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## Promoting Ethical Conduct in Public Administration

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### **Abstract:**

*The reputation and success of any government in both developed countries and developing societies depend upon the moral and ethical conduct of public functionaries and what the public believes about the conduct of the functionaries. It is therefore, of fundamental importance that public functionaries should act justly and fairly to one and all, not only paying lip-service to justness and fairness, but also ensuring that these are manifestly and undoubtedly seen to be done in practical action.*

**Keywords:** government, public functionary, morality, ethical conduct, justness and fairness

### **1. Introduction**

Public functionaries both elected political office-bearers and permanent appointed public officials should act justly and fairly to one and all, not only paying lip-service to reasonableness, justness and fairness, but ensuring that these are manifestly and undoubtedly seen to be done in practical action. This then constitute the subject of this journal article.

### **2. Purpose of Article**

The primary purpose of this article is to demonstrate that the reputation and success of a government in democratic societies are dependent upon the moral and ethical conduct of public functionaries and what the public believes about the conduct of the functionaries.

### **3. Promoting Ethics and Ethical Conduct in Public Administration**

#### *3.1. General Observations*

The reputation and success of a government depend upon the conduct of public functionaries and **what the public believes** about the conduct of functionaries. It is, therefore, of fundamental importance that public functionaries should act **justly** and **fairly** to one and all, not only paying lip-service to justness and fairness, but ensuring that these are manifestly and undoubtedly seen to be done in practical action. **Source:** S. X. Hanekorn: 1993:151

#### Explanations

- It is imperative that each public functionary, upon accepting government employment, take cognizance of the fact that s/he has a special duty to be just, fair and impartial in his/her dealings with members of society.
- Personal self-interest should in all circumstances be subordinate to the public good, particularly if circumstances arise where the prospects and possibilities of a conflict of interest may become an ethical problem and challenge.

- The private activities of public officials ought to be of such high standards that they should not bring discredit to their posts and disrepute to the government.
- In order to promote the public good, the actions of public functionaries – elected and appointed – should always be in the public interest, that is, their official conduct should always be “good”, “right” and “positive”. Public functionaries are expected to adhere at all times to the *intra vires* rule, and ethical conduct is, within the public service, always subject to formal prescriptions based upon the policy of the ruling party, as expressed in terms of law. (S. X. Hanekom: 1993:151).

### 3.2. The Terms and Concepts “Morality” and Ethics

Clarity and unambiguity should be obtained on the meaning of the terms of morality and ethics.

#### 3.2.1. Morality

According to Funk and Wagnalls (1946), *morality has to do with personal conduct of the individual – his/her moral duties and conformity to conventional rules.*

Administrative morality: the use of religious, political, or social precepts to create standards by which the quality of public administration may be judged; in the main, the standards are usually those of honesty, responsiveness, efficiency, effectiveness, competence, effect on individual rights, adherence to democratic procedures, and social equity. Source William Fox and Ivan H. Meyer: Public Administration Dictionary 1995:4

#### 3.2.2. Ethics

*Ethics refers to the basic principles of the right action* (Funk and Wagnalls, 1946) and to rules of conduct (Fowler and Fowler, 1952). The term **ethics** has a macro or comprehensive meaning which could be applied to all cultures at all times, but it has also a micro or restrictive meaning related to a specific society or societal group. (Hanekom: 1993:152). The micro view pertains to good or evil, right or wrong, which the micro view refers to how good or evil, right or wrong are interpreted by a specific society, societal groups or even individuals.

For the purposes of this article, the terms ethics deals with the character and conduct of the human beings as public employees. Regarding the conduct of public affairs by the public officials, it deals with whether the public’s business was conducted rightly or wrongly and whether the public official’s behaviour was good or bad when s/he executed his/her official duties. Ethics then evaluates conduct against some supposedly absolute criteria and imposes negative or positive values upon it. These criteria can be in writing (legislation or merely the interpretation by an individual of what is acceptable and what is not (Hanekom: 1993:151).

It is against this background and in this context that the moral and ethical conduct of public functionaries in public administration is examined.

### 3.3. Relevant Prominent Public Administration Scientists on Ethical Conduct of Public Functionaries

The most quoted prominent scientists relevant to the subject of moral and ethical conduct of public functionaries in public administration include:

• J.J.N. Cloete	• S. X. Hanekom	• P. D. Dteyer
• S. B. M. Marume	• C. de Witt Armstrong	• G. A. Graham
• Joel L. Fleishman	• Lance Liebman	• M. H. Moore
• Steven W. Hays	• T. Zane Reeves	• H. E. McCurdy

### 3.4. Public Officials as a Specific Social Group of Public Officials Have Definite Special Characteristics.

- a) Like any social group, public officials have a specific pattern of behaviour which may distinguish them from other social groups. A specific behavioural pattern implies conformity to a specific set of rules, guidelines, principles or codes.
- b) The establishment of rules or codes of conduct to guide the ethical behaviour of the human being is as old as mankind itself. an example of a set of rules or guidelines of prescribed and acceptable conduct, originally of a specific society and today associated with the adherents of the Christian religion, are the ten commandments in the Old Testament of the Bible.
- c) In the public sector ethical norms are usually enconced in acts or are in the form of a code of conduct to which the public official must subscribe when assuming duty. The basis of these ethical codes is to be found in the ethics of society and varies from society to society, and from culture to culture. It is therefore true that some western capitalist theories and ideas may prove to be irrelevant *for socialist and communist societies, one party-states* or even specific cultural groups within a western capitalist society.
- d) The ethical norms represented in codes are therefore nothing but a generalization of the ethics prevalent in a society (or section of the society) of a specific country, and are ultimately based on the religious life of that particular society [S. B. M. Marume:2015]

#### 3.4.1. Prescribed Codes of Ethics

Code of ethics is an acceptable standard of conduct Source: W. Fox and Ivan H. Meyer, 1995:2

According to P. D. Dreyer (1971:26), a code of ethics is a set of rules prescribed by a higher authority to a specific homogenous group of employees (or to the members of social group), with a view to eliciting from them specific behaviour under specific circumstances. All codes of ethics have positive and negative aspects. The positive aspects of ethical codes are that they are reassuring to the public, because the public has written proof that the public service has definite rules of acceptable conduct, and they also provide officials with guidelines in making ethical choices (Hays and Reeves 1984:469-70)

Notwithstanding the positive aspects of official codes of ethics, these codes are often negative: they usually prescribe how not to act, and normally say very little, if anything, on how to behave ethically. (Hayes and Reeves 1984:467). It is furthermore possible that owing to his membership of various groups, the public officials' behaviour could also be guided, or at least influenced, by other ethical codes such as church codes (Armstrong and Graham 1975:56-7)

Apart from the positive and negative aspects of codes of ethics, ethics in themselves have a specific role to play in public administration.

### 3.4.2. The Role Ethics in Public Administration

#### (A) Three Ethical Ideals

According to Rosamund Thomas (1978:146-89), public administration deals with, inter alia, the execution of the government's business and can therefore never be free of any Endeavour to promote the ethical conduct of public officials. Three ethical ideals which form an integral part of public administration can be identified as:

- a higher form of society, meaning that through public administration happiness should be brought to society (Thomas 1978: 146-56)
- service to society, which implies that the public official's action should not harm society (Thomas 1978: 156-63) and
- the happiness and well-being of the worker, whereby specific legal or other prescriptions are introduced to safeguard the worker against unlawful or unethical conduct (Thomas 1978: 163-89)

#### (B) Four Major Objectives of Ethical Issues

These ethical ideals in some way or another form part of the prescriptions of ethical codes. Ethical codes in turn have at least four major objectives:

- promoting and maintaining responsible conduct of public officials;
- promoting public confidence in the integrity of public officials;
- providing guidelines to public officials in their relationship with fellow public officials, elected public office-bearers, and with members of the public; and
- providing guidelines to public officials in the exercise of the discretionary powers they may have [Marume:2015]

### 3.4.3. Necessity for Ethical Codes

*What is the necessity for codes of ethics?*

Possible answer(s):

- a) Because no human being stands apart from society, one's lifestyle is inevitably influenced by the values prevalent in society; man cannot disassociate himself from the values of society. It is, however, normal for one person to view everything in terms of its aesthetic value (Dreyer 1971:27)
- b) Codes of ethics indicate which values are accepted by the majority of society as more important than others. A code of ethics therefore becomes necessary in order to guide the public official in rendering service to society, to safeguard the official against unjustified claims from society, and also to improve the view people have of the public service (Dreyer 1971:27, 31).
- c) Furthermore, guidelines to *enhance ethical conduct* become increasingly necessary because the extent of government activities often forces *state, provincial and local government* to promulgate legislation framed to an extent in general terms. Discretionary powers in the interpretation and implementation of legislation are left to elected and appointed public functionaries. These functionaries are subject to many internal and external influences and pressures, which can lead to ethical conduct, manifesting in conformism, nepotism or corruption and other unacceptable behavioural patterns.

### 3.4.4. Who Should Behave Ethically in the Public Sector?

The question is specifically asked:

Who should behave ethically in the public sector?

Possible answers and explanations:

C. de Witt and George A. Graham (1975:12-25) strongly and brilliantly maintain that the improvement of the quality of the public service is dependent on an understanding of the ethical values and norms that guide the official activities of those engaged in government and administration. *A first group* whose ethical behaviour could provide guidelines for its subordinates comprises elected representatives in Parliament. The way they behave undoubtedly has a positive or negative influence on the behaviour of public officials. It is the *second group*, however, namely the elected political office-bearers, the ministers of state responsible for the various government departments, whose behaviour has a direct influence on the execution of duties by public officials. If the minister earnestly tries to promote equity in public administration, the public official may take his cue from the minister; on the other hand,

negative behaviour by the minister may result in negative behaviour by the public officials. *The third group* – the largest – companies the *appointed public officials* engaged in the day-to-day conduct of public affairs, whose ethical behaviour can positively or negatively influence the official conduct of their colleagues or subordinates engaged in public service or both.

No responsible and accountable democratic government either British, American, European or some progressively developing democratic African government can afford to be complacent regarding the ill-conduct of its *appointed officials* if the public is not prepared to tolerate it. It has therefore become generally accepted practice that appointed public officials are subject to special regulations serve as value norms against which conduct is seriously measured.

#### 3.4.5. Value Norms for Measuring Conduct

According to the following leading public administration scholars, namely Howard e. McCurdy (1977:224-225); Joel L. Fleishman, Lance Liebman and Mark H. Moore (1981:120), and Joel L. Fleishman and Bruce L. Payne (1980:37-38), acceptable ethical conduct of public officials can in general be measured against the following general values and norms:

- a) The Judeo-Christian ethic, which requires the public official to be honest, to do good and to respect human life (McCurdy1977:224).In other words, the public official's conduct of public administration should always take into account the basic requirements of honesty, integrity, justness and fairness.
- b) The greatest good for the greatest number, of utilitarianism (McCurdy, 1977:224), by which is implied that the public official should always endeavor to promote the general welfare.
- c) The endeavor for administrative competence (McCurdy 1977:225), i.e. the professional conduct of public administration by officials who behave morally.
- d) Adherence to the principles of democracy and procedural fairness, which means that the public official should not act arbitrary (Fleishman & Payne 1980:37, 38).
- e) The exercise of administrative discretion in the public interest, i.e. not to strive for personal aggrandizement (Fleishman, Liebman & Moore 1981:115).
- f) Truthfulness in the execution of public official's official duties, either in dealing with members of the public, or when presenting information to superiors (Fleishman, Liebman & Moore 1981:120).
- g) Observance of the prescriptions of acts, regulations and codes, for example, the public service acts, the public service regulations and public service staff codes of most countries such as Ghana, Nigeria, South Africa, Zimbabwe, Zambia, Kenya, India, Brazil and so on; thereby implying that the official actions of the public official should comply with legal prescriptions and with prescription with the power of legality.

From the above criteria against which ethical conduct can be measured, it is apparent that public officials not only have to perform their official tasks within the boundaries of certain criteria, but they also have specific obligations and responsibilities.

#### 3.4.6. Obligations and Responsibilities of Public Functionaries

The obligations and responsibilities of public functionaries can be classified according to whether they are of a legal or moral nature, and whether the functionaries were selected or appointed to force. Legal obligations and responsibilities imply restrictive and, where applicable, punitive action. Moral obligations in turn, are of a restrictive but not punitive nature. The main purpose of moral obligations is to assist functionaries to obtain a clear concept of what is expected from them in their individual conduct and in their relationships with individual members of the public or with groups when executing their official duties.

The obligations and responsibilities of elected public office bearers are not necessarily identical to those of appointed public officials, although they should be compatible with each other.

##### 3.4.6.1. Obligations and Responsibilities of Elected Central Government Functionaries.

In the constitutions of South Africa, Ghana, Zimbabwe, for example the obligations of the members of Parliament are clearly stipulated, inter alia, to safeguard the integrity and freedom of the country; to secure the maintenance of law and order; to further the contentment and spiritual and materials welfare of all in their midst; and to seek world peace in association with all peace-loving nations. the oath of the State President serves as an example of what is expected of the highest elected office bearer, inter alia o be faithful to the republic and to promote that which will advance it; to do justice unto all; and to devote himself to the well-being of his people.

Ministers of state are also expected to make and subscribe to an oath in the presence of the State President, in which the minister undertakes to be faithful to the republic, to be true and faithful counsellor; not to divulge directly or indirectly matters are entrusted to him under secrecy; and to perform the duties of his office conscientiously and to the best of his ability.

Although these obligations are clearly of a moral nature, the misuse of public office holds the threat of discharge.

Specific prescriptions pertaining to the ethical conduct of appointed public officials on central government level as well as on local government also exists.

##### 3.4.6.2. Legal Obligations and Responsibilities of Central Government Officials

Constitution of South Africa, or Zimbabwe, or Tanzania as examples contains specific regulations pertaining to the conduct of officials employed by the central government. Any officer of the public service can be charged with misconduct if he or she contravenes or fails to comply with this Act; disobeys lawful orders; acts with prejudice against the administration of government institutions, is negligent or indolent In the discharge of his duties, or conducts himself in a graceful manner; uses intoxicants

excessively; becomes insolvent or peculiarly embarrassed by imprudent behaviour; undertakes private work without permission, or accepts rewards for the carrying out of or failure to carry out his duties; discloses official information for any purposes other than for the discharge of his official duties; commits a criminal offence; makes a false or incorrect statement, knowing it to be false or incorrect, with a view to obtaining any privilege or advantage; misappropriates or improperly uses government property, or attempts to secure intervention from outside sources to improve his positions in the public service.

Failure to comply with the aforementioned legalistic-ethical prescriptions holds the threat of suspension or even discharge.

#### 3.4.6.3. Legal Obligations and Responsibilities of Local Government Councillors and Officials

The South African Profession of Town Clerk Act, 1988 (Act 75 of 1988) provides for the registration of town clerks. The Act also contains specific prescriptions pertaining to the conduct of town clerks. In the act improper conduct is described as inter alia:

- a) contravention of any ethical rule determined by the Town Clerk's Council;
- b) unbecoming conduct in the performance of his duties;
- c) information disclosure other than for the purposes of his duties, or the use of information for any purpose other than for the execution of his duties;
- d) acceptance of rewards other than the emoluments payable to him as an employee of a local authority;
- e) improper use of or misappropriation of local authority property; and
- f) knowingly making false statements to secure an advantage pertaining to his duties or official position or cause prejudice or injury to the local authority or an employee of the local authority where he is employed.

Failure to comply with the aforementioned prescriptions holds the threat of either being cautioned, or being fined, or registration being suspended, or the particular person's name being removed from the register by a disciplinary committee appointed from the members of a Town Clerk's Council instituted in terms of the provisions.

#### 3.4.6.4. Moral Obligations and Responsibilities of Local Government Officials.

In order to promote ethical conduct of appointed public officials in the employ of local government, three codes of conduct which are prescriptive but not punitive and which lay down general guidelines, are in existence at the time of publication. They are the codes of conduct for local authorities, compiled by the Natal Provincial Administration for example, and applicable to local authorities, compiled by the United Municipal Executive, for the use South African local authorities.

### 4. Code of Conduct for Local Authorities

The Code of Conduct for Local Authorities in Natal for example, provides for a number of general prescriptions, applicable to both councillors and employees; inter alia, councillors and officials must:

- not allow themselves to be influenced by motives of personal advantage;
- conduct themselves so as to promote the full confidence of the public in the integrity of its local government; and
- not make use of confidential information for their personal gain or for the personal gain of others.
- The code furthermore provides for prescriptions relating to:
  - the relationship of councillors with the public;
  - The relationship of councillors with the officials in the employ of the local government;
  - the relationship of the official with the council and with individual councillors;
  - the relationship of the official with the public; and
  - the acceptance of gifts and favours.

Provision is also made for a suggested creed for councillors and a suggested creed for municipal officials.

An enlightening aspect of this code of conduct is the inclusion of a section on The Public in its dealing with councillors and officials, in which it is stated that the public should bear in mind that no member should expect special treatment from officials; that councillors owe their first duty to the inhabitants of the municipality as a whole; that the councillor is not the person to attend to the day-to-day transaction of a business between the council and outside interests; that councillors or officials should not be persuaded to secure some personal favour for a member of the public; that the proper channels of communication should be observed; that reasonable consideration should be shown in dealings with officials; and that unreasonable calls on the time of officials should not be made.

### 5. Ethical code of the Southern African institute of Town Clerks

The ethical code of the Southern African Institute of Town clerks serves as a guideline of conduct for the members of the institute in that the member is expected:

- to treat councillors with respect;
- not to cultivate the favour of councillors with a view to personal gain;
- not to grant special treatment to anyone;
- not to participate actively in any municipal election save to exercise his right to vote;
- to act in accordance with the laws, rules, and regulations applicable to his local authority.
- to be loyal to the local employing him; and
- to endeavor to ensure that those under his control are so motivated in their work that in their service they are worthy of their hire

## 6. Code of conduct for Local Authorities in Southern Africa

The United Municipal Executive's Code of Conduct for Local Authorities provides councillors and officials as well as ratepayers, with guidelines as to what is expected of officials in so far as their personal behaviour and mutual relationships are concerned. The basic premise of the Code is that every councillor and official assumes not only a duty but also a responsibility towards the local authority and fellow citizens and that personal interest cannot be permitted to play a part in matters concerning the interest and welfare of the community as a whole.

The code consists of five parts, pertaining to:

- provisions of the code applicable to councillors and officials in general;
- councillors and their relationship to the public;
- councillors and their relationship to officials.
- the official and his relationship to the council and individual councillors; and
- the official and his relationship to the public.

From the topics dealt with in the various parts of the Code, it is clear that it is to some extent based on the Code of Conduct for Local Authorities in Southern Africa.

As can be deduced from the guidelines included in the existing codes of conduct for officials at the central and local government levels, no attempt is made to cover every possible facet of official conduct. The guidelines rather provide broad criteria to assist public functionaries to act responsibly and in conformity with generally acceptable behaviour. It is, however, possible that non-conformity to the guidelines could result in punitive steps either legal or extra-legal against the official concerned, by the institution responsible for drafting the code.

## 7. Remedial actions

To ensure responsible execution of public duties, various legal and extra-legal controls can be instituted. Legal control originates from statutory provisions and from formal codes of ethics which are legally enforceable and embraces legislative, executive and judicial control. Legislative control embraces the delegation of authority and the approval of the budget, executive control embraces the appointment and discharge of leading officials and the practical execution of the budget, whilst judicial control embraces the provision of various acts and ordinances or by-laws (Hays & Reeves 1984:465-6).

An independent judiciary is also a great asset in the endeavour to promote the ethical conduct of officials.

Extra-legal control originates from the influence of those groups with which the individual comes into contact (Hays & Reeves 1984:465-6).

Other extra-legal or administrative measures to ensure ethical conduct can be found in the recruitment and rigorous selection programmes of employees of only the best quality; proper training; the allocation of authority commensurate with training and experience; adequate remuneration, the lack of which can contribute to the "uninterestedness" of the official. In the appropriation of state funds for his direct or indirect benefit; greater participation by the community in the processes of government and administration at all levels of authority; and promoting professionalism among public servants.

### 7.1. Legal Measures to Promote Ethical Conduct

For example, section 20 of the South African Public Service Act, 1984, prescribes the steps to be taken when a central government official is charged with misconduct and also the steps to be taken if he is found guilty; inter alia that:

- Officers are charged in writing with misconduct and are allowed to deny or admit to the charges in writing. Officers may be suspended from duty with or without emoluments by the minister or the head of the department is authorized thereto. The suspension may be cancelled at any time by the aforementioned functionaries. The minister may also order an inquiry in to the charge.
- If the officer charged with misconduct is found guilty, he may be cautioned or reprimanded, fined, or transferred to another post; his salary or grade or both may be reduced; or he may be discharged or called upon to resign from the public service.
- Officers charged with misconduct may appeal and are provided with a copy of the reasons for finding against which appeal is brought.

Specific legal procedures to control unethical conduct of public employees can also be found in the provisions of the Advocate-General Act, 1979 (Act 118 of 1979), which empowers the Advocate-General (an office similar to that of an well-known ombudsman but with terms of reference pertaining to the application of state funds only) to investigate matters related to the dishonest use of state funds and illegal or improper actions for direct or indirect pecuniary advantage, and to report to Parliament and/or to refer the matter(s) to an ordinary court of law, or to levy a fine or imprisonment (not exceeding six months) or both.

### 7.2. Administrative or Functional Measures to Promote Ethical Conduct

It was pointed out that various administrative or functional measures can be instituted to promote ethical conduct. Two of the most important of these measures are education and training in public service ethics and the promotion of professionalism, which can greatly contribute towards effective public administration.

### *7.3. Education and Training in Public Service Ethics*

The South African Public Service (on central, regional and/or local level) is neither better nor worse than any other public service, where it concerns the ethical conduct of public functionaries. On the basis of this statement one could argue that there is no need for specific education and training in public service ethics and that issues dealing with ethical dilemmas such as political participation of public servants; misuse of office; value choices; negotiations for benefits; the relationship of the public service and public officials with other government institutions and the public; and the exercise of discretionary powers, should be included in the Public Administration curricula of universities and technikons. It is, however, unfortunate that not all public functionaries attend universities or technikons. It is, however, unfortunate that not all public functionaries attend universities or technikons, and that not every one that does studies Public Administration.

It should be emphasised that to execute their official duties properly, public functionaries should take cognizance of legal prescriptions pertaining to the execution of their duties. They should also take cognizance of then normative factors applicable to public administration which can serve as guidelines to ethical conduct in the execution of their duties. Specific provisions should therefore be made to train all employees of central, regional and local government in public service ethics and to emphasize to them the necessity to abide by prescribed codes of conduct and by prescribed official action, i.e. by the provision of legislation.

Apart from the aforementioned general requirements, it is possible to identify specific criteria which can provide guidelines to help activities, and which can also serve as fields of training for public functionaries. The following "factors" can be identified (Hanekom & Thornhill 1983:115-45; and Cloete 1981: 9-34).

#### 7.3.1. Deference to Political Supremacy

this implies that for public administration there is a political institution (legislature) which must be accepted as the de facto and de jure allocator of values (preferences, fund, services, policies) for which and by which public administration must operate. This factor also implies that the heads of executive government institutions, and for that matter all public officials, perform their tasks in a political milieu, a fact which they should never lose sight of.

#### 7.3.2. Maintenance of Public Accountability

The authority given to public functionaries is authority given to them in trust. A public functionary should therefore confine his authority to the purposes for which such powers were entrusted. Whether or not executive institutions maintain public accountability depends to a large extent on the control exercised by the legislature over their actions, as well as on the reaction of the public to their actions.

#### 4.3.3. Requirements of Administrative Law

Public institutions in the welfare state are both regulators and entrepreneurs. Therefore, the legislature prescribes directly or indirectly how its own employees must act. The requirements of administrative law imply that public functionaries can perform only authorized functions; that public officials are there to serve all members of the community; that they may not take unjustifiable or inconsistent decisions or action; and that public servants should be above suspicion in all their actions, i.e. of unimpeachable integrity and displaying a complete lack of all ulterior motives.

#### 7.3.4. Respect for Societal Values

Public functionaries work in a sphere which is value laden and their actions are judged on the grounds of their regard for societal values, i.e. political, economic, social, cultural, religious, historical and aesthetic values.

The above-mentioned factors represent both the legal and moral obligations and responsibilities of public officials and are in fact the minimum standards applicable to the acceptable performance of public service. The basic education and training in public service ethics ought, therefore, to include instruction in those aspects, and should always be aimed at the promotion of social equity and serving the public interest. Education and training in the aforementioned aspects can also contribute towards the promotion of professionalism.

### *7.4. Promotion of Professionalism*

Professionalism enhances group cohesion because of similar standards of education and training; it promotes communication since all members of a profession are acquainted with the terminology used; participation in the activities of professional institutes contributes towards an increase in knowledge; intensive education and training improves intellectual abilities and the ability to interpret scientific and technological change; and membership of a professional group leads to conformity with and loyalty to the purposes and standards of the group (Hanekom 1976:14). The promotion of professionalism in the public sector can therefore lead to a better understanding of the complexities of public administration, and by implication also to improvement in the quality of public administration.

## **8. Summary**

The basis of the official behaviour pattern for appointed public officials can be found in the prescriptions of codes of conduct, which can be utilised to promote and maintain responsible public administration and also serve as safeguards against unjustified claims from society.

In the public sector both elected and appointed functionaries should behave ethically and their conduct is usually measured against norms such as Judeo-Christian ethics, utilitarianism, administrative competence, exercise of discretion and the observance of legal

prescriptions. Apart from the aforementioned criteria, public functionaries have specific obligations and responsibilities which are of a moral or legal nature. The obligations and responsibilities are applicable to the State President, the minister of state and all appointed public officials, whether in the employ of the central government or local government. For appointed public official's specific codes of conduct have been compiled to which they must subscribe on accepting appointment.

Non-conformity with the guidelines provided for in legislation or in codes of conduct could lead to legal or extra-legal punitive steps against the functionary concerned. Administrative measures to promote ethical conduct can also be instituted, for example, formal education and training in public service ethics and the promotion of professionalism.

It should, however, be noted that the mere compilation of an inventory of all possible ethical dilemmas and all possible steps to rectify unacceptable conduct will not necessarily lead to ethical conduct, especially because of the diverse values represented by different culture, the diverse obligations of public officials owing to their membership of different social groups, and because of the difficulty of infusing meaning into values. Owing to the inadequacy of codes of ethics, even legally enforceable codes, training in public service ethics and the promotion of professionalism may prove to be a more suitable approach to the promotion of ethical behaviour.

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