

Inculcating public leadership for citizen value

Reflecting on Public Administration curricula

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ABSTRACT

Although broadly advocated and entrenched in South African law, the practice of public administration often tends to pay lip service to the principles of public participation and citizen empowerment. It would seem that public managers, who plan and implement service delivery processes do not fully comprehend the local social and meaning-giving contexts in which the public exists. A matter that could be attributed to the training they receive.

The recent Winelands (2010) Conference on *Public Leadership for Added Citizen Value* introduced the principles of *citizen value* and *public leadership* into the discourse of public administration theory and practice in South Africa. This article examines the suitability of existing curricula at selected South African universities to inculcate a people, citizen centred approach in Public Administration teaching. It does so by exploring the curricula of the Bachelor of Administration of selected universities and by drawing on discussions held with selected academics. In addition, the authors draw on their experience in teaching Public Administration as well as research supervision in the discipline.

The article concludes that while academic conferences are vibrant in their discussion of values and notions of public leadership, public governance, public value and public participation, this does not sufficiently reflect in the curriculum of Public Administration – at least not at the undergraduate level.

INTRODUCTION

Academic conferences are invaluable in shaping both the theory and practice of academic disciplines. Not only do conferences provide space for academics and practitioners to present their research, but valuable academic networks are established and contacts built. Conferences have the added potential to fundamentally impact on both the curriculum and the practice of an academic discipline.

So it was with Public Administration and the Minnowbrook I-III Conferences in America as well as the Mt Grace Conferences I-II in South Africa (Theron & Schwella 2000). Cameron and Milne (2009:380-395) argue that while there were important differences, both the Minnowbrook and Mount Grace Conferences have been influential on Public Administration with regard to scholarship, professional education and training in the discipline of Public Administration? They have, for this reason, been referred to as “the watershed conferences which tried to shape Public Administration in times of turbulence” (Cameron & Milne 2009:380). The recent Winelands Conference (2010) added yet another dimension of reflecting about Public Administration when it not only introduced the principle of public leadership and citizen value, but linked the two principles.

In this article the authors reflect on the continuously developing discourse of conceptualising Public Administration theory and practice by examining Public Administration curricula from selected tertiary institutions in South Africa. Examining the curricula allows one to establish the extent, if at all, to which various academic teaching programmes incorporate conference discourse generally, and specifically, the principle of citizen value. The authors advocate that public value needs to be located within the level and space of “publicness” that is; the combination of ideas, issues, people, relationships, practices and sites that are in the public domain. “Publicness” also refers to the space allowed for the public to participate in the design, delivery, implementation, monitoring and evaluation and governance of institutions and services (Newman & Clarke 2009:2-7; Cornwall & Coelho 2007 and Mhone & Edigheji 2003).

Some may rightly ask “*why do the authors continuously debate Public Administration theory and practice?*” This recurring question is asked by academics as they are forced by practical realities and challenges to refocus and adapt to stay “relevant”. The authors interrogate what difference Public Administration make (or can make) through teaching and research to better prepare students that will contribute significantly to policy implementation within South Africa’s current socio-political reality.

With globalisation, public administration is no doubt experiencing “challenging times” the world over. The challenge is particularly significant for

the South African public where, due to fundamental socio-political changes, discourse tends to be preoccupied with narratives of decline in public policy implementation. Newman and Clarke (2009:1) warn of a “new debate” developing in the public sphere. This debate, Newman and Clarke (2009) contend, is concerned with *inter alia* an unsustainable environment, security concerns, food insecurity, global warming, poverty, social exclusion and a lack of authentic public participation. This growing debate calls for public action and clear guidance from both academics and practitioners. In particular, academic leadership, innovation and direction are required if Public Administration hopes to remain relevant as an academic discipline and respected by government, and the public alike. Newman & Clarke (2009) enlighten academics about the “chain of connectivity” between *publicness; the public sphere; public value; the politics of the public* and *public action*. In South Africa, if one assesses the quality of public services, it is not always clear if and how the above connectivity functions – is it connected or dismantled? One thing is clear though and that is, that academics in the discipline are researching, they are debating and they are sharing their thoughts through publications and conferences as the following discussion will reveal.

FROM MINNOWBROOK TO WINELANDS – A BIG LEAP OR A SMALL STEP FOR PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION?

The young and eager academics brought together by Waldo for the first Minnowbrook Conference (1968) focussed on the need for a Public Administration that addresses public interest. Minnowbrook I marked the birth of the “New Public Administration” which was normative in approach and characterised by a move towards normative theory and social concern. It was also characterised by an attempt to break away from the technical prescripts of the POSDCORB (planning, organising, staffing, directing, coordinating, reporting and budgeting) model developed by classical Schools exponents, namely Gulick and Urwick (Hughes 2003:24-31).

Subsequent conferences in the Minnowbrook series were particularly concerned with the importance of productivity and performance management in the public sector (Cameron & Milne 2009:5; Bailey 1989; Guy 1989 and Frederickson 1989) and on how Public Administration, Public Management and Public Service could better respond to current times effectively (Cameron & Milne 2009:380 – 395).

In 1991, following the political changes in South Africa, the New Public Administration Initiative (NPAI) was launched in South Africa (De Beer 2003:478) as an attempt to reenergise, unify and transform Public Administration

and Management into a relevant discipline. Based on this initiative, the Mt Grace Conferences (I&II) were initiated to map out a framework under which Public Administration and Development Management as a discipline and practice could be transformed.

A clear message from the Mt Grace Conferences I & II was that “the theory, teaching and practice of Public Administration was in crisis in that it was too descriptive, reductionist, fragmentary and ignored other dimensions and approaches to public administration” (Cameron & Milne 2009: 386). One of the conference resolutions called for, among others, an explicit establishment of a *developmental focus* as opposed to a control, regulatory and managerialist framework in Public Administration teaching and practice.

Changes in Public Administration and Development Management since Mt Grace I, though seen as superficial by some (see Gasper 2000:22), included the adoption of a development and management oriented curricular as well as the abolition of the divisions between white-oriented and black-oriented Public Administration. Fundamentally the curricula did not change and as Cloete (2000:14) noted, the Public Administration teaching content remained too descriptive and lacking in analytical and explanatory techniques. For this reason, a call was made to change the focus and depth of research in the discipline. The Mt Grace Conference II resolved that research should be relevant, empirically rigorous and critical and that it should be geared towards generating new knowledge rather than rehashing existing knowledge.

Since 1997 the School of Public Management and Planning (currently the School of Public Leadership) at the University of Stellenbosch has presented the Winelands Conferences. These bi-annual conferences increasingly attract national and international participants. In the past, the themes have ranged from networking for sustainable delivery; good governance; outcomes-based governance; ethics, to mention a few conference themes (see Meyer, Theron & Van Rooyen 1995; Burger, Theron & Van Rooyen 1996; Theron, Van Rooyen & Uys 1998; Theron, Van Rooyen & Van Baalen 2000 and Van der Molen, Van Rooyen & Van Wyk 2002 for published conference proceedings).

The 12th Winelands Conference, in the view of the authors, took on a *paradigmatic shift* with and advanced the concepts of public leadership and citizen value as conference themes. Papers were focused on these concepts and subsequent discussions called on the public service to take a leading role as informed by that which the citizen's value. Muller's entitled *Creating public value through collaborative environmental governance* example, showed the benefits that accrue when government finds alternative ways of contributing to public value and adopts new roles to cope with what he calls “the limits of governance”. In his paper, which examined the benefits of collaborative arrangements for resource management, Muller affirms that such arrangements

require processes and consensus-building between stakeholders and knowledge sharing to enable the development of sustainable solutions to new challenges. Muller concludes that such collaborations require a “shift of emphasis from management skills to enablement skills that engage the public and that bring multiple stakeholders together for a common end” (Muller 2010:13).

Nabatchi and Goerdel, in their paper entitled *Reconciling managerialism and Public-centred administration: the role of Lead Administrators in creating public value* offered theory-driven strategies for reconciling managerialism and public-centred administration to better create overall public value through service delivery. While pointing out the importance of efficiency in public administration, they warn that a focus on this alone crowds out important values that are critical to the functioning of government, including a reduction in public participation and an erosion of democratic principles in service delivery processes.

Mubangizi and Theron in their paper entitled *Public leadership in local government for public value – what role for South Africa’s community development workers?*, located the notion of public leadership within the service delivery debate at the local government sphere, and proposed locally based solutions in the pursuance of service excellence for public value. In particular, they point out the role of the newly established Community Development Workers (CDWs) Programme suggesting how these CDWs can promote public value through processes of engagement with the community and by acting as a link between public managers and the communities they serve.

Probably the most poignant paper relating to public leadership and citizen value was the Kafka Brigade Research Programme whose paper, *Public management Theory in Practice*, presented a process approach to tackling bureaucratic dysfunctions through an understanding of public value, public sector organisations and public leadership. The process approach suggested in the paper highlights (among other things) the importance of putting the public at the centre while involving all stakeholders; reflection on all projects undertaken so as to understand cause and effect while maximising learning; and creating a safe environment for public servants to innovate, share new ideas and challenge long held assumptions. In short, the Kafka Brigade Research Programme calls for a greater understanding by public servants of the public and the environment in which the public exists.

What emerges from most of the 12th Winelands Conference papers is the shift away from an inward-looking bureaucracy seeking to manage internal processes efficiently and effectively, to one that is outward-looking, seeking to not only create linkages with the public but to create dialogue and seek to understand what the public, in fact, values. To do this requires public leadership—a notion that flows from a relationship between key concepts that have dominated the realm of both theory and practice in the public sector organisations. Notably,

these are Public administration; Public management; Public governance as discussed below:

THE CONTINUUM OF PRINCIPLES – IMPLICATIONS FOR PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION AND DEVELOPMENT MANAGEMENT CURRICULA

A detailed discussion of the concepts of public administration, public management, public governance and public leadership is beyond the confines of this article. It is suffice to argue that these key concepts reveal a progressive shift towards greater participation of the public in public services and an increasingly flexible bureaucracy in the pursuit of public value. There is no doubt that the nature and quality of the public service by and large depends on the nature and quality of the system of education and specifically the Public Administration curriculum in South African institutions of higher learning. It is in these institutions that the above mentioned key concepts will become real in influencing public action. It is also through these institutions that the discourse in conferences will translate into practical application

Connaughton and Randma (2003) argue that the education system ought to respond to the demands of public administration while at the same time shaping the nature of that administration. A curriculum therefore, should respond to and inform public administration practice both through the content taught and the knowledge generated by research. The concerns of both the Mt Grace Conferences about content of research and teaching of Public Administration in South Africa were thus significant and timely. During that period South Africa was going through fundamental changes to democratise the State by shifting it to one that would not only be socially conscious but also be internationally connected. At the same time, both the discipline of Public Administration, and the practice globally, had undergone changes in response to the New Public Management (NPM) debates. As Newman and Clarke (2009:5) state, “While the dominant managerial logistics associated with the high point of the NPM were based on economics, public services now require therapeutic or psychological skills in order to deliver developmental and behaviour-changing strategies”.

Thus South Africa’s public service required a move to a skill-based or technocratic approach of *doing things right* (efficiency). At the same time, South Africa’s public service requires a move towards a compelling moral requirement for public managers and the public service to *do the right thing* (effectiveness). The time for mere administration and maintenance of the status quo while being oblivious to the public being served and the resource implications for sustaining such a process had come and gone.

Doing the *right thing* in the public service requires that public institutions make a concerted effort to move in a democratic and socially relevant direction and function in a manner that promotes social justice and deliberately removes social inequity. Following public sector reforms of the 70's and beyond, public management came to be viewed as a panacea for achieving efficient, effective and politically popular governments (Lynn 2006:104). These reforms, whose principles were embedded in the New Public Management Paradigm, called for market driven changes to make the bureaucracy entrepreneurial, competitive, customer oriented and result-driven. This, in essence, meant the introduction of private sector ideals in the public sector domain. At the heart of these reforms was a theoretical mix of public choice theory and agency theory (Hughes 2003).

In South Africa, these principles are embedded in The White Paper on Transforming Public Service Delivery, 1997 – referred to as the *Batho Pele Principles*. Fundamental to this White Paper is the notion of *value for money* and *efficiency*. It is no surprise therefore, that curricula to train public servants in South Africa (generally the Bachelor of Public Administration), has been too focused on ensuring that public servants *do things right*. Such a curricula trains students on how to manage resources, keep records and religiously follow the prescripts of POSDCORB. There seems to be less focus on understanding *what the right thing is*, i.e. who it is the public institution is serving? What are the power relations between and within communities being serviced? Or what the real needs of the public are?

Implicit in the *Batho Pele Principles* and in the constitutional principles of Public Administration in South Africa is the zeal to make government programmes more responsive to the public's needs. This can only happen if programmes are designed, not from the point of view of government officials, but from the point of view of the public as recipients of services. The benefit of public participation in the creation of public value is well documented in South Africa's public service delivery systems. Many public structures like parliamentary committees, citizens' forums and street committees as well as IDPs and *izimbizo* (Mubangizi 2010) have been established to facilitate discourse between the public and the government.

Barnes, Newman and Sullivan (2007:2) have shown that the public is becoming increasingly keen on public policy systems by demanding more transparency. They have also shown that, as a result, public service workers are being exposed to new experiences and encounters. This is the case, for example, when public servants have to deal with public service delivery protests and an irate public. In this regard, Barnes *et al.* (2007:3) advise that public servants develop the capacity to change their orientation to what they do and how they do it.

Public managers need to understand the socio-economic context in which they function and the implication of their actions on the needs of the public. While public participation offers transformatory potential, it is critical to realise that institutional practices can constrain the participation processes (and related benefits) by producing a loss in trust by the public (Barnes *et al.* 2007:6). Thus the role that public managers' play as "facilitators" or "enablers" of service delivery at all spheres of government is critical. To this effect, a curriculum of Public Administration should train and develop public managers who are creative, able to ask different questions and able to discover alternative knowledge without getting stuck with organisational maintenance. It should prepare public administrators for the ambiguous, unpredictable consequences of POSDCORB. Such a curriculum would have to be democratic rather than technocratic as differentiated in the discussion below.

Morgan (1984:263) defines a *technocratic* curriculum as one which focuses on precise knowledge of processes, procedures as well as expert decision-making and efficiency. The technocratic view, Morgan adds, assumes that the world represented in the curriculum is rational and standardised and is as such predictable and capable of manipulation to attain goals. Trained under this curriculum, a good public manager shows systematic organisation of tasks, projects and programmes for the successful implementation of public policy.

Conversely, Morgan (1984:263) defines a *democratic* curriculum as that which emphasises localism, public control and accountability. A democratic view in a given curriculum emphasise participation and collective decision-making. It assumes that in the real world public administration is practical, subjective and contingent upon a range of factors. Trained under this curriculum, public managers admit that, rather than systematic organisation of tasks, projects and programmes, there is a diversity of approaches to achieving desired public policy outcomes.

In the training and development of public managers, a *technocratic* curriculum would be one which emphasises public administration processes, project, finance or human resources management. A *democratic* curriculum on the other hand, would place emphasis on development theory, social policy, gender relations, rural development and the like (cf. Henderson, 2001).

From Minnowbrook to the 12th Winelands Conference, a call has repeatedly been made to change the focus of the teaching and practice of Public Administration. What has transpired in South Africa in this regard? What curricula changes have occurred since the Mt Grace deliberations? To what extent are our curricula in South African institutions mindful of the inherent conflict between developing public servants that *do things right* i.e. are *technocratically* efficient and developing public servants that *do the right thing* and are effective, i.e. public servants that are democratic and socially alive to the public they serve?

The authors consider the above questions by examining curricula from selected tertiary institutions and hypothesise that while academic discourse has followed a continuum from public administration to public leadership, fundamentally our curricula remains biased to the technocratic(s) of public administration with little input from the democratic aspect of a curricula.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The objective of this article was to examine curricula of the Bachelor of Administration in selected institutions to obtain an overview of the extent to which concerns of the public are incorporated into the curricula and in this way establish the “*democratic*” content of the curricula. A study of curricula in selected universities was undertaken. A purposive sampling technique was used to select Universities that offer the degree and whose curricula appear on their websites. This was followed by a one-on-one discussion with an academic teaching on the Programme. While the authors appreciate that detail in curricula focus cannot be clearly assessed by interpreting course framework contents alone, it was possible to draw conclusions with regards to the curricula’s focus. In the discussion of findings, the names of the universities are omitted in keeping with ethical considerations.

FINDINGS

University 1

Based in the Faculty of Management and Commerce, the Bachelor of Administration aims to produce a cadre for the developmental State and thus enable students to fulfil the role required of an official in the public service, non-governmental organisations and civil society in general.

The 1st year modules are predominantly in line with the technocratic approach. In addition to Public Administration as a core module, the modules offered at 1st year are; Business Management, Financial Accounting and Statistics. There is a slight focus of the human sciences at this level in that Economics is offered as a mandatory module as is Political Science. The 2nd level is much the same but in addition, students are offered a wider exposure to fields which include Development Economics and Administrative Law. At the 3rd year level, a good balance of subjects is offered with Public Administration modules equally interspersed with Political Science, Administrative Law and Development Economics is maintained. While there is a bulk of technocratic modules in the

1st and 2nd year, there is a gradually shift to modules in the developmental and legal domain by the final year of study.

University 2

The Bachelor of Administration, offered in the Faculty of Economic and Management Sciences, aims to build the capacity of students to participate and contribute to managerial issues of policy making, human resource management, organisational restructuring and ensuring accountability in public institutions.

In the 1st year the programme provides students with a variety of modules outside mainstream Public Administration which, at this level, comprises a mere 20%. In addition to Public Administration, students have compulsory modules in Communication, Academic Literacy, Computer and Information Technology, English and Politics. In subsequent years (2nd and 3rd) the programme grounds students in Public Administration modules but allows electives from a vast number of fields from (largely) the management sciences. In addition, electives from the field of Law are available in addition to Political Science, International Relations and Organisational Psychology. There is no exposure of students to the study of Development Studies or any module in the social sciences. The curriculum is thus more technocratic than democratic.

University 3

At the 1st and 2nd level, the Bachelor of Administration Programme offers students a good balance of courses from the fields of Public Administration, Management, Economics and Development Studies. In the 3rd year, although more Public Administration modules are offered, students still have an option to select elective modules from other faculties and in this way, are able to gain exposure to such fields as Law, Anthropology and Development Studies. While the introduction of modules from Law, Anthropology and Development Studies is noted, there is, by and large a clear leaning towards the technocratic and the managerial aspect of the curriculum than to a democratic one.

University 4

The Bachelors of Administration degree aims to build the capacity of students in management and governance aspects of the public sector. The 1st year allows a mix of modules in Public Administration and South African Politics. In the 2nd year a variety of management modules are offered including Human Resource Management, Financial Management and Organisational Theories. Also on offer

is a module in Urban and Rural Management – a module that is not offered in any of the Universities in the entire study. The 2nd year modules are steeped in developing managerial skills. The picture remains similar at the 3rd year level. An important aspect to note is that students are introduced to knowledge generation through a module on Research Methods in Public Administration, the only of the selected institution that offers a research module.

University 5

In this University the Bachelor of Public Administration can be taken with inter alia Economics, Business Management, Financial Accounting, Industrial Psychology, Political Science, Sociology and Philosophy at 1st year level. At 2nd year level the above combinations are continued. In 3rd year, students specialise in either Economics, Business Management, Financial Accounting, Industrial Psychology, Political Science, Sociology and Philosophy. The introductory 1st year module Orientation to Development, Society and State; the 2nd year module in Development Theory and Paradigms and the 3rd year module Micro-Development Strategies are more Development Studies oriented than Public Administration/Development Management, while Integrated Development, Policy, Management (Theory and practice capstone) is specifically practical and outcomes based. The modules with a development focus have clearer people-centred practical outcomes than the Public Administration modules, which are Public Management and Policy; Government; Development Policy Frameworks; The Public Policy Process and Public Management Strategies. The development oriented modules have a clearer focus on public value issues, and the rest are somewhat technical and “managerialist” in orientation. A focus on social research through the modules is unfortunately absent. A strong binding element through all modules is theory, management, strategy and policy implications.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The current state of the Bachelor of Public Administration discussed above shows that while some universities focus on the technical, other universities focus strongly on the democratic curricula. The two do not have to be mutually exclusive. Indeed, in this article the authors do not suggest that the teaching of public administration should be exclusively democratic curricula steeped in the humanities or social sciences. However, what emerges from the discussion above is a tendency for the curricula to emphasise the *technical* aspect of public policy implementation wherein students are drilled into the knowledge of the process of carrying out government functions and doing so efficiently

and economically. With few exceptions, the curricula shows less focus on the general developmental context, be it social, cultural, political or economic, in which government activities are typically carried out (see Davids 2009:25-26). If curricula more or less emphasises the broader process, it is likely that future public managers will know how well to budget, manage resources, interpret policy but *will not* necessarily have a holistic understanding (see Kotze & Kotze 2003:76-99) of what it is that the public actually value and how best to assist.

With exceptions here and there, none of the curricula of the selected universities incorporate a specific and clear practical component. A practical component of the curricula could take the form of student placements or understudy where students are exposed to the public service work environment under the guidance of the university and as part and parcel of the academic programme. As it is, most students of the Bachelor of Public Administration in the universities studied are not given an opportunity to test the practical aspects of the discipline whilst still in the universities. The disadvantage here is that such students will not be able to functionally relate the theory to practice and will take a long time to relate to their work environment in the public sector.

With the exception of University 4, none of the curricula offer a specific or specialised module which expose students to Public Administration research methods. Students are not explicitly exposed to the basics of knowledge generation or creation. This would also mean that they are given limited exposure to computations of basic statistics or the interpretations of graphs and tables.

Based on an overview of the curricula of the Bachelor of Administration from the selected universities, it can be concluded that, by and large, the curricula leans towards a technical focus, emphasising POSDCORB principles. It assumes that once public managers have the right plans and execute them to the letter, the results will be precise and this will have successful outcomes for government. While the knowledge of these technical aspects is necessary, it is not sufficient in making good government and good governance. For the latter to be achieved, an understanding of the policy context, a perception of democratic and developmental values as well as the effectiveness of elected officials and the public's ideals are fundamentals that will make government work, and work better.

The findings are reminiscent with McLennan (2007) who noted that South Africa's curricula in Public Administration tended to be descriptive and historical in nature, focusing on existing State structures, rather than context, comparative structures and processes of change. McLennan (2007) further noted that there was no clear relation between theory and practice since the curricula, with the exception of technikons (now Universities of Technology),

was devoid of relevant practical components. The observations in this study are also reminiscent of Meserumule and Mashigo (2009) who regret the absence of economic principles in the study of Public Administration and who suggested that it be included as an 'anchor subject' in the instructional offerings of the degree programme.

DO WE OR DON'T WE NEED TO CHANGE AND RE-FOCUS THE CURRICULA ?

Knowledge today is highly situated, rapidly changing and more diverse than ever before (Kalantzis *et al.* 2003:16). The notion of situated knowledge discards the claim that knowledge is authoritarian, universal and impartial (Harraway 1991). Instead, the notion of situated knowledge acknowledges that knowledge is, in fact, partial and linked to the context in which it is created. To this end, Lave and Wenger, 1992 (in Ben-Ari 2005) have advised that gaining situated knowledge occurs when a learner is mindful of activities as they actually take place within a community (Ben Ari 2005:367-368). From this perspective, it would, according to Lo Bianco (2000), be limiting if a curriculum were to be focused around (authoritarian) empirically right and wrong answers or any assessment techniques that measure knowledge within such a narrow context.

Because knowledge is rapidly changing, any facts or truths learnt in schools, no matter how immediately relevant they may be, are likely to be redundant or contested tomorrow. With this in mind, learners will have to possess particular attributes. Apart from being autonomous and self-directed learners, Kalantzis *et al.* (2003:17) suggest that good learners in the new economy will have to be broadly knowledgeable, and able to engage with the different interpretive frameworks and contexts of specific information (Kalantzis *et al.* 2003:17). So it should be in the training of Public Administration students to take on the roles of public servants and managers. The Public Administration curricula should ensure that lecture room information is applicable to the circumstances within which a learner is expected to function once they have left the university. They should be able to think broadly and comprehend the interrelatedness of the managerial and the social, the technical and democratic. Only then will public managers be able to withstand the onslaught of criticism they are faced with. For as Newman and Clarke (2009:7) remind us, "The state of public services and their proposed futures appear at the centre of current public and political debates. This proliferation of projects, innovations and contestations around publics and public services makes us wary of announcements of the death or decline of the public services. Publicness remains a site of significance: the focus of material and symbolic investments". In the light of the above it becomes

clear that the global challenges referred to by Newman and Clarke (2009:1) in the first section of this article and the national implications thereof, require a much more socially focussed, ethically conscious public service, some of these national and global challenges are highlighted below:

- South Africa has become more conscious of the international image relations and obligations. This is evident through the numerous peace keeping missions in conflict areas on the continent as well as the international relations that are created and nurtured in the high commissions and embassies in far flung parts of the globe.
- A socially conscious and questioning public (due to public participation rhetoric and disillusionment and social exclusion) makes demands (sometimes violently) on the public service through demonstrations and protests as is currently the case in South Africa.
- The growing poverty levels and unsustainable livelihoods sometimes linked to poor environmental management whose cause and effect, may impact even beyond the national borders of the country.
- The ever looming threat of terrorism and cross border crime to which all countries are vulnerable but which are of particular significance for South Africa—a regional economic giant and numerous entry points.

RECOMMENDATIONS FLOWING FROM THE STUDY

The authors acknowledge that it is impossible to have one common curricula of Public Administration for the country and variations will no doubt abide. However, it is possible that, even in the diverse curricula presented above, certain principles, as recommended below, do indeed prevail;

- Greater input from the humanities in Public Administration teaching programmes calling for an inter-disciplinary approach which enables inputs that inculcate 'people skills' which are currently lacking in the curricula.
- Internship programmes for students with government, semi-state agencies and NGO's as well as the introduction of a practical and community based course content in the Bachelor of Administration Programme.
- Incorporation of social research methodology into the curriculum, ideally presented by experts from Sociology. It would be useful to have service modules in Humanities being on offer to Public Administration students.
- Much more formal co-ordination with provincial and national government with regards to needs and requirements of future university trained employees, mutual research programmes, funding and bursary needs.
- Greater input from public administration practitioners in Public Administration curricula at conferences and workshops.

- Greater input from Public Administration academics with regard to government research, panel discussions, committees and public hearings.

CONCLUSION

Against the backdrop of pivotal conferences on Public Administration and noting the evolution of key concepts in the practice and discipline, this article discussed the never-ending search in Public Administration for efficiency, effectiveness and relevance. In particular, it has, through a scan of Public Administration curricula of selected universities, attempted to examine how sufficiently prepared public managers are in responding to (unpredictable) situations in public administration practice. The discussion concludes that while academic conferences are vibrant in their discussion of innovative processes in Public Administration, and while discourse at such conferences is mindful of, and values notions of public leadership, public governance, public value and public participation, this does not sufficiently reflect in the curriculum of Public Administration – at least not at the undergraduate level. The article outlines the relevance of a democratic curriculum citing compelling national and global challenges. The discussion wraps up with suggestions on how this can be done. Among other things, the article suggests a multi-disciplinary approach to the teaching of Public Administration and the incorporation of a social research and a practical component into the curriculum.

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