

Coping with Leadership Persona in South African *Public Administration Practice: Implications on Macro-policy Initiatives and Implementation*

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Abstract: *This article seeks to expose the element of leadership persona in shaping the state of the practice of public administration in South Africa since the advent of democracy by outlining its implications on the consistency of the implementation of macro-policy initiatives as well as the precision in terms of commitment and coherence thereof. It is argued that the practice of public administration cannot be separated from the persona of those in charge of leadership within a given regime in South African context. Each regime that assumes office brings along a new team of leadership that initiate new macro-policies instead of marshalling the existing ones for full implementation and coherence. Such constant changes have an adverse impact on the continuity of strategic policy implementation and this article attributes that to the persona of leadership that assume office at a given stage. The article concludes by asserting that South Africa have not yet had a societal position that can be mandated to the state in order to enable the system of governance to remain focused even if there are regime changes in the form of leadership. In consequence, South Africa is stalled in a vicious circle of policy incoherence that stalls development in that the recurring leadership persona tend to obscure policy implementation and coherence to protect leadership personalities.*

Keywords: Leadership Persona, Types of Leadership, Macropolicy, Public Administration Practice, South Africa

Introduction

The practice of public administration has a longer history and a wider geographic range than almost any other aspect of government and it has been an instrument of ancient empires, monarchies, democracies and dictatorships, of both developed and developing countries (Coetzee, 1988; Hanekom and Thornhill, 1994). Yet there is still a debate on the issue of a landmark article of Woodrow Wilson (1887) written way back over a century ago as to who among them best understood Wilson's contention of the politics-administration dichotomy wherein others dismissed the notion variously as

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fiction, intellectual aberration, or political rationale; yet the dichotomy's persistence may have its foundation in the nature of the decision-making processes of large bureaucratic organisations (Gawthrop, 1998; Svava, 2006, 2008; Overeem, 2008; Skelley, 2008; Demir and Nyhan, 2008) that is as well underpinned on the persona of those who lead them and context; yet one of the simple facts about leadership is that one cannot be a leader by oneself (Nall, 2011). Fundamentally, leadership involves complex human interactions that is by nature comprised of multiplicities and varying contexts (Nkuna and Sebola, 2012). It is undisputed fact that Woodrow Wilson (1856 –1924), just like any other contemporary head of state in the current wave of development, brought with him an element of persona that shaped his ideology and ontological stand in his leadership style, hence his contention at the time that politics can be separated from administration. However, none of those still debating Woodrow Wilson's (1887) contention appear to shift the lens and view his contentions from the perspective of his persona in that other than being the President of America at the time, Woodrow Wilson (1856 – 1924) was also a scholar. Same principle applies to those who are hailed as pioneers of Scientific Management like Frederick Winslow Taylor (1856 – 1915) who was an engineer by profession; Max Weber (1864 – 1920) who traded in between law, politics and sociology; Johan van Goethe(1749 – 1832) a German poetic writer, politician and scientist; Karl Max (1818 – 1883) who was a German philosopher, economist, sociologist, historian, journalist, and revolutionary socialist and others one can mention.

In as much as the latter were not state leaders like Woodrow Wilson (1856 – 1924), the philosophic positions they brought along in the discourse of public administration practice is arguably in principle based on their persona as thinkers within their own right. For example, Max Weber (1864 – 1920), is regarded as the father of bureaucracy yet he was a Sociologist who has grown up hating the strife of command line that was subjected to him by his parents and family background (Gane, 1992) and was regarded as distinct from other thinkers as representing something of sophisticated and agnostic. As for the pioneers of Scientific Management, consideration need to be made that they were engineers, and they were looking for the best way to simplify the job for productivity purposes (Ferguson and Lohmann, 1994; Schein, 2004) wherein the status of endogenous epistemic ways that was informed by situations of various setups in the globe was comprised as such was pursued with high precision to influence leadership persona towards scientificity (Fideler, 1998; English, 2002).

South Africa was fortunate to have leaders like F. W. de Klerk (1939 -) who beyond the odds of his fellow conservative nationalists concerted to the unconditional un-burning of political parties during 1990 and brokered for negotiated settlement to democracy (Turok, 2008; Maharaj, 2008; Maharaj, Desai and Bond, 2011). As a sanctification Nelson Mandela (1918 – 2013) who became the first democratic president of South Africa with an idealistic persona that had been derived from being a lawyer and political activist before receiving military training as one of the founders of "Umkhonto we Sizwe", who had remain visionary principled despite the undue conditions the apartheid government subjected him to for nearly three decades in prison (Maharaj, 2008; Turok, 2008) to an extent of advocating for reconciliation of the purposefully fragmented nation. The same ideal he advocated for

during his Rivonia Trial address he lived up to it to voluntarily stepping down as the country's first democratically elected president. So it is the same of other leaders, who assumed office on their schematic profile that had shaped their thinking, while in public office either in Africa as a continent or some parts of the world. The article put forward a debate that South African state of public administration practice, in whatever situation it found itself, remains factored on the persona of those in office within a given term of office. Wherever so far President Mandela (1918 – 2013) has served his term of 1994 – 1999; President Thabo Mbeki (1942-) served during 1999 – 2008 while President Jacob Zuma (1942-) served 2009 to the time of this manuscript.

This article conceptually explicate on issues of leadership persona on policy coherence and sustainable implementation thereof within the South African context. This is done by providing the background and rationale of the debate followed by conceptualising persona for public administration practice engagement. The argument is based on the notion that persona is shaped by personal development that is premised on the schema or schemata that one draws knowledge from together with the phases that define such person's systematic progression throughout life as a human agent. For relevancy in a complex domain like that of public administration practice, one does not need to use common sense as it is through persona that is easily espoused through competencies that one have developed overtime; and that tend to be the case in leadership within the South African polity if not probably Africa as the whole.

Background and Rationale

Public Administration has been declared an eclectic discipline that borrows its scientific strands from other existing theoretical positions (Coetzee, 1988; Hanekom and Thornhill, 1994; Botes, Brynard, Fourie and Roux, 1996), with a critique that it has totally disregarded the African endogenous knowledge to remain relevant within the authentic values of the continent errand to the Western project of civilisation (Amoah, 2012; Nyamnjoh, 2013). This is strongly justified due to the range of activities involved in the field that inform whatever approach can be adopted in its practice that has transcended beyond the inherited systems from the colonial past in the case of the African continent (Mamdani, 1996; Kuye, 2008; Nyamnjoh, 2012; Amoah, 2012). Such wholeness even resulted in various paradigms that have put the discipline in quandary for over a century (Henry, 1975, Coetzee, 1988; Hanekom and Thornhill, 1994; Botes *et al*, 1996) based on the progress that was benchmarked on the Western pace of development as African endogenous knowledge was not factored in (Mamdani, 1996; Nyamnjoh, 2004; Amoah, 2012) and exacerbated by the apartheid past in the case of South Africa (Maharaj, 2008; Ngepah and Mhlaba, 2013) that have reduced the spatial settlement of the black majority to cheap labour reserves. Of course given the history of the field, the exercise is probably regarded as a sign of health while on the other hand self-scrutiny can be overdone to the detriment of the field and practice thereof. Just like the mathematician, John von Neumann (1903 – 1957), once described the state of a discipline that had become far too involved with self-study by coining the term “baroquism” that simple means a re-examination by public administrationists of

where the field has been and where it is going appears worthwhile (Henry, 1975, Rosenbloom, 2008) and tend to be occupied by such without making meaningful progress in addressing its loci.

Not surprisingly that in as late as 2013 there are still debates as to whether Woodrow Wilson (1887) was either misunderstood or misquoted in his article on politics-administration dichotomy (Svara, 2008; Uwezeyimani, 2013). This is also applicable to other pioneers in the field that are continuously being interpreted without regard of the element of persona that have a bearing on their nature as human agents with internal structure (Stacey, 1996; Nkuna and Sebola, 2012). Such is becoming evident on the leaders of the contemporary regimes as they surface more especially in Africa with South Africa in particular in this case. It remains a matter of empirical curiosity as to how President Mandela's (1918 – 2013) regime of 1994-1999 has been a factor of his persona as a leader, same to President Mbeki (1942 -) during 1999-2008, and President Jacob Zuma (1942 -). The manner in which policy directives are rolled out with a given precision in an administrative state is also influenced by the element of persona for those leading the regime at the time. Such can range from an independent thinking of leaders in their own right to a judgemental guidance and ideological stance they offer to party in power in the case of partisan democratic system like that of South Africa. A wave of the first generation of leaders that liberated some parts of Africa barely reflect the persona that they have in steering the nations to the level where they have achieved (Mamdani, 1996; Nyamnjoh, 2004) in that such independences were short lived before a spate of internal conflicts sponsored by disposed colonial masters.

This paper explicate the extent of coping with leadership persona in relation to the consistency of rolling out implementation of policy initiatives in South Africa drawing from the position of other prominent scholars that forms the basis of analytical thinking within the discourse of public administration practice. The paper focuses on South African scenario but drawing on examples from other randomly selected administrative states within the globe to reinforce the debate with a bias to African continent in particular. A prototype example being that of the boldness that President Yoweri Museveni (1944 -) of Uganda had to enact a policy position that suites the Ugandan people despite the noise from other corners of the globe. Is it a matter of personal arrogance that President Robert Mugabe (1924 -) of Zimbabwe appears to be controversial among his counterparts in the region? The ontological stance of the argument is that while there is on-going engagement in public administration discourse and draw the basis of theoretical disposition empirically, it is important to consider persona that provide a complex blind sport for rational thinking especially where leadership is a factor.

Conceptualising Persona

In the practice of management, data and their relationships are incomplete, and decisions in all functions, levels of an organisation and external relationships as from top management to specialists, workers, suppliers, customers and others as are based on mix of fact and judgment calls (Gummesson, 2006; Alkahtani, Abu-Jarad, Sulaiman, and Nikbin, 2011). The mix of facts and judgment calls are influenced by leadership's persona in the case of public administration practice.

Persona refers to the aspects of a person's character that they show to other people, especially when their real character is different, or the role one assumes or display in public or society (Hornby, 2006; Alkahtani *et al.*, 2011) while on the other hand personality can be defined as the complex of characteristics that distinguishes an individual (Nall, 2011). It is a style made up of many or multiple behaviours that we become aware of through style or temperament type to help identify individual strengths and weaknesses. So far South Africa has seen how President Mandela's (1918 – 2013) persona has brought about peace and reconciliation within a previously divided nation. People who have different backgrounds have different attitudes, values and norms do reflect their cultural heritages, which are, in fact, different (Alkahtani *et al.*, 2011; Nyamnjoh, 2013). These differences result in different personalities of individuals that determine their actions and behaviours with some people have strong personalities in that they can influence others to act and do things (Nkuna, 2007; Alkahtani *et al.* 2011). Others, who have certain type of personality, can determine the way the organisations behave like those assuming the office of leadership within a given time.

It is eminent as to how governance issues have evolved during the regimes of the three leaders in South African polity, with the interim space of President Kgalema Motlante (1949 -) that have not done much except preparing the stage for the 2009 regime change. In public administration context, persona may be seen as a role, a task, a skill, ability, or a personality trait which one displays while assuming public office. Due to different backgrounds, attitudes, values and norms and cultural heritages, a systematic history of each human agent as a leader took effect within the realm of complex terrain that is beyond predictability (Stacey, 1996; Cilliers, 1998; Nkuna and Sebola, 2012). Virtanen (2000) refers to such competences as distinct to qualifications. A competence is seen as an attribute of an employee referring to a kind of human capital or human resource that can be transformed into productivity, while qualification is understood as requirements of a certain class of work tasks or job. Such competencies determine to a large extent as to how leadership steer institutions or organisations towards the intended objectives. In other words competencies that are required from an incumbent to fulfil certain leadership position within the practice of public administration are derived from such incumbent's persona.

The Making of Persona

Individual agents are schemas or algorithms representing the world that they act into (Stacey *et al.*, 2000). They manipulate and process information according to their schemas as the basis of their interaction and display differing competencies that end-up being the making of leadership persona. A schema consists of a set of rules that reflects regularities in experience and enables a system to determine the nature of further experience and make sense of it (Stacey, 1996; Nkuna and Sebola, 2012; Ntayi, Ngoboka and Kakooza, 2013). Much of the leadership development comes from the opportunities that an individual takes advantage of throughout life (Nall, 2011; Ntayi *et al.*, 2013). The element of disciplinary exposure is also eminent in providing such schema hence it becomes necessary to relate to leaders like Woodrow Wilson (1856 – 1924) and Karl Marx (1818 – 1883) as they were not foreign to acquiring a disciplinary background that helped frame their thinking. So if the

practice of public administration had to be left to those who apply common sense, which is not that common in anyway, polities like South Africa might be heading for demise. Leaders within the field of public administration practice as agents interact through the application of different schemas or displaying different competencies. Such is also applicable to leaders when assuming office within specific regimes in a polity. Hence it is a matter of discourse on the extent to which leaders are either described as democratic, authoritarian or dictators. Even Marx Weber (1864 – 1920) in his writings had views on leadership being charismatic, traditional, and legal-rational in exercising authority (Hennessey, 1998). Of course such also emanate from the premise that an average public organisation or public institution has to obey to different professional, legal, economical, management, political, scientific, technical, environmental and civil demands, wishes and expectations (Hennessey, 1998; Van der Wal and Van Hout, 2009). Managers and professionals in public organisations as leaders are also confronted with various “wicked” impossible situations and have to apply various competencies that they possess or acquired overtime. Such competencies vary in relation to contexts and organisational setups that can be escalated to the level of even leading administrative states like that of South Africa.

As mentioned earlier, of course leaders as human systems are characterised by internal structure in that they bring to their respective areas of responsibility their cultures, emotions, personal preferences, attitudes, genders, experiences, skills, and abilities (Stacey, 1996; Nall, 2011; Nkuna and Sebola, 2012; Ntayi *et al.*, 2013), but it remains folly for leaders due to their wicked persona to hide behind those normative issues like culture when confronted by governance challenges within the practice of public administration. It however remains a challenge as to whether it is possible to determine a boundary on the leader’s persona and the practice of public administration especially on policy coherence within a culturally diverse society like South Africa happens to be. The fact that a leader assuming office within a defined polity had to rationally be divorced from a cultural base that is instrumental to the making of the persona remains questionable.

Various Types of Leadership Competencies

Virtanen (2000) put forward an argument that the vital competences of the personnel in modern organisations are increasingly value competences and that these should be understood as commitments (see also Mouton, 2009; Brynard, 2010; Nall, 2011; Ntayi *et al.*, 2013). The moment there are value issues within the analogical space in the discourse, the rational premise of scientificity falls short (Fideler, 1998; English, 2002; Nkuna and Sebola, 2012) and it is such contentions that preclude the exogenous African way of doing things (Mamdani, 1996; Amoah, 2012; Nyamnjoh, 2013). Brynard (2010) put that one almost ambiguous factor in policy performance is commitment. What determines factors such as commitment? What is the relationship between these factors? The key to any initiative is the commitment of everyone concerned to ensuring the successful roll-out of the initiative (Mouton, 2009; Brynard, 2010). In essence, commitment refers to an ability to maintain the focus on an initiative from its inception through to its delivery. Such remain questionable in South African polity as each time the new regime take office there are major changes that even veer away

from the principled position of the parties involved to protection of leadership persona than a system. The rush and emotional changes of constitutional position of the African National Congress (ANC) as the ruling party during December 2007 followed by similar move by the South African Communist Party (SACP) is a prototype example.

Gruban (2003) as cited in Pagon, Banutai and Bizjak (2008) defines competencies as the ability to use knowledge and other capabilities, necessary for successful and efficient accomplishment of an appointed task, transaction of work, goal realisation, or performance of a certain role in the business process. By implication competencies encompass knowledge, expertise, skills, personal and behavioural characteristics, beliefs, motives, and values. Such competences or commitments may be classified in five areas, namely, task competence, professional competence in subject area, professional competence in public administration, political competence, and ethical competence (Virtanen, 2000; Dunn and Legge Jr, 2001; Pagon *et al.*, 2008; Ntayi *et al.*, 2013). The mainstream public administration sees competences of leaders as a generic profession and the differences between private and public sectors are not directly addressed. In a complex arena like public administration practice this poses a challenge. Virtanen (2000) identifies such competencies being task competence, professional competence, political competence, and ethical competence.

Task competences and professional competences are in many ways the same for both sectors, but leaders within the public administration landscape have political and ethical competences that make an important difference (Virtanen, 2000;Dunn and Legge Jr., 2001; Ntayi *et al.*, 2013). The competence areas are the same for non-managers, but since public managers have subordinates and larger formal responsibilities; the contents of particular competences differ from those of other public servants with the task competence being more concrete of the five areas. The criterion for task competence is performance. Goals and means are given and the task has to be accomplished. The value competence is motivation on why one has to perform the task with the instrumental competence being the ability to do the job. All the other competence areas have impacts on social reality through the interface of behaviour structured by task competence (Virtanen, 2000;Dunn and Legge Jr., 2001, Pagon *et al.*, 2008; Ntayi *et al.*, 2013). The extent to which leaders are competent to do their tasks within the practice of public administration will structure the social reality created which will be impacted upon by other competences. The prototype example can be given on the extent to which a public official or leaders is able to communicate at various levels and the ability to read and interpret statistical data as well as to delivery preparatory policy notes or speech where necessary.

A leader has to be competent either in the substantive field of the line organisation or portfolio on defined services or in a specific task field in techno-structure of the organisation like a direct deliverable (Virtanen, 2000; Dunn and Legge Jr., 2001;Blanchardand Donahue, 2007; Ntayi *et al.*, 2013). The professional competence will be in the subject area of such defined services, the value competence will be the extent to which one is able to control the policy object as societal phenomenon of the subject area or field. The know-how of the policy object of such particular field will

be the instrumental competence in the case of this debate. A leader also has to be competent in public administration practice as distinguished from politics and policy (Virtanen, 2000;Dunn and Legge Jr, 2001; Ntayi *et al*, 2013) more so if the objective is to steer within a complex arena like that of the public administration practice. Public administration in this context may be reduced to narrow administration of execution of a policy given by politicians. Controlling policy programmes becomes a value competence while the know-how of cooperation is instrumental. Virtanen (2000) regard professional competences as articulating modernism in that they are based on continuous doing better by controlling the object of the work (see also Dunn and Legge Jr., 2001; Blanchard and Donahue, 2007; Ntayi *et al*, 2013). The criterion of professional competence is development in the aspects such as policy object within defined services; subject know-how such as better mastery of legislative guidelines; policy programme such as fewer mistakes in service delivery; and know-how of cooperation such as better efficiency, also in the implementation of service cuts. Without professional competence there is no long-term quality improvement, although good task competence may lead to high productivity occasionally (Virtanen, 2000; Dunn and Legge Jr., 2001; Ntayi *et al*, 2013). In essence, relevant professional competence is a corner stone for a leader to succeed within the area of responsibility assigned. It remains questionable in South African public administration practice if that is a matter for consideration.

Political competence has to do with values and power (Virtanen, 2000;Dunn and Legge Jr, 2001; Ntayi *et al*, 2013). The ideology and interests of a public manager set the value competence and they have effects on the creation and authorisation of the goals and means of a public policy. Ideological beliefs and interests are partly determined by social background, also for those who are neutral in terms of party politics which appears to be fading in the case of South African public administration practice whereby those having access to public office are to be politically aligned irrespective of other preceding prerequisite competencies for discharging relevant mandates. Possession of power becomes instrumental competence (Virtanen, 2000; Nkuna, 2007; Dunn and Legge Jr., 2001; Ntayi *et al*, 2013) and due to a particular persona such may be discharged in a manner that counter progressive due to ulterior personal motives for those holding office and be subjected to informal or shadow manipulations (Stacey, 1996; Nkuna and Sebola, 2012). It is derived from the power of the office and official authority, but it has to be maintained in day-to-day practice in order to give opportunity to make real decisions. The possessed power may also be ethically unjustified, for example it might be greater than formal authority. With power a leader can create and allocate resources for preparation of public policies. Without political competence, leaders are not able to contribute to politically acceptable outcomes, no matter how good the output is in terms of developing professional quality and performance (Virtanen, 2000;Dunn and Legge Jr., 2001;Ntayi *et al*, 2013). There are of course divergent views on how to create commitment to policy initiative (Mouton, 2009; Brynard, 2010) within the range of competencies. The trend that have played itself during the introduction of macro-economic policies during the era of President Thabo Mbeki in South Africa with an irony that among the team that initiated such policies were those involved in drafting the RDP, GEAR and continue to be involved in the National Development Plan (NDP) as late as during

President Zuma's term of office. One view is that political backing is needed, implying that commitment is mainly a top-down issue; while others regard commitment as something that has to be developed from the bottom-up. The latter view focuses on the attitude of the employees who have to implement the initiative at the ground level (Blanchard and Donahue, 2007; Mouton, 2009; Brynard, 2010). The political arena is also complex in that each moment requires a certain skill of handling it and that tend to shift with context. There is no accurately defined political competence that may be regarded as that one has to have to be competent hence the arena is highly manipulated.

Ethical competence refers to conforming to moral values and moral norms that prevail in culture (Virtanen, 2000; Ntayi *et al.*, 2013). Morality becomes the value competence with the prevailing conception of what is right and what is wrong refers to administrative morality. It takes the constitution and the laws determining the general rights and obligations of public managers. Argumentation a process of reasoning in terms of ethics becomes an instrumental competence. It is needed for the ethical review of policy goals and means. Without ethical competence, leaders do not use their political, professional or task competence in right ways (Virtanen, 2000; Blanchard and Donahue, 2007) the trends that aroused this debate in relation to South Africa. But ethic also develops from a societal background that a given leader developed from. The manner in which one is raised in a society will also determine the ethic of such a person. South Africa has a variety of ethnic cultural groups which are protected constitutionally. Other than professional ethics that one acquires from the professional discipline, there are cultural ethics that triggers massive controversies in South Africa due to its diverse nature. Those cultural ethics develop from the traditional cultural background of the ethnic group that form an endogenous knowledge base that tend to be ignored within the modern conception of leadership within public administration practice. The resilience of such customs due to the nature of internal human structure in public administration creates shadows (Stacey, 1996; Nkuna and Sebola, 2012) or what Hanekom and Thornhill (1994) refer to as an informal organisation (see also Stacey, 1993; Hanekom *et al.*, 1996; Schein, 2004; Nkuna, 2007). The persistence in nurturing such shadows or informal organisation cripples the leadership ethos and reduces the stature of their persona to be unsuitable for public office.

Policy Inconsistencies and Leadership Changes

The article has so far devoted the engagement on leadership persona with varying examples within a polity, it is, however, necessary to further alludes as to the extent of its role within the policy landscape in the practice of public administration. Ndletyana (2013) has with specific reference to South African macro policy incoherence attributed such inconsistencies to ideological conflicts. The notion which this article argues from the angle of leadership persona as South Africa has since its inception of democratic dispensation is ruled by the same party being the African National Congress (ANC); yet each time there are changes in the government's executive that appears to affecting policy persuasion as every time a different leader is assigned a different portfolio, he or she tend to introduce new policy direction despite the manifesto for the term of office. The veering of policy position that manifests itself in terms of the point of regime changes creates a phenomenal vacuum

that also find expression when there is an executive reshuffle that transcend even to the point of ensuring functional agents reforms within the term of the regime that tend to stall progress with the adversaries of the principle of “cadre deployment” that create administrative instability and poor retaining of institutional or organisational memory.

The changing of programmes as a result of each leader assuming office in different portfolio might from another point of analysis be regarded as way of covering the failing trend of the regime to other questionable areas of the discourse. A prototype of the number of times the country’s has been reshuffled during President Zuma’s term of office remains a factor in destabilizing macro policy implementation flow. A contention that need further engagement as to whether President Zuma as a leader’s persona has what it takes to have a self-internalized philosophy that would have been derived from his competency to consider steering and navigating the country’s executive towards coherent policy stability. Of course this can be linked to the parody of having to escalate the number of the executive portfolios from 24 to 34 upon assumption of power during 2009 that juxtapose the rationalisation project that follows President Mandela’s (1918 – 2013) Presidential Review Commission of 1998 that find expression during the term of President Thabo Mbeki (1942 -).

Government Structural Stability since 1994 to 2013

In the dawn of South Africa’s negotiated settlement the ANC embarked on preparations for the assumption of power in government as stakes were clear that majority of South Africans were going to vote for the party. Policy positions informed by discussion documents like “Negotiations - A Strategic Perspective” of 1992 (ANC, 1992; Maharaj, 2008) laid foundations that has later informed all policy bifurcations that the party opted as well as the “Ready to Govern” policy document of 1992. The basic objectives of those policies were fourfold in that they were firstly, to strive for the achievement of the right of all South Africans, as a whole, to political and economic self-determination in a united South Africa; secondly, to overcome the legacy of inequality and injustice created by colonialism and apartheid, in a swift, progressive and principled way; thirdly, to develop a sustainable economy and state infrastructure that will progressively improve the quality of life of all South Africans; and fourthly, to encourage the flourishing of the feeling that South Africa belongs to all who live in it, to promote a common loyalty to and pride in the country and to create a universal sense of freedom and security within its borders (ANC, 1992; Turok, 2008; Maharaj, 2008). These objectives were however not mutually exclusive goals as the future of the country by that time depended on harmonious and simultaneous realisation of all objectives as outlined. The advancement of the majority of people’s will, in the medium-and-long-term, release hitherto untapped and suppressed talents and energies that were supposedly to both boost and diversify the economy. Developing the economy in turn provided the basis for overcoming the divisions of the past without creating new ones. Finally, the achievement of a genuine sense of national unity depended on all South Africans working together to overcome the inequalities created by apartheid (Turok, 2008; Maharaj, Desai and Bond, 2011). In real world however, this has proved to be impossible to delineate public-administration from neither politics nor reducing it to finite rational science due to its complex holistic nature destined towards

addressing the welfare of a society. More so, if such society is within the endogenous landscape like that of Africa which is characterised by rich diversity and multiplicity of cultural basis.

From RDP, GEAR, New Growth Path, and NDP

The founding policy intentions of the ready to govern provisions were encapsulated to Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP) that served as election manifesto of the ruling party during the first democratic elections (Adelzadeh, 1996; Blumenfeld, 1996; Turok, 2008; Maharaj, 2008). It is argued that the persona of leadership at the time had a bearing on the extent how such policy position was conceived and implemented. It was not surprising for the policy to find expression in statutory governance through the pronouncement of the White Paper on Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP) of 1994 as published in terms of notice number 1954 of 1994. The RDP was the primary vehicle through which the new Government of National Unity (GNU) sought to address these challenges (Blumenfeld, 1996; Weeks, 1999). In the early days of the GNU, the programme, which set out a broad framework for socio-economic reform, attracted virtually universal political support. But, however, within two years the programme had become so discredited that the separate RDP ministry that had been created in the President's own office was abolished. The openness of the RDP to different interpretations was both its strength and its weakness; it enabled all major social, political and economic interest groups to unite in support of the programme's broad aims; at the same time, it obscured the lack of consensus about specific and often controversial policy issues (Blumenfeld, 1996). Consequently, after the first year, when the GNU's general incapacity to deliver on its election promises in the developmental field became apparent, the RDP became an equally potent symbol of that failure. The release of the RDP White Paper in September 1994 signified the first major point of departure from both the goals and the ethos of the initial RDP document (Adelzadeh, 1996). It unsuccessfully attempted to reconcile the original Keynesian approach to the RDP with a set of policy statements and recommendations that were inspired by the neo-liberal framework that had long been the alternative offered, even if in different variants, by big business, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Bank, and, not least, the apartheid state itself in its twilight years in the form of the Normative Economic Model (NEM).

The key policy framework which has determined the trajectory of the post-apartheid economic transformation is the Growth, Employment, and Redistribution (GEAR) policy that the Department of Finance, now the National Treasury, introduced in June 1996 (Weeks, 1999; Heintz, 2003) and that was during the term of President Mandela (1918 – 2013). However Bond (2011) put that just as the world failed to shake the 'Washington Consensus' during the height of the September-October 2008 world economic crisis, South Africa could not shake 'Mbekism' at the same moment in that perhaps no South African talked left and walked right with more confidence and eloquence than former president Thabo Mbeki, who ruled not only from 1999-2008, but arguably also from 1994-99 as Nelson Mandela's deputy. The contention that this article asserts to be is a factor in both President Mandela (1918 – 2013) and President Mbeki (1942 -) persona to afford space for competencies informed by validated schematic framework than common sense (Maharaj *et al.*, 2011). At the same

time it needs to be noted that the responsible Minister at the time was Mr Trevor Emanuel, who was involved in drafting the RDP and later charged to be responsible for the Ministry of Planning in the Presidency during the era of President Zuma (1942 -). The same unit that spearheaded the development of the National Development Plan (NDP) that it will later be outlined how it is viewed as a catalyst to take South Africa forward.

The GEAR policies were launched in an environment in which the rand was depreciating and foreign exchange reserves were at an extremely low level. The strategy proposed a set of medium-term policies aimed at the rapid liberalization of the South African economy (Weeks, 1999). The low acceptance mode of GEAR by trade union federations eventually relate to the commitment on the will of practitioners that had to ensure that it is reduced to practice. The state of readiness of the public practitioners to drive implementation of such policies remains a matter to be questioned. That is where the notion of separating politics from administration becomes an issue in relation to a variety of definitions as expounded above. Introduction of the New Growth Path during 2009 that culminated in the development of the National Development Plan (NDP) also did not survive evoking contentious debate from the union federations and alliance partners. Comprehensive as it is the NDP run the risk of being another ambitious project introduced by politicians that can suffer poor implementation due to administration antagonism by practitioners. That asserts the issue on debate that in as much as politicians may introduce grand policies, the leadership persona that run office at a given time have an impetuous on the extent that such policies find expression for implementation.

Conclusion

This article has empathetically articulated on the notion of persona within leadership in the context of South African public administration practice landscape. However examples from other states have been made as well as in relation to renowned thinkers within the field of Public Administration to justify that their thinking were partially informed by the schematic positions that shape up their persona in discharging their duties and eventually their competencies. The fact that each leader within a polity assume responsibility as an agent that have an internal structure that determines attitudes and ethos is paramount to such leader's commitment and asserting a position that can take the governance forward without the trial and era fixation nor modifications of a policy to suite personal related egoism ulterior to intentions. The conclusion is that in the South African context, leadership persona has created policy incoherence phenomena of late to an extent that it is not clear that those in power really practice what they preach. The extent of shifting from one macro-policy to another reflect a situation wherein leadership have no idea as to at what stage will the polity stop to be becoming. From the layman's point of view that can be easily translated by the application of common sense within the complex policy landscape, yet such common sense is not that common. If there is a time that South Africa or Africa in general had to consider putting leaders in office with competencies that it takes for one to assume such office, it cannot be at a right time than now. The South African experience can serve as a point of reference as the system is currently likened to the powder keg that can break at any time unless some meaningful intervention can be done. Of course this needs to be

considered within the realm of complexities that characterise the phenomena within Africa as a whole where endogenous systems have been disregarded in favour of the Western civilisation. That eventually created a vacuum for leaders to hide in-between the quagmire as it softens to their advantage. In this regard there is a need for self-reflection for Africa to chart its way forward.

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