

How the Partnership of Good Governance and Ethics Enhances Public Administration

NS Modiba

University of Limpopo, South Africa

Abstract: The paper interrogates the questionable governance and unethical practices in public administrations. The paper is both conceptual and empirical in nature. Interviewing techniques and document analysis were used to collect data from three public administrations in Limpopo Province, South Africa. Research findings reveal that there is lack of professionalism by public administrators. Secondly, inadequate emphasis of accountability in public administrations, is costly. Thirdly, there is inability to appoint honest people in public administrations. Fourthly, there is leadership deficit in the public sector. Lastly, there is lack of clean-up attitude in public administrations. On that basis, the researcher recommends that public administrations be revolutionised to rid them of entrenched mediocrity visible through their questionable governance and unethical practices. Furthermore, the researcher recommends for accountable administrative leadership that will do the right thing and put Africa first, at all times. That would be part of deinstitutionalising the entrenched mediocrity which delays the service delivery.

Keywords: Accountability, Clean-up, Conscience, Leadership deficit, Professionalism, Revolutionise

1. Introduction

The desire for a clean and ethical governance is an aspiration of every public administration. Such a governance could create an administration characterised by institutional efficacy. That occurs where the principles of good governance like openness, transparency, consultation and participation are observed in the process of service delivery by organs of state and their institutional incumbents (Fox, 2010; Theletsane, 2014). Many public institutions continue to be mired in administrative bungle due to diverse factors one of which relates to the tradition by those public institutions of placing inadequate attention to accountable and ethical governance in administrations (Moyo, 2015:16). Masina (2015:24) narrates that where there is an ethical, healthy and responsive governance and administration, the delivery of services to the civilians is likely to be satisfactory. As long as there is a will-power by institutional incumbents to be committed to accountable and ethical governance, being guided by courageous leadership, the nature of governance structures and systems created to render a service to people are likely to be impactful (Khoza, 2015:43). Owing to colonialism, among others, some public administrations persist to operate with inherited meek governance patterns that are based on their erstwhile colonial masters (Tisdall, 2015:15). The danger of such a practice is the perpetuation of

subjugation and delivery of poor services to the civilians. This occurs in a subtle manner which makes it difficult for everyone to notice. Nkuna (2015:120) remarks that untransformed public administrations whose governances are shaky and at times unethical, do instil in incumbents, a sense of self-hate and inferiority complex. Accountable and ethical governance in public administrations are indispensable. Unethical governance in public administrations, benefit no one (Yukl, 2006, Motsepe, 2015:5). One of the underlying reasons why myriad public administrations still operate with unaccountable and unethical governances that are indescribably inefficacious after more than two decades of independence in Africa, it is because of placing little attention to issues of good and ethical governance by myriad public administrations. Siswana (2007:182) asserts that conspicuous indicators of unaccountable governances in public administrations are the dysfunctional institutional systems and structures applied. Its manifestations would be the unending protest marches for lack of service delivery by diverse communities at different times. Shejvali (2015:34) observes that, there is an amount of reluctance by myriad public administrations to reposition themselves through placing adequate attention to accountable and ethical governance in order to operate differently. In some instances, the very institutional structures and systems which are accepted to be the core of efficacious governance

and administration are non-existent. The question to pose is: what is likely to occur within a public administration whose operation is not underpinned by good and ethical governances, supported by accountable governance structures, systems, policies, processes and institutional procedures of note? Under normal circumstances, not much could be expected in terms of quality service delivery from such public administrations. Such public administrations could struggle to service its people as expected, as a result of lacking the foundation upon which its magnificent service delivery has to be based on, namely, a sound accountable and ethical governance (Khoza, 2015:43).

Hofstee (2010:107) advises that there is a distinction between the research title and the research problem and maintains that the researcher risks wasting the reader's time where she fails to distinguish between a title to read about and a research problem to solve. With a research title, the researcher gathers data under its guidance while with the research problem the researcher strives to overcome it. The prerequisite for the researcher solving a research problem is to understand it fully. No skill is more useful than the ability to articulate a problem concisely. The problem of this paper centres around explaining the opportunity missed by certain public administrations by taking their own clientele for granted through poor and unethical governance. This practice of rendering dissatisfactory service to the clientele is as old as mountains themselves. For instance, a couple of years ago, some public administrations in Limpopo Province, were placed under an administration as a confirmation that the services they were rendering to the clientele were of a mediocre nature. What is astonishing about the discussed challenge of some public administrations not being productive is that the problem appears to be more prevalent in the rural Provinces of South Africa as in other urban Provinces, like Gauteng and the Western Cape Provinces. The question to pose is why more common in rural Provinces. This is due to the suffered apartheid in South Africa. Apartheid has eroded and corroded in certain rural public servants any semblance of humanity and Ubuntu to the level where egoism in Africans is so entrenched such that public servants turn to operate without conscience with much of what they are doing in public administrations. The research questions are as follow: What are the roles and significance of ethical and good governance structures and systems that are clearly crafted in line with the resoluteness

of a public administration as an organ of state, in enhancing a vibrant civil society that enjoys above average service delivery? What are the ideas, concerns and aspirations of the civil society regarding the strengthening of the public administrative efficacy? Broad as they are, the above questions could be broken down into the following sub-questions: How are enabling governance structures and systems created? Who genuinely benefits from the ethical and the accountable public administration? How best to replace inefficacious public administrations with efficacious ones? How is a public administration stability, linked to structures and systems of an organ of state?

2. Theoretical Considerations

Welman, Kruger & Mitchell (2005:12) assert that a theory forms the basis for a chain of reasoning. This signifies that arguing on how the partnership of good governance and ethics enhances public administration, with a theory in place, one's argument is elevated. The critical theory underpins this paper. Its choice rests on the relevance the researcher finds in it in illuminating issues of efficacious and ethical governance in public administration. Briefly, one of the principles of the critical theory is that very often the truth serves the status quo. The other principle relates to the question of "why is it that certain groups of people are so privileged?" These fundamental principles were helpful in clarifying how lack of good and ethical governance, delay the enhancement of public administrations, and perpetuate inequality of service delivery among the citizenry (Motsepe, 2015:5). Lack of good and ethical governance could make it difficult for some public administration heads to be accountable to their superiors. The selection of the critical theory in this paper, is informed by its encouragement of reflective and analytical thoughts as regards the experienced state of affairs of lack of efficacious and ethical governance in myriad public administrations in the country and beyond. That the three chosen public administrations in this paper, namely the Department of Education, the Department of Health and the Department of Police Services in Limpopo Province are still having a shaky and unethical governance in their administrations, has to be a cause for concern (Moyo, 2015:16). The critical theory reveals that inequality in a country's public administrations could be entrenched if the masses of the clientele are docile and gullible and not standing up for their constitutionally guaranteed rights to quality service delivery. Higgs & Smith

(2010:67) advise that knowledge and how we understand truth, including scientific truth, moral truth and historical truth should not be separated from everyday life. This implies that comprehending the spread of how quality public administration services are denied to their legitimate recipients, the context of the manifestation of denial, is as essential as the denial itself. The critical theory assists in arriving at the root cause of the absence of good and ethical governance in public administrations as experienced in some of Limpopo Province's administrations (Van Niekerk & Van Niekerk, 2009:12). The other unique relevance of the critical theory for this paper can be traced back to how it stands out emphasising ethics in public administrations. In the context of this paper, that would imply the study of good and bad behaviour by human beings especially in the manner in which they interrelate and interact when rendering a public administration service to their fellow human beings. The critical theory has a potential of uncovering whether the process of inability to create structures and systems by some public administrations, in order to service their people well, is deliberate or unintentional. The researcher contends that not every theory other than the critical theory could productively illuminate a problem of this paper like the chosen theory (Allen, 2015:11). The problem of this paper centres around explaining the opportunity missed by the identified public administrations by taking their own clientele for granted through managing and leading their public administrations without good and ethical governance practices. The critical theory advocates for the critical reflection on society, in order to discover the hidden assumptions that maintain the existing power relationships between the leaders and the followers (Higgs & Smith, 2010:72). Embracing critical theory by the researcher, centres around the theory advising against separating the context of unethical governance in public administrations of Limpopo Province, South Africa and the learnt social oppression, practitioners in public administrations, have been subjected to during the era of apartheid and colonialism. Public administrations of the world require emancipation from unethical and inefficient governance within their institutions (Arden, 2013:38). How practitioners and public administrators normally think and act is the product of many years of being subjected to circumstances that either facilitate the quality service delivery to the clientele or the perpetual neglect of the service recipients despite their constitutionally guaranteed rights to those services (Tisdall, 2015:15).

3. Methodos and Materials

This paper is qualitative in nature. The problem which this paper pursues was found to be researchable along the qualitative school of thought as against the others (Dawson, 2006; Levin, 2005). The researcher found a need to create a synergy between the critical theory and the qualitative approach as the overarching research methodology (Hofstee, 2010:115). The combination of the two, helped immensely in terms of illuminating issues of how lack of efficacious governance in public administrations, deny the civil society, the basic right of quality public services, they are entitled to, and how that persists to paint Africa as a dark continent where some public administrations care more about the elites and less about members of their civil society. A good case in point for a similar state of affairs happened when 30 million was looted from the public administrations during the cash-gate between Malawi and South Africa in 2013. This occurred amongst others as a result of lack of efficacious governance in public administrations. That was manifested through the abuse of public administrations, negligence by public officers in preserving money or other property, and through open money laundering processes enabled by questionable public administrations (Masina, 2015:24). The shared example exposes the ripeness of the unethical and inefficient governance in public administrations across the globe. With the critical theory underpinning the paper, the researcher utilised it, to interrogate how the civil society normally understands lack of ethical and efficacious governance and the kind of discourses they normally engage themselves in over the matter. Furthermore, the theory was also applied to determine the common reactions by members of the civil society expected to be serviced by their disappointing public administrations which are perpetually inefficient. Partnering the qualitative research approach and the critical theory enabled the researcher to make an in-depth understanding of how despite many years since apartheid formally collapsed, its effects remain firmly in place. Such effects are still so severe such that certain public administrations find it difficult to be productive in servicing their own civil society with aplomb and distinction. To conclude this item on research methodology, there is a need to divulge that interviewing techniques and the document analysis were utilised to construct data relevant for this paper. All the documents primary and secondary that contained

information about the inefficacy and the unethical governance of public administrations were studied. To triangulate, the gleaned data, interviewing was conducted with three members in each of the identified three public administrations whose services to the civil society were disappointing. Responses were audio-taped for transcription later-on (Glatthorn & Joyner, 2005).

4. Results and Discussions

Findings arrived at in this paper, are in relation to the research title whose focus is: how the partnership of good governance and ethics enhances public administration. The basis of the findings is the analysed data which were generated through the interviewing techniques and the document analysis. The three public administrations that were explored as regards how inefficacious and unethical governance in public administrations, deprive the civil society of the quality service delivery are: The Departments of Education, Health and Police Services. The researcher identified those public administrations for scrutiny in the area of inefficacious and unethical governance, not because there is anything special about them, other than perpetually delivering dissatisfactory services to the civil society where at one stage they were put under administration, in the recent past. Furthermore, paying attention to those three public administrations ought not to create an impression that they are the only ones that are worse off as regards inefficacious and unethical governance in Limpopo Province of South Africa. They were selected because down the years the researcher, familiarised himself with issues of poor and unethical governance in those public administrations. The critical theory has been sufficiently instrumental in assisting in the analysis of data to emerge with these findings. Findings and discussion for this paper are the following: lack of professionalism, less emphasis of adequate accountability and inability to appoint honest people.

4.1 Lack of Professionalism

Professionalism is of essence for public administrators. Embracing the Ubuntu philosophy and the Batho Pele Principles could enable public administrators to render services to consumers with aplomb and distinctions (Baloyi, 2019:3). The dilemma with some public administrations is attraction to governance models which have outlived their usefulness. Good and ethical governance systems

and structures, could support public administrations to reinforce the professionalism culture in their operations (Madue, 2013). Professionalism, distinguishes one public administration from the rest (Khaas, 2019:10). Limpopo as a Province does not currently pride itself of such kind of public administrations. A good case in point is that some couple of years ago, many public administrations were placed under administration because of poor service to residents. Even those that were trying to deliver brilliant services to the clientele were found to be ignoring the principles of ethics. This more or less placed them in the same category with those whose operations were devoid of professionalism. Most public administrations have inherited their governance structures, policies and systems to manage and lead their own service delivery processes, from previous regimes. That does not always work well in view of the changed circumstances of the 21st century. Developers of those structures and systems of governance and administration were being guided by their own backgrounds, culture, ethos, upbringing, fears aspirations etc. Apartheid bequeathed governance and administration which needed to be adapted to new conditions of democracy. Operating with structures and systems whose development was foreign to institutional set-ups, was a grave error. Whether current public administrations will be able to sever the historically established ties with their erstwhile apartheid regimes, it is a matter of wait and see (Tsheola, 2002). Zwane (2015:10) articulates that structurally, nothing has changed in public administrations since the collapse of apartheid. This is to signify that current public administrations and their administrative heads are by and large presiding with dignity over the mess of apartheid inherited from their former illegitimate rulers. Amongst others, current administrations inherited apartheid policies and infrastructure. The challenge of being a copycat by current public administrations and its people, keeps those public administrations always bereft of originality which is a sign of lack of being critical, independent and reflective on issues of sustainable development and progress, such as quality and decent delivery of services to the civil society (Mbeki, 2003, Mbele, 2019:10; Musyoka, 2019:4).

4.2 Less Emphasis of Adequate Accountability

Brown (2019:1) emphasises that accountability and stability in a public administration determine the level at which that administration would attract the

positive image or not. That the majority of public administrations are characterised by either instability or disharmony, has to be a cause for concern in an attempt to restore accountable and ethical public administrations (Arden, 2013:56; Bell, 2019:2). Why is accountability as one of the essential elements of good and ethical governance missing in myriad of the public administrations? Literature review answers that the enemy of accountable and ethical governance is public administrations themselves. Where accountability is compromised, a public administration could lose a positive image it has been enjoying (Omano, 2005; Gobillot, 2008; Owabe, 2013). The contribution of apartheid and colonialism to the flouting of the accountability principles cannot be ignored. It is more than 21 years since nearly all the public administrations in the continent have been functioning under the new dispensations, but accountability is not yet reigning supreme. Everything is based on the point that South Africa as the last but one country of the continent of Africa to be free, accountability in its public administrations is at its lowest ebb. Normally, public administrations of Africa find themselves faced with protesters complaining about service delivery. Low level accountability is behind poor service delivery (Mooney, 2019:7; Musyoka, 2019:4). Accountable and ethical administrations attempt to bring quality services to customers (Cunha, Filho & Goncalves, 2010). Jim (2019:3) reiterates that where accountability is being sufficiently emphasised, managed, monitored and continuously evaluated in public administrations, service delivery could show signs of enhancing.

4.3 Inability to Appoint Honest People

Allen (2014:9) advises that as long as public administrations are bereft of honest and ethical personnel, then service protests may not dwindle. Inability to appoint sufficiently dedicated and honest people as public servants remains a challenge. Furthermore, lack of alignment of skills, leadership and organisational capabilities to the services to be delivered to the civil society, also contributes to dissatisfactory services rendered by public administrations (Mbele, 2019:10). Alignment aims at never compromising the quality of services delivered to the civil society. Where alignment exists, there will never be business as usual in the form of jeopardising high performance (Musyoka, 2019:4). Institutional alignment thrives well in public administrations where ethics, accountability and good governance

are virtues. Thornhill & Van Dijk (2010) assert that bad customer service by public administrations is avoidable as long as the right basics are in place and organisational practitioners abide by them. Kouzes & Posner (2007) and Sebola (2012) reason that where there is great public administration it would result from great governance supported by ethical and ever determined personnel. Jim (2019:3) accentuates that with no ethics and accountable governance in public administrations, ineptitude and corruption could set in. To sum up, ethical and honest public servants who are accountable, could restore the ruined image of an administration (Tisdall, 2005:15). Khaas (2019:1) concludes that the civil society could be better served where good governance in a public administration is characterised by ever honest public servants who have performance-driven administrative virtues.

5. Conclusion and Recommendations

Public administrations in Limpopo Province, South Africa, need to deal with their challenges of inefficient and unethical governance, in the identified institutional operations. This will enable them to improve service delivery to their civil society. Whether hurdles experienced by public administrations are internally generated or externally imposed, is not an issue. The question to pose has to be: what is it that every individual public administration has to do, to implement an ethical and good governance that enhances its public administration to enable it to operate differently and in an efficacious manner? Public administrators have to put their civil society in a trajectory of forward development and movement by offering them decent service delivery. This is possible with the sound and ethical governance in their institutional operations that prioritise high level service delivery to their civil society. Such good and ethical governance has to be free from euro-centric models. The postponement of creating efficacious and ethical governance in public administrations stands to allow unemployment, diseases, poverty, starvation and other maladies to soar. There are copious examples from diverse public administrations of the continent which confirm that magnificent and brilliant governance in public administrations are possible, with ethical, accountable and honest people serving those public administrations. Failing to deliver excellent service to the civil society by public administrations has to be punished. The basis of these recommendations are the discussed findings which are as follows:

- There is a need for public administrations to emphasise professionalism at all times by the institutional incumbents, in order to render a service that is ever excellent within the ethical and efficacious governance that enhances their public administrations
- There is a need by public administrations to put more emphasis on upholding the principle of accountability to stabilise their administrations through pursuing good and ethical governance that is likely to ascertain that the delivery of service to the civil society, is of the highest quality.
- Lastly, there is a need to address leadership and management deficit, experienced in some public administrations that prevent the appointment of honest public servants with the clean-up attitude which this century so much requires to fast-track the delivery of mouth-watering service within the good and ethical governance that enhances the performance of a public administration.

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