

Understanding and promoting value considerations in South African public administration

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ABSTRACT

Public administration (also referred to as work of government) is a collective human enterprise carried out to ensure achieving the ultimate ideal of serving the public interest. Currently, it is facing critical issues and new agendas emerging from an intensive and pervasive interconnected internal, external and global environment. South African public administration is no exception. Although, by means of the South African Constitution which is the supreme law in the land, legislative, institutional and administrative measures embed and promote value considerations, it is the view of the author that understanding conceptual perspectives of values in terms of similar, related and core meanings, can facilitate the guiding of South African public administration to its ultimate ideal – Chapter 10 of the South African Constitution on public administration being the principle foundation. To enable and support public administration to cope and deal with these challenges, a deeply embedded and enduring value system is essential. Another intertwined enhancing factor is value orientation. A keen grasp and application of the related value orientations namely, theoretical, political, ethical, social, human and spiritual could rigorously and vigorously animate and influence public administration to realise its ultimate significance, which is the promotion of the public interest. To deal with the challenges relating to the review and implementation of the measures, a determined political will, coupled with a robust public discourse and a vibrant and vigilant media, could be meaningful.

The concept of values has become a major feature of both the practice and study of public administration (Kernaghan 2003:711)

INTRODUCTION

There is no single and acceptable approach to describing, explaining and analysing social phenomena. However, contextualising can play a facilitating role. The context here is a

conceptual understanding of the role values ought to play in South African public administration. In the initial part of the article emphasis is on the ideals of public administration. A conceptual perspective follows on the various meanings of values. Finally, the various value orientations impacting on public administration are described and explained.

IDEALS

Serving and realising the public interest through ensuring a high quality of life, living and livelihood is the essence and ideal of public administration. As the Preamble to the South African Constitution states: "Improve the quality of life for all citizens and free the potential of each person...". The concept of *public* is its intellectual and practice foundation (Haque 1999:309). Often considered, as a machinery as well as a system, it comprises public institutions, structures, processes, activities, patterns of roles, responsibilities, competencies and capacities (tangible and intangible). It is a human activity carried out by human beings by means of a human network (Ramaite 2000:39; Nnoli 2000: 44–45; Braibant 2002:333–343; Basu 1992:124). The challenge is how values can best be integrated into the system (Kernaghan 2003:711). It operates within a pervasive and intensive constantly changing connected internal, external and global milieu, and its practice and applicability can be studied from a multi-dimensional intellectual perspective (Nnoli 2000:53; Peters and Pierre 2007:7; Basu 1992:6).

What does this actually mean? The concern of the legal expert will be how decisions guarantee compliance with policies, procedures and laws. Management experts will focus on how economy and efficiency are promoted in public service delivery. Information and communication technology experts inquire how the internet has contributed to effective public service delivery. A historian will want to investigate how political stability has been promoted during the reign of a particular political party. For sociologists the concern will be how the needs of the historically disadvantaged have been addressed compared to advantaged groups. The governance experts want to investigate how politicians use or misuse public power. The impact of political policy on the formulation and outcomes of the public policies, will be the focus of political scientists. The constitutional experts try to ascertain to what extent practices are within the stipulation of a country's constitution. For the development expert, the concern will be how the increasing of people's choices and access to public resources enhance living standards. The environmental expert will want to know how policies on the use of natural resources have been formulated and implemented. Philosophers will want to consider how public administrative activities have contributed to the development of a perfect society and the ideal state. The concern is whether in this utopia human rights, privilege, injustice, immorality, indifference and sloth will prevail or not (Vilella 2001:7; Coetzee 2001:120; Rajamani 2003:400; Caiden 1991:161).

Public administration operates at different levels of government. Currently, public administration is facing critical issues and new agendas: promoting economic growth, achieving social equity, a range of alternative service delivery mechanisms, national security, terrorism, environmental quality, corruption, addressing human rights issues, civil disobedience and, many more (O' Toole and Meier 2011:1; Rose and Lawton 1999:ix; Barton and Chappell 1985: Preface). In regard to the issue of corruption, Nelson Mandela (in



RSA Presidency cited by Mantzaris and Pillay 2013:113) cautioned: "Our hope for the future deeply depends also on our resolution as a nation in dealing with the scourge of corruption. Success will require and acceptance that in many aspects, we are a sick society". Operating at different levels of government and, despite there are variations in people, substance, contents, contexts and publics, public administrators share certain commitments. However, none is more significant and important than an everlasting and total commitment to *public service* (Denhardt and Denhardt 2009:1; Pauw 1995:28).

The notion of *public service* implies servanthood, stewardship, trusteeship as well as a calling (April, Macdonald and Vriesendorp 2003:99–110; Block 1993:xx; Wolf and Bacher 1990:165). Unlike the other *two worlds* of public administrative employment, namely job and career, the world of vocation is a *Calling to Public Service* (Wolf and Bacher 1990:167–168). In the context of South African public administration, this assertion is underscored by the Constitution (officially referred to as *The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa*, 1996). The Preamble of the Constitution states that one objective is to: "Improve the quality of life of all citizens and free the potential of each person". In a development-oriented public administration like South Africa, this will include all citizens, most importantly, the most powerless and the humblest (Nnoli 2000:44; Krishna Iyer 2003:491). This living for *public service* enables and supports the public administrator "... to be part of a human social enterprise, to experience meaning in work, and the feeling of altruism (Wolf and Bacher 1990:170). The world of vocation embeds a powerful transpersonal and interconnected dimension that supports and affirms an overall positive and effective role of the public administration system (Wolf and Bacher 1990:168). This *interconnectedness* creates for the public administrator a powerful and embedded sense of belonging, and while overcoming isolation, separation and alienation, is aware of and respects the intrinsic dignity and integrity of the individual (Lifton 1996 in Wolf and Bacher 1990:170). This notion is inspired by the Preamble of the Constitution which states: "We the people of South Africa...Believe that South Africa belongs to all who live in it, united in our diversity". In real terms public administration therefore is not only about abstractions and statistical data and information, but also is also about human welfare. According to Jawaharilal Nehru "(Public) administration is meant to achieve something, and not to exist in some kind of ivory tower, following certain rules of procedure and, Narcissus-like, looking on itself with complete satisfaction. The test after all is the human beings and their welfare" (Nehru 2003:1).

In order for public administrators to promote the public interest through *public service*, they require both tangible and intangible capacities such as motivation, leadership, determination, tolerance and values (Brynard 2007:38). Public administration is directed and manned by human beings (public administrators) and is meant for human beings (members of the public) (Basu 1992:18). The mission of the intangible capacity of values is to foster and promote the human endeavour of public administration. Public administration is driven by individual and collective (organisational) values whether those values are understood consciously or unconsciously, are influential or not, written or unwritten, spoken or unspoken (Bean 1993:93). Values can be stipulated through legislation and can be individually and collectively learnt, created, transformed and realised by public administrators as human beings (Biswas 1997:629).

For South African public administration, the Constitution which is the supreme law in the Republic stipulates nine values as well as other values that must be complied with by

public administrators' operations. Another profound stipulation that public administrators must take cognisance of, is that "...law or conduct inconsistent with (the Constitution) is invalid and obligations imposed by it must be fulfilled" (Section 2 of *The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996*). These constitutional stipulations serve to inculcate in public administrators that in an authentic democracy they render *public service* to all members of the public in an heterogeneous as well as a linguistically, and culturally diverse and developing country such as South Africa (Devenish 1998:271).

CONCEPTUAL PERSPECTIVES

Value as a social concept is difficult to describe and explain, since they have similar meanings to principles, beliefs and norms, and are also inter-linked to concepts such as attitude and behaviour (Misselhorn 2001:188). In order to systematically understand the meaning and nature of values it is necessary to discuss some of the similar and linked meanings first, then the core meanings.

Similar and Linked Meanings

Chapter 10 of the South African Constitution provides an example of similarities in meanings. It refers to the basic values and principles governing public administration. According to the *Encarta World English Dictionary* (1999:1497) principle means "basic assumption", "ethical standard", "way of working" and the "characteristic ingredient". Gildenhuis and Knipe (2000:92) advocate that principle as a fundamental truth forms the foundation for reasoning, action and deed and therefore being a fundamental truth, is not subject to change for simple reasons. A principled public administrator therefore adheres to the principles of the government for which he/she works and believes in (Gildenhuis and Knipe 2000:92). Belief according to the *Encarta World English Dictionary* (1999:165) is the acceptance of something as bring true and real, and that certainty is embedded in an emotional and inspirational sense. Therefore, for example, South African public administrators must: "Believe that South Africa belongs to all those who live in it, united in our diversity" (Preamble: *The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996*). Having a belief in something implies that it has been given conscious and serious consideration, but people can be totally wrong in their belief and is not the same as knowledge and facts (Lawson 1989:210–211). Therefore, reality is understood in terms of assumptions that are accurate or inaccurate as well as valid or invalid (Misselhorn 2001:11). In the public administrator's work life he/she may have beliefs about a colleague's reliability or unpredictability, competency or inaptitude (Misselhorn 2001:11). Whichever beliefs public administrators hold, and whichever proves to be true, this enables conclusions to be drawn about them (Lawson 1989:211; Wood, Chapman, Formholtz, Morrison, Wallace, Zeffane, Schermerhorn, Hunt and Osborn 2004:113). A norm, according to the *Encarta World English Dictionary* (1999:1289) means *inter-alia* "standard pattern of behaviour" and "required achievement and expected range of functioning". Norms emphasise what ought to be and not what is, but endorses ends, goals, purposes, visions and missions. Focus is also on what is expected and desirable and shared by individuals as well as adaption to what is required (Barton and Chappell 1985:33; Fox 2010:10). It



is reasoned that normative guidelines and normative emphasis in public administration understood from the perspective of the individual public administrator implies that certain challenges and phenomena in public administration cannot be described, explained, predicted and evaluated within the capability of social science and natural science. This has to be admitted and accepted by the public administrator. Recognition of the complexities of human nature and the fact that human beings (public administrators) as individuals and as members of a collective unit (organisation), are a composite of several factors, constitute the ingredients of the normative emphasis. Through the individual ought maturation process he/she is influenced by what to be, what is expected and to what extent they are recognised. These impacts on the individual's perception of how *public service* should occur. So too the organisation attempts to mould and influence the individual's perception of what *public service* ought to be (Barton and Chappell 1985:332–333).

While values, principles, beliefs and norms have a more general focus, attitudes have a specific focus (Jones and George 2003:80). Attitudes may be explained as a psychological tendency or a mental state of preparedness or feelings of positivity (favourableness), negativity (dis-favourableness), organised and learnt through experiences that influence an individual's perception of issues and response to situations, objects and people (Quick and Nelson 2009:116); Gibson, Ivanevich and Donnelly 1994:116). However, unlike values, principles, beliefs and norms, attitudes are evaluations of particular issues, people, situations and objects (Fisher and Lovell 2009:153). Attitudes which reflect thoughts and feelings can be influenced by a collection of values, principles, beliefs and norms, only because they focus on particulars and specifics, and unlike values, principles, beliefs and norms, are more changeable (Smit, Cronje, Brevis and Vrba 2009:2009; Fisher and Lovell 2009:153). Public administrators may have attitudes to numerous aspects of public administrative work life such as access to information, corruption and service delivery protests. Attitudes impact on behaviour which reflects an individual's tendency to act towards issues, situations, objects and people in certain ways (Uys 1995:524; Gibson *et al.* 1994:15). For example, a public administrator may make a verbal statement expressing his/her feelings about how service delivery protest is managed. This is an attitude. The outcome of the attitude is sending a letter of resignation which is *behaving* in a certain way. Reacting to feelings based on the resolution to act in a certain way is therefore, the consequence of the attitude (Uys 1995:525; Wood *et al.* 2004:144).

Core Meanings

Some perspectives emphasise that value is a serious and deeply held belief, principle and norm reflecting abstract ideals, preferences, convictions, behaviour and outcomes (Lawson 1989:214; Kreitner 1995:147; Subramaniam 2003:419). Values as a means for organising attitudes, guiding individual behaviour and conduct connotes dislikes, likes, shoulds, viewpoints, prejudices and biases as well as irrational and rational judgements and evaluations (Spranger in Gibson *et al.* 1994:118). Barton and Chappell (1985:335) reason that values have a conceptual underpinning and are more profound than wants, needs, emotions and senses. In theorising about the origins of values Bellone and Nigro (in Barton and Chappell 1985:335–336) propose that they are the consequence of social-psychological processes which emanate from people's interactions that attribute meaning to phenomena. Values as representing object-oriented activity are the outcome of the ability of people to

objectify phenomena, thereby establishing the essential function of values to create meaning. To the individual, values are of considerable importance and significance; they are not in the least trivial and are reflected by the fact that they are linked to choices which precede action (Bertrand in Barton and Chappell 1985:335–336). Therefore, a value can be considered an explicit and implicit conception which is distinctive and characteristic of an organisation or an individual or public administrative work life of the *desirable* which impacts on and influences the selection from a range of ways, modes, means, paths and ends of actions (Kluckhorn in Pinto 1989:60). Once internalised, values form the foundation (consciously or unconsciously) for guiding actions (Gibson *et al.* 1994:118). Individual and organisational values can therefore be regarded as distinctive, enduring and influential as well as subject to change as individuals and organisations grow, mature and learn during their life span (Bean 1993:96–97; Quick and Nelson 2009:136).

Fisher and Lovell (2009:155–156) use the notion of fragmentation to explain the nature of values. A fragmented view of values implies that values would be seen as various, diverse, disconnected and disordered, and are expressed in the form of conflict between different and rival views and opinions. While values in a non-fragmented social reality are simple and whole, they are difficult to apply in a fragmented social reality. Specific situations need values to be interpreted and can lead to ambiguity. Simple and whole values are not adequate to deal with new and changing circumstances. Conflict with the other values may also be the cause for ambiguity. For example, in a particular situation there may be conflict between the demand of telling the truth and loyalty. Should a public administrator tell the public the truth about security operations on a country's borders if it would result in endangering the life of the soldiers who expect him/her to be loyal to them? Therefore, it is reasoned that the wholeness and simplicity of values are broken down (fragmented) because of not knowing what value should apply in a particular situation (Fisher and Lovell 2009:156). As Kouzes and Posner (2007:52) state: "Clarity of values is essential to knowing which way, for each of us, is north, south, east and west. The clearer we are about our values the easier it is to stay on the path, we've chosen". Milton Rokeach distinguished and developed two sets of values referred to as instrumental (means-oriented) and terminal values (ends-oriented) which are important in public administrative work life.

Table 1 sets out the terminal and instrumental values in the Rokeach Value Survey.

While instrumental values reflect an enduring belief, the preferable way of behaving in all situations, terminal values reflect an enduring belief that a desirable end – state of existence is worth striving for. These are some lifelong goals or objectives that must be achieved during one's life time. It can be reasoned that instrumental values serve as means to achieve desired end-states or (terminal values (Roodt 2009:100–101; Kreitner 1995:14). Schermerhorn, Hunt and Osborn *et al.* 2008:35) state that instrumental values represent how one goes about achieving one's important desirable end-state, depending on the relative importance that one places on the instrumental values. For example, a person who endeavours to behave honestly through his/her life time will subscribe to the instrumental value of "honesty is the best policy" with self-respect being his/her terminal value (Kreitner 1995:141). Values having both the attributes of content and intensity may reflect a mode of behaviour (willing to pardon others) or an end-state of existence (contentedness) as important. How important the value is, represents the intensity attribute. Ranking of values in accordance with their intensity reflects a person's value system, thereby representing a hierarchy of values (Roodt 2009:100).



Table 1: Rokeach Value Survey

Terminal Values	Instrumental Values
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A comfortable life (a prosperous life). • An exciting life (a stimulating, active life). • A sense of accomplishment (lasting contribution). • A world of peace (free of war and conflict). • A world of beauty (beauty of nature and the arts). • Equality (brotherhood, equal opportunity for all). • Family security (taking care of loved ones). • Freedom (independence, free-choice). • Happiness (contentedness). • Inner harmony (freedom from inner conflict). • Mature love (sexual and spiritual intimacy). • National security (protection from attack). • Pleasure (an enjoyable leisurely life). • Salvation (saved, eternal life). • Self-respect (self-esteem). • Social recognition (respect, admiration). • True friendship (close companionship). • Wisdom (a mature understanding of life). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ambitious (hardworking, aspiring). • Broad-minded (open-minded). • Capable (competent, efficient). • Cheerful (light-hearted, joyful). • Clean (neat, tidy). • Courageous (standing up for your beliefs). • Forgiving (willing to pardon others). • Helpful (working for the welfare of others). • Honest (sincere, truthful). • Imaginative (daring, creative). • Intellectual (intelligent, reflective). • Logical (consistent, rational). • Loving (affectionate, tender). • Obedient (dutiful, respectful). • Polite (courteous, well-mannered). • Responsible (dependable, reliable). • Self-controlled (restrained, self-disciplined)

Source: Roodt 2009:100

Quick and Nelson (2009:137) assert that instrumental and terminal when working in concert offer individuals (public administrators) opportunities to define and strive for goals and acceptable means of realising those goals. For example, the terminal value of a *sense of accomplishment (lasting contribution)* may serve as an impetus to the public administrator making a lasting contribution to organisational goals by creating innovative service delivery mechanisms. An instrumental value such as *logical rational* can serve as a catalyst for a public administrator to ensure fairness in arriving at decisions affecting service delivery (Jones and George 2003:80) Gibson *et al.* (1994:120) caution on being aware of contradictory values and their potential for conflict. Intrapersonal value conflict reflects for instance, the conflict between instrumental values of ambition and forgiveness. The conflict between an individual’s quest to be creative and imaginative may clash with the organisation’s insistence with strict compliance. This reflects individual-organisational conflict. Conflict may arise amongst individuals from different cultural backgrounds. A group that advocates broad-mindedness and personal freedom may be regarded as being insensitive to a group that believes in self-respect and obedience. This can be regarded as intercultural value conflict (Kreitner 1995:130). On the contrary, it can be argued that a congruent and shared value system–values in harmony held and subscribed to by several people–creates and facilitates a sense of collective vision, mission and purpose amongst the organisation’s members. Individuals embracing and following shared values make their actions and contributions consistent with team and organisational goals (Hill and McShane 2008:19). This is enshrined in the Preamble of the Constitution: “Build a united and democratic South Africa to take its rightful place as a sovereign state in the family of nations”.

Various factors embed, influence and shape values (Bloisi, Cook and Hunsaker 2003:146). Business Basics (1995:70) advocates the family unit as one with the most influence on individual motivation and development and thereby, values. It is both a complex relationship and a social unit. The family unit focuses on what kinds of behaviour

are always acceptable and desirable or not. Being just a little honest is not taught to children. This distinction between what is desirable and undesirable results in enhancing the stability of values (Smit *et al.* 2009:298). It is also reasoned that parents, teachers, educational system, external groups, the media as well as the larger society and culture, serve as sources that impact on and play a role in influencing and strengthening people's values (Wood *et al.* 2004:111). In addition to all the sources, Quick and Nelson (2009:136) stress the impact of organisational life on individual values. While values induced by the various sources may embed a set of *intended values*, individuals have to learn *adopted values* as part of the organisational culture which comprises the value system of the organisation. When there is congruency in adopted and intended values, highly pragmatic *operative values* emerge. These values establish a frame of reference for consistency and effective relations in public administrative work life (Bloisi *et al.* 2003:148). For example, when the individual's terminal value of equality is consonant with *People First Batho Pele* principles, the public may be assured of fairness and respect in dealing with public administrators. As Gadgil (2003:21) aptly remarks: "The (public) administrator is accountable for his actions and what is more important and what distinguishes his case from any other is that he is accountable, not to his conscience but to the public". This requirement is embedded as one of the values governing public administration in the South African Constitution. It requires that the public administration must be accountable (Section 195 (1) (f)) of the *Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996*.

Orientations

Values being the most deep enduring and stable characteristic of individuals, influence attitudes and behaviour and therefore public administration work life (Lewis, Goodman and Fandt 2004:92). Being action oriented, values not only inform attitudes and influence behaviour of public administrators towards the means and ends they seek to achieve, but also form the bedrock of criteria for behaviour that should determine and inform how they ought to go about pursuing and achieving those ends in different contexts and interactions (Molina and McKeown 2012:377). Various authors have cited and proposed different value orientations. For example, Schermerhorn *et al.* (2008: 36) refer to theoretical, economic, aesthetic, social, political and religious value orientations. Human, ethical, productivity and political ones are emphasised by Misselhorn (2001:193). Molina and McKeown (2012:377) reflect on orientations such as democratic, professional, ethical and human. Spiritual orientation is referred to by Krishnan (2008:12). In a publication entitled: *Dynamics of Development: An International Perspective*, Biswas (1997:629–636) reflects on: *Development in Spiritual Dimensions: Present-day-World and Religious Knowability*.

Theoretical

A theoretical leaning, direction or position in public administrative work life has links with science and research. For example, this refers to discovering truth, cause and effect, acquiring knowledge, rational, systematic and logical arrangements of facts and thoughts underpinning assumptions, principles and concepts, and how phenomena are investigated, understood, described, explained, analysed and predicted within a wide range of situations



(Schermerhorn *et al.* 2008:36; Van Tonder 2006:234). A theoretical orientation path is also embedded in a cognition map “searching for similarities and differences” in thought processes used in different circumstances and situations (Bryman and Bell 2007:726). For example, a public administrator may want to inquire into the thinking underpinning decision-making sequences and processes for dealing with service delivery complaints. A public administrator with a theoretical leaning on “reflectivity” may want to carefully think of and interpret the implications of the methodology of public administration research on the knowledge generated, for example (Bryman and Bell 2007:731). Reflecting within a chaos and complexity theoretical orientation, a public administrator may want to discover the following: how minor changes in organisational conditions could cause exponential results over time; how organisations comprising different and diverse individuals can create a form of self-organising order; and how understanding details together with the broad picture and global issues impact on policy formulation and implementation (Haynes 2003:31–32). Therefore, public administrative work life embedded in a theoretical value orientation will desire frames of reference for understanding cause and effect relationships, summary statements to describe and explain phenomena in different contexts, expositions of individual events and cases in general categories as well as the offering of a general model of analysis for practical events and situations (Lungu 1986:127; Hanekom and Thornhill 1983:5; Bhatnagar 1983:116–118).

Political

Public administrative work life is also shaped and directed by individuals with a political orientation which can impact negatively and positively on it (Pinto 1989:64–65; Morgan 2006:156–157). Pinto (1989:64) argues that because public administrative work life operates in a political milieu, public administrators cannot be “aseptic” to the wider political happenings and thus, “... they do carry political values in their mental baggage”. A public administrator with a political leaning will place high priority on exercising power, influence and authority which may be personal focused or organisation focused. In public administrative work life this orientation may be manifested in conflict and cooperation, deception and manipulation, expanding networks and, alliances, coalition building, inspirational appeals, rational persuasion as well as consultation and neutrality (Bloisi *et al.* 2003:147; Jones and George 2003:561–564; Quick and Nelson 2009:267). In day-to-day public administrative work life a public administrator embedded in a political orientation may strive to: (Misselhorn 2001:192–193; Dana 1993:139–140; Lall 2003:48):

- acknowledge and give praise to people in authority and power;
- focus on becoming visible as well as enhancing and building one’s personal or official image;
- network and gain support with influential and powerful people;
- create events and situations which would best justify and support the advancement of one’s goals or organisational goals;
- establish positive and strong relationships and bonds with people holding positions of authority, power and influence;
- obtain and expect support and influence from those to whom past support was given and who benefitted from the exercise of influence;

- override the objections of others so has to coerce compliance with one's preferred or organisational outcome;
- use power, position, influence, alliances and coalitions to sabotage an opposition's self-interests or veto the wishes of others, if it is in the interest of the organisation;
- deprive other individuals from being treated fairly, equally and equitably as well as for the need for self-esteem and autonomy by abusing power and authority with the possible support of alliances and coalitions where necessary; and
- ascertain how the conciliation and non-conciliation of diverse interests, ideas, facts and forces impact on the exercise of power, authority and influence.

Ethical

Values as a constellation of beliefs, principles, norms, judgements and prejudices may be regarded as serving as ethical anchors for public administrative work life (Spranger in Gibson *et al.* 1994:118; Kreitner 1995:146). Ethics may be described as a system of moral imperatives that govern the behaviour of individuals and organisations to which they belong (Kavanagh 2002 and Irvin 2002 in Van Tonder 2007:34). It does not only concern the moral imperatives of right or wrong and good or bad, but also with the degree of commitment as to what is right or good (Kernaghan 1996 in Holtzhausen 2010:262). It is argued by Fisher and Lovell (2009:175) that "...it is not just what our values *are* that matters, but also how important these values are to us". This importance and commitment form the bedrock for a strong sense of attachment that individuals have in relation towards their values. It is this strong sense of attachment that drives and directs individuals to act and behave in public administrative work life (Young 1977 in Fisher and Lovell 2009:175). According to the Constitution ethical behaviour is enshrined as a basic value and principle governing public administration (Section 195 (1) (a) of the *Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996*). The foundation for ethical orientation in public administrative work life is that it concerns the process through which right and wrong and good and bad are clarified. It also concerns the process by which right and good are acted upon as well as involving reasoning to determine the proper course of action (Denhardt and Denhardt 2009:127–128). A public administrator with an ethical orientation may strive to be primarily interested in (Fisher and Lovell 2009:207, 229–230; Misselhorn 2001:192–193; Spitzer 2000:229–230):

- courageously ascertaining the extent to which there is intrinsic dignity, loyalty, selflessness, authenticity, openness, honesty and integrity in dealings and relationships;
- uncompromisingly creating awareness of the practice of giving preference to what is right than who is right;
- commitment to equality in giving attention to the needs of everyone irrespective of their position;
- resolutely questioning unjust, unfair and arbitrary exercise of power and authority;
- steadfastly inquiring into how account for the consequences of actions and inactions is rendered;
- a principled approach to understanding how ego-rewards and ego-rage project the self and others as being boastful and arrogance;
- honourably finding out the extent to which lying to protect self and telling lies about others, occur;



- responsibly assessing the deliberate seeking and supporting views of others or complying passively with the wishes of the most powerful and influential; and
- conviction to temporarily tolerating ethical lapses on the condition that individuals are awarded the opportunity to learn and apply new and meaningful ways.

Social

In order that public administrative work life be continuously aware of serving the public interest, individual and group actions operating in unison are fundamental requirements. Both the well-being of the enablers and beneficiaries of public administrative work life need to be supported by a fully awakened missionary conscience and enduring value system. Public administrative work life embedded in a social value orientation implies that there is a deep and unselfish, passionate and generous desire to promote and improve the welfare of all sectors of human activity. This belief, desire, concern and acting in the interest of the other human beings is courageous, honourable and responsible (Schermerhorn *et al.* 2008:36; Bloisi *et al.* 2003:147; *Encarta World English Dictionary* 1999:152, 1415). The philosophical foundation for the social value orientation may be best captured by the words of Martin Luther King, Jr (in Van Rensberg 2009:73): “An individual has not started living until he can rise above the narrow concerns of his individualistic concern to the broader concerns of all humanity”. A public administrator embedded in a social value orientation may, with great resilience, tenacity and honour strive to (Hellriegel, Jackson and Slocum 2005:422; Tannenbaum and Davis 1993:707–710; Van Rensberg 2010:51–52; Jones and George 2003:682):

- avoid negativity, exclusiveness and marginalisation and move towards inclusion, recognition and confirmation;
- accept, reward and utilise individual differences rather than resisting and fearing them;
- view individuals as whole persons being part of an inclusive process rather than primarily focusing on his/her job description in an isolated manner;
- move away from using status in terms of power, authority and personal standing to using status to ensure focus on goals, missions and visions;
- instil a greater emphasis on collaboration, co-operation and whole-attitudes rather than on competition, discord and conflict;
- generously share self-knowledge, personal mastery, experiences, competencies and talents with all role players and stakeholders;
- readily engage in facilitating, building and nurturing networks, alliances and coalitions as well as promoting harmonious relationships; and
- persuasively inculcate how social learning is influenced by people’s thoughts, interactions, environments and the observation of the behaviour of other people and benefits thereof.

Human

Human nature can be understood as a set of innate qualities intrinsic to the individual and are governed by reason. Humans are capable of and have a propensity for rationality, sociability and co-operation, and as a result have the prospect and potential for personal

growth and development (Heywood 1998:74). In public administrative work life they are entitled to equal worth and opportunity, respect and dignity. This entitlement is enshrined in Chapter 2 of the Constitution which contains the Bill of Rights. Therefore, it can be stated that public administrators must not lead by being corporate and institutional, but by being human (Paul Hawkin in Van Rensburg 2009:17). Knowing himself/or herself as primarily being human is not all, as Jung (Memories, Dreams, Reflections. <http://www.quotationspage.com>. Accessed 27/08/2012) asserts: "As far as we can discern, the role and purpose of human existence is to kindle a light in the darkness of mere being". This may lead to the realisation that humans also have feelings, emotions and instincts which have to be understood and managed in order to enhance public administrative work life (Luthans 2005:353). What may also dawn upon public administrators is that individuals in public administrative work life are living and vibrant fields of collective intelligence (Debashis Chatterjee in Dunphy and Pitsis 2003:184). In fact, as Miewald (1978:33) asserts: "One must reject as an affront to human dignity the idea, that people are mere objects". Therefore respecting the intrinsic dignity of humans means never to treat them as mere means to an end, but, principally and always at the same time, as end in themselves (Chryssides and Kaler 1993:99).

A public administrator with a human value orientation will express keenness in how public administrative work life humanises itself and remains human and humane in turbulent circumstances (Basu 1992:376–379; Jagannadham 2003:27) – implying that there should be no room for haughtiness, resentment, aloofness and callousness (Jagannadham 2003:273). These concerns could be realised by observing and assessing (Pant 2003:20; Misselhorn 2001:192–193; Spitzer 2000:339–340; Wamsley, Goodsell, Rohr, Stivers, White and Wolf 1990:50):

- how caringly, respectfully and democratically conflicts are resolved rather than allowing them to acrimoniously simmer;
- in what manner care, compassion, encouragement and support are offered instead of hostile criticism;
- how everyone's contribution is recognised with joy and pride rather than with resentment and animosity;
- to what extent warmth and affection are effected in relationships rather than being prone to insensitivity, arrogance and betrayal of trust;
- in what way is genuine concern for the refusal to allow clichés that embarrassingly marginalise, manifested;
- to what extent one's contribution to the common good considered before making hurtful comparisons without concern for inherent dignity and seeking ego-gratification;
- how is empathetic consideration, trust and kindness manifest in and inspires the creation of a common cause for redressing past injustices; and
- in what way is a decent human existence with succour and hope provided with grace, pride, dignity and respect to the public as a whole and at the same time respecting oneself and all role players and stakeholders involved in public administration work life.

Spiritual

Valuational urge is an integral and embedded component of human nature and also capable of elevating the intellectual to his/her defining and unique moments of self-transcendence



(existence apart from the material world) to aesthetic (sublimity, harmony and enthusiasm) and spiritual dimensions. The notion of comprehensive and meaningful human progress is manifestation of a spiritual fulfilment of humans. Scope has to be provided for by a social set-up and environment which will ideally support and nurture the individual's complete fruition and development (Biswas 1997:629–630; *Encarta World English Dictionary* 1999:26, 1980). Spirituality, according to Krishnan (2008:12), comes from the Latin word *spiritus* meaning breath of life. It can be described and explained as a dimension of a human being that is a way of being and experiencing derived through the awareness and presence of a transcendental reality (Spitzer 2000:309; Krishnan 2008:12). It is also the direct feeling-level of the flow and force of the universe and extends to the sphere of reverence, perfection, pervasive harmony, unconditional love and the ultimate and infinite (Spitzer 2000:309; Krishnan 2008:12). Even going beyond the self and self-defining activities, known and prevailing paradigms, restrictions and limitations of physical and material energy, as well as the mind and the entire universe, is the capacity of spirit (Spitzer 2000:309).

Spirituality also involves the process of integration, interconnection, relationship, bonding, unity, self-awareness and awareness of others, and conscious recognition and acknowledgement of the delusion that everything is permanent. These processes are expressed as the oneness of everything and perceived as the means and ways personal meaning in the entire universe is sought, created, understood and explained (Krishnan 2008:12; Dhall 2009:4). As Einstein notes (The World as I see It. <http://quotationspage.com> Accessed 27/08/2012): "When you look at yourself from a universal standpoint something inside always reminds or informs you that there are bigger and better things to worry about". Besides entailing and involving the dimensions of knowledge base and belief systems and principles there are also other dimensions of inner self and interior as well as institutional activity and exterior life that connect and interact with one another in the conscious pursuit of an ultimate cause that transcends ordinary life (Harter in Krishnan 2008:12–13). As Spitzer (2000:31) cogently asserts: "Spirit not also moves beyond, it moves within. When we achieve a higher viewpoint, have a deeper and broader perspective for what really matters, and a more comprehensive understanding of the mystery of life, our judgement becomes more subtle, our timing more acute and our emotions more balanced. When self-transcendence brings the depth, balance and calm it enables us to let go of the fixed, tangible and superficial structures upon which we formerly relied". In terms of quantum thinking as well, the notion of materialistic determination is rejected and the *invisible realities* of positive interactions of human force and flow founded on *invisible energy*, namely spiritual and moral forces, are embraced and accepted (April 2003 *et al.*). Public administrative work life deeply grounded in an heightened animated and inspirational spiritual value orientation, may want to focus on (Dhall 2009:2; Patanjali in Kovess 2003:149; Spitzer 2003:35; 105; Debashis Chatterjee in Dunphy and Pitsis 2003:181; The Teachings of Buddha in Dunphy and Pitsis 2003:187):

How to transform negative emotions of arrogance, animosity and anxiety to positive emotions of trust, devotion and pride so as to focus on a purpose of ultimate significance. Remembering that from living in one spirit germinates unity of spirit and virtues of various kinds.

Impelling with benevolence individuals towards awakening dormant faculties, talents and forces to integrate, interact and connect in ensuring vital and limitless benefits to all individuals as part of a wider collegial community as well as wider society.

Creatively committing to and accepting unconditionally that the future as if it were the present by united anticipation, joint formulation of options and faithfully connecting to actualise these options. Realising that larger processes underlie small events means that transcendence is experienced in public administration work life.

Shifting focus on the outlook of public administration work life as a source of anxiety and frustration to a source of self-worth, righteous, gratifying, satisfying and glorious opportunities for committing to and identifying with a divine purpose, unselfishly. For example, reference is made in the Preamble of the Constitution to: “recognise the injustices of past” and “heal the divisions of the past”.

Realising that spirituality is a process that underpins, permeates and inspires clear and creative thought and good judgement in public administrative work life exchanges, statements, concepts and explanations.

Although values in public administration are separated for analytical purpose, in practice they are interdependent, interconnected and inter-related, not isolated and watertight. Public administrators as initiators, pro-activists and reactors in a public administration life subject to changing internal and external environmental forces, need to entertain strong, enduring and deeply embedded values. The values are compulsory to provide themselves with drive, perseverance, courage and fortitude for significant just action (equal treatment for equals), prudence (practical wisdom by practising them), and heightened awareness in the pursuit of a significant ultimate purpose (Pinto 1989:72; Subramaniam 2003:432). Values constitute an important part of the foundation for public administrators to behave, decide and act. It is the hallmark of the public administrator while engaging in *public service* to be conscious of the differences in degree and kind between the values (Subramaniam 2003:432). Recognition and reward for the philosophical, value-centric and practical wisdom that promote and sustain the discharge of the duty of the public administrator are more deep and cogent (Pinto 1989:71). Hatchins (in Pinto 1989:71) remarks that the offerings may not be religious rites and ceremonials or formal public memorials. This should be the least of his/her concern. Joy and satisfaction will be experienced by them, even if there is failure from having observed, participated in and attempted one of the most difficult works of the mind, soul and spirit and one of the most challenging tasks of civilisation namely public administration. As Frederickson and Smith (2003:1) observe: “All the great human events in history were probably achieved by what we would today call public administration. Organisation and management *practices* in collective or public settings are as old a civilisation”. In South African public administration, although, mandated by the Constitution for the establishment of legislative, institutional and administrative measures to embed and promote value considerations, challenges prevail in the reviewing and implementation of these measures. The exercise of political will without fear or favour, continued robust debate by the populace supported by a vigilant media, can creatively contribute to dealing with these challenges.

CONCLUSION

Understanding the conceptual underpinnings of the nature, characteristics and meanings of values, facilitates the guiding of public administrative work life to achieve its ultimate ideal that of promoting the public interest. Reflecting on the related, linked and core meanings of



values as well as value orientations kindle the intellectual foundations of public administration. Appreciating and grasping the intertwined value orientations, namely theoretical, political, ethical, social, human and spiritual could enhance the ultimate significance and consequence of public administrative work life which is to promote the public interest. To enhance, promote, support and review the legislative, institutional and administrative measures for value considerations, requires focused political will, robust discourse by the populace, and vigilant media. These actions could play a meaningful role in addressing these challenges.

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