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

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**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.

## INTRODUCTION

Corruption is a major form of unethical conduct throughout the globe taking place across developed and undeveloped states religion's and ethnic groups, public and private companies as well as in non-profit and charitable organisations (Myint 2000 ; Ogundiya 2009; Mungiu-Pippidi 2013; Aslund 2014; Mafunisa and Sebola 2014)**.** It may often be argued that it has become part of human nature to the extent that discouraging it has become impossible to effect. This make it questionable if indeed human nature, with its sophisticated scientific means and rigor developed over the time has indeed managed to define in terms of knowing and understanding itself (Max-Neef 2007). Of course the effects of corruption are disastrous and always threaten peace and stability of governments that fairly want to provide services to its citizens. Governments do introduce means and strategies of counteracting unethical conduct by combating all forms of corruptive activities that endangers service delivery agendas of their countries. Surely, it can also be argued that such government formations are within a defined mode of frameworks that are benched against international standards which is informed by rationality of science that has been regarded as the panacea of all problems in human nature (Senge 1990; Fideler 1998; Farmer 2010). The efficiency and effectiveness of such strategies and legislative frameworks are not felt equally in concerned developing countries because often they are far away from the established cultural norms of the labour force expected to conform to such frameworks. A major issue raised in this article is to argue that government should introduce ethical legislative frameworks that are compatible to the culture of the "publics" so that conformity can be harmonised. Such might help to promote generally upheld ethical practices which could lessen the perception that developing countries are corrupt without acknowledging that they are indeed failing to conform to foreign ethical standards than being corrupt. This article will therefore keep its relevance to the paradox of culture, politics and ethics in the world of work in South Africa.

## ETHICS IN GLOBAL CONTEXT

A major ethical problem in the public sector is associated with corrupt activities which robs the citizens of their access to public services. It is argued that no other threat of democracy, economy and politics in any nation supersede the danger of corruption in the society (Sandholtz and Taagepera 2005; Mohammed 2013). This endemic is critical in the sense that it transcends borders through funding of development in developing countries and therefore compelling development funding institutions to take a tough stand against corruption practitioners (Nichols

et al. 2004). This by implication means that such financial institutions are likely to propose anti-corruption strategies that the funded countries should conform to in order to obtain funding. This is with the background contention that such developing countries are predominantly in Africa whereby most states obtained independence from colonial powers and the public services they inherited, were nearly without exception as they were based on one of the European systems of the particular colonial master, for example British, French, Belgian or Portuguese (Kuye 2008). This clearly illustrates that the systems on which the newly independent states had to build their public services andhad to be transformed to cope with the needs of the new state and satisfy the expectations of the democratized society. Yet even the conception of democracy itself remains contentious in most African states (Birch 1993; Smith and Vawda 2003; Van Beek 2005). As it is argued in this article that such strategies should be in line with the specific targeted countries or else conformity with such will only be in terms of legal papers presented which will be screwed in practice to suite funding purposes. Habeeb (2013: 1) contends that up to so far anti-corruption strategies are unproductive in the sense that they focus on passing laws and regulations to scare perpetrators against corruption than dealing with them. The argument that is in line with the pursuing knowledge related solution to problems that need understanding of the phenomena one is dealing with (Max-Neef 2007). Ugundiya (2009) argues that manysocieties' law lack legitimacy and consistency and pays little attention to social behavior to the extent that public opinion and cultural societies are considered better in defining corruption. A contention that those are within the postmodern mode will argue to such asauthentic local reality that cannot be analysed through rational science (Cilliers 1998; Farmer 2010; Nkuna and Sebola 2012). A practical reality worldwide shows that the level of corruption may as well be linked to the problem of the lack of resources to feed the entire population concerned in developing countries. In that instance, poor countries are likely to be highly corrupt as citizens have to compete for scarce resources and often those in developed countries pretending to assist such countries have their conditions which also promote corruption than helping to eliminate it.

Often it is believed that corruptive activities are likely to be more felt in countries that are autocratic and governed through military regimes. This however is not always the case since even democratic countries are facing the scourge of unethical conduct through corruption. It is generally agreed that corruption is defined as an abuse of public office for private gain (Myint 2000; Williams 2002; Mafunisa 2008; Mohammed 2013; Mafunisa and Sebola 2014). This definition can be argued to be a major cause of lack of solution to corrupt activities in developing countries because the definition has been coined in the context of the western model of ethics in the public service. Such models are however not necessarily applicable in some developing countries.

Mohammed (2013) also pointed out that ethical conduct defined as corruption is multifaceted and complex and therefore difficult to conceptualise. It is complex manifestation that results to what Nkuna and Sebola (2012) refer to as complexity in context in that what means corruption to someone might not be contextualised as such to next person within the society. Ley (2012: 1) reviewing the book by Peter Lamour titled "Interpreting corruption: Culture and politics in the Pacific Islands pointed out that in the Pacific Islands there is not even an equivalent of the use of the word "corruption" and therefore a lack of such definition makes it impossible for the so called transgressors to be charged successfully because their actions do not fit the official definition of the term corruption. As such;the definition of this concept in western context than specific population context targeted for such assistance is arguably a cause of lack of solution to ethical challenges facing public services in developing countries. The definition and application of the use of ethical principles designed and developed to suit a culture of the west is likely to cause more problems than solutions because the western countries are major donors of the developing countries. Often it is not acknowledged from both the perspective of academic and practitioners that the euro-contextpolitical systems and business practices which are adopted by many developing countries are a major cause of ethical problems in developing countries starting from the nature of politics of the west and the competing business strategies of the western countries. Thus far as attested in many literatures on related subject the notion of ethics is handled from legal

perspectives which are from a normative perspective considered illegitimate (Overland 2012: 14). It is considered that most ethical issues are considered in the context of western morals which often are not compatible with the local norms; hence the upcoming Africa scholars regard this as colonisation of its kind in that Africa is trapped in an iron cage of modernisation (see Mkandawire 2011).

**Culture and Ethics**

Culture is regarded as complex of learned behavior, patterns and perceptions of life and its practices (O'Neil 2006: 1-4). Itincludes a range of issues such as belief system, knowledge, customs, morals and habits acquired by man as a member of the society. It is indeed culture that defines a human beings character such as language use, decision-making on issues and life practices in general. Due to complexity of those variables, it is impossible of course to have a rational description that can be uniform within diverse societies like those in Africa. Cliffs Notes (2012: 1) noted that an accepted culture by the society is a condition for identification and conformity to shared social values that help to contribute meaningfully to social advancement. On the other hand ethics refer to behavior or conduct that is appropriate and socially acceptable (Ebert and Griffin 2007; Mafunisa and Sebola 2014).A Greek word "ethos" from which the word ethics historically originate from implies a character or a custom of the people (United Nations Economic Commission for Africa 2003: 34), and therefore ethics is rooted in culture of the people or vice- versa. It can be deduced from the definition of both culture and ethics that the two are indeed inseparable; meaning that ethics or culture cannot be defined or treated exclusively from each other.That eventually makes it to fall out from the rationality of the Western Enlightenment. It is indeed culture that explains the character and identity of an individual image and social standing. It is acceptable however; that culture is dynamic in the sense that it is time basedas it suits issues of a particular time frame; which also subject ethics to a changing environment. But even if the two are subjects ofdynamisms there are common elements of similar culture and ethics that are sustainable and retains originality to the extent that while other practices may be altered with time changes; but

may not completely differ from the original culture. For example, UBUNTU may be a cultural practice that is naturally embedded in Africans(Black people), and such may characterise the general cultural practices of Africans, And to a particular extent the practice of the Ubuntu philosophy in public administration without linking it to the applicable administrative principles in government is a major cause of unethical conduct in African government administration.

The African approach of handling administrative problems by considering a human approach (Ubuntu) than legislation has compromised numerous African administration following democratic systems that are informed by Western conceptualisation and context. Thus far it is difficult to conclude whether culture and ethics must fit democracy or democracy must fit the requirements of culture and ethics of the people concerned. Moreno (nd: 1-4), noted that ethics is indeed a cultural aspect and can from time to time be justified and be seen from the perspective of cultural grounds that can only be narrated locally. This therefore put the concept of ethics and culture on a relative scale of moral judgment.Literature on culture and ethics demonstrated that it is indeed cultural dimensions that influence the individuals' perception of ethical issues (Saleim and Bontis 2009).What is termed unethical conduct through corruption in other administration of government today can indeed be judged either negatively or positively from a cultural perspective as provided for earlier. Taylor and Raga (2000) also pointed out that it is not only culture that helps us to interpret what ethical is- but also our historical circumstances and events helps us to define what ethical or unethical character could be at a given period of time.Coincidentally, history is by itself one of the defining characters of complexities in transforming dynamic systems (Cilliers 1998; Nkuna and Sebola 2012), like South Africa what became to be of significant is that the changing historical circumstances that may affect culture and ethics should indeed be a positive modification than being viewed as changing to a worse situation.

**The Business of Government and Ethics**

The business of government is to provide service to the public they serve in administrative and political terms. Developing countries

are often unable to provide such service and depend on development funding institutions from the developed countries in order to deliver services promised at political manifestos on their founding policy directions. This service as it is believed; it has to be provided by money collected from the public; however the majority of the public benefiting from free public services in developing countries is not economically active-like is the case in South Africa through its various macro-policies that are changed from time to time. The ruling political parties being a custodian of Public finances are expected to take care of public finances in a manner that will promote transparency and accountability (South Africa 1991 and South Africa 1996). The South African legislative frameworks on ethics and accountability are influenced by its commitment to conform to international laws, regulations and principles. The United Nations (UN) has always been in the forefront of defining and developing principles for ethics for member countries.Such principled approach is within the rational modern conceptions that do not fit well in African context. The question that is difficult to answer here is; while the UN is said to be a representative international organisation, who are the influential actors that provide direction for its members on ethics? Probably those that come from developed countries and having an upper hand in funding development in struggling countries due to their financial muscles. Thus far developing countries faces two ethical problems; having to sell their souls to external funders who prescribes foreign ethical principles on them which deepen their ethical problems and secondly; having to cope with the troubles of running a government of people that all and at the same time want to have access to resources of the country in a manner of doubtful future sustainability.

Globally it is acknowledged that the manner in which government run its business of service delivery; is affected highly by unethical means in which only politicians and highly politically connected individuals monopolizes the business with government. This problem in developing countries like South Africa is fuelled by ethical principles designed by experts of foreign descendent who expect compliance to ethics of governance to replicate their own. It is however acknowledged in scientific arguments that ethics is a relative term (Putnaik and Banarejee 2008, Menyah 2010: 5; Mafunisa and Sebola 2014)

which is highly subjective (Pinto nd: 1), since it is highly premised on the culture and the religion of the people. In South Africa for example, an acknowledged fact that no science agrees to our practice of any religion (ancestor worship is often doubted as a religion), but it can be recognised that our ethics is premised from our philosophy of *Ubuntu*. The contradiction of the *Ubuntu* philosophy and the rigid uncompromising western ethical principles to be conformed to by developing countries is but a matter of concern in solving ethical problems in the public sector. The performance of a government in service delivery is likely to be highly dependent on conformity to ethical principles set by the government itself. But the situation in which the government has to design and develop ethical principles that satisfies the funder than its own public servants is a limitation on own and has to a large extent open ways for corrupt behaviour by individual public servants and politicians failing to cope with set ethical principles. Such politicians and public officials spend most of the time trying to find loopholes on how they can abuse public finances.

## ETHICS AND ACCOUNTABILITY IN AFRICA

It is acknowledged that issues of ethics and accountability are a major issue of debate in developing countries than developed, but however that does not mean that developed countries are not affected by problems of unethical conduct such as corruption. Currently in Africa the debate on ethics and accountability is high (Rasheed 2014). considering the high rate of unethical practices and accountability, a wave of political liberation which emboldened a budding civil society into demanding enforcement of ethical standards and punishment of violators, a recognition that unethical practices caused Africa an economic decline and exerted pressure by the international donors to force African countries to adhere to good governance and avoid the squandering of resources. Africa and other developing countries are failing to cope with the demands of ethics formulated from the perspective of the donors of foreign descendants. This ethics is believed to be ignoring an important element that ethics is a subjective matter varying with people, culture and places (Putnaik and Banerjee 2008). It is argued that the

funders of development in developing countries will put more emphasis on conformity by the funded country to principles of good governance. Such conformity is within a coherent mode of modernisation informed by the enlightenment of the West (English 2002). According to The Independent Commission on Good Governance in Public Services (2004: 4-6), the principles of good governance are:

- Focusing on the organisations purpose and outcomes for citizens and service users
- Performing clearly in defined functions and roles
- Promoting values for the whole organisation and demonstrating the values of good governance through good behavior
- Taking informed, transparent decisions and managing risks
- Developing the capacity and capability of the governing body to be effective and
- Engaging stakeholders and making accountability real.

The above mentioned six principles are indeed acceptable principles to those that first developed them and understood them in the context of their own culture of government. To argue this from a radical perspective, these principles are unlikely to be possible in a country that is Muslim in character or culture and other religious groupings differing from those highly influenced by Christian principles. That is also playing itself in a diverse polity like that of South Africa wherein human rights are a constitutional and protect each culture and religion. Jelovac, Van der Walt and Jelovac (2011) pointed out that the current spirit of capitalism originated from the Protestant ethic which upholds values such as truth, honesty and sincerity as a necessity for happiness and success in public and private life. It is argued that while such principles are in accordance with the western viewpoints of democracy originating from protestant ethos; the principles are often used by the western funders to access privileged information of the funded and exploit the weaknesses of the funded countries through an own transparency reporting system. It is indeed those systems of transparent reporting that ultimately shows the weaknesses of the developing to the developed countries and exposing the developing to an exaggerated notion of corruption that would be used by the same funders to unethically expose the funded to an international image scandal. When

developed countries use the accountability and transparency principles for the developing countries to slander the image of the poor funded countries such is ethically justified and not contested by any poor country that could risk to be provided with future financial support; hence the contention of re-colonisation of its kind in Africa.

Many African countries in the South are up to date with the exception of Botswana which is regarded as failing to provide a fair democracy which is associated with low corruption and good governance (Kgalemang 2013). The Adoption of the Charter for Public Service in Africa in 2001 in Namibia was a response to appalling ethical problems facing African leadership after independence (Halleson 2011).

Charters are formulated and adopted by many institutions with the purpose of increasing service delivery output. The Department of Justiceand Constitutional Development in South Africa signed a service delivery charter (South Africa 2009) committing itself to good service and governance principles. While these charters are a point to consider and comment, but they still promote the same ethical principles of the democracy, the implementers rarely understand and master in concepts. The reality about the major cause of ethical conducts through corruption in developing countries is that it is the failure by the implementers of foreign democratic principles to cope with the load of fitting their ideology to the western models. Even Botswana which is hailed the best in Africa is not satisfying politicians to the best when it comes to implementing service delivery principles without officials extorting some cash from the public needing service (Kgalemang 2013: 2). This should be understood that the Botswana government is good as far as the manner in which they have managed to combine the traditional local authorities and their public service of which at local level the traditional administration could ensure compliance and the rule of law (Sharma 2010)which might not be the same at the national office level where the so called international standards are applicable and conformed to. These standards which are not set by the locals themselves are the creation of confusions which lead to corruptive activities in governments. Such governments sets high standard by which they promise the public unlimited services which are not linked to the available resources; and

therefore when the government fail to deliver the public officials as custodian of available scarce resources provide them in drips and draps resulting in selective provision to beneficiaries. Yet systematically, public officials are human systems that have an internal structure that adhere to their cultural schema (Stacey 1996; Nkuna and Sebola 2012). The temptation of biasness on exercising discretion for distribution of such resources is always high.

## THE SOUTH AFRICAN GOVERNMENT LEGISLATION AND ETHICS

The South African supreme legislation (Constitution of South Africa, 1996) emphasis professional and adherence to ethical conduct from both politicians and public servants of the country.

The Constitution being a supreme law has also given to effect some pieces of legislative frameworks that will operationalize the objectives of the Constitution. To this extent it is still argued that

the proclaimed legislative frameworks for governing ethical conduct still reflect an incompatible character of the public servant and the public served as such; with a paradox of combining both values and factual related issues in its conception.

These legislative frameworks which include; Executive Members Ethics Act of 1992, Corruption Act of 1992, Prevention and Combating of Corrupt Activities Act (Act 12 of 2004) and Public Servants Code of Conduct are but also based on international norms with little consideration for the culture of the people of South Africa which is diverse in nature. One of the major weaknesses of these frameworks is their ability to over exaggerate the use of the ambiguous concept of corruption emphasising various dimensions of corruption such as bribery, embezzlement, extortion and favouritism in developing countries.

In South Africa the Constitution emphasis only two important elements of good service to the public: namely; conformity to high standards of ethical conduct and an accountable public administration characterised by transparency in delivery of services.

These two elements are not easy tasks to be achieved, especially if the law can ignore the culture of politics and the public officials that serve those politics and the served public.

There are ever confusions of applying the definitions in accordance with the nature and culture of the people:

### Briberies and Gifts

Developing countries are largely accused of briberies as a major form of unethical conduct in the public service.

South Africa is not an exception and immune from such cultural practice.

In South Africa the Public Servants Regulation of 2001 and the Executive Members Ethics Act, 82 of 1998 is very clear about the issues of briberies and private gifts. Gifts create more of ethical problems in the public sector. As Gilfillan (2010: 1) argued there are acceptable gifts and unacceptable gift in the sense that acceptable gifts are gifts of promotional values such as business diaries, calendars, pencils, mugs and branded T-shirts. As opposed to acceptable gifts, unacceptable gifts are gifts that are believed to have the potential to corrupt individuals' relationship in the public service environment (Seleimand Bontis 2009). It is agreeable that while we are a nation as Africans but our countries are composed of various cultural ethnic groupings which are often diverse in terms of cultural practices and origins; such manifestation being phenomenal within a single state like that of South Africa due to its diverse cultural groupings. Our provinces and regions within a particular country are demarcated in terms of our different ethnicities that are worsened by the apartheid spatial legacy in the case of South Africa. What is questionable is whether a country composed of various nations can succumb to a common ethically held ethical principle? Cultural practices form part of people's life and policies and a law that fails to recognise that is likely to fail in implementation. Such is also a factor in that human nature comprises of either formal and informal groupings (Hannekomand Thornhill 1996) or what Stacey (1996) refer to as a shadow institutional arrangement. The moment cultural issues escape within the informal setup in a policy landscape; they become counterproductive and render any endeavour to fail. Thus far it has been argued that most of incidences recorded as unethical practices (bribes) by international organisation investigating ethical problems in developing countries are indeed gifts given to leaders and service providers in Africa. The

South African government is very clear on amount to be declared as acceptable gifts and should not exceed a rand value of a thousand rand (R1000). It is not known whether this standard rate set of a thousand rand value is South African or international standard set. Sbu Ndebele, a former Member of Executive Council (MEC) for transport in Kwa-Zulu Natal broke the news when he was given a gift worth R1.1 million ( A Mercedes-Benz) and some cattle's by a group of contractors who benefitted from government contracts during his term of office (Olifant 2009). This was hailed and opposed left and right as an unethical practice by opposition partiesof the country (Ghana Pundit 2014: 1-2) with most of them coming from white minority led political parties of the country. It should be understood that if the case is judged from an administrative perspective and existing policies, Honourable Ndebele is wrong because firstly the gift exceed the acceptable norm for gifts to be received by politicians. But viewing it from the African cultural perspective there is nothing wrong with any gift of whatever value given to people who excelled in their service. More so if such gifts are in good faith in terms of the cultural customs of such part of the society. In actual fact, in terms of African cultural custom, it is an offence to refuse a gift from those that reward you for serving them better and acknowledging your dedicated service.Gifts indeed differ from briberies in the sense that they are based on recognition of good service rendered to recipients other than bribery which have a price and it is solicited by other middleman.

## Nepotism and Favouritism

Nepotism and favouritism are major problems of ethical conduct in the South African public service in the sense that public resources are directed to the benefit of a particular cartel or clan or political groupings. The problem of nepotism and favouritism is considered bad when other members of the public coming from a minority group are discriminated against the benefit of the resources of a country. Such is becoming worse if policies to be implemented by government are rendered impossible in relation to such dynamics. According to Rasheed (2012: 1) the problem of ethics is such difficult that failing to understand it from political, cultural and economic context is making it impossible to be up-

rooted as a social problem. The practice of nepotism and favouritism has been over exaggerated by critics of African administrations and often abusing the local politician to put blame and criticizing on own systems to please foreign ideologists wanting to impose their own in developing countries. In more situations opposition politician are good ambassadors of spreading negative political practices to opponents of the African administration therefore discrediting them on the other hand.Hence it has been stated somewhere that such found space within the informal arrangements of the institutional arrangement beyond culture. The concept nepotism has always been defined in a manner that is controversial in African administration and always confused with favouritism and subjecting the concept to wrong opinion and misinterpretation. The definition of this concept is arguable referred to as the practice of showing favouritism toward one's family members or friends in economic or employment terms while disregarding merit ( US legal 2014: 1; Prokosh 2001: 1-4). Of course in everyday life favouritism means the act of unfairly treating one person better than others because you like them better than others (Hornby 2010).In developing countries the concept is used by the critics who takes advantage and spread every employment of a relative as nepotism despite the merit and organisation procedures followed in the appointment of a duly qualified family or employer's acquaintance.

In South Africa currently, the country pushes for local development and empowerment which therefore forces local public offices as well as private companies to employ qualifying locals before considering the external competitors. The use of these concepts without considering the cultural origin of the people is to a particular extent costly as an electorate or a member of the clan in developing countries such as South Africa. It is argued that if former President Thabo Mbeki visits Idutywa (his place of birth) and his village people tell him of their trouble in accessing public service (such as delayed birth certificates, social grants and bursaries for their children) his response would be to refer them to a responsible offices for enquiries, but if a similar issue happen at Nkandla (Jacob Zuma's birth place) it is argued that President Zuma's reaction would be to get the name of the responsible manager quick so that the said service should

be provided the same day or tomorrow handled personally by him and responsible officials. From juxtaposition perspective of the experience of these characters in South African public office is that former President Thabo Mbeki operated by the book of administration that there are no preferential treatment of people either being homeboys or not they must queue in public offices like any other person for getting assistance of public service than assisted by him. Such is indeed a strong ethical standpoint based on principles of fair administration which at the same time contradict the African tradition of *Ubuntu* in serving your own constituency and clan. Above that it is costly in electoral terms and creating a vacuum between a man and his clan. It is tradition of South African Northern Sotho speaking that" *mmetla shapo la tlala o betla a lebile gagabo*" (meaning charity begins at home). From this saying emerge a strong culture of serving own people before going on to serve other households. But a situation in which such cultural realities are ignored is a major concern of conflict between modern public administration and the ethical practices of the public officials who are culturally grounded. The *Ubuntu* of Jacob Zuma is also not free from troubles. Newspapers reported that his household receives not less than 500 visitors on weekend per day at Nkandla needing him for a variety of assistance (ranging from social grants, educational bursaries, employment and personal financial favours). He attends to all of them and provides assistance required, however, that causes him to require medical attention on regular basis. But if this assistance is viewed from a public administration perspective it becomes simply nepotism and favouritism. But in the South African context the practice is simply serving your clan better and ensuring that charity begins at home.

## IS COMMON AFRICAN ETHICAL PRINCIPLE POSSIBLE IN PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION?

Currently there is a common knowledge that there is a clash of public administration ethical principles and the culture of the people serving and served by public administration in South Africa. And yet most literature on similar subject attests that the avoidance of culture in public administration may be a cause of lack of conformity to ethical principles developed by governments. It is acknowledged that the ethical principles set for developing countries speak directly to former colonial masters' way of doing things than the local countries (Kuye 2008).Calhoun (2011) argues that all societies organised themselves on basis of their cultural beliefs, around a set of rules and laws or norms of society. But in the case of developing countries like South Africa you have a scenario in which the cultural beliefs, rules, norms of the society are organised by the outside experts who are not part of such culture, in turn expect conformity without fail which in future is used by the powerful political bloc to determine whether the Africans are ethical or not in conducting public affairs matters. Ethics is according to Hicks(2003) based on requirements of life of particular societies and therefore no other societies ethics can be used to judge another society. The argument in this article is that only ethical principles that do not contradict the norms, values and cultural beliefs of the society stand a better chance of limiting the escalating level of corruption in the public service and thus affecting the level of funding. Such ethics will be an authentic reflection of such society and will eventually position what Max-Neef (2007) refer to understanding beyond knowledge. Thus far it is the international financial institutions like World Bank and International Monetary Fund (IMF) and other oversight institutions such as Corruption Watch and Transparency International (International Political Forum 2013: 14-17) thatexposes the highest level of corruption and its effects in developing countries.It is argued that corruption is a concept which is sufferingfrom definitional problem in the sense that it is defined in a variety of ways as an ethical problem (Calhoun 2011; Morenond: 3-13) without most scholars in this considering the culture of the people being the custodian of a given normative values.Mollo (2010: 25-29) and Manyaka andSebola (2012) have argued that ethical problems in South Africa could be solved through ethical training for public servants. Such recommendation which is seen being implemented in the public service has only done a little to influence the behaviour of public servants to the right directions of ethical conformity. The fact that people could learn other peoples culture does not mean conformity and if forced theyremain distant actors of such cultures. The Council for the Advancement of the South Afri-

can Constitution (2011: 1-2) argues that corruption in South Africa "is rooted in its bureaucratic traditions, political development and social history" in which the declining moral of work caused by the new system demotivate public official to provide service in an ethical manner. While such may be true, but the argument in this article is that the culture of the natives in public administration has been ignored and therefore resulting in failure of the public servants to comply fully with ethical prescripts and codes of unknown origin.Whaley (1999: 24) noted that a regime ethics which is not based on the respects and reflection of the culture of the country would not be able to solve ethical problems in the public service. It is argued that in guanxi in China what the West may call corruption (bribe) is indeed acceptable business practice as a gift(Calhoun 2011).It is indeed possible to come up with ethical prescripts and code that are acceptable to the African society rooted in the philosophy of *Ubuntu*. As it is argued from the Biblical perspective; Jesus Christ could not have been crucified should he have been trialed by the laws of the conqueror then the Romans (under Pontius Pilate), although under the Roman government; the Jews still had to trialhim in terms of the Jewish law and found him guilty of blasphemy (the law of his own people). This surely contradicts the current practice by which prescripts and codes of ethics are to be followed by countries which are later to be accused of having failed to comply to and found guilty on foreign standards of measurements.

## CONCLUSION

This article has argued that there is indeed a paradox of culture and ethics in South Africa by which public servants are not coping to comply and identify with the ethical prescripts and codes set for them. Such has two implications; namely; that international institutions will rank the country high in terms of corruption (unethical practice) index and that most of public officials are being charged and dismissed from service for things that should not have been considered unethical in terms of the countries culture. It has also being noted that ethical training provides to public officials on ethical codes and prescripts they do not subscribe to have little effect on their compliance. Unlike policies, codes and prescripts are not publicly negotiated laws,

but are instead developed by authorities for compliance. And who are those authorities? Are those authorities the local practitioners or people that should copy acceptable prescripts and codes of former colonial masters?

## RECOMMENDATIONS

The paper strongly recommend for the fitting of the notion of the local culture into the ethos of work as well as the change of approach of the practice of public administration to be relevant to its own clientele and server . As argued from both the perspective of literature and practice; a major flaw of the practice of public administration in South Africa and other developing countries is that it is viewed from the perspective of the foreign expert than the local one. Such views have always rendered African perspectives to be useless and inapplicable to modern principles of administration. The said negative views have not been helpful to the problems faced by modern governments as Africans and other developing countries continue to fail to implement foreign principles into their own administration. It is highly recommended that the current borrowed approaches used by developing countries from their former colonial masters be reviewed and that a relevant and acceptable public administration practice be adopted by own governments so that they can measure their successes or failures of administration on own created and known principles of own created administration.

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