

A Review of Leadership Moral Ethics in the 21st Century: A South African Perspective

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Abstract: Since the dawn of 1990s, social change in South Africa has provided a series of opportunities to government and related institutions of learning with a view to alter social structures and practices that were perceived to adhere to a narrow cultural perspective. However, despite the adoption of the Ubuntu moral ethics as a guiding philosophy in rendering the required change in service delivery and related Public administration, the reality tends to suggest that related Public Administration seems to be limited when it comes to evoking or apply the related *Ubuntu* principle in their daily practice. Furthermore, traditional management fundamentals remain observable; the notions of workers and management remain the mainstay of the practice. In view of these limitations, this chapter intends to highlight some of the challenges that limit the present Public Administration in effectively perfecting their mandate in their respective social spheres in particular in realization of multicultural management practice. Again, literature review will be explored to identify current challenges that affect general Public Administration and governance in various social structures in relation to redressing the past injustices. These experiences can be related to the present continuous marginalization of the indigenous value systems such as *Ubuntu* and the decay of moral ethics in view of the increase in the number of reported corruption related incidences. In view of the fact that a success of a sound programme and its implementation depends on the quality of Public Administration; this chapter concludes that only Public Administration with relevant skills in terms of being knowledgeable of multicultural perspectives in particular when it comes to understanding diverse ethics value systems. Finally, the success of transformation agenda in terms of redressing the past injustices and incorporation of indigenous African value systems in all social spheres in South Africa depends on the education system that respects all people's values systems equally and geared to enhance multicultural society.

Keywords: Administration, Leadership, Morals, Public, Private, Ubuntu

1. Introduction

Leadership limitations and successes in any Public Administration cannot be clearly valued without the reference to the related governing moral ethics of a particular nation. Nonetheless, the 'post-modern' African states elite tend to arbitrary promulgate policies that promote the status quo as they are governed by moral ethics which advance the limited narrow cultural perspective (Afegbua & Adejuwon, 2012:141). Cornwell (1995) (as cited by Afegbua & Adejuwon, 2012:142) emphasized this situation as follows:

The driving force behind Africa's experiment with democracy came both from ideology conviction and the growing impatience of an ever bolder public consciousness, and from the related manner of the continent's prevailing economic woes. On the other hand, the politically conscious urbanized, professional and studies bodies began to rail against the continue failure of their rulers to match rhetoric

and promises to economic progress, for much of Africa had experienced a steady decline in living ethics through the 1970's and 1980's. On their part, the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and other bilateral aid donors also made it quite clear that if further financial assistance was to be forthcoming. South Africa's governments had to give urgent attention to their moral ethics of their leadership in Public Administration. More specifically, they had to become politically more accountable to their people, and curb corruption.

Perhaps, the notion of effective cannot be ignored especially when it comes to realization of moral sound administration and sustainable development. Though the leadership crisis cannot be understood in isolation to the conflicting interests of historical development of capitalism, but it's also worth considering the moral ethics and Ubuntu aspect in relation to the process adoption of "bad policies, that eroded Public Administration and ethics and weakened the system of governance (Afegbua &

Adejuwon, 2012:143). This experience reveals that stakeholders, such as government and all relevant social structures or institutions, to consider the practical strategies to ensure equity and justice that reflect a liberated state (Beckmann, 2016:289). Thus, Pinar (2009:318) asserts that Public Administrators should be transformed in order to be relevant to the aspirations of a transformed South Africa. This chapter poses that *Batho-pele* is limited due to reasons that include the deficiency of relevant human capital but also the refutation of Afrikan moral ethics such as ancient *natural* world order in favour of European based – new *rational* world order (Denton & Vloeberghs, 2003:85). In discovering this matter further, the transformation leadership perspective will be used to scrutinize the limitations of leadership and Public Administration in relation to the current pathological social settings. The limited narrow cultural perspective model that is notorious of marginalizing of other cultural value systems – especially when it comes to service delivery to varied racial groups – will be deliberated.

In order to gain a better understanding the limits of the current leadership in particular within the Public Administration such as government, education, corporate structures, political parties and religious aligned organizations within western timeline – twenty first century, in particular the guiding ethos in this instance. Nevertheless, for a better understanding of the issue under discussion, leadership moral ethics in democratic South Africa, thus etymology becomes relevant in two terms, "ethics" and "morality", since they are fundamental in this discussion. Kunhiyop (2008:4) emphasises that:

Morals and morality come from the Latin word, mos, meaning custom or usage, while ethics comes from the Greek word, ethos, whose meaning is roughly the same. So it is hardly surprising that today, as earlier, these two words are often used interchangeably. When a distinction is made, "morals" nowadays refers to actual human conduct viewed with regard to right and wrong, good and evil, "ethics" refers to a theoretical overview of morality, a theory or system or code. In this sense, our morality is the concrete human reality that we live out from day to day, while ethics is an academic view gained by taking a step back and analysing or theorizing about (any) morality.

Although democratic era in countries such as South Africa is perceived as the moment of discovering

equity between the previously advantaged white populace and disadvantaged black African community (Denton & Vloeberghs, 2003:85). This predicament arises due to varying definitions by researchers in this instance, as some tended to define leadership based on personality and physical traits, while other stresses on prescribed behaviors' (ibid.).

Nonetheless, Aguda (1995) (cited in Denton & Vloeberghs, 2003:144) summarises three protocols of acquiring leadership position: firstly, the individual can self-impose without honoring the constitution arrangement. Secondly, in other circumstance the group of people can impose individual as the leader; and thirdly, the individual presentation of what is perceived as leadership skill based on their set of values. In other words, the idea of governance refers to " a set of values, policies and institutions" that are used for managing economic, political in various spheres including government, civil society and private sector. In summary, governance is associated with realm to political system and institutionalization of the normative values that enable or coerce citizens in general.

This paper argues that the significance for consideration of the historical background that laid the foundations for the present moral ethics of which this chapter is trying to unpack in view of the rationale behind the leadership limitations. Denton and Vloeberghs (2003:149) emphasise this scenario by stating that:

The political elites are not a productive class, but rely on the control of state structures to access economic rewards. The over politicization of the... state is also understood in the context of the unmediated struggle for power, influence and patronage. The nature of political context ensured the emergence of local governing class without ideological commitment. Rather than pursue political contexts within ideological framework, politics became a contested terrain for shallow, self-centered political gains.

On the contrary, the inclusivity approach attempts to change the exclusionary moral leadership of the colonial era that reinforces the narrow cultural view point in particular western moral codes (Pinar, 2009:6). The current situation is not necessarily because of segregation, but, more subtly, is the outcome of Public Administration that prohibit the transformation that encompass and recognize indigenous African moral codes in the broader

government spheres. For example, during 1994 the government pronounced three approaches – local, provincial and national, accompanied by the adoption of *Batho Pele* (the African moral code that stresses that People come first) principle to fast track the planning process, passing of policies that enable the effective service delivery (Mthembu, 2019; Municipal Structures Act 117 of 1998). Despite such government intervention, the majority of municipalities in the country tended to experience challenges of service delivery protests like in City of Tshwane, where Hammanskraal spent the whole 6 months suffering without water of which suggest dissatisfaction from citizens as the municipalities are tasked with service delivery. Perhaps, Beckmann's (2016:299) argument that suggest that in order to understand the current leadership discourse, it is vital to note that these perceptions, which seem to be ill-defined and unsolicited, include attitudes, cultures and styles that obstruct the goal of ethical transformation from Public Administration. In other words, the perpetual disregarding of attending to diverse cultural moral ethics, which is a common feature of the present Public Administration system, contributes to delinquent behavior in various Public Administration in particularly among the government officials.

The system thinking theory argues that a point of departure towards understanding of the causal linkages between the elements of any Public Administration (Denton & Vloeberghs, 2003:88). When unpacking the notion of coloniality –the experience of *status quo* in this country, that it is characterized by the continuous marginalization of indigenous values systems (Abdullahi, 2011:115). Nevertheless, when it comes to South Africa context, since 1994 the agenda to restructure the Officials from the narrow cultural perspective to encompass the previous disadvantaged cultural traits and redress past social injustices remain high on the agenda. In addition, the experience of rapid change that is characterized by technological novelty, globalization, and market expansion that tend to identified with high rate of service delivery protests within various institutions including communities and academia (Mkhize, 2018).

This chapter argues that the realisation of a transformed leadership will be possible when the incorporation of African centered moral ethics including the transformation of institutional cultures in the Public Administration, as there are

still remnants of exclusionary, hurtful and anger-provoking elements that represent the oppression of the past (Mthembu, 2018:198). In other words, this scenario is exacerbated by the historical colonial global narrow cultural perspective that remain highly ostracized as other segments of the society seek to sustain (Denton & Vloeberghs, 2003:88).

Furthermore, the better understanding of the guiding principles that each society or Public Administration that adhere to in terms of norms, maybe, the deliberation on the notion of social order or contract becomes urgent. In an African social contract – the ancient world order/ order of creation, leaders are perceived as intermediaries between the people and their governance; or as individuals who have been elected to serve and lead a particular public entity to reach its objectives (Karam & Jamal, 2017:462). In other words, a social contract depicts the broad social order that regulates human relationships that manifest with reference to globalisation issues, such as social justice especially when it comes to the economic, inequality, gender, marginalisation of indigenous people and coloniality through moral values.

Perhaps, for a better understanding of the agency and related guidelines of the current leadership practices, the idea of order is more irresistible to grapple with. It's noting that agency can be material, ideational or normative – something denied the non-core actors in any situation, for instance, during colonialism various indigenous people in different nations in the world including South Africa were violently forced to accept foreign cultural values such ethics, language including inculcating false consciousness ideal of knowledge of individual self (Acharya, 2018:4). For the purposes of this chapter, a distinction between "international order" and "world order" implies the relationship between states, with "global order" applying to "social life among mankind as a whole". Order serves to guide the knowledge that a specific community or society reveres, which it gained through thinking, the senses, feeling, intuition, physical movement, or relationships with others and among members of that community in general (Nabudere, 2011:83). Thus, the modern-day interpretations of moral leadership by African people, phenomena, and milieus continue to reflect a narrow Ubuntu perspective that serves to marginalise their indigenous values system, specifically leaders tend to entrenches false conception when it comes to understanding of the

purpose of inequality and a transformation (Do Vale, 2016:600). In other words, this scenario suggests that colonial moral ethics do not adapt well to African-centred milieus, in that they alter traditions and influence various parts of the public in various ways, culminating in leadership crises on the environmental political, social and economic fronts, that continue to undermine African wisdom and morals (Awajiusuk, 2015:308).

Nonetheless, this situation suggests that when Public officials are linked to delinquent behavior or limited skill, they cannot demonstrate an alternative leadership style, despite their social status and educational achievements. In other words, the relevant moral ethics enable the role of leadership to advocate societal aspirations and required set of ethics that promote a particular culture in various state entities including political, communal and related government administrative organs such as the municipality (Mthembu, 2012:iv). Perhaps, an appraisal of moral ethics that focuses on the personal integrity of leadership in the twenty first century becomes more relevant. In other words, the review of all government institutions including those that are tasked with moral molding, the Public Administration should be considered especially when discussing issues related to failure to implement African related values system such as *Batho-pele* in the government structures in this country.

However, the nature of leadership challenges in South Africa are considered to be structural and encapsulate the mismatch between the skills endowment of individuals and moral ethics (Mlatsheni, 2012:32). For example, in various public structures where normally public representatives have good intentions in particular when they are appointed in their respective posts, but they tend to be prohibited by the untransformed Public Administration especially when performing their duties. Nonetheless, this scenario suggests that although individuals can achieve high skills and have related high chances of occupying leadership and management roles, there is no guarantee of their understanding of indigenous moral ethics in view of the continuous denomination of narrow cultural framework that is rife in the public.

Theoretically, moral ethics, the type of education relative to skills can also influence an individual's behavior, ability to be self-sufficient and reliable. Thus, education system should be transformed and

accessible to equip individuals with diverse moral skills that focus not only on western values, but also on the indigenous African knowledge value systems to ensure multicultural leadership style (Denton & Vloeberghs, 2003:88). Where there is high rate of delinquent behavior among the leadership, such an approach would constitute interlinked substitutes for the respect and exposure to understanding of diverse cultural values in our locales and globally (Brown & Trevino, 2006). Burns (2008:11) emphasises that the current partial Public Administration set-up has analogous connections to marginalization with discouraging effects, especially for the southern nations in Africa, including South Africa. In summary, issues of accessibility, such as financial constraints and public values, determine the acquisition of education qualifications and subsequent individual's agency and behavior.

2. The Transformative Leadership Perspective

In this paper, the demonstration of the pervasiveness of disconnection between public aspirations, values and current leadership practice(s), while contrasting this with the proposed *Batho Pele* principle in relation to current leadership crisis that is experienced in Public Administration especially when it comes to meeting service delivery mandate or objectives of a particular public structure and most of all, the recognition and inclusion of the previously marginalized African values systems in this country. So, the increasing demand for a pluralist or multicultural education system requires a high level of understanding and respect for those from other previously advantaged cultures (Northouse, 2007). This new form of leadership approach was also emphasised by Nelson Mandela in his book, *Long walk to freedom*, where he emphasized that, "The truth is that we are not yet free; we have merely achieved the freedom to be free, the right not to be oppressed. For to be free is not merely to cast off one's chains, but to live in a way that respects and enhances the freedom of others. The true test of our devotion to freedom is just beginning" (Mandela, 1994:617). One of the best ways to inculcate this value is through an education system. In retrospect, Pinar (2009:290) argues that for African context to achieve this goal, the first point of departure should be centered on a concept of place, as it is one of the fundamental aspects in moral code development. Thus, the psychoanalysis functions as a determining element of a science that integrates self-reflection (Mthembu, 2018:197).

When considering leadership limitations in achieving the desired organization goal especially in the South African context, it becomes imperative to consider the transformative learning perspective, as it emphasizes that transformation process consist of three fundamental aspects: psychological that deals with the rationality of the self, belief that focus on the moral related issues, and attitude focused on the improvement of lifestyle (Heilman & Clarke, 2016:42). Mthembu (2018:198) argues that transformative learning entails personal commitment to divulging of the previously held beliefs, opinions and conventions. Nonetheless, the transformative learning approach assists in identifying and understanding grounds for alterations with a view to formulate the aspired objective.

Furthermore, the notion of mixing becomes relevant in this instance, as it encompasses three methods of using individuals' experiences, especially when it comes to the conception of desired organization change (Le Vine, 1977:631). This is achieved firstly, through by highlighting the intuitive capability – observation, hearing and practice; secondly, via understanding the emotional aspects such as despondency, partiality and achievement; and lastly, the discovery of personal knowledge – remembrance of social structures, individual limitations and differences between personal and collective experiences (Vives, Orte & March, 2015:230). Thus, Vives, Orte and March (2015:231) argue that the advocacy of transformative leadership entails changes of which emphasise the adoption of a holistic alignment of leadership techniques to encourage engagement with other forms of leadership knowledge's – the operational and interpersonal (Le Vine, 1977:637). This scenario suggests that knowledge that enables the broader examination, so that leaders are aware of their feelings and their relationship to their surroundings through their communicative representation (Chareonwongsak, 2018).

3. Challenges and Prospects of *Batho-Pele* Principle

The realization of capable and morally fit leadership in the Public Administration South African landscape would require the consideration of a more inclusive approach is suggested – as per the transformative leadership perspective. In order for a better understanding of the issue under discussion, perhaps, it worth mentioning that when discussing the leadership crisis in South Africa, the

consideration that there wide public variety with divergent moral ethics, for example, the Afrocentric principle that is identified by humanitarian virtue that advocate morals on consensus and compassion and Eurocentric principle identified with bottom-up thinking public morals that promotes production and performance (Ramdass, 2015:1113).

Nevertheless, the extent of the challenge surrounding the leadership limitations in bringing about the desired change or to achieve a clearly defined goal in Public Administration in this regard; for instance, in particular the leadership within the South African governance landscape, it is estimated that 257 municipalities are in a disastrous leadership crisis, as only about 33 (13%) meet the relevant legal requirements (Benjamin & Gordon, 2016). Again, about a third (31%) of the municipalities revealed their weak status, as they are not financially viable. It is worth highlighting that in addition, this scenario is exacerbated by variety of factors that encompass a lack of appropriate management skills, narrow moral ethics, political interference and infighting in councils. In addition, it also includes the challenges to lack of relevant skills to fill major positions and related lack of political will to ensure accountability (Le Vine, 1977: 632). Subsequently, these limitations can be linked to the rise in the rate of protests activities of which tend to reveal the level of people's disgruntlement and commitment of the government structures in this instance (Benjamin & Gordon, 2016).

The understanding and addressing of the leadership limitations requires the knowledgeability of various cultural moral backgrounds in order implement a transformed leadership approach to address injustices in various public structures (Brown & Trevino, 2006). Therefore, mentorship of moral and responsible leadership, Northouse (2007) argues that such endeavors to produce good leadership entails the process whereby an individual influences a group of individuals to achieve a common goal. In other words, the success of any social structure depends on responsible individual's working on their holistic awareness in guaranteeing achievement of the desired change in their respective locale (Le Vine, 1977:637).

When contrasting the colonial era and post-independence leadership approaches, the African political styles during colonial era tended to reflect the constraints imposed by colonizers expectations of role-performance in institutions that uphold

western moral ethics of which contributed and used as the baseline in the post-colonial nations such as South Africa. This situation was illustrated by Fourie, van der Merwe and van der Merwe (2017:231) when they argue that: "[T]he creation of single-party, authoritarian regimes in a number of countries, and the appearance of military dictatorships in others, gave impetus to the development of much more idiosyncratic, highly personalized leadership styles than had been possible before independence. In summary, this setting suggests that leadership structures that fail to encompass and acknowledge other cultural knowledge's are at risk of being viewed as oppressive and being opposed by individuals who feel disadvantaged (Mthembu, 2018:198).

Nonetheless, leadership limitations are normally linked to a series of misconducts such as corruption and failure to achieve the desired objective, however, the idea of social order tend to be ignored despite of its significance. This setting was emphasised by Le Vine (1977: 632) when he argued that there are three historical factors that need to be considered when assessing the incompatibility of present African leadership in relation to social change:

Firstly, the role, style and image of African political leaders should be viewed in terms of "the idiosyncratic – but precarious – balance between the expression of a leader's personality and his [sic] response to the complex of pressures attending and impinging upon his role". Secondly, that African leaders "adopt role-images that serve to create or maintain ... affect between themselves and their followers to induce submission, acquiescence or support, as well as to satisfy their own role-cognitions". Thirdly, they advocate the "salience and valence of important symbols" for their status.

4. Prospects of Multicultural Perspective: Batho Pele Principle

For the feasibility of this project this chapter will be not in a position to discuss multicultural perspective at length but a summary will be provided in this instance. Nonetheless, the contemporary sociopolitical changes in South Africa coincided with socio-political changes that are observable for upholding the western global social order, especially in the public sphere on three fronts: the rapid use of information technology; the call for an

incorporation of previously disadvantaged cultural values including in the education system and subtly entrenchment of the previously and still disputed western value system that are notorious for marginalization of other values specifically the indigenous African moral ethical systems (Awajiusuk, 2015:308; Denton & Vloeberghs, 2003:86). Nevertheless, the post 1994 regime is known for a mandate to redress the past injustices and guarantee of speedily service delivery. Thus South African government adopted the principles of *Batho Pele* guided by eight principles that are outlined here in this instance:

- **Consultation:** The public should be consulted and be given full and relevant information about the public services they are entitled to receive.
- **Access:** Guarantee of equal access to the services to which they are entitled to.
- **Redress:** The assurance receives sympathetic, positive explanation.
- **Service ethics:** The guarantee of quality of public services that they are aware of what to expect.
- **Transparency and openness:** Familiarity on how government departments function and related leadership.
- **Value for money:** Services should be provided economically and efficiently in order to give you the best possible value for money.
- **Courtesy:** Guarantee of fair treatment with courtesy and considerations.

However, despite such commitment from the government, the public reality shows that most municipalities in the country tended to be continuously facing the similar challenges of service delivery protests. Therefore, these challenges suggest a need for thorough examination of relevant Public Administration arrangements and support mechanisms that guide the present leadership in Public Administration in the country (Denton & Vloeberghs, 2003:86). In other words, the failure to acknowledge the varying guiding cultural moral ethics for each society will lead to a failure to bridge challenges that were imposed by colonial center-periphery administration framework that ensured the social arrangements that haunts the 'post-colonial' – the democratic era (Vives, Orte & March, 2015:231). Conversely, this scenario suggests

a need for transformative leadership that will be able to grapple with past injustices and asserting the nations aspirations (Denton & Vloeberghs, 2003:84). This it is suggested that the knowledgeable of the previously marginalized ethos, the African centered leadership approach such as *Batho Pele* will enable the adaptation to the practicalities of each peculiar public setting, but provision of relevant policies, guidelines and appropriate support for its implementation will guarantee its success.

5. Conclusion and Recommendations

According to the present experiences of leadership crisis and the aspiration to bring about social transformation in South Africa, this article revealed some of the limitations that inhibit transformation, as well as the possibilities that can be embraced to address challenges in a changing society. Thus, transformative leadership perspective it is suggest that it should be used as a guiding principle in formulating relevant principles that enhance mutual respect of diverse cultural values system for diverse social groups in the world. Perhaps, the transformative learning components such as psychological, diverse belief systems and varied public behavioral aspects are well suited to enhancing leaders' participation in championing their responsibilities with the multicultural societies such as South Africa and the world (Denton & Vloeberghs, 2003:84). In fact, the public sphere is already in transition from narrow public perspective to a pluralist view, by escalating the use and introduction of multicultural elements such language and other artefacts will enable the previous advantaged groups in particular leaders a chance to learn and develop a sense of respect of other people and their cultures in forging 'a better world'.

In particular, the mixed leadership style and moral development depend on authentic learning in order to nurture basic, technical and practical skills in this instance. In guaranteeing the success of the transformed leadership, blended public learning education will enable the provision of various approaches to ensure improvement of morals and knowledge for leaders, academic and satisfaction of multicultural societal needs. In other words, the recognition and application of varied moral ethics will enable global leadership to discover mutual respect of which colonial era denied them by virtues of arrogance that has been demonstrated by 'some western leaders'. This scenario recommends the holistic approach suggested for the development

of a transformed social system that takes into cognizance of diverse cultural social setting and related social orders. In conclusion, the success of the transformed leadership and the relevant academic support for leaders and society should be an inherent facet of the social milieu. In summary, the continuous failure to incorporate and development of a multicultural social setting will confirm the voice from the previous disadvantaged, black African public that argues that though democracy is highly celebrated for bringing about the current debates on transformation; yet, the subtly enforcement of the use of English language in all social spheres and the western based capitalist economic systems remain rife in South African society and global community in general.

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