

The significance of philosophical tools for good governance with reference to South Africa

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ABSTRACT

The breadth and complexity of issues that Public Administration deals with requires the pursuit of multidisciplinary approaches, rather than a singular orientation or perspective. The public administration's strength and promise lies in the tapestry of ideas that continues to evolve from the synthesis of a broad body of research in related disciplines. Perhaps its distinct niche as a field of inquiry is best identified by the attributes of intellectual chaos and conceptual untidiness (Ferraioli 2001:1). This article attempts to unravel the trans-disciplinary relationship of philosophy and public administration in order to determine the significance of ethical reasoning in decision-making structures. Due to the advent of New Public Management (NPM), Public Administration faces a paradigmatic shift towards decentralisation and relativism that demands more accountability and responsibility. The authors aim to explore the merits of philosophical tools to ensure ethical governance in a South African context. The article philosophises that a normative approach is necessary to induce ethical structures in Public Administration/Management. It concludes that it is vital for Public Administration to work in conjunction with the normative tools of ethics, integrity and honesty to create an environment of good governance, as well as an ethical society.

INTRODUCTION

"Is there a philosophy of public administration (sic.)?" Having posed this question, Simmons and Dvorin (1977:186) proceed to provide a categorical reply: "The answer is an unqualified 'no'. No administrative philosopher or theoretician has yet succeeded in synthesizing (sic.), in the grand Aristotelian manner, the vast content of administrative thought into a unified and systematic framework". The authors concede that "[s]ome theoreticians have attempted, with varying degrees of success, to strengthen the conceptual basis of the administrative process" (Simmons and Dvorin 1977:186). However, these studies are found across a wide spectrum of separate fields of knowledge and are scattered far and wide in numerous books and professional journals. Notably, no sense of unity has yet been achieved (Simmons and Dvorin 1977:186). Further, Simmons and Dvorin (1977:186) explore the opinion that, "*[n]othing in administrative theory today approaches the general unity of thought or the consensus professors of political theory held as to the content of their subject matter during the late nineteenth and the first half of the twentieth centuries. A syllabus on the philosophy of public administration today in all probability would reflect few commonalities either in major figures and their works or even the strategy of approaching the subject*".

The philosophical approach to Public Administration may perhaps be the most difficult of all to master because of the intangible nature of its key concern: the moral justification for the exercise of public power and coercion in a democratic society (Simmons and Dvorin 1977:186).

The authors believe that the philosophical foundation of Public Administration contributes less to the overall thrust of this article. This is largely because the traditional philosophical concerns of Public Administration appear to have little significance these days for scholars – the empiricists who clearly dominate the field of Political Science and hence Public Administration. The empiricists, who pretty much dominate the field of Public Administration, find that the issues of morals and philosophy of Public Administration are not "user friendly". Furthermore, it is argued that the philosophy relationship is yesterday's news, which has already been settled. The reality is that not only Public Administration but also its "parent", Political Science, are in a race with their other brethren, Economics, to be seen as the "most scientific" social science discipline. Instead of dwelling in the sphere of irresolvable and the out-of-focus arguments of the past, empiricists prefer to explore the "significance of philosophical tools" in Public Administration. The concept of efficient administration evolved from the increased use of scientific management theories and the acceptance of generally accepted principles and practices of good governance. The latter are verifiable and thus can contribute to demonstrate efficient administration.

Public Administration ought to operate within democratic prescriptions that influence the execution of public sector activities, as well as the implementation of measures that promote normative governance. Despite efforts by the South African Government to uphold transparency and accountability, unethical conduct in various forms has persisted in recent years. It has been stated authoritatively that, since the first democratic elections in 1994, achieving good governance and fighting corruption have become two of the most important challenges for the country in the post-Apartheid era. However, there is a widespread perception that corruption has in fact increased during the period of political and economical transition. Thus, the South African Government regards the fight against corruption as top priority (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime 2004:68).

It is also a purpose of this article to explore the level of unethical conduct in South African public administration. It discusses the measures to combat misadministration and proposes the utilisation of philosophical tools to instil normative values for a morally and ethically inclined South African public administration.

HISTORICAL OVERVIEW OF PHILOSOPHY IN GOVERNANCE

It is worth noting that the decisive moment that marked the transition from physics to ethics in philosophy is credited to Socrates (who is regarded as the founder of moral philosophy), as ethics and concern with the inner, rather than the outer world, became the chief object of thought and inquiry in the fifth century BC (Makrydemetres 2002:3; and Vyas-Doorgapersad & Ababio 2006:386). Aristotle situated ethics (*techne ethike*) within practical philosophy as related to politics (*techne politike*), thereby placing it in opposition to Plato's identity between both fields (Capurro 2002:2).

In Aristotle's first book *Aristotle's Politics* he deals with "economics" – questions concerning the administration of the house (*oikos*) and the family. Furthermore, Socrates denies the Platonic conception of speaking synonymously about community (*koinonia*) with regard to the city, as well as to the family. Later on it became a scholarly approach to conceive practical philosophy as consisting of three sub-disciplines, namely ethics, economics and politics (Capurro 2002:2).

Aristotle created the *telos* democracy that is described as "liberty of oligarchy, wealth aristocracy, culture and right conduct" (Day & Chambers 1962:56) and further stressed the idea that, "the passage between the moral and the political sphere is done through language as the constitutive medium of

the *polis*. We are naturally a political being (*anthropos physei politikon zoon*)” (Capurro 2002:3). The polis of Aristotle was a philosophical and ethical society that operated under administrative laws. Later on, in 1660, Hobbes’ *Leviathan* approached the concept of ethics and morality with rationality and objectivity, where the issues of state and common wealth were explored within the domain of political philosophy. In addition, Kant differentiated the law in its relation to an external action (legality), and with the internal motivations of such actions (morality) (Capurro 2002:4).

Currently, westernised governance is facing challenges of corruption, financial misconduct and dishonesty, which complemented by the lack of moral values. The virtue (*arête*) and effort to become a good citizen (*polites spoudaios*) of Aristotle (1943) are supplemented with political greed for power and authority and personal benefits for more materialistic luxuries. Table 1 explores this shift in ethical components, as identified by Sardar (in Clapper 1999:149; Raga and Taylor 2007:9 and Vyas-Doorgapersad & Ababio 2010:412).

Table 1: Traditional and Modern Public Service Ethics

Twentieth-century ethics	Twenty-first century ethics
Determinants – ruling elites.	Determinants – authentic discourse among all who will be affected.
Common ethical code – belief in final solutions.	Constantly managing code(s) – based on continuous authentic discourse.
Support guaranteed through coercion.	Support guaranteed through consensus.
Dissenters subject to punitive measures.	Dissenters subject to punitive measures.
Western (colonial) ethics.	Ethics based on anthropological and sociological pluralism.
Corporate accountability (amounts to non-accountability).	Personal accountability
Exercise of personal morality stifled and discouraged.	Exercise of personal morality encouraged.
Exercise of personal discretion discouraged.	Exercise of discretion encouraged.
Public interest nebulous, determined by governing elites.	Public interest(s) disparate but relatively distinct, determined with all involved (authentic discourse), constantly redefined.

Table 1 demonstrates that in the twenty-first century we are experiencing ethical, moral and philosophical dilemmas. Public policy-makers, practitioners

and scholars are more concerned with personal gain, professional success and ego-centred status. In the words of Makrydemetres (2002:3), *"at the beginning of the new century we are surrounded by new questions, uncertainties and doubts resulting from the overarching processes of the globalization (sic.) of market economies and information technology, as well as localization of political conflict, authority systems and culture"*.

Overall, a more balanced view of what may have occurred is that there was a much larger pool of political operatives and academics in the latter half of the twentieth century than during the first few decades. Although it might seem as though there was a greater inclination toward self-centred theorising or self-serving practitioner-oriented behaviour towards the end of the twentieth century and the beginning of the twenty-first century, there is no empirical evidence to support this impression.

Public administration practitioners today need to reconsider and re-adopt the ethical values established by Socrates. He viewed ethics as the *"rational way that a thoughtful man could follow in order to achieve morality, which was, in turn, defined as the actual choice of the good – 'well doing' – after deliberation"* (in Vyas-Doorgapersad & Ababio 2006:386). In particular, Socrates related morality to knowledge; in particular the knowledge of what is truly good (not simply phenomenally good) and useful to man. The rational foundation of ethics is found in the quest for and reasoning about virtue. It is in this sense that "virtue is knowledge" and unless one has or acquires knowledge one cannot be virtuous. Even more importantly, one can achieve true and lasting happiness through reasoning about morality (Makrydemetres 2002:3). Evidently, the predominance of virtue in the Socratic disclosure is predicated on the concept that only conscious and purposive action can be judged and evaluated from an ethical point of view and on the basis of moral standards. Indeed, Socrates advanced a unified and comprehensive idea about morality and happiness, arguing that ethics is about the knowledge of the good things in life (Makrydemetres 2002:4).

In the history of philosophy, ethics was not among the earliest issues to be examined in a systematic manner; rather it was among the last. A similar trend can be observed in the history of administrative thought about moral standards in governance and administration (Makrydemetres 2002:3). In philosophy, concern about the physically observable world preceded concern about the inner world. However, in the evolution of administrative thinking, attention shifted gradually from the purely structural and functional aspects of organisation, to the management of questions about leadership and motivation, and then turned to proper conduct on the grounds of certain ethical and normative standards (Makrydemetres 2002:3).

PHILOSOPHICAL TOOLS FOR GOOD ADMINISTRATION AND MANAGEMENT: THEORY VERSUS PRACTICE

There is a philosophy, a logic behind everything; every action and every subject or discipline. The branches of philosophy include logic (a study of the rules of appropriate thinking that leads to rational thoughts); epistemology (which deals with rationalism, that is, valid knowledge that comes only through the mind – the truth); ethics (a study of the moral values of human behaviour); metaphysics (a study of ultimate reality); and political philosophy (which examines the nature, evolution and aim of government). One of the important branches of philosophy is theology, the philosophy of religion. Spirituality is a coordination of body, mind and soul and religion is a means of attaining spirituality. To study the relationship between Public Administration and religion, “a theory of soul”, conceived by Lynch and Lynch (1999:138–164) is relevant, as it deals with the philosophy of being a professional in Public Administration. Their theory presents three pairs of opposites:

Ego versus oneness: When people within the structures of an organisation think that it exists for its employees, and take the stance that performing services for the public is simply not important (or worse still, is an intrusion), then the organisation is without soul due to the overriding ego of the employees. The negative association of the word “bureaucratic” captures that meaning (Lynch and Lynch 1999:141). The polar opposite of ego is oneness. A public servant always serves more than simply “clients’, although the word does capture some of the essence of public service. A deeply committed public servant defines him/herself in terms of the larger oneness or wholeness of the organisation and wider society, while acting out of altruism (Lynch and Lynch 1999:141).

Body versus spirit: Lynch and Lynch (1999: 142–144) point out that: “...in the organizational (sic.) context we experience the body through organizational (sic.) loyalty such as being a member of a clan, a gang, a church, a corporation, a nation, or some group ... Spirit is the uplifting learning opportunity that moves us to new levels that usually are just a little higher than our present place but are seemingly without limit.”

In organisations, as is the case with individuals, spirit is uplifting and in every way remarkable. With spirit, being part of the organisation is in itself motivation and often inclusion is part of the reason why an organisation has spirit. We feel enriched by “belonging’, because there is dynamism, style, grace and a sense of harmony that only exists if an organisation has spirit (Lynch and Lynch 1999:143–144).

Mind versus heart: The third and final pair of opposites that form part of the theory of soul, is explained as follows: “...throughout the new organization (sic.) a new higher level of ethics and morality based on heart must exist if

civilization (sic.) is to sustain itself... We use the analytical tools ... in harmony with guidance from the heart to understand and eventually decide what we as individual or organizations (sic.) should do in a given circumstance" (Lynch and Lynch 1999:148).

Then we should reflect, and from that reflection we can learn positive lessons. With organisations, heart is particularly important. In an organisational context, leaders must "listen, be patient; listen, suggest solutions; listen, revise; listen and move forward to ensure that leaders keep not only their promises but their credibility" (Lynch and Lynch 1999:148).

In order to put the above theory into practice, it is necessary to consider the "four-fold grouping adopted by the South African Institute of Management (SAIM), using the terminology of SPIRIT, HEART, MIND and BODY, which became fashionable during the 1990s" (Dalton 1998:358). This is shown in Table 2 below.

Table 2: Soul of Management

Aspect	Attribute/Skill	Examples
Spirit	Personal Attributes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Self-actualisation ● Self-management ● Beliefs/values/ethics ● Risk-taking ● Willpower
Heart	Interpersonal Skills	Communication, empathy, trust, motivate, inspire, listen, coach
Mind	Cognitive Skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Learning to learn ● Analytical thinking ● Lateral thinking ● Problem-solving ● Decision-making ● Memory abilities
Body	Technical Managerial Skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Plan/lead/organise/control/ ● TQM (Total Quality Management)/ ● MBO (Management by Objectives)/ ● JIT (Just-In-time Ordering)/ ● BPR (Business Process Re-engineering)

Source: Dalton 1998:358

Public Administration/Management also deals with facts and values. The philosophy of Public Administration is concerned with the intricacies of Government and its workings. The values of philosophy are practicable in Public Administration, because they influence the moral, social, political

and administrative aspects of every organisation and the country as a whole. Philosophical tools are thus significant for any organisation, as reflected below in Table 3.

Table 3: The soul of an organisation 'The Living Company'

Grouping	Component	Comment
Spirit	"Persona"	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Corporate identity. ● Company ethos/ culture/ ability to build an "employee community". ● Organisational values.
Heart	Ecological Awareness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Ability to build constructive relations/alliances/ decentralisation and tolerance. ● Acquisitiveness and mergers/ job mobility and social propagations.
Mind	Learning	Economic success and learning/ rapid external change requires rapid internal responses/ scenario planning/ inventing the future/ decision making as a learning activity
Body	Self-Management	Financial conservatism/ money governs company evolution/ effective distribution of power

Source: Dalton 1998:364

The development of the attributes or skills associated with the SPIRIT, HEART, and MIND of management, occurs most effectively in the workplace (practice), while the acquisition of the BODY (knowledge) of management is most rapidly acquired through short formal courses (training) (Dalton 1998:360).

In practice, the theory of soul enables public administrators/managers to control their behaviour and adapt their management techniques accordingly for the benefit of the administrative organisation. Furthermore, it requires that public administrators/managers should: be able to use his/her heart (consciousness) – a judgement ability to find out what is right and what is wrong; form rational opinions and make suggestions regarding policies and programmes to be executed; be able to determine his/her actions that meet with moral standards; believe in result-based ethics because his/her actions and decisions must have positive results in order to develop an honest relationship with society; believe in virtue ethics in order to be scrupulous; be able to formulate and implement policies that reflect values, morality and embody principles of ethical conduct; possess ideological attributes to overcome unacceptable thoughts, such as corruption and think about his/her moral and ethical duty as an administrator towards the society; and finally,

develop an ethical culture in the administrative organisation in order to affect him/herself and associates in a positive way.

PHILOSOPHICAL TOOLS FOR GOOD PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION, WITH REFERENCE TO SOUTH AFRICA

A total of 868 cases of financial misconduct in the South African Public Service were reported for the 2007/2008 financial year. Notably, the Public Service experienced a significant increase to 1204 in the 2008/2009 financial year (Public Service Commission [PSC] 2009:2; 2010:2). The *Fifth Consolidated Public Service Monitoring and Evaluation System Report* for the year 2007/2008 further highlights the following findings (PSC 2008:11):

"[T]he average performance of departments regarding management reporting on cases of misconduct dropped from above 60% in 2000/05 and 50% in 06/07 to below 40% in 07/08. This is a cause for concern since this is an indication that management does not effectively handle cases of misconduct; the time taken to deal with cases remains a concern. When officials see that cases of misconduct do not get finalised timeously this may send a message to them that unethical behaviour is tolerated, and could thus result in a breakdown in discipline."

Table 4 assesses the professional ethics per department on the basis of information provided in PSC 2008.

The total cost reported by the national and provincial departments emanating from unauthorised, irregular, fruitless and wasteful expenditure, as well as losses resulting from criminal conduct reported, was R100,111,076.82 in the 2008/2009 financial year (PSC 2010:8). This is quite costly – particularly in an emerging, democratic country. It is even more costly if one considers that such costs deny the Public Service the opportunity of achieving a higher level in terms of the quantity and quality of service to citizens. However, one must be careful to establish the accuracy of statistical reports. Valid findings or reports are influenced by, among other things, the statistical tools employed, the objectivity of the measurements used, as well as the degree to which "politics" is absent from a commission's investigative report on an administrative conduct or activity. Nevertheless, these published statistics raise concerns on the morals, values and ethics in the South African Public Service.

The following segments deal with the significance of philosophical tools to enhance a normative environment in the South African Public Service in particular, and public administration in general.

Table 4: Professional Ethics: Departments' score per standard

Department	Standard											Total out of 5
	*A		*B		*C	*D					*E	
	1	2	1	2	1	1	2	3	4	5	1	
Northern Cape: Department of Agriculture & Land Reform	0.50	0.50	0.50	0.00	1.00	1.00	-	-	-	-	1.00	4.50
Eastern Cape: Department of Sport, Recreation, Arts & Culture	0.50	0.50	0.50	0.00	1.00	-	-	-	0.25	-	1.00	3.75
National Department: Public Service & Administration	0.50	0.50	0.50	0.00	1.00	-	-	-	-	0.00	1.00	3.50
Eastern Cape: Department of Transport	0.50	0.50	0.50	0.00	0.00	1.00	-	-	-	-	1.00	3.50
Gauteng: Department of Agriculture, Conservation & Environment	0.50	0.50	0.50	0.00	0.00	1.00	-	-	-	-	1.00	3.50
KwaZulu-Natal: Department of Transport	0.50	0.00	0.50	0.00	1.00	-	-	0.50	-	-	1.00	3.50
Northern Cape: Department of Tourism, Environment & Conservation	0.50	0.50	0.50	0.00	0.00	1.00	-	-	-	-	1.00	3.50
Western Cape: Department of Transport & Public Works	0.50	0.00	0.50	0.00	1.00	-	-	0.50	-	-	1.00	3.50
National Department: Public Works	0.50	0.50	0.50	0.00	0.00	-	0.75	-	-	-	1.00	3.25
Free State: Department of Public Works, Roads & Transport	0.50	0.50	0.50	0.50	0.00	-	-	-	0.25	-	1.00	3.25
National Department: Environment Affairs & Tourism	0.50	0.50	0.50	0.50	0.00	1.00	-	-	-	-	0.00	3.00
North West: Department of Public Works	0.50	0.50	0.50	0.00	1.00	-	-	0.50	-	-	0.00	3.00

* Legend	
<p>A. Policy on process</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. A policy document is in place that sets out the procedure and time frames to be followed when handling cases of misconduct. 2. All five senior managers surveyed have a working knowledge of the system. <p>B. Management reporting</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Cases of misconduct are reported in management reports. 2. Evidence on management's response/actions on these reports is available. <p>C. Time taken to resolve cases</p>	<p>D. Capacity to handle misconduct cases</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. 100% to 80% of the managers are highly competent to deal with cases of misconduct; or 2. 60% to 79% of the managers are highly competent to deal with cases of misconduct; or 3. 40% to 59% of the managers are highly competent to deal with cases of misconduct; or 4. 20% to 39% of the managers are highly competent to deal with cases of misconduct; or 5. less than 20% of the managers are highly competent to deal with cases of misconduct. <p>E. Training and awareness</p> <p>The managing of cases of misconduct is reflected in training materials and is covered in capacity building processes.</p>

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Department	Standard											Total out of 5
	*A		*B		*C	*D					*E	
	1	2	1	2	1	1	2	3	4	5	1	
North West: Department of Sport, Arts & Culture	0.50	0.00	0.50	0.00	1.00	-	-	-	-	0.00	1.00	3.00
Western Cape: Department of Health	0.50	0.50	0.00	0.00	1.00	-	-	-	-	0.00	1.00	3.00
National Department: Transport	0.50	0.50	0.50	0.00	1.00	-	-	-	-	0.00	0.00	2.50
Limpopo: Department of Sports, Arts & Culture	0.50	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	1.00	-	-	-	-	1.00	2.50
National Department: Sport & Recreation	0.50	0.00	0.00	0.00	1.00	-	-	0.50	-	-	0.00	2.00
KwaZulu-Natal: Department of Agriculture & Environmental Affairs	0.50	0.00	0.50	0.00	0.00	-	-	-	-	0.00	1.00	2.00
Limpopo: Department of Education	0.50	0.50	0.00	0.00	0.00	1.00	-	-	-	-	0.00	2.00
Mpumalanga: Department of Culture, Sport & Recreation	0.50	0.50	0.00	0.00	0.00	-	-	-	-	0.00	1.00	2.00
Mpumalanga: Department of Roads & Transport	0.50	0.50	0.00	0.00	0.00	1.00	-	-	-	-	0.00	2.00
Gauteng: Department of Gauteng Shared Services	0.50	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	-	-	-	-	0.00	1.00	1.50
Total	11.0	7.5	7.5	1.0	11.0	7.0	0.75	2.00	0.50	0.00	16.0	64.3
Average score per standard (total divided by 22 departments assessed)	0.50	0.34	0.34	0.05	0.50	0.32	0.03	0.09	0.02	0.00	0.73	2.92

*** Legend****A. Policy on process**

1. A policy document is in place that sets out the procedure and time frames to be followed when handling cases of misconduct.
2. All five senior managers surveyed have a working knowledge of the system.

B. Management reporting

1. Cases of misconduct are reported in management reports.
2. Evidence on management's response/actions on these reports is available.

C. Time taken to resolve cases**D. Capacity to handle misconduct cases**

1. 100% to 80% of the managers are highly competent to deal with cases of misconduct; or
2. 60% to 79% of the managers are highly competent to deal with cases of misconduct; or
3. 40% to 59% of the managers are highly competent to deal with cases of misconduct; or
4. 20% to 39% of the managers are highly competent to deal with cases of misconduct; or
5. less than 20% of the managers are highly competent to deal with cases of misconduct.

E. Training and awareness

The managing of cases of misconduct is reflected in training materials and is covered in capacity building processes.

Source: PSC 2008:102-103

The role of ethics in public administration

The legislative measures in South Africa to combat unethical conduct include: the *Investigation into Serious Economic Offences Act of 1991* (Act 117 of 1991); the *Reporting of Public Entities Act of 1992* (Act 93 of 1992); the *Prevention of Corruption Act of 1992* (Act 94 of 1992); the *Audit Act of 1992* (Act 122 of 1992); and the *Public Service Act of 1994* (Act 103 of 1994). There are also formal mechanisms in place to ensure ethical governance, such as commissions of inquiry appointed to look into specific issues; standing committees of Parliament that are set up if circumstances demand it; the Human Rights Commission and the Public Protector (Ombudsman). These measures require the public official to fulfil his/ her duties in an ethical manner.

Public officials and government ethics

It is essential that an effort is made to ensure effective governance in all sectors and at every level of public administration. Furthermore, attention should be paid to the values that are of importance to the community. Such an approach will ensure that the proper value system and norms are followed in all official duties. An acknowledgement that sound values and norms prevail in public administration will imply that public officials carry out their appointed tasks in an ethical manner (Hanekom 1977:11). To this end, section 210 of the *Constitution of South Africa, 1996*, made provision for the establishment the Public Service Commission that is competent to conduct enquiries regarding the organisation and administration of the various Government departments and the Public Service. It also regulates the code of conduct applicable to all members of the Public Service.

Conformity and the public official

There are measures to ensure that public servants in South Africa adhere to the ethical standards of professional institutions in terms of guiding principles. This conformity is achieved, for example, through public sector auditing, where the Auditor-General of South Africa is appointed to curb misadministration. The Auditor-General's functions and responsibilities are set out in the *Constitution*, as well as in the *Auditor-General Act of 1995* (Act 12 of 1995).

Statutory guidelines and codes of conduct

Laws and regulations outline the fundamental values of the Public Service and should provide the framework for guidance, investigation, disciplinary action,

and prosecution. In South Africa, the *Executive Members' Ethics Bill*, No. 64 of 1998, was drafted to provide for a code of ethics governing the conduct of members of the cabinet, deputy ministers, and members of provincial executive councils. *The Public Service Act of 1994* includes a code that gives guidelines to employees on what is expected of them from an ethical point of view – both in their individual conduct and in their collegial relationships with others.

Code of ethics in public administration

A code of ethics is a measure to control and minimise indiscretions and corruptible behaviour and its primary aim is to channel the public official's individual morality and integrity. It should ensure that a public official does his/her work in accordance with acceptable moral principles. On the empirical level, South Africa has developed indicators to measure good governance. A comprehensive explanation of these indicators is available at http://info.worldbank.org/governance/wgi/pdf_country.asp.

THE WAY FORWARD

In the South African context, the monitoring of ethical conduct is a reasonably strong agenda that is guided by the National Public Sector Anti-Corruption Strategy, *"...which emphasises the need for more active ethics management; most public and private organisations have some form of Ethics Code. A Code of Conduct for the Public Service has been developed and communicated, with training and manuals. Most departments have implemented it; an Ethics System and Code of Conduct for parliament (sic.) has been implemented; and senior management members in the Public Service are required to disclose their interests"* (Department of Public Service and Administration 2003:91).

However, managing discipline in the Public Service, including some senior managers' reluctance to take disciplinary action against unprofessional employees continues, and this has become a major weakness in the public sector.

All Public Service personnel need a new mind-set and a paradigm shift that appreciates and values above all else the public interest, interconnectedness and oneness. In other words, South Africa needs an organisational culture that not only supports ethical behaviour, but also sees that it defines and underpins right and wrong conduct at both an individual and an organisational or institutional level. This concept of inter-relatedness largely corresponds with the African concept of "Ubuntu" or brotherliness and good neighbourliness. What affects your brother, directly or indirectly, also affects you (Hilliard & Lynch 2011:2).

Furthermore, society needs to inculcate moral virtue in all public functionaries by enforcing good moral habits. Good habits could, in the long term, ensure that a person reacts “automatically” and intuitively to being virtuous and upholding high ethical standards that are closely akin to a set of globally recognised ethics, instead of submitting to parochial regime values. Society needs to reject the latter values, taking heed of the sordid socio-political past of Apartheid from which the new South Africa emerged (Hilliard & Lynch 2011:3).

It is additionally recommended that: “...*public service unions must be mobilised to advocate professional ethics to members; it is essential that the employer as personified by executing authorities at the political level and public service managers at all levels create an appropriate environment in which values are established and exemplary models set for emulation by all employees; and management support is crucial because management attitudes play a significant part in shaping the organisational ethos of a work environment*” (Department of Public Service and Administration 2003:92).

This article is informed by data and analysis, which contend that professional performance, activities and behaviour are embodied with values and ethical measures. Furthermore, according to Denhardt (1988:126), “*in some cases public officials have to make certain individual judgments about whether the emerging social values are appropriate and acceptable, and this responsibility cannot be underestimated. Specific values to which public servants should pay attention are equity, freedom, justice, fairness and various individual rights*”. Every group or individual develops norms and values pertaining to ethical behaviour. This enables the other members of the group to predict one another’s behaviour. Norms and values are a collective form of communication and also facilitate cooperation. They constitute a collective agreement about what is necessary to survive, what works, and what needs to be done to ensure cooperation (Moeller 1988:120). It is also important to establish how a public official interprets the role that ethical behaviour should play in the execution of his/her duties.

The methodology of a normative approach to ethics requires deductive reasoning from a deontological perspective. In such an approach, reasoning from the general to the specific sense about the rightness or wrongness of an action is determined by existing rules, societal principles, and one’s own values and personal beliefs. In essence, a public administrator searches for some principle that guides his/her decision-making or provides justification for his/her decisions (Kavran and Wyman 2001:8). This approach provides a framework to guide and justify managerial decision-making. However, decisions are in the final analysis, the end-product of various factors, including structural codification. Most importantly, this approach employs values inherent in the society, political system and governance in which the individual resides (Kavran and Wyman 2001:8).

CONCLUSION

Over time, there are social constructs that people of power and position have decided to use to ensure societal conformance and (political) system balance. These norms, rules and expected behavioural patterns have found their way into politically sacred constructions known as 'constitutions' and, subsequently, constitutional law. If we follow the rules, citizens at all levels of society are regarded as moral and ethical. If we do not do so, we are punished, even ostracised. Generally, values are social constructs that serve as a codified societal rulebook for individuals, communities, organisations and nations to follow. Presumably, thinking or acting in accordance with the "rules of the game" validates one's behaviour. Therefore, over time, the collectivity develops norms, morals, conventions and expectations that are subsequently ascribed as the basis of societal "ethics". Conformance to these prescribed rules defines an individual as moral or ethical and thus possessing integrity of behaviour. Adoption of, and adaptation to, administrative rules of the game are expected because the administrative practitioner would have been socialised or inculcated through the normal process of political socialisation. This occurs *via* the universal mediums of socialisation, such as the home, school, place of religious worship and values of one's academic discipline. This is the frame of reference we as professionals (academics or practitioners) use to determine the level of integrity in ourselves and in others.

Therefore, practitioners (or academics) must realise that Public Administration occupies a unique position in society and that its first priority must be to promote the general welfare of the community. Public officials are therefore honour-bound to adhere to the ethical standards integral to a system of moral principles. The values and morals by which the official lives as an individual in a community have a direct influence on his/her position as a public official.

Consideration must continually be given to the values and morals that the public regards as sound and desirable; these will provide the background for sound and transparent administration. When performing their duties, public officials must acknowledge and manifest the value norms of Public Administration. Ethics are essential for transparent public administration, and when viewed in conjunction with values and morals, they serve as the cornerstone of accountable and responsible Public Administration.

Using philosophical tools (taking a normative approach) helps public administrators to think rationally and to be ethical policy-makers. The relationship between the disciplines of Philosophy and Public Administration is important to enhance an ethical administrative culture. Public Administration is undoubtedly a universal subject and its trans-disciplinarity makes it more dynamic and unique.

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