

Role of selected higher educational institutions in inculcating an ethical ethos in local government in South Africa

A curriculum review perspective

P Pillay

School of Public Administration and
Development Management
University of KwaZulu-Natal
South Africa

M Subban

School of Public Administration and
Development Management
University of KwaZulu-Natal
South Africa

ABSTRACT

The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996 makes provision for three spheres of government: national, provincial and local government. Local government is the third sphere of government, closest to the people and is responsible for service delivery in that sphere. The challenge is the manifestation of corruption across local government. According to Williams (2000:ix), corruption is a deviant and transitory activity. History is replete with cases of bribery, embezzlement, fraud, abuse of power, maladministration, nepotism, conflict of interest and the like. Corruption displays many negative consequences: weakened service delivery, misdirection of public resources, inhibiting growth, alleviating poverty and loss of trust by society (in Webb 2005:153). Therefore, anti-corruption reform is high on the political agenda in South Africa. In view thereof, this article introduces a paradigm shift in addressing corruption in local government. The researchers support the views expressed by Alperstein (2007:62-64) that institutions of higher learning should play prominent roles in instilling values, becoming more socially responsive to community development and producing new knowledge and graduates who are critical yet responsive citizens by reviewing its curriculum development. It



stands to reason that higher education is often celebrated as the powerhouse and engine' for development, and central to this mandate is the design and function of curricula in Higher Education Institutions (Prinsloo 2010:19). Hence, the key focus of the discussion is an overview of curricula of Local Government modules at both undergraduate and postgraduate programmes at selected institutions of higher learning in South Africa. The aim is raising awareness on ethical issues and evolution of a culture of zero tolerance towards unethical behaviour in municipal practices. The article supports a need for debate and discussion on diverse methodologies and approaches as a starting point to the ethical enquiry. Ethics education is becoming more complex and entails new learning approaches in addressing its complexity. There is a paradigm shift in the debate and discussion about teaching and incorporating a focus of ethics in the curriculum from a mere incorporation into the curriculum, to what are the best methods and pedagogies for teaching ethics.

INTRODUCTION

Ethics education is an educational process that leverages on curriculum development and review. In order to sustain the value of ethical leadership and good governance in local government, it is imperative that these issues are incorporated into the field of study. As an institution of higher learning, the university is seen as providing an environment for lifelong learning and a platform where values and principles of integrity can be instilled in students who will in due course provide the stewardship of the employment sector. The quality of work life is dependent on the enhancement of values and ethics and character development which serve as essential building blocks.

In light of this discussion, an increased focus on integrity management is provided within the tenets of the values and principles of public administration, as highlighted in Chapter 10 of the *Constitution of the Republic of South Africa*, 1996. It has therefore, become a key responsibility of schools and departments of Public Administration to provide an increased focus on integrity management within this premise. Teaching ethics awareness and the consequences of ethical and unethical actions and behaviours has become a critical component of curriculum development. In the context of local government management and development, it is emphasised in this article. *"The aim of ethics ...is not to teach the difference between right and wrong, but to make people comfortable facing moral complexity"* Solomon (in McWilliams and Nahavandi 2006:421).

According to Prinsloo (2010:19), higher education is often celebrated as the *powerhouse and engine* for development. Institutions of higher learning prepare graduates to enter the working world, or create a learning environment for those already employed. However, there still remains the need for students to gain a firm and strong understanding of the ethical concepts and be climatised to face the ethical challenges in their workplace, whilst making ethical decisions. It is within this context, that a constitutional perspective on municipal good governance and administration follows.

CONSTITUTIONAL REQUIREMENTS FOR MUNICIPAL GOOD GOVERNANCE AND ADMINISTRATION

The *Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996* highlights the importance and responsibilities of public administration with specific reference to values and principles that govern municipal administration. In this context, Section 195(1) of the Constitution highlights the values and principles, amongst others, professional ethics, provision of impartial and equitable services, accountable public administration, transparency and fairness and that are relevant and applicable for municipal officials (Bekink 2006:473). According to Reddy (in De Vries, Reddy and Haque 2008:68), considerable progress has been made in local government ethics. However, much more is necessary to ensure that municipalities become more vibrant, dynamic and creative in the context of developmental local government.

These aforementioned values and principles influence the normative factors relating to municipal service delivery and public participation. Municipal officials should display a certain degree of professional ethics, be accountable, representative and participatory, not forgetting fairness in applying the Rule of Law. The normative guidelines provide a framework for behaviour that guides municipalities in the execution of their duties. It also serves to motivate, direct and control their behaviour, thus guiding decision-making. Municipalities must be people-centred, accountable and transparent in their actions and ultimately responsive to local needs. The maintenance of professional integrity requires that municipal practitioners at all times act with responsibility and circumspection in public appearances and utterances. The principles, norms and culture expressed here all point to a fundamental responsibility demanded of municipalities. The acceptance of this responsibility is a necessity for the achievement and maintenance of ethical public administration and municipal good governance (Subban 2009:94-95).

A CODE OF ETHICS

One of the main challenges South Africa is facing today is irresoluteness about core values and norms. This has emerged out of the new political dispensation from the Bill of Rights that ensures equitable treatment for all persons regardless of race, culture and creed (Chapter 2, Constitution, 1996). In a multi-cultural set-up, it may become difficult to reach consensus on what is right and wrong, and what is acceptable and unacceptable conduct, because of competing, and often conflicting, values (Hilliard and Ferreira 2001:94).

It is argued that codes of ethics inherited from the apartheid era must be modified under the new dispensation. There is undoubtedly a common set of core values and norms to be negotiated, accepted, legitimated and applied in South African society, so that citizens are able to distinguish between right and wrong and ethical and unethical behaviours (Disoloeane 2010:437-438).

Codes of ethics are important as they reflect a concern and a willingness to raise ethical levels and serve as a yardstick of conduct (Skinner, Essen and Mersham 2004:16). A significant challenge is the notion of public accountability and maintaining a sustained sense of accountability (Forrer, Kee and Gabriel 2007:270). A code of ethics contributes to an integrity strategy which is characterised by ethics as a driving force of an institution. Ethical values shape the search for new opportunities, designing new systems and re-aligning decision-making



processes by individuals and groups. Ethics define what an organisation is and what it stands for (in Mavuso and Balia 1999:5). Universities as institutions of higher learning, have a pivotal role to play in fostering a culture of ethics and values in the teaching-learning interface.

ROLE OF UNIVERSITIES IN INSTILLING AN ETHICAL ETHOS

Since 1950, Article 2 of the first Protocol to the European Convention on Human Rights obligates all signatory parties to guarantee the right to education. At the world level, the United Nations International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights of 1996, guarantees this right under its Article 13, which states that higher education shall be made equally accessible to all, on the basis of capacity, by every appropriate means, and in particular by the progressive introduction of free education http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Higher_education.

Education means the process of gaining knowledge, inculcating forms of proper conduct and acquiring technical competency. It involves instilling values and principles and includes the development of skills along with the achievement of one's physical, mental and social development. Education consists of defined phases starting from formal education that consists of primary, secondary and higher education and ideally it never ends <http://www.buzzle.com/articles/beliefs-about-the-purpose-of-education.html>.

Education is believed to be responsible for the cultivation of a civilised society. Imparting education to the citizens enables the development of a responsible and thoughtful society. Education helps in imbibing moral and ethical values in the individuals and their education. In turn, it assists in the creation of a healthy society that bears a deep understanding of principles and the philosophy of life <http://www.buzzle.com/articles/beliefs-about-the-purpose-of-education.html>.

Education is widely accepted as a major instrument for promoting socio-economic, political and cultural development. Universities educate future leaders and develop the high-level technical capacities that underpin economic growth and development (Odukunle 2001). Besides, Ibukun (1997) also posits that the main purpose and relevance of university education is the provision of much needed human resources to accelerate the socio-economic development of the nation. Higher education is regarded as an instrument of social change and economic development. Moreover, higher education plays a crucial role in the supply of high level human resources for the socio-political and economic development of a nation. Higher education is expected to:

- contribute to national development through high level relevant manpower training;
- develop and inculcate proper values for the survival of the individual and society;
- develop the intellectual capability of individuals to understand and appreciate their local and external environments;
- acquire both physical and intellectual skills which will enable individuals to be self-reliant and useful members of the society;
- promote and encourage scholarship and community service; and
- forge and cement national unity (Ekundayo and Ajayi 2009:1).

Higher education includes teaching, research, exacting applied work, and social service activities of universities. Within the realm of teaching, it includes both the undergraduate

level (sometimes referred to as tertiary education), and beyond that, graduate level (or postgraduate level) for qualified students who wish to improve in their education and skills http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Higher_education. Higher education has to reflect on such sources, convey their focus whatever the subject or specialisation or research areas. A university has to be a place at which not only facts and skills are learned, but also an environment where thought, feeling and abilities are expressed and active engagement take place (Bone and McNay 2005:3).

REFORM IN HIGHER EDUCATION IN SOUTH AFRICA

Transformation, since 1994 has been characterised by various changes and a new system of higher education. This comprised increased participation by all sectors of society, greater institutional responsiveness to policy imperatives, and new co-operative relations and partnerships between higher education and the broader society (Wessels 2007:531). South Africa has reviewed and updated many education policies from 1994 to date (www.education.gov.za).

Kuye (2007:2) asserts that through relevant policy documents following reforms in 1994, higher education is required to obtain and sustain higher levels of economic growth; improve the standards of the masses; institute socio-economic change and development; facilitate good citizenship by empowering citizens to participate in a meaningful manner in the democratic processes; develop knowledge bases and contribute to citizens utilising opportunities and allowing them to compete internationally in a quest for excellence in delivery. Reform in higher education necessitated the need for curriculum review in institutions of higher learning. According to Kuye (2007:3-6), government introduced a system that radically changed the higher education system which required tertiary institutions to address changes in programmes and qualification offerings in their curricula. An important consideration, asserts Kuye is that of teaching and learning focusing on bringing academic and vocational education into closer alignment, and to follow an outcomes-based approach to allow cross-field outcomes.

Curriculum reviews flowing from the transformation of higher education as provided by Auriacombe (2000:7), is a combination of three types of competence as: practical (knowing how to do things and the ability to make decisions; foundational (understanding what they are doing and why); and reflective learning and adapting self-reflection, applying knowledge appropriately and responsibly.

Following from the above important considerations advocated by Kuye and Auriacombe, is the integration of the New Public Management (NPM), and its reflection on the discourse of Public Management and the study of Local Government Management and Development in South Africa. Of significance, it is worth noting that recently a number of writers have argued that government have moved beyond the NPM Approach to understand the relationship between state, market and civil society. There is a growing awareness of the importance of societal outcomes, recognition of the limitation of government in addressing the socio-economic issues and the declining engagement in democracy and trust in government, as a result of large scale corruption that is eroding public confidence (Hartley and Skelcher in Hartley, Donaldson, Skelcher and Wallace 2008:14). Arising from such concerns, this article addresses the growing



need to incorporate a key focus on an ethics discourse in the undergraduate and postgraduate programmes in institutions of higher learning further. This should be in addition to the traditional approach to focusing on the ethics aspect in the local government arena.

NEW PUBLIC MANAGEMENT APPROACH (NPM)

Ronald Reagan (in Auriacombe 1999:129) is of the view that government is not the solution to the problem but that government is the problem. Osborne and Gaebler (in Auriacombe 1999:129) highlight the following important principles relating to taking control and charge of resources:

- promoting competition of service delivery through service providers;
- empowering citizens rather than merely serving them;
- measurement of performance based on results thus focusing on outcomes as opposed to outputs;
- goal-driven with a focus on the mission; and
- meeting needs of customers through redefinition thus affording them choices.

A significant focus of the NPM components as advocated by Hood (in Auriacombe 1999:130) is therefore highlighted as follows:

- managers should be given more discretion and held responsible for results and decisions taken;
- defining explicit targets and measurement of results;
- a fit should be created between resource allocation and results;
- decentralised autonomy with a focus on functional units;
- increased contracting of work to private sector;
- more flexibility to recruitment and retention services; and
- curbing of costs to achieve more with less.

According to Doorgapersad and Ababio (2010:415-416), the subject of ethics in local government has evoked a great degree of interest in South Africa's relatively new democracy. Furthermore, there has been an increase in unethical conduct and corruption in local government which impacts negatively on service delivery. The community and municipal functionaries will have to take serious cognisance of the institutional and administrative measures to enhance ethical conduct and counter corruption.

ETHICS IN LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Public institutions in South Africa have an obligation to ensure service delivery to all citizens (Van Schalkwyk 2008:272). It is clear from the discussion and perspective of this article, that ethics education remains the focal point of the discussion for good governance in local government. Masango (2000:60) is of the view that efficiency and effectiveness of public service programmes are crucial aspects for productivity. Furthermore, he advocates that it is necessary for public officials to uphold and adhere to the principles of efficiency and

effectiveness. However, these concepts are often challenged in unethical practices that occur in municipal governance in the local sphere of government.

It is generally accepted that politicians and municipal officials should display a sense of responsibility and accountability when performing their municipal duties. By being accountable, municipal officials must, according to Fox *et al.* (in Sekoto and Van Straaten 1999:117) remain continually accountable in an honest and accurate manner for their actions; act in a competent and effective manner; produce the desired outcomes; and not act for their own private gain.

Ababio and Mahlatsi (2008:354) emphasise that municipalities are the primary institutions for enhancing the service delivery agenda of government in the local sphere of government, and have three key roles to play as part of the developmental agenda:

- provision of decisive leadership and direction in municipal policy-making, reducing costs of conducting business and maximising citizen participation in the local economy;
- administering programmes and projects with a focus on growth and local development; and
- initiate economic development through public spending, judicial control of the municipal fiscus and the promotion of small business development (Small Medium Micro Enterprises – SMMEs).

In addition to the above discussion, Nealer (in Van Der Waldt 2007:180-181) points out that the principles that underpin good governance can only be effective within the context of honesty and recognition of compliance with legislation and codes of conduct in local government. Furthermore, Section 152(1) of the *Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996* lists the objects of local government as providing democratic and accountable government for local communities. This is one way of combating corruption in local government.

Concepts and themes of *enablement; partnerships; participation; civic engagement; solidarity; decentralisation of authority; capacity building* are some of the building blocks that could contribute to isolating local government from corrupt practices and governance processes (Pieterse 2008:65). The need to embed good local governance and democratic governance is a current priority with renewed focus.

Given the above responsibilities, the centrality of integrity management and promoting a culture and ethos of ethics in exercising their powers and performing their functions cannot be overemphasised. Furthermore, the increased demand for an integration of the ethics discourse into mainstream curriculum reviews and pedagogical approaches dominate the focus of teachings in Public Administration and Local Government Management and Development currently.

CURRICULA OVERVIEW OF SELECTED HIGHER EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS – A LOCAL GOVERNMENT FOCUS

The Republic of South Africa is divided into nine provinces. The article covers five provinces and one institution from each province is indicated hereunder:

- Eastern Cape: University of Fort Hare



- Free State: University of Free State
- Gauteng: University of Pretoria
- KwaZulu-Natal: University of KwaZulu-Natal
- Western Cape: University of Western Cape

Contact was made with the above institutions via e mail, telephone or access via websites (which appears in the bibliography for ease of reference).

A profile of the offerings is presented in the table that follows.

DISCUSSION

All five universities offer Local Government/Municipal Administration modules at both undergraduate and postgraduate levels. All universities offer Certificate Courses and/or Training Programmes on Local Government/Municipal Administration. However, some universities are more intensely involved in training of this nature than others. The School of Public Management and Development at the University of Fort Hare offers a module entitled Life, Knowledge, Action. The curriculum framework incorporates Values and Principles with emphasis on Integrity, Honesty, Trust and the like. The University of Western Cape offers a module on Governance and Ethics in the Public Sector at the Honours Level, whilst the University of KwaZulu-Natal offers a module on Legislative and Ethical Foundations of Public Administration and Development at the master's level. The School of Public Management and Administration at the University of Pretoria has introduced a new curriculum at the undergraduate and postgraduate levels. A module on Ethics and Service Rendering at the undergraduate level focuses on ethics and public service and citizenship and public ethics.

Other Schools offer ethics across the curricula. The School of Public Management and Development at the University of Fort Hare offers a Masters Degree in Educational Policy and Management and an elective module is based on Managing the Curriculum. The purpose of the module is to introduce the major theoretical and organisational issues that underpin approaches to managing the curriculum in schools and colleges; examine a range of constraints and opportunities within which curriculum policies are formulated; link curriculum policies to curriculum practice paying attention to external and internal pressures promoting change and innovation. The School of Public Management and Administration at the University of Pretoria is the only School in South Africa offering a PhD in Public Affairs (Part 2: Electives) with a specialisation in Local Government Management and Administration. The School of Public Management and Administration at the University of Pretoria is the leading School offering a DAdmin in Municipal Administration.

Academic content in the Local Government/Municipal Administration modules are similar and/or common in all five universities (Policy and Legislative framework, Institutional Arrangements, Comparative Local Government, Environmental Factors, Corruption, Inter-governmental Relations, Financing and Budgeting, Service Delivery, Local Economic Development, Case Studies and Best Practices from Developed and Developing Countries). Following this, several schools and departments inculcate an ethical dimension in their Local Government/Municipal Administration offerings via academic discourse, case studies or diverse assessments.

Table 1 Instructional offering in public administration with reference to local government

Name of Institution and Name of School	Module/s at Undergraduate Offerings	Modules at Postgraduate Offerings	Training Programmes/Short Courses
<p>University of Fort Hare School of Public Management and Development (www.ufh.ac.za)</p>	<p>Local Government and Administration (B Admin Public Sector Management and Administration) Human Resource Management and Local Government and Administration (B Admin Public Sector Management and Administration) Life, Knowledge, Action (Grounding Programme)</p>	<p>Honours Degree: Local Government and Administration (Elective) Masters Degree in Public Administration: Local Government and Administration (Elective) Masters Degree in Educational Policy and Management: Managing the Curriculum (Elective)</p>	<p>Certificate in Public Administration – Local Government and Administration (Core) Certificate in Municipal Financial Management – Apply the principles of ethics in a Municipal environment (Fundamental Component) Local Government Short Course Local Government Unit Standards- Apply the principles of ethics in a municipal environment</p>

Table 1 Instructional offering in public administration with reference to local government continued

Name of Institution and Name of School	Module/s at Undergraduate Offerings	Modules at Postgraduate Offerings	Training Programmes/Short Courses
University of Free State Department of Public Management (www.econ.ufs.ac.za)	Municipal Management Core (B Pub – General Management) Municipal Management Elective (B Pub – Economic Policy) Municipal Management Core (B Pub – Human Resource Management) Municipal Management Core (B Pub – Accounting) Municipal Management (B Com 4 Year Curriculum)	Local Governance Elective (Advanced Diploma in Public Administration)	Credit Bearing Short Course Learning Programmes: Budgeting & Financial Management for the Public and Municipal Sectors Integrated Development Planning Integrated Strategic Management for the Public and Municipal Sectors Manage in terms of the PFMA/MFMA Municipal Services Partnership in the Public Sector Organisational Analysis and Intergovernmental Relations in the Public Sector Performance Management and the Public and Municipal Sectors Strategic Planning and Budgeting for the Public and Municipal Institutions Strategic Planning for the Public and Municipal Sectors Training Courses: Advanced Management Development and Emerging Management Development Programmes with PALAMA

Table 1 Instructional offering in public administration with reference to local government continued

Name of Institution and Name of School	Module/s at Undergraduate Offerings	Modules at Postgraduate Offerings	Training Programmes/Short Courses
<p>University of Pretoria School of Public Management and Administration (www.up.ac.za)</p>	<p>New Curriculum: B Admin (Public Management) Ethics and Service Rendering Local Government and Administration</p> <p>Normal Curriculum: B Admin B Admin (International Relations) B A (Political Science)</p> <p>Option in Municipal Government</p> <p>Municipal Administration</p>	<p>B A Honours/ B Admin Honours: Intergovernmental Relations Municipal Government and Administration Elective</p> <p>MPA Municipal Law Elective</p> <p>MPA New Curriculum Local Government and Administration</p> <p>Local Government and Administration Specialisation</p> <p>PhD in Public Affairs Part 2: Electives Local Government Management and Administration Specialisation</p> <p>D Admin in Municipal Administration</p>	<p>Short Courses: Municipal decision-making techniques Municipal Regulations and Adjudication Introduction to Municipal Government and Administration</p>

Table 1 Instructional offering in public administration with reference to local government continued

Name of Institution and Name of School	Module/s at Undergraduate Offerings	Modules at Postgraduate Offerings	Training Programmes/Short Courses
<p>University of KwaZulu-Natal School of Public Administration and Development Management (www.publicadmin.ukzn.ac.za)</p>	<p>B Admin Introduction to Local Government (Core)</p>	<p>B Admin Honours: Advanced Local Governance and Management (Elective) MPA Advanced Provincial and Local Governance (Elective) Legislative and Ethical Foundations of Public Administration and Development (Elective)</p>	<p>Training Courses: Advanced Management Development and Emerging Management Development Programmes with PALAMA</p>

Table 1 Instructional offering in public administration with reference to local government continued

Name of Institution and Name of School	Module/s at Undergraduate Offerings	Modules at Postgraduate Offerings	Training Programmes/Short Courses
<p>University of Western Cape School of Government (www.schoolofgovernment.co.za)</p>	<p>B Admin: Introduction to Public and Local Government Administration and Management</p>	<p>B Admin Honours: Governance and Ethics in the Public Sector</p> <p>Issues in Local Government Elective</p> <p>MPA: Intergovernmental Relations Elective</p> <p>Local Government Planning and Management Elective</p>	<p>Certificate in Local Economic Development:</p> <p>Municipal Finance and Budgeting Local Government</p> <p>Certificate in Economic Development: Local Governance</p> <p>Executive Leadership Development Programme for Councillors and Municipal Officials:</p> <p>Local Government Policy and Legislative Framework</p> <p>Local Governance and Democracy Leadership and Management in Local Government</p> <p>Crime Prevention in Local Government: Understanding the Local Government and Crime Prevention Policy Framework</p> <p>Training Programmes: Local Government Management Development Programme</p> <p>Municipal Service Partnerships Training Programme</p> <p>Senior Executive Leadership Programme for Disabled Councillors</p> <p>Local Government Partnership Programme</p>

Following on the above survey of Public Administration programmes at selected universities, it could be deduced that all the above universities indicate an ethics course for their undergraduate and postgraduate programmes and integrate it across the curriculum. The universities either have:

- A *stand-alone* module on ethics;
- ethics is incorporated in the Local Government/Municipal Administration modules; and
- an ethical dimension is a key focus in several modules.

The importance of ethics education in the growing field of developmental local government is a necessity, given the range of problems and challenges experienced at the local sphere of government. The next part of the article focuses on some criteria for best practices in teaching ethics, and is presented in light of the afore-going discussions.

Table 2 Key criteria of best practices in teaching ethics

CRITERIA	METHODS & PEDAGOGIES
Discussion of philosophical and theoretical concepts in ethics discourse	Lectures, discussion, research papers and a focus on theory-driven quantitative studies of ethics
Practical application of theoretical concepts to business and managerial situations and dilemmas	Examples, case studies (providing contextual issues that are critical for understanding historical, policy, political, economic and social conditions), guest lectures, experiential methods (role-plays, simulations, internships) Through simulations practitioner-focus is incorporated into curriculum and course work materials (Milam 2003:368).
Active student engagement and emotional involvement through being an active participant Students should develop a case based on their personal experience – seen as most effective because of ownership of issues and content	Experiential methods for on-the-job applicability in the core curriculum
Critical thinking through analysis, evaluation, synthesis and integration of information gathered through observation, reflection and research using that information to guide decisions and actions	Discussion of abstract concepts, research assignments, experiential methods
Relevance and application	Case studies, experiential methods
Integration with other knowledge and information	Lectures, experiential methods and internships
Accountability through being asked to take, support and defend a position	Case studies, presentation, papers, debates, experiential methods
Transfer of learning to real life situations	Supervised internships

Source Adapted from McWilliam *et al.* (2006:424).

The above criteria for teaching ethics, as cited by Auriacombe (2000:7) must incorporate the five competencies of cognitive, performance, consequence, affective and exploratory since it gives meaning to active learning. The significant words of Skinner (in Auriacombe 2000:7) are aptly related to the focus of the interface of ethics as an integral module in

the core curriculum of undergraduate and postgraduate programmes in schools of Public Administration, as follows: “Education is what remains when what has been learned has been forgotten”. Contextualised, ethics education is evidently becoming more complex, hence it entails new learning approaches to find new ways to address its complexity.

TEACHING ETHICS IN SCHOOLS AND DEPARTMENTS OF PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION

According to research studies on teaching ethics in programmes in Public Administration, the following questions by Catron and Denhardt (in Mensel 1997:225) draw attention:

- Why has ethics education become so important?
- What factors influence decisions to offer ethics courses?
- What are or should be the goals of ethics education?
- How does or should a programme or department incorporate ethics education into the curriculum?
- What is or should be the content of ethics courses?
- How do schools respond to ethics pedagogy?
- What instructional methodologies are applied to teach ethics?
- Who actually teaches ethics courses?
- What difference does ethics education make in the life and behaviour of men and women in pursuit of public service careers?

From the afore-going questions, it can be stated that one has to move beyond the political rhetoric to developing and cultivating resources devoted to theories and practicalities of ethics and transformational stewardship. The importance of ethics and accountability has become even more important. It is rapidly becoming one of the most significant roles of public managers (Forrer *et al.* 2007:276).

ANATOMY OF AN ETHICAL PERSPECTIVE IN THE CURRICULUM

The following lead-in devices/aspects are suggested as key determinants of an ethics course (which are illustrated in the model that follows):

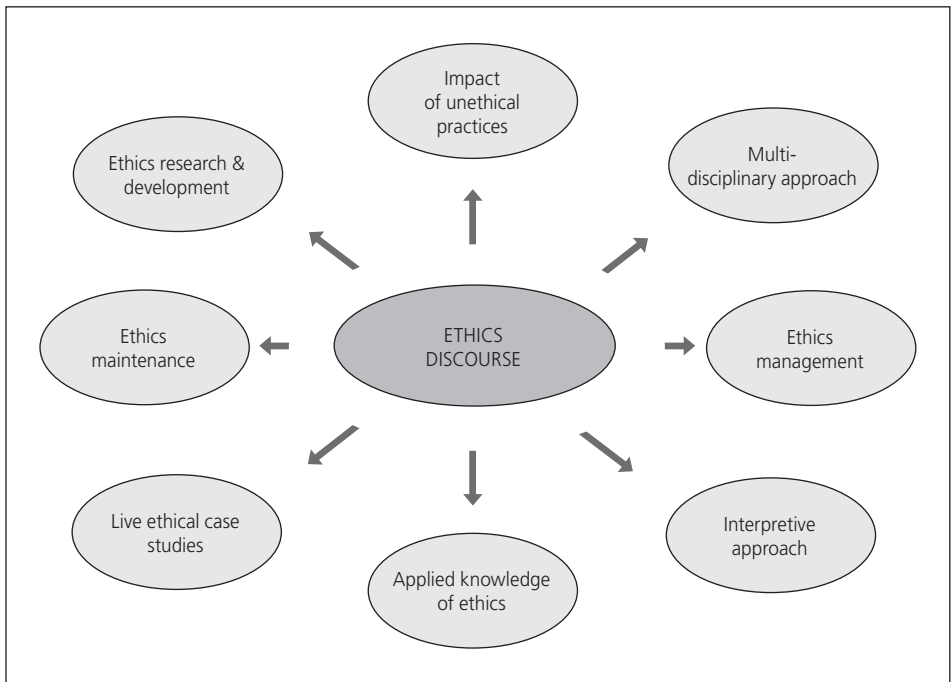
- governance and accountability for improvement and enhancement of municipal service delivery;
- research, quality assurance and a more robust community engagement (as advocated by Kuye 2007:2) (*ethics research and development*);
- a performance-metrics approach focusing on performance (*ethics management*) and improvement (*addressing the maladies in corrupt practices*);
- performance reporting and conformance to service standards (*ethics maintenance*);
- multi-disciplinary approach to an *ethics discourse* with a focus on demonstration projects;
- generation of propositions to be tested by undertaking *live ethical case studies*;

- focus on an interpretive approach to the critical examination of the *efficacy of ethics* in local government;
- increased focus on empirical evidence of the impact of *unethical practices* on municipal service delivery thus examining the causalities of poor governance and ill performance, as proffered by Skelcher (in Hartley *et al.* 2008:28); and
- developing theoretical based, but focusing on applied *knowledge of ethics* in academic discourse.

There is a paradigm shift in the debate and discussion about teaching and incorporating ethics in the curriculum from a *mere incorporation* into the curriculum, to what are the best *methods and pedagogies* for teaching ethics. The proliferation of ethics courses can be viewed as an important development that does not seek to convey a set of moral truths but tries to encourage students to think carefully about complex moral issues, and to make students more perceptive in detecting ethical problems when they arise (Menzel 1997:230).

Ferrer *et al.* (2007:266) argue that the new curricula offered by schools and departments of Public Administration should reflect the new realities of public managers including a focus on ethical leadership. Evidence abounds attesting to the importance of accountability and governance mechanisms to address ethical issues and restore quality service delivery and revitalise the life of local communities (Friere in Friere and Stren 2000:xxxviii). Milam (2003:369) contends that teaching makes one a better practitioner, whilst being a practitioner

Figure 1 Model on the approaches to the study of ethics education: a local government perspective



Source Adapted from above discussion, Kuye (2007) and Skelcher (in Hartley *et al.* 2008).

makes one a better teacher. The questions and thought processes assist in understanding how local government operates and should operate.

CONCLUSION

Focusing on the thematic issues raised in this article, the effective and efficient functioning of local government is not only a political responsibility, but also a moral obligation whilst fulfilling a constitutional mandate. Preserving the integrity of the municipal sector in relation to political, managerial and operational demands is integral to the accomplishment of the agenda of developmental local government and local democracy. In Public Administration and Local Government Management and Development, questions of morality and ethics become issues of captivity whilst there is renewed public interest in government ethics and morality. It is both an institutional and individual responsibility to ensure that values and ethics are inculcated in municipal practices. However, it is also a responsibility of institutions of higher learning to develop and review curricula, and contribute to an ethics discourse that focuses on addressing some of the maladies in governance, and to further encourage professionalism and integrity in the graduates whom we produce who will ultimately contribute value and strive for excellence in their prospective employment.

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AUTHORS' CONTACT DETAILS

P Pillay

E-mail: pillaype@ukzn.ac.za

M Subban

E-mail: subbanm@ukzn.ac.za

