

The Complex Nature of the African Business Environment

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Abstract

The complex issues encapsulated in the African business environment can be settled from a moral perspective. For instance, the problem of corruption, poverty, unemployment, poor working conditions, poor systems of social control, illiteracy, bad governance and the lack of proper information disclosure. Such dilemmas in most cases emerge from undemocratic systems of governance. Undemocratic systems undermine democratic structures, systems of checks and balances, and the safe-guarding of common well-being. The consequences are a palpable increase in social injustices *cum* corrupt practices that include rampant embezzlement of funds and nepotism. As such, these consequently lead to an unwarranted violation of human rights.¹ Such immoral practices project a tragic failure in our duty as human beings and responsible stewards vested with the noble duty to safeguard/protect the dignity of others. This is emphasized by the teachings of the Christian worldview²: “In truth I tell you, in so far as you did this to one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did it to me” (Matthew 25: 40).³

Introduction

Although the African way of living used to be largely communal, that does not seem to hold any longer. As the rich get richer, the poor are becoming marginalized. Morality is no longer considered *en masse* as

¹ The Ecumenical Trust for Justice and Peace in Kenya stresses that human rights: “...are God-given and are therefore, inherent, and inalienable. This means that you are born with them, they should not be violated nor should they be taken away from you. These rights are natural to our humanity because they enable us to live like human beings” (The Ecumenical Trust 1).

² B. J. Walt defines Christian worldview as “an integrated, interpretive set of confessional perspectives on reality which underlies, shapes, motivates and gives direction and meaning to human activity” (Walt 39).

³ All scriptural quotations in this work are from the New Jerusalem Bible.

far as the acquisition of wealth or doing business is concerned. For that reason, the African business environment, like everywhere else, requires an approach which is integral and encompassing in nature. The African business environment faces a myriad of problems that include the following: corruption, lack of employment, poor working conditions, poverty, poor systems of social control, illiteracy, bad governance and lack of proper information disclosure among others. These problems are too sophisticated to be addressed without a personal commitment to re-construct our ways of thinking and functioning. Thus, moral responsibility is recommended. Accordingly, the article will treat the African business environment and ethics, the sources of harmful practices in the African business environment and conclude with some recommendations that can be instrumental in remedying the situation. I begin with the African business environment and ethics.

The African Business Environment and Ethics

The application of ethics⁴ in business is piquant. Any harmful way of behaving affects all aspects of relating in business and otherwise. In this consideration, the application of ethics in an African business context is very complex. For example, corruption in business dealings creates a vacuum of distrust, which is detrimental towards the development of a socially integrated society.

Ethics or morality should be distinguished from other values since it is not all values that are moral. The way we relate with others depends on our particular values. As argued by Bestuursetiek, “there is no way in which values of the people involved in bribery could be described as moral values.”ⁱ Hoffman and More in their claim that ethics is the study of what is good or right for human beings suppose the idea of good values and how they should be encouraged.ⁱⁱ Morality is a concept which transcends individual interests to the interests of

⁴ I use the term ‘Ethics’ here to refer to norms governing human behaviour both mental and practical.

everyone. This is the purpose of business ethics in the sense that business should be done in tandem with moral principles. Our business actions will be appropriate if they promote the common good of the others.

In the African situation as well as in other parts of the world, there have been loopholes in as far as the practice of morality in business is concerned. These loopholes can be explained theoretically through the way in which individuals or members of a group progress through stages of moral growth. As a human institution, business matures to moral stance through a train of stages.

Three Stages of Development to Moral Maturity in Business

As argued by G. J. Rossouw, there are three stages that propel to moral maturity in business. These three stages are: the **survival phase**, **reactive phase** and **pro-active phase**.ⁱⁱⁱ The process to moral maturity is not obvious for it may happen or not happen at all depending on various conditions and circumstances.

At the **survival phase** one can make any desperate move to survive in business. In such a situation, the key idea is to behave in a way that enables one to remain in business. This may include bluffing, exploitation of customers or the marketing expired products among others. It is otiose therefore to talk of morality in such a situation. As Bestuursetiek puts it, “In this situation, moral considerations are often overridden by the prospect of material gain, people cannot afford losing any income whatsoever.”^{iv} However, business people who wish to make progress in business have to learn how to deal with their consumers. Otherwise, very few consumers are ready to deal with business persons who bluff. For Bestuursetiek, “It goes without saying that very few will respect, appreciate or support a business that is continuously involved in cheating, or other immoral activities.”^v

The second stage of business development is the **reactive phase**. This occurs when the minimum requirements for survival have been

achieved and business considers doing business from an ethical perspective. At this level also, business comes to realize the wellbeing of consumers as the only way to make progress in future business transactions. Business which does not respect or deal well with those it offers services is bound to collapse for they will seek an alternative. Any business destined to flourish is bound to respect the laws of the state, protect ecology and enhance the quality of life of its employees.^{vi} Any sound business therefore is to work towards establishing a modicum of a healthy relationship with the entire society by providing palpable services.

The third level is the **pro-active phase**. Here, business has the responsibility of making ethical decisions. In the previous level the demand for a business to behave morally is determined by the society. A business which wishes to survive has to conform to the needs/demands of the entire society. Under pro-active phase, a business undertaking realizes its pivotal role in the society and opts to operate in a way that promotes the wellbeing of its *clientele*. As Bestuursetiek indicates, “At this stage, business sees itself as an integral part of the larger community and makes an explicit choice to act in such a way that its activities will contribute to the creation of a healthier and more human society.”^{vii}

Most of the business activities at the pro-active level aim at contributing to both people and the natural environment. This is achieved by avoiding exploiting consumers, pollution of rivers and so on. Business begins to consider how it can adjust itself in order to promote the social wellbeing of everyone including ecology. When this is achieved, a business becomes meaningful, popular and quintessential to the society. Astoundingly, most of the businesses in Africa are on the survival stage and morality is not the issue. The aim here is to try by all means to remain in business for the means do not matter whether moral or immoral. However, the survival nature of business does not justify the absence of morality in the way it deals

with others. Hence, the famous old adage that, “We should not do to others what we would not like them do to us.”

The Sources of Harmful Practices in the African Business Environment

One of the elements that promote harmful practices in business is limited resources. This fact propels to high and unhealthy competition. In such a situation, some business persons argue that the concern is basically the survival of the business first before considering other people’s well-fare. For this group of entrepreneurs, the moment one’s survival is at stake it is only human to address one’s own needs first. In other words, it becomes a case of bread first and morals later.^{viii} Peter Singer underscores this fact when he argues that our attempts to assist the needy should never affect our own survival and wellbeing.^{ix} Singer insists that we have to struggle for our survival first even though this is not morally justifiable. However, Singer’s position is fundamentally problematic because human dignity is sacrosanct. In my view, although most of the businesses in Africa are in the survival stage, the survival nature of business may not justify the absence of morality in the way it handles its customers or transacts its business. Further complication in the African business environment is highlighted by the following factors:

Corruption

The tales and trails of corruption have thrived in most of the African countries since independence days. Corruption is a ubiquitous phenomenon that poses threat to institutions, governing structures and accountable leadership. Corruption Like climate change, crop pests, dirty politics and mismanagement is a major threat to development in Africa. For instance, “Leaders and experts say “dirty,” politics and poor management of resources are hurting the agriculture sector leading to persistent food insecurity in the continent.”^x Speaking during this year’s African Green Revolution Forum in Kigali, Rwanda, former US Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs Jendayi Frazer said “corruption in agriculture sector and vested interests of

politicians and government officials, have serious impact on food production.”^{xi} Underscoring the same concept, Dr. Frazer said, “A leader gets elected today and the following day starts accumulating money for the next election’s campaign. The few projects they implement are meant to attract votes and not to empower the people.”^{xii} Rockefeller Foundation president Rajiv Shah said, “It is a fact that corruption in agriculture sector is rampant and it needs strong leaders to uproot it,” said Dr. Shah. He added that if corruption is tackled properly, agricultural production could increase even in the face of climate change and other threats be-devilling the sector.”^{xiii}

In a country like Kenya, corruption has affected agricultural production in large scale ranging from distribution of fake fertilizer to importation of contraband food items that flood the market to the detriment of local farmers. Agriculture PS (Permanent Secretary) Richard Lesiyampe and former National Cereals and produce Board (NCPB) managing director Newton Terer are currently facing corruption charges relating to a 5.6 billion maize purchase that saw thousands of farmers short-changed as cartels lined their pockets with money.^{xiv} The African Union (AU,) during its 30th Assembly of Heads of State and Government held early this year in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, declared 2018 the year of fighting corruption, saying the vice is a hindrance to sustainable development.^{xv}

In common parlance, corruption can be expressed as an abuse of public responsibility, a conduit to fulfill egotistic interests. As an epitome of structural chaos, K. S. Kuhumba describes it as “an abuse of the power that has been entrusted to officials presiding over public institutions. It includes fraud, bribery, and rejection of established ethical conduct.”^{xvi} From a political perspective, M. McMullan elaborates on what it means to be corrupt by saying, “a public official is corrupt if he accepts money...for doing something that he is under duty to do anyway, that he is under duty not to do, or to exercise a legitimate discretion for improper reasons.”^{xvii} For Varda Eker, Corruption is

nexus to the “practice of using the power of office for making private gain in breach of laws and regulations nominally in force.”^{xxviii}

E. Ekweme defines corruption as “the violation of the fundamental human desire to know, to ask further relevant questions, especially moral questions that pertain to the individual’s wellbeing and that of his or her fellow human beings irrespective of the family, kin, country, institution, race, and country.”^{xxix} In Kenya for example, trade in illegal sugar and other commodities has been thriving for years with the full knowledge of authorities—Kenya Bureau of Standards, Kenya Revenue Authority, Kenya Ports Authority, Anti-Counterfeit Agency, the Police and investigative agencies have always known the presence of illegal trade.^{xx} As a case study, K. Kuhumba cites the venture of multinational companies from the developed world that bstride the continent like a colossus in search for resources that include minerals, scrap metal and fossil fuel among others. Wherever these multinationals have succeeded in their venture, the outcome is achieved in cahoots with the germ of local leaders.

E. Ekwueme refers to this wanton malpractice as “‘corruption-with;’ that is, where shareholders of multinational companies collaborate with local leaders to carry out fraudulent activities.”^{xxxi} Similarly, the same multinationals are also said to purchase huge swathes of land for agribusiness or mining hence compelling locals to be evicted from their ancestral dwellings. For them, its business first without bothering about what happens to the *hoi polloi*. This fact propels to what Ekwueme calls ‘corruption-against’ a kind of mismanagement that denies people from benefiting from resources fraudulently harvested from their land.^{xxii} Corruption therefore has rampantly played a key role in engendering environmental pollution, ethnic conflicts *cum* tensions, land clashes and persistent lack of job opportunities.

Bad Governance

Dictatorship regimes in Africa have contributed towards the lack of moral practices in business. Due to porous systems of governance,

material individualism operates as the order of the day in most of the African countries. Any clinched political position is meant to influence and enhance the proverbial saying that “it is our time to eat.” As argued by Van Der Walt, “Government is only a tool for enhancing the welfare of the individual or certain social classes like politicians, retired army generals and so on.”^{xxiii} Here, the duty of the government to propel its energies to common good is debilitated.

In such situations human rights are always at stake where consumers are exploited through poor quality products and underpayment among others. Such consumers cannot make any complaints against this especially in places where corruption is rampant otherwise they may risk their jobs. As it stands, this is against the *ethos* of human rights. Consequently, it is hard for employees or even consumers to challenge business persons when they violate their consumers rights. Donna J. Wood claims that “The under developed or even lack of democratic procedures make it extremely difficult for workers and employees and consumers to respond effectively when business people treat them morally.”^{xxiv}

Lack of Employment

Lack of employment is a common phenomenon in Africa. Most of the African countries are constantly grappling with the issue of shortage of jobs most especially for the youth. For instance, Zimbabwe’s economists predicted that the number of the unemployed was growing very high to the extent of hitting 50 and 60 per cent from 1999 to 2000. Some years back more than 30, 000 workers lost their jobs. Under employment is becoming a way of life for the broad mass in most of the African countries.^{xxv} Consequently, the rate of inflation continues to rise as interest rates continue to multiply; such a situation is said to breed a high rate of unemployment.

Furthermore, a country like South Africa, which has an estimated population of about 14 million is able to create about 30, 000 jobs or more every year in its formal sector. However, economists have

already suggested that this may not be the case for the next few years. In short, many people in Africa are generally going through difficult economic crisis hence widening the chasm between the rich and the poor. Lack of employment is in most cases caused by corruption and monopolization of resources. Such situations are highly challenged by the Second Vatican Council which claims that “there must be made available to all humanity everything necessary for living a life truly human, such as food, clothing, shelter;...the right to education, to employment...”^{xxvi}

Poor Working Conditions

Most of the business companies in Africa cannot afford to provide better working conditions for their employees. According to the Herald Reporter some years back, “Many companies are not protecting their workers against occupational hazards, including providing them with protective clothing particularly in milling and construction industries.”^{xxvii} Although this poses a lot of risk on people’s lives, the workers involved have little choice apart from working to eke out a living. Annexed to this is the blatant disrespect of workers at their places of work. Some bosses still address workers as unqualified idiots.^{xxviii} Such dilemmas leave people with minimal or no option at all. In such cases, morality becomes otiose.

Poverty

Poverty has different interpretations to different people. The poverty emphasized here is the fact of being impecunious, that is, the lack of means to meet the basic human needs in order to function economically or socially. A. Dale defines poverty as “a lack of sufficient resources, or money or to obtain nutritious food, rest, shelter, clothing in cold areas, medical care and sanitation in civilized nations, recreation and entertainment in affluent ones.”^{xxix} In most of the African countries people are so poor to the extent of not being able to afford a meal every day. Such problems have propelled many to engage in immoral practices as a conduit to earn a living. Due to high poverty levels, consumers have also not been able to make a clear

distinction between fake and genuine products as counterfeits and contraband dominate the market. Peter Warutere argues that “poverty is a major contributing factor particularly in the consumption of illicit alcohol and drugs, where consumers make choices based on price.”^{xxx} This can be directly linked to Carr’s argument which compares business to a game of poker.

Poor Systems of Social Control

Another problem that breeds immorality in the African business milieu is the absence of social control by the community in which a business offers its services and products. Any society has got a right to be treated fairly in the services it receives from business enterprises. Previously, we highlighted on reactive phase as the first level towards moral growth. This simply means fulfilling the needs of the society hence promoting common good.^{xxxi} In order to meet the needs of the society from business, the society has to be well structured, and well informed about their rights in the sense that business has the obligation to handle its consumers appropriately. Environmental consumer watch dogs are pressure groups that have to be put in place if need be. This is lacking in most African business contexts. Even where they exist, their influence is extremely minimal.

Illiteracy

There is a very close relationship between education and poverty. Going to school is very expensive and actually has become a luxury because it can be afforded by a handful. Some people have qualified to join secondary schools or even universities but due to lack of money they are unable to carry on with their education. For that reason, the level of education acquired depends on the amount of money one can afford. As Bobbs Merrill indicates, “A person is likely to get education in proportion to how much one has.”^{xxxii} This has contributed a lot towards the violation of people’s rights since they are not well informed. For example, in business people will buy a particular product just because it is well advertised while they may not be critical

about its side effects or a business person who sells expired products not knowing they can harm people health wise.

Since the greatest resource in every society is the development of people's minds, African societies need to work for a way of offering free education. This is the only radical way through which illiteracy can be eliminated. The kind of education offered also must put in to consideration the rapid changes going through the African society, that is, learning helpful courses relevant to make a living. The lack of structured and literate community can propel incessantly towards immoral practices in African business environment.

Lack of Proper Information Disclosure in Marketing Products

In business transactions, when consumers are not given adequate information, it compromises the decisions that they are likely to make. The poor, the elderly, and other marginalized groups have often been victims of exaggerated prices, substantial or highly priced products which they cannot afford from their skewed income. Arguing from the human rights point of view, workers have the right to proper, safe and healthy working conditions. By 'human rights' here I mean the existence of some condition to which persons are entitled simply because they are human beings or citizens of a nation.^{xxxiii} Employers are therefore obliged to establish safe working conditions for their workers. In such a case, workers have the right to be informed about the risks involved in a particular job.

Similarly, some employers in most cases do not inform workers about the harmful effects that may be involved in their work places. For example, inhaling poisonous gases or the handling of dangerous chemicals if inhaled. It is not easy to determine the amount of information to be disclosed to workers by a particular company but workers need at least to be warned about the dangers involved. Although employers may warn their workers about the dangers involved in their working environment, there may be no law to protect the company from being sued by affected workers. This is a dilemma

facing many business enterprises. As Donna Wood indicates, “The problem of companies is that disclosure of information on possible health hazards does not protect them from lawsuits from workers injured or sickened on the job.”^{xxxiv}

In order to avoid being sued by affected workers (through which a business might lose a staggering amount of money), most business corporations opt to keep the information secretly until a case is proved to be true. As Wood continues to argue, “The temptation is therefore to resist disclosure until health hazards have been proven, rather than giving workers information about chemicals they have been using or other hazards they have been facing which may provide ammunition for future lawsuits.”^{xxxv} Lack of proper information to workers about the dangers involved in a working milieu are quite serious. The reason being, the workers are not well informed to make a free choice on whether to accept the job or not. Also consumers who are not well informed about a particular product end up disenchanted while their needs are not professionally met. Zoeb Tayebjee’s claims that “Some supermarkets have various brands that look genuine from the colour and mode of packaging. Arresting the dealers, he adds, is laudable but more importantly educate the public on how to tell if a product is genuine or not.”^{xxxvi} Once consumers have the proper knowledge about a certain products, it is easier for them to tell the difference between genuine products from counterfeit.

Recommendations

In my attempts of trying to address the malaise, I have developed a repertoire of themes that I believe can be pivotal in restoring sanity into the African business environment. As far as I am concerned, these themes are: good stewardship, respecting rights of consumers, professional management and administration, proper checks and balances against corruption and the Christian Worldview. I begin with good stewardship.

Good Stewardship

The term steward/stewardship is etymologically coined from the Greek word *oikonomos*. In common parlance, stewardship is also closely connected to the term, economics. *Oikonomos* therefore refers to an authentic or a genuine house keeper. According to K. Kuhumba, stewardship with regard to management of natural resources involves care-holding where natural resources are managed not to fulfil the egoistic needs of the managers but to provide for both the living and the generations to come.^{xxxvii} As social beings, God persuades every human person to be an accountable steward. For B. Mondin,

Man is created in the image of God, among other reasons, by the mandate received from his creator to subject and dominate the earth. In execution of this mandate, every human being reflects the same action of the creator of the universe.^{xxxviii}

As stewards we have a duty to take good care of environment by ensuring that it becomes prolific even in business. Business as such is not simply a conduit of producing goods and services for consumption as articulated by the capitalistic ideology, neither is it a liberation for man as Marxist socialist ideology pontificates. Business in this case should be a fulfilling task, a vocation to service. However, it is important to note that stewardship is not only business oriented but an aspect that permeates each aspect of life.

In his Encyclical *laudato Si*,¹ Pope Francis argues that human beings are persuasive and relentless in operating like self-proclaimed lords and masters possessing intrinsic claims to violate the world (our common home) of her God given resources. Such violence which is candidly visible in our hearts, propelled by sin, is also noticeable in the environmental destruction facing soil, water, and air in various spheres of life. “This is why the earth herself, burdened and laid waste is among the most abandoned and maltreated of our poor; she groans in travail” (Rom 8:22).^{xxxix} As endowed stewards, we therefore possess candid responsibility towards God, towards nature and also towards our neighbour.^{xl} The obvious way of taking responsibility towards others as business people is by being genuine and transparent in the

way we do business. As stewards we have the onus to take care of creation to the level of being fruitful even in business.

Respecting Rights of Consumers

As human institutions, businesses provide goods and services for the purpose of improving the standards of living for its consumers, but sometimes they damage peoples' livelihoods, exploit workers and even displace people from their homesteads. In case of such unanticipated tragedies, it has always been a devastating experience for the affected to find the appropriate means to have their claims addressed. For most of the communities, it is a Sisyphean task to hold such businesses accountable due to candid absence of proper legal structures in business operations and obligation. Alternatively, the Kenyan Constitution for example, bears the significant legal provisions as far as the grammar of rights is concerned.

The United Nations Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights (UNGPBS) also acknowledges the responsibility of any business enterprise as far as human rights are concerned. In tandem, those businesses that violate consumer's rights should be compelled under the relevant legal procedures to shoulder the responsibility of any harm suffered or inflicted on their business clientele. For example, the tragedy of the Nyakinyua villagers in Solai (Nakuru County) following the collapse of its dam walls on the fateful night of May 9th 2018. The dam unleashed roughly 70 million litres of water cascading tragically down slope. As reported, "the water and the sludge left 47 people dead and 2000 homeless and destroyed property and infrastructure worthy millions of shillings."^{xli}

Consequently, all the business operations of the company (Patel Coffee Estate Limited) are subject to applicable laws and regulations enforceable by State institutions such as the National Environment Management Agency (NEMA and Water Resources Authority (WEMA)).^{xlii} As stipulated by the Constitution of Kenya Article 20

(1), “the Bill of rights applies to all law and binds all state organs and all persons equally.”

As human institutions therefore, businesses have the obligations to produce safe products and enterprising services to their consumers. In case, a manufactured product causes harm to its consumers, the manufacturer must take responsibility as stipulated by the law. The *ethos* of producing quality products can cushion manufacturer companies from incurring colossal loses through compensation. Ensuring safety in the production of goods and services should in most cases determine the *raison d'etre* of any prominent business.

In the case of Patel Coffee Estate Limited dam tragedy, both the government of Kenya and the company have shared responsibility to protect, promote and vindicate the rights of the victims of the tragic event. As argued by R. W. Kimotho, In 2008, the UN adopted the “Protect, Respect and Remedy framework and human rights that hinged on *three main pillars*: State duty to protect citizens against human rights abuses by third parties, including business; corporate responsibility to respect human rights; and the need for governments and businesses to ensure effective access to remedies.”^{xliii}

In similar vein, the UN Human Rights Council in 2011 approved 31 UNGPs, that operate as an authoritative blueprint on how to conduct business *vis-à-vis* the grammar of rights. The Kenya government is currently working on National Action on Business and Human Rights in reference to the three pillars cited previously. Article 21 (1) of the Kenyan Constitution acknowledges the duty of the State to promote human rights from being violated by third parties including business entrepreneurs. This will practically be achieved through promulgated laws and other legal means of proceeding with regard to operating businesses. The Article also stipulates enforcement mechanisms in reference to such significant laws and a process of redress to victims of any harm caused whenever such laws are violated in pursuit of any business transactions.

Business corporations should therefore operate without violating the rights of their employees, the rights of communities annexed to them, the rights of their consumers and those of the entire society. Any business that causes harm to its consumers should seek appropriate means to address the perpetrated harm. Since it is not obvious for a business to detect its role in violating other people's rights, the UNGPs calls upon ALL businesses to be aware of its responsibility as far as human rights are concerned, to protect and embellish human rights carefully and responsibly. For R. W. Kimotho, "Businesses need to regularly conduct human rights impact assessments or integrate human rights into environmental and social impact assessments."^{xliv} For instance, a prompt inspection of the Patel Dam tragedy before the long rains could have been instrumental in identifying the possibility of a titanic overflow to the detriment of hapless inhabitants of the milieu. That way a plausible solution would have been established to remedy the situation in advance.

Any promising business should therefore ensure proper checks and balances are in place and establish—reliable means that ensure their operations do not by any means violate other people's rights. Many at time, businesses focus on maximizing profits rather than promoting people's rights or even producing quality products and noble services which contradicts the essence of business.

Professional Management and Administration

For any sound organization to achieve its prospective goals, professional management is quintessential. T. Erickson argues that, management is the driving force that leads, guides, and directs an organization towards the accomplishment of pre-determined goals and objectives.^{xlv} As an administrative strategy, management can be exercised through a myriad of activities that include planning, monitoring and evaluation, recruiting competent staff and establishing tight control systems. Good management skills that pay attention to

the welfare of the personnel and the world in general is prolific for any promising and reliable business venture.

In similar vein, Bob Collymore, CEO, Safaricom (one of the leading telecommunication companies in Kenya) and a member of the B Team⁵ argues “There is no business argument for a world that continues to consume and produce itself into oblivion. We need an economic system that does a better job of extending prosperity to all, reducing inequality, and preserving the planet for the future generations.”^{xlvi} This is the germ of ideology behind the prospects of the B Team with regard to efficiency and productivity in doing business.

The organization is upbeat to reach out to CEOs, various investors and business entrepreneurs and equip them with the required skills on how to manage their businesses in a more productive, profitable and transparent manner. B Team is encouraging business leaders to channel their efforts in three main initiatives: Net Zero green-house gas emissions by 2050; Governance & transparency; 100 per cent Human at Work.^{xlvi} A healthy business environment is that in which employees feel valued and their work highly appreciated. This way they feel encouraged and fired to produce even more since besides working they also cherish a palpable sense of belonging. As Collymore argues, “Happy employees are better decision makers, more effective managers and become better leaders, and that results in happy customers and better business performance. This has made employee satisfaction a critical function of the leadership team, and this is where “100pc human at work” begins.”^{xlvi}

Collymore^{xlvi} gives five elements that he believes can be instrumental towards establishing professional and transparent management. First, acknowledge that employees are human beings who desire to be

⁵ Not-for-profit initiative formed by international business and civil society leaders to advocate for a better way of doing business for the wellbeing of people and the planet.

treated with respect. Leave days, flexible working hours and the ability to switch off after work is a minor investment that can be pivotal in making a business efficient. It is such a great feeling for an employee to sign off with the assurance of having some time to catch some rest. Second, establish a conducive working ambiance in the place of work. Employees should be able to abstract a sense of being at home in the place of work. Third, invest in both personal and professional growth and assist people to bring out the best of themselves. Four, pay attention to relationships by encouraging transparent communication and make an effort to listen. Those employees who feel appreciated and respected can easily cultivate the habit of being transparent, hard-working and can persevere in times of challenges and difficulties.

Proper Checks and Balances Against Corruption

In order to fight corruption, some formidable checks and balances have to be put in place. Some African countries are already in the front line in this regard. Tanzania has the *Tanzania Prevention and Combating of Corruption Institution* (PCCB). Kenya has the *Ethics and Anti-Corruption Commission* (EACC). South Africa has the *Public Protector* (PP) while Namibia has the *Anti-Corruption Commission of Namibia* (ACC).¹ Such institutions can be helpful in minimizing the vice that is overwhelmingly becoming problematic even in the world of business.

The Christian Worldview

Business mal-practices in Africa seem to contradict the essence of the Christian worldview of caring for others. The Christian Worldview obliges us to be good and to avoid hurting others.^{li} In the Gospel of Matthew, Jesus underscores this idea in the context of God and his relationship with man. “You have heard that it was said, you shall love your neighbor, and hate your enemy; but I say to you love your enemies, and pray for those who persecute you so that you may be the sons of your father who is in heaven; for he makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and the unjust (Matthew 5: 43-45).

Business persons have the candid obligation to heed the noble words of I. Kant that underscore the Christian worldview: “Now I say, man and, in general, every rational being exists as an end in himself and not merely as a means to be arbitrarily used by this or that will. In all his actions, whether they are directed to himself or to other rational beings, he must be regarded at the time as an end.”^{lii} The ideal Christian conception that God is love is the first step towards being ethical in business. Since God himself is holy and full of love, human beings, created in His image need to exercise this love. As Jesus says in the gospel of Mark: “You shall love your neighbor as yourself” (Mk 12:31).

Conclusion

Although business and ethics are compatible, the African business environment has been complicated to some extent in as far as the integration of ethics and business is concerned. Such an exacerbation has been jettisoned by a number of factors that propel businesses to operate against moral business practices although this fact does not make immoral practices moral. A pronounced awareness in some of these factors can help raise concerns on how the African society is organized, managed or governed by practices that at times can be harmful to business. As a consequence of this complication, the paper argues for moral sobriety and responsibility as a tenable way in dealing with some of the moral dilemmas persisting in the African social milieu. First, the African business environment should consider carefully the suggested solutions that most probably bear some insights that can be pivotal in addressing problems in business. Second, since we have an African worldview, philosophy and culture, these are already stepping stones towards the establishment of formidable structures with regard to doing business in a manner that promotes common good, justice, fairness and respect for human rights. Third, Anti-Counterfeit agencies in our respective countries should scale up consumer awareness campaigns to regulate consumer’s inclination for contraband goods and services. It is the responsibility

of such agencies to educate consumers not to engage in malpractices that threaten moral principles in business. Fourth, Anti-Counterfeit Agencies should be in the forefront to educate consumers on the bad-side of acquiring fake certificates online, or from unscrupulous colleges because this contributes to both illicit trade in knowledge and technology products.^{liii} Lastly, any effort made towards creating moral consciousness in the society will be instrumental in the fight against all kinds of illegal trade, cushion the drivers of economic development and nurture a booming social renaissance.

Endnotes

- ⁱVenster Op, Bestuursetiek. *A Window On Business Ethics*. Potchesroom: Potchesroom University For Christian Higher Education,1993), 128.
- ⁱⁱVenster Op, *A Window On Business Ethics*, 128.
- ⁱⁱⁱG. J. Rossouw in Venster Op, *A Window On Business Ethics*, 131.
- ^{iv}Venster Op, *A Window On Business Ethics*, 128.
- ^vVenster Op, *A Window On Business Ethics*, 128.
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