

Ethics in the South African Public Service: A Paradox of Culture, Politics and Ethics in the World of Work

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KEYWORDS Corruption. Complex. Multifaceted. Diversity. Culture. Ubuntu

ABSTRACT This paper argues that South Africa is also crippling to fit in the notion of native culture into the ethos of the world of work. Institutions of public service remain strange to those serving it and those meant to benefit from it, leading to lack of conformity by public officials to ethical frameworks prescribed for good conduct. This paper uses literature to argue that the mismatch between the native cultural ethos and ethical frameworks based on rational doctrines of enlightenment are a cause for escalating unethical conducts in the public service. The ethics introduced to the practice of public administration tend to be artificial in relation to actual custom practices of African diversity. That raises questions as to whether Africa is really free from colonisation if its ethical values and customs are regarded as unethical in terms of standards that are outside its being. The paper concludes that there is a need to harmonise the legislation governing ethics and the generally accepted cultural values and practices of the South Africans that is informed by authentic African customs.