

**MANAGEMENT OF HIGHER EDUCATION  
INSTITUTIONS**

**THE ROLE OF ETHICS IN SERVICE EXCELLENCE: A  
MANAGEMENT CHALLENGE FOR CURRENT AND  
FUTURE LEADERS IN THE 21<sup>ST</sup> CENTURY**

**BY**

**PROF GORDON N ZIDE  
VICE-CHANCELLOR & PRINCIPAL  
VAAL UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY**

**CONFERENCE OF ASSOCIATION OF ACADEMIC  
ADMINISTRATORS**

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## **ABSTRACT**

### **“The Role of Ethics in Excellence in Governance”**

*For a long time now but certainly since the dawn of our democracy, there has been a perception from certain sectors of our society that “Governance” – be it in the Public or Private Sector has no direct relationship with ethics as the two processes are viewed as not belonging to the same fold. The role of Ethics in Excellence in Governance is really not about lawlessness, chaos, ungovernability, corruption, poor service-delivery, flouting of procedures, promotion of unethical behavior, poor performance, un-accountability, finger-pointing, sloppiness and indecisiveness.*

*The role of ethics in the service of Excellence is really about upholding the principles of fairness, social justice, anti-corruption, accountability, transparency, decisiveness, and honesty. In earnest, it is about standing upright in an upside down environment.*

*This paper on “The Role of Ethics in Excellence in Governance: A Management Challenge for the Current and Future leaders in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century” will attempt to prove that there is a profound relationship between “Ethics” and “Excellence” in Governance.*

*Within the context of “Excellence in Governance”, an attempt will be made in highlighting the profound as well as the significant role that the current and future leaders can play in enhancing “Excellence in Governance” through the use of Technology in the advancement of knowledge Management, Performance and Human Capital Management, Higher Education Transformation, Risk Management, Ethics and Values of Management as the fundamental pillars of Excellence in Governance.*

*The centrality of the topic “ The Role of Ethics in Excellence in Governance: A management Challenge for the Current and Future Leaders” is well articulated and summarized in the ANC’s Election Manifesto “Working Together, we can do more”, the Thuma Mina Campaign, and even Barack Obama caught the electorate of the United States of America by storm with his now famous electioneering campaign when he said:*

**“Yes, We Can”**

## **1. INTRODUCTION**

*It will not be out of context to argue in this presentation that “The Role of Ethics in Excellence in Governance” is about “working together” for positive organizational results as well as putting our focus on the common achievable organizational goals and targets and say “Yes We Can” and to this end an argument can be made to the fact that no self-respecting member of any Institution of Higher Learning and more so, members of the Association of the Academic Administrators, can be seen to be promoting unethical business transactions, promoting sloppiness in their area of work, promoting strife and dissension, being perfidious, sowing seeds of discord, etc, and yet they call themselves honest, loyal, disciplined and dedicated members of the Higher Education Sector. The Role of Ethics in Excellence in Governance will therefore attempt to posit some challenges for the Higher Education Leaders to consider as they continue to navigate their way through the maze of managerialism and professionalism.*

*The role of ethics in Governance and Leadership is more relevant now than it ever was before, as it pricks one’s conscience about the promotion of sound behavioral values and adherence to professional and business activities which shape and inform the moral fibre of the profession to which we*

*belong either as a collective or as individuals.*

*It will not out be of context therefore to argue in this paper that the “Role of Ethics in the Service Excellence and indeed even in Corporate Governance” is not about working in silos, but it is more about taking collective direction in the pursuance of Effective Control and Legitimacy. It is about “working together” for the positive achievement of organizational goals and targets and in fact echo President Barrack Obama’s famous electioneering campaign credo when he said “Yes We Can!”.*

*To this end, an argument could be advanced that no self-respecting member of any institution could be seen to be promoting unethical business transactions, promoting sloppiness in his or her area of work, promoting strife and dissension, being perfidious, sowing seeds of discord, surrounding himself or herself with a group of “Yes Men/Women” and even promoting and/or practising nepotism and yet he or she calls himself or herself an honest, loyal, disciplined and dedicated member of an Institutional leadership. The Role of Ethics in Service Excellence and Corporate Governance will therefore attempt to posit some challenges for the current and future Leaders of our Institutions as they continue to navigate their way through the*

*Corporate Corridors of power and authority, and associated with managerialism and professionalism.*

*In the South African context, the role of Ethics was sharply embraced by the Black Consciousness Philosophy as promoted by the Honorary President of the Black Consciousness Movement, the late Steve Biko who argued:*

*“To be Black is not a matter of one’s pigmentation – it is however, a state of the mind”, what this means is that to define yourself as Black, is an affirmation that the man-made managerial obstacles created by the apartheid or the colonial regime to exclude from the Economic Wealth of the Country and the Corporate Decision-Making Bodies is a social injustice that needs to be purged from the South African Political as well as Economic Landscape. The Higher Education should not fail the Continent from these noble principles of this all embracing and inclusive Body of the African Intelligentsia of our people – new and Old.*

*In ethics, there is a rich tapestry of well-founded knowledge-base which dictates how business enterprises should be run and conducted, devoid of corruption, dishonesty and fraud. In this regard, Service Excellence as a bedrock of Ethics and sound values can serve society better if the professions to which we belong are healthy and strong and are as such*

*governed by sound codes of conduct. There can therefore be no doubt that there is an inherent cohesion and synergy between ethics, governance and service excellence.*

*This presentation will therefore be a contribution to the ongoing debate about ethics, morality, managerialism, professionalism as well as sound moral compass towards building an ethical and values driven ethos among Africans in the Continent to maintain moral standards among themselves but equally helping to reduce crimes like rape, murder, theft, robbery, fraud and bribery which are among the major contributors to moral decay (Sowetan, 22 February 2013:7)*

*Key words used in this study:*

- *Excellence,*
- *Ethics,*
- *Governance,*
- *Service, and*
- *Morality*

## **2. THE GENESIS OF THE PRESENTATION**

The genesis of this presentation will attempt to address the following:

### **“Ethics of Managerialism in the Workplace”**

Against the background of this theme, the following critical questions shall be addressed:

- What is Service Excellence
- What is excellence in Governance?
- How do we know we are achieving excellence?
- Is Excellence in Governance related to Ethics in Governance?
- What lessons can the current and future leaders of the 21<sup>st</sup> century learn from this paper?

The crux of my presentation will attempt to respond to these questions.

It has to be noted therefore that this presentation will be anchored on the following key concepts as the basis of the journey we are about to embark upon:

- What is excellence?
- What is governance?
- What is ethics and morality?

- What is Service?
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### **3. DEFINITION OF KEY CONCEPTS**

For the purposes of understanding the centrality of my presentation it will be important to give a conceptual understanding of the three (3) concepts which are the pillars of this presentation.

#### **3.1 What do we understand by Excellence?**

A dictionary explanation of the word “excel”, from which the noun “excellence” comes states:

“Be better than others at doing something”

If we were to take this explanation further, excellence therefore means:

- Doing and/or surpassing your very best
- Going beyond the call of duty for achieving positive results
- Excellence lies in you and not with and/or others – Why quote excellence in others when in fact you, yourself have the potential to excel?
- Look no further but at your own self. The Organisation cannot succeed if you are not delivering!

- The real race of excellence is the one which you run against yourself (Hickman and Silva, 1986:23).
- Excellence knows no bounds, it is about remaining focused and aiming high for reaching and/or surpassing your targets.

### 3.2 What do we then understand by Governance?

A Handbook for Public Sector Bodies on “Excellence in Governance (2005:12), gives a succinct definition of Governance as follows:

***“Governance has been defined as the exercise of authority, direction and control on behalf of a public or private organization (Le Clere at.al. 1996). Management is the act, art or manner of controlling or conducting affairs (CCAF, 1996). Governance is framed by the purpose for which an organization was created with activities of the highest level including planning, goal and monitoring progress towards governance objectives”.***

The noun governance stems from the verb govern, which means to” ..... be in charge of the public affairs of a country or an organization”.

Excellence in Governance therefore literally means “promoting good governance”.

To reinforce our understanding of Governance, the following explanation will further help to clarify and to reinforce the point:

***“Good governance is not just about compliance, but even more importantly, about performance. Good governance practices ensure that the entity delivers on its objectives, the strategy and quality of strategy implementation throughout the entity. This too, requires performance policies, procedures and reporting processes,”*** (Linda de Beer, 2013: p17; Corporate Governance in the Public Sector in IODSA Directorship, April/May/June 2012, Published by Richard Lendrum, Edited by Chris Gibbans, Future Publishing (Pty) LTD, Rivonia).

Furthermore, the King IV Report (2016:20) defines Corporate Governance as follows:

***“Corporate Governance, for the purposes of King IV, is defined as the exercise of ethical and effective leadership by the governing body towards the achievement of the following governance outcomes:***

- ***Ethical Culture***
- ***Good Performance***
- ***Effective Control***
- ***Legitimacy***

***Ethical and effective leadership should complement and reinforce each other.***

<p><b><u>Ethical Leadership</u> is exemplified by integrity, competency, responsibility, fairness, and transparency. It involves the anticipation and prevention or otherwise amelioration of the negative consequences of the organisation's activities and outputs on the economy, society and environment and the capitals that it uses and affects.</b></p>	<p><b><u>Effective Leadership</u> is results-driven. It is about achieving strategic objectives and positive outcomes. Effective leadership includes, but goes beyond an internal focus on effective and efficient execution.</b></p>
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### 3.3 What do we understand by Ethics?

Ethics, by and large is about standing for truth, justice and honesty in any business transaction as well as adhering to the Corporate principles and procedures governing and regulating the operations of a Business Enterprise. No enterprise can therefore develop a long-term commitment based on dishonesty, greed, self-aggrandizement and manipulation. Ethics is therefore characterized by responsibility, accountability, fairness and transparency and all of these principles are underpinned by adherence to the moral values of humaneness (ubuntu), and the soul of the institution which is about discerning between right and wrong, and between good and evil. Indeed, it is about standing upright in an upside down environment.

## **4. LINKING SERVICE EXCELLENCE TO GOOD GOVERNANCE**

The Handbook for Public Bodies on Excellence in Governance (2005:21), further highlights the Model of Governance as follows:

***“Good Governance is a process whereby people work together in a specified relationship to enable effective decision-making. It is shaped by the purpose for which the organization was created and is therefore primarily concerned with the activities of the highest level including planning, goal and objective setting, policy development and monitoring progress towards desired results”***

In support of the statement made above, Cynthia Schoeman (2012:3) in an article on “Ethical Leadership in Public Sector” published in IOD Directorship, says: ***“Good leadership is often interpreted as effective leadership, for example, leaders who achieve the organization’s goals. Good leadership should however, also imply moral leadership – leadership which upholds sound ethics. Sound values, such as honesty, integrity, fairness, respect, responsibility and accountability, and that he/she lives by those values for the betterment of those over whom he/she has influenced.”***

Cynthia Schoeman, goes on to reinforce the above statement by saying that an ethical leader would even go as far as taking responsibility for the actions of his/her followers. He/she knows that the ‘buck stops with him/her.’

This is a profound statement by Cynthia and if all institutions and/or organizations, whether public and/or private could live in accordance with the principles and values she is propagating, then “things” in our country and/or in the Continent would not “....Fall Apart as Winds of Change are Blowing All Over!” Our institutions and our continent would be free of corruption, fraud and bribery and would, ethically speaking be an embodiment of morality, ethics and values-driven citizenry.

The Handbook for Public Sector Bodies on Excellence Governance has further identified the following four (4) pillars as the basis of Service Excellence:

- Authority : Legal authority to conduct the organization’s affairs is vested in the governing body. The governing body has authority over the organization and are trustees of the organization’s mandate as well as its resources
- Leadership : Governance fulfills a leadership function in society. As leaders, governing bodies are expected to reflect the value system and priorities of the Government within their context.

Through the governing body, individuals accept the challenge to develop positive relationships, to ensure respect between parties and to build a sense of belonging in the group. Leadership is about the relationship between the governing body members and those who bestowed the governance role.

- **Responsibility** : Having a fiduciary responsibility, governing bodies are expected to manage the resources of the organization effectively and efficiently to accomplish the mandate conferred by the Government. Governing Body members are expected to be reliable and allow appropriate factors and consideration to affect their judgement, including consideration of the effect of their choices on others. These are also expected to devote their personal time and energy to ensure that governance is appropriate and adequate.
- **Accountability** :Governing Bodies are ultimately accountable for the actions of their organizations.

Accountability is the ownership of responsibilities combined with the obligation to report on the discharge of conferred responsibilities. It requires that governing bodies understand who is responsible for what outputs, outcomes – are achieved and what information needs to be shared to ensure appropriate decision making.

It is very interesting to note that there is an epistemological relationship between what the above authors said about Excellence in Governance and what the KPMG Report on Empowering Good Governance Outcomes says about Corporate Governance, as it states:

<p style="text-align: center;"><u><i>Ethical Culture</i></u> <i>Establishment of an ethical culture within the organization, so that interactions with stakeholders are undertaken in an ethical manner</i></p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><u><i>Good Performance</i></u> <i>Well governed organizations should be run for the purpose of and in a manner that is intent on delivering value and they should report or disclose results to stakeholders</i></p>
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<p style="text-align: center;"><u><i>Effective Control</i></u></p> <p><i>Well governed organizations have appropriate governance structures and processes in place to ensure that the organization is effectively controlled.</i></p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><u><i>Legitimacy</i></u></p> <p><i>Well governed organizations attempt to balance the legitimate expectations of its stakeholder-inclusive approach to governance. This builds trust, legitimacy and a good reputation.</i></p>

Good governance therefore requires the application of foresight, knowledge, understanding, judgement and trust.

Good governance assumes impartiality, integrity and objectivity, welcomes accountability, accepts transparency and openness, and attempts to maximize value for money. Good governance is therefore the basis of excellence in governance.

The single most important form of discipline for sustained results is fanatical adherence to the principles of Corporate Governance as highlighted in the King III Report, (2009: 9-10), viz

- “1. Good Governance is essentially about effective leadership. Leaders should rise to the challenges of modern governance.

Such leadership is characterized by the ethical values of responsibility, accountability, fairness and transparency and based on moral concept of Ubuntu. Responsible leaders direct company strategies and operations with a view to achieving sustainable economic, social and environmental performance.

2. Sustainability is the primary moral and economic imperative of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. It is one of the most important sources of both opportunities and risks for businesses. Nature, society and business are interconnected in complex ways that should be understood by decision-makers. Most importantly, current incremental changes towards sustainability are not sufficient – we need a fundamental shift in the way companies and directors act and organize themselves;
3. The concept of corporate citizenship which flows from the fact that the company is a person and should operate in a sustainable manner. sustainability considerations are rooted in the South African Constitution which is the basic social contract that South Africans have entered into. The Constitution imposes responsibilities upon individual and juristic persons for the realization of the most fundamental rights. ”

it is through the embodiment and embracing of the above principles, that excellence in governance can be promoted. It is therefore crucial for individuals and organizations to live up to these expectations and standards and this is a challenge that the Higher Education in its programmes, strategies and tactics of developing and nurturing future leaders should consider.

Whilst King III Report (2009) puts emphasis on the above principles, King IV Report (2016) however, has gone further by putting emphasis on the following factors as playing a key strategic role in operationalization of the Corporate Governance processes as shown herebelow:

King III Report	King IV Report
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Effective Leadership</li> <li>• Sustainability</li> <li>• Social Justice</li> <li>• Transparency</li> <li>• Accountability</li> <li>• Corporate Citizenship</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ethical Culture</li> <li>• Effective Control</li> <li>• Good Performance</li> <li>• Legitimacy</li> </ul>
	The above do not necessarily mean that all variables of

	<p>effective leadership are excluded. In fact King IV goes on to mention that Ethical Leadership is exemplified by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Integrity</li> <li>- Competence</li> <li>- Responsibility</li> <li>- Accountability</li> <li>- Fairness and</li> <li>- Transparency</li> </ul>
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## **5. THE ROLE OF ETHICS IN EXCELLENCE IN GOVERNANCE**

Until recently, excellence in governance was not seen to be related to ethics, i.e. business ethics was seen as a totally separate entity to governance and yet the two (ethics and governance) cannot be divorced from each other if we are to promote excellence in governance. It has to be noted that ethics is a fixture on management development programmes as well as an aspect of growing importance for managers who are sensitive to excellence.

The Role of Ethics in Governance can therefore not be over-emphasized. At the heart/centre of excellence in governance lies ethical leadership.

Ethical Leadership is the one better described by Martin Luther King Jr (1992:26), when he says:

***“A time like this demands strong minds, great hearts, true faith and ready hands, Leaders, who the lust of office does not kill; Leaders, who possess opinions and a will; Leaders, who can stand before a demagogue and damn his treacherous flatteries without winking; Tall leaders sun crowned, who live above the fog in public duty and private thinking.”***

The kind of ethical leadership described by Martin Luther King Jr, is the one which will be able to engender a spirit of excellence in organizations. It goes without saying therefore that even Tertiary Institutions which are led by such hegemony would sincerely be promoting excellence in governance as they would be living above “the fog in public duty and private thinking”. No clandestine and/or surreptitious deals can be signed at the expense of the operations of a public entity.

While ethics in general deals with good or right in human interactions (and interaction between human and animals and the environment), business ethics (or ethics in governance

focuses on what is good and right in the governance operations of a business entity.

It is therefore crucial to draw a close relationship between ethics and excellence in governance. The success of any business or organization lies in its ethical conduct/ethical business transactions. It goes without saying that “unethical behavior in organizations is often attributed to “bad apples”. “They are seen as morally corrupt and it is often suggested that the solution to unethical behavior in business lies in removing the bad apples.” (Rossouw et.al; 2007, p9).

No institution can afford to have bad apples in its midst and if there are any, they should be removed immediately as their continued existence can be cancerous and therefore harm the public image of the University. Of course, their removal should be subject to the due legal processes as contemplated in the Labour Relations Act, No 66 of 1995, as amended. It is because of these considerations that the subject of spirituality and the need for moral and ethical standards in the workplace cannot be overemphasized, (Tichy, NM and McGill, AR (Ed), 2003:55).

The role of ethics in governance takes many forms and shapes but the following as propounded by Rossouw et al (2007: iii) quickly come to mind:

- Excellence in governance must always be governed by the highest ethical standards so that it does not lead to exploitation and abuse;
- In order to foster high ethical standards, for purposes of proper governance, codes of conduct for employees should be in place and that there should be measures to enforce these.
- Applied ethics should form part of the broader philosophy of governance structures of an organization so as to enhance ethical grounding for employees work and their personal lives. Doing so would be a welcome recognition of the fact that our work has to be executed on the basis of professionalism and excellence.

Any behavior, conduct or action of a particular colleague and/or employee or practitioner which threatens the effectiveness as well as the efficiency of an organization may then harm the good reputation of the profession and also that of the organization. Practitioners should always act in a manner that is consistent with the moral mindset of a person with integrity and objectivity. Behavior, even with a harmless intent that may threaten the public image of an organization and/or that of a practitioner or the profession should be avoided.

Professional behavior includes conduct of an honest and considerate nature towards others; a level-headed, moral mind-set towards others will benefit more wide-ranging understanding of the practical ethical issues that face us as citizens and professionals.

Indeed the manner in which effective governance operates would be to ground ethical knowledge and wisdom in the real world of business.

The role of ethics in excellence and in governance is well captured in an article by Professor Solly Benator which appeared in the Cape Times on 14 February 2006, in which he wrote:

***“Professionals play, an important role in society. Indeed, society could not function effectively without trustworthy professionals. This raises questions about the ethics of how institutions operate and exert influence on those who work within them. In the face of the powerful forces eroding professionalism, there is a great need to promote core professional values”***

The above statement underscores the essence of ethics in governance as our work has to be executed on the basis of professionalism and excellence.

In the pursuit of excellence in governance clients, third parties, employees, partners, practitioners of a particular profession (e.g. Human Resources, Accountants, Registration and Admissions Officers, Examinations Officers, Registrars etc), employers and society as a whole have to observe and live by professional standards dictated thereto by their professions. Excellence cannot be achieved and realized, if we continue to act and/or behave in an unethical manner which may compromise the professions we belong to. This statement, no doubt applies to you too, as members of the Association of Academic Administrators.

Ethics and Service Excellence therefore require the application of foresight, knowledge, understanding, judgement and trust; all of these principles are at the heart of ethics in a civilized society. It is unethical for instance for nurses at the hospitals to leave patients unattended; it is unethical for teachers and educators to leave learners and students months on end without tuition; it is unethical for Civil Servants to use Departmental procurement processes and systems to enrich themselves; it is unethical for Civil Servants to take funds earmarked for social security grants and use them fraudulently for their own good;

it is unethical for members of the Police Services and Traffic Officers to ask for bribery from members of the civil society as part of their self-enrichment scheme and therefore breaking the very laws of the country they are supposed to uphold; it is unethical for members of the Police Services to shoot and kill defenseless and unarmed people; it is unethical for Senior Officials of Government and indeed of members of Civil Society to acknowledge that they know of people who break the law but do not report them and choose to keep quiet; it is unethical as it is an anathema to the Police Services especially for those in our country, South Africa, to be seen and witnessed by the entire international community, pulling and dragging a 'hand-cuffed', 'defenseless', 'would-be culprit' and a Mozambican citizen behind a fast-moving police van for 500 meters; it is unethical for a Law Enforcement Officer to be the one who breaks the laws and thus becomes a danger and a threat to the very society he is supposed to protect; it is unethical for members of Civil Society NOT to report self-enrichment schemes/activities related thereto, to the powers that be just because they themselves benefit; it is unethical for members of the academic staff at Universities not to mark students' scripts and it is unethical for anyone without valid cause and reason to miss deadlines and adopt lackadaisical attitude in anything that one does; and it is equally unethical to preach one thing and do the opposite;

it is unethical for Ministers of Religion (Members of the clergy) to preach forgiveness, truth, peace and reconciliation when on the pulpit and when they descend it, they fuel and promote violence, conflict and dissension within their circuits and/or societies; it is also unethical for members of Laity to persecute Ministers of Religion in their circuits and societies and making life extremely difficult and painful for them and their families, and in the process failing to follow the prescribed procedures of lodging their complaints with the appropriate structures of the church; it is unethical to disregard Institutional Policies, Procedures and Guidelines and thus running Institutions of Higher Learning like 'Spaza-Shop' (a term used in South Africa to refer to those shops which are mushrooming and are around the corner, and some of which also do not have trading licenses), and I bet even such 'Spaza-Shops' do at least have some elementary and rudimentary guidelines and rules which have to be observed. It is also unethical to fraudulently effect changes/alterations on a document knowing full-well that doing so is wrong and constitutes a criminal offence; it is unethical to manipulate procurement processes of an organization in order to benefit those close to you and by extension to benefit yourself by getting "kickbacks"; it is unethical for everyone to use his/her position of authority and influence in an organization to syphone funds of

the institution to enrich himself or herself at the expense of the trust bestowed on him/her by the said institution.

It is furthermore unethical for State Officials to be seen to be promoting and doing fraud and corruption and looting the resources of the state at the expense of the people they are supposed to lead. It is also unethical for University Officials to ask for sexual favours from either male or female students in order to give “high” marks and scores knowing that they do not deserve such marks and/or scores and therefore inadvertently destroying the future of these kids; it is unethical for officials or managers to have “sexual” relations with their PAs or Secretaries as such relations negatively affect the flow of work and levels of productivity. Above all, it is unethical to do anything which one’s conscience says: “Do not do it as you know it is wrong!” It is unethical for any Leader and/or Manager to use institutional resources to score points and deal ruthlessly with those who raise opposing views to his/hers. It is unethical and unpatriotic for any member of Civil Society to utter statements which have a potential of fueling racial conflict, tension and polarization among different racial groups.

Based on the above expressed sentiments, it can then be stated without any measure of doubt that good governance, service excellence and ethics assume impartiality,

integrity and objectivity and welcomes accountability, accepts transparency and openness, and attempts to maximise value for money. Ethics is therefore the basis of service excellence in governance as well as in leadership.

The single most important form of discipline for sustained results is fanatical adherence to the sound principles of Corporate Governance as postulated in the King III Report, (2009: 9-10), to wit:

- “1. Good Governance and Service Excellence are essentially about providing effective leadership. Leaders should rise to the challenges of modern governance. Such leadership is characterized by the ethical values of responsibility, accountability, fairness and transparency and based on moral duties that find expression in the concept of Ubuntu. Responsible leaders direct company strategies and operations with a view to achieving sustainable economic, social and environmental performance;
2. Sustainability is the primary moral and economic imperative of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. It is one of the most important sources of both opportunities and risks for businesses. Nature, society and business are interconnected in complex ways that should be understood by decision-makers.

Most importantly, current incremental changes towards sustainability are not sufficient – we need a fundamental shift in the way companies and directors act and organize themselves;

3. The concept of corporate citizenship flows from the fact that the company is a person and should operate in a sustainable manner. Sustainability considerations are rooted in the South African Constitution which is the basic social contract that South Africans have entered into with the broader South African population. The Constitution imposes responsibility upon individuals and juristic persons for the realization of the most fundamental rights”.

There is a view held by some colleagues in the Higher Education Sector that Tertiary Institutions are not Business and that they cannot be run as such. Whilst I do indeed understand the point they are coming from, I do however, believe that if Universities were not run like business entities, we should not be talking the languages of University being juristic person, (i.e it can sue and/or can also be sued), talking the language of sustainability, surpluses, reserves, balance-sheet, income statement, audited financial statements and annual reports, etc.

What arguments can we therefore use in supporting the view that Universities are not Business Enterprises when in fact we train and produce Accountants, Auditors and Business people – Men and Women of substance and who make a significant contribution to both the market economy and the knowledge capital of our country? By not stating these truths are we not hiding the economic realities of the financial stability and sustainability of an Institution? Yes, it could be argued that some of our prominent Business people may not have been to university, but the fact of the matter is that they do have Accountants, Book-keepers and Auditors who look after their business interest. In fact in their business journey, they have in one way or the other studied basic business principles in order to provide and promote Service Excellence to their clientele. Likewise, universities, in their pursuit of professional pedagogy, are in the “Business” of “selling” “education” and “knowledge” as “commodities” which keep them in their “Core business” of Teaching, Learning, Research, Innovation, Community Engagement and Student Support” – these being the Pillars of the Academic Project – which make a University what it is all about!

It is through the embodiment and embracing of the above principles, that Service Excellence and Ethical Leadership in Higher Education can be promoted.

It is therefore critical and crucial for individuals and Tertiary Institutions in particular, to live up to these expectations, standards and obligations. This is a challenge that the Higher Education Institutions in their programmes, strategies and pedagogy of developing and nurturing future leaders and leaders in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century should consider.

## **6. KEY PRINCIPLES OF KING III REPORT AS PILLARS OF EXCELLENCE IN GOVERNANCE**

The Price Water House Coopers publication on Human Resources Services: Non-Executive Directors – Practices and Fees Report – South Africa 2009 (p8), inter alia, states that “the core philosophy of King III revolves around leadership, sustainability and corporate citizenship. The Report goes on to mention that the following Key Principles are prominent in the pursuance of excellence in governance:

- Good governance is essentially about effective leadership. Leaders need to define strategy, provide direction and establish ethics and values that will influence and guide practices and behavior with regard to sustainable performance.
- Sustainability is now the primary moral and economic imperative and it is one of the most important sources of both opportunities and risks for business.

Nature, society and businesses are interconnected in complex ways that need to be understood by decision makers. Incremental changes towards sustainability are not sufficient – we need a fundamental shift in the way companies and directors act and organize themselves;

- Innovation, fairness and collaboration are key aspects of any transition to sustainability – innovation provides new ways of doing things, including profitable responses to sustainability. Fairness is vital because social injustice is unsustainable and collaboration is often a prerequisite for large scale change; and
- Social transformation and redress is important and needs to be integrated within the broader transition to sustainability. Integrating sustainability and social transformation in a strategic and coherent manner will give rise to greater opportunities, efficiencies, and benefits for both the company and society.

The Report goes on to conclude by stating “If adhered to, King III, will result in any company practising good governance.”

The role of ethics in excellence and in governance is intertwined with the moral fibre of an enterprise and the same is like running a race and/or embarking on a journey.

However, this journey has to begin somewhere and with someone, and that someone is your people in the organization. It is precisely because of the realization of the importance of people in a Company that Peters TJ and Waterman RH Jr (1993:238), aptly put the significant role of people in an organization as follows:

***“Treat people as adults. Treat them as partners; treat them with dignity; treat them with respect. Treat them – not capital spending and automation – as the primary source of productivity gains. These are the fundamental lessons from excellent companies’ research.”***

This is a profound advice that comes from those who know better about how well run organizations flourish in the midst of adversities. It is an indisputable fact that at the heart of excellence in governance lies people who are custodians of systems, processes and procedures but more importantly are the organization’ greatest assets.

However, for this to happen, requires ethical leadership which Madale Thepa in the Sunday World of 2 December 2012: p12, describes in the following words:

***“..that everyone who leads should be a person of virtue, a righteous person who receives his/her recognition on the basis of their work and conduct --- men and women who are intellectually purified and have strong impulses to serve, who don't bring baggage and cant be faulted in any way.”***

The statement, however, equally recognizes the fact that we are all human beings and that we have a propensity to be fallible, but nonetheless, when we assume leadership positions, it is expected of us to lead by example and to adhere prudently to the dictates of both the King III and King IV Reports. This means that our leadership qualities and characters should be beyond reproach and further that at the center of such leadership, should be moral rectitude characterized by strict adherence to ethical principles and mores.

## **7. TWENTY CARDINAL RULES WHICH ENSURE ETHICAL LEADERSHIP**

Whilst there could be as many cardinal rules as the scholars of ethics could think of which speak to the ethical conduct of leaders, the list as given herebelow is not exhaustive but the

same could indeed be considered as some of the cardinal rules for ethical leadership which need to be embraced by all of those who value this discipline:

1. As an ethical leader, your behavior, both in public as well as private life should always be above reproach and should equally be consistent with your moral outlook as well as your moral compass;
2. Never say things you cannot defend in any platform;
3. Always remain focused and never lie in order to get things done to unscrupulously advantage yourself;
4. Never show disrespect to other people whether these are your Seniors or your Subordinates, treat people with the same utmost respect. Remember, respect is always earned, and not demanded;
5. Never steal other people's ideas and make them your own. If you do use other people's ideas to reinforce your argument, always acknowledge the source and in doing so, your peers and/or other people who may read your work, will hold you in high esteem and as somebody who has done research on a particular topic/project and has acknowledged his/her source. If you do this you will ensure that you are not accused of plagiarism.
6. Value your ethical morals at all times and never patronize and/or fraternize with sin;

7. Never use your position in the organization to advantage yourself over other people and/or to unfairly benefit yourself at the expense of the organization and/or people;
8. Remember your attitude is the measure of your latitude, i.e the way you project yourself is the inner mirror of who you really are;
9. Never be a chameleon, i.e changing your colours in order to suit a particular situation and in the process lose your moral latitude – rather be a tiger which never changes its spots – i.e remain true to yourself and never run with the hares and chase with the hounds;
10. Take full responsibility of your actions and never blame the next person in order to hide your own inadequacies – always maintain a high moral ground and be true to yourself all the time;
11. Always remain consistent in following institutional/company policies and procedures for the maintenance of procedural fairness as well as institutional integrity;
12. Be firm but fair whenever you have to take/make decisions whether operational and/or strategic;
13. Listen to the opposing and divergent views of others as that inner voice in you could be saying:

**“Accommodate dissenting views and then act cautiously and rationally”**

14. Never hold grudges against other people, as to do so would consume you. The person you are holding a grudge against may not even be aware and so, you may be directing the anger and grudge you have against yourself;
15. When on the road, avoid if you can, any reaction to road-rage as this might affect your thinking and attitude at work or even at home. Ignoring road-rage puts you on the high moral ground – again it helps you to remain focused.
16. Racism has always been an anathema to race relations worldwide and as an ethical leader, rejecting racism from whatever angle it comes, would help you stand for justice in the midst of adversity;
17. In a work environment always make sure that colleagues look up to you as a Counsellor, a Leader, a Fighter for Human Rights and a Human Being whose character, attitude and actions are beyond reproach;
18. People will always remember you for the good footprint you leave behind in their hearts. Bad memories may take long to be forgotten but will disappear and fade with time.

However, good memories and good work will always be remembered, hence making a mark and difference in one's life is always magnanimous in a manner of speaking.

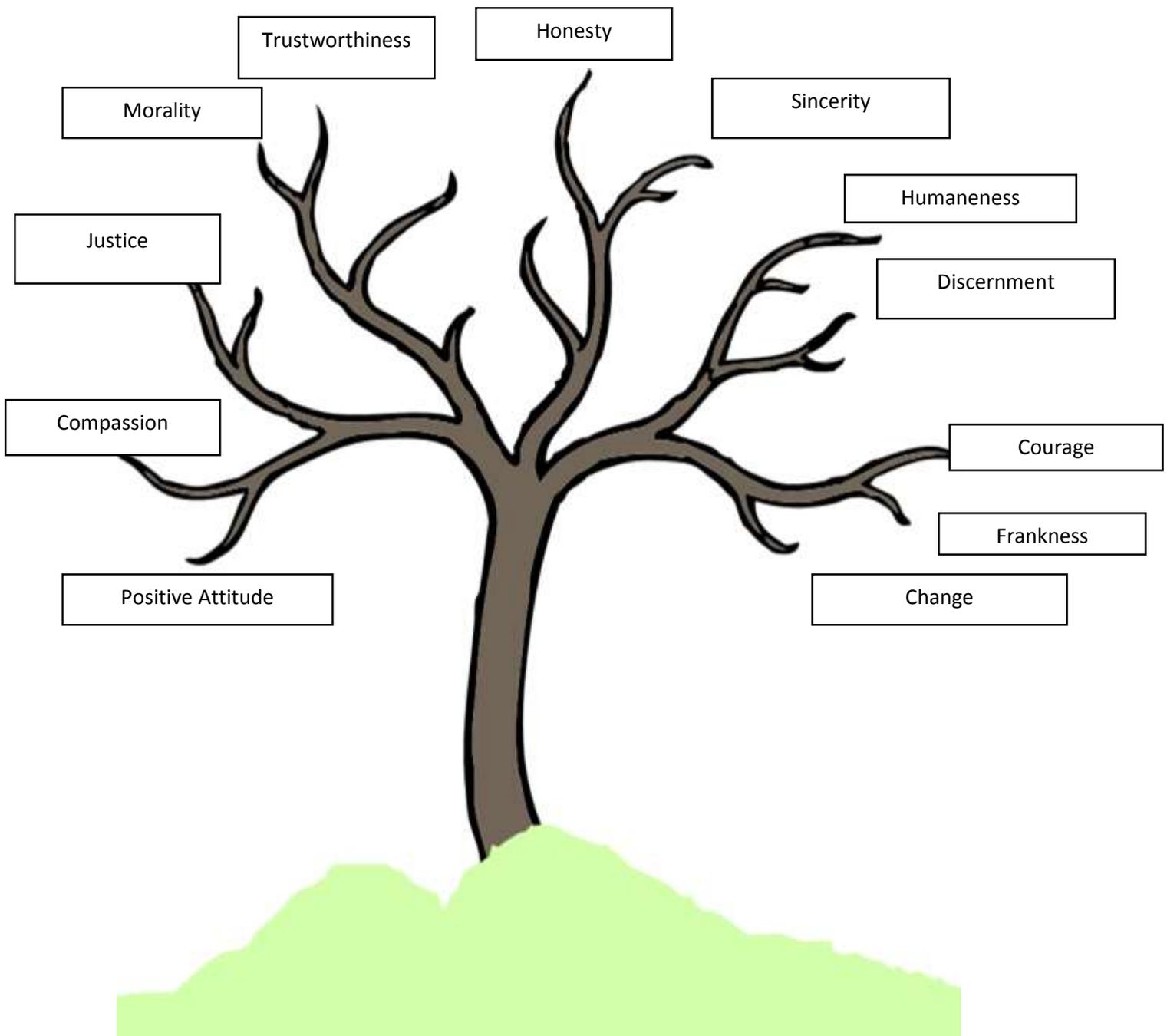
19. Never go to bed angry as doing so will keep you awake all night and will thus not enable you to focus on your work/activities the following day.
20. Never speak badly about other people and/or look down upon them. Have you for instance ever thought of generously giving a tip to the guards who look after your car at the shopping malls, - come rain or sun?

The essence of the above rules is that as an ethical leader, your actions should always attest to who you really are and that you should live and re-live the words of the old age philosophy:

**“Beyond the hill, there is hope,”**

Meaning, that for every difficult situation we may be faced with there is always a solution and that in whatever we do, we should always be pragmatic and not be held back by existential thinking.

## 8. TREE OF ETHICS



Whilst the fruits of the tree of ethics could be as many as the interpretation of ethics itself, it however, can be argued that all those fruits hanging on the “Tree” of Ethics could just be a handful of what it could mean if all of us could “eat” from the tree of ethics. Eating from the “tree of ethics” could greatly change our lives for the better as well for nurturing and developing the Communities in which we live and work.

A brief interpretation and understanding of the “fruits” of ethics is captured herebelow:

1. **Honesty**: Honesty is at the apex of the tree as well as at the core of ethics because this is a value that expresses and confirms what it means to be ethical.
2. **Trustworthiness**: related to honesty, is trustworthiness as one could perhaps not be truly honest if one cannot be trusted. Trustworthiness is a fundamental basis of ethical behavior.
3. **Morality**: The high level of corruption and fraud ravaging the moral fibre of our country is a result of lack of morality. Asking for sexual favours in return for jobs or other work related benefits/ promotions or even for female students to pass examinations and give them top marks, which they do not deserve, is the most overt unethical behavior which, if not confronted head-on can only promote promiscuity and exacerbates immorality.

4. **Justice:** Ethical behavior seeks nothing but justice for all, and this is a key ethical block for leadership as it further seeks to do what is just and fair for all.
5. **Compassion :** To be ethical does not mean that one should be less compassionate – in fact to be ethical is to be compassionate and that is to put yourself in the shoes of the other person and to cry with him/her when he/she cries and laugh with him/her when laughs – rejoice and to be sad when circumstances so dictate and thus showing compassion with utmost care and sincerity.
6. **Positive attitudes:** For an ethical person, there is no room for negativity. An ethical person always displays a positive attitude for he/she knows that attitude is the measurement of one's latitude. Displaying positive attitude is an affirmation of ethical behavior devoid of any character traits of malicious, spurious, nebulous, vindictive, amorphous and nefarious acts.
7. **Sincerity:** To be ethical is to be utmost sincere in whatever you do. Sincerity does not have room for double – standards, i.e to say one thing to a particular group/person and only to bad-mouth and castigate the very person you were singing praises of when confronted by a group/persons who speak negatively about that person. Be sincere in small things and the biggest benefits will follow.

An ethical person does not steal from his/her company; an ethical person does not accept bribery and/or do fraud; an ethical person remains sincere in public and in private life. He/she does not preach this and does the opposite. He/she remains sincere to the cause of social justice and fairness all the time.

8. **Humaneness:** One of the most distinguished characteristics of an ethical leader is humaneness (Ubuntu/Botho). The principle of “do unto others as you would want them to do unto you” remains key to an ethical person. Showing humaneness to others is a fundamental principle of ethical leadership. Humaneness/morality and ethical behavior speak to the wholeness of a person and therefore humaneness is the extension of ethical behavior. There can be no moral regeneration without humaneness.
9. **Discernment:** To discern between good and bad and between right and wrong is at the heart of ethics and morality. Discernment is therefore the ability to show good judgement and being able to act accordingly. Growing from good to greatness is the embodiment of discernment. It is because of such virtues that ethics is related to discernment.
10. **Courage:** This is the ability or the capacity to face danger and/or opposition or difficulty even if you are in doubt or

even not sure of whether or not you succeed. Courage can further mean the capacity and/or the ability to stand alone for truth against a group of people or a crowd whose interest is only to pursue their myopic and narrow-minded agenda. Helen Suzman was a courageous woman who stood alone in an apartheid nationalist-led government fighting for the human rights of the majority of the people of South Africa whose constitutional rights were brutally usurped by the said apartheid government. A whole list of courageous men and women who fought against apartheid includes but is not limited to the following: Oliver Tambo, Nelson Mandela, Chris Hani, Steve Biko, Walter Sisulu, Mapetla Mohapi, John Nyathi Pokela, Archie Gumede, Robert Sobukwe, Veronica Sobukwe, Getrude Hlophe, Govean Mbeki, Raymond Mhlaba, Winnie Mandela, Albertina Sisulu, Thenjiwe Mthintso, Miriam Makeba, Solomon Mahlangu, Tsietsi Mashinini, Stanza Bopape, Onkgopotse Tiro, Vuyisile Mini, Steve Tswete, Makhenkesi Stofile and many others. These are among the most prominent leaders of our time whose courage remains unsurpassed.

11. **Frankness:** Being able to speak openly and therefore making your views and/or feelings known to people is the epitome of ethical leadership. Frankness also speaks to the ability to express one's views openly and without fear

and/or grotesque human machinations of evil intentions.

12. **Change and transformation:** An ethical leader is the one whose outlook and orientation is always positive and that such positive attitude negates the work of a group of evil doers whose intentions are to destroy the work of well-meaning and purpose-driven people. It is because of this belief in life that we come to understand and embrace the religious statement “....**God’s purpose about Man is greater than Man’s own plan...**”

If the whole world could, figuratively speaking eat from the fruits of the “Ethical Tree”, then the planet earth could be a better place to live in, and where political parties could indeed share the vision of promoting equity and equality without being driven by personal aggrandizement with an appetite of only caring for themselves and those close to them and thus forgetting the needs and wants of the very people who voted for them to power. Ethics and Service Excellence in this context mean caring for those who put us in the leadership positions, whether it is in the Public and/or Private Sector. Obfuscation and obliteration of the wishes of the people are grave obstacles in the majestic and magnanimous journey of ethical leadership for 21<sup>st</sup> century leaders. One of the most profound advice which ethical leaders could give is one which encourages us not to deny our wrong doings.

Ethical leaders would then argue that we should never ever deny our wrong-doings as such actions would continuously prick our consciences for the rest of our lives. To admit and acknowledge our mistakes is one of the most important key values espoused by ethical hegemony. To deny our mistakes can be equated to dereliction of duty and trustworthiness and so, an ethical leader would by all means never fall into such a trap. An ethical leader is never arrogant as arrogance is the nemesis of humility and humaneness.

The University of Illinois (US) in its “Good Ethical Practice, Ethics: A Handbook for Faculty and Staff at the University Illinois, 5<sup>th</sup> Edition” (p4), describes the value of embracing ethics as follows:

***“Apply ETHICS in every aspect of your life to attain the RESPECT and TRUST of others. Keep in mind the VALUES this institution represents, and act with INTEGRITY and HONESTY at all times when representing the University of Illinois. Together, we can achieve great RESULTS”.***

What the above statement translates to is that we should always live and breathe ethics and that ethical behavior is paramount to professional leadership and that from the above quotation one can draw some observation that the discipline of ethics has for a

long time never received the kind of attention it deserves. However, the latest study/research shows that the world would not have been fraught with fraud and corruption, had the general public leaders been adept to ethics, as Leo Buscaglia put it:

**“To be, is to do, and to do is to do now,”**

And so, we are challenged to do the right things now and not procrastinate as to do so would have deleterious effects on humanity.

## **9. SUGGETSED INSTRUMENTS FOR THE PROMOTION OF ETHICS**

In order to address the above, the following could just be a few of the many instruments which could be used;

1. **Whistle-blowing**: As a deterrent mechanism, this could be used;
2. **Ethics Practitioner**: Organizations/companies/institutions are advised, in addition to the establishment of an Ethics Committee, to create a post of an Ethics Practitioner which has to deal with all issues of ethics and non-compliance
3. **Code of Ethics for Staff/Students/Governing Council**: Many institutions have such codes as part of compliance but do very little to adhere to and/or observe them. Institutions are advised to adhere to these strictly.

4. **Hotline**: To be created to promote accessibility in reporting cases of non-compliance as well as reporting cases of breaching the Institutional Code of Ethics.
  
5. **Establishment of a Monitoring and Evaluation Committee**: Under the chairpersonship of the CEO and/or and a Senior person delegated as such by the CEO; the purpose of this Committee would be to assess, evaluate and monitor the extent to which the institution has dealt with and/or is dealing with all matters of ethics.

If used properly, the abovementioned instruments could play a significant role in the promotion of Institutional Ethics and also in creating a friendly environment. At the end of the day, even if sensitivity and awareness workshops/seminars could be held, fact of the matter is that ethical behavior remains a choice and a responsibility of an individual. So, to act ethically or to act unethically, remains an important aspect of our being; remember that the eye and the arm of the law will one day catch up with you and if it does, it might be too late to reclaim the lost ground and thus, Leo Buscaglia's words of wisdom still remain pertinent:

**“To do is to do now, as tomorrow might not be there”**

The statement simply enjoins us to do and act responsibly when we still have time on our side as to procrastinate may never give

us time to put things right when we had time to do so, but regrettably failed!

## **10. SPIRITUAL LEADERSHIP AS THE BASIS OF ETHICAL DIRECTION IN SERVICE EXCELLENCE**

As we continue to navigate our way through the maze of managerial challenges in search of excellence and ethical leadership, we only come to realize how important it is in life to be endowed with the gifts of spiritual leadership. Service excellence requires true leadership, a leadership that is not a method, a technique or a science but an attitude.

Such spiritual leadership as is herein advanced is the one better described by Dr Myles Munroe (2005:121-122), where he inter alia states:

“

1. To exercise leadership, you must believe that you are inherently a leader.
2. The leadership spirit is the inherent leadership capacity and potential that is the essential nature of human beings. The spirit of leadership is the mind-set or attitudes that accompany a true leadership spirit and allow the dormant leadership potential to be fully manifested and maximized.

3. Trapped within every follower is a hidden leader.
4. Our leadership capacity is buried under social, cultural and ideological perceptions that restrict, discourage, and hinder its manifestation.
5. The leadership spirit is the intrinsic capacity of the human spirit to lead, manage, and dominate, which was placed there at the point of creation and made necessary by the purpose assignment for which man was created.
6. Leadership is not something that human beings have strived for; it is something that is inherent within us because of our purpose and design.
7. When we become our true selves, we will naturally be leaders.
8. If something is created to do something, it is designed with the ability to do it.
9. Humanity was designed with the natural components or “circuitry” to dominate its environment.
10. God’s requirement that we dominate is evidence that the ability to lead is inherent in every human spirit.
11. The secret to leadership greatness is in serving others. To become the great leader that you were created and destined to become, you must discover your unique inherent gift and assignment (your original purpose) and serve that to the world of mankind.

What Myles Monroe (2005), describes above as a recipe for spiritual and effective leadership, does in many ways give testimony to the importance of ethical leadership behavior in the promotion of service excellence. It may equally be a truism what Dr Myles Munroe propounds above as it buttresses and corroborates what Blanchard, K (2004:110), earlier stated in his book, The Leadership Pill, in which he also argues in favour of what makes an effective leader to produce effective results and therefore leading in excellence, for a well-run company. Ken Blanchard, thus goes on to say:

#### “THE SECRET BLEND FOR EFFECTIVE LEADERSHIP

- Leadership is Not Something You Do to people It’s Something You Do With Them.

#### INTEGRITY

- LEADING WITH Integrity Means Being the Person You Want Others to Be.
- Trust Is What happens When Values and Behaviours Match Up.
- People Are More Apt to Trust and Respect You When What You Say and What You Do are One and the Same.

## PARTNERSHIP

- THE Key to Effective Leadership Is The Relationship You Build with Your Team.
- Sharing the Big Picture Puts Everyone on the Same Page.
- It is Easier to Get Up the Hill When You Climb It Together.

## AFFIRMATION

- Praise Is The Easiest Way to let People Know They Are Appreciated.
- Each of US Has the Power to Recognise the Goodness in Others.
- You Will Go a Lot Further If You Stop to Refuel.

## PERFECTING THE BLEND

- People Will Think for Themselves When You Quit Doing It for Them.
- Leadership Is the Process of Getting Everyone to the Place They Are Supposed to Go.
- The Highest Achievement As a Leader Is Winning the Respect and Trust of Your Team.”

All the above principles can help in expediting the process of service excellence and service delivery only if one is driven by ethical consideration, commitment, the willingness and zealousness to make a difference.

## 11. ONLY YOU CAN MAKE THE DIFFERENCE

It is no wonder that Motivational Speakers like the Late Leo Buscaglia would argue that the success of any organization can only be achieved and realized if those in management strive to live ethically and according to the precepts of his now famous message in which he says: “Only You Can Make The Difference”.

Indeed, as Leaders in our own right and in all our interactions with one another, we should always strive to make a difference in the Workplace and if we do, then light will shine upon those we are entrusted to lead, govern and manage, but of course if we fail to lead, ethically and morally, no matter how much we can follow business principles learnt from the leading World Class Business Schools, all our attempts, efforts and endeavors would be in vain. Central to our leadership roles, would be the ability to discern between good and bad, right and wrong, positive and negative and always striving to do our very best as well as in private life. This, being the basis of ethics and morality.

It is perhaps because of this understanding that the Late Leo Buscaglia, that famous Italian-American motivational speaker would always end his motivational speeches by reminding his audience:

## **“Only You Can Make The Difference”**

And may I therefore invite you to walk with me as I pass this illuminating legacy of that world-renowned motivational speaker to you as you continue to find meaning and purpose in search of better ways of protecting service excellence through your endeavors in making a difference, in search of ethical leadership for the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

I quote Leo Buscaglia as he emphasizes the essence of ethics in Leadership when he says:

- You alone can bring magic – and humour, and joy to the people you encounter;
- Anything you dream, by the very nature that you can dream it, makes it possible;
- The purpose of life is to help others and if you can't help them, would you at least not hurt them!
- You can make things happen that you never thought you could!
- The greatest risk in life is to risk nothing. The person who risks nothing, does nothing, has nothing and is nothing;
- To be is to do – and to do is to do now because tomorrow might not be there;
- You have everything you need to be so much....don't settle for less!

- There is no end to human potential – and there’s so much more to learn;
- The time for action is now – and only you can make the difference!

## **12. CONCLUSION**

This presentation, with the title “The Role of Ethics in Service Excellence: A Management Challenge for the Current and Future Leaders in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century” has taught us how the question of Ethics, Excellence and Governance, can embrace a blended approach in ensuring that Leaders of Higher Educations Institutions in particular, do not only train Leadership principles, but that in their managerial and leadership positions, they equally live and breathe the ethics as expected of those occupying positions of accountability, authority, leadership and responsibility.

What further emerged from the study is how the Spiritual Leadership approach could be applied in the promotion of ethics and morality in Governance. The study on Ethics in Service Excellence puts emphasis on the following values and principles as anchors for sound Corporate Governance:

- ✓ Respect
- ✓ Integrity

- ✓ Competence
- ✓ Responsibility
- ✓ Fairness
- ✓ Transparency
- ✓ Sustainability
- ✓ Social Justice
- ✓ Transformation, and
- ✓ Good Citizenship

The study has further drawn a relationship between Ethical leadership and Effective Leadership; arguing that these two are sides of the same coin, if not identical twins. The message for the Management of Higher Education Institutions is that no amount of Service Excellence can be pursued and promoted if the same is not anchored on the principles postulated above, and which the King IV (2016) identified as:

- Ethical Culture
- Good Performance
- Effective Control
- Legitimacy

It is hoped that we shall, together be imbued with the spirit of ethical leadership and morality, as we grow this Association:

**From Good to Great**

**From Great to Better**

**From Better to Awesome**

**From Awesome to Auspicious**

**From Auspicious to Ostentatious**

**From Ostentatious to Fantastic**

**From Fantastic to Fabulous**

**From Fabulous to Remarkable**

**From Remarkable to Incredible**

**From Incredible to Magnificent**

**From Magnificent to Majestic**

**From Majestic to Splendid**

**From Splendid to Spectacular**

**From Spectacular to Evolutionary**

**From Evolutionary to Revolutionary**

**From Revolutionary to Victory**

**From Victory to Contentment**

**From Contentment to Tetelestai!**

**I THANK YOU!**

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