

The Interrelationship between Ethics and Integrity in Public Administration

D Fourie

School of Public Management and Administration
University of Pretoria

J Kimaro

School of Public Management and Administration
University of Pretoria

ABSTRACT

This article aims to provide clarity on the contextual confusion that exists between ethics, integrity and its associated terminology. A review of public administration theories related to ethics and integrity is traced back to early philosophers' thinking, after which the social contract is discussed. Countries have developed and implemented codes of conduct and frameworks for preventing and managing ethics and integrity in the public service. The article analyses the context and effectiveness on both the preventive and management fronts using qualitative research methods to present an overview of ethics, integrity and related concepts, the changing and growing nature of ethics and integrity in public administration, ethics frameworks and whistle-blowing as a means to clamp down on corruption. As act-focused interventions fail to address ethical and integrity issues, the article argues that actor-based approaches focused on public servants present a robust complementary approach to curb vices. The article concludes by presenting possible areas for future research on ethics and integrity in public administration.

INTRODUCTION

Over the past decades, public administration has shown a growing interest in ethics and integrity. Public service reforms, poverty reduction measures, demands for improved services and stern financial resource management in

institutions are key factors in this debate. It has fuelled interest in analysing ethics and ethical behaviour, the effects of unethical behaviour and a lack of integrity within public administration.

Discussions surrounding ethics supersede integrity, as reflected in ancient philosophies (Sloan 2010:236; Jonas 2018:987–990). Ethics and integrity are common terminologies in Public Administration studies and show continuity and growth in the debate around the two concepts (Huberts 2018:S18; Kitcher 2014 in De Waal, Churchland, Pievani and Parmigiani 2014:121–122). Scholars and professionals have shown a growing interest in ethics and related issues, as these have a direct effect on the development of a country (Mphendu and Holtzhausen 2016:234; Pring and Vrushi 2019:15). Professional associations for medical doctors, nurses, accountants, the media and teachers have embarked on promoting professional ethics and integrity by defining related parameters and expectations from the public service conduct. Ethics and integrity feature among the top subjects in conferences, summits and academic gatherings. Universities and research institutions strive to uphold ethical conduct, and ethical analysis of academic work is a prominent criterion for universities' ranking at a country, regional and global level.

Confusion exists on the context of ethics, integrity, corruption, values and norms (Kolthoff 2007:37). Furthermore, countries develop various forms of codes of conduct and frameworks aiming to prevent ethical malpractices and to manage ethics and integrity. To provide more clarity, this article centres on how ethics and integrity are defined, and the purpose of their existence in public administration. The key underlying questions are: What are ethics and integrity, and for what purpose? The article also reviews their context, effectiveness and alternative solutions that focus on the public servant.

CONTEXTUALISATION OF ETHICS AND INTEGRITY

Ethics and integrity are sometimes used individually or interchangeably (Huberts 2018:S18; Six and Huberts 2008 in Huberts, Maesschalek and Jurkiewicz 2008:68), however, certain authors suggest variations in the two terminologies. First, ethics and integrity can be viewed as two separate phenomena or second, as a single concept, for example, “ethics and integrity”, “ethics for integrity” or “ethics and integrity for governance”. This article suggests that integrity supersedes ethics and lays the foundation of all assessments and judgements of ethical actions. Integrity begins with the social contract, which refers to the obligations of the public office or official in exchange for legitimacy that is willingly received or coerced from the citizenry. A public official or government may be ethical but lack integrity.

Ethics is defined according to existing ideologies that define truths, values and the beliefs of a certain society or group of people over time. Kolthoff (2007:37) states that the origin of ethics can be traced back to the Greek word, *Ethika*, which means principles or standards of human conduct (sometimes referred to as morals). Lasthuizen, Huberts and Heres (2011:387) also create linkages between ethics and morals. According to the authors, "The moral nature of these values and norms refers to what is judged as right, just, or good conduct. Values are principles that carry a certain weight in one's choice of action (what is good to do, or bad to refrain from doing). Norms indicate morally correct behaviour in certain situation" (Lasthuizen *et al.* 2011:387).

Ethical discourse refers to an agreement on what is good and bad behaviour (Lawton 2008:51; Menzel 2012:3) in matters that affect dignity and integrity. Ethics links with policy processes, a term that refers to content of decisions, policies, laws that focus on the consequences or results of policy, as well as the moral quality of the political or governance processes related to policy development and implementation (Huberts 2018:S19). Ethical norms link to both public interest and accountability. As such, clarity is needed to unravel complexities surrounding terms related to the same phenomenon (Fourie 2015:875). There is a gap between academic research and practice, as institutions focus more on corruption as a problem or ethics management in general (Lasthuizen *et al.* 2011:386). Within the public service, ethics not only focuses on direct or indirect private gains against acceptable norms and values. In reality, it covers a wide spectrum of duties, obligations and work processes that a public official or institution must fulfil.

DeGeorge (1993 in Huberts 2018:S20) states that acting with integrity is the same as acting ethically or morally. Integrity focuses on creating trust (Lawton *et al.* 2013:6; Kolthoff 2007:40) as it forms a public service principle, "public servants shall exhibit the highest standards of professional ethics and competence, working with skill, care and diligence; and will carry out their duties with energy and goodwill, with efficiency and effectiveness" (Lawton, Rayner and Lasthuizen 2013:6).

Klockars (1997 in Lasthuizen *et al.* 2011:387) ties integrity to the quality of individuals and organisations. Furthermore, the author defines integrity of governance as the quality of acting in accordance with relevant moral values, norms and rules. However, this definition of integrity is limiting, as it does not consider integrity from a responsibility point of view that extends beyond being ethical towards meeting citizens' expectations. Notably, integrity underscores the actions or inactions of individuals or the government in fulfilling public duties and responsibilities. In democracies and during elections, particularly in the developing world, voters' choice of government is based on the social contract, rather than spontaneous ethical dilemmas or scandals occurring from time to time.

The literature raises concerns on the incomplete nature of integrity research and the lack of conceptual clarity and robust measurements to determine a

variety of preventive and management measures that are not counterproductive (Huberts *et al.* 2008:65; Lasthuizen *et al.* 2011:384). While integrity is raised as an important concept in governance, it does not replace challenging debates on “ethics theories and approaches”. Within this context, proposals must be embedded within existent approaches and theory development (Huberts 2018:S18). Huberts *et al.* (2008:68) summarise the premises for analysing integrity as:

- wholeness or completeness that is consistent and coherent with principles and values, also supported by Kolthoff (2007:40);
- professional wholeness or responsibility;
- one or more set of values, such as incorruptibility, honesty, impartiality, accountability;
- the relationship between integrity and morals through defining right and wrong, good or bad;
- clarity of laws defining conduct and acting premises; and
- an umbrella concept with a combined set of values to judge the actions of public officials (Huberts 2018:S19-S20).

The above principles’ subsets serve as a means to create governments and individuals with integrity. Although ethics and integrity seemingly share some commonalities, they differ in terms of scope, where the former is a subset of the latter. Due to this interchange, this article extends the discussion to cover the integrity of a state that creates trust in terms of its public institutions and officials. Ethics and integrity (and their underlying variables) correlate because “...individuals and organisations possess moral standards and principles (ethics), and their behaviour may accord more or less with their ethics (individual or organisational integrity). Similarly, social (sub) sectors like professions share moral values and standards (e.g. professional ethics), conformity to which corresponds with professional integrity” (Kolthoff 2007:41).

THE RATIONALE FOR PUBLIC SERVICE ETHICS AND INTEGRITY

The growing interest in ethics during the last three decades stems from rapid public service reforms, more stern financial measures, increasing demands for improved services and the increased use of information technology (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) 2000:28; Kolthoff, Huberts and Van den Heuvel 2007:400–403). There are increasingly more debates on ethics and integrity and the challenges emanating from a lack of ethics and integrity in both the developed and developing world. While discussions vary, they are skewed towards developing countries and corruption as the main vice in public

administration. Kitcher 2014 (in De Waal *et al.* 2014:121–122) presents an argument for the continuity of ethics-related discussions in public administration to progress further away from the past predicaments of *hominid* ancestors, where there was limited responsiveness to well-being and human development.

The concept of the “social contract theory” began with Thomas Hobbes, who defined life without society, government, law or regulations (state of nature) as oppressive, brutal and short. Laskar (2013:1) argued that Hobbes’ work described people moving away from the *hominid* state of nature through entering into agreements called “*Pactum Unionis*” (for protection of their lives and property) and “*Pactum Subjection*” (a united people who pledge to obey an authority and surrender the whole or part of their freedom and rights to an authority). The early philosophers stated arrangements in terms of the social contract through the public agent notion, as conceptualised by Aristotle. Within this context, the social contract defines the state-related arrangements and obligations of government in terms of what they ought to do for citizens. Governments therefore become unethical and lack integrity when they provide goods and services. This failure to honour the social contract agreements relates to a particular setting and takes place on a periodic basis. In developing countries, this exposes the vast majority of citizens who cannot afford basic goods and services, to extreme forms of poverty (Menzel 2012:4).

Unethical dilemmas take place when governments fail to provide the necessary inputs and an official is prompted to make professional or non-professional decisions on issues that are not included in established frameworks or guidelines. This contributes to a lack of integrity that can have unintended consequences. Apart from the well-known correlation with underdevelopment, unethical political behaviour and a lack of integrity have devastating effects (Mphendu and Holtzhausen 2016:234,246). It can lead to civil war, genocide, displacement, violence against women and children and the formation of ethnic- or religious-based terrorist groups.

Theories on ethics and integrity

Ethics is referred to as a growing enterprise, evolving over time depending on conditions of human life: “The primary task of the ethical theorist is to expose the character of this enterprise, the conditions that give rise to it, the nature of whatever progress it can achieve, andto consider ways in which the ethical resources we have inherited might further be modified or elaborated” (Kitcher 2014 in De Waal *et al.* 2014:110).

Mapping the purpose of ethics and integrity in public administration starts with fulfilling government or state duties attached to the social contract. The social contract addresses the questions of “why” the public administration or government

is connected to “what” citizens ought to receive in exchange for legitimacy. On the other hand, an ethical government does not necessarily offer a panacea for integrity. Ethics discourse promotes guidance and prevents behaviour or practices that contribute to non-fulfilment of duties to provide goods and services.

While ethics covers actions, integrity focuses on trust and/or trustworthiness on a wider scale and stems from fulfilling social contract obligations. Any obstacle that prevents the government from fulfilling its public administration duties (such as ethics) remains a topic for discussion and links to the described evolving nature of ethics and integrity phenomena. The scope of ethics and integrity theories covers the desire to sanction wrongdoers. Within this context, both unethical conduct and a failure to fulfil duties, as per the social contract, manifest in democratic and non-democratic processes. In summary, a discussion on the theory’s road map attempts to answer the “when”, “what”, “why” and “how” of specific ethical conduct.

Theories in public administration are evolving and so are those related to ethics. Arguments exist that ethics theories are incomplete and need revision (Kitcher in De Waal *et al.* 2014:113). The evolution of the conceptualisation of ethics and integrity starts with human gatherings to develop rules and regulations that guide conduct, stating the “do’s” and “don’ts” and the consequences of non-compliance, including fear of shame, punishment or seclusion from the community.

The following section builds an argument for the existence of ethics and integrity in ancient societies, as documented by the early philosophers. The article argues that the early philosophers laid the foundation for how we developed and conceptualised ethics and integrity phenomena. The focus falls on the work of Aristotle, followed by highlights of how it influenced other public administration approaches.

Socrates, Plato and Aristotle’s notion of ethics

Scholars appreciate the contribution of Socrates, his student Plato, and later Aristotle in determining the foundation of ethics and integrity. An ethical life and reflections on the topic progressed through those who crafted the earliest cities and was later passed on to form the cornerstones of present codes of conduct (Kitcher 2014 in De Waal *et al.* 2014:112). It is believed that ethics can be traced to Socrates, and was later documented by Plato, his student. Jonas (2018:987) presents Socrates’ beliefs on cultivating virtues by encouraging people to participate in this practice, in addition to convictions of ethical truths through philosophical reasoning and argument.

According to Jonas (2018:987), Socrates reasoned that encouraging individuals to act virtuously helps moderate their appetites and passions so that they do not influence or distort ethical reasoning while making decisions. Socrates proposes

learning and practice to help an agent choose virtuous actions that bring happiness and avoid suffering, without which there will be no consistent practice to act justly. However, this notion contradicts the fact that humans have innate selfish or personal desires, which implies that they are not always rational beings. Moreover, it fails to consider the environmental factors that affect ethical decision-making.

Aristotle raised key ethical variables for analysis, starting with the virtue to contribute to the happiness of citizens, thus emphasising the mutual connection between governments and the governed. Aristotle describes virtuous or good actions that result in a good end. Sloan (2010:237) points to Aristotle's differentiation between voluntary and involuntary acts, which makes an act virtuous or shameful. Aristotle presents virtuous actions as an end and provides a framework for assessing virtuous actions to determine the existence of a good end. According to Hirji (2018:1007), Aristotle's notion of "ethics of care" is connected to a public agent's deep desire to ensure the well-being of another person. Aristotle raised key ethical variables, namely options an agent has at their disposal based on their character or pursuit of happiness; a process to be followed to achieve some form of action; and an action (virtuous or non-virtuous) leading to an end (good or bad). In this regard, Ward (2015:20) presents Aristotle's 11 moral virtues and their corresponding vices, namely courage, moderation (self-restraint), generosity, magnificence, magnanimity, ambition, gentleness, friendliness, truthfulness, wittiness, and justice.

Summarised, the ethics and integrity pathway involve a choice of action, a process and the result of the chosen action. Apressyan (2016:457) supports the pathway by stating that official actions are not spontaneous but deliberate and reflexive actions. Within this context, a person as subject of the action bears a reflexive relationship to their actions, as they think about them and actively constructs a relationship with others. Aristotle sets the foundation for making choices within public administration, as manifested in the classical, rational, scientific management, system approaches, New Public Management (NPM) and New Public Governance (NPG).

In addition to his work on ethics, Aristotle proposes that friendships and relationships influence both parties, determine the institutional character and mould the characteristics they approve of (determined virtues and the differentiation between right or wrong) (Curzer 2007:226). This proposal unveils certain contextual issues surrounding ethics and integrity. Importantly, it provides clarity and emphasises the environment where an unethical action took place and the culture embedded in the institution or group of people.

When the agent performs non-virtuous actions due to ignorance of facts surrounding an event or act, Aristotle suggests that the issue of non-voluntary acts comes into play. Within this context, the same non-voluntary act can turn into an involuntary act when the public agent shows regret. An act is only deemed

virtuous or shameful when the agent performs an act voluntarily. Aristotle states that the difference between voluntary and involuntary acts can benefit ethics' students and legislators who administer rewards and punishments. Analysis of the agent's act states that applying the virtuous or shameful lens involves a state of 'voluntariness'. Therefore, Aristotle states that ethics students and legislators who administer rewards and punishments should be taught the difference between voluntary and involuntary acts.

In his work on Ethical Intuitionism, Johnson (1957:195) presents intuitionistic theories through four moral judgement parameters, namely imperatives of action or a duty to fulfil promise; providing help whenever needed; general judgements of intrinsic value (e.g., pleasure is better than pain and a life of justice has an intrinsic worth); and the moral imperative or maximising good. Johnson's parameters for supporting or condemning an act by public office or a public official supports Aristotle's (in Sloan 2010:237–238) ethical circumstances. This further links to the government's obligation to focus on citizens' welfare – a failure to do so can be deemed unethical. However, the question remains on how many people judge governments that fail to provide the required goods and services as being unethical. The framework for analysing ethics and integrity has diverted from this moral value and is now viewed as corruption.

Aristotle's foundation, as presented above, cites the difference between virtue and vice (good and wrong), choices, morality and decision-making processes with a good end-result. These tenets form the basis of highlighting how other public administration approaches view ethics and integrity. Utilitarianism by John Stuart Mill (1806–1873) rates actions according to their consequences (Menzel 2012:8). Aristotle underscored the importance of attaching an end-result to the pursuit of happiness. Likewise, Utilitarianism calls for actions that benefit many and, once an end is good, then the action is desirable and ethical. Utilitarianism, as a teleological theory of ethics, justifies the morality of an action on the basis of consequences (the end justifies the means). Hence "happiness" remains a focal point when a public administrator pursues their duties, as well as choices on policy, budgeting and community segmentation (Geuras and Garofalo 2011:50). Criticism regarding utilitarianism centres on the fact that various segments of society have different ways of measuring happiness. This makes it difficult for a public administrator to set priorities and to define its context. Furthermore, concentrating on an end rather than means could lead to challenges in managing unethical behaviour and the abuse of power and non-accountability among public officials.

To Weber, ethics means roles and rules. Within this context, ethics refers to following Weberian norms of bureaucratic behaviour within formal structures regardless of its implications on efficiency (Christensen and Lægveid 2011:460). Unethical acts do not follow rules and norms. Weber supports scientific evaluations that are objective, valid and verifiable, as opposed to practical value

judgements that are faith-based and subjective (Roederer 2000:82). Thus, Weber argues that ethics means making a rational choice and following due process within established structures, rules and norms. Weber's complete exclusion of morality and values remains a major flaw in his discourse on ethics, as his ethical and integrity specifications fall short of assessing actions based on values, environment and consequences.

Conversely, an action can follow due process but fail to result in a good end. Carol Lewis (2008 in Huberts *et al.* 2008:47,62) argues that ethics is grounded on virtue, moral character and approaches linked to common sense and human emotion. Acting ethically and with integrity entails more than merely complying to rules and regulations. Without the ability to judge circumstances using formal and informal criteria of norms and values, an official can become a willing accomplice in an autocratic or corrupt regime.

Kimaro (2018:49) highlights that the informal human attributes in public institutions form the social ethics and balance between individual and institutional interests. Despite the existence of various approaches and perspectives, public administration ethics management tilts towards the legalistic compliance mode (Geuras and Garofalo 2011:7), aligned with the Weberian position, among others.

The systems approach diverts from the rational approach, which fixes ethical choices and processes within a public institution (Kimaro 2018:46). It claims that a public official's decisions are based on interdependent parts within and outside an institution. As such, this approach points to the need for a balance between internal and external factors of influence (Kimaro 2018:48). A systems approach suggests that ethical behavioural analysis should focus on understanding causality and examining the business operating environment instead of searching for culprits (O'Neill and Hern 1991:129–130).

Under NPM, Lawton (2008:54) presents the character of an ethical discourse for, and within, organisations, namely promoting public interest, drawing a distinction between ethical conduct and good behaviour and unethical and illegal conduct and recognising the importance of an ethical culture. While the term "public interest" carries a broad definition, Fourie (2009:627) links it to the objective and efficient application of resource management and accountability. Within this context, NPM introduced a private sector culture and operational focus to the public sector. The focus shifted from governments as sole providers of goods and services to including the private sector through outsourcing, privatisation and competition. NPM requires governments to become entrepreneurial and move resources from low-return to high-return areas. A failure to adopt these business administration techniques leads to a narrow focus, an unwillingness to follow rules and a lack of accountability in the quest for efficiency (Kolthoff *et al.* 2007:404–405).

The purpose of public administration (social contract) is to focus on the provision of goods and services, which is broader than making profit and ensuring

efficient service delivery. In this regard, Geuros and Garofalo (2011:17,20) state that governments' cornerstone of existence is to pursue projects, values and services that citizens consider worthy of public funding and to embrace people's expectations for claiming legitimacy and legality. These tenets of the social contract cannot be seen in the same light as the private sector values of profit-making and service provision.

Undermining the foundational values of public administration leads to integrity-related challenges, as it partly undermines governments' duties and responsibilities to citizens. Huberts (1998 in Kolthoff *et al.* 2007:411) states that integrity questions raised under regimes adopting the NPM approach include corruption, kickbacks, fraud, questionable gifts, nepotism, the abuse and manipulation of information, waste and abuse of resources including time, and improper use of violence towards citizens. Menzel (2012:5) states that the disappearance of boundaries between the private and public domain leads to increased complexities in applying ethics.

However, the discussion continues on how private sector values influence ethics and integrity within the public sector. To date, there is no empirical evidence to substantiate the claim of increased unethical conduct due to these new values. However, from a value and morality perspective, outsourcing, privatisation, public-private partnership (PPPs) and other private-public service provision hybrids raise ethical dilemmas to a public official. In this regard, Menzel (2012:5) states that, "...the modern public administrator is sometimes torn between loyalties and responsibilities...she may be caught between the interest of the public and those of her organisation. Such a conflict is more a temptation to favour organisational loyalties over the public interest...the administrator of a private corporation that has contracted to perform a public service has dual loyalties: to the stakeholders of the corporation and to the public".

The NPG's emphasis on ethics focuses on values related to social accountability, collaboration and gaining the trust of non-public agents or citizens. With NPG, citizens have the upper hand in defining what is good or bad in the context of the actions of public agents or institutions, service delivery and individual actions. Promoting ethics and integrity under NPG calls for supporting a demand for accountability, promoting transparency and creating avenues for continuous interactions with the citizens.

ETHICS AND INTEGRITY FRAMEWORKS

Scholars and practitioners contemplate the existence of universal ethics, and the applicability of universal frameworks that apply across countries and institutions. Diversities among countries, cultures and the type of governments cause

disparities in the application of general rules on ethics and integrity. Thus, the varied context and scope of ethics and integrity remains a key determining factor for developing corresponding ethical frameworks (Lasthuizen *et al.* 2011:385). Governments can use ethical codes of conduct, analysis, judgements and sanctions to reward, protect or punish political opponents. As ethics discourses change over time depending on the culture and environment when an act happens, official action can be condemned as unethical at present but treated differently in the future.

Plato's work includes his description of the Nocturnal Council that preserves laws, where he advocates the importance of fully understanding the target (also referred to as a virtue) that the law aims to protect. This assertion, and that described by Aristotle's virtue judgement, correlate to the principal-agent theory, where the actions of agent(s) and consequences thereof are well specified. Aristotle provides key questions for analysing whether actions are a 'virtue' or a 'vice'.

In order to categorise, analyse or investigate an act by the public agent, Aristotle suggests the following seven sequential circumstances, which have been adopted in current formal ethics and integrity frameworks and informal assessments: *"Therefore, it is not a pointless endeavour to divide these circumstances by kind and number; (1) the who, (2) the what, (3) around what place or (4) in which time something happens, and sometimes (5) with what, such as an instrument, (6) for the sake of what, such as saving a life, and (7) the how, such as gently or violently"* (Eth. Nie. 1111 a3-8 in Sloan 2010:239).

CATEGORIES OF ETHICS AND INTEGRITY FRAMEWORKS

Geuras and Garofalo (2012:109) describe ethical codes of conduct as broad mission statements that provide project ideals, norms and obligations. Organisations, including the public service, develop codes of ethics and integrity for preventive purposes, also for management of unethical conduct. Rossouw (2008:78) argues that codes of ethics and integrity differ in scope, ranging from simple ethical standards to detailed directional documents. Menzel (2012:19) states that governmental ethics and integrity fall under the deontological theory category, as they are compliance-based and aligned with traditional bureaucratic theory that stresses hierarchy, rules, regulations and work classification. More than two-thirds of OECD countries have established a legal framework for the standard behaviour expected from public officials, ranging from the Constitution (Turkey); administrative procedural law (Greece, Portugal), codes of standards of conduct (the United States [US]), and Canada's The Conflict of Interest and Post-Employment Code for the Canada Public Service (OECD 2000:38). The third type contains

frameworks covering professions in both the public and private sectors, such as nurses, lawyers, the media, accountants and human resource practitioners. This category stems from professional associations developed in consultation with the government, which promote and guide professions' ethics and integrity of the public service officials.

In the public service, ethical frameworks are represented as principles, values and norms. Christensen and Læg Reid (2011:461–463) reviewed the work of Lynch *et al.* (2007) and identified three categories of ethical theories that focus on both institutions and individuals. The work of Lynch described deontological ethics that deals with right and wrong based on formal, rigid principles. Under this theory, the code and frameworks are compliance-based, stating right and wrong. Consequential or teleological ethics focuses on the consequences of decisions and codes, while frameworks are instrumental and preoccupied with effectiveness or efficiency. Virtue ethics emphasises virtuous character traits, takes the high moral ground and assumes that virtue forms an integral part of management competencies. The German philosopher Immanuel Kant, described the so-called Kantian virtue ethics that points to a duty that is exemplified to an extent of becoming a universal law. Within this context, ethical humans are duty bound and there are motives based on the principles of doing the right thing (Menzel 2012:8). Under virtue theory, codes and frameworks embody ethical norms, values. However, this may be a fallacy in the real life of a public official with personal interests and needs in an unethical environment.

In addition to the theory-based outlook of ethics and integrity frameworks is analysis based on values promoted and considered important by a government/ regime. The criteria of analysis based on values includes ensuring compliance to rules and regulations; viewing unethical behaviour as a cost factor; promoting learning organisations with frameworks that promote exchange of ethics and integrity information; implementing network governance that calls for creative ethics management strategies; and implementing cultural-based frameworks to support an ethics- and integrity-positive culture (Menzel 2012:19–22).

A critical look at Rossouw and Menzel's description of ethical codes and frameworks points to shortcomings in addressing ethical challenges. For example, learning approach/-based frameworks encourage interactions and networks on ethics. However, this level of analysis operates at an organisational level only and is limited to the public service or to a political system. Culture-based frameworks consider an important element in the successful management of ethics and integrity in the organisation but may exclude other pertinent factors such as business processes relating to service delivery, the capacity of officials, interaction with citizens. In summary, the development and analysis of ethics and integrity frameworks need to be all-inclusive and comprehensive to address competing values and ethical challenges.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF ETHICS AND INTEGRITY FRAMEWORKS

Ethics and integrity frameworks or codes of conduct are prescriptive in nature and may ignore the reasons for officials' ethical or unethical conduct. On the other hand, ethics management faces challenges due to the failure to understand the nature of an ethical dilemma, a lack of clarity and a lack of capacity to analyse and judge ethical or unethical behaviour. The effectiveness of ethics and integrity frameworks depends on varying factors, ranging from creating a supportive institutional environment that prevents unethical behaviour to handling unethical events. While countries implement ethics and integrity codes of conduct, they still face unethical events. Budhram (2018:126) points out that South Africa has various codes of ethics and integrity frameworks for preventive and management purposes, such as the Public Service Act 103 of 1994; the Prevention and Combating of Corrupt Activities Act 12 of 2004; the Promotion of Access to Information Act 2 of 2000; the Protected Disclosures Act 26 of 2000; the Public Financial Management Act 56 of 2003; and the Promotion of Administrative Justice Act 3 of 2000. Nonetheless, the country grapples with serious ethical dilemmas and corruption.

The 2019 Afro Barometer study that covered 35 African countries measured people's perception on the level of corruption in general and the levels of bribery and corruption by institutions. According to the study, the least corrupt countries are Tanzania, Lesotho, Sierra Leone, Ghana and Gambia, while the most corrupt countries include Gabon, Madagascar, Sudan, Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and Uganda (Pring and Vrushu 2019:11). Citizens in countries with high corruption rates believe that top leadership is corrupt: Uganda (37%); DRC (82%); Sudan (49%); Madagascar (33%); Gabon (71%). Respondents in countries ranked as less corrupt believed that their governments were taking substantive measures to tackle corruption. The data indicates that the effectiveness of a code of ethics and frameworks depends on other factors, such as support and integrity of the leadership, non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and the religious community.

Despite the existence of ethical codes of conduct and frameworks, governments and institutions should focus on transparency regarding policymaking processes, accountability for actions, protecting service recipients, promoting engagement between citizens and government and reviewing business processes and capacity building. Furthermore, there is a need for creating a supportive institutional environment that builds capacity by providing training on creating an ethical culture. Based on the aforementioned, various countries provide ethics and integrity training in the public sector as a preventive measure for unethical conduct and also support propositions made by Socrates.

A failure to achieve intended ethical conduct through codes of ethics and frameworks has prompted public administration institutions to embark on

additional efforts to address “actors” rather than “acts”. Within this context, the focus remains on organisational culture, with the public servant acting as the key to facilitating positive change (Rossouw 2008:79). This approach entails moving away from actions and prescriptions towards addressing public servants’ behaviour and organisational culture. OECD countries invest in compulsory and voluntary ethics and integrity training that covers either the entire or part of the public service (OECD 2000). A review of business processes plays a vital role in creating ethical officials and institutions. It removes processes that trigger unethical behaviour and develops a transparent business processes model based on accountability. Geuras and Garofalo (2012) argue that ambiguous ethical and integrity questions can be reduced to a legalistic conundrum (legislation and regulations). When conflicting values and competing obligations are not addressed, it reduces the effectiveness of ethical codes and frameworks.

One of the key issues this article addresses is the role public servants play in addressing unethical conduct and integrity issues in the public service. To this end, the following section highlights current practices, as well as the role of the government and other actors in protecting the public servant whistle-blowers.

Whistle-blowers’ role in highlighting unethical conduct

Bashir *et al.* (2011:286) and Pring and Vrushi (2019:20) describe a “whistle-blower” as a person exposing unethical acts, wrongdoing, falsehood and corruption. Holtzhausen (2012:84) adds that the act of “whistle-blowing” takes place through pre-established internal and external channels. While whistle-blowing exposes unethical acts and injustices, it can also be used as an act of retaliation between individuals or a group of individuals. A whistle-blower takes this brave action while being aware of the consequences. Pring and Vrushi (2019:20), Bashir *et al.* (2011:287), Holtzhausen (2012:84) and the OECD (2000:54) state that the consequences of reporting unethical conduct include accusations of dissent or betrayal, a loss of employment and physical injury or harm. Unsurprisingly, two-thirds of African citizens, mostly from Gabon, Eswatini, Malawi, São Tomé and Príncipe, Uganda, Nigeria, Kenya and Togo fail to report unethical conduct out of fear of reprisal (Pring and Vrushi 2019:20).

At an international level, organisations have developed frameworks or guidelines for countries to customise to their local circumstances (Holtzhausen 2013:60). Based on NPM and NPG paradigms’ focus on citizen engagement, whistle-blowing extends beyond public institutions’ internal arrangements. The public service offers protection through anonymity and legal support. However, these measures may not be effective in some settings with a high level of corruption. In the US, for example, anonymity is applied to guard against reprisals and ensure the safety of a whistle-blower (OECD 2000:55). In turn, the South African

Public Service Commission (PSC) guidelines on whistle-blowing procedures state that where employees fear victimisation, they may opt to use a general disclosure to the broader public through pre-established channels (Holtzhausen 2013:64). In certain countries, it is against the law to publish a whistle-blower's identity.

Based on experiences on whistle-blowing in both developing and developed countries, it is clear that the public service needs to complement rules and procedures with strategies relating to a codes of ethics section. Jonas (2018:989) argues that a person with sufficient knowledge of virtue will act virtuously on every occasion. Therefore, it is important to focus on knowledge transfer and development among public servants and promoting a culture of organisational ethics and integrity. Moreover, a focus on ethics and virtue may create a culture favourable for effective whistle-blowing and ethics management. Mphendu and Holtzhausen (2016:240–241) also state that qualified and motivated staff may contribute towards combating of administrative corruption. According to the authors, countries like Georgia and Singapore invest in public servants as a way of curbing corruption and unethical behaviour, in addition to enforcing the regulatory framework enforcement.

CONCLUSIONS AND PROPOSALS

This article presented similarities and points of convergence between ethics and integrity. The arguments presented on the evolving nature of ethics and integrity promote the discourse and establish a need for continuous generic and customised research. The ethics and integrity theory road map presented in the article started with human gathering, as conceptualised and documented by Socrates, Plato, Aristotle and modern public administration theories, such as NPM and NPG. However, the article argues that further theoretical and conceptual clarity between the two is needed, specifically linking it to a wider scope of integrity and theories of public administration. The article established that public service ethics and integrity codes of conduct and frameworks exist to prevent and manage violations. However, the literature suggests a greater focus on management than prevention.

While ethics and integrity frameworks help curb unethical acts, disparities within frameworks cause challenges. Also, when combined with other contributing factors such as national or institutional culture, democratic space and resources, their effectiveness remains unclear. In this regard, scholars reiterated weaknesses in the discourse and how it bends towards corruption, for example, bribes, grand corruption in monetary terms.

The public administration cannot avoid the 4th Industrial Revolution (4IR) and the increased use of information technology in service delivery. The 4IR decreases human interaction, while increasing technology-based services. This shift

from individuals or humans to technology may cause a conservative ethics and integrity paradigm shift in terms of values, morality, codes of ethics and ethics management. As this remains an unexplored area in public administration, clarity is needed on possible ethics and integrity challenges and solutions to the issue of choice, process and an end (of an act). Would technology promote ethics and integrity? Will it undermine the importance of culture in ethics and ethics management? What possible unethical and integrity-related conduct can we foresee in the medium and longer term? What will the management of ethics and integrity look like in the future?

Possible areas of future research include the tenets of collaboration and the public's role in enforcing ethical values and integrity. Debates exist on the parameters for comparing and differentiating between ethics and integrity and private and public values. Within this context, the observation of ethics and integrity requires a comparative empirical analysis. Furthermore, Kolthoff (2007:424–425) questions whether NPM values lead to more public service integrity. Thus, researchers ought to clarify the claim that NPM has eroded ethics and integrity by including the private sector within the public sector.

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AUTHORS' CONTACT DETAILS

Prof Dawid Fourie

School of Public Management and Administration
Faculty of Economic and Management Sciences
University of Pretoria
Lynnwood Road
Pretoria
Cell: 083258273
Email: prof.djfourie@up.ac.za

Dr J Kimaro

School of Public Management and Administration
Faculty of Economic and Management Sciences
University of Pretoria
Lynnwood Road
Pretoria
Email: josephinekimaro@yahoo.com