

PUBLIC/CIVIL SERVICES VALUES AND ETHICS IN PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION

Status of Values

Public value refers to an appraisal of what is created and sustained by government on behalf of the public. Public values are created when policy and management strategies are politically legitimate, feasible and sustainable, operationally possible and practical, and of substantive value to the citizenry. In contrast, public value is destroyed when the wrong decision are made about the needs to be satisfied, the strategies to satisfy the selected needs and the processes to produce and deliver services.

Today, the notion of creating public value has become part of an overall managerial philosophy wherein public services are oriented toward outcomes that meet local needs and are authorized by service users and their communities.

There are several core values in public administration, such as accountability, citizenship, legitimacy and the public interest. These public values simultaneously anchor the field and propel the creation of public value and the prevention of public values failure. Preventing corruption and improving public services management is the primary goal of promoting ethical standards for civil servants.

Some of the core values are discussed below:

1. **Accountability:** This is essential in field of public administration and particularly important within the context of administrative discretion. Effective administration requires administrators to exercise the discretion with accountability.
2. **Citizenship:** It is an important public value in the field.
3. **Legitimacy:** The public interest might also be considered as significant value. Although, there are numerous types and source of legitimacy, the term can be defined simply as the popular acceptance of a governing regime, in this case public administration. More specially, legitimacy arises when the governed consent to the governing institution and believes that those institutions will rule in the public interest.
4. **Public Interest:** There is a common good that is different than the aggregate of private benefit and that common good is something that is in the interest of the larger community, even if it is against the interest of some individuals in the community.
5. **Integrity and Honesty:** Public servants hold their office in trust, which underlines two principles they shall not use public office for private gain and they shall act impartially and not give preferential treatment to any private organization or individual.

Eg., negotiation of future employment by a public official with a firm with which he has official dealings, prior to leaving public office is widely regarded as a conflict of interest situation. Only when public servants inculcate the noble values of integrity and honesty, a dent in massive corruption problem facing the country can be made.

6. **Spirit of Service and Sacrifice:** It is an essential ingredient of public services and public officials should feel inspired that they are working for a national cause.
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Problem of Values

With the increasing role of the state in modern societies, bureaucratic control in social and economic fields and the increasing use of administrator's discretion in various matters, scholar and development partners have put emphasis on the quality of its governance. Experts opine that while making decision, public bureaucracy always faces two conflicting situations such as between serving the personal or group interest and serving public interest. Therefore, for keeping the behavior of public officials congruent with public interest, along with various institutional checks, the question of morality of the administration becomes a principle concern in modern administration process.

The factors that justify the magnitude of the ethics in a contemporary public administration, more concretely are:

- Material and resource difficulties.
- Needs of a growing and multifaceted society.
- Critical and attentive perspective implied in citizenship.
- Restricting subjects and change of the administration.
- Constant demand that decision processes become more thoroughly participated.

It is crucial to have a leadership that provides integration of the values; a strong organization culture based on principles, a serious evolution/attendance and an Aristotelian process of learning and continuous recycling. This accomplishment lives in a real political will for true ethical politics, homogenous and global. It is essential to pass from imposition of bureaucratic sense to internalized practices, consensual conducts, conception of system and organizational structures.

In effect, the present reality requires innovative approaches and combined measures.

Ethical Concerns in Public Institution

Ethics in public institutions is also affected by environment, which includes:

Historical Context: History of a country affects the ethical character of the government. Corruption in India has its root in history. In British India, corruption was there.

Socio-Cultural Context: Social order of the society determines the nature of Governance System. Today, means-ends debate has been sidelined. Materialism and accumulation of wealth is growing. This has also effected the government.

Legal Judicial Context: A neatly formulated law with a clear stress over the ethical conduct can really do well. In India, laws made during the time of British are still used. They are not according to the needs of present society, hence not very effective. Like, Indian Police Act, 1861.

Political Context: A model in which politicians will be communal, corrupt and harbourers of criminals, whereas civil servants would be secular, responsive and behave as change agents cannot be an equilibrium position.

Economic Context: The level of economic development of a country is likely to have a positive correlation with the level of ethics in the Governance System. It is seen that low economic growth accompanied with high level of inequalities will lead to more unethical behaviour.

Hence due to these dimensions let us broadly try to summarize various ethical concerns in a public organization. These are:

1. **Legality and Rationality:** Government organisations have to function within the limits set by the laws, rules and regulations. Decisions should be based on rationality and logic rather than personal beliefs.
2. **Responsibility and Accountability:** Responsibility refers to the public servant's adherence to public will, whereas accountability denotes the specific methods and procedures to enforce the public servants responsibility. Responsibility is subjective and works from within, while accountability is objective and works from outside. The basis of enforcing responsibility from outside is known as accountability. Public accountability and responsibility is the hallmark of government institutions in a democracy. They have to function in its environment which consists of press, civil society, political parties and public. An administrator should not hesitate to accept responsibility for his decisions and actions. Moreover, he is also accountable to higher authorities and people who are the ultimate beneficiaries of decision and actions.
3. **Work Commitment:** An administrator should be committed to his duties and should perform his work with involvement, intelligence. This also includes respect for time and fulfillment of promises made. Work is considered not as a burden, but as an opportunity to serve and constructively contribute to society.
4. **Excellence:** An excellent administrator ensures the highest standards of quality in administrative decisions and actions and do not compromise because of convenience or ease. Excellence comes from the integration of efficiency, economy and effectiveness.
5. **Fusion:** A public official is expected to bring about fusion of individual, organizational, and social goals and should be committed to such fusion, e.g., a District Collector involved in rural development project not because of public service, but for promotion will not be able to put his complete energy. In situation of conflicting goals, a concern for ethics should govern the choices made.
6. **Responsiveness:** Public official should respond effectively to the demands and challenges from outside as well as, from within the organisation. He should be adaptable to environmental transformation and yet sustain the ethical norms of conduct. People expect government to respond and that to in a timely manner to their problems. Government organisations are subject to political direction and control. Infact, it is the machinery through which politician responds to the public interest (like registration of FIR in police stations).
7. **Utilitarianism:** While making and implementing policies and decisions, a civil servant should ensure that they lead to the greatest good (happiness, benefits) of the greatest number.
8. **Compassion:** A civil servant without violating the prescribed laws and rules should demonstrate compassion towards weaker sections of society.
9. **National Interest:** Though universal in orientation and liberal in outlook, a civil servant, while performing his duties should keep in view the impact of his action on his nation's strength and prestige. This automatically raises the level of service rendered and the products delivered.
10. **Justice:** This means giving each person what he or she deserves or in more traditional terms, giving each person his or her due. Ethics originate from the sense of justice prevailing in a particular society e.g., a child slaps another child and the third child watching finds it unethical because he believes in social justice that every human is equal and has the right to live with dignity under Article 21, which calls for protection of life and personal liberty.

11. **Transparency:** It implies openness, communication and accountability. Transparency is operating in such a way that it is easy for others to see what actions are performed. A common man is the most important stakeholder in the government organisation as he is the one who is most influenced by policies and programmes of the government. Therefore, he has the right to know. Transparency is used as a means of holding public officials accountable and fighting corruption. When a government's meetings are open to the press and the public, its budgets may be reviewed by anyone and its laws and decisions are open to discussion, then it is seen as transparent and there is less opportunity for the authorities to abuse the system for their own interests. For e.g., Right to Information includes openness through voluntary disclosure, procedure for communication and accountability through established mechanism.
12. **Integrity:** Administrative action should be based on honesty and power; positions and discretion should not be used for personal interest or any other illegitimate interest.
13. **Uniformity:** Government originations have to be consistent and fair in their treatment. There could be many more ethical concerns added to the above list like benevolence, collegiality, courage, dedication, faithfulness, representativeness, truthfulness, selflessness, loyalty, privacy, constitutionalism, tolerance, sincerity, optimism, openness, lawfulness etc. However, the overall objective is to ensure good governance with the prime concern for ethical principles, practices, orientations and behaviour. Also, these concerns are related to each other and violation of anyone automatically leads to the violation of other concerns.

Ethical Concerns in Private Institutions

Ethics in private institutions refer to the ethical principles which should govern business activities. Business ethics provides a code of conduct, which guides managers and employees in performing their jobs. Ethics lay down norms of behaviour by the business. There are many behavioural conducts which can be judged on the dimensions of ethics.

In the context of Private Institutions certain cases which can be described as unethical are as follows:

- Bribing public officials to obtain undue favours;
- Using false claims in advertisements;
- Using company properties for personal use;
- Overlooking safety violations to get the job done;
- Revealing confidential information or trade secrets to competitors;
- Accepting bribe;
- Doing personal business on company time and job using company infrastructure; and
- Claiming credit for someone else work.

Let us broadly try to summarize various ethical concerns in a private organization. These are:

1. **Responsibility and accountability** towards the stakeholders which includes customers, employees, managers, shareholders and the society.
2. **Transparency and disclosure** are important as all the stakeholders have the right to know the decisions taken and how they are implemented. Performance and results known to all the stakeholders will lead to trustworthiness, credibility and participation. Better understanding can only lead to better and long-term relationships.

3. **Integrity loyalty and honesty** are the human qualities which are required in every private organisation.
4. **Commitment** towards the goals of the organisation and towards the benefit of all the stakeholders.
5. **Statutory and legal obedience** leads to trust and better relations between private and government sector. Obedience to the laws has always been considered ethical.
6. Private organisations are needed to be **responsive** towards their clients and shareholders.
7. **Quality of products and services** is very important for every private organisation as it secures and benefits the interests of all the stakeholders. Providing quality below what the organisation is claiming is always considered unethical by the society.
8. **Excellence** which can be gained by integrating efficiency, economy and effectiveness. If a person is naturally not efficient than we cannot say that he is unethical, but if he deliberately slows down his work or don't try to give his best, then one can say that it is unethical.

However, a private organisation is more concerned with administrative efficiency rather than policy and service efficiency. Private organisations are less concerned with the satisfaction level till the time people are buying their products:

Ethical Dilemmas in Public and Private Institutions

A dilemma is something wider and more demanding than a problem. The reason is that dilemmas, unlike problems, cannot be solved in the terms in which they are initially presented to the decision-maker. Caught on the horns of a dilemma the decision-maker is not only faced with opposed and perhaps equally unwelcome alternatives; even worse their incompatible juxtaposition also implies that they are mutually exclusive in the sense that the satisfaction of the one can only be made if the other is sacrificed.

Hence according to O.P Dwivedi several fundamental questions/dilemmas arise out in public and private institutions because of unclear conduct norms. These are:

1. What favours are acceptable without being considered discourteous and rude. Should any and all kinds of gifts and hospitality be avoided? Or should it be limited to a specified minimum? If so, what should be that minimum?
2. Is a public servant only a public servant during office hours? Or ethical norms should be practiced outside office also?
3. Should the public servants interpret policies and programmes according to their individual perceptions of right and wrong or should they only adhere to the values of the institutions they are serving?
4. What should the public servants do if their personal honesty and integrity appear to be out of place in their work environment?

Absence of clear-cut guidelines could lead to some more problems such as:

- (a) Should every kind of favour extended to a friend or relative be considered unethical? There are various conditions that transform a gift into bribe.
- (b) What if the public servants are forced to indulge in unethical behaviour because of stringent rules and procedures of the organization? At times, bypassing the rules becomes very essential.