An Investigation into Ethical Leadership in Municipalities: The South African Perspective

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ABSTRACT

Ethical leadership has undoubtedly become a mantra for modern and global leadership styles that should characterize every modern and global leader. However, the current spate of unethical behaviors and corruption scandals across both public and private sector companies necessitates a closer look at the concept of ethical leadership itself with a view to help organizations embrace it. It is for this reason that this study investigated ethical leadership in South African municipalities. It looked at theoretical constructs of ethical leadership and the value systems that go with it. It used qualitative research design and employed semi-structured interviews to elicit information from municipal managers and senior managers in local government across South Africa. The study concluded that it is extremely difficult to practise ethical leadership in municipalities especially because the environment is not conducive and safe for ethical leaders.

Keywords: *Ethics, Ethical Leadership, Exemplary Leadership, Values, Morals, Fraud and Corruption, Ethical Leadership Development, Whistle Blowing.*

INTRODUCTION

The current spate of unethical behavior and corruption in the number of both public and private sector organizations requires highly moral and ethical leaders. Ethical leadership has undoubtedly become a mantra for modern and global leadership styles that should characterize every modern and global leader. It is clear that ethical, modern and global leadership reflects the dimensions of organizational leadership, behavior and culture with the primary role of leading the organization by making ethical decisions to inherently influence the attitudes and interactions of employees (Alshammari, et al. 2015). Ethical leaders become exemplary to other employees and thus influence them to be ethical. In promoting ethical behavior, a leader must become a role model for the employees.

It is always very difficult to pinpoint exactly the reasons behind unethical conduct in organizations. Private sector organizations sometimes indulge on unethical behavior to get profits at any cost however greed and corruption have also creeped in to be some of the reasons behind unethical conduct. Public sector organizations are not an exception to greed and corruption as motivators for unethical behavior however political patronage seems to be a new phenomenon promoting unethical behavior in public organizations. Hegarty & Moccia (2018) maintain that there are a number of reasons organizations behave unethically: shareholder pressure for growth, senior leadership striving to achieve its stated goals, impending financial losses, greed and quite often ignorance.

It is very difficult to believe that some unethical commissions or omissions are as a result of ignorance even though this might be true at a very small scale especially in local government. What is even surprising is the fact that most of unethical conducts happen in organizations that claim to be upholding high moral and ethical values and most of these organizations have very good Codes of Ethics. Unethical organizations are usually characterized by disconnect between senior executives and the organizations' Code of Conduct. If the senior leadership does not subscribe to its own code of ethics, then there is no reason to expect rank and file to consistently apply uniform ethical behaviors (Moccia, 2012).

Municipalities in South Africa have Codes of Conduct for both councilors and officials, but sadly unethical behavior seems to be getting worse in most cases eroding public confidence which then manifests itself in ongoing public protests for service delivery. South African local

government is not short of legislation and mechanisms to deal with unethical behavior. Authors like Gildenhuys (1997) do emphasize that unethical municipal officials and councilors should account for their decisions and activities in public. This then begs a question whether this accountability will ever be real or will remain a pipe dream. It therefore becomes imperative for this study to explore strategies that can promote ethical leadership in South African municipalities.

AIM AND OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The main aim of the study was to investigate ethical leadership in South African municipalities.

The objectives of the study were:

- To examine literature behind ethical leadership.
- To establish the ethical values practised by leadership in municipalities.
- To establish the support mechanisms for ethical leadership in municipalities.
- To find out the barriers to ethical leadership in municipalities.
- To recommend ethical leadership development programmes for municipalities.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Definition of Ethics

Before "ethical leadership" is defined it is important that "ethics" and "leadership" are defined for purposes of providing necessary contextual background to ethical leadership. Rich (2013) defines ethics as a systematic approach to understanding, analyzing and distinguishing matters of right and wrong, good and bad, and admirable and deplorable as they relate to the well-being of and the relationships among sentient beings. Rich (2013) further defines the term "unethical" to describe ethics in its negative form when, for instance, a person's character or behavior is contrary to admirable traits or the code of conduct that has been endorsed by one's society, community or profession. It is important to note that the society, community or profession determine what is ethical. Billington (2003) provide important features regarding the concepts "morals" and "ethics" as follows:

- Probably the most important feature about ethics and morals is that no one can avoid making moral or ethical decisions because the social connection with other necessitates that people must consider moral and ethical actions.
- Other people are always involved with one's moral and ethical decisions. Private morality does not exist.

- Moral decisions matter because every decision affects someone else's life, self-esteem, or happiness level.
- Definite conclusions and resolutions will never be reached in ethical debates.
- In the area of morals and ethics, people cannot exercise moral judgement without being given a choice, in other words, a necessity for making a sound moral judgement is being able to choose an option from among a number of choices.
- People use moral reasoning to make moral judgement or to discover right actions.

What is important about these features is the fact that people are surrounded by other people whose lives can be directly or indirectly affected by the ethical or unethical decisions they take. It is also important to define a "leader" and see how it aligns with "ethics". Winston & Patterson (2006) define a leader as one or more people who select, equip, train and influence one or more followers who have diverse gifts, abilities and skills and focus the followers to the organization's mission and objectives causing the follower to willingly and enthusiastically expend spiritual, emotional effect and physical energy in a concerted and coordinated effort to achieve the organizational mission and objectives. An ethical leader is likely to influence followers to be ethical and also achieve the organizational goals if they are ethical as well.

DEFINITION OF LEADERSHIP

Leadership is defined by Cohen (1990) as the art of influencing others to their maximum performance to accomplish any task, objective or project. This correlates with Rost (1991) who defines leadership as an influence relationship among leaders and collaborators who intend significant changes that reflect their mutual purposes. Key words in these definitions of leadership are "art" and "influence", the latter being more related to the fact that ethical leaders stand a better chance to influence their followers to be ethical.

Jose and Thibodeaux (1999) quoting research, describe a number of specific roles for the ethical leader:

- With regard to visioning, they suggest that leaders set the moral standards for the organisation and focus on the integrity of the common purpose (Hosmer, 1987).
- Leaders explicitly clarify the ethical dimensions of management decisions and formulate and justify ethical principles that govern decision-making (Enderle, 1987).

- Leaders signal their commitment to ethical principles through their influence on corporate culture.
  - They do this by defining organisational ethics and values, and by acting as role models in establishing a positive ethical climate. Employees normally receive their ethical guidance from observing the behaviours of their superiors (O'Boyle & Dawson, 1992).
  - Leaders build culture by what they monitor and control, how they react to critical events and what criteria they use for recruiting, selecting, rewarding and dismissing organisational members (Schein, 1992).
  - The addition to a strong impact on the ethical behaviour of employees, ethical leaders facilitate trust (Brien, 1998).
- The CEO faces the challenge of creating a high degree of congruence between the organisation's guiding beliefs and employees' everyday beliefs (Jose & Thibodeax, 1999).

DEFINITION OF ETHICAL LEADERSHIP

Bubble (2012) defines ethical leadership as the process of influencing employees through values, principles and beliefs that extensively border on the accepted norms in the organisational behaviours. The essential element of leadership in this definition is that of influencing employees through values, principles and beliefs. This notion of influence is also picked up by Brown, Trevino & Harrison (2005) when they define ethical leadership as the demonstration of normatively appropriate conduct through personal actions and interpersonal relationships and the promotion of such conduct to followers through two-way communication, reinforcement and decision-making.

Cumbo (2009) focuses on the leader as the individual in defining ethical leadership by asserting that a leader is considered ethical when inward virtues direct the leader's decision-making process, therefore followers simply become beneficiaries of a leader living a virtuous life. Executives at large organisations define ethical leadership as simply a matter of leaders having good character and the right values or being a person of strong character (Freeman & Stewart, 2006). It may be ideal to look at what characterises both ethical and unethical leaders as depicted by Figure 1 below to understand ethical leadership.

The Ethical Leader	The Unethical Leader
- Is humble - Is concerned for the greater good - Is honest and straight forward - Fulfils commitments - Strives for fairness - Takes responsibility - Allows respect for each individual - Encourages and develops others - Serves others - Shows courage to stand up for what is right	- Is arrogant and self-serving - Excessively promotes self-interest - Practices deception - Breaches agreement - Deals unfairly - Shifts blames to others - Diminishes other's dignity - Neglects follower development - Withholds support - Lacks courage to confront unjust acts

Figure 1. *Ethical Leader and Unethical Leader*

Source: *Zanderer (1992)*

ETHICAL LEADERSHIP (VALUES-BASED LEADERSHIP) THEORY

Figure 2. *Value-Based Leadership*

Source: *Van Wart (2014)*

There is no doubt that ethical leadership is premised as value-based leadership since values are its core foundation. Van Wart (2014) provides six schools of thought or perspectives within which ethical leadership as a concept is anchored.

VIRTUOUS LEADERSHIP (PERSONAL INTEGRITY MODEL)

There is great correlation between ethical leadership and leadership integrity. Van Wart (2014) asserts that the basic meaning of integrity is wholeness and that, in turn is based on notions of consistency with one's own words, thoughts, principles, actions and social setting. When asked about all possible leader characteristics, the various elements of integrity are often the highest frequently ranking more highly than competence itself (Kouzes & Posner, 1993).

Van Wart (2014) discusses the five (5) most common hallmarks of integrity which are honesty, trustworthiness, fairness, prudence and conscientiousness as follows:

Trustworthiness

Trustworthy leaders know what their principles are, and they are able to state them so that everyone knows how they stand. Trustworthy people are consistent with their own principles (Manz, et al. 2008). In the public sector, principles are expected to include dedication to the public service, commitment to the common good, dedication to the law and other civic virtues. Trust has been identified as one of the most frequently examined constructs in organisations (Burke, et al. 2007) and is sometimes used broadly as a synonym for the concept of integrity (Newell, Reeler & Ronaye, 2008).

Fairness

This refers to knowing and following rules and making sure that they apply to all. Fair people take time to listen well to all sides in disputes. Those who are considered very fair are not involved with "self-dealing" or using their positions for personal gain rather than sharing gain more equally (Carnevale, 1995).

Conscientiousness

This refers to concern for doing a good job. Synonyms to conscientiousness are diligence, industriousness, hardworking, reliability, accountability, discipline, resolution and working earnestly and at a higher level and it includes striving for excellence.

People of good integrity are perceived as telling the truth, acting consistently, providing treatment to others that they themselves would like if they were in the same position, acting with discernment and aiming for excellence at all times. Those of exceptional integrity likely exhibit remarkable condor, conscientious follow-through and an unusual astuteness in achieving a balance in meeting the competing interests inherent in the complex situation of life (Kodish, 2006).

AUTHENTIC AND POSITIVE LEADERSHIP

If the virtuous leader emphasizes the ethical traits which promote equality and socially oriented values, then authentic leadership emphasizes the traits that ensure self-awareness and self-improvement, and positive leadership emphasizes traits that reflect openness, transparency and optimism. Authentic leaders are self-aware in terms of their values, cognitions and emotions.

Core values of authentic leaders include trustworthiness, credibility, respect for others, fairness, accountability and personal integrity. They develop positive psychological capital with their followers and that increases authentic interaction and communication between the authentic leader and followers. The authentic leadership construct takes into account the individual's roles beyond the mere passive acceptance of social norms; authentic leaders are responsible for being both self-aware and self-regulating, while translating that understanding into positive emotional behaviors (Phillips & Loy, 2003 and George, 2003). It emphasizes the positive aspects of leadership in terms of leaders taking charge of their emotional health and enhancing the moral awareness and emotional health of others.

MORAL MANAGEMENT LEADERSHIP

Moral management leadership is a term used to describe the leadership function of ensuring that organizational expectations are understood and enforced (Brown & Trevino, 2006). The reason why the term "management" is used here is because it refers to a formal process applied by managers where ethics are developed first and thereafter there is consequential disciplinary process if an unethical conduct is committed. Moral management is highly utilized in public sector organizations in which the delegation of authority to work on the public's behest derives from statutes and articulated through administrative law (Roberts, 2009). Whilst the content of what ethical public leaders are expected to do is stipulated in the relevant legislation, the expectations of leaders to avoid self-serving or inappropriate behaviors are stipulated in the ethics legislation.

This legislation stipulates prohibited behavior such as political interference, conflict of interest, accepting gifts, nepotism, etc.

PROFESSIONALLY GROUNDED LEADERSHIP

According to Rohr (1989) and Sergiovanni (2007) the professionally grounded leadership approach puts ethical decision-making squarely into the orbit of the responsibility of professionals. This therefore means that professionalism can be an instrument to achieve ethics since many professional organizations have Codes of Conduct (Ethics) for their members barring them from unethical conduct. If moral management is rules based, professionally grounded leadership is principles based. If moral management tends to rely on codes of conduct that are technical and stipulated to prevent wrong-doing, professionally grounded leadership tends to rely on codes

of ethics that are aspirational in terms of encouraging right doing and exemplary behavior. The challenge with this approach is that it can only be achieved through professional training which can take months or a year.

SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY LEADERSHIP

Social responsibility models emphasize concern for others, righteousness, concern for the community and concern for the environment. This model emphasizes servant leadership where the leader recognizes that he or she is privileged to lead people. Therefore, it is the improvement in well-being of the people, their empowerment and the concomitant humility of the leader that is the measure of leadership greatness.

This model also relates very well with corporate social responsibility where the same logic of ethics applies to corporations as it does to individuals (Kempster, Jackson, Conroy, 2011). Apart from the foundational base values of providing fair economic services and abiding by legal responsibilities, private sector organizations (and public organizations to some extent) have ethical responsibilities which are those that include voluntary efforts to be environmentally friendly, enhance human rights, be an employer of choice, etc. In the public sector literature, there is a growing body of works on the importance of public service motivation (Alonso and Lewis, 2001). Some professions more than others are fundamentally more open to the social responsibility leadership model, especially in the non-profit and public sector. Municipalities are therefore obliged to incorporate and practise social responsibility leadership because of their close proximity to communities and being at the coalface of service delivery.

TRANSFORMING LEADERSHIP

There is a close relationship between ethical leadership and transformational leadership, in-

fact one cannot be successfully implemented without the other. Transforming leaders are those who understand the need for change emanating from the people, who clarified those needs, and who were able to create wholesome long-term change that would benefit the community. These leaders can sacrifise and transcend the need for personal gain and fame for success with the good of the community. A strength of this perspective is that there is no doubt that change is a major and frequently critical function of leaders, especially executives (Roberts, 1985).

ETHICAL LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

The importance of ethical behavior is now recognized by the private and public sector organizations around the world. It is no longer a question of choice to develop ethics in these organizations but an obligation. Enforcing ethical behavior can however be very challenging, especially because of rampant corruption that has engulfed many countries. Resick, et al. (2011) postulate that the growing desire to embrace integrity formulated the development approach that allowed the establishment and applications of ethical leadership within the foundations of managers discovering their core value and developing a vision that would personify the objectives of the organization.

Role modeling is one modern and informal global ethical leadership development approach which has gained momentum lately. Ethical leadership relies to a large extent on social learning processes. This approach ensures that young leaders have proximate ethical role models at work which then facilitates the development of ethical leadership interventions (Brown, et al, 2005).

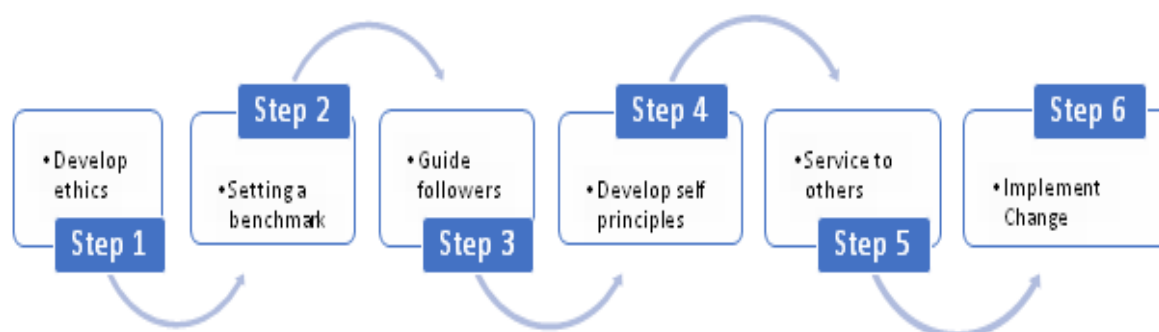Shakeel, et al. (2019) discuss the following steps of the ethical leadership process.

Figure 3. *Steps of the ethical leadership process*
Source: Shakeel, et al. 2019

Individual Ethics

This step involves an individual leader developing his or her own individual self (ethics). The source of adopting an ethical lifestyle could be external and internal drivers as evident from the social learning theory implied in ethical leadership by seminal authors (Brown, et al. 2005). This implies that ethical leadership development starts with self-focus, grows into utmost dedication towards followers and other external factors, and concludes into commitment to initiating change of status quo.

Ethics Benchmark and Feedback

At this stage, the leader willingly opts to have his ethical behaviors analysed by external stakeholders. The inputs that the leader gets from external stakeholders become his or her benchmark for improvement.

Guiding Followers

The leader starts to instill the learned ethical behavior to his or her followers. This dissemination of ethical knowledge is the second point of contact with the external stakeholders and fits well with the role or moral management as described by Brown, et al. (2005).

Inspiring Followers

Professionally grounded leaders assume the responsibility or governing employees towards ethical behavior through their functional roles (exemplary leadership). In this step principles guide a leader's behavior more than rules. This competency can indicate being governed by such guideline that include both aspirational codes and operational assistance (Meine & Dunn, 2019).

Source to Others

This step is related to leadership behavior that is predominantly focused on the self-actualization of followers, and how the leader can help them to achieve their goals. This implies certain servitude or sacrifices from the side of the leader.

Achieving Change

This change can be both internal and outside the organization. It is change of the external organisational culture and change aimed at achieving ethical needs outside the organization. At this stage the leader will develop and implement a plan of action to achieve changes that are considered necessary from an ethics perspective.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study used qualitative research design and used semi-structured interviews as a data collection tool. The use of semi-structured interviews is motivated by Tod (2006) who maintains that semi-structured interviews are more flexible and they allow for unanticipated responses and issues to emerge spontaneously. Interviews are used as a research strategy to gather information about participants' experiences, views and beliefs concerning a specific research question or phenomenon of interest (Lambert & Loiselle, 2007). A sample of 50 municipalities was selected across South Africa and 50 senior managers including Municipal Managers were interviewed on one-on-one basis. Sandelowski (2002) purports that one-to-one interviews are the most commonly used data collection tools in qualitative research.

RESEARCH FINDINGS

Senior managers and municipal managers were interviewed because of their experiences with ethics in municipalities. Interviews were transcribed into seven (7) themes which are:

- Understanding of Ethical Leadership
- Values of Ethical Leadership
- Practising Ethical Values in Municipalities
- Mechanisms to Enable Ethical Values
- Barriers to Ethical Leadership
- Compromises to Ethical Leadership
- Developing Ethical Leadership

Theme 1: Understanding Ethical Leadership

All respondents (100%) showed a very good understanding of ethical leadership. R1 stated *"It is the leader's ability to lead morally by example thus influencing the followers to be ethical at the workplace."* R2 defined it as *"the type of leadership where decisions to lead are based on the ethical beliefs of the leader who is in charge or on the ethical beliefs of the community within which the organisation is located."* R 3 defined it as *"the one that is instilled from the highest level of the organisation through written and verbal statements but most importantly through their behaviours."* R5 defined it as *"the leadership that is directed by respect for ethical beliefs and values and for the dignity and rights of others."* R15 added a professional dimension by defining ethical leadership as *"being able to lead and practise one's professional, personal values and perform one's functions in an ethical manner in every aspect of one's life."* These definitions are consistent with Bubble's (2012) definition where he defines ethical leadership as the process of influencing employees through values, principles and beliefs that extensively

border on the accepted norms in the organisational behaviours.

Theme 2: Values of Ethical Leadership

When asked about values that characterise ethical leadership, respondents cited the following values:

- Honesty
- Integrity
- Accountability
- Responsibility
- Courage
- Selflessness
- Respect
- Serving
- Empathy
- Trust
- Conduct
- Manners
- Attitude
- Fairness
- Justice
- Humility
- Dignity
- Morality
- Transparency
- Commitment
- Truthfulness
- Unbiased
- Ubuntu (humanity)

Theme 3: Practising Ethical Values in Municipalities

When asked whether both political and administrative leadership do practise the above-mentioned values in municipalities, the majority of the respondents (46%) clearly stated that it is "Yes" and "No" in the sense that some values are practised and others are not practised. The remainder of the respondents which is 54% were almost split into half where 27% agreed that their political and administrative leadership do practise the values and 27% disagreed. This then begs the question whether a truly ethical leader can be selective in the values to practise.

Theme 4: Mechanisms to Support Ethical Values

When asked what support mechanisms enable both political and administrative leadership to support ethical values, respondents cited the following mechanisms:

- Oversight Committees
- Municipal Public Accounts Committees (MPACs)
- Ethics Committees
- Audit Committees
- Integrity Management Committees
- Municipal Ombudsman
- Auditor-General
- Codes of Ethics
- Declaration Registers
- Service Charters
- Ethical Leadership Development Programmes

Theme 5: Barriers to Ethical Leadership

When asked about the barriers that stop both political and administrative leadership from practising these values, respondents cited the following:

- Lack of accountability
- Lack of consequence management
- Personal ambitions
- Purging of ethical leaders
- Incompetence
- Culture of corruption
- Victimization

Theme 6: Compromises to Ethical Leadership

When asked what compromises ethical leadership in municipalities, respondents cited the following:

- Greed
- Corruption
- Abuse of power
- Self-enrichment
- Nepotism
- Skills deficiencies
- Lack of experience
- Lack of knowledge
- Lack of transparency
- Lack of accountability
- Political interference
- Political patronage
- Political factionalism
- Incompetence
- Inability to listen

- Irregular appointments

Theme 7: Developing Ethical Leadership

When asked what should be recommended to develop ethical leadership, respondents cited the following:

- Exemplary leadership
- Ethical training
- Enforcement of Codes of Conduct
- Upholding ethical values
- Incentivising ethical conduct
- Defining what is ethical and unethical
- Professionalization of local government
- Encouraging whistleblowing
- Life-style audits
- Education and awareness
- Strengthening oversight structures
- Regulatory environment

DISCUSSION

Respondents had a very good understanding of ethical leadership and did not only provide good definitions but also provided how ethical leadership should be applied. This indicates that Municipal Managers and Senior Managers (who were respondents to this study) actually understand what ethical leadership is, more especially, because it is them who should provide ethical leadership and lead by examples in municipalities.

The values that were cited by respondents are indeed ethical values and this further substantiates the fact that respondents are aware of the correct ethical values. This signals the fact that it will be very difficult for Municipal Managers and Senior Managers to claim that they did not know what is expected of them if there are commissions of unethical conducts. When it comes to practising these values by both political and administrative leadership, it became very clear that they are actually difficult to practise. This is an unfortunate fact in many municipalities where those who are ethical become victims and some of them even lose their lives for standing for what is right. It is also concerning that the understanding by some respondents was that both political and administrative leadership sometimes have to choose situations where they can apply ethical values and choose not to in other challenging situations.

Almost all municipalities do have mechanisms that promote practice of ethical values such as the institutional structures such as Municipal Public Accounts Committees, Audit Committees, Ethics Committees, etc however it is sometimes very difficult for these structures to be objective when dealing with matters of ethics. In many municipalities most of these structures, maybe except for Audit Committees, are compromised by politics. When it comes to barriers to ethics in municipalities, political interference and lack of consequence management were the variables most cited by respondents. What this means is that because some of the unethical conducts are perpetuated and sanctioned by certain politicians, it becomes difficult to discipline those officials because they have this political protection. This then creates a situation where officials would collude with politicians in unethical conduct such as corruption because officials know they will be protected and will not be disciplined.

When it comes to what compromises ethical leadership in municipalities, a common thread was "Nepotism" which refers to the employment of officials who do not have requisite skills, qualifications, experience in senior management positions. What is coming out very clearly is that incompetent and unqualifying officials are appointed deliberately in these senior management positions so that they will be held at ransom to "deliver" and if they do not do that they will be threatened that their contracts will be terminated. In actual fact there are municipal managers and senior managers who have been dismissed from municipalities because they are ethical and refuse to be involved in fraud and corruption.

FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The following are the findings of the study:

- Municipal managers and senior managers do understand what ethical leadership is and what is expected of them as administrative leaders.
- Municipal managers and senior managers do understand the ethical values expected of municipal leadership.
- There is a challenge with regard to practising ethical values in many municipalities.
- Most municipalities do have support mechanisms to deal with unethical conduct but effectiveness of these structures is very low.

The following Are the Recommendations from the Study

- Local government should be professionalised so that all employees should belong to professional bodies and be bound by professional ethics and Codes of Ethics.

- Municipalities must inculcate an ethics culture and the tone must be set from the top.
- Both political and administrative leadership must lead by example when it comes to ethical leadership.
- Municipalities should provide a conducive institutional and regulatory environment to deal with unethical conduct.
- Municipalities must introduce incentives for ethical conduct.
- Municipalities must have ongoing campaigns, communication, education and awareness programmes against unethical conduct such as fraud and corruption.
- All municipalities must provide for and support whistle blowing, for this is one mechanism that has proven to be very effective in reporting fraud and corruption.

CONCLUSION

The main aim of the study was to investigate ethical leadership in South African municipalities. Literature review focused on definitions of ethics; a leader and ethical leadership; virtuous leadership; authentic and positive leadership and moral management leadership. The study used a qualitative research design and interviewed 50 municipal managers and senior managers in randomly selected municipalities across South Africa. These officials were selected on the basis that they have experience of and are expected to lead ethically in these municipalities. Interview questions focused on seven (7) themes which were understanding of ethical leadership; values of ethical leadership; practising ethical values in municipalities; mechanisms to enable ethical values; barriers to ethical leadership; compromises to ethical leadership and developing ethical leadership. The study revealed that it is extremely difficult to practise ethical leadership in municipalities especially because the environment is not conducive and safe for ethical leaders.

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