

TOWARDS IMPROVEMENT OF ETHICS IN THE PUBLIC SECTOR IN ZIMBABWE

Daniel Chigudu*

Abstract

In Zimbabwe reports of abuse of public office have manifested in various forms resulting in public outcry; poor service delivery, and government losing millions of dollars. This study aims to undertake a reflective inquiry on the ethical conduct in the Zimbabwean public sector through content and process analysis in order to provide intervention mechanisms to the problem. Statistical analysis of corruption level is made to benefit the study. Results indicated some legislative gaps and an incapacitated Anti-Corruption Commission which has been unable to execute its mandate fully. Most senior public officials and politicians appear to have too much power and authority with no checks and balances in place. Practical implications of the widespread unethical practices call for the government to plug the glaring legislative gaps; take stern measures against offenders; empowering the Anti-Corruption Commission; term limits for senior public officials as well as for political appointments; and motivating political will to uphold ethical leadership. The recommendations will open a window for the Zimbabwean government and administrators to view how some advanced economies have propped up ethical behaviour in the public sector. It is the way to go for ailing economies like Zimbabwe. The paper demonstrated the importance of ethical awareness in another political and economic setting-Zimbabwe.

Keywords: Public Sector; Corruption; Public Official; Unethical Practice

* University of South Africa, Pretoria, South Africa
Tel: +2712 429 2174

1. Introduction

Scientific debate has been intense in public administration on how to make the civil sector function in the best way, the role of government particularly its regulatory institutions and good governance in the developing world. The debate has sought answers to how much and what form of state intervention is needed to achieve economic development and political accountability, among other objectives. This debate has given a better understanding of the responsibilities of the public sector's interface with citizens, civil society, foreign organisations and private institutions. The debate has focused on good governance in which ethics and ethical principles become pivotal for public officials to make better decisions, and help those they serve to evaluate them (public officials).

Arguably, ethics has been a controversial area of study in public administration in as much as it has been controversial in other study areas like politics, philosophy and law (UCAN, 2009). Due to the complexity of ethics, practitioners tend to shy away from ethics and choose to stick to rules and regulations that define the scope of their work in the public sector.

But this seem to be losing ground as public officials no longer simply exist to implement policy

decisions of the policy makers. Instead, public officials are increasingly exercising discretionary powers that affect peoples' lives. Unfortunately, the effect of the decisions benefit less the people and more to the public administrator. Economists have called this standard "*homo oeconomicus*" UCAN (2009:6), where a man attempts to pursue selfish interests, with little regard if any for ethics and others.

This paper discusses public sector ethics with a view to make a reflective inquiry on Zimbabwe. It provides a background and research issues/questions to Zimbabwe's ethical position in the public sector, methodology, conceptual framework, and statistical analysis of corruption levels over the years, codes of ethics, significance of ethical practices, contextualization of unethical practices, conclusions and recommendations.

2. Background, Research Questions and Issues

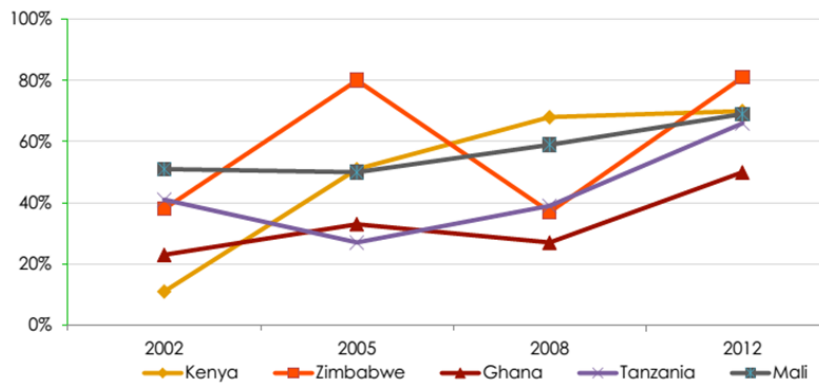
A privately owned daily newspaper in Zimbabwe (Newsday, 2014) reported on a decline in service delivery and called for ethical public managers. Clarion calls have been made by the public through the media for public officials to refrain from unethical practices in the discharge of duty. A daily state-

sponsored newspaper in Zimbabwe (The Herald, 2014) carried a story on the alleged Rautenbach scandal of the Hwange Colliery, Unki Platinum and Chisumbanje Ethanol Plant involving senior public officials. In 2013 according to the Transparency International Corruption Index Survey, Zimbabwe was ranked one 157 out of 177 countries. In 2012 the country was ranked 163 out of 173 countries in terms of unethical practices. These positions portray gross unethical practices. As indicated by the newspaper articles, the corruption index rankings and the survey data; it seems some public officials are unethical to the detriment of the people they purport to serve. Questions that beg for answers are; what is government doing about it? What mechanisms if any are in place to safeguard the public? This calls for reflectivity on ethical matters in the public sector in order to proffer solutions.

A survey by Transparency International Zimbabwe (TIZ, 2000) reported that Zimbabweans

regarded the public sector as the most unethical sector in the country. The police was ranked as being most corrupt followed by political parties, parliament/legislature, public officials and the judiciary. From October 2011 to June 2013, Afrobarometer, a research project which measures public attitudes on socio-economic and political issues in sub-Saharan Africa surveyed more than 5100 people. According to (Afrobarometer, 2013) Zimbabwe was the third most corrupt African country, after joint leaders Nigeria and Egypt. Zimbabwe stood at 81% while both Nigeria and Egypt were at 82%. Afrobarometer also reported that Zimbabwean corruption increased by 43% between 2002 and 2012. The figure below shows percentages of negative ratings Zimbabwe and some countries received for handling the fight against administrative malpractices and corruption.

Figure 1. Countries where corruption fight is failing, 2002-2012



Source: AfroBarometer, 2013

Findings from the (World Bank, 2012) presented in the Human Resources Management Actionable Governance Indicators (HRM AGI) that in Zimbabwe, high levels of discretion are afforded both politicians and senior public officials without the necessary checks and balances. This may imply that there are some legislative gaps. The lack of such checks and balances breed unethical conduct, which often bear severe economic consequences to the general public and to the country in the long run. Therefore, as has been indicated, public sector ethics in Zimbabwe is a matter that urgently needs informed discussion.

3. Methodology

The study is a reflective approach to research as borrowed from (Fook, 1996) and ideas from (Argyris, and Schon, 1978). It is an approach which enables one to reflect upon own assumptions and to influence a situation. In this way of thinking, reflectivity allows a practitioner to research the practice of others in

order to change or improve it. This study makes a reflective inquiry into unethical practices in Zimbabwe's public sector in order to improve or change the status quo. This is done through content analysis of public sector ethics in general and Zimbabwe in particular.

4. Conceptual Framework

This section provides a discussion on definition of ethics, theories of ethics, public sector ethics, corruption and statistical analysis, governance and whistle blowing.

4.1 Understanding Ethics

According to (UCAN, 2009) people believe that public sector ethics is a term too weak and too nice to be of real importance. As such existence of ethics in what is regarded as the tough, dirty and unprincipled world of politics is seen as wishful thinking. Ethics is sometimes viewed as negative, impractical and meant

for the believing innocent and not for the deliberate offenders. The term ethics has had various definitions but common to these definitions are aspects of ensuring that people live up to certain expectations as defined by institutions. For (Edwards, 2008), ethics and morality are often used to mean the same thing. These are principles meant to evaluate behaviour as bad or good.

According to ancient Greeks, the word *ethos* refers to morality. The word *moral* derives from the Latin word *mos* which is the same as the Greek word *ethos*. *Moral* is therefore used to refer to the current morality while *ethics* is used as the study of morality as asserted by (Lategan, 2003). For (Edwards, 2007) in Aristotle's view *ethics* implies the study and practice of good life. Therefore, in Aristotle's view *ethics* is not a matter of gaining intellectual understanding but of practical hands on which he termed *phronesis*. *Phronesis* is a sort of ethical know-how of what action is most appropriate in a given situation. The Organisation for Economic Co-operation Development (OECD, 1996:12) defines *ethics* as "the rules that translate characteristics or *ethos* into everyday practice". *Ethics* refers to the sum of ideas which define an overall culture in the public sector while values may be seen as principles that guide judgement about what is good or bad. However, the relationship between these two is complex and overlapping. Several commentators have tried to explain them. For instance, Kernighan (Chapman, 1993:16) notes that the link between *ethics* and values is that ethical standards and principles can be applied to the resolution of value conflicts or dilemmas, while (Denhardt, 1989:187) argues that, the concepts have been difficult to apply to the daily lives of public servants because,

"Public administrators are still striving to develop an understanding of the *ethics* of their profession, not because it is new, but because the understanding of the profession and its role in government has changed dramatically over years."

Public sector *ethics* should be seen as an activity and not a status. Therefore, encouraging ethical behaviour should not be just about establishing a list of rules to be kept in offices but an on-going management process that underpins the work of government (OECD, 1996). This is corroborated by (Thompson, 1992: 255) who says,

"*Ethics* may be instrumental, it may only be a means to an end, but it is a necessary means to an end. Government *ethics* provide the preconditions for the making of good public policy. In this sense, it is more important than any single policy, because all policies depend on it."

The ethical conduct of politicians and public officials is a critical ingredient in democratic governance. *Ethics* can be viewed as standards of accountability by which the public will scrutinise the work being conducted by the members of their organisations. No matter how complex the politics of

the day can be the ethical standards of the public sector are seen to be at three different levels of practicality and in principle. The top most principles are some ethical imperatives, embedded in religion or in human rights; the internationally accepted principles for democratic and accountable governance for the public sector; and the contextual rules for the behaviour of public servants (UCAN, 2009). *Ethics* can be viewed from the traditional and modern moral philosophy perspectives.

4.2 Traditional Moral Philosophy

Moral theory is the study of what makes actions wrong and right from the traditional perspective. This philosophy is also known as the moral theory or normative *ethics* and offers principles to which public officials could appeal in resolving challenging moral issues. Normative *ethics* is the study of ethical action. It investigates the set of questions that arise when considering how one ought to act, morally speaking. As argued by (Foot, 1983) morality does not seem to have any special binding force. She adds that people only behave morally when motivated to do so by other factors. This notion should be embraced fully by the public sector in Zimbabwe. Descriptive *ethics*, on the other hand, is about peoples' moral beliefs. Meta-*ethics* seek to define moral language and the metaphysics of moral facts. Other scholars define normative *ethics* as prescriptive in nature, rather than descriptive. In this article, the discussion is situated in the normative *ethics* area. It seeks to examine standards for the rightness and wrongness of actions. Normative theories have several strands with three most well-known being virtue *ethics*, consequentialism and deontological *ethics*.

4.2.1 Virtue Ethics

These focus on the character of the public official and not on the formal rules of the organization or the consequence of actions. Virtue *ethics* are hinged on an account of the purpose of human life or the meaning of life. For Plato and Aristotle the Greek philosophers, the purpose was to live in harmony with others, and defined four cardinal virtues as prudence, justice, fortitude and temperance. Virtue *ethics* should be universally accepted.

4.2.2 Consequentialism

This theory holds that the consequences of a particular action develop the basis for any valid moral judgment about that action. For instance, a morally right action is one that produces a good outcome, or consequence.

4.2.2.1 Utilitarianism

This theory is a specific strand of consequentialist ethic in that, the moral worth of an action is primarily determined by its contribution to overall utility. This means its overall contribution to happiness or pleasure among all persons as opposed to sadness or pain. It is the satisfaction of preferences.

4.2.3 Deontological Ethics (Kantianism)

It is sometimes called duty or obligation ethics. Deontologists believe that ethical rules bind one to duty. The theory is concerned about the wrongness or rightness of actions in pursuance of duty and not the wrongness or rightness as a result of the duty. What matters here is the public official's fidelity to the principle and not the consequences for the individual or their usefulness to others. Duty is more critical in this theory.

4.3 Modern Moral Philosophy

Modern moral philosophy revolves around claims-based or rights-based ethics. These are ethical theories based on the fundamental principle of human rights which focus on people's freedom of speech, association, religion, civil rights, political rights and social/economic rights. The claims-based ethics implies that people have claims against somebody for instance the state, and that this somebody consequently has some obligations.

In the public sector, ethics address the fundamental premise of a public official's duty as a "steward" to the public. In other words, ethics is the moral justification and consideration for decisions and actions made during the completion of daily duties when working to provide the general services of government (Foot, 1983). For (Bass and Steidlmeire, 1999) the ethics of public officials rest on three pillars: firstly, the moral character of the leader, secondly, the ethical values embedded in the leader's vision and articulation thereof; and, lastly, the morality of the choices and actions within which leaders and followers engage and which they pursue to realise the ethical vision. These authors contend that corrupt behaviour is therefore not impulsive but rather it is a premeditated act.

(Van Wart, 2003:214) states,

"In the public sector, effective leadership provides higher-quality and more efficient goods and services. It provides a sense of cohesiveness, personal development and higher levels of satisfaction among those conducting the work. Effective leadership provides an overarching sense of direction and vision, an alignment with the environment, a healthy mechanism for innovation and creativity and a resource for invigorating the organisational culture."

Given that kind of leadership in Zimbabwe, the level of corruption could go down significantly in the

public sector. The unethical leadership in Zimbabwe hatches corrupt practices and a lack of responsiveness to the needs of clients. According to (Naidoo, 2012), unethical behaviour often starts at the top of the public sector, where public sector values are not personified and promoted. This may be attributed to lack of accountability, lack of transparency and lack of responsibility.

It can be suggested that by placing greater emphasis on accountability, responsibility and transparency and adhering to rules and procedures, effectiveness and efficiency in Zimbabwe's public sector can be improved. In the subsections to follow we discuss corruption, governance and whistle blowing in the realm of traditional and modern moral philosophy.

4.4 Corruption

In view of virtue ethics corruption is a break of several categorical imperatives which include avoiding injury and acting justly because corruption entails a favour to certain people. While deontological ethics is about commitment to principle it argues that corruption involves deception. This undermines the moral of those involved and therefore corruption is deemed unethical. The consequentialist theories and utilitarianism, however, may view corruption as ethical because some observers have argued that corruption is to "grease the wheels" and can make bureaucracies work more efficiently (which is useful to most people). While this argument is hardly seen today, it can exemplify a perspective from which corruption can be seen as ethical. (World Bank, 1994) and (TI, 2005) define corruption as "the abuse of entrusted power for private gain" and (O'Leary, R, Gerard, C & Bingham, 2006:4) say that, it is a significant problem in much of the developing world. Some factors contributing to corruption are poor policies, and activities like procurement that are poorly managed; poverty; income disparities; inadequate civil service remuneration; unethical leadership and poor governance practices. It can be argued that unethical leadership breeds abuse of power.

4.5 Governance

The (World Bank, 1994) defines governance as the exercise of political, economic, administrative and legal authority in the management of a nation's affairs. Such authority may be acquired through election, appointment or delegation in the public sector (Siswana, 2007). According to (Farazmand, A and Pinkowski, 2007:313) governance is a value-laden normative concept, referring to how well governments govern or whether the government serves the citizenry well. As such, good governance implies (Edwards, 2008) a condition whereby such authority is discharged in an ethical, effective,

transparent and accountable manner, while bad governance is associated with unethical practices in the public sector. Good governance practices allow for whistle blowing to alert the public on unethical behaviour.

4.6 Whistle Blowing

The assertion by (Masaka, 2007:33), that whistle blowing and the obligations of loyalty and obedience in Zimbabwe presents a classic case of competing moral values. These competing moral values are the basis of ethical or moral dilemmas. An ethical dilemma is a situation involving a choice between two opposing courses of action, where there are reasonable moral considerations in support of each course of action. This situation of conflicting moral choices calls for individuals who are courageous enough and prepared to make hard choices in which case they have to promote one or the other of the values, but not both. In Zimbabwe, cases of immoral practices in the public sector present moral dilemmas to the public officials, whether to blow or not to blow the whistle given these conflicting moral circumstances. In most cases the punishments meted out to the whistle blowers inflict pain, for instance, through victimisation (Shaw, 1999). However, (Bok, 1988), views whistle blowing as an act of disloyalty mainly because the whistle blower's public exposure of alleged immoral practices in the business is a violation of loyalty both to the firm and to his fellow employees. Therefore, according to Bok, whistle blowing violates public sector and collegial loyalty while at the same time it helps to inform the public about malpractices that are likely to injure their health and well-being. Masaka notes and we agree that while Bok castigates whistle blowing for violating public sector and collegial loyalty, he also defends it. What is important in this case is to determine whether collegial loyalty has more moral weight than loyalty to public welfare. This article argues that loyalty to the public interest should take precedence to that of the public sector entity.

The observation by, (Shaw, 1999:282) that the obligations of loyalty and obedience to one's employer are morally suspect because such obligations try to inculcate domination of the ethical sensitivities of employees and hence prey on the employees' autonomy and private lives. This holds true to a large extent to the public sector in Zimbabwe. The employer therefore, who does not cherish ethical values tends to corrupt the employee who sees the employer condoning corrupt tendencies. It takes a person of high moral fibre to report unethical practices like corruption even if it means risking the loss of his/her job. (Larmer, 2002:161) remarks that, "Loyalty does not imply that we have a duty to refrain from reporting the immoral actions of those to whom we are loyal." Loyalty that persuades employees to 'see no evil' and 'speak no evil' when

immoral practices are an injury to the public, is misdirected.

5. Codes of Conduct and Codes of Ethics

Renowned codes of ethics include the International Code of Conduct for Public Officials adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in 1996 and the Model Codes of Conduct for Public Officials developed by the Council of Europe and adopted by the Member States in 2000. They serve as a reference point for states administration. Among other provisions, the codes state that the public officials should carry out their duties in accordance with the law, in a politically neutral manner and should not attempt to frustrate the lawful policies, decisions or actions of the public authorities. Equally important are provisions, which say that public officials should not allow their private interest to conflict public positions which they occupy. Further, in the exercise of his/her discretionary powers, the public official should ensure that public property, facilities, services and financial resources which are entrusted upon him/her are managed and used effectively, efficiently and economically. Well written Codes of Conduct provide that public officials should not accept a gift likely to, cause them to act with prejudice in the course of their duties.

6. Assets and Income Disclosure

Proponents of public sector ethics have argued that one of the key instruments for maintaining integrity in the public service is income declarations. This includes statements that show the assets and liabilities of all those in positions of influence and those of their immediate family members. This helps to identify what wealth is not fairly attributable to income, gift, or loan. It is a notion that is winning support from international agencies.

7. The Significance of Good Ethical Practices in Zimbabwe's Public Sector

Limited resources; citizen demands; departmental autonomy and managerial discretion all present challenges that require ethical consideration as will be shown in this section. For the majority of people in Zimbabwe, it may seem that they are approaching a moral crisis, more than an apparent crisis of confidence in the political authorities. This may also be a crisis of confidence in the representativeness and legitimacy of public sector management. This may pose a problem with a serious effect on the public service as it results in a loss of respect for the institutions and a lack of ethical and law enforcement role models.

7.1 Working with limited resources

When resources are limited, there may be pressure to cut corners or to bypass due process. If people feel underpaid and insecure, morale goes down, and then they may be less willing to work extra hard. It seems government is aware of the possible risks of these factors and acknowledges that the conditions under which public servants work are important in ensuring a climate conducive to ethical conduct.

7.2 Citizen demands

Making government more client-oriented is a central platform of public management reform in many countries. This means that, at the same time as having to manage with fewer resources, public servants also face pressures from increased public demands for more and better quality services. Conflict might arrive between client rights and the public servants' obligation to keep within economic limits. These conflicts of objectives and responsibilities manifest themselves as dilemmas that must be resolved directly by public servants. When high public expectations are not met, public servants meet the burden of the public's dissatisfaction.

7.3 Departmental autonomy

In Zimbabwe, departments now enjoy relatively more autonomy. As departments define their own standards and ways of operating; concerns have been raised that the inculcation of public service values are breaking down.

7.4 Managerial discretion

Within departments too, there is significant devolution of authority to individual managers. Considerable discretion is left with operational managers to choose inputs, and re-allocate funds between programmes or activities. Flexibility has also been given to managers in the management and deployment of human resources.

8. Contextualisation of Unethical Practices in the Public Sector

Unethical practices in Zimbabwe have become endemic within public sector entities. Those highly reported in the media and noted by (Yakamoto, 2014) include Willowgate scandal (1988); War victims compensation scandal (1994); Grain Marketing Board scandal (1999); Chiadzwa diamond scandals (2006-2014); the airport road scandal (2008-2014); and the salarygate scandals.

In 2012, Cabinet noted with concern that the Grain Marketing Board (GMB) had not realised a profit over the previous ten years owing to malpractice. At the Zimbabwe Broadcasting Corporation (ZBC), the Minister of Information (2014) dissolved a board running the entity for allegedly being embroiled in the corruption that saw the chief executive officer taking home over forty thousand American dollars when the shop floor staff went without pay for months. The Office of the Auditor and Comptroller-General is believed to have unearthed a lot of rot in the government circles such as the Central Mechanical Department (CMED); the Tender Board of Zimbabwe; the Vehicle Inspection Department; Zimbabwe Revenue Authority (ZIMRA); Immigration; Passport Offices; traffic corps and in local authorities.

Table 1. GCI Ranking Comparison for 2012-2013 and 2013-2014 (the bottom 20)

Country	2012-2013	2013-2014
	Rank out of 143	Rank out of 148
Uganda	126	129
Benin	127	130
Zimbabwe	127	131
Madagascar	128	132
Pakistan	129	133
Venezuela	131	134
Mali	132	135
Malawi	133	136
Mozambique	134	137
Timor-Leste	135	138
Myanmar	n/a	139
Burkina Faso	136	140
Mauritania	137	141
Angola	n/a	142
Haiti	138	143
Sierra- Leone	139	144
Yemen	140	145
Burundi	141	146
Guinea	142	147
Chad	143	148

Source: The Global Competitiveness Report 2013-2014:15

Unethical practices of this magnitude in the public service are disgusting because public service delivery should be a culmination of the extent to which moral dimensions of ethical practices are upheld (Morscher, E. Neumaier, O and Simon, 1998:145). In light of this (Masaka, 2007:32) asserts the importance of ethics in humanity's daily endeavours and interactions with public entities. It is difficult to conduct business with an unethical person, in that one cannot risk trusting him/her and the commitments and promises he/she makes (Trevino, and Nelson, 1995:290). According to (Masaka, 2007) a case in point is that of Zimbabwe where public sector malpractices are reported to be on a meteoric rise. People have lost faith in the way some public officials perform duties given a plethora of cases of malpractices that have beset Zimbabwe. Good public service delivery is only possible if the ones who engage in it do so in a manner that shows respect for

the well- being of partners, clients and society at large.

9. Statistical Analysis

The Global Competitiveness Index (GCI) is a tool that assesses the competitiveness of 148 economies across the world in all stages of development including performance of public sector institutions. Table 1 above shows the position of Zimbabwe (in bold) in the bottom 20 of the 143 economies for the period 2012-2013 and bottom 20 of the 148 economies in the period 2013-2014. These positions are not pleasing for a country with a literacy rate soaring above 80% in the last decade. In table 2, public institutions in Zimbabwe continue receiving weak assessments due to corruption and favouritism. Table 3 shows the GCI for Zimbabwe in some detail with selected indicators that directly relate to public institutions. Indicators are expressed as scores on a scale 1-7 with 7 being the most desirable outcome.

Table 2. The GCI for Zimbabwe in detail: Selected Indicators

Measure	Year	Index/Ranking
Transparency International Corruption Index	2012	163/176
World Bank-Doing Business Millennium Challenge Corporation(MCC) government effectiveness	2013	172/185
MCC control of corruption	2013	-0.53
	2013	-0.43

Source: The Global Competitiveness Report 2013-2014

Table 3. Global Comparisons of Economic Competitiveness and Corruption: Zimbabwe's index / ranking

Indicator	Value	Rank/148
Judicial Independence	2.7	77
Favouritism in decisions of government officials	2.6	108
Wastefulness of government spending	2.6	112
Reliability of Police Services	3	123
Degree of customer orientation	3.7	133
Hiring and firing practices	2.4	146

Source: Bureau of Economic and Business Affairs Report (2013)

10. Bad Practices Going Unreported

Management in some sectors of the public service is intolerant of any employee who reports unethical practices. The employee is subjected to various forms of victimisation, open or latent, ranging from physical and verbal threats through to psychological traumatization in a bid to silence the would- be whistle blowers.

The vulnerability of employees to whimsical victimization by management is high in Zimbabwe's public sector. This is calculated to scale down the propensity for reporting malpractices by senior managers. The victims are then used as examples of bad apples by management when management instills fear in other employees. Therefore, unethical practice

in Zimbabwe's public sector tends to be on the side of senior management. Any real or perceived unethical practice at lower levels is expeditiously dealt with by senior management. This helps senior management to mask their own unethical practice and bolsters their integrity in the eyes of the general public they purport to serve.

Evidently, instead of public entities taking a keen interest in the corporate misdeeds exposed by the employee, they undertake to harass the employee for making unauthorised disclosure of real or perceived corporate misdeeds. Whistle blowing should be allowed to provide checks and balances in the public sector. There can be no plausible reason to bypass good ethical behaviour in the public sector as corroborated by Ross in (Boss, 1999:27) who wrote

that the moral duty of non-maleficence (duty not to cause harm) overrides the duty to maximise profits.

The Central Bank Governor of Zimbabwe established a Whistle Blower Fund in December (The Financial Gazette, 2004). The fund was meant to reward those who reported corrupt practices although in the private sector. Here was a window of opportunity to learn and do the same for the public sector. Whether the fund achieved the intended objective in the finance sector is for others to comment. A similar fund for public sector ethics could have arrested the rate of unethical practices and corruption that have pervaded the corridors of power and authority in the public service delivery system in Zimbabwe today. Public officials however, must expose and report immoral business practices because it is the right thing to do. But the conditions to do what is right for its own sake in Zimbabwe may not always be possible. Some employees would say, "Why risk my life or losing my job?", as a result they will not report any unethical practice. The complexity of the matter may lie in senior public officials possibly being political appointees as opposed to their being appointed based on merit.

Zimbabwe may need to develop uniform ethical standards that cut across the public sector. The upsurge in immoral practices in the public sector in Zimbabwe today primarily driven by greed puts Kantian moral theory to a stern moral test.

11. Impediments to Good Ethical Practices

Zimbabwe faces several challenges that militate against ensuring that public sector ethics are emulated by the public. These include legislative gaps on how to manage conflicts of interest in which senior public officials are politicians; and where there are delays in initiating investigations; delays in conducting and concluding the investigations; and delays in taking decisive action where investigations are concluded. Law enforcement agents often appear incapacitated to handle certain cases because some public officials appear to wield wide discretionary authority to determine investigation outcomes.

This is probably meant to enable weakening possible 'ripple effects' when the culprits are eventually brought to book with punitive action being taken. When audits expose unethical practices, management and other agencies that are required to follow up the cases to the logical conclusion, tend to develop cold feet. In some cases a game of hide and seek may be played where senior management may appear to be waiting for a decision from the board or the minister. On one hand, the board or minister may bury their head in the sand and claim it is a management issue. On the other hand, they may claim to be preoccupied with policy issues.. There is an apparent need for political will to uphold ethical standards and reduce corruption levels.

12. Conclusions and Recommendations

The study indicates that public sector ethics are lacking as manifested by high levels of corruption and public outcry over maladministration of public institutions. Global Integrity (Global Integrity, 2011), reported that the Anti-Corruption Commission is highly inefficient, ineffective and "has very little authority to take steps aimed at stopping corruption in Zimbabwe". Out of 147 corruption cases reviewed by the Commission in 2006, only 4 were completed.

Anti-corruption bodies would require shielding from undue political interference and need to be capacitated. There is need to plug legislative gaps that appear in the impediments as highlighted. The government needs to expeditiously give attention to public officials implicated and involved in corruption so that the public does not assume nothing is being done. Political will to improve ethical conduct will go a long way in improving ethical behaviour. Government sponsored entitlements like huge fuel allocations should be trimmed when the economy is weak. It may be worthwhile to consider establishing clients' service charters in all public sectors. Term limits for political appointments in the public sector may eliminate the entrenchment of unethical behaviour unlike where open-ended tenure of office is allowed to prevail. A facility to offer rewards for providing evidence of corruption and other forms of practices that violate a comprehensive code of ethical conduct may improve ethical conduct. Treasury may require capacitation to monitor effectively and efficiently the flow of money. Government should develop stiffer punitive measures against those convicts of corruption, abuse of public office and other related offences.

Further research is needed to establish solutions sector by sector as no one solution may suit the entire public service.

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