

Ethical leadership in and through the family, religious, secular traditions and the youth

ABSTRACT

This article describes the ethical roles of the Family, Religious and Secular Traditions, and Youth as an attempt to explore and reflect on new ways of moral formation and transformation. Challenges of the 21st century seem to overpower any interventions for a morally good society. The 'societal homes' in which ordinary 21st century families and youths lives in, have become unsafe and unpredictable. Religious and secular institutions' roles are neither certain nor trustworthy. Moral and ethical challenges of our day play itself out in a 'vacuum' of a 'free for all' tendency. The socio-economic reality of South Africa exacerbates the problem of responsible and morally good citizenry. Dysfunctional families are the direct cause for the moral decay; and calls for 'a living hope' that inspires families and youth to become active agents with new ethical and moral values. Families are the most powerful agent of socialisation. Spiritual leaders could assist in the creation of a new 'sense of the world'. South Africans have a common ethical calling and responsibility, and should build a national culture of integrity. Families, youths and religious societies are the most basic agents for moral and ethical formation and transformation.

1. INTRODUCTION

This article is part of a series of articles and describes the views of academic exponents and reflective practitioners delivered at three different conferences, namely Ethical Leadership in and through the Family; Religious and Secular Traditions and Youth (www.elp.org.za). The primary objective of this article is to serve as a resource tool, and does not intend to provide a theological reflection or in-dept ethical theory development on the subject.

The challenges of the 21st century¹ are so vast that it overshadows the numerous interventions for a morally transformed society. Leaders' ethical roles and the moral fibre of communities and its citizens are no longer pre-determined and established factors (Koopman & Vosloo, 2002:1-56). The different cultures of societies have shifted like tectonic plates and left a fragmented image in the roles and lives of leaders and their communities. This is the place in which ordinary 21st century families and the youth must live in (compare Boikanyo & Donnell, 1997). The role of religious and secular institutions is neither certain nor trustworthy. Traditional institutions left the centre stage of society and have shifted to its fringes (Roxburgh, 2005:34-36). The only certainty is a general uncertainty and a vacuum of clearly defined roles and responsibility (Dames, 2005:25). The moral and ethical challenges of our day play itself out in this 'vacuum space' of a 'free for all' tendency-society. The socio-economic reality of South Africa adds to this dilemma and exacerbates the problem of responsible and morally good citizenry².

1 Compare Gibbs and Coffey (2001).

2 Koopman (2007) expands our socio-economic scope, for it is only with (an Africa) continental

Unemployment may be regarded as one of the major contributors to the degeneration of civil society's moral fibre. The *Mail and Guardian* (11 November 2005) for example, reported that the unemployment rate in Delft, one of the suburbs on the Cape flats, is between 65% and 75%.

2. CONTEXT

High unemployment, alcohol and drug abuse is generally cited as key factors contributing to the high crime rate in communities (ELP Report on Gender Workshop, 2006:2). Domestic violence and sexual abuse is a direct result of these crime incidences (ELP Youth Workshop, 2006:1). Crime activities are often linked with gangsterism which is rife and a socio-economic reality on the poverty-stricken Cape flats (Mac Master, 2003:59-60; Pinnock, 1997:1-6). There is an estimated 100 000 gang members affiliated to 137 gangs of which 28 gangs are the most notorious for its brutal rapes and killings in the area (Special Assignment, SABC News 12/10/2004). Some families in these crime infested communities are ironically supportive of and are themselves recipients of financial support by crime syndicates. The rationale behind this scenario is the high unemployment rate and the livelihood support that crime syndicates provide to struggling families. A religious leader at the ELP's Labour Conference (3-4 April 2007) raised the following question: *what to do with crime syndicates who contribute to the church's soup-kitchen?* This question could indicate that the ethical challenges for church leaders and families and the immoral practices in communities, are complicated and pose ethical and moral questions to traditional and contemporary 'ethics and morality'.

The abovementioned scenario calls for informed ethical leadership to address contemporary moral challenges in South African. South Africans are called upon to explore and reflect on moral formation and transformation that would promote, advocate and instil values which will foster moral transformation (Villa-Vicencio & De Cruchy, 1994:ix-xi). This article will describe some of the key perspectives, which various leaders hold, on the current moral challenges in society. This will be done with reference to ethical leadership in and through the Family, Religious and Secular Traditions, and the Youth.

3. ETHICAL LEADERSHIP IN AND THROUGH FAMILY³

The collapse of family life is the direct cause of moral decay in society⁴. De Klerk-Luttig (Die Burger, 21 November 2007) defines the family's contemporary status with the concept: 'broken families'⁵. This challenge can only be answered by developing appropriate values and a family-based culture (Volmink, 2005:39).⁶ The call for 'a living hope that inspires people to become

perspective that we would be able to deal with the ethical and moral challenges at hand. The influence of foreigners from the rest of Africa and their ordinary and daily economic and labour markets of poorer South African communities cannot be disregarded, more so in light of the recent xenophobia attacks.

3 The *Ethical Leadership in and through the Family Conference* was the ELP's first public engagement and was held in Cape Town on 17 and 18 August 2005.

4 Children are under siege by drugs; children and women live under the constant threat of abuse; and the family often lacks to be the source of comfort and security (Sampson, 2005:19-20).

5 De Klerk-Luttig depicts a pathological state of 'brokenness' of many parents and their children. It would almost be impractical to expect of these parents to partake in the moral formation of their own children. (Die Burger, 21/11/07).

6 Engela Volmink and her husband adopted ten children to become a multiracial family with eleven

active participants in the war against these detractors of our common good and our drive towards lives of contentment', is what contemporary families need (Sampson, 2005:20). Values and culture 'should be learned in the moment when problems are solved together as families reflect on these experiences' (Volmink, 2005:39).

The family - a home for all in the 21st century

The Volmink family deconstructed traditional societal assumptions on how and what should constitute families (compare Olson & Leonard, 1996:8-11). They are living proof that the family can be a "home for all"⁷ – the vision of the Premier of the Western Cape (Volmink, 2005:40). The Volmink family serve as a practical model that different family expressions in South Africa can be an enriching example of positive social capital transformation. Family types in the 21st century are plural and universal in composition - families consists of nuclear, single-parent, child-headed, same sex and other forms of families (Louw, 2005:17; Koopman, 2005:20). Families function as primary agents or spaces for moral and ethical leadership formation and transformation (Koopman, 2005:21; Louw, 2005:17; du Preez, 2007:1)⁸. The content or virtues of the formative and transformative functions of families is respect, equality, dignity, love, compassion, sacrifice, patience, loyalty, trustworthiness, justice, etcetera (Mathee, 2005:28; Koopman, 2005:21). Families are the foundation of any society and form society into the people we are. Patterns of behaviour and emulation of role models are learned within the family context (Louw, 2005:17).

Families as the moral fibre in society

Louw, rightly so, argues that families are confronted with numerous factors of which poverty is the severest, in our history and contemporary glocal⁹. environment. Poverty militates against healthy family living. He adds that families are challenged daily by media headlines capturing the pathologies of society over against thousands of families that nurture well-adjusted, morally sound, progressive human beings that contribute in creating a better world. We should "...celebrate our families as we listen to mutual stories, engage with one another and learn new things that will strengthen us in the work of building our families and re-building the moral fibre of our communities" (Louw, 2005:17). Moral formation originates in the formative years of people and is a product of the home, school and environment (Liebenberg, 2006:79). De Klerk-Luttig (Die Burger, 21 November 2007), however, holds that the primary educative role of the family home is being replaced by teachers as secondary educative agents. The reason for this is the fact that mature people do often not live out their own morality. Jamodien (2006:151-152), argues convincingly for a parental environmental approach to foster moral identities and character.

Families as agents of socialisation

Naidoo (2006:154) on her part emphasises the fact that the family is the most powerful agent

children. This family is a practical reflection of the ideal of the 'rainbow' nation (Volmink, 2005:39).

7 Koopman (2005:22) defines this ideal as the goal of moral formation and ethical leadership.

8 Louw (2005:17) declares families as formative institutions with its pervasive influence in our lives. By reaffirming the centrality of the family we can establish and maintain our inner moral compass in life.

9 "The term 'glocal' refers to the individual, group, division, unit, organisation, and community which is willing and able to 'think globally and act locally'" (<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Glocalisation> - accessed on 9 May 2008).

of socialisation. Naidoo calls for influential, significant male and female role models in the life of a growing individual. “Traditionally speaking, a child needs both ‘mothering’ and ‘fathering’ in order to develop an understanding of the world and its people. Moral messages given to children, of course, form the basis for the development of an ethical mind-set and help individuals make informed decisions about what is right and what is wrong”. Naidoo employs an Eastern cultural framework to illustrate why the family, particularly its senior members, should be perceived as having a huge influence in a child’s life: “... ones mother, father, and teacher embody God and it is through the virtues and teachings of each of these figures that God is ultimately realized” (Naidoo, 2006:154). She concludes that the aforementioned experience, in a sense, is the origin of what it means to be ethical and sets the stage for the development of an ethical mind-set.

The home is the foundation from where moral and ethical youth must be nurtured to become servant leaders to society ‘without being a burden’. The reality, however, is that young people are being brought up in dysfunctional homes with the absence of a firm moral and ethical foundation. “Some of us are extremely privileged to have grown up in homes where we have been taught the responsibility that needs to be shown toward life” (Gamielidien, 2006:171).

Buys (2006b:173) states that *The Youth Commission* is in full support of the work of the Ethical Leadership Project. The promotion of a similar Family Commission or family movement should also be recognised and developed. He calls for the establishment of significant (family) teams and community; the creation of networks of people working together towards a shared goal; the inculcating of a spirit of diverse dialogue and discussion, to cross racial and class divides. The youth and families should embrace leadership and participation with different people. Everyone has a responsibility, as a citizen, to participate in discourse. “Therefore, we must pay attention as to where we can find opportunities to participate within public forums of discourse” (Buys, 2006b:175). Religious and Secular Institutions could fulfil such a need.

4. ETHICAL LEADERSHIP IN AND THROUGH RELIGION AND SECULAR TRADITIONS¹⁰

There is evidence (*Mail & Guardian*, 13 April, 2006) that more and more people are looking to religions and various other spiritual/philosophical traditions to provide meaning, hope and guidance – in a world that seems to have ‘lost the plot’ in so many ways (Lazarus, 2006:69).

Fostering spiritual moral transformation

This section will address different perspectives on the theme ethical leadership in and through religious and secular traditions. The contribution that the religious and secular traditions could make to foster moral transformation should not be underestimated (Boezak, 2006:89).

Pearson (2006:46) calls on leaders embodied in the Word of God and with spiritual sensitivities, to make sense of the world.¹¹ Ethical leadership has a spiritual foundation (Matthee, 2006:83). The virtue of humanity has an inherent spiritual identity, and strength within the framework of ethical leadership. The Buddhist practice, for example, is the ethical training of body, speech and mind to avoid doing harm, to do good, and to cultivate tranquillity and clarity of the mind (Walter, 2006:95-96). The ethical responsibility of spiritual leaders and institutions is and was never without costs. “Men and women who are prepared to protect the weak and the vulnerable;

10 Refer to the Report on the Ethical Leadership Conference in and through Religious and Secular Traditions, 2006, www.elp.co.za.

11 Solomon, for example lived a life of high moral value (Proverb NIV Bible).

and stand on the side of the poor, the oppressed and the marginalised” (Pearson, 2006:46).

Servant leadership for society

Society is in need of servant leadership (Liebenberg, 2006:75). Leaders need to act against poverty, the tendency of disrespect for life in all its ugly guises, HIV/Aids, unemployment and exploitation as blight on the moral landscape of our society (Pearson, 2006:47). “Ministers of hope” in “this season of hope” [Thabo Mbeki] should address the culture of cynicism, despair and discouragement that characterises our society (Pearson, 2006:47). The virtue of righteousness and hope giving is a primary characteristic of religions, especially to feed, clothe, and to show hospitality to those in need, locally and globally¹².

It is the social obligation and not the orthodoxy of belief or ritual practice (important as these are) in virtually every religion, that is posited as the necessary obligation for fulfilling the Law (Pearson, 2006:48). Pearson adds that today’s challenge is to live without enemies and without scapegoats while the temptation of the ‘fortress nation’ and the ‘church refuge’ tendencies is growing stronger. He holds that this tendency is evident at all ends of the political spectrum of South Africa (Pearson, 2006:52).

Research in the area of indigenous ‘knowledges’ within Native American, African and South African contexts has emphasised the deep pain and damage that has occurred through colonialism (Lazarus, 2006:56-57). We are faced with an immense challenge as a human race to learn, listen to, and respect each other’s being, views and worldviews. Lazarus (2006:57) sees this as the central challenge of developing ethical leadership to promote moral transformation of our societies.

Ethical leadership as welcoming the stranger

Pearson (2006:53) proposes the concept “*filoxenia*” referring to welcoming the stranger as a primary demand of our times. *Filoxenia* is to live together with other people as a normal condition of social life. It means living together with the one who is close and the one who is far away. It refers to the values of bonds, to belonging, to engaging the other, to solidarity. Lazarus (2006:55-56) addresses the topic from a community psychological perspective with the focus on an understanding and response to the person-in-context. She holds that the relationship between intra-psychic, inter-personal, and broader systemic factors need to be grasp and ‘targeted’ in the attempt to solve problems and foster positive development of both personal and social transformation, simultaneously¹³. From a sociological point of view, social institutions such as the family, education, religion, economy, mass media, and the political system are part of the mixture of spheres of life that frame our living, and ‘make us who we are’.

The shift from a communal way of life to individualism

Moral decay in the country could be ascribed to the shift from a communal way of life to individualism (Mndende-Icamagu, 2006:71). “The focus on individual rights more than communal rights has made people to ignore the moral principles ...” (Mndende-Icamagu, 2006:71). Individualism in African Religion is regarded as inhuman. *Umntu ngumntu ngabantu*¹⁴ generally

12 The values which South Africans embody may serve as an exemplary beacon of ethical leadership and the enrichment of society’s moral fibre. ... the unified vision of our colourful diversity can serve as an inspiration for the rest of the world (Pearson, 2006:48).

13 A major challenge facing South Africa is to develop a ‘morally transformed society’ in addressing the breakdown in ‘community’, and developing a strong ‘*sense of community*’ (Lazarus, 2006:60).

14 Harmony within oneself, clan, society, nature and the spiritual world forms the basis of a healthy

signifies the inherent value of community (Mndende-Icamagu, 2006:71). Religious communal societies provide the most strategic starting point for dialogue on values in South Africa (Buys, 2006a:105). Religious youth networks are increasingly becoming the biggest remaining vehicle for participation of young people for the benefit of others. This becomes especially critical when we challenge the consumer culture that is built around brands and labels, as well as the growing interest in rediscovering traditional African identities.

The role of religious and secular traditions' leadership

Religious leaders, and leaders of other secular traditions, do and can play a central part in ethical leadership and the moral transformation of society (Koopman & Vosloo, 2002:93-149). These leadership positions in our community and society are perceived as 'role models' and have to accept the social responsibility of reflecting the values and practices we are trying to promote as we grow from the ashes of apartheid into a genuinely caring society (Lazarus, 2006:69). Shutte (2006:113) cautions against a religious force of any kind and calls on religious leaders to judge themselves against the standards of the humanity we share. Religion's transformative function is only possible where religious leaders are willing to critically re-examine their conservative moral views (Boezak, 2006:89; Bunge, 2001:5). We need mediation of growth and transformation of others and our society through creative education strategies that facilitate deep learning and transformation, as well as the political strategies that engage with all the social institutions through these struggles (Lazarus, 2006:69). The modern democratic society is faced with both opportunities and problems. Religion could, however, provide an objective framework of ethical rules and conduct to be applied within even secular systems (Liebenberg, 2006:80). The development of individuals who can function in moral communal ways is required. We need leaders who are ethical and beyond reproach and religions that respect our humanity's capacity for self-determination (Shutte, 2006:113)¹⁵. It is clear that we need partnering institutions which would respect and acknowledge their shared experiences and 'knowledges' (Shutte, 2006:113).

De Klerk-Luttig's (Die Burger, 21 November 2007) observation of a search for spirituality (not necessarily religion) should be noted. The question of what role the youth could play in the formation of ethical leaders and the development of a morally transformed society is therefore important.

5. ETHICAL LEADERSHIP IN AND THROUGH YOUTH¹⁶

The majority of people who suffers under the burden of poverty, unemployment, illiteracy, violence, as well as the impact of HIV/AIDS on families are under 35 years of age. ... Government policy¹⁷ has declared since 1994 that young people should stand at the centre of all development efforts from government as well as in all other sectors (Buys, 2006b:101-102).

society (Mndende-Icamagu, 2006:71).

15 "The ability of South Africans to move beyond their different theological and scriptural perspectives, in the interest of the common good, is vital for diversity, and the country's constitution. ... the more we will begin to bear the fruits of ethical leadership" (Matthee, 2006:82).

16 This conference sought to address the question on how the youth could remain effective, act authentically, remain hopeful and take an ethical and moral stance on all matters, despite contemporary pressures (Youth Conference on 22nd and 23rd June at UWC; www.elp.org.za, 2006).

17 The National Youth Commission was established in 1996 that had the task of drafting the national policy framework for youth development in South Africa (Buys, 2006:101-102).

The 'So what' generation

De Klerk-Luttig (Die Burger, 21 November 2007) addressed the *Conference for Moral Regeneration and Poverty Alleviation* at Stellenbosch University on the subject, the youth today, grounded on a wide spectrum of research results. De Klerk-Luttig defines contemporary youth as the 'so what' generation – nothing shock them anymore; they experience everything and do not demonstrate the need to be shocked by anything; they create high-risk challenges (like "trainsurfing" and experimenting with drugs) if they are bored; sex is perceived as a right, without any responsibility. Research in 2005 indicated that 41% of all learners from grade 8 to grade 11 were sexually active; many had sex with three people three months before the research. The average age for the first sexual experience is 13,5. The Medical Research Council found that 41% of all 14 year olds are sexual active; 29% conduct safe sex. However, the tendency of youth to hurt each other and the rape of learners by fellow learners is increasing. Sexual abuse of the youth has increased significantly; the average age of victims and offenders is decreasing (43% of all offenders is younger than 18). Exposure to pornography, violent communities, the disintegration of families and the media (especially television) were found to be the root causes of said violent behaviour.

The irrelevancy of ethical leadership?

The question of ethical leadership in the face of the unprecedented challenges the youth has to deal with may be 'irrelevant' in a sense. Our first notion could be that it is not the responsibility or role of the youth to fend for their development, safety and security. The primary 'home for all' vision should be the foundation on which every young person builds their lives and futures. The socio-economic challenges are first order issues which need political-responsible addressing before one can pose the question about ethical leadership or a morally transformed society to the youth¹⁸.

Buys (2006b:101-103), however, argues that the concepts "ethics" and "leadership" have increasingly become the framework for reflection and practice for leaders and practitioners in youth development. He is correct in that youth development should be a holistic approach regarding individual and community development. The statistical reality emphasises this fact. More than 70% of all unemployed people in South Africa are under the age of 35 and represents the biggest target group for any development¹⁹. The development of ethical youth leadership is thus crucial. Ethical leadership should be holistic, consistent and congruent with how it impacts on the whole of society and specifically youth development (O'Connel, 2006:127).

A corporate ethical responsibility for a culture of integrity

Exponents of ethics are in agreement that notions of morality should be developed into ethical leadership practices (O'Connel, 2006:126). Youth leaders should have the capacity to build relationships, foster community, accepts ownership and accountability (O'Connel, 2006:128). South Africans have a corporate ethical calling and responsibility, and should more then ever before, build a culture of integrity, where everybody values integrity (O'Connel, 2006:128). We are faced with a growing tendency of being intemperate (lack of self-control). There are

18 " ... what we did not need to hear from our national leaders is that if we moan about crime, we should just leave the country. ... The youth of South Africa has lost all confidence in the nation's political leadership" (Hill-Lewis, 2006:160).

19 " ... there is absolutely no doubt that the young can learn to contribute to the welfare of society and live lives that are meaningful" (Mtshali, 1988:1 cited in the ELP, Youth Workshop George Report, 2006:1-3).

numerous examples of leaders and citizens who act on impulses to take or do things, without distinguishing whether it is right or wrong. An example hereof, is recent occurrences of fraud and the behaviour of leaders who disregarded the needs, interests and the wishes of their followers. Leaders should learn new languages of virtues and moral values of admitting and accepting their faults (O'Connel, 2006:133):

[Durkheim, 1961: 161] ... the core dilemma of modern civil society is that the strong networks, cohesion, *ubuntu* ... has been replaced by an "anomic"²⁰ civilisation ... What is required is a fresh moral influence (a well structured and organised institution) ... (ELP, Youth Workshop George, 2006:1-3)²¹.

21st century youth are faced with multiple challenges: the knowledge and information revolution, population explosion, globalisation, economic-, technological-, ecological-, social-, cultural-, aesthetic-, political- and values revolution (O'Connel, 2006:134). These challenges should be acknowledged by the entire society and the youth should be supported to develop into ethical leaders. South Africa's peaceful transition parted with apartheid's unethical leadership – its youth should demonstrate and introduce the ethical exemplars of citizenship and governance (as Nelson Mandela and Desmond Tutu) to the rest of the world. The current situation in our country calls for caution and reflection, for we have descended in terms of our ethical integrity. The Kebble saga and the role of leaders and political parties in this regard, should sound as a warning for our future (O'Connel, 2006:134).

Fostering soulful spiritual ethical and moral leadership

Recent developments in South Africa are, however, signs of hope for the rest of the world. Youth leaders should utilise our country's developments in science, ethics, morality and economy to inspire and impact Africans and nations across the world (O'Connel, 2006:136). Youth leadership should be a process which creates an environment of mutual responsibility and integrity that encourages growth and development (Williams, 2006:140). Corruption (associated with power) amongst (youth) leaders is a growing threat to tertiary institutions and nearly every institution in our country. The test of ethical leadership, would be to find the will and means to counter the current scourge of corruption (O'Connel, 2006:141). Adequate support structures and greater leadership structures for assisting and mentoring (student) leaders, is what is required. Constant and critical reflection of leaders' perceptions of normality and morality should be developed (de Waal, 2006:145). Concepts such as "*soul*" and "*spirituality*" could engineer meaningful reflection on moral leadership and ethical conduct.²² This is a significant paradigm shift for our new democracy. There is "a growing recognition that spirituality is essential to ethical leadership, because ethical leadership emerges from our essence as human beings" (Mbhele, 2006:149-150). Ethical leadership cannot be reduced to technique. Ethical leadership develops from our identity and integrity and demonstrates authentic leadership behaviours and actions – in the

20 The meaning of this concept according to Durkheim [1893] is that it is a state where norms are confused, distorted, and unclear or not present within a particular society (ELP, Youth Workshop George, 2006:1-3).

21 The Ethical Leadership Project as an initiative of the National Moral Regeneration Movement, within the Western Cape, could represent that new ethical institution. ... the myth that the youth of today are 'apathetic agents of immoral behaviour' or 'helpless victims' can be redefined with the aid of the ELP ... (ELP, Youth Workshop George, 2006:1-3).

22 We apply the concepts "soul" and "spirituality" with a degree of hesitancy, because of their broad meaning, their somewhat taboo nature in young minds, and their overuse in popular culture (Mbhele, 2006:149-150).

moment (filled with distractions and growing demands) of action. The point where inner and outer leadership comes together, is the secret; it is the moment of truth that enables a leader to make a lasting difference (Mbhele, 2006:149-150).

‘Wells of moral consciousness’ for ethical leadership

Existing and potential young leaders need to drink from our own ‘wells of moral consciousness for ethical leadership. “It remains clear in our minds how student leaders during the apartheid struggle consulted our parents for guidance about matters they were conflicted about with respect to their roles, actions and responsibilities” (Naidoo, 2006:154-155).

Chetty (2006:157) calls for renewed attention and appropriate action if we are to develop young ethical leaders for a morally transformed society in a global world. The necessity for the development and implementation of a value based education system was never before more prevalent than now. Principled stewardship and equity in the development and utilisation of our nation’s natural resources would nurture individuals with the values of character, charity, capacity and community.

Hill-Lewis (2006:160) pleads for a new social struggle (like the 1976 youth liberation) that demands ethical leadership, one that rejects unethical governance, and one that commits itself to making responsible choices. Hill-Lewis (2006:160) emphasises that “it is a struggle, that with the help of ELP, we will fight and win. More importantly though, it is a struggle that we cannot afford to lose”. Leibrandt (2006:165) argues for cooperation between government, youth leaders in political parties, and civil society, as a means to promote ethical leadership in and through youth. Consideration of the arguments presented here could play a significant role in the development and promotion of true ethical leadership. This is crucial for a country where research has shown that society’s trust in governmental institutions is decreasing (Garcia-Rivero et al., 2002 in Leibrandt, 2006:165). Adam (2006:166-168), a grade 12 learner, registered his concern about Mr Jacob Zuma’s actions, which are raising so many questions about the credibility of our leaders.

The youth experience high stress levels and their pain and anxiety increase (Mueller, 1999:38;45). Poverty, an increase in violent crime, ecological problems, unemployment and disintegrated families are sighted by De Klerk-Luttig (Die Burger, 21 November 2007) as primary causes for the youth’s experience. The worldviews of these young people serve as an indictment to the ideal of a “home for all”. The fact that youths should witness and live in such a society is horrendous. The time is overdue for church leaders and parents to step out of their comfort zones to become ‘significant others’ in the formation and transformation of young lives and their society. This calls on the rest of our leadership, in labour, business, politics and education to be ethical contributors in the moral transformation of our society.

6. CONCLUSION

The context in which the 21st century families and the youth must live in calls for religious and secular institutions to demonstrate an ethical integrity that can cultivate renewed trust in traditional institutions of society. Society is in dire need of spiritual leadership’s demonstration of the content and practice of ethical leadership and moral transformation. The view that the collapse of family life is the direct cause of the moral decay in society should be adhered to with intent. The plea for appropriate values and a family-based culture should be at the focal point of every religious and secular tradition’s work. The role of significant others or senior family members should be explored and developed. This article has described the severe conditions the

youth has to face on a daily routine and how their futures seem almost impossible. The need for 'a living hope that inspires people to become active participants in the war against these detractors of our common good and our drive towards lives of contentment', is of paramount importance to instil the knowledge, values and skills of ethical leadership for a morally transformed society. Families, youths and religious societies are the most basic agents for moral and ethical formation and transformation.

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