Poverty alleviation and curbing corruption in the South African public service

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Abstract

The Millennium Development Goals (2000) established by the United Nations, had as their core objective the reduction of people who are poverty stricken to at least half of the world's number of people then living in absolute poverty, by 2015. It sought to make it a priority for national governments to strive to eradicate poverty while also concentrating on financial institutions as well as the private sector to be involved in a meaningful manner in eradicating poverty. However, in countries such as, for example, Brazil and South Africa, corruption is almost endemic and permeates many facets of individual daily life and business transactions. Corruption in the public sector in particular is a malignant practice which is corroding confidence in the government of South Africa, and it severely undermines the credibility of the nation in the global arena. Strong moral leadership undoubtedly influences the ethical climate permeating any organization and indeed a nation. The Public Service in South Africa is in the process of developing a strong ethical culture so as to reduce the incidents of corruption, which are inter-alia characterized by fraud, bribery and other corrupt activities which plague it and which demean the character of South Africa as a nation forged in 'doing the right thing'. This conceptual article discusses how corruption impacts poverty alleviation and unpacks efforts made from a legislative perspective as well as anti-corruption programmes in South Africa in recent times to address corruption in the Public Service. It makes recommendations and also briefly probes the role of the president and makes recommendations as to the way forward.

Keywords: Poverty, Bribery, Fraud, Corruption, Politicians, Ethics

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1. Introduction

When assessing the state of the world's poor, the literature states that at least 1 billion people live in absolute poverty and have only US$1 per day for subsistence (World Bank, 2008). Despite the fact that there is somewhat of a reduction in poverty, the fact remains that the absolute number of those in extreme poverty is dropping less due to burgeoning global population growth. Nations such as Brazil, South Africa and India, which are members of the BRICS group of nations (including Russia and China), have high absolute numbers of poverty stricken individuals due to relatively slower economic growth rates. In sub-Saharan Africa, poverty escalated from 41 percent in 1981 to 46 percent by 2001 and is on the rise due to the region's wider population gap when compared to the rest of the world (World Bank, 2008). It is estimated that over 4 billion out of a global population of 7.25 billion people live on less than US$2 a day and are thus at the bottom of the economic pyramid (Collier, 2007). It is evident that the wealthiest 20 percent of the world's population consume 86 percent of the goods and services on offer, while the impoverished 20 percent consume only 1.3 percent (Crosette, 1998).

2. Poverty Issues

Poverty is multifaceted and of course a relative issue. In absolute terms, the poor were far worse off in the last century but their upward mobility has been to an extent thwarted by globalization and abuses at the upper echelons of both the public and private sectors. Corrupt national leaders prop up oligopolies which are founded on economies of scale that tend to dominate the global markets and which are not as well-regulated as they should be and thus corruption sets in (Isaak, 2005). Poverty is a difficult state of being to break out of as it essentially involves a huge deprivation of opportunity and leaves people without even the most basic human rights including safety and security, water, food, employment opportunity, health care, education and basic sanitation provision.

The poor take life as it comes and for many, every day is a desperate state of existence. The life expectancy of the poor is far lower than those who are wealthy and for many, poverty is a self-fulfilling highly negative prophecy but more importantly, it stunts an individual's view as what he or she can become given their poor state. Poverty thus has a devastating effect on people as it is reinforced by hunger and inadequate resources that are needed for one to live a meaningful existence. Its psychological dimension is equally damaging as the poor generally feel marginalized, humiliated and dependent. In South Africa, the government has made some progress in alleviating the plight of the poor but public sector corruption has worsened their plight as financial resources are often squandered on corrupt activities.

The patriarchal nature of African society has also left women especially challenged and they are obliged to seek solace in informal networks upon which they depend. While there are numerous NGOs and charitable institutions with philanthropic intentions, their efforts are miniscule when compared to the challenges at hand. In some instances unemployed men who are generally viewed to be household leaders, resort to

violence or alcoholism to vent their frustrations. Poor women often resort to demeaning jobs to feed their children and elderly parents as they have no other options (UNDP, 2003).

Poverty has numerous causes including lack of income and any assets to obtain the most basic needs and a state of powerlessness in state institutions. The poor have no capacity for work, skills and health and are very vulnerable to economic recessions, civil strife and natural disasters. They have no land of their own and many resort to living in informal settlements which have little or no infrastructure. They have no access to credit from financial institutions and also are devoid of social assets with reciprocal networks to tap into when the need arises (WDR, 2001). The huge current gap in wealth and status between the rich and the poor in most nation, has been driven by higher incomes for the wealthy in richer nations, thus leading to a chasm between the rich and the poor. Brazil and South Africa have the hugest income inequalities where the richest 20 percent of households are 25 times wealthier than the poorest 20 percent (Birdsall, 2002).

3. The South African public service

The Republic of South Africa Constitution Act of 1996 presents the government of South Africa with a strong constitutional foundation as it seeks to promote ethical conduct in the Public Service (Republic of South Africa, 1996). When one becomes a public servant, this means placing public interest ahead of personal interests. The policy oriented applied research which was undertaken considers theories and concepts, which can enhance our understanding of the issue of corruption in the public service and problems encountered in this regard. It is also descriptive research in that it to an extent presents a profile or describes a process, namely corruption. The epistemological perspective is critical in that it is interested in understanding the social phenomenon of corruption in the Public Service in its social context. The ontological consideration is constructionism in that the social phenomenon of corruption and its meanings are continually being accomplished by social actors, namely public servants as was evident in the literature that was reviewed. It is hoped that this research will further highlight the problem of corruption in the South African public service, explain steps taken hitherto in the legal sphere and suggest ways in which corruption could be limited.

Politicians represent the public and are expected to be virtuous and be honest, respectful, truthful, and act with integrity in both their personal and public and life. When politicians falter in terms of unethical conduct, in for example handling of contracts or agreements, this is indeed a serious misdemeanor and the obligations of public servants in discharging their duties are thus flaunted. Ashforth and Anand (2003) state that when there is corruption in any organization, this places a huge burden on society and serves to erode any stability and trust and essentially breaks down the culture of democratic government. An iconic government depends on the conduct of public servants and the perceptions of its citizens concerning acceptable standards of services that they offer. Consequently, it is critical that public servants are seen to be acting justly and fairly in all their dealings with the public, and are not merely paying 'lip service' to transparency and openness (Vyas-Doorgapersad and Ababio, 2006: 385).

Governments worldwide and their leaders are called upon to proactively fight the cancer of corruption which is gradually eroding the moral fibre of society to the detriment of the planet and people, and very often also profits, thus impacting negatively on the triple-bottom-line. Anthropological research by McDonald (2009) suggests that ethical philosophies and the values espoused by those in positions of authority have a huge impact on the ethical choices and behaviours of the employees they oversee. Accordingly, when a leader such as a president is perceived to be corrupt, then it is likely that public servants will follow suit. State institutions *per se*, are expected to be beyond reproach when it comes to maintaining the highest possible standards of professional ethics. In this regard, the White Paper (1994) on the issue of transformation of the South African Public Service, made provision for the development of codes to regulate the conduct of public servants in the workplace. These codes were intended to promote the upholding of ethical values and practices and promoted ethical conduct and acceptable standards and thus served essentially as frameworks to fight the growing incidences of fraud and corruption. The reputation of public officials also has a significant impact on the business climate of the country or public support for any local initiatives. Consequently, the personal behaviour of public servants is a legitimate area of public concern. It is important to have ethics and integrity in place in the public and private sectors as these are also essential when it comes to personal fulfillment and ultimately to business success (Lawrence et al., 2012).

According to Lewis and Gilman (2005) ethics involves thinking systematically about morals and conduct and includes the making of moral choices and thus stating or doing right and wrong. Bruce (2001) views ethics as the conscience between what is moral and immoral and right and wrong. When one acts ethically this is usually considered behaviour that aligns with accepted moral codes and this is proper conduct. Gustafson (2001) views ethical behaviour as something that is based on the assumption that employees act in what is considered the right way in each and every situation and this is generally recognized and expected by both public servants and the public at large. Standard of conduct should thus impose a reasonable obligation on public servants not to be involved in corrupt activities but rather act with honesty, loyalty and integrity. There are also researchers such as Dordrecht (1992) who state that public servants may knowingly commit unethical acts because they believe that their actions may be rewarded as is often the case in businesses where employees who are accused of corruption are suspended on full pay and are not prosecuted. Furthermore, there are public servants who believe that being secretive and deceitful is not necessarily undesirable conduct. The Public Service Commission (PSC) Report on the State of the Public Service emphasizes that an ethical framework is required if high standards of professional ethics are to be inculcated in to the Public Service. It is interesting to note that a PSC Report (2009), suggested that trust in the South African Government had decreased from 60% in 2004 to 52% in 2007.

The unethical behaviour of public officials has clearly led to the creation of very negative perceptions about the Public Service in general. Thabo Mbeki, the then President of South Africa, in 2006 maintained that corruption is a huge hindrance to the country's efforts in alleviating poverty. Furthermore, it hampers economic development while simultaneously breaking down the social fabric of society and it also generally undermines democracy and good governance (Public Service Commission, 2006). A central task of the Public Service should be education in ethics and governance which will help mould the souls of the forthcoming generation to achieve relevant knowledge on ethical issues and encourage them to do the right thing as a

matter of course. Corruption increasing levels of poverty and income inequality and the loss billions of rand to corruption does not bode well for future growth. Corruption has sadly become very deep-rooted within many government departments, and permeates all levels of Public Service employment.

4. Current trends

Corruption is either visible or hidden. The latter refers to policies which are neglected by politicians due to their focus on making more money, inspired by an ethic of self-preservation at the expense of others. Hidden corruption is also deep in that it involves politicians dipping into funds without jurisdiction to do so, so that national security risks are possible. Visible corruption alludes to day-to-day transactions where for example, bribes are order of the day. South Africa has lost R385 billion since the democratic elections in 1994 due primarily to corruption but also incompetence at each echelon of government. Where there is corruption in state procurements, this invariably leads to waste of critical public funds and resources. There is also the added problem of inferior quality products and services, which often drives away quality suppliers from conducting business with the government. Corruption in South Africa is at an endemic level which is severely impacting the macro-economic outlook and thus the economy of the country to the detriment of the millions of poor and the 25.2% unemployed (The Economist, June 14th -20th 2014, p.84). The organisation Global Financial Integrity has stated in a recent report that there has been an illegal outflow of R185-billion from South Africa between 1994 and 2008 predominantly as a result of corruption in the public sector. In 2009, the extent of government corruption totaled R70 billion (www.news24.com/user/sacitizen). There are for example, numerous cases of corruption in South African municipalities (available at http://www.da.org.za), which illustrate the dire straits that South Africa is in ethically speaking. Unethical conduct is increasing and not only at local government levels. The Government recognizes the magnitude of the problems at hand and purports to wish to address the problem as a matter of urgency. Fraud in South Africa is also on the rise and together with theft and corruption amounted to R100 billion lost and this seriously retards any prospect of economic growth and liquidity in the South African economy as well as in the regional economies. (2010, audit firm BDO). Public officials are tempted by a 'get rich quick' possibility and act fraudulently as the government pays out huge amounts of funds for salaries, procurements and state pensions, and the state is defrauded.

The Special Investigating Unit (SIU) informed the South African Parliament that astronomical amounts of money between R25-billion and R30-billion of the government's annual procurement budget alone, was misplaced as a result of corruption, incompetence and negligence. Additional cases were under investigation accounting for a further R171-million and involving numerous governmental departments (www.news24.com/user/sacitizen). Corrupt activities such as these seriously stifle economic development and essentially contribute to the rapid depletion of public funds. The spin off is that both local and foreign direct investment is greatly reduced. Funds collected from taxes that are intended for national projects and service provision such as education, policing, health care, social grants, infrastructural development

including power stations, roads, water provision and defence, are stolen. It has been suggested that approximately 20% of the GDP is lost to corruption annually (http://www.news24.com/user/sacitizen).

5. The Role of the President

Trevino and Brown (2004) assert that a great deal of unethical conduct is often the result of indifferent leadership and organisational cultures that send out very mixed messages to their constituents. Leaders in government need to manage the ethical conduct of the public servants who represent them. There appears to be a lack of accountability and good governance in South Africa and it is the ultimately the president's responsibility to address the corruption issue. It is the president who is totally accountable for any public expenditure and it is incumbent upon him as head of state to make certain that the taxes paid by the citizens of the country are utilized to uplift the plight of the masses of poor and unemployed. Instead billions of rand are missing from the national coffers. It should be stated that President Jacob Zuma is not solely responsible for the corruption which pervades the public sector, but his recent actions have not helped to redress the matters at hand. It is thus not surprising that many question his *bona fides*. The president has a history of speaking out against corruption in government

The National Prosecutions Authority (NPA) has been investigating the president's involvement in corruption relating to the very contentious $5bn, 1999 arms deal. It was widely reported in the media in 2007 and 2008 that BAE had created a £100m fund to entice South African politicians. The 2013 Afrobarometer Survey, demonstrated that the negative perceptions of the office of the President increased from 13% in 2002 to 35% in 2011. There have nonetheless been numerous efforts undertaken by the government to tackle corruption.

When the president was involved in questionable business dealings with people such as the convicted swindler Shabir Shaik, and continued to appoint candidates with poor ethical stature to important positions in cabinet as well as in the criminal justice system, he essentially eroded public trust. The further scandals of the 'Gupta wedding' chronicle and the erection of the President's private Nkandla residence in Kwazulu Natal province undoubtedly had a negative impact on sentiment concerning the ethical status of South African politicians. Thus, the argument that corruption perpetrated by politicians and public servants is giving South Africa a 'bad name; when it comes to issues of corruption cannot be underestimated with the result that citizens are far less trusting than hitherto. The 2013 South African Reconciliation Barometer survey undertaken by the Institute for Justice and Reconciliation (IJR) showed that from 2012 there has been a 10,8% decline in the average citizens' belief in the national government as a custodian of the people. Additionally, there was a 13% increase in the percentage of citizens who sense that government does not care about them. The age on which we live calls for politicians to demonstrate a genuine concern for their people. Serious engagement with anti-corruption initiatives and loyalty are non-negotiable. Politicians need to consider their actions and weigh the benefits with the costs of their actions. President Zuma has a huge task ahead of him and if the recent elections are anything to go by, there are increasing numbers of unhappy citizens.

6. Lack of an ethical climate

An ethical climate is thus critical to the South African government which is in the forefront in Africa, in deepening its commitment to creating an ethical culture in which there should be an unspoken understanding among public servants of what is and is not acceptable ethical behaviour. The private sector is undoubtedly also a transgressor in corrupt activities since it works with the government via tenders and contracts but the Public Service is a very often more corrupt, probably due to the fact that the private sector is of necessity obliged to be more transparent in its processes. In the Public Service, corrupt and unethical practices *inter alia* nepotism, tenderpreneurism, kickbacks, bribery, corruption, intimidation, BEE-fronting (where in terms of rules governing Black Economic Empowerment (BEE), black people are given a seat on the Board of Directors of companies while in reality they have *no decision-making power* at all. This is done in order to place the guilty company in a position to qualify for government contracts in terms of BEE requirements), use of public policies to promote personal gain, money laundering, fraud, procedural bluffing (where people are promoted without following applicable procedures), loans write offs, embezzlements, unethical government deals, general lawlessness, hidden bank balances to name a few, have been responsible for South Africa been placed at number 69 in the Transparency International Corruptions Perceptions Index (CPI) 2012. This index is a perceived level of public sector corruption in 176 countries around the world (Transparency International, 2012). In Transparency International's 2013 global Corruption Perception Index (CPI) South Africa has dropped further 3 places to be ranked at number 72 out of 175 countries. South Africa has effectively dropped a total of 34 places since 2001, with half the decline of 17 places taking place since 2009 (http://www.defenceweb.co.za).

Transparency International estimates that investing in what is a "relatively corrupt" country compared to an "uncorrupted" could be as much as 20% more expensive. Critically there is a devastating direct economic impact which hinders the much-needed job creation to alleviate the huge unemployment problem facing South Africa. Transparency International conducted a survey which revealed that corruption in South Africa is almost endemic. It stated that 56% of South Africans dealing with Government Service Providers in 2010 where obliged to pay a bribe (Harding, 2011). This is an atrocious state of affairs and the corruption and bribery clearly supports the notion that many public servants are working in their self interests thus depriving the very poor elements of society of opportunities for upliftment. If it is desired that citizens remain motivated in the face of increasing corruption and spiraling crime, far more is required to support the notion that there can be a better life for all. Sadly, many South Africans have lost faith in the Public Service and its ability to deliver moral and competent government. Public servants have an obligation to act morally and ethically and with the highest integrity. If they do not do so there is no doubt that South Africa will loose international credibility and much required foreign investment.

A 2013 Afrobarometer report entitled 'Governments falter in fight to curb corruption', which was released on 13 November 2013 provides a bleak picture of South Africa as an unethical nation. Some 51 000 people were surveyed in 34 African nations on their opinions about corruption believed that corruption is certainly increasing in South Africa, more especially since 2008. Whereas South Africa's regional neighbours including

Botswana, Malawi, Mozambique and Zambia, where in fact seeking ways to address and curb Public Service corruption (Newham, 2013).

Tenderpreneurs have been highlighted in the South African news in recent months where individuals are purported to have enriched themselves through corrupting the awarding of government tender contracts. This has been mainly based on links with personal connections and corrupt relationships have been formed. Bribery is also a growing problem which increasingly involves elected or politically appointed officials or their direct family members holding concurrent business interests. To exacerbate matters the guilty parties also overcharge for their services and deliver sub-standard quality workmanship which is unacceptable.

7. Steps taken to address corruption

As the second biggest economy in Africa, after Nigeria, South Africa has a wide range of rules and regulations governing the conduct of Public Service employees. In research published by the Ethics Resource Centre (2010), there is an indication that strong ethical cultures are associated with both a reduction in observed misconduct and an increase in employee engagement so that when public servants perceive that their leaders are corrupt, the wrong tone is set as to what is acceptable behaviour. The Public Service of South Africa faces a myriad of challenges as it strives to become a truly representative and highly competent body that is effectively aligned to its task of assisting in the reconstruction and critical development initiatives that the country requires as a matter of urgency. Daft (2006) states that organizations can longer be reliant solely on their codes of conduct to regulate the behaviour of their employees but must promote a self-regulating ethical cultural in which all employees act ethically as a matter of course. Velasquez et al. (1997) consider ethics to be in sync with sentiments, religion, law or conforming to social norms, so that when unethical behaviour such as corruption is rife, this may be viewed as acceptable behaviour.

McNamara (2008) endorses certain characteristics of what he terms high integrity organizations. These characteristics include the organization having a clear vision of integrity that is driven by the top management echelon over a period of time. The reward system is also aligned to this vision as are all policies and procedures. Most importantly, all management decisions must include an ethical value dimension. President Zuma in his State of the Nation address on 11 February 2010 stated that: "The feature of this administration will be that it knows where people live, understands their needs and responds faster. Government must work faster, harder and smarter" (Dorasamy, 2010). In the Human Sciences Research Council's (HSRC) annual South African Social Attitudes Survey it is shown that the proportion of people who think that engaging with the issue of corruption must be a national priority almost doubling, from 14% to 26% in the five-year period between 2006 and 2011.

In the Apartheid era prior to the democratic elections in 1994, there were no consistent anti-corruption initiatives in place. South Africa acknowledged the dire need to construct a National Integrity framework as a basis in the fight against burgeoning corruption. In October 1997, the Cabinet tasked a Ministerial Committee to reflect on proposals for the implementation of what was termed a National Campaign Against Corruption. Eventually a National Anti-Corruption Summit was held in April 1999 in Parliament, Cape Town. The

Conference theme was 'Fighting Corruption: Towards a National Integrity Strategy'. The conference was to develop a clearly expressed national strategy to combat corruption in all sectors of society; and to get the buy–in of all stakeholders in the efforts to handle corruption. It was also to recommend legislative procedures to strengthen anti-corruption structures. South Africa has since implemented an array of legislation and also developed democratic institutions in its quest to craft national integrity and fight corruption. The National Anti Corruption Forum (NACF) was established in 2001 to fight corruption, and especially to build integrity and increase awareness of what was envisaged. The NACF was committed to contribute to establishing national consensus via the co-ordination of various sectoral strategies that were aimed at combating corruption in any shape or form. The NACF also makes suggestions to government on all national initiatives dealing with the implementation of anti-corruption strategies. Furthermore, it was tasked with sharing information and best practice on sectoral anti-corruption work and also advising sectors on the improvement of sectoral anti-corruption strategies (http://www.nacf.org.za). The Public Service Anti-Corruption Strategy was purposely developed for the Public Service so as to give effect to the commitment of Government to combat corruption in the Public Service.

It is nowadays imperative that the Public Sector in a country develop and implement codes of conduct as mechanisms which can aid in engendering ethical behaviour (Garcia-Sanchez et al., 2011: 190). South Africa has acceded to a wide range of international conventions and protocols on corruption and this leads one to believe that the Government is indeed committed to combating corruption in the Public Service. The OECD guidelines, the Technical Guide, the International Code and Model Code are the generally accepted guidelines and contain principles to which the South African code may be compared. However, on close inspection, and due to the high levels of corruption in South Africa in recent times, we may conclude that the guidelines are not adequately applied to make any meaningful impact. While there are Codes of Conduct for public servants, these are not in the public domain and should be 'out there' for all to see and understand so as to create an ethos of moral fortitude.

Although South African legislation has to an extent put in place the required framework to endorse integrity, this is yet to be effectively put into operation. In the South African Public Service the Public Service Commission (PSC) has assumed the responsibility in terms of its mandate, to be the champion for promoting integrity in the Public Service with its Code of Conduct (Government Notice/Gazette: Regulation Gazette 5947, No. R. 825, 1997) which was promulgated and finally published on 10 June 1997 (PSC, 2006:5). The Code of Conduct was meant to be adhered to by the Public Service officials at national, provincial and local government levels (Public Service Commission, 2006) and provides a series of guidelines for public officials and their employers as to expected ethical behaviour on their part. Cameron and Stone (1995: 80) state that the code also informs public servants of what they are required to do when there is a conflict of interest. The Code was reassessed in 2006 with no further amendments having being made.

Schwartz (2004: 324) highlights the fact that codes can be called a number of things ranging from codes of ethics, to codes of practice, credos, value statements and even mission statements. Codes could also be aspirational or regulatory and thus be prescriptive. Some codes describe desirable standards of behaviour while others may be values and ethics based (Skubik and Stening, 2009: 516). The International Code and Model Code are both aspirational and directional in nature (UNODC, 2005, 114-115). The PSC developed a

Code of Conduct for the Public Service which has been included in the Public Service Regulations and which is essentially the basis of the Public Service's integrity framework as it sets out the standards for the ethical conduct that is expected of public servants. The Code of Conduct elaborates on what must be done to avoid any conflicts of interest and basically strives to inculcate an ethos of ethicality in the Public Service when it comes to individual conduct and dealing with the public. The PSC has also created and administers a Financial Disclosure Framework which is aimed at senior managers in the Public Service and it is intended to prevent conflicts of interest by necessitating senior managers to reveal their financial interests. In addition to these and other measures, the PSC established and oversees a National Anti-Corruption Hotline to encourage the reporting of corruption in the Public Service. This service allows any whistleblowers to call a hotline to report corruption without fear of any type of victimization. Once complaints are received, the Public Protector receives the information and investigates the complaints from the public and also has the power to recommend necessary corrective action.

The PSC this has an important oversight role over the Public Service and is relatively independent and unbiased and upholds constitutional values and principles which govern public administration and promotes moral conduct and advances professional ethic in the Public Service. The Auditor-General is tasked by the Parliament with auditing and reports directly to it on all of the accounts, financial statements and fiscal management of all of the national and provincial state departments as well as local municipalities.

The South African government has passed a number of important Acts so as to ensconce values such as transparency and accountability. It is desirous of combating and ultimately ceasing corruption and numerous laws have been passed to support this notion. We can for example cite legislation such as, *inter-alia*, the Public Finance Management Act (Act No.1 of 1999), Promotion of Access to Information Act (Act No. 2 of 2000), the Promotion of Administrative Justice Act (Act No. 3 of 2000), the Protected Disclosures Act, (Act No 26 of 2000), the Prevention and Combating of Corrupt Activities Act (Act No. 12 of 2004) which have all been promulgated in recent years.

The Public Finance Management Act (Act No.1 of 1999) establishes an important structure for the accountable management of public funds and makes provision for criminal prosecution of guilty public servants. The Promotion of Access to Information Act (Act No. 2 of 2000), pushes the idea transparency in all governmental and private sector dealings. In terms of this act, certain information must be publicly available (Simpson, 2009). The Promotion of Administrative Justice Act (Act No. 3 of 2000) promotes fair administrative procedures and remedy for citizens who have been affected negatively. Government must adhere to fair procedures when taking decisions that affect the public or individuals. Citizens have a right to request in writing any reasons for decisions they may differ with. Effectively this will allow them to identify if corruption played a role in the decision that was reached. The Prevention and Combating of Corrupt Activities Act (Act No. 12 of 2004) provides steps to combat corruption in all its forms including bribery. In terms of this Act merely offering to bribe someone, whether they accept it or not is deemed to be corruption (Simpson, 2009). Additionally, Public Service departments' must set up minimum anti-corruption competencies to make possible the prevention and combating of corruption and must also put in place mechanisms to thwart, identify and investigate corruption. There should thus be an ethical structure in place with good policies and procedures and a series of good internal controls. Public servants must be trained on

ethical issues and there should be security of persons and information as part of a risk management strategy. Once corruption is identified, there must be mechanisms in place such as whistle-blowing. Internal audits should also be used in detecting corruption. Critically, it is important to appoint the right employees to the Public Service to start with, so screening is important. Any investigation that is undertaken must be acceptable in terms of procedures followed and there must be cooperation with law enforcement agencies.

The government has established bodies to assist in the fight against corruption. The Special Investigation Unit (SIU) was established in terms of the Special Investigating Units and Special Tribunals Act, Act 74 of 1996 (SIU Act). Its mission is to be "A state body that fights corruption through quality investigations and litigation" (Simpson, 2009). The SIU scrutinizes what are considered to be serious maladministration issues in connection with the affairs of any state institution as well as the unlawful appropriation or expenditure of public money or property and corruption that is in any way linked with the affairs of any state institution. The SIU has been rather successful in a number of areas. Two which stands out the most are the Department of Social Development actual savings of R493 million as well as preventative savings of R4,9 billion and the removal of over 81 thousand fraudulent social claimant payments. The Asset Forfeiture Unit (AFU) was established in May 1999 in the Office of the National Director of Public Prosecutions and was created to ensure that the powers which are in the Act which allow the seizure of criminal assets would be used to their maximum effect in the fight against crime. In recent years, about R700 million worth of assets have been frozen in addition to many other successes. The Scorpions were established to deal with syndicated crime and multifarious corruption cases. This unit has also been rather successful and has tackled major international corporate raiding in conjunction with the FBI of the United States of America and the law enforcement organs of the United Kingdom. This unit has subsequently been disbanded and replaced by the Directorate of Priority Crimes known as the Hawks.

Additional to the above there are also other units such as the Specialised Commercial Crimes Unit (SCU) which deals with complex commercial criminal cases. They have a 95% conviction rate. They recently recovered R 86 million from perpetrators, and arrested 81 officials who were found guilty of misconduct, 29 of which were dismissed. They are nonetheless hampered by a lack of investigative capacity and do not have appropriate structures or specialized units to deal with certain cases (Simpson, 2009). A National Anti-Corruption Forum (NACF) is an organ which is essentially an anti-corruption coalition involves Business, Civil Society and the Public Sector. Its primary purpose is to have a say towards the establishment of a national accord through the co-ordination of sectoral strategies against corruption and to advise the Government on all national initiatives involved with the implementation of strategies to combat corruption.

The Protected Disclosures Act, Act No. 26 of 2000 is vital in promoting whistleblowing as a pre-emptive corruption measure and protects whistleblowers from "occupational detriment" as a result of exposing corruption in good faith. It encourages honest employees to raise genuine concerns and report any wrongdoing in the workplace without fear of retribution (Simpson, 2009). This is in line with measures in the United Kingdom and the EU. The U.K. Public Interest Disclosure Act protects most employees from any form of retaliation by their employers, including dismissal, disciplinary action, or even transfer. The EU likewise published a charter for whistle-blower protection. EU commission staff may blow the whistle, and they have a duty upon to report any suspected wrongdoing (Martens and Crowell, 2002). Participatory Monitoring and

Evaluation (PM&E), according to the World Bank, may serve as a platform for social accountability of all local and national government programmes to relevant communities. It is essentially a dynamic engagement and judgement practice which empowers stakeholders irrespective of their level of involvement, to engage in monitoring and evaluation of anti-corruption programmes. They are able to identify gaps in strategy and make suggestions for corrective action that could be taken to redress wrongs and pro-actively halt corrupt activity (Parkinson, 2009).

8. Conclusion and recommendations

The Ancient Greek philosophers understood to well what is required in leaders. Socrates for one, believed that virtue was a matter of understanding. When one grasps what is good and what is evil, they are cautious, self-controlled, are brave and possess a spirit of justice. Aristotle on the other hand debated that while virtue has an intellectual component, it also encapsulates a virtue of character that is gradually developed by education. Real leaders however should possess what he termed 'true virtue' which is inherent in the person. Today we require politicians be experts in one or other area, but we should be seeking virtuous leaders first. Credible political leadership is seriously undermined by corruption in South Africa and it is time for ethical and competent leadership to prevail in a spirit in which the leaders are obliged become co-creators and make efforts to drive the sustainability of morality and credibility in all practices and dealings. Only in this way can the nation be competitive in the quest for foreign investment which will accelerate the social projects that are envisaged to uplift the downtrodden and create employment opportunities. It will be highly unfortunate if as a result of a culture of corruption and an ethic of self preservation and egoism, that morality begins to disintegrate. Where transgressions of the law are evident, visible sanctions must be activated and many of the unethical activities that are 'customary' must be criminalized. Guilty parties should be severely dealt with and the full letter of the law should be applied to them irrespective of their seniority in the Public Service. Where appropriate, dismissals need to be enforced and losses should be recovered from the guilty perpetrators assets.

Unethical leadership in the Public Service will lead to the destruction of each facet of government if left unchecked. Cloete and de Coning (2012) state that accountability entails that all public servants as responsible officials, are accountable for ensuring that they explain any act that is prejudicial to the interest of the community at large. These are challenges for leadership to address. There are also problems where many public servants are not adequately skilled. The Auditor General's (Republic of South Africa, 2011) reports annually point out that public funds are not in order and this is very often ascribed to a shortage of public servants without the required accounting skills. Citizens and indeed all stakeholders, should also be participating in information sessions on corrupt activities and how to combat this scourge. Such participation could for example include media briefings, public forums, survey polls, public lectures and electronic media reports with a strong emphasis on the social media platforms. Such strategies would certainly highlight ways in which corruption must be handled.

All Anti-Corruption strategies are vitally important and the government needs to consider a wider range of alternatives as a matter of urgency if the battle is to be won. The internal controls including codes of conduct, and ethics programmes that engender integrity in the workplace and which to an extent encourage employees to report potential wrongdoing must be 'beefed-up' (Kranacher et al., 2011). The desirable ethical standards for the Public Service must be clearly articulated in the legal frameworks that are in place and where there is misconduct procedures leading to discipline should be swift and firm. A strong ethical culture in the Public Service requires the support of strong ethical leaders. This implies that anticorruption programmes must be fully supported by senior employees. All policies and programmes in the Public Service must be carefully designed and be supported by appropriate structures and processes. Public servants should be trained and placed on ethics programmes and their behaviours should be monitored on an on-going basis. The most important aspect is that a strong message concerning ethical behaviour should be communicated to all public servants and where there is evidence of superior levels of integrity in dealing with stakeholders this should be rewarded as part and parcel of an effective performance management system

The South African Public Service is in dire need of a strategic rebalancing which will give reassurance to the masses and feed positivity to the ever-declining appetite of South Africans towards corrupt activities. The reaction of the government in seeking ways to reduce corruption is admirable and will be a fundamental issue in the ability of the ruling party, the ANC, to maintain its almost mythological status as the custodian of the nation. While there are marked improvements in the frameworks that have been created and in legislation to prevent corruption, the latter still persists and is growing. While public servants are urged to report fraud etc, and whistleblowers are afforded protection, more still needs to be done as the government commits itself to the highest possible standards of conduct. In a nutshell, public servants must act honorably as a matter of course and should require minimal monitoring.

Perhaps it is incumbent only on external watchdogs such as Transparency International (TI) to shed light on the success rate or otherwise of anti-corruption initiatives. The desirable outcomes in terms of corruption levels are not forthcoming yet. Additionally, it is time for leaders to be positive role models and set the tone for a positive future in what is undoubtedly a country with immense potential for a positive future as a continental and eventually global powerhouse.

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