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# Editorial

Societal values play a significant role in the behaviour and actions of individuals in a state. This value framework is not created in the aftermath to an election. It is the product of centuries of development influenced by the physical, political, cultural and historical environments. In some cases individual leaders play a momentous role in shifting societal behaviour to achieve lofty ideals e.g. Socrates, Napoleon, Churchill and Mandela by acting as icons at particular periods in the lives of members of society. Such leaders provide new initiatives for the honouring of values inherent in society and infuse coherence amongst diverse groups regarding common goals.

South Africa is currently facing a serious threat due to a breakdown in societal values in some sections of society. It seems as though the accepted norms and standards developed over a long period of struggle failed to find common ground for a new framework within which every member could be free of bias, intimidation and discrimination. It does not only imply questioning existing rules of good conduct and reasonableness. It appears as though it questions the basic system utilised in contemporary states to find solutions for vexing problems affecting the peaceful co-existence of members of the different communities comprising society. It also inhibits government's ability to govern i.e. to steer society from the current (unacceptable) situation to a more desirable destiny within the ambit of the resources at its disposal.

Government is continually faced with the dilemma of needs always exceeding its resources. It is, therefore required to set priorities e.g. the determination of how to allocate the available funds and human resources to meet the needs. Some measure has to be used to determine the relative weighting of the demands for services such as the relative importance of social welfare against education or the value of health against housing. In all probability no mathematical or statistical model could be developed to make such a judgment as it is a value laden decision government has to make. The Minister of Finance compiles the budget as a financial expression of the political values expressed by Cabinet with the acknowledgement of the availability of financial resources and the economic conditions prevailing in the state. Therefore the current demands of some students for free education should be viewed in the context of the weight assigned to education to justify the reallocation of resources already assigned to other priorities. The dilemma faced by government to a large extent concerns the question of how to reprioritise the funds already allocated to the different functions the state undertakes. This is a case of re considering the relative value of different functions in monetary terms and deciding which function(s) should forfeit some allocated funds to redirect it to higher education. This is a critical issue facing the government of South Africa.

This issue of the *African Journal of Public Affairs* contains a selection of articles covering a wide spectrum of issues relevant to public administration and management in its quest to ensure that public services are rendered efficiently and effectively. The first article by **Van Dijk and Labuschagne** addresses the complex problem of the human brain's ability to solve problems, in this regard the contributions of the Senior Management Service to deal with difficult situations is investigated. The next article by **Baloyi and Naidoo** considers the merger of tertiary institutions which serves as an example of the complex administrative

effects of political decisions which do not always yield the results expected by the policy makers. **Du Plessis** highlights the need for human capital development as a means to ensure the effective implementation of governmental policies thus focussing the reader's attention on the importance of the quality of the employees in the public sector. **Sayeed** adds to this topic by discussing the role of codes of conduct in promoting a public service ethos. The code is just one of the mechanisms which could contribute to the achievement of a higher degree of ethical conduct among public employees. This is followed by the article by **Hendriks** who explains the financial implications of the transfer of funds from national to provincial government and rightfully questions the equitability of the equitable transfers due to the divergent nature of the nine provinces. This article emphasises the complexity of administering a system of government within a state with extremely different conditions applying in each of the nine provinces. The following five articles concern aspects of local government. The first of these is by **Lues** investigating the role of local government in using innovation for the purposes of service delivery. The next article by **Madumo** questions the possibility of the de-politicisation of municipal service delivery within the context of the politicised environment within which basic services are delivered. **Mbecke and Mokoena** focus on the nexus between intergovernmental relations and the development of an Integrated Development Plan by municipalities. The next contribution is by **Kroukamp** who considers ways and means to improve confidence in local government considering the current low esteem local government enjoys due to its seemingly inability to render services of the quality and quantity expected by citizens. **Van Niekerk and Dalton-Brits** investigate the existing mechanisms in local government to impose accountability and the authors explain the contributions the Municipal Public Accounts Committee and the Audit Committee could make in this regard. The next article by **Thornhill** pays tribute to the significant role the Public protector has played in promoting ethical conduct during her seven year term of office.

The office of the Public Protector plays a very important role in the preservation and protection of public issues and the adherence to constitution of South Africa.

**J.O. Kuye**  
Chief Editor

