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The utilisation of normative ethics theories as catalysts for consequence management in municipal governance in South Africa

Sithenkosi Lungisa *, Ogochukwu Iruoma Nzewi

Department of Public Administration, Faculty of Management and Commerce, University of Fort Hare, Bisho, South Africa

Abstract

This study explores the utilisation of ethics for consequence management in the South African local government. This is pursued with the intent of helping municipalities to construct and develop efficient, well-functioning, and well-governed public service with the aim of maximising its development mandate and the well-being of the people. Using the desktop research approaches, this study applied discourse analyses with the aim of deconstructing literature in a bid to produce a new interpretation. This article explores the three competing Normative Ethics theories (Deontological Ethics; Virtue Ethics; and Teleological Ethics) as the basis for analysis to contextualise, conceptualise, and understand consequence management in the context of municipal governance. The key tenets of the theories have been utilised to achieve consequence management with a specific focus on results or output and the presentation of clearly defined goals for employees. The study highlights the importance of inculcating ethical culture in local government with the intent of helping municipalities to achieve their constitutional mandate of improving the well-being of the citizens through the efficient and effective provision of basic services. As a result, this study becomes a cornerstone and focal point for more research on consequence management in both the discipline of Public Administration and municipal governance.

Keywords: Consequence Management; Deontological; Virtue; Teleological; Ethics

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* Corresponding author. *E-mail address:* slungisa@ufh.ac.za

1. Introduction

Consequence management (CM) remains a conceptually and practically ambiguous subject in the South African public sector context because it has received limited attention as a standalone project and phenomenon, especially in the sphere of local government. However, in the South African municipal governance parlance, consequence management seems to be an evolving practice. For now, much of the debate and use of the term is confined to the ethical and governance aspects of government. Many of the examples of the use of the term particularly tend to focus on the area of financial management. This is because while it may be seen as a management strategy to deal with intended and unintended results of policy and administrative processes, situating consequence management within the ethics and good governance discourse still needs a lot of work.

In the South African context, the first use of consequence management can be traced to the Auditor General of South Africa (AGSA), who, as early as 2013, reflected on its importance (Du Plessis, 2016). Thus, the concept is preoccupied with strengthening and improving the lack of accountability in the AGSA recommendations and statutory instruments that help municipalities in delivering effective and efficient services to citizens (Godihno and Hermanus, 2018; Fazekas and Tóth, 2016). This article advances the idea that the tenets of normative ethics theories can be utilised in the municipal context to strengthen consequence management and quell persistent unethical behaviours such as patronage, bribery, irregularities in supply chain management and embezzlement of funds. In this regard, the principles of Deontological Ethics, Teleological Ethics and Virtue Ethics are discussed in the context of improving consequence management in the South African local government domain. To this end, this article seeks to discuss and explore the main principles of normative ethics theories in line with the concept of consequence management and to analyse the extent to which the utilisation of normative ethics theories has contributed to effective consequence management in the South African municipal context. More so, the research is germane in the local government because it demonstrates the extent to which the three approaches can be used in unison to achieve consequence management in the municipal context.

2. Literature review

This section seeks to delve into the principles and tenets of Normative Ethics Theories and explore how these have been applied in the public sector context. It is imperative to note that work-related ethics and norms studies belong in the discipline of moral philosophy (Butts and Rich, 2019, p. 4). Philosophy is a discipline that examines acceptable human actions and modes of becoming. Optimal conduct, according to Aristotle, is characterised as behaviours that contribute to the ultimate objective of happiness, which is defined as an elevated degree of satisfaction or well-being. On the contrary, Immanuel Kant assumed that ethical conduct was in compliance with one's obligations. More so, the concept of well-being in Kantism implied being able to practice self-determination, not being used as merely a means, getting treated with respect and dignity, or being able to reason (Beauchamp and Childress, 2009).

The fundamental values, actions, or modes of becoming that originate from values are known as morality. Through a systematic ethical review, a person's ethics are judged to be either right or wrong (Butts and Rich, 2019, p. 4). Irrationality seems to be the polar opposite of moral values; it happens when an individual's acts violate established social, theological, historical, or professional moral principles (Brookfield, 2005). Deceit, theft, abuse, murder and sexually aggressive conduct are examples of unethical acts. Extant literature has

shown that the disciplined method of interpreting, assessing and separating questions of good and bad, positive and negative, noble and despicable as they contribute to the well-being of, and interactions amongst, sensitive beings can be viewed as the philosophical study of ethics (Bohman, 2005; Beauchamp and Childress, 2009; Butts and Rich, 2019). Structured philosophies, frameworks, and rules of ethics, such as those established for sects and religions, are used to make ethical decisions (Hoover and Pepper, 2014). Morality is perceived as an ongoing mechanism instead of a fixed state. Even though individuals presume that morality is completely arbitrary, they should be prepared to defend their actions using logically rational arguments whenever they apply ethics (Butts and Rich, 2019).

As a subset of philosophy, normative ethics lays an appropriate theoretical foundation for the article as it provides a basis for moral principles, ideals and norms that must underpin the framework. The causes of why or reason for actions help us understand the values or motives that influence ethical behaviour. Therefore, moral ethics justify whether such judgments or acts are correct (Hoover and Pepper, 2014). As per their focal points, suggested normative ethics frameworks are categorised into three groups, namely Deontology ethics, Teleological ethics and Virtue ethics.

2.1. Deontology ethics

Theories of deontology emphasise the existence of basic ethical rules which must be observed regardless of the result. Immanuel Kant is credited with inventing deontology (Christie, 2008). In this context, individual laws are the subject of deontological ethics (Hoover and Pepper, 2014, p. 607). According to Kant, a person has an obligation to act willingly only in ways compatible with the voluntary acts of any other individual, and these acts must become standard (Gotsis and Kortezi, 2010). The deontological approach also emphasises the importance of the reasons behind an action in relation to the result (Micewski and Troy, 2007). Kant made a distinction between morals and science, arguing that physics defines the rules of nature through which each physical thing works, while ethics defines the rules of morals through which each individual should behave (Christie et al., 2008, p. 55). Only acts driven by a sense of obligation provide moral meaning in Kantism, and responsibility is characterised as behaving in accordance with ethical rules (Hoover and Pepper, 2014). Kant believed that because individuals are intelligent beings, the rule of morality should be extracted purely through justification, without regard to particular situations or experiences (Christies et al., 2008).

The inherent essence of an event, instead of the condition or particular situations one finds themselves, determines if it is correct or incorrect in deontology (Ramaswamy, 2018). The philosophy emphasises doing the proper thing since it is the prudent action to do, not just because it is in one's self-interest or because it would result in positive outcomes (Ramaswamy, 2018). Deontology ethics emphasises the truthfulness of behaviour instead of its implications (Altman, 2010). Deontology also sees people as rational and accountable, and it believes that they have obligations to perform, and it puts the principle of responsibility at the forefront of its thought (Rohlf, 2009). Real acts are those which originate from a sense of responsibility and those that are consistent with ethical codes.

Kant goes on to claim that certain acts inspired by a sense of obligation hold moral meaning, and this obligation is thus characterised as behaving in conformity with the general rule (Christie et al., 2008). The Categorical Imperative (CI), as Kant calls it, can be classified as follows:

- Act just on the principle that you are building at the very same moment with the intention of it being a law of the universe, and
- Act in such a manner that you regard humanity, either in your own person or in the position of another, as a purpose in itself, never as a means to an end (Christie et al., 2008).

Kantism considerations are essential concepts that can be used to evaluate the validity of any action. Kant characterised an obligation as any declaration announcing that a specific activity or negligence is required. For instance, if an individual wishes to prevent becoming thirsty, he or she must drink. Consequently, Kant defined a categorical imperative as one that is valid throughout all times and in all places (Ramaswamy, 2018, p. 51). According to Kant, a categorical imperative governs moral decisions (Basara, 2018, p. 20), which can be done regardless of the situation. It is important for an ethical individual to make judgements based on categorical imperatives. The principles of the categorical imperatives are discussed in the sections below.

2.1.1. Universalisability principle

The principle of universalisability holds that one should operate only in accordance with that principle for which one could simultaneously wish that it became a law of the universe without inconsistency (Ramaswamy, 2018, p. 52). Kant regarded a maxim as just a principle or theory of conduct and a universal principle as something which should always be followed under identical conditions (Bench-Capon, 2020). In general, Kantism asks the principle of one's conduct, which incorporates the universal principle that underpins the specific action the person is contemplating before acting. This is illustrated by Kant using the illustration of a student who steals a banana from a supermarket, in which the student would ask: is it morally appropriate to do something like this? If the student agrees with the theft rule—whether they acknowledge this or not—essentially universalising the crime, meaning that everybody should often steal (Ramaswamy, 2018).

In this case, Kantism asserts that universalising the principle of every action committed by a single person means integrating a notion of fairness between the interests of all the actors in the hypothetical scenario. Therefore, Kant hinted that there would be no need to consider the implications of universalising such imperatives if it were appropriate that one's own will was of higher significance or more automotive than the will of certain individuals, regardless of whether or not those individuals are influenced by such a practice or will (Bench-Capon, 2020, p. 2).

2.1.2. Humanity principle

The humanity principle is grounded on the notion that individuals are products of their actions (Rohlf, 2009, p. 346), and all are nothing more than items which live to be used by others. Given this, the insinuation is that people live solely for their own benefit. Rohlf (2009) goes on to assert that, as a consequence, approaching everyone as a goal, entails respecting the dignity of the individual one is dealing with and recognising that that person has their own aspirations, beliefs and desires. This entails that people are self-governing and have the right to make reasonable choices according to their individual consciences. Therefore, we have an inherent moral value that implies we should not be abused, and we ought not to exploit certain autonomous agents for our own gain (Altman, 2010, p. 309). This demonstrates that deceit and lies are never appropriate because when a person is misled, they are unable to take an independent decision about how to behave, and their judgments are based on inaccurate facts. An instance would be a student who lies to get a PlayStation by

requesting a loan and convincing the institution that the loan is for books. Therefore, the student has robbed the ability of the loan giver to decide autonomously whether to give the loan to the student. The student has viewed the other individual as a way to achieve his aspirations, with little concern for the other individual's values and objectives. Therefore, Kant believed that proper logical interpretation of the ethical theory contributes to defined and relevant objective values for all moral beings (Rawls, 2000, p. 76).

2.1.3. *Autonomy principle*

The reasoning underlying Kant's ultimate rule utilitarianism theory is conceived by the very first imperative's reasoning. Will autonomy is relevant only to the degree that it is consistent with such a comparable amount of independence for all in the social system (Ramaswamy, 2018). The autonomy principle is founded on libertarianism, which states that nobody should be denied of their freedom if (a) it does not infringe mostly on the freedom of those who might be harmed by this, and (b) it will not violate the categorical imperatives (Bench-Capon, 2020).

An independent imperative demands that the government forbids limits on autonomy and freedom. Kant goes on to say that perhaps the government, in essence, is obliged to guarantee that personal independence is not abused. As a result, a government should not only refrain from compromising personal freedom but also vigorously control individual measures to ensure that citizens do not infringe on the freedoms of everyone else (Ramaswamy, 2018). In fact, it not only necessitates a government's active regulation of persons' behaviour in this respect but also necessitates the creation of an even legislative system to facilitate the effective accomplishment of such controls in criminal and civil law.

2.2. Teleological ethics

Teleological ethics is focused on the outcomes or consequences of one's decision (Cokely, 2000; Dean and Pollard, 2011, p. 157). What is explored here is that teleological thinking is versatile because it exists throughout complicated contextual environments in which the person is continuously assessing possible and real decisions in relation to the results (Dean and Pollard, 2014). According to teleological ethics, the importance of rational judgment or good character is determined by the behaviour or life itself. Therefore, while behaviour cannot be right or wrong in itself, the effect or influence of that behaviour mainly on the individuals involved could be either right or wrong (Baumane-Vitolina et al., 2016, p. 110). In addition, the presumption would be that performance, and the achievement of a higher degree of happiness, are all at the heart of human morals. Therefore, each conduct is correct if it improves pleasure and fulfilment and incorrect if it has the reverse reaction (Bentham et al., 1996; Koçyigit and Karadağ, 2017).

Furthermore, the setting of a moral standard to enable the end legitimises the means (Dean and Pollard, 2011). Personal satisfaction, self-actualisation, or making the largest number of people content is often seen as the primary aim, and the measurement of ethical reasoning is the output proportion of positive to negative (Koçyigit and Karadağ, 2017, p. 300). The utilitarian approach is a type of debauched action consequentialism that maintains whether a behaviour is appropriate, such that they maximise goodness and reduce evil, with overall goodness outweighing any possible harm (Koçyigit and Karadağ, 2017). It relates to hope and despair as the only inherent positive and negative, respectively. Therefore, moral judgment is performed purely based on outcomes. For instance, if a person breaks an agreement, consequentialists might argue that perhaps the

behaviour is only immoral if it causes many individuals to be upset instead of positive, which might result from the breaching of a promise (Roby, 2018, p. 21).

According to Dimmock and Fisher (2017, p. 15), based on enjoyment development, the effects of every behaviour determine the ethics of the behaviour, and no considerations are important. Therefore, the utilitarian perspective is founded on estimation, with the assumption that satisfaction can be calculated in both quality and quantity (Bentham, 1982). Bentham devised the Hedonic Calculus to assist people in measuring what further gratification they could gain from different acts (Baumane-Vitolina et al., 2016, p. 110). As argued by Bentham (1982), the Hedonic Calculus is obtained by measuring potential gratification based on their:

- Intensity – how strong it is;
- Duration – how long does the pleasure last;
- Remoteness/Propinquity – when it could arrive, how distant;
- Extent – how many people will experience pleasure;
- Richness/Fecundity – if it will cause further pleasure, and
- Purity – whether the outcome delivery solely benefit or does it also bring suffering, if any pain will be felt alongside that pleasure (Dimmock and Fisher, 2017, p. 15)

The hedonic calculus is intended to provide rational individuals with a decision-making technique for carrying out a task or action in a rightful way (Dimmock and Fisher, 2017). Since it is more associated with caring effects, teleological ethics may encourage unethical acts to occur as one of its weaknesses (Roby, 2018). The underlying principle advocated by scholars of teleological ethics is that humans need to be regulated through rules, codes of conduct, professional standards and procedures as a strategy to build their moral compass for improved decision-making. Roby (2018) goes on to buttress this notion when he purports that in the absence of rules, professional standards, policies, and procedures that regulate and guide human behaviour, aspects such as decision-making are affected and cause distress to the organization.

One must note that critics such as Bench-Capon (2020) suggest that there are problems associated with teleological ethics, given its inability to provide the standard requirement of calculating which consequences need to be considered critical to the attainment of organisational goals and objectives. The results of one's decisions are always unpredictable and can have far-reaching and unforeseen consequences. While criticism focused primarily on difficulty of measuring, all of the implications of each behaviour for each individual are dependent on a misconception that teleological ethics is a judgment method. The teleological ethics theory is regarded as a standard for assessing behaviour rather than a judgment process (Roby, 2018, p. 21). As Moore (2013) suggests, in consequentialism, everything is reduced to pain and pleasure. According to Roby (2018, p. 22), such consequentialism values only enjoyment and devalues just suffering or misery. Seemingly, many people agree that several things in this world are important to us despite our lack of satisfaction. Bench-Capon (2020, p. 23) elucidates this point by noting that we can have ambivalent thoughts towards a governmental administrator when he or she is cold yet informed, as compared to one who is less savvy yet sincerely concerned about members of the community. Even if the municipal representative causes us considerable pain, we respect his or her expertise and treatment, making pain and pleasure much less essential and not central to us.

Sinnott-Armstrong (2009) concludes that it is difficult to quantify every outcome for everyone in any particular scenario. The challenge emanates from the fact that quantification before a particular task means that consequence management fails to maximize its utility. Indeed, people often act out of motivations that do

not consider consequences. Even though the concept of utility is fundamental to the philosophy, it can be suggested that using it is morally incorrect. In the consequentialist philosophy, contentment is the primary aim of human behaviour. In the philosophy of virtue ethics, the very same end purpose is established. Satisfaction, on the other hand, is characterised by consequentialism as obtaining a personal gain. At the same time, virtue ethics emphasises individual personal relations in which contentment is achievable because of a virtuous life and societal support. As opposed to consequentialism, one might argue that the idea of virtue has a different social essence (Baumane-Vitolina et al., 2016, p. 112). Implementing the utilitarian perspective involves taking into account the needs of all parties concerned and the implications of acts taken in their direction (Baumane-Vitolina et al., 2016, p. 110).

2.3. Virtue ethics

Numerous intellectuals, including Anscombe (1958) and MacIntyre (2007), conceived the model of virtue ethics in the 20th century. The virtue ethics principle of the twenty-first century is based on Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics* (Adams, 2006). The focus of virtue ethics seems to be on the virtuous official's personality and on the characteristics, temperaments, and behaviours that strongly correlate with a relatively moral and ethical person enjoying life (Gal et al., 2020). According to Hursthouse (2007), virtue ethics is a form of normative ethics that emphasises virtues or personal integrity. Swanton (2003) argues that virtue ethics emphasises individual traits in deciding an individual's moral nature and direction (Aristotle, 1987). Instead of concentrating on correct steps or what everyone can do, virtue ethics focuses on the upright individual (Aristotle, 1987) and is largely grounded on the following aspects.

2.3.1. Pursuit of internal good

According to MacIntyre (1967), virtue is an attribute that allows a person to advance towards their moral telos. The ultimate goal in which individual actions are conducted and in which their significance is extracted is referred to as telos in virtue ethics (MacIntyre, 1967). The ultimate objective has to be something selected in and of itself instead of as a path to another goal (MacIntyre, 2007). According to Aristotle (1987) and MacIntyre (2007, p. 187), virtue is a "complex and cooperative human activity in which goods internal to the activity are realised in the process of attempting to achieve these requirements of excellence, which are suitable to, and partially definitive of, that form of activity, with the result that human powers to achieve excellence are enhanced". In this article, we advance the principle that a virtuous person continuously seeks to change and accomplish anything when engaged in social interaction, thus propelling his/her activities and the practice itself. The person is seen to seek a positive that is intrinsic to her profession (Gal et al., 2020). What can be deduced from this is that internal products are cherished for their own purpose and are so essential to the process, and we can perceive them in reference to this activity and recognise them through our involvement in it.

2.3.2. Practical wisdom

Aristotle submits that it is important to learn and cultivate pragmatic knowledge to obtain goods which are integral to a social activity, as well as to manage dynamic and unpredictable circumstances by performing morally correct behaviour (MacIntyre, 1967). Critical thinking, according to Gal et al. (2020), is the capacity to

consider and react appropriately to logically critical components in any particular scenario, thus practising virtue. Practical wisdom entails more than the possession and implementation of technical skills aimed at achieving desirable results or goods. The intention is to do the responsible thing in conditions that call for confidence, strength, integrity, or discipline (MacIntyre, 1967).

Practical wisdom, as argued by Beabout (2012), directs the virtuous person towards proper behaviour by paying attention to the nuances of each case, identifying places where no current strategy or policy exists, and prescribing plans of action through which the virtuous person demonstrates modesty, fairness and bravery. In essence, it means deciding if a specific action is worthwhile in terms of fostering a comfortable lifestyle for both the individual and society (Gal et al., 2020). Like every other value, practical wisdom cannot be acquired by conceptual exercise; instead, it is the product of virtuous act-based learning. Therefore, habituation and repetition become the source of practical wisdom acquisition (Tsoukas, 2018). For example, a strategic planning trainer becomes good by repeatedly conducting training workshops. A single training programme does not render an instructor effective, but regular training sessions can instil the practice of good training so that we can relate not only to the educational sessions as good but also to the individual as good (MacIntyre, 1967). According to Tsoukas (2018), this mechanism does not occur because of self-responsibility but because of socialisation into a group. It includes communicating and studying with people who engage in critical thinking to better understand the ethical principles that regulate the social life of the group.

2.3.3. *Virtue as voluntary action*

Voluntary action means that actors act virtuously with complete and reasonable consideration of certain behaviour and the conditions in which they operate, appreciating that their behaviours are the right ones for their own good due to the circumstances (Gal et al., 2020). Three fundamental requirements govern charitable action (Hursthouse, 1999); the behaviour must be of a noble sort, such as stating the facts, showing courage, or assisting others. Therefore, the individual should behave for the correct purposes, which satisfies the second fundamental requirement. The best thing to do in the appropriate context would be to state the facts, and the good individual understands it and takes corrective actions. As a result, the person would have to choose their acts for their own sake in order to be justified (Gal et al., 2020).

Primarily, what makes the action right in virtue ethics is the conception of motive, unlike the other two theories that acknowledge motive but do not consider it essential (Donaldson, 2017). Nevertheless, the lack of agreement among virtue moral philosophers is a weakness of this theory. Some claim that intent has no effect on justness, implying that inner virtues like intent are much less essential than outer values in assessing the rightness of an action (Donaldson, 2017). According to Beauchamp and Childress (1994, p. 68), if an individual has a good personality, their acts are morally justifiable. Even people with good faith who act righteously will make mistakes. They can be misinformed about the possible implications, make inaccurate decisions, or be unable to comprehend what must be accomplished. Therefore, virtue ethicists cannot say that moral and immoral acts are purely decided by what moral and immoral people do (Putman, 2012).

3. Research method

The utilisation of Normative Ethics Theories as catalysts for consequence management in Municipal Governance in South Africa was analysed using discourse analysis. This research method aims to deconstruct

literature in a bid to produce a new interpretation. Discourse analysis has been adopted in various disciplines with different research traditions (Gee, 2001). It is important to note that the current truth about the application of Normative Ethics Theories has been shaped by social scientists' discourses. As such, the discourse analyses used in this article utilised numerous sources, including books, newspapers, journal articles and internet sources on consequence management and normative ethics theories utilisation in the South African municipal set-up. In order to interrogate stances and discourses used to explain the study phenomenon, the researchers found discourse analysis to be a powerful tool to achieve the objectives of the article, hence producing a new perspective on the relationship between Normative Ethics Theories and consequence management.

4. Application of normative ethics in the local government context

Based on the principles of the three Normative Ethics Theories discussed above, this section explores the extent to which such principles have been applied in the context of South African local government.

4.1. Deontology ethics and consequence management in local government

Public Administration scholarship is fundamentally characterised by the universalisability of ethics (Brady, 2003, p. 532). Collective good, public interest, objectivity, equity, democracy, openness, honesty and institutional development are just a few examples. Therefore, in this study, the role of public servants and municipal officials is the application of ethical universals to the various troubling challenges of corruption, maladministration, non-compliance with legislation and regulation, and poor consequence management. At the heart of deontology is the principle of universalisability, which best captures the principles that drive the very essence of public administration in practice.

The core of the existence of municipal governance is to ensure the delivery of services as envisioned by section 195 of the South African Constitution, which provides principles and values that must characterise a South African public servant (Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996). These principles fundamentally ensure the establishment of municipalities that are well coordinated and are driven by the provision of procedural fairness in their delivery of services to the poor and destitute. The Municipal Systems Act No. 32 of 2000 provides a code of conduct for councillors and managers, specifying the desired actions of municipal authorities at the municipal level (Municipal Systems Act, 2000). As previously highlighted, the supposed lack of sensitive or transparent municipal authorities is triggered more by the political elite, lack of compliance and democratic will than by insufficient or inappropriate ethical regulations. Municipal governments can have shared objectives, strategic plans, and a sense of perspective owing to the abstractions described above.

However, with the absence of a fine-tuned sense of responsibility, coordination, and procedural fairness, governance collapses. This is precisely how the South African public service can be characterised presently, especially in local government, where there is disregard for human dignity and an established culture of corruption, fraud and mismanagement of financial resources. Therefore, there is a growth in the distance between municipal officials and citizens (Du Plessis, 2016). Furthermore, at the organisational level, a system of lost connections between city officials and elected leaders leads to dissatisfied workers and a lack of

enthusiasm for their employment. On the other hand, people feel that their administration has become too large to recall Du Plessis (2016).

Section thirteen of the National Development Plan (NDP) 2030, which provides for a comprehensive transformation and operational efficiency roadmap for the South African government and the formation of a competent government and supports the concept of making municipal government an occupation of preference, is connected to these existing legislations. Therefore, strengthening human resource development mechanisms like recruitment and selection, retention, training, coaching, and mentoring; career development, education and learning; performance management, and remuneration and rewards is integral in nudging municipal employees towards compliance with rules set out, standards, policies, processes and procedures.

In view of the vast challenges that face local government, the theory of deontology presents organisations with the ability to remember that rules, procedures, processes and policies are constructed as universal governance imperatives. Therefore, municipal officials are responsible for applying the rules, procedures, processes and policies, relying on personal judgement to determine the applicability. Furthermore, deontology allows the designer of consequence management in local government to ponder difficult questions, such as what drives the municipal official? What does he/she aim for? Often, municipal officials have goals that they share with the municipality. Hence, individual goals should be integrated with those of the organisation to avoid disintegration. In addition, deontology provides municipalities with the opportunity to synchronise individual goals with those of the organisation. When a municipal official feels integrated with the municipality, their execution of an action is driven by organisational interests.

4.2. The role of consequentialism in enhancing consequence management in local government

A literature review demonstrated that consequentialism implies greater scrutiny of the reinforcement motivation viewpoint, which focuses on how people identify which behaviour will best fulfil their needs, why their needs are different, and why they experience variation in their needs: the mental process. This augurs well with teleological ethics, which views individual behaviour as a function of its consequences. In this case, local government's consequence management framework must focus on a result, to understand the ability to present decision paths that clearly define desired goals for employees. Consequentialist theories suggest that retribution is not acceptable when it does not operate to deter the very same crime from occurring again. Above all, there should always be a correlation between the seriousness of the crime and the seriousness of a penalty.

Therefore, the severity of the crime is calculated by the damage it causes. Ramaswamy (2018) follows the basic principle that retribution should be serious enough to outweigh any advantages the criminal may have received from breaking the law. This article argues that the assertion correlates with that of punishment antecedents of reinforcement, which implies that to decrease the probability of behaviour recurrence, the response to an offence or breach of rules must remove something positive or add something negative to deter the unwanted behaviour. At the centre of consequentialism is effective governance, which, amongst other things, necessitates the establishment of organisational culture. In their studies, Nzewi et al. (2016) and Delobbe et al. (2002:6), identify three layers that define and conceptualise organisational culture. Dress codes, reward schemes, workplace culture, rituals and ceremonies are examples of the apparent at the synthetic layer. The standards and principles layer is the second layer. The final layer is the degree of expectations that derive

from principles reflected in behaviour and evolve into unquestioned activities. While assumptions are not direct or observable, they do, to some degree, determine and influence behaviour (Nzewi et al., 2016, p. 41).

While interventions like codes of ethics are necessary, they are not sufficient in the pursuit of good governance, hence the interest in the theory of consequentialism. Consequentialism helps establish a consequence management approach to local government administration, as it offers a different dimension through establishing mechanisms which have the potential to dampen the 'feel good' gains of corrupt practices while strengthening the 'feel bad' punishment of such a practice.

4.3. Applicability of virtue ethics in enhancing consequence management in local government

It can be deduced from the extant literature that the virtue ethics approach is rooted in the concept of practice (Molina, 2015, p. 50) and what motivates the action. As a result, it is a useful way of thinking about government sector importance as a contextualised collection of behaviours, expertise, and behaviours that allow the profession to achieve the products, objectives and high standards of public administration. According to Donaldson (2017), the secret to getting the correct decision at opportune timing, in a positive way, against the right kind of people, for the correct side, and in the right way is to create an acceptable feeling or intuitive sense.

According to Molina (2015), hardly any of the values emerge spontaneously. However, humans obtain them via schooling, practice, and careful observation, as observed in the reinforcement approach, which seeks to create a habitual behaviour that helps organisations to establish an ethical culture through its motivation antecedents. Furthermore, the manner in which virtues are acquired and the nature in which they are exercised make virtue ethics helpful in examining public service values (Molina, 2015). As previously mentioned, principles are gained through schooling, modelling and practice, and they are effective in supporting a particular goal or a set of goals. It is pivotal to ensure that the systems of education, modelling and habit are grounded in the virtue principle.

In virtue ethics, a prosperous existence of satisfaction, virtue, and perfection (eudemonia) was the aim for an individual being therefore, virtues are the attitudes, actions and expertise that, on average, appear to encourage this kind of life (Fairholm, 2004). Consequently, public sector ideals, including virtues, express themselves in the form of behaviours, abilities, and actions that are essential to attain the benefits and objectives that the function of government administration is meant to achieve. Public administration's internal goods include public interest, accountability, effectiveness, efficiency, transparency, institutional capacity building, and consequence management. All these goods are pursued to achieve organisational excellence. Virtue ethics allow organisations (municipalities) to be consistent in their practice of public administration.

5. Discussion

Having examined these normative ethical foundations to establish a practical consequence management framework for local government, key elements of these ethical norms can be formulated. Deontological ethics establishes categorical imperatives based on universal principles of public administration. This is echoed through the values and principles of public administration in chapter 10 of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa; the Public Service Act No. 30 of 2007; the Public Audit Amendment Act No. 5 of 2018; Municipal

Finance Management Act No. 56 of 2003, and the Municipal Systems Act No. 32 of 2000. Such standards offer city authorities guidance for what is required of them in the context of general services. Moreover, they represent the nature with which city authorities can carry out their roles, as well as what should be designed to stop potential conflicts of interest and what is required of them in their public and private lives.

Teleological ethics explores organisational interventions and policies that elevate the “feel bad” consequences of corrupt practice over the “feel good” gains. For the effectiveness of codes of conduct, disciplinary actions and sanctions must be built into them; otherwise, municipal officials and politicians may not take such codes seriously. Most importantly, municipalities must have well-articulated and fair human resource policies on remuneration and conditions of services, training, and career development programmes. There is a need to recognise and reward good work through incentives, thus nurturing professionalism and motivating employees for improved performance. Strengthening human resource capacity further provides municipalities with the ability to investigate unethical conduct. However, for all this to succeed, exemplary leadership and political will are needed to instil ethics and professionalism because problems sometimes emanate from the top and permeate the institution.

Virtue ethics seek organisational approaches that are based on motivating practice based on learning and continuous iteration. This is done by delivering support and learning in municipalities that focus on the institutional dimensions of ethics, professional ethics, transparency, discipline and instilling a professional culture. This helps workers to exhibit exemplary behaviour. However, they must be informed and qualified so that they can differentiate between good and bad, as well as identify ethical and moral behaviour.

Evidence from literature and application has shown that the normative ethics have some limitations. Rajesh and Rajasekaran (2019: 1040) opine that all normative ethics have some restrictions and are meant to carry out their obligations without considering the results or other circumstances. What can be noted is that the normative ethics approach advances a one-dimensional approach where it is believed that once leaders employ ethical or moral behaviour, institutions will be able to function effectively without the consideration of the internal and external environment within which such institutions operate. In this case, we argue that each of the three ethics deals with a distinct set of moral principles. The goal of utilitarianism has been positive results. Kantian ethics has given careful consideration to righteous laws. Virtue ethics concentrated on the righteous, but all three theories share the strong goal of emphasizing only people and excluding other entities.

6. Conclusion

The majority of management scholarship focuses on cognitive, social and behavioural phenomena and understanding. However, in its quest to understand the phenomena of consequence management, this study ponders on the very essence of humanness and the uniquely human desire to do well and live communally with others. For this to be achieved, the normative theory of ethics is applied to recognise the ethereal and uniquely human quality in the theories of ethics. This study utilised all three normative ethics and it demonstrates that the establishment of morally ethical leaders in the South African municipal context can be a result of the adoption or a conglomeration of all the three approaches that work in unison. In this regard, the study concludes that the normative ethics theories are a precondition or sine-qua-non for the achievement of effective consequence management in the public service.

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