

## Good Governance and Whistleblowing: A Case of a Higher Education Institution (HEI) in South Africa

N. Dorasamy

*Department of Public Management & Economics, Faculty of Management Sciences, Durban University of Technology, 41-43 ML Sultan Road, Durban, 4001, KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa*  
*Telephone: +27 31 373 6862 (O), Mobile: + 27 72 2678704, Fax: 086 550 9932, E-mail: nirmala@dut.ac.za*

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**ABSTRACT** The article aims to explore the attitudes of employees toward the Protected Disclosures Act (2000) in providing protection to whistleblowers in South Africa. It seeks to examine the extent to which employees are encouraged to blow the whistle at higher education institutions, despite legislation which protects disclosures made in good faith. The assessment is conducted in the light of empirical research conducted at a higher education institution, against literature gleaned on whistleblower legislation and its impact on good governance. The research was limited to the Durban University of Technology, a higher education institution (HEI) in South Africa and may not produce the same findings at other similar higher education institutions. A conceptual framework informed by legislation, policy and procedures and organizational culture was used to determine employee perceptions of whistleblower protection within higher education institutions. The research methodology focused on questionnaires administered to all employees. Despite the implementation of a whistleblowers line at the institution, employees are of the opinion that practices and procedures relating to whistleblowing have not encouraged whistleblowing or even decreased unethical conduct. In light of this research, recommendations are made to promote a culture of whistleblowing that broadly need to be supported and articulated throughout the institution.

### INTRODUCTION

Whistleblowers can be considered as ethically consistent employees who disclose in good faith unethical practices within the workplace, thereby expecting investigation of the disclosure. Views of whistleblowers include those seen as guilty of betrayal and disloyalty, while others are seen as showing allegiance to authority and a display of ethical standards. Despite a divergence of responses to whistleblowers, protection for whistleblowers is generally based on the premise that organizational goals should have priority over personal goals, therefore requiring organizations to compensate employee loyalty by according them some protection. There is an increasing recognition of the need to provide ways for employees to raise concerns about suspected wrongdoing by promoting internal policies and procedures, which offer safeguards to actual potential whistleblowers (Vanderkerkhove and Lewis 2012: 253). As a result, it has become imperative to determine the extent to which higher education institutions are implementing and managing whistleblowing mechanisms in an attempt to curb unethical conduct.

Since the implementation of the Protected Disclosures Act (PDA) 26 of 2000, numerous organizations have implemented hotlines for whistleblowers to disclose unethical practices in good faith. Higher education institutions like the Durban University of Technology (DUT) in South Africa have afforded employees this opportunity to make anonymous disclosures without fear of retaliation. While such mechanisms have been implemented, no study has been undertaken to determine whether it has been taken seriously and whether it should be complemented by other institutional responses.

However, the implementation of such internal control measures has to be underpinned by ethical guidelines and an ethically oriented institutional culture to ensure that whistleblowing is encouraged as an effective deterrent mechanism for employee related fraud and corruption.

### Objectives

The objectives of the study focused on: an examination of whistleblowing policies and practices at DUT, an analysis of staff perceptions on

the effectiveness of whistleblowing mechanisms and to identify staff expectations to promote a whistleblowing culture supporting good governance.

## METHODOLOGY

### Sampling

Data for this study was collected in 2011 from employees at the Durban University of Technology, South Africa. A total of 117 employees completed the electronically administered questionnaire, which used the census method of sampling a population of 1200 employees.

### Measurement

An exploratory-type survey questionnaire was developed to explore employee perceptions on whistleblowing. A total of 20 questions were presented and classified into four groups: Respondents demographics; legislation; governance; policy and procedure. Employee responses to perceptions on whistleblowing practices were measured by asking them to evaluate statements shown in Table 1. Respondents were asked to evaluate how strongly they agreed or disagreed with each of the given statements on a scale from 1 (strong agree) to 5 (strongly disagree).

## RESULTS

Table 1 which incorporates the mean scores for the legislative perspective and good governance also indicates standard deviations, thereby confirming that variation from the mean scores was not high. All of the items under the legislative perspective have scores below 3.5, indicating disagreement with the statements relating to communication regarding whistleblowing legislation and institutional compliance with the requirements of the PDA.

The majority of items under good governance have scores below 3.5, indicating disagreement with statements relating to the deterrents impacting on whistleblowing at the institution such as lack of explicit support from management, weak adherence to ethical values and practices, fear of retaliation and an ineffective whistleblowers line in encouraging disclosure or decreasing unethical practices.

**Table 1: Mean scores for legislative perspective and good governance**

	Mean	Std. deviation
<i>Legislative Perspective</i>		
I am familiar with the stipulations of the Protected Disclosures Act, No 26 of 2000.	2.66	1.16
The institution complies with the Protected Disclosures Act, No 26 of 2000 in protecting whistleblowers.	2.37	1.13
The importance of the Protected Disclosures Act, No 26 of 2000 and the associated significance of the whistleblowers line is regularly communicated to employees.	2.27	0.96
The institution provides a whistleblowers line to report any unethical practices at the institution.	3.25	1.22
The whistleblowers line at the institution provides legal protection to a whistleblower against any form of retaliation.	2.50	1.20
<i>Good Governance</i>		
Unethical practices that are not investigated reflect a poor organizational culture.	4.50	0.84
The institutional culture shows a strong adherence to ethical values and practices.	2.75	1.15
There is explicit top management support for whistleblowing.	2.62	1.12
There is an institutional approved policy for the protection of whistleblowers	2.46	1.11
Retaliation from senior management and colleagues is highly likely if I blow the whistle.	3.34	1.24
The whistleblowers line investigates any information received on unethical practices.	2.56	1.13
A well managed whistleblowers line reflects the institution's commitment to good governance.	4.18	1.02
The whistleblowing line has encouraged the disclosure of unethical practices.	2.64	1.25
The whistleblowing line has contributed to decreased unethical practices.	2.26	1.07
Employees feel confident to report unethical practices through the whistleblowers line.	2.29	1.06

Table 2 which focuses on reliability coefficients for legislative perspective, contribution to good governance and institutional perspective is a summary of the Cronbach's alpha reliability measure for the various sections that com-

prises this study. All of the reliability scores are above the recommended norm (as per UCLA minimum requirements). This means that the respondents scored the construct in a consistent manner.

**Table 2: Reliability coefficients for legislative perspective, contribution to good governance and institutional perspective**

Section	Cronbach's Alpha
A legislative perspective	0.70
Contribution to good governance	0.77
An institutional perspective	0.81
Overall	0.81

### Limitations

The data collected concentrates entirely on employees within a higher education institution in a developing democratic state. Therefore, its usefulness elsewhere is limited.

### Legislative Perspective

Table 3 illustrates responses from employees regarding legislation pertaining to the protection of whistleblowers. The PDA provides procedures relating to protection of employees who blow the whistle, with the aim of protecting them from retaliation as a result of disclosures made in good faith. Therefore, employees need to be aware of the procedures required by legislation if they are to be protected as whistleblowers. Only 27.35% of respondents indicated familiarity with the stipulations of the PDA. Further, 12.82% agreed that the institution complies with the PDA in protecting whistleblowers. As the majority of the respondents are not familiar with the stipulations of the Act, they are unable to determine whether the institution complies with the requirements for protecting whistleblowers. Such an organizational culture does not facilitate the disclosure of unethical practices and neither does it promote the eradication of unethical practices.

If the PDA is to support the best interest of accountable and transparent organizations, then DUT needs a whistleblowing policy that informs employees on the guidelines and procedures relating to protected whistleblowing so that it is supported by principles like integrity, responsibility and loyalty.

**Table 3: Legislative perspective from employees**

	Dis- agree	Uncer- tain	Agree
I am familiar with the stipulations of the Protected Disclosures Act, No. 26 of 2000.	46.15	26.50	27.35
The institution complies with the Protected Disclosures Act, No. 26 of 2000 in protecting whistle-blowers.	41.88	45.30	12.82
The importance of the Protected Disclosures Act, No. 26 of 2000 and the associated significance of the whistleblowers line is regularly communicated to employees	64.96	23.93	11.11
The institution provides a whistleblowers line to report any unethical practices at the institution.	24.79	21.37	53.85
The whistleblowers line at the institution provides legal protection to a whistleblower against any form of retaliation.	40.17	41.88	19.75

It is alarming that only 11.11 % agreed that the importance of the PDA and whistleblowers line is regularly communicated to employees. Harquail and Fox (1993: 162) are of the opinion that strong organizational cultures provide guidelines on how employees should conduct themselves, disseminate reinforcing information about policies and procedures and create awareness on penalties for non-conformity. With less direction and approbation of unacceptable conduct, ethics can be compromised. A lack of support for the importance of such awareness creation among employees is not conducive to establishing a whistleblowing culture. Education of employees regarding legislation and whistleblowing procedures is of vital importance for the institution.

A whistleblower's line helps organizations to expose unethical practices that can adversely affect any organization. It can serve as an important deterrent for potential unethical conduct since a reporting mechanism has been established. However, only 17.95% agreed that the whistleblower's line at DUT provides legal protection against any form of retaliation. The efficiency of the whistleblowers line has to be strengthened, if DUT wants to enhance organizational performance and the integration of values into the core business of the organization

and the conduct of its employees. This is supported by De Maria (2005: 220) who identified public confidence in the effectiveness of disclosure in combating unethical practices and guarantees of freedom of expression as import prerequisites for effective whistleblowing. This needs to be addressed by management as the purpose of the whistleblower's line and the commensurate protection offered by the PDA is distorted.

### Good Governance

Table 4 illustrates employee responses to issues relating to good governance. A transparent and accountable organizational culture is conducive to promoting whistleblowing. Further, it is good governance to manage whistleblowing which can be a potential deterrent for unethical practices. The majority of respondents (91: 45%) agreed with the statement that unethical practices that are not investigated reflect a poor organizational culture. This is indicative of employees perceiving ethical conduct as integral for a dominant organizational culture which focuses on core values like integrity, honesty and loyalty. There was a strong negative response (48.72%) to the statement that the institutional culture shows strong adherence to ethical values and practices. This is of concern since poor perceptions of organization adherence to core ethical values and practices may not deter unethical practices, while reflecting negatively on an organization culture conducive to whistleblowing.

It is vital that management should explicitly show its support for whistleblowing. Without providing evidence of support for whistleblowing, management fails to show accountability by "walking the talk". However, while the university has a whistleblowers line, employees do not consider this as an adequate reflection of explicit support for whistleblowing. A majority response (43.59%) to a lack of explicit support from top management for whistleblowing is indicative of good governance being compromised, since leading by example can provide the impetus for employees to blow the whistle. In addition, top management support makes a vital contribution to a sustainable whistleblowing culture, since such a culture does not merely exist, but is the way in which employees think and act about working and communicating with

in the organization (Bakman 2003: 25). Support from top management will not only reflect transparency and accountability, but also zero tolerance for unethical practices. This can be reinforced through the establishment of an institutional whistleblower's policy and underpinned by a code of ethics to give greater legitimacy to whistleblowing within the institution.

**Table 4: Employee perspectives on good governance**

	<i>Dis- agree</i>	<i>Uncer- taint</i>	<i>Agree</i>
Unethical practices that are not investigated reflect a poor organisational culture.	4.27	4.27	91.45
The institutional culture shows a strong adherence to ethical values and practices.	48.72	19.66	31.62
There is explicit top management support for whistleblowing.	43.59	35.04	21.37
There is an institutional approved policy for the protection of whistleblowers.	37.61	48.72	13.68
Retaliation from senior management and colleagues is highly likely if I blow the whistle.	23.08	25.64	51.28
The whistleblowers line investigates any information received on unethical practices.	38.46	41.03	20.51
A well-managed whistleblowers line reflects the institution's commitment to good governance.	8.55	5.98	85.47
The whistleblowing line has encouraged the disclosure of unethical practices.	40.17	32.48	27.35
The whistleblowing line has contributed to decreased unethical practices.	52.14	39.32	8.55
Employees feel confident to report unethical practices through the whistleblowers line.	58.97	30.77	10.26

Gqubule (2004: 60) stated that while many may agree that whistleblowing may be the right thing to do, it often does not occur because of fear of retaliation. Results also showed that 51.28% agreed with the statement that retaliation is highly likely if they blow the whistle. This is probably reinforced by the lack of explicit support from top management and inadequate communication regarding the importance of ethical conduct and whistleblowing practices. Rehg et al. (2008: 225) contend that if whistleblowers fear retaliation, then they are likely to perceive

the procedures for organizational response as unjust. This not only affects value based relationships within the organizations, but can also lead to the withdrawal of trust and loyalty. The imperative for workshops and communication from top management supporting whistleblowing and ethical conduct should be prioritized to strengthen a whistleblowing culture within the organization. In this regard, Robinson and Robertson (2012: 217) argue that management should not assume the “bystander” approach by diffusing responsibility. The more management makes employees aware of potential unethical situations, the greater the chances of responsibility not being diffused by everyone to report unethical conduct.

While the majority of respondents (41.03%) indicated uncertainty regarding whether the institution investigates any information received on unethical practices, 38.46% agreed that the whistleblowers line does not investigate any information received on unethical practices. This is reflective of an ineffective whistleblowing mechanism that not only has failed to communicate its activities to employees, but also a lack of confidence in its operations.

This indicates that there are no powerful reinforcers in place to promote responsibility by DUT to take action against unethical conduct. This will not only increase the probability that employees will behave unethically, but also dissuade potential whistleblowers from disclosing unethical practices. Hellreigel et al. (1998: 551) mention powerful reinforcers like management reaction to incidents of unethical conduct and the manner in which it is dealt with, can improve a whistleblowing culture wherein management sends strong messages on what is important and expected. It can be suggested that when employees perceive strong reinforcers by management, then there is an increased probability of compliance, enforceability and ethical awareness within the organization.

An effective whistleblowing line constitutes good governance. DUT complies with the legislative requirement of establishing a whistleblower’s line. However, responses to statements relating to the effectiveness of the whistleblower’s line reflects weaknesses in it achieving the desired outcomes.

The low level of agreement (20.51%) with the statement that the whistleblower’s line investigates any information received on unethical conduct can indicate various possibilities: employees are aware of unethical practices that were

reported and not investigated, lack of communication on the effectiveness of the whistleblower’s line, employees are not aware of the outcome of investigations. If employees are aware of action taken against those guilty of unethical conduct, then an effective whistleblower’s line can increase the probability of unethical practices being reported and investigated. Hooks et al. (1994: 92) argued that when an organization shows tolerance of unethical practices, then this influences the perceptions of seriousness. Such tolerance does not reflect good governance, since it does not reinforce ethical practices and uphold the importance of an organizational culture prioritizing positive values.

The benefit of a whistleblower’s line in contributing to good governance is shown in the majority of respondents (85.47%) agreeing with the statement that a whistleblower’s line reflects the institution’s commitment to good governance. However, only 8.55% agreed that the whistleblower’s line has contributed to decreased unethical practices. It is quite evident that the whistleblower’s line has not been effective in curbing unethical practices. It is important for management to investigate factors influencing unethical practices in the organization, despite a whistleblowing line being operational. It can further be suggested that there should be greater awareness created of the benefits of whistleblowing and the whistleblowing line. This has to be driven by a rigorous audit of processes and procedures that are negatively impacting on an ethical organizational culture.

Good governance is reflected in an organizational culture where ethical practices are made real. This can be achieved through the implementation of management systems that support awareness campaigns, ethics training, induction programmes, ethics committees, reporting mechanisms for ethics management performance and appointment of ethics officers to co-ordinate ethics management initiatives (Van Vuuren 2008: 66). The implementation of such management systems is the acid test that management is serious about curbing unethical practices, rather than merely paying lip service.

## DISCUSSION

### Contribution of Whistleblowing to Good Governance

The imperative for any institution to be underpinned by the principles of ethical gover-

nance has gained momentum in recent years. Whistleblowing has become a popular strategy in the fight against corruption in many countries. Emerging democratic states like South Africa are embracing opportunities to implement anti-corruption strategies in public administration. Whistleblower protection, as endorsed by the United Nations convention against Corruption (United Nations 2003: 15), requires signatory nations like South Africa to establish policies and procedures for the protection of whistleblowers. While no common criteria for judging the effectiveness of whistleblower protection policy exists, De Maria (2006: 646) argues that even though the use of whistleblower programmes is a central marker in any institution, the take up rates are significantly low. He quotes the case of South Africa, where only 4 cases went to court from 2000 to 2006. The strength of protected disclosures lies in the protection of the position of whistleblowers, while regulating the conditions which pre-empt the necessity for making disclosures (Lewis and Uys 2007: 88). Lewis and Uys suggest the institutionalization of responses to wrongdoing, whereby procedures are established for internal reporting. Creating such a corporate environment should endeavour to focus on the message rather than the messenger.

Institutionalising whistleblowing procedures requires the enactment of corporate ethics. The enactment of such ethics can be reflected in the following (Lewis and Uys 2007: 89):

- ♦ Workers should be protected not only if they made a disclosure, but also if they are victimized.
- ♦ Legislation should outlaw discrimination against whistleblowers.
- ♦ Establishment of effective reporting procedures.
- ♦ Retaliation against a whistleblower should be treated as a criminal offence.

Any organization which incorporates whistleblowing as part of its corporate culture, should view it as supporting the interests of the organization, thereby adhering to ethical standards. In this regard, Vandekerckhove and Commers (2004: 228) consider the explicit statement of the organizations' mission, goals, value statement and code of conduct as legitimizing the compulsion to blow the whistle if the norms and values of the organization are violated. By promoting a culture of corporate governance, ac-

countability and responsibility can be enhanced. This fosters a climate of disclosure, whereby clear communication channels are established. This is highlighted in the King III Report of Corporate Governance (King Committee on Corporate Governance 2009: 10), which views good governance as effective leadership, underpinned by ethical values of responsibility, fairness, accountability and transparency. Good governance is generally based on statutory requirements or on a code of principles and practices, or a combination of both (King Committee on Corporate Governance 2009: 1). The driver of good governance is effective leadership characterized by ethical values of responsibility, accountability and transparency. Such ethical values are rooted in the South African Constitution, 1996, which imposes responsibilities on government for the realization of fundamental rights.

Within the higher education landscape, there has to be a culture of good governance which supports whistleblowing, while protecting whistleblowers. Such protection assures employees that they will not be exposed to institutional retaliation. By institutionalizing whistleblowing constructively, to the advantage of the whistleblower and the organization, management shows accountability from a good governance perspective. Therefore, by properly managing whistleblowing within an institution, good governance is promulgated. However, a culture of good governance which encourages whistleblowing cannot develop without management perpetuating "lived" actions that communicate such a culture to the entire institution. The code of ethics is an example of a component of the institution's good governance infrastructure that should be referenced in all organizational operations. Further, by devising a whistleblowing policy and educating employees on it, employees can be encouraged to make disclosures as they are knowledgeable on the whistleblowing policy. The ability to make disclosures is critical, especially if employees cannot approach their supervisors or managers. Further, the employee is empowered to make disclosures and becomes actively involved in combating organizational fraud and corruption, while remaining anonymous. This is only conclusive, if the organization does not consider whistleblowing as a challenge to its authority structure. Therefore, the authority structure must be effective and supporting, when employees use the whistleblowing mechanisms provided by the organization.

In keeping with the requirements of the PDA, every organization has to implement whistleblowing mechanisms. Such mechanisms reflect on the responsibility of the organization to be transparent on how it is managed. This is pivotal when one examines the higher level of corruption in Africa. De Sardan (1999: 28) argues that corruption has been considered a common element of the administrative system from top to down in African countries. De Maria (2005: 222) further argues that corruption in Africa has been routinised and institutionalized to the extent that whistleblowing policies in Africa are predominantly addressing non-systemic corruption, thereby rendering whistleblowing policies ineffective.

Therefore, it can be argued that apart from the requirements of the King Report on Good Governance and other legislative imperatives, effective management of whistleblowing can contribute toward curbing unethical practices within institutions.

### Protecting Whistleblowers

In view of young democracies undergoing rapid transformation, the PDA was a response to high levels of corruption, by encouraging whistleblowing which was protected. The Act allows for protected disclosures by all employees in the public and private sectors, except private contractors, while media whistleblowers are not protected. Further, employees can only receive protection if they make disclosures about their employers or other employees. It aims to encourage employees to blow the whistle internally first and provide a platform for employers to establish internal reporting pathways for dealing with such disclosures. The PDA has standard requirements for what constitutes protected disclosures. The whistleblower has to report in "good faith", what is considered to be a "substantially true" disclosure, to the correct authority. In addition, the PDA stipulates that all employees must be made aware of practical guidelines which outline the provisions of this Act and all provisions must be made available to employees who wish to report a protected disclosure. The PDA is an attempt by government to introduce a "public interest" dimension into the sphere of labour relations. The "good faith" requirement exposes whistleblowers to investigations about their motivation and ethical stan-

dards while the "substantially true" stipulation places a major evidentiary submission from whistleblowers (De Maria 2006: 649). Further, by making protection contingent on whistleblowers reporting to internal institutional agencies, it gives the institution forewarned information about the allegations, against whom and by whom (De Maria 2006: 649). It is argued that such a mandated reporting pathway can be steeped in bureaucratic processes over which the whistleblower has no influence. Further, the Act does not provide the whistleblower with civil and criminal indemnity, which can be considered as powerful forms of protection. In terms of investigation, the Act does not stipulate that authorities which receive disclosures should exercise their investigative duty, neither is there any requirement that such investigations meet quality controls such as timely and competent investigations. The failure to have a special investigative unit to independently investigate the whistleblowers allegations results in little attention being paid to the investigation. This makes it extremely risky for whistleblowers to make a disclosure under the assumption that an outside agency will investigate and confirm the truth regarding the investigations.

De Maria (2006: 652) further criticizes the PDA on the following grounds:

- ♦ There is no protection for disclosure of material classified as secret.
- ♦ Non-availability of injunctive relief, as a restraining order, can encourage reprisals to work faster than protection.
- ♦ Difficulty for whistleblowers to prove that adverse management decisions were the exclusive result of disclosures.
- ♦ No protection against defamation.
- ♦ Employer retaliation against an employee is not an offence, but can be considered an unfair labour practice.

De Sardan (1999: 30) highlights the following obstructions to the Act being highly effective:

- ♦ Impunity enjoyed by powerful individuals.
- ♦ Lack of ethics in the public service
- ♦ Developmental aid which encourages an inflow of clientelism favourable to corruption.

In terms of retaliation, the Act simply states that "*no employee may be subjected to any occupational detriment by his or her employer on account, or partly an account of having made a disclosure*" (South Africa 2000: 5). However,

the Act does not make it an offence for an employer to cause detriment to a whistleblower, nor is there provision made for punitive damages. However, if the employer retaliates against an employee for whistleblowing, it may be an unfair labour practice, but not an offence. Therefore in the absence of retaliation not being considered as part of occupational detriment, victimization can be encouraged. This can be considered a shortcoming of the legislation, since it does not act as an adequate deterrent to prevent employers from victimizing whistleblowers, thereby rendering protection insufficient. By implementing mechanisms that discourage employers from victimizing employees, the focus can shift from the messenger to the message. This can increase the confidence of whistleblowers to disclose unethical practices to authorities which can be trusted, without fear of retaliation.

Shevlin (2012: 9) argues that stakeholders who play an important role in the effective running of a university, need to recognise the value that the university brings to the economy and wider society. Therefore, the interests of all stakeholders should not be jeopardised by improper management of whistleblowing practices and procedures.

### CONCLUSION

While the PDA provides protection to whistleblowers, it can be suggested that those who suffer retaliation have to provide adequate evidence that they suffered occupational detriment as a result of the disclosure. It can be argued that protection in this regard is inadequate, since it is a challenge for employers to admit that action taken against a whistleblower is the result of the alleged disclosure. Further, disciplinary actions taken by the employer, as a result of the disclosure, are not subject to external legal representation and may be a tedious task for the whistleblower to prove. The PDA does not provide for any independent investigation of the whistleblower's claims of victimization, especially if the whistleblower leaves the organization after reporting the alleged irregularity. In addition, reporting to internal channels also fails to make the investigation independent. It can be argued that an external investigative agency can provide greater protection for whistleblowers by shifting the focus to investigating the disclosure. In the absence of an indepen-

dent agency investigating the truthfulness of the delegations made by whistleblowers, it can be argued that whistleblowers are inadequately protected from possible retaliation.

Although institutions have whistleblower lines as an internal reporting pathway, it is generally felt that such a mechanism does not achieve the intended transparency and accountability envisaged. By merely paying lip service to the protection of whistleblowers, institutions can very well be vindictive in hunting down "squealers". Further, the financial losses for institutions that violate the Act is an inadequate deterrent for retaliation, especially in view of many whistleblowers not having the funds to pursue their cases in court. Further, threats of exposing the organization and damage to organizational image is not sufficient for organizations with major resources to be deterred from hounding whistleblowers. The failure of the Act to consider punitive damages as an occupational detriment and the difficulty in proving occupational detriment resulting from disclosure, places whistleblowers in a highly vulnerable position.

While recognizing that provisions of the PDA require a stronger foundation, organizational conditions should be regulated to make it imperative to disclose irregularities. While the PDA first requires internal disclosure by the whistleblower, there are no directives requiring confidential reporting channels that focus on the irregularity and guarantee that such authorized disclosures will be investigated. Institutionalising disclosures as part of organizational ethics lays the foundation for whistleblowing to be a "lived way" of organizational culture. So long as acts of retaliation are not given adequate attention by the PDA and the organization, protection of whistleblowers alone cannot promote disclosure.

Whistleblowers, as perpetrators of responsible and accountable employees, are protected by the PDA in an attempt to combat unethical conduct. It upholds the expectation of a democratic dispensation in South Africa, whereby every citizen has the right to fair treatment. By entrenching the obligation of employers to protect whistleblowers and providing the route to follow in the event of disclosure, organizations are expected to establish structures to enable whistleblowing. This facilitates unethical conduct being properly addressed. It can be argued



that such legislative initiatives by government promote an ethos of good governance, while ensuring greater accountability by organizations in the public and private sectors.

### RECOMMENDATIONS

Establishing a whistleblowing culture is important to organizations because unethical practices can be quite detrimental to any organization. For whistleblowing to be effective, one must take into account the organizational environment in which governance takes place. The effective management of whistleblowing within any organization reflects good governance. It is quite plausible that an organization culture that institutionalizes whistleblowing practices and procedures can promote whistleblowing without a fear of retaliation.

Communication and awareness initiatives by management regarding whistleblowing are an imperative for good governance reflecting accountability and transparency. This is vital to reinforce confidence in employees that there is support from top management for ethical conduct. "Lived" practices can possibly motivate potential whistleblowers to report wrong doing.

In view of increasing demands for an ethos of good governance within organizations, the proper implementation and management of whistleblowing is necessary for unethical conduct to be properly raised and addressed in the workplace. Such initiatives contribute toward accountable and transparent governance. From the data, it can be deduced that DUT needs to create greater awareness of whistleblowing and its management through a well communicated policy. The high percentage of answers being uncertain has shown weaker opinions through a lack of awareness.

Additionally, while the employees are well intentioned in seeing unethical practices being investigated as a reflection of a strong organizational culture, the institutional culture at DUT is contrary to this. It can be postulated that ethical issues are not prioritized at the institution and this requires serious consideration.

It is therefore argued that ethics awareness needs to be prioritized and reinforced by a whistleblowing policy that is rigorously communicated to all employees. Future research may compare results from other South African higher education institutions and higher education institutions in developed countries.

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