

# State of the Science

## A Review of International and South African Scholarship on Public Service Ethics

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### ABSTRACT

The academic enterprise should be motivated by one overriding concern: the epistemic imperative. Researchers should ensure that they pursue the most valid and reliable research design to arrive at the most truthful knowledge. This could be achieved within one or a combination of the main social science research designs: qualitative-, quantitative-, or a mixed method approach. In this article, the author reviews international and South African scholarship in the field of public service ethics. To achieve this objective, the author identified various themes that are prominent in the literature on public service ethics. For this purpose the following themes were identified: Integrity, ethical leadership, whistleblowing, and public service values. To delineate the study, it was decided to review publications and research outputs that appeared between 2005 and 2014. The author then engaged in convenience and purpose sampling and identified various data sources including conference papers, journal publications, and chapters in books. Consequently, this sample is not representative of international and South African scholarship on public service ethics. If this was the objective, there would be no end in sight for this modest effort. As this publication serves to reflect on the research methods used by authors in 21 research outputs, it mainly caters for an academic audience as it comfortably falls in Mouton's World 1: The World of Meta-Science. This article ends with some ideas on possible research avenues which South African scholars in public service ethics could pursue.

## INTRODUCTION

Since the completion of my doctoral dissertation in 2010, I have become acutely interested in the field of public service ethics and corruption prevention. As part of that project, I have also had the opportunity to meet and participate with international scholars working in the same field. From these deliberations, I have noticed numerous differences between local and international publications on public service ethics. Emanating from this awareness was the decision to undertake a perhaps more reasoned and scientific review of the scholarship produced by these two groups.

In undertaking this activity, my actions were guided by some very important considerations. These include the epistemic imperative. Researchers should ensure that they pursue the most valid and reliable research design to arrive at the most truthful knowledge (Babbie & Mouton 2007:4–17). This could be achieved by studying the research object within one or perhaps a combination of the main social science research designs: qualitative and quantitative research design (Webb & Auriacombe 2006:588–602). Perhaps, more appropriate would be a combination of these two designs: a mixed methods research design.

The main research question which guided this modest research project was: To what extent are South African researchers in public service ethics guided by this epistemic imperative; or alternatively stated ‘the search for truthful and valid knowledge’. This publication serves to reflect on how 22 scholars have investigated this research problem, conceptualised and theorised on these issues, which research instruments they used, and what they found empirically. Consequently, it falls within Mouton’s World 1: The World of Meta-Science and caters for an academic audience (Babbie & Mouton 2007:4–17).

## THE PURPOSE OF REVIEWING THE LITERATURE

A literature review serves the purpose of determining what has been done within a specific field of study. It serves various purposes *inter alia* determining how other scholars have investigated a research problem, conceptualised and theorised on specific issues, which research instruments they used, and what they found empirically. This review should not only be limited to the most recent and credible literature, but also a wider range of research products. This implies that a more suitable word would be the body of scholarship. Such products could include books, conference proceedings, journal articles, and theses and dissertations (Mouton 2008: 86–97).

For the purpose of identifying this sample of research output, the following key words were used: ‘integrity’, ‘public service’, and ‘public integrity’. The

author engaged in convenience and purposive sampling and identified various data sources including conference papers, journal publications, and chapters in books. International publications were identified by two means: Firstly, the key words were used to find publications on the search engine 'Google Scholar'. Secondly, specific journals were identified and perused for relevant articles. Readers of this article will notice that many publications were extracted from the *American Society for Public Administration's* (ASPA) international peer reviewed subject journal '*Public Integrity*'.

In respect of South African research output and publications, the same key words as indicated above were used on the NEXUS database to find publications relevant to this study. One local dissertation was found while other publications were either still in progress or not available at the time of publication. Various other local publications were identified using the 'Google Scholar' search engine and perusing various South African subject journals for relevant publications. The search was limited to research output between 2005 and 2014. It should be noted that this sample of publications cannot claim to be representative of what has been published on public service ethics internationally or in South Africa. This study is exploratory in nature and seeks to identify possible future research endeavours in this subject matter.

## **INTERNATIONAL SCHOLARSHIP ON PUBLIC SERVICE ETHICS**

For the purpose of reviewing the international scholarship, a total of 12 publications were identified and reviewed for the purpose of this publication. The findings are categorised below in terms of the themes: Integrity, ethical leadership, whistleblowing, and public service values.

### **Sub-Theme: Integrity**

If one considers the date of Pope's (2007:75–83) publication entitled '*The First Third Phase in the Fight Against Corruption*', it comes as a surprise that the author acknowledges the futility of creating institutions and statutes to fight corruption. In his earlier work at Transparency International, he argued in support of strong institutions to fight corruption; what he termed National Integrity Systems. In this publication, he seems to divert from his earlier position and identifies the significance of more softer issues such as public service ethics and integrity. In his view, research should investigate various themes including whether integrity is a product of upbringing, or whether it could be taught; and to what extent gender influences integrity. He acknowledges the relativity of values. Whereas

ethics and legality are equated in the United States, in Europe ethical conduct is not necessarily lawful conduct. Finally, as part of the third phase in the fight against corruption Pope calls for the need to implement and assess a state's integrity system which in turn would identify strengths and weaknesses in its reform project.

Van Montfort, Beck, and Twijnstra (2013:117–132) investigate the interesting question: Can integrity be taught in public organisations? Their empirical research project was guided by two research objectives. Their first objective was to determine whether integrity training programmes could be effective and lead to an improvement in the level of integrity of employees. The authors operationalised the concept of integrity into three dimensions: an individual's awareness of the moral aspects of a given situation; an individual's ability to make a decision in this context; and an individual's ability to take action. These three dimensions could be regarded as an individual's moral awareness, moral reasoning, and moral behaviour. In practice, an employee recognises a moral issue, makes a decision on the issue, and acts accordingly.

Their second objective was to determine which factors have an impact on the effectiveness of integrity training programmes. The researchers experimented with the impact of two different training programmes on respondents employed at Dutch municipalities. They found that only one programme had a positive but short term impact on the moral awareness and reasoning abilities of employees. Neither programme was effective in the long term. It was found that integrity training programmes would be most effective in institutions with a poor ethical climate, where employees are not highly qualified, and where employees have direct contact with citizens.

In a review of the Hong Kong corruption prevention efforts in the post-1997 period, Scott and Leung (2012:39–52) evaluated the underlying rationale of gradually incorporating the elements of a values-based approach into the existing dominant compliance-based approach. From a reading of the manuscript it is clear that the retrocession of Hong Kong to China in 1997 was not the only factor that led to the introduction of an integrity system which affords public officials sufficient discretion to make moral choices based on a public service ethos. What makes this change intriguing was the success of the pre-1997 period with its compliance based approach where ethical requirements were embedded in voluminous sets of rules including the *Colonial Regulations*, *Civil Service Regulations*, disciplinary provisions, and *Prevention of Bribery Ordinances*. According to the authors, changes in the political and bureaucratic environments were less amenable to corruption prevention-based on a rule-based approach. For example, various public management reform measures such as contracting out and downsizing meant greater exposure to the private sector and consequently more opportunities for corruption.

According to the authors, various factors persuaded the Hong Kong government to move towards a value-based approach including increasing awareness of conflict of interest, as well as an attempt to change the colonial bureaucratic ethics to serve the people rather than the organisation. Two observations from the Hong Kong case study are worth noting. In the context of a value-based approach, public officials are expected to exhibit a degree of moral reasoning. In terms of the Civil Service Code, officials are expected to determine when an actual, perceived, or potential conflict of interest exists. When such a conflict exists, the official may not deal with it him or herself but must report it to his or her immediate supervisor.

The article by Heywood (2012:474–493) forces one to reflect on the importance of choosing the most suitable approach to corruption prevention-based on the context of implementation. The argument should be; do not employ enforcement tactics that do not fit the organisational culture. According to the author, United Kingdom (UK) based integrity management efforts, have sought to find a balance between compliance-based and value-based approaches. The public service in the UK has relied heavily on informal codes of conduct and moral integrity due to its ideal civic culture: open, consensual, and free of corruption with active and informed citizen participation in public life. However, the introduction of public management reforms have created a multitude of opportunities for corruption and have replaced traditional concerns of public interest with those related to efficiency and effectiveness. Advice provided by experienced public servants has been replaced by advice from policy advisors appointed by the ruling party. The restructuring of the public sector involving privatisation, contracting out, cost awareness, consumer choice, and performance-based management undermined the ethos upon which integrity management has been based. These changes, together with various public scandals have led to a more formal approach to corruption prevention; the compliance-based approach. The introduction of the *Constitutional Reform and Governance Act of 2010* has formalised the values of integrity, honesty, objectivity, and impartiality for the UK public service.

### **Sub-Theme: Ethical Leadership**

Kaptein, Huberts, Avelino and Lasthuizen (2005:299–311) emphasised the value of surveys as an instrument to measure ethics and its potential in generating valuable information for the leadership of an institution. The information that surveys provide are even more beneficial when it is possible to track an institution's performance over time, or draw comparisons between similar institutions. The authors emphasised that it is not only important to know whether institutions have ethics policy documents in place, but also whether

they have implemented these documents. For example, to what extent are employees informed of their ethical responsibilities, or to what extent did employees receive ethics training? Surveys could also be used to determine the frequency and types of misconduct, as well as the presence of ethical leadership within an institution. Although this publication mainly elevated the significance of surveys in managing ethics, the authors identified various attributes of ethical leadership. When managers are perceived as positive role models, set reasonable performance standards, and are committed to upholding the institution's standards of conduct, it could have a positive impact on the organisational climate and the way employees behave. Furthermore, when employees feel comfortable to report observed cases of malfeasance to their managers, positive perceptions of the quality of ethical leadership is promoted.

Jurkiewicz (2006:245–256) used Toni Morrison's novels to explore the meaning of ethical leadership: *Sula*, *Beloved*, and *Paradise*. At the outset, she emphasised the importance of the informal organisation; the exercise of ethical leadership through the use of power rather than authority. In her view leaders should demonstrate a character of high morality, and allow subordinates evolution of increased ethicality. To Jurkiewicz, ethical leadership in the public sector is much more important than in the private sector simply because of the high standards expected in terms of human rights, independence, freedom and prosperity. In her analysis of the three novels, ethical leadership should be associated with decisiveness, independence, and assertiveness combined with a concern for the common good; the imperative to focus on the future rather than to be concerned with past mistakes; and finally, the importance of questioning current beliefs and not protect the *status quo* from outside influences.

Heres and Lasthuizen (2012:441–466) investigated the differences between ethical leadership in public, hybrid, and private sector organisations. Their literature review pointed to the existence of two main dimensions of ethical leadership: the moral person, and the moral manager. Ethical leadership of the moral person relates to the individual's moral character as well as the moral nature of the individual's own decision-making and behavior. Integrity, trustworthiness, responsibility are the main moral traits of ethical leaders. Ethical leaders make decisions that are consistent, coherent, and constant, and treat followers justly and fairly. The second dimension of ethical leadership relates to four sub-dimensions. *Role modeling* refers to the extent that the leader's behavior and decision-making is visible and salient, and negative and conflicting signals are not sent out. *Reinforcement* concerns the use of formal and informal measures to reward and punish virtuous or malicious behavior. *Communication* refers to the extent that leaders communicate the moral implications of decisions, and have open discussion of individual and organisational values. The last dimension of the moral manager refers to the *empowerment* of followers.

Ethical leaders empower their followers to participate in decision-making and allow them to voice their own concerns and perspectives. The authors preferred a qualitative research design and used semi-structured interviews to collect data. They found significant differences between ethical leadership in public, private, and hybrid institutions such as a greater outward focus of leaders in public and hybrid institutions, and the preference of leaders in the private sector to use more implicit mechanisms to communicate ethics and integrity.

However, the significance of the publication to this author is the extent to which the authors operationalised the phenomenon of ethical leadership. Heres and Lasthuizen did not merely speculate and make presumptions on what the differences of ethical leadership between public, private, and hybrid institutions are. The authors engaged in empirical work to test some of their initial assumptions. In fact, in their conclusion the authors critically note that the ethical leadership measures to date provide too little information on the traits and behaviours that they entail. For example, an item measuring the communication of ethics by ethical leaders could be understood differently by respondents. One respondent could score an ethical leader preferring more explicit communication, while another respondent could score the same person expecting more implicit forms of communication.

## **Sub-Theme: Whistleblowing**

Heumann, Friedes, Cassak, Wright and Joshi (2013:25–51) sought to construct a typology of whistleblowers which would serve to differentiate the goals, motives, and contexts of these individuals. For the purpose of their study, whistleblowers were defined *inter alia* as an insider (employee or ex-employee) engaged in normally legitimate activities (not criminal), who challenges an institution's policy, practice, or action that may have an adverse impact on the public interest. The whistleblower reports the alleged malfeasance to external stakeholders only after it was reported up the chain of command. The act of a whistleblower is beyond passive disobedience in which he/she actively seeks relief.

In their study, the authors analysed and interpreted two sets of quantitative data and nine individual interviews. In their view the quantitative data did not capture the nuances of the act, motives and context of the whistleblower, and they consequently pursued a more qualitative approach to capture the greater depth of insight and understanding of the whistleblower. The authors established a typology of whistleblowers which includes the Altruist, Avenger, Organisation Man, Alarmist, and Bounty Hunter. Although the findings are worth noting, it is rather the methodology of the authors that is of significance to this study. A proper reflection on their research methods and the choice to engage in mixed methods contributed to more truthful, authentic, and valid findings.

## Sub-Theme: Values

The study of values appears to be very prominent in the study of ethics in public administration. In the publication by De Graaf and Van der Wal (2010:623–630) the authors introduced the topic of a symposium that was held at the VU University in Amsterdam, the Netherlands. The symposium was entitled the *First Global Dialogue on Ethical and Effective Governance*. The authors pointed to the main theme of the articles following their introduction: the existence of certain values and the tensions that these values bring about. The sub-title of the conference identified two values that are often at tension with each other: governing with integrity and governing effectively and efficiently. The authors referred to *inter alia* two other publications of importance for this debate. The publication by Anechiarico and Jacobs in 1996 noted a trade-off between corruption control and efficiency, whereas the publication by Bovens, Ten Hart and Van Twist in 2007 distinguished between clusters of values i.e. lawfulness, integrity, democracy, and effectiveness and efficiency (De Graaf & Van der Wal, 2010:623–630). De Graaf and Van der Wal's main thesis is the conflict which exists between values, and the tentative indication that governing well (being effective and efficient) most often prevails over governing good (having integrity).

Feeney and Bozeman (2007:175–190) applied the public values failure model to the 2004–2005 flu vaccine shortage in the United States (US). In this case study, provisions of flu vaccine were provided by two private sector service providers. In 2004, one service provider was suspended by the health authorities severely reducing the supply of the vaccine. Consequently, the demand exceeded the supply of the vaccine which led to shortages as well as exorbitant price increases. Many US citizens would not receive basic healthcare services. As vaccine production was a private affair, the government was powerless to influence the provision and distribution of it. Public values failure occurs when the market and the public sector fail to provide goods and services required to achieve the core values of society. For example, public values failure could occur under the following conditions: when government allows the private provision of a vital public good; where private individuals and groups are able to capture and control public goods and services limiting its distribution to the public; when there are insufficient providers of necessary public goods and services; and where the government applies short term solutions to problems that require long term planning.

The authors are critical of the prominence of economic individualism or market-oriented theories in the study of policy and management. In the recent past, discussions of public interest were labeled as vague, out of date and unscientific, while theories of public interest were regarded as too general and

ambiguous. In the authors' view the public interest should be at the center of policy analysis and discussions.

In Nabatchi's (2011:1–34) paper, she cautions against the possibility of public values failure; similar to market failure in the private sector. In her view, public officials should be responsible for upholding values; especially when they exercise delegated decision-making authority. She recognised the existence of multiple values at play and the complexity of public administration to find the appropriate balance. Although she acknowledged the common perspective of values as an interplay between bureaucratic ethics concerned with values such as efficiency, expertise, loyalty, and hierarchy, and the democratic ethos, which is concerned with values such as social equity, justice, citizenship, and constitutionalism, she regarded this conceptual framework of little practical use to public administrators.

In Nabatchi's paper four value frames were identified i.e. political, legal, organisational, and market public values (*cf.* Graaf & Van der Wal 2010:623–630). Each value frame has specific content values. For example, the political values frame reflects the values of participation, representation, liberty, equality, and responsiveness. The legal value frame contains the content values of substantive rights, the right to procedural due process, and the equity values of fairness and the protection of the individual's constitutional rights that have been violated by administrative action. The organisational value frame is concerned with administrative efficiency and also specialisation and expertise, authority of positions, merit, formalisation, and political neutrality. Finally, the market values frame contains the content values of innovation, productivity, customer service, entrepreneurship, and cost savings and efficiency. In her view, the values of accountability, legitimacy, citizenship and possibly integrity could be regarded as floating values that could be interpreted differently depending on the particular values frame through which administrators adjudicate.

Saarnit (2006:49–63) investigated the case of Estonia; a member of the European Union since 2004 and formerly part of the Soviet Union. It is evident that many similarities could be identified between Estonia that became an independent state in 1991 and the South African state which became a constitutional democracy with general franchise in 1994. Estonia experienced similar problems to what is experienced in South Africa including establishing a culture of transparency and rule of law, changing bureaucratic values, and the implementation gaps between what is promulgated and what is actually delivered. Estonia appears to be subjected to the same imposition of western values; specifically with their new membership of the EU. According to the author, the Estonian public service seems to grapple with conflicting values: adhering to the law, serving the public interest, compliance with the legally enforced will of elected politicians, and concerns for economy, efficiency, and

effectiveness. This conflict and the development of a new public service ethos are important considerations within the context of what Nabatchi terms a public values failure. In this author's view, a limitation of this study was Saarniit's apparent reliance on government reports, newspaper clippings, and some personal interviews.

## **SOUTH AFRICAN SCHOLARSHIP ON PUBLIC SERVICE ETHICS**

For the purpose of reviewing the local scholarship on public service ethics, a total of nine publications were identified and reviewed for the purpose of this publication. The findings are also categorised below in terms of the themes: Integrity, ethical leadership, whistleblowing, and public service values.

### **Sub-Theme: Integrity**

Webb (2012:96–108) proposed that a compliance-based approach be supplemented by a value-based approach in attempts to reduce public service malfeasance. The compliance-based approach *per se* should not be regarded as the panacea for corruption. It could be argued that such an approach not only reduces malfeasance, but creates additional layers of oversight and reduces public service efficiency and effectiveness. In fact, additional structures and policies could create opportunities for corruption. Conversely, the value-based approach seeks to promote the ethical culture within a public institution. This research builds on the findings and recommendations by Kaptein (2008) in his work of measuring and developing the ethical culture of organisations. This author identified the Department of Correctional Services as a case study to determine how the promotion of an ethical culture could enhance the implementation of corruption prevention policies. The author made use of a survey to collect data. The captured data was analysed and subjected to exploratory factor analysis. A total of 11 factors of ethical culture were provided and the correlation between factors was provided with the Pearson's Correlation Coefficient. The findings indicated that the promotion of some factors of ethical culture coincided with reduced levels of malfeasance.

Basheka and Mubangizi (2012:636–637) proposed a corruption prevention method that could not be classified as a compliance-based, nor a value-based approach. Citizen-driven approaches have consequently received comparatively much less publicity. However, the role of active citizenry in opposing public service corruption is a direct result of the recommendations by Stapenhurst and Langseth. The National Integrity System addresses public

service corruption through government processes and civil society participation and comprises eight pillars including public sector anti-corruption strategies, watchdog agencies, public participation, public awareness of the role of civil society, accountability in the judicial processes, the media, the private sector and international cooperation (Stapenhurst & Langseth 1997:311–330). The *Local Government Anti-Corruption Programme* identifies the community as the main role player in implementing this strategy at local government level encouraging the community to engender a culture of intolerance towards unethical conduct. The authors also emphasised the significance of Integrated Development Plans (IDP), and its monitoring aspect as a safeguard against maladministration and corruption. With these statutory interventions, public spaces are created for citizen activism against corruption. Importantly, the authors recommended further research work; specifically empirical work in assessing the impact of citizen actions against local government corruption.

### **Sub-Theme: Ethical Leadership**

The title of Naidoo's (2012:656- 683) publication is perhaps somewhat misleading. The author mainly described the legislative, policy, and institutional framework in combatting public service corruption. In this publication she mainly made use of various secondary sources to describe and evaluate corruption and the various role players active in preventing public service corruption. Although the article title emphasises the importance of ethical leadership in combatting corruption, very little is written about it. Naidoo listed the attributes of ethical leadership being someone who has integrity, and is honest and trustworthy, but the author neglected to operationalise the concept. Although she correctly views the causal relationship between ethical leadership and an ethical climate, she incorrectly assumes that effective leadership would create a more virtuous public service.

Edwards' (2010:93–109) publication of ethical and servant leadership is significantly more informative on what ethical leadership entails. To the author, ethical leadership constitutes the following roles: to place institutional interest above personal interest, to create formal mechanisms to enforce ethical conduct, to establish an ethical culture and to act as role models to establish a positive ethical climate, to promote ethical decision-making, to create living conversations about ethics and values among subordinates, to create mechanisms of dissent, and to create a system of shared values within the institution. Edwards provided a to-do list for ethical leadership which includes various dimensions including bringing about *inter alia* ethical alignment, ethical enforcement, and ethical impetus. Ethical alignment is achieved by promoting ethical decision-making in all day-to-day activities, whereas ethical enforcement

aligning is brought about by enforcing policies, rules, and codes of conduct. Ethical impetus refers to leading ethical initiatives and rewarding ethical behavior. Her take on servant leadership also seems relevant to the discussion on ethical leadership. Servant leaders, in her view, promote moral reasoning and moral actions, and values institutional interests over self-interest. Although the author clearly articulated the attributes of ethical and servant leadership, she did not distinguish between an ethical climate and an ethical culture. Although both the Naidoo and Edwards publications rely only on secondary sources, Edwards points to the need to collect data from multiple public institutions to assess the impact of ethical and servant leadership. Perhaps this statement reflects on the main weakness of our research into public service corruption; relying mainly on secondary sources without testing our assumptions in the field.

### **Sub-Theme: Whistleblowing**

Holtzhausen (2012:84–103) identified 13 variables that influence the act of whistle-blowing. She identified which variables would influence an institution's response to the act of whistleblowing including the whistleblower's credibility, his/her motivation to blow the whistle, the position of the whistleblower in the institution, and the membership of the whistleblower to minority groupings. The whistleblowing process could also be influenced by other variables including organisational characteristics such as organisational culture and climate, the characteristics of the wrongdoing, the status and power relations within institutions, individual characteristics such as low self-esteem and job satisfaction, membership of professional organisations, and levels of moral reasoning. Holtzhausen also identified certain psychological processes underlying ethical behaviour. She cited three important attributes that the whistleblower should possess: sensitivity to observing unethical conduct; perseverance and the strength of character to follow through on his or her ethical conviction; and the relationship of trust between the whistleblower and the institution. Holtzhausen provided an insightful perspective on the variables that impact on whistleblowing. As this publication relies on secondary sources only, the next logical step would be to test these theories within the South African public service.

Mbatha (2005:1–258) investigated the act of whistleblowing and set out to describe the whistleblowing process, to identify those variables that may impact on the likelihood of whistle-blowing, and to suggest strategies to promote whistle-blowing. The student, *inter alia*, reviewed the literature in chapters 2 and 3, and described the statutory and policy framework in chapter 4. In chapter 5 the student described whistleblowing, the characteristics of the whistleblower and the whistleblowing processes.

Despite the student's intention to investigate the following empirical research question: "What are the variables that increase the likelihood that whistle blowing will be effective?" no evidence of surveys or interviews could be found in the bibliography. At the time, the student did caution the reader that it would be too early to engage in empirical work (Mbatha 2005:17). This may be due to the promulgation of the *Protected Disclosures Act 26 of 2001*; shortly before the finalisation of this study.

## Sub-Theme: Values

From the outset, Sebola (2014:295–304) argued for the introduction of an ethical legislative framework that is compatible with the values of the local public in South Africa. In the author's view, the imposition of a western model of ethics is greatly problematic and Africa is 'failing to cope with the demands of the ethics formulated from the perspective of the donors of foreign descendants'. The main legislative framework to prevent malfeasance including the *Executive Member's Ethics Act of 1992*, the *Prevention and Combatting of Corrupt Activities Act of 2004*, and the *Public Service Code of Conduct* is based on international norms with little consideration for the culture of the people of South Africa. Ubuntu – in the author's view – is a cultural practice that is embedded in Africans and could be a major cause of unethical conduct in African government administrations.

Manyaka and Sebola (2013:75–88) hypothesised on the importance of training as a method to combat public service corruption. The authors uncritically cited the existence of a comprehensive legislative and policy framework in existence to combat South African public service malfeasance. To them, public officials should be trained and educated about ethics, and corruption and its consequences. In their view, training should form part of an integrated approach for an effective anti-corruption system. Ethical training should enable public officials to observe high standards of ethical conduct, and inculcate the values, norms and principles of public administration expressed in the *Constitution of the Republic of South Africa*.

What confuses this author is the fact that one of these authors (cf. Sebola 2014:295–304) expressed a serious concern that this same legislative and policy framework is incompatible with the values of the local public and represents an effort to impose a Western ethical framework! Another significant inaccuracy is their reference to 'the great majority of public servants who are constantly embroiled in scandals involving unethical conduct', and 'the overwhelming increase in unethical conduct of most civil servants'. It would serve the authors well to distinguish between poor public management due to capacity constraints and the intentional act of corruption.

In the first edition of *Reflective Public Administration: Ethics* Clapper and Robson (2014) contributed to the discourse on public service ethics. Clapper's

contribution fits in neatly with the proponents of the value-based approach to ethics. Clapper (2014:4–16) emphasised the importance of morality developed from childhood. He emphasised the deliberative aspect of ethics: reflection, communication with others, and the use of reason; similar to the views of the virtue ethicists of Ancient Greece. He also referred to utilitarianism; the greatest happiness to the greatest number of people. Clapper described the attributes of ethics in the twentieth century which was characterised by a traditional and orthodox approach where dissenters were punished, western values dominated, obedience was required, the existence of heterogeneity was denied, and externally imposed rules had to be followed; all of which are attributes of modernism and pre-modernism. In his view, this approach to ethics has become out-dated and should be replaced by a post-modern approach to ethical conduct which requires an appreciation of diversity, protection of pluralism, encouragement of differences, and a suspicion of any form of coerced convention.

Although a code of conduct has both proponents and opponents, Clapper emphasised the importance of codes of conduct with a punitive aspect. A code of conduct would both restrict individuals in their pursuit of self-interest and restrict discretion and innovation. For Clapper a code of conduct ensures congruence between the personal morality of the official and the public service interest. A code of ethics should steer a public official's morality into the virtuous and efficient rendering of public goods and services.

Whereas Clapper proposed a twenty first century ethic which emphasises personal morality, Robson suggests quite the opposite. In Robson's (2014:17–32) view, the public official '*should respect the authority inherent in a properly determined majority view*'. This majority view should be captured in the constitution and other laws of the land. In this context he identifies various sources of ethics for the South African public service e.g. the *Constitution of the Republic of South Africa*, 1996; *Bill of Rights*; and the Code of Conduct contained in Chapter 2 of the *Public Service Regulations*, 2001. Perhaps the author should also have considered other relevant statutes such as the *Public Service Proclamation 103 of 1994*; the *Public Finance Management Act 1 of 1999*, and the *Local Government: Municipal Finance Management Act 56 of 2003*.

## **CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

From this review of scholarship, some general observations could be made. International scholarship on public service ethics appears to focus on an integrity approach; rather than what could be termed a compliance-based approach. In Pope's publication entitled '*The First Third Phase in the Fight Against Corruption*' he concluded that the more softer issues such as public service ethics and

integrity have become significant. In his earlier work he emphasised the importance of strong institutions to fight corruption. Conversely, South African publications appear to maintain a greater focus on the compliance-based approach as many authors prefer to emphasise the fairly recent establishment of South Africa's statutory and policy framework.

Perhaps Sebola's publication represents the symptoms of what local practitioners and scholars in public service ethics are constantly engaged with; a search for consensus on the most ideal values for the South African public service. South Africa's recent political transition coincided with a change in political and bureaucratic values; from a focus on efficiency and effectiveness to the prominence of what the public interest entails. In this uncertain context, scholars may inadvertently fall back on what the formal and institutionalised value framework may be. The reviewed works by Nabatchi, Feeney and Bozeman, and De Graaf and Van der Wal suggest that societies often struggle with conflicting values. Research on the nature and content public of service values should be on the agenda for South African scholars in public service ethics.

A second and probably more important observation is that the local scholarly work on public service ethics is mostly conceptual and theoretical in nature. Most studies reviewed appear to be desktop studies, and not informed by empirical work. International scholars appear to be quite comfortable with testing hypotheses with empirical work. Most international authored publications capture the findings after some form of quantitative or qualitative empirical work was completed. These findings suggest a need for local scholars to include empirical work in their research design efforts. Such empirical work would entail *inter alia* reflecting on the most appropriate research design, operationalising the ethics concepts used by scholars, collecting data with appropriate measurement instruments, and confirming or rejecting untested assumptions on public service ethics.

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