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The impact of ethics and values in enhancing trust and accountability in Public administration

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Abstract

Ethics and values are fundamental for enhancing trust and accountability in Public Administration. They serve as the foundation that connects the government with its citizens. It shapes a transparent and responsible governance system in the country. A well functioning administrative structure depends greatly on adherence to ethical standards and human values. In today's context, both governance and politics recognize that corruption and misuse of authority erode national strength. Without instilling ethics and human values in individuals, reforms cannot bring about genuine change in attitude and behaviour of the civil servants. The public institutions can only be considered reliable when their functioning is rooted in moral values. To provide the satisfactory services to the public, the governments need to adhere high standards of personal integrity and probity with sound technological administrative mechanism. The ethical orientation of political and social institutions provides direction to the society and ensures progress in the right path. For governments to deliver efficient and satisfactory services, they must uphold high levels of personal integrity, honesty, and probity. A society furnish importance for values like accountability, objectivity, selflessness, integrity, honesty and leadership in any of its institutions. Particularly, the individuals are expected more to adhere and it wish to entrust on those with administrative responsibility. Administrative ethics and values refer to the set of moral norms and principles that guide the pursuit of the common good and the practical application of ethical standards. Administrative ethics help a country to grow. To combat corruption, the Indian government has implemented various measures over time to prevent it within the country. The present study aims at examine the current state of ethics and values in politics and public administration, and to propose recommendations for effective public administration.

Keywords: Administrative ethics, moral values, corruption, accountability. selflessness, behavioral approach

Introduction

World is facing crisis in adhering values and ethics both at home and at work place. All the religious scriptures and secular scripts put forward this ethics and moral values in their own way. To what extent it is applicable in day today life and enforced is matter of concern and many debates are going on. Not only in day today life, at work place also there is need to have ethics and values. They are termed as professional ethics. When we speak about work place then we have to speak about profession or professionalism in public administration. For better administration and administrative output, there is need of professional ethics and values that have to be followed. Ethics and values are part of culture that has to be habituated by human mind. Therefore, moral values and ethics are part of things framed in human mind. Public administration essentially refers to the functioning and operational pattern of the state and its machinery. The effectiveness of its functioning largely depends on how well they are implemented. The overall efficiency rests not only on the competence of the civil servants, bureaucrats, and policy makers but also on the support of the public. Public administration constantly places individuals in situations where they must make choices like ethical or unethical, moral or immoral which affect directly the public lives. The standards of morality and professional conduct are laid down by professional associations pertaining to that particular field. The sole intension of this code of conduct is to preserve is to maintain the integrity of profession, to prevent its misuse and to protect the public from exploitation. Thus professional ethics can be defined as standards of behavior expected from particular person

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adhering particular profession. When we speak of public administration, provisions of code of conduct are mostly enforced by law of the land and some serves as general guidelines.

The moral values, attitude and ethics in administration and social institutions will replicate the concerned state and society. If Power abuse takes place in administration and politics then it may lead to corruption that ultimately weakens the nation and its systems. Therefore, Ethics and moral values play eminent part in better functioning of civic administration system. About role of ethical and moral guidelines in administration, there are many definitions. In simple words, with provided ethics and values in certain framework, it is expected more of accountability from service providers and trusteeship between the people and administration. Professional, qualified and government officials placed with high status and esteemed with respect in the social order. A society expects good governance with honesty and responsible leadership.

This type of administration can be reliably merely when it is considered deeply sensitive in human values. Until morality is inculcated in the minds, human behaviour can't be transformed. Behavioral approach helps us to study about ethics in studying administration. Basically, administration can be understood as a framework of rules and guidelines that regulate the conduct of public officials ensuring responsible behaviour in their services to the common public. Such regulations and guidelines are vital for building and sustaining the trust and confidence of citizens in the society. Ethics and human values represents the moral principles and basic standards of to perform their duties and responsibilities with fairness and accountable.

Over few decades, there is criticism about sanctity of bureaucracy and politician's role in success of welfare state. The criticism is against the presence of red tapism, nepotism, inefficiency, cumbersome and archaic rules present in the system. Many committees has advised for sweeping reforms. The main challenge is to free bureaucracy from the grip of corrupt and selfish politicians and to strengthen service oriented public representatives from adamant and stubborn administrators. The above statement is not to question about those civil servants and public representatives who are quietly working day and night in the welfare of people, system and nation. Ethics in administrative system doesn't mean only about civil servants and public representatives. It also includes all those personals who are directly and indirectly involved in state run administrative and welfare activities meant for the benefit of nation. They are like Health workers, law enforcing agencies like legal and policing services. In recent past, It also include private stake holders who run business, industry, finance etc.

The concept of Ethics in Public Administration

The term ethics originates from the Greek word *ethos*, which signifies a way or character of life. Ethics as a discipline of philosophy, deals with the study of human behaviour and moral decision making. It represents a code of conduct for human beings living in a society. It focuses on providing rational grounds for moral choices, exploring questions of right and wrong, justice and injustice. Collectively, it shapes the way of the people interact each other and coexist in the society.

Ethics in public administration refers to the moral principles, values and standards that guide the behavior and decision making ability of the public servants and civil servants. These are the principles guiding the public servants in performing their duties and responsibilities fairly, honestly and responsibly to uphold public trust and democratic values while promoting the common good. Public administration ethics thus underpin good governance. The standard norms, moral values and individual behavior are the three important aspects of ethics.

Ethics related to human being are of three types, they are meta ethics, normative and applied ethics. Further, Meta ethics further is divided to experts into three aspects based on analytics and they are realistic, anti-realistic and cognitive. The first major three ethical aspects of human interface and professional ethics fit in them at some or other place.

Determinants of ethics in Public Administration

A set of principles, norms, moral values, moral requirement and behavioural rules forms part in extending services in public administration. In the domain of public administration, one who disburse their services are known as administrators, civil servants and administrative managers. Ethics in governance has developed over a span of time and is conditioned during its cultivation by a variety of things. These are as follows;

- **Historical factors:** Lot of thinkers in world history spoke plenty on ethical principles. There are plethora of name on world platform whose ideas speak on values and ethics, some of them are like Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, Jeremy Bentham, Immanuel Kant, John Rawls, J.S. Mill, Rousseau and even Dalai Lama. Buddha, Mahavir Jain, Vivekananda, Jiddu Krishnamurthy, Sarvepalli Radhakrishna, Gandhi are some of the many who spoke on moral values and ethical norms. Differences definitely exists among the thinkers. Some find considerations are more important than senses and for some it is vice versa. According to Kant, "the human beings, never used by anyone and the morality is rooted in and justified by reason". In Aristotle's virtue ethics and in Kant's duty based ethics, an in Jeremy Bentham's utilitarianism ('the greatest happiness for the greatest number') as some of the foundational moral thoughts in thinking of Western world. J S Mill in his 1861 Utilitarianism, states that the absolute classic exposition and defense of the commonly held moral position. It also contains Mill's 1868 speech on capital punishment. All the professions, even politics and administration are not immune to the moral values and ethical norms. The long inheritance of unethical practice in governance is prone to boost the tolerance level for administrative and managerial immorality. Model and traditions set by the apex administrators, ministers and legislators also play a significant role. With passing of time the concept of administration especially in civil services in India has changed. The structure and establishment of civil services in India changed a lot when compared to British rule and independent India. Two different things can be noticed in characteristics of duties of civil services in pre and post independent India. In first case it was intended to control India politically and economically. In later case, administrative ethics

changed with the vision of Sardar Patel. For him it has to play dual role. One to keep safe Indian integrity and other is to cater service in the welfare of common citizens. Based on this set of administrative ethics were framed for Indian administrative services.

- **Socio-cultural aspects:** The administrative group surface from the midst of society itself. Obviously, societal ethics is probable reflecting in the behavior of administrators. Socio-religious establishments in the social order are significant influential instruments of getting socialization. If these establishments emphasize honesty and ethics, the impact on the mind-set of people is expected to be greatly positive and powerful.
- **Legal-Judicial aspects:** A precisely formulated decree, with a clear stress on the norms of conduct, sincerity and honesty, is probably to differentiate chaff from grain in the moral world.
- **Political aspects:** The leadership in political arena is possibly the solitary most potential influence on the morals and ethical values of citizens. The administrative establishments won't remain immune to the stages of political morality. Many times it is noticed as seen in terms of Criminalization of politics and politicization of bureaucracy. Early or study of political science is the admixture of moral, ethical philosophy and politico-economic issues. In the same way, professional ethics and public administration aspects are under the influence of political and management sciences. Political science influence with philosophical ideals whereas management science influence with technical aspects of administration. J.N. Burgess, A.B. Hart, E.J. James, F.J. Good now and A.L. Lovell are some of the political philosophers. Later, Herbert Simon's decision making theory made revolutionary impact on administrative ethics. His decision making theory comprising of rational bounded, heuristic and routines, programmed and non-programmed decisions that helped in good decision making. Simon proposed a multi-stage process involving intelligence, design, choice, and implementation in his decision making theory. Simon he further emphasized that the decisions are well based on both the aspects of factual information and value judgments. In essence, Simon's theory provided realistic and practical outlook about how decisions are made in real-world setting, there by acknowledging the restrictions and complications that influence human choice while taking a decision.
- **Economic factors:** A countries economic rise probably has positive correlation with the some form of ethics in the governance and its system. The poor economic development may tempt the less privileged sections of society in fulfilling their basic needs of existence and security.

Prerequisites to Ensure the Practice of Administrative Ethics

Administrative ethics is no way different from social or group ethics. It is created in the context of administrative and structural requirement that undergo change contextually. Historical, socio-cultural and political aspects are some of the contextual factors that influence the administrative ethics.

- **Faith, Trust and determination:** In pursuing excellence and quality in professional operations there

is need to develop ethical standards. Pre-determined ethical standards influence the behavior of new entrants and senior staff in any organization. Establishing standards shall help in avoiding self-esteemed or administrative arrogance.

- **Blending of ethics into politics:** The very common problem found in public administration is political involvement and corruption. The gap of leadership and its trustworthiness between the politics and administration is increasing with the passing of time. H.V. Kamath, one of the eminent contributor and founders of the Indian Constitution, all the time regretted with the declining moral values and ethics of persons in public life and administration. It resulted in unhealthy struggle and competition for power, position and wealth by any odd means.
- **Character building and related issues:** administrative morality is one of the crucial part of the general morality in any given community. Success of any government depends upon civic consciousness and this aspect plays a pivotal role. Awareness on such consciousness can be brought through educational institutions and by other popular means like mass media. Literate society of a country can cooperate with the personnel in the public service better, and vice-versa. This mutual co-operation can work towards the development of any given society.
- **Impartiality and objectivity:** Public servants must be objective while dispensing his duties and avoid red tapism and corruption, so that dignity and authority of any public office can be maintained. They must execute and implement all the policies and programmes framed by the government for public convenience strictly and legally or in according to rules and regulations.
- **Political neutrality:** Without this feature upholding the integrity and efficiency of the administrative system is difficult in democratic setup. The clear meaning is that the civil servants or bureaucrats should provide free and frank advice to the government, impartially without any political titrations.

Importance of Ethics in Public Administration

- **The utilization of public resources:** The responsible use of resources guarantees that society's development. Uncorrupted atmosphere and trustworthiness of public servants are key for better distribution of resources.
- **Fair and objective ethical norms** if adhered in a society then it may result better fruits. As a result, preventability and predictability enhances, which ensures economic efficiency
- **Rather than thinking subjectively,** an administrator should take decisions objectively on merit basis. He should keep his mind immune from being influenced by personal interests. Administrator's commitment of work and dedication is determined by his impersonal service in the interest of society and nation.
- **Public confidence and assurance:** Administrators and bureaucrats should take general public into confidence and extend just and equitable service without any communal and ethnical disparities.
- **Social assets:** both citizen and administration should have confidence on each other and build a credible and trustworthy atmosphere that facilitates and synergize the administration.

- Preventing corruption: Corruptive practices, anti-social activity, unholy practices should be eliminated for providing transparent administration.
- Service with compassion and human face in everyday activities are important for any administrator and manager as it show big difference in life of vulnerable and helpless people.
- The administration should become more attentive and helpful in fulfilling the needs and desires of general public.
- To establish guidelines and standards that will help unify the interaction between employees and the executive branch of government that further encourage in non-partisan and unbiased administrative service.
- To infuse morality among government employees and ensure that they abide to it flawlessly.

Nolan committee on standards in public life

The Briton government formulated a Committee in the year 1994 under the leadership of Lord Nolan. The Committee has proposed seven principles of public life. These principles are known as Nolan principles. They are

1. **Selflessness:** The public servants must work on public interest only not with selfishness. They must refrain from seeking benefits for themselves. Accountability to the public is non-negotiable.
2. **Integrity:** The public servants must protect the integrity and independence of the country. They must refrain from placing themselves under any financial or other obligations and could potentially seek to exert influence their decision-making and the execution of their official responsibilities.
3. **Objectivity:** Public officials decisions should be made on merit, based on the best available evidence and without bias.
4. **Accountability:** public officials are held accountable to the ruled for their actions and decisions through clearly formulated and transparent process. They must willingly subject themselves to any appropriate scrutiny befitting their positions, fostering trust and transparency within the community.
5. **Openness:** The government servants should strive to cultivate an atmosphere of transparency regarding all decisions and actions. They ought to provide clear and compelling justifications for their choices. Disclosure should only be limited in circumstances where the greater public interest unequivocally necessitates such restraint.
6. **Honesty:** The public officials are to be performing their duties truthful and straightforward.
7. **Leadership:** The public servants have to acquire leadership qualities. They have a profound responsibility to embody and champion these principles through both their leadership and their actions. By setting a powerful example, they can inspire others to embrace these values and create a positive impact among the public.

These principles are applicable to civil servants and other public officials. They are considered crucial for maintaining public trust in institutions and ensuring ethical conduct in public service.

Measures to improve Ethics and Values in Public Administration

Basically, in Public Administration to improve the ethics and values there are two levels for improvement i.e., ensuring effective personnel management and strengthening governance mechanism.

1. Personnel management

- **Recruitment process:** The selection process must focus on selecting candidates who are not only skilled and knowledgeable but also appropriate for the roles. Priority should be given to the competence and ethical standards of the candidates rather than favoritism and nepotism
- **Training process:** Apart from professional training, Value based education and training are an integral part for civil/public servants. The governments should be better taken care of these two things at school and college level.
- **Code of conduct:** It should be provided statutory measures for strict adherence by government authorities. The emphasis needs to be shift from “code of conduct” to “code of ethics” in the structure of public administration.
- **Rewards and punishments:** System of rewards to motivate the public servants in developing their ethical standards and also, the mechanism of punishments should be followed sincerely to build the confidence and trust of the citizens on the public administration

2. Governance mechanism

- **Accountability and Responsibility:** The duties and responsibilities of the public servants should be clearly defined to develop the accountability of public services. Confusions as well as duplications in the public services are need to be eliminated.
- **Effective co-ordination:** There should be effective coordination at all levels of hierarchical set-up of governmental organizations in achieving the common goals.
- **Preventive vigilance:** To control the misuse of the powers of public servants, there should be a proper vigilance mechanism and surprise checks by the higher authorities. Vigilance awareness programmes need to be mandatorily conducted to aware the public servants about the consequences.
- **Rule of law:** It should be noticed that, all are equal before law. The rules and regulations should be equally applicable to all citizens of our country including political leaders, government administrators, bureaucrats and civil servants of the country. Public servants should remember that, they are appointed to serve the civil society.
- **Citizen charter:** A well designed Citizen Charter and its effective implantation is essential to ensure accountability, transparency and responsiveness in public administration.
- **Public service delivery:** A quality and satisfactory public service delivery system should be maintained by the governments with maximum standards to deliver the public services with hassle-free. Periodic evaluation

should be done on the performance of the public service system in reaching the government schemes to the common citizens.

- **Grievance redressal system:** The governments should have to maintain an effective redressal system to address the public complaints earnestly. A satisfactory endeavour should be made to improve the quality of public service delivery taking into consideration the feedback from the service users.

Conclusion

Before conclude, the words of Peter Singer make our mind to brood over few things that we ought to be ethical. He says, *“Is it ethical to buy luxuries when others do not have enough to eat? Should we buy meat from intensively reared animals? If your carbon footprint is above the global average, are you doing something immoral?”* Individual and society collectively forms a system and system runs having its own modus operandi. In the present world, nearly all the modern governments are suffering from the unrelenting preoccupation of procedures and functionalities in exclusion of ethical values and moral standards. Ethical features of integrity, impartiality, commitment to serve, accountability, devotion to duty are some of exemplary behavioral features that has to be part of so called system of administration. Responsive and transparent administration relies on faithfulness of employees in public service based on ethical standards and on basic principles of law. The explanation for the problems of decency in governance depends in restricting the menace of corruption and by increasing transparency in government through adoption of steps like Right to Information, releasing annual reports and by framing Citizen's Charters.

The societies and their systems success depends only through achieving goals of ethical values. This can only be possible if all the citizens work unitedly, public should also feel it as their personal responsibility by working together, common men should feel about their role in administrative responsibilities, by respecting others ethical values, accepting own abilities, protecting integrity and property of state. People should also feel that upstanding ethical values itself is a social responsibility. They should be upheld even after facing challenges through resilience, optimistic attitude, self-discipline, team spirit. There is need to develop an ethical legacy that should be universal, rational and human in nature and as a legacy should be forwarded to the coming generations. Therefore the present form of professional ethics should focus mainly on values of equity, justice, humanism, behavioral approach, compassion, gender equality etc. They help to strike a balance in administration and professional ethics resulting in resolving the disputes that emerge between fact, values and ethics at places of work.

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