



The Role of Ethical Behavior and Public Value Creation in the Local Government System in South Africa

Andrew Enaifoghe

PhD, Department of Public Administration, University of Zululand, South Africa

E-mail: EnaifogheA@unizulu.ac.za

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Abstract

South Africa after 1994 with the newly elected government established a new political framework and governance of the public sector. The installation or appointments of local government officials came before the foundation of local government, with greater aspirations from the nation to appropriately rectify historical inequalities and offer services to people in an ethically and democratic way. The consequence of the ethical behaviour of municipal authorities on decision making is thought to have a significant influence on government power and direct access to the decision-making process. This study examines the possibility for developing ethically inclusive behaviour in local government by considering work culture as one of the drivers and characteristics of employees in local government. It highlights that the promotion of a professional service ethos throughout South African local government manifests itself as appropriate behaviour promoted through laws and prescriptions, a code of conduct, and culture. The article's findings and discussions are valuable in addressing the perceived unethical behaviour in the South African local government and contribute to the development of better governance and public sector ethics.

Keywords: *Ethical Behaviour; Leadership; Governance; Local Government; Politics*

Introduction

South Africa is a nation emerging from a tumultuous history that has left a legacy of impediments in terms of education, opportunities, resentments, equality, and attitudes. Corruption is acknowledged as a serious impediment to good administration in the public sector, as it is in many communities. The South African government has mandated the public sector to prioritise anti-corruption efforts as part of its anti-corruption systems. Nonetheless, the politicisation of local bureaucracy was unavoidable as the ruling party wanted to ensure that municipality executive leadership embraced the same political viewpoint and goal to support local government development. To ensure effective public service delivery, ethical leadership is a critical component of governance. Strong leadership is always perceived as effective when

the persons chosen to leadership positions are competent to achieve organisational goals.¹

A scholar argues that leadership is a moral link between individuals based on trust, accountability, commitment, and a shared vision of public goods, rather than an individual or a position². Ethics is concerned with how one distinguishes between what is right and bad, or what is good and evil, and this is something that leaders should always examine when leading people.³ "Good ethics in leadership improve service delivery".⁴ According to research conducted by the Ethics-Research-Centre, ethics in leadership is a global concern, top officials were found not performing as they believe, when it comes to upholding both their own and the institution's dedication to integrity.⁵ Ethical behaviour is not just crucial in democratically appointed public officials, but it is also a critical aspect in good public service delivery.⁶ If one considers the common proverb underlined in official literature, 'if the local government fails, South Arica fails,' the mounting service delivery challenges are cause for alarm.

Given that the efforts for a democratic South Africa were waged at the grassroots level, this must imply an improvement in the quality of life for local populations.⁷ As a result, good political management is essential for improved municipal service delivery and, ultimately, good local governance. This article reviews the trends and historical developments of the South African local government system for public value creation. The purpose of this research is to determine how public authorities in South Africa can foster an ethical work environment at the local level. The article used a qualitative approach to critically review and analyse literature from different secondary sources to suggest pathways for creating an inclusive ethical environment based on legislative processes, statutory guidelines and standards of practices (codes of conducts), with the guiding values for democratic accountability in leadership.

Research Methodology

The research is qualitative in nature, given the flexibility, openness, and responsiveness to the context that characterises qualitative research, the phases of data collection and analysis are not as distinct and sequential as they are in quantitative research.^{8,9} As Fossey puts it, "sampling, data collection, analysis, and interpretation are tied to each other in a cyclical (iterative) manner, rather than sequentially".¹⁰ As suggested by Hak, the researcher made informed decisions on the approach to be used, how it will be implemented, and to which and how many units it will be applied.¹¹ The research adopted a qualitative research approach, as the study primarily collected data through an extension of review of the literature available in different databases and to add credence to the secondary sources, the data collected were analysed based on content. Adopting content analysis, the criteria for selecting documents, reflect the issues on which the researcher is seeking evidence.¹²

¹ Schoeman *Ethical leadership in the public sector* 2012: 2

² Ciulla *Ethics, the heart of leadership*. 2014: 3

³ Dorasamy, *The impact of the global crisis on ethical leadership*. 2010: 057

⁴ Ndlovu, Maramura & Enaifoghe, *Moral and Ethical Leadership Challenges...*2020: 22

⁵ Ethics-Research-Centre (2017: 5),

⁶ Mbandlwa, Dorasamy & Fagbadebo, *Ethical Leadership...*2020:

⁷ Naidoo, *Ethical Leadership Principles in South African Public Administration*. 2012: 5

⁸ Hak, *Waarnemingsmethoden in kwalitatief onderzoek*. 2007: 14

⁹ Russell & Gregory, *Evaluation of qualitative research studies*. 2003. 37

¹⁰ Fossey et al., *Understanding and evaluating qualitative research*. 2002: 717

¹¹ Hak, *Waarnemingsmethoden in kwalitatief onderzoek*. 2007: 14

¹² Enaifoghe, *Deliberative Politics on African Political Processes*. 2019: 12

Literature Consideration

This section attempt to contextualise the historical background to the South African local government system, for public value creation through ethics in decision-making processes. Governments all over the world are obligated to encourage and promote the culture of ethics in decision-making while carrying out their tasks and functions in organisations, as reflected by a well-defined value system. Along with the New Public Management (NPM), public institutions and administrative commencements have been altered, and ethical concern is recognised as the primary indicator in the global discourse on governance transformations¹³. The study's ethical principles attempt to reduce and correct the ongoing corruption and maladministration in the South African public service. Corruption and immoral behaviour can erode democracy, harm economies, stymie public-sector reforms and development. The government is expected by society to provide methods for fostering an ethical culture that will restore public trust in government¹⁴.

Today's public managers face more challenging ethical quandaries, as they must answer to media and societal demands while developing a service-oriented local government¹⁵. The South African Constitution requires public authorities to act ethically and respectably and to refrain from abusing public trust¹⁶. Similarly, a key issue in municipal government focuses around the moral quandary in the choices and value judgement of officials and politicians while carrying out their jobs. Government agencies and institutions respond to changes brought about by social and political upheaval¹⁷. The fragility of the government agencies and institutions can sometimes put the tolerance of prescriptive rules and ideals in the larger society to the test. The foundational principles of democracy contained in the Constitution (Act 104, 1996) provide ethical grounds for the betterment and protection of citizens rights including; “the right to information, freedom of expression, freedom of the media, freedom of movement, and freedom of association”¹⁸.

Scholars argued that some of the numerous issues affecting local administration in South Africa are related to violations of fundamental rights as a result of unethical behaviour by political and public officials¹⁹. It is argued, therefore, for any failure to identify a moral component in the eyes of the public can be manifested as an abuse of public trust, poor service delivery, a lack of commitment, a lack of response, and accountability²⁰. This argument implies that when performing public obligations, municipal officials and political office holders have a responsibility to contribute to the establishment of an ethical culture and preserve the rule of law. When local government employees reportedly failed to execute their obligations and abused the public trust, the current municipal service protests are portrayed as a source of conflict.

Ethics can be viewed theoretically and practically in organisational and individual contexts. The issue of municipalities in fully realising the importance of building an ethical culture might be related to an economic problem, in which the basic demands of communities do not meet the resources that are available to demand the delivery of municipal services. Some municipalities have been grappling with transformations since before the dawn of democracy in 1994, despite having limited constitutional power and financial resources to execute and function ethically. They mostly rely on national and provincial governments for financial assistance. Furthermore, local governments work in a volatile and uncertain

¹³ Ndlovu *et al.*, 2020

¹⁴ Maroun, Reportable *irregularities and audit quality*. 2015: 22

¹⁵ Joensuu and Niiranen, *Political leaders and public administrators*. 2016: 3

¹⁶ Republic of South Africa. *Local Government: Municipal Systems Act 32 of 2000*

¹⁷ Kim and Yoon, *An Innovation-Driven Culture in Local Government*: 2015: 148

¹⁸ Republic of South Africa, *the Constitution (Act 104, 1996)*.

¹⁹ Ndlovu *et al.*, 2020: 24; Maroun, 2015.; Nguyen, *et al.* 2014.

²⁰ Ndlovu *et al.*, 2020; Pandey *et al.*, *Transformational leadership*. 2016. 205

political context, making them liable to engaging in unethical activities when carrying out their tasks. Municipalities, on the other hand, have a constitutional responsibility to adopt by-laws and provide services within their authority, as well as to provide a platform for creating democratic spaces and engaging in development activities.

The South African local government system continues to carry colossal historical burdens.²¹ Its history tells of a distorted local government system that failed to address the needs of the black majority and was met by a lot of resistance and protests.²² Before 1994, the local government system was characterised by racial segregation with black local authorities exhibiting poor administration and management standards.²³ Skewed allocation of resources favoured white local authorities in many ways. For example, in conjunction with the then Department of Native Affairs, white local authorities made all policy-related decisions on behalf of black local authorities²⁴.

Critical Breakdown of South African Public Development Management

South Africans come from several cultures and racial groupings that exist in the country. It has been difficult for South Africa and other countries to agree on what constitutes good governance. Certain aspects of good governance are subject to different standards. Over 400 years, these South African cultures formed themselves and practised basic subsistence farming with everyone on their property. Conflicts between cultural groups are limited to specific areas or borders as a result of changes to other territories as groups of people known as "Voortrekkers." With the finding of gold and diamonds, there was an immediate common interest in particular geographical areas, as well as a larger demand for formal government raises. The British occupation was followed by the creation of the Union of South Africa in 1910. The dictatorship of Dr. Malan's National Party, which was the beginning of Apartheid, began in 1948. South Africa became a republic in 1961, marking the end of British imperialism. South Africa has resigned from the Commonwealth of Nations (Van Schoor, 2004:12-18).

i. The Role of the State in Governance

To understand the role of the state, the following must build, maintain, refine, and restructure an enabling framework for private corporations and individual responsibility to redefine the role of the state. Strong institutions of governance and the rule of law. As well as have credible and independent judicial institutions; effective legal frameworks for economic activity; an open and competitive economic environment; and equitable taxation are characteristics of intelligent and democratic states. To create information access; pricing stability and budgetary responsibility; and encouragement of technical and infrastructure development (Rodinelli & Shabbir Cheeman, 2003:22-25).

Improving the efficiency, accountability, and responsiveness of government Controlling corruption and creating ethical standards; improving public administration responsiveness; strengthening judicial institutions; and decentralizing governance must all be achieved (Rodinelli & Shabbir Cheeman, 2003:46-49). The United Nations Development Program (UNDP) identifies five areas where good governance can be achieved. The first are governing institutions, followed by civil society organizations, decentralisation and support for local government, exceptional situations governance, and public and private sector management (Governance for Sustainable Human Development, 2005).

²¹ Parnell *Democratising Local Government* 1.

²² Binza 2005 *JCH* 77.

²³ De Visser *Developmental Local Government* 58-59.

²⁴ South African History Online 2019 *Apartheid Legislation 1850s-1970s*. 2.

A Theoretical Account of Public Value Creation

The development of Public Value for Moore (1995, p. 29) (1995, p. 29) The parallelism between the public and private sectors has its limits. Public managers are evaluated not just on the goods and services produced, but also on their ability to demonstrate that the results acquired are worth the expense foregone in attaining the desired results. Furthermore, public assets differ from private property in that they are owned by everyone. Nonetheless, Moore (1995, p. 18) argued in what he termed as a "modest challenge to the prevalent theory" that public officials should engage in some "entrepreneurial" decision-making since that is how value is developed. Furthermore, he argued that public organizations, in general, should adopt this operational framework to be more valuable to citizens, and that citizens' recognition of Public Value Creation is an important component of the process - in effect, it forms an affirmation of a virtuous cycle of public sector activity.

Moore (1995, p. 24) emphasized that public managers work in situations that are distinguished by three characteristics: First, managers' actions are influenced by the organizational context in which they find themselves. Second, when making decisions, public authorities must listen to and respond to a variety of stakeholders - politicians, residents, industry organizations, and so on. Third, despite these limits, it is the manager's responsibility to seek out chances for value creation within this environment. In this series of relationships, a scholar described it as 'the Strategic Triangle' which the basic elements of the model include;

[i] the operational capabilities (the organization itself) and [ii] the authorising environment (the complex political realm, including elected politicians, higher tiers of government, community groups, etc. all of which have a range of interests). Both of these interact with [iii] the day-to-day task environment of public managers, where managers are in a position to create Public Value (Moore, 1995: 34).

The relationships built in the strategic triangle can also be referred to as the Public Value chain. The Public Value chain is a map of organisational production, including inputs, activities or projects, partners, outputs, client satisfaction, and outcomes. By measuring Public Value Creation at different points in the process, blockages, ineffective systems or unproductive steps can be identified and Public Value linked with organizational improvement. This study outlined the ways for developing an ethical culture to extend the opportunities for practising good governance and improving service delivery in local government. The study's premise is that when the ethical climate in local government strengthens, workers' values and quality of performance will be substantially encouraged.

The Conceptualisation of Ethics in Leadership

The term ethics is derived from the Greek phrase *ethos*, which implies the distinctive spirit of a culture, inner tendency, or 'morality' (Oxford Dictionary, 2002: 397). Ethics is a moral theory based on a specific school of thinking. The application of moral ideals to people's behavior is what ethics is all about. This research situates disputes about public service ethics within the framework of public service practice. Aristotle defined ethics as a moral virtue that could be fostered in persons through practice and instruction (Grint, 2007:238). Aristotle admits nature's influence in the development of some traits in man, which are more of a way of life based on a set of norms and principles.

Similarly, this language of virtue encourages public officials to be motivated by duty and moral norms by taking into consideration the concepts of responsibility, responsiveness, and devotion to public service tasks. The absurdity of depending exclusively on force to create virtue becomes clearer when one considers that a public person has to ensure that his acts look ethical. Machiavelli (1469-1527) became the most quoted and understood policy analyst, developing a set of ideas for his prince that became axioms of those who achieve and keep power. Machiavelli expresses pessimism about those in positions

of authority, whether they are princes or public administrators. He justified public officials' lying by stating that they lie to maintain and protect the public trust and maintain societal order.

Machiavelli's philosophy of lying was considered ethical since the deception was done for the sake of the state. It was also a monument to Pluto's noble lie from Book 3 of the Republic, in which he argues that the guardians of society may present untruths in order to maintain social order (Shafritz, 2011: 173). Aside from the language of falsehood, honor comes before ethics since the absence of honor cannot be considered ethical. To those who defend it, honor has a contextual value; it is always impacted by their current organizational and political environment. Public officials are respectable when they act patriarchally as patrons and uphold authority as a result of the office they hold, such as Council, Board, and Commission of Inquiry. Similarly, it is the obligation of public authorities to carry out their duties not just with dignity but also with perceived honor. Administrative officials are unavoidably confronted with ethical dilemmas since they have extensive administrative discretion, and the criteria for their ethical decisions should be taken from the essential principles of the society, as stated by the constitution.

Working inside an organization puts specific obligations and loyalties on local authorities, such as exercising authority while doing their tasks. They must uphold consistent moral norms that are sensitive to their political context and as prescribed by their local office. South Africa's sociopolitical ethical evolution has experienced substantial alteration. There is currently no universal code of ethics for local government, with the exception of a municipal handbook and appropriate schedules to advise councilors and municipal officials.

It may be concluded that the discourses of virtue, morality, and code of conduct can be conceived as a code of ethics. These discourses aid in the elucidation of what is good and wrong. The word ethical culture, on the other hand, is related with recurring trends to create culture in an organization or agency. In a strong ethical culture, ethical principles and behaviour are vital, as are employee activities, business rules and processes, choices regarding incentives, who gets penalized, and assessments. Ethical ideals are not encouraged in a "weak" ethical culture, and "getting the job done" is considerably more essential than getting the task done properly. Essentially, the strength of a local government's ethical culture is the amount to which the institution prioritizes ethics.

Understanding the Ethical Dilemmas in the South African Local Government

Understanding the ethical dilemmas in local government, this study looks at it from different perspectives such as corruption, mal-administration and abuse of trust. On the issues of, corruption, misconduct and mal-administration in the South African public service have long been a source of disagreement, with some researchers in the fields of local government and public management seeing corruption as one of the key challenges impeding the advancement of good governance (Kanyane, 2005; Sindane, 2007; Naidoo, 2012). It has been observed that in the absence of an ethical culture, the likelihood of corruption and maladministration is considerable. Local politicians face a wide range of ethical challenges and dilemmas. As a response to the rising corruption in South African local government, the Department of Provincial and Local Government (DPLG) is now charged with the monitoring and facilitation of the Anti-corruption strategy.

Abuse of public trust, maladministration, and corruption are among the most common challenges in South African municipal government. Lying and other types of deceit, misuse of authority by officials and councilors, fraud and harassment of staff employees and clients/public are all examples of public trust abuse. The administrators are constantly enticed by presents from their constituents and the general public. Their personalities and immoral acts are constantly portrayed negatively by the media and society when they take gifts and fail to reveal them to their offices, and when they lie. During elections, municipal politicians frequently lie and misrepresent their constituents' views on policy alternatives aimed

at fixing social problems.

Society supports falsehoods while they are unaware because they trust their officials, but they do not appreciate lies and the lying individual, leading to resentment and irritation. Maladministration and corruption depict another another set of ethical quandaries. Corruption, according to Ababio and Doorgapersad (2010, 412), represents any activity or behavior in connection to those entrusted with responsibilities in public that breaches their obligations as public officials on earning undue gratification of any form from others. Scandals and bribes in government indicate corruption. When a public official abuses his or her position for personal benefit, it endangers democracy and the rule of law. Corruption also damages economic rights, as public officials might take gifts and money in exchange for performing their duties.

This is mirrored in supply-chain management, when local government employees fail to comply with supply-chain management processes and procurement regulations during the tender process and during procurement (AGSA, 2011). As a result, the other contenders have no claim to a shortened fair and unbiased bidding procedure. Bribery supplemented the wages of people in positions of power in the bidding system and supply-chain management. According to Gildenhys (1991:42), infringement of the law is an outstanding illustration of maladministration and might result from the following: 1. failure to perform a legal responsibility; 2. actions that exceed the authority granted by law or regulations; 3 The use of delegated authority (power) for a purpose for which it was not intended, and 4. Actions that do not adhere to a legal procedure geared at avoiding arbitrary or inappropriate judgments in the exercise of legal authorities. However, maladministration should be investigated not just by looking at the nature of the individual who is acting unethically, but also by questioning the law's efficacy.

Creating Public Value through an Ethical Culture in South African Local Government

ii. Legislative Mechanisms

The South African government enacted the Protected Revelation Act (26 of 2000) to promote the disclosure of information regarding misconduct in public service and to offer workers and individuals who whistle-blow about wrongdoing with protection from retribution. Whistleblowing is defined as the exposure of a legal infraction, mismanagement, egregious waste of finances, abuse of power, or a threat to public health or safety, whether made inside or outside the chain of command. According to Holtzhausen (2007:131), various persons have varied reasons for blowing the whistle, but what they all have in common is a knowledge that it would be ethically wrong not to report apparent injustice.

The media has reported a number of scandals involving bribes, the misuse of public funds during elections, the illegal solicitation of information by recording e-mail messaging and cell-phone conversations, the misuse of government vehicles by local office and service, the illegal awarding of tenders by local officials, and the misuse of public funds to facilitate service delivery. According to Uys (2008), whistleblowers frequently suffer a high price for disclosing what they consider to be organizational wrongdoing. Once the whistle is blown, either through internal channels or investigative journalism, government investigating units and prosecuting organizations frequently respond to initiate the Rule of Law process.

ii. Statutory Guidelines and Conduct Codes

Instilling an ethical culture necessitates a wider delegation of duty and discretion on the part of public servants, budgetary pressures and new forms of delivery. There is no common code of ethics for local government, but the Municipal Systems Act (32 of 2000) and the municipal handbook give essential schedules to advise councilors and municipal officials. The South African Constitution (1996) also

provides as a framework for municipal authorities to follow in order to respect the Bill of Rights, Cooperation Principles, and Inter-Governmental Relations.

Public officials are supposed to grasp and know the fundamental ideas and standards that they are expected to implement at work. There is a need for a clear separation between their employment and the limitations of acceptable behavior. These concepts should be discussed, presented in meetings and workshops, and periodically updated. Section 195 of the Republic of South Africa's Constitution of 1996 states that governmental administration shall be guided by democratic ideas and principles such as:

The promotion of a high standard of professional ethics; The promotion of efficient, economic, and effective use of resources; That transparency must be fostered by providing the public with timely, accessible and accurate information; and That public administrations must be accountable.

Tender Boards were formed by the Public Finance Management Act, 1999 (Act 1 of 1999) (PFMA) to assist in monitoring the actions of supply chain management departments. The medium-term expenditure framework (MTEF) also requires national government agencies to budget in accordance with strategic objectives. Local officials are also urged to avoid from accepting gifts and bribes in this respect. Ethical counsel should also be offered at the local level through mentorship programmes, in which top officials train their subordinates and other coworkers through various processes and procedures.

Similarly, good governance necessitates the development of ethical codes as part of corporate governance frameworks. Local government personnel are supposed to follow the Code of Conduct for Municipal Employees, whereas municipal councilors are expected to follow the Code of Conduct for Municipal Councilors as provided by the Systems Act. The Code of Conduct for Municipal Employees (Annexure A of the Systems Act) is divided into the following sections:

The general conduct, commitment, serving the public interest, personal gain, disclosure of benefits, unauthorized disclosure of information, undue influence, rewards, gifts and favours, council property, payment of arrears, participation in elections, sexual harassment, reporting duty of staff members, and breaches of code.

In a nutshell, the Public Finance Management Act, 1999 (Act 1 of 1999) introduced Tender Boards to help monitor the activities of supply chain management departments. Good governance implies that organizations should develop codes of ethics as part of their corporate governance frameworks. Local government employees are expected to abide by the Code of Conduct for Municipal employees.

iii. The Guiding Ethics for Principled Behavior

The democratic ideals granted by the Constitution are the source of the foundations of values in South Africa (1996). Accountability, impartiality, development orientation, representation and participation, fairness, public accountability, effectiveness and efficiency, and professional ethics are some of the basic values and principles governing public institutions, according to Section 195 of the Constitution (1996). The establishment of democratic ideals meant that municipal authorities and political appointees had a greater obligation to defend democratic norms in a responsible and responsive way. When serving the people, local government officials are required to subscribe to democratic ideals; the rewards may be seen later in the quality goods and services provided to communities.

ii. Workplace Ethical Awareness and Training

There is a need to raise ethical consciousness in the workplace, where local officials can organize ethical awareness campaigns that can be executed through training and development programs. Senior managers must benchmark for performance indicators in order to obtain precision and efficiency later on. A voluntary ethical survey may be carried out efficiently by polling all workers at various levels. Following data collection, results should be communicated with participants. Ethics training at all levels of the workforce is required to guarantee that everyone who shares the same values is aware and equipped to deal with ethical quandaries.

Training design is crucial in addressing the demands of different levels of employees and unique duties of their jobs without deviating from their organization's goal and vision. Executive management support is required for successful ethics training. Training programs that are constantly monitored and evaluated might produce greater results.

An organizational climate of ethics may also be formed by providing sufficient incentives for ethical action, such as acceptable working conditions and effective performance evaluation.

Formal Mechanisms

In terms of legal processes, Section 188 (1) of the South African Constitution (1996) specifies the Auditor General's (AD) functions as auditing and reporting on the accounts, financial statements, and financial planning of the country. According to Cloete and Thornhill (2012, 46), the AD office performs control tasks in the public sector by auditing and reporting on the financial operations of numerous entities in all areas of government. As a result, ethics can be implanted as a preventative strategy as well as to correct errors or corruption indicated by the AD. To get clean audit reports, the AD office urges municipalities in South Africa to comply with the Public Financial Management Act (2001), Treasury Guidelines, and Audit Standards.

Municipalities are now grappling with transformation by responding to audit results. In the 2010-2011 fiscal year, only 3% of South African towns had a clean audit (AD report, 2010-2011). Consequently, the Standing Body on Public Accounts (SCOPA) is regarded as Parliament's most powerful committee since it evaluates the AG's yearly reports on the financial issues of public organizations, including local government. The SCOPA is responsible for investigating whether state monies are used properly and are legally allotted on the budget. As a result, SCOPA plays an important role in ensuring accountability and openness in state departments. The South African Constitution (1996) specifies the functions of the Office of the Public Protector (OPP), often known as the Ombudsman: to examine allegations of corruption and inappropriate behaviour by public employees in all levels of government, that is accused or suspected of being inappropriate or of causing impropriety or bias, and advise the President on the topic. It is the President's responsibility to determine how to proceed.

However, the success of the OPP in rooting out corruption is dependent on its skills (resources) and ability to be available and function, as well as the cooperation of governmental departments and the president. So far, the current OPP has made headway in probing corruption cases involving accused department and public officials, including abuse of public trust, bribery, unlawful tender awarding by local authorities, unethical behavior, and mal-administration in the public sector. The legislation also requires law enforcement and investigative authorities to investigate and prosecute public officials who are implicated in criminal activity, fraud and corruption.

The Public Service Commission, South African Revenue Services, South African Police, National Prosecution Authority (NPA), Special Investigation Unit, National Intelligence Agency, and the Anti-

Corruption Coordinating Committee are among these institutions. The constitution empowers the President of South Africa to select these groups and determine whether or not to act on their advise.

The Implications for Service Delivery

Batho Pele principles (taken from Public Service Act 147 of 1999) express the underlying ideals of public service and the larger community, as well as how local authorities should offer services to the communities in a responsible and accountable way. The moral behavior of municipal authorities and staff has a direct impact on their position and job as municipal officials and councilors in the community they serve. Their understanding and application of ethics leads to improved resource allocation decisions for their towns.

In combination with public administration concepts and values such as accountability, openness, responsiveness, value for money, and responsibility, ethics and the Batho Pele Principles are critical for providing better services to communities. Despite procedures in place to prevent and combat corruption in the South African public sector, there are pockets of wrongdoing in South African local government. There is a need for trustworthy local government leadership that can function as stewards of ethical behavior in order to root out corruption and uphold good governance ideals while being entrusted with state resources.

The paper emphasized the vital need for ethical leadership to combat corruption and promote good government in South Africa. It is obvious that ethical leadership is required for the effective establishment of an ethical culture and the promotion of good governance. However, various components of unethical behavior, such as political corruption, non-compliance with legislation and code of conduct, corruption, maladministration, and others, can impede the elements of good governance.

Closing Remarks

This article advocates for an ethical culture and environment in South African municipal government, which may be fostered through a code of ethics, legislative processes, and institutional organizations. A good ethical culture might concentrate on the behaviors of local leaders that result in the right thing being done for the right reasons. Councilors and public officials can use ethical conduct and ethical codes to assess their activities against anticipated norms, with acceptable explanation for their discretion and moral autonomy in decision-making. Repeatedly, ethical behaviors are instilled in individuals and engrained in organizations. Ethical culture may lead to cost savings in supply chain and contracting or procurement where authorities find it difficult to apply justice, accountability, and reasonableness in order to create efficiency in their businesses.

The successful eradication of corruption and promotion of good governance is dependent on public officials' understanding and training, ethical leadership, and policies and processes meant to assure compliance with particular laws and regulations, as well as fundamental internal control. To comply with the appropriate rules and procedures, all workers, councillors, and stakeholders are required to be ethically conscious. A major risk in this area is a lack of information and awareness; so, top management must plan for ongoing training and effective awareness campaigns regarding current policies and procedures for ethical codes.

To enhance organizational integrity, assessments and evaluations of systems, performance awards, policies, and procedures must be undertaken in combination with financial and human resource systems. Any violation or noncompliance with these processes by employees might have a major influence on the progress toward building an ethical culture; so, each municipality should design a

rectification plan as well as fines or disciplinary proceedings to handle this correction plan. Local government and public agency officials must shift their mindsets and recognize the value of administrative ethics. Through a monitoring and mentorship program, effective administrative processes may be envisioned.

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