

## Administrative Ethics

Dr. S. B. M. Marume<sup>1</sup>, Dr. A. S. Chikasha<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>BA, Hons BA, MA, MAdmin, MSoc Sc, PhD

<sup>2</sup>BED, DPHE, MEd, DEd  
Zimbabwe Open University

---

**Abstract:** *Public personnel administration, which has far wider connotations, deals with classification, recruitment, training, promotion, discipline and retirement benefits of the personnel in the government. It is also equally concerned with the field of administrative ethics that refers to the professional code of morality in civil services of many countries. Administrative ethics as a field of study, therefore, constitutes the moral fiber of civil servants. This provides the subject – matter of this journal article.*

**Keywords:** *public personnel administration, administrative ethics, morality, profession and civil service*

---

### I. INTRODUCTION

The civil service being a profession in the contemporary state, has developed a code of morality comprises traditions, precedence and standards which have to be kept up by the civil servants who are expected to set up high acceptable moral standards not only for themselves but also for the larger society.

### II. THE PURPOSE OF THE ARTICLE

The purpose of this article is to demonstrate vital necessity of high ethical standards in the civil services of any country either developed or developing state.

### III. ADMINISTRATIVE ETHICS

#### 1.1 Meanings

- a. *Ethics*: the process by which we clarify right and wrong and act on what we take to be rights, that is, a set or system of moral principles that is generally applied [W. Fox and Ivan H. Meyer, 1995:45].
- b. *Administrative morality*: means the use of religious, political, or social precepts to create standards by which the quality of public administration may be judged; in the main, the standards are usually those of:
  - honesty,
  - responsiveness,
  - efficiency,
  - effectiveness,
  - competence,
  - effect on individual rights adherence to democratic procedures, and social equity [Fox and Meyer, 1995:4].
- c. *Administrative ethics*: denotes the professional code of morality in civil service. They constitute the moral fiber of civil servants. They regulate the conduct and behavior of different categories of civil servants. Thus, they provide ‘rules of the game.’

The civil service, being a profession in the modern state, has developed a code of morality for its members. This code consists of traditions, precedence, and standards which have to be kept up by the civil servants. The civil servants are expected to set up high moral standards not only for themselves but also for the community at large. This is more so in the context of the growing size and role of administration and its impact on the society.

#### d. Leading social scientists relevant to this aspect include:

**Three leading scholars are singled out because of their pertinent contributions to the subject under discussion as follows:**

**Chester Barnard:** has described the ethical conduct or moral behavior as “governed by beliefs or feelings of what is right or wrong regardless of self interest or immediate consequences of a decision to do or not to do specific things under particular conditions.”

**Glen Stahl:**(in his book *Public Personnel Administration*): rightly remarked: “the problem of ethical conduct of public official arises by virtue of the power and influence that he commands and the commitment that he undertakes of loyal and disinterested service to the public.”

**Paul H. Appleby:**(in his book *Morality and Administration in Democratic Government*): preferred the expression ‘morality’ instead of ‘ethics.’ He argues that morality and administration cannot be

separated. He remarked: “it is not merely bigger government that ultimately matters: what is significant is that morality in administration alone could ensure better government. One would not doubt that the morality in administration is sustained by *patience, honesty, loyalty, cheerfulness, courtesy* and like traits.” He delineated the following attributes of a moral public administrator:

- a sense of responsibility
- skills in communication and personnel administration
- ability to cultivate and utilize institutional resources
- willingness to engage in problem-solving and to work with others as a team
- personal confidence to initiate new ideas
- prefers to be influenced by public needs, interests and sensitivities rather than resorting to the use of raw bureaucratic power.

Germany (Prussia) was the first state in modern times to professionalize its civil service. Obviously, it developed a professional code for the civil servants. However, it contained authoritarian, bureaucratic and other non-democratic elements, besides the usual ethics. Britain was the first country which developed a democratic type of professional code for the civil servants. In fact, the British civil service is well-known for its administrative ethics.

Regarding the position in India, P.R. Dubhashi summarized very well: “in India, though there is no ethical code for public administrators, there are, what are called, the government servant conduct rules. These rules lay down what constitutes misconduct for the public servant. It is apparently implied that such misconduct, which is not permitted, is also unethical conduct.”

### 3.2 Elements

The various elements or components of *administrative ethics* are:

1. integrity
2. loyalty to the nation
3. honesty
4. efficiency
5. non-partisan attitude
6. humbleness
7. non-corruptiveness
8. devotion to the duty
9. sense of public good
10. secrecy
11. neutrality
12. anonymity
13. impartiality
14. fairness
15. sincerity

In India, all these elements of administrative ethics are contained in the various Civil Service Conduct Rules. The important ones are: All India Services (Conduct) Rules, 1954; Central Services (Conduct) Rules, 1955; and Railway Services (Conduct) Rules, 1956. In addition to these, there are several rules and instructions dealing with particular situations pertaining to Civil Servants.

### 3.3 Importance

The following points highlight the *importance* of (or, need for) *administrative ethics*:

1. check the arbitrary activities of civil servants
2. promote the sense of administrative responsibility
3. establish and promote the correct relations between the citizen and the civil service
4. cultivate high standards of conduct among civil servants
5. preserve and promote social welfare, public interest and common good
6. control that part of administrative power and discretion which cannot be controlled by formal laws, methods and procedures
7. improve the efficiency and effectiveness and administrative process
8. strengthen the legitimacy and credibility of public administration
9. stabilize and harmonize the relation between the civil servants and the political executives
10. foster and maintain high morals among all categories of civil servants

Highlighting the importance of administrative ethics, P.R. Dubhashi said, “it is of utmost importance that the public administration should be efficient but it is even more important that it should be ethical. It is said of an

individual that if character is lost, everything is lost. It could be stated about public administration, that if ethics is lost, everything is lost.”

### 3.4 Factors Determining

The observance of administrative ethics in civil service is determined by the various factors, namely:

1. precedents and traditions set by the top administrators
2. communication patterns in the administrative system
3. effectiveness of disciplinary action on the civil servants
4. ethical standards and values existing in the society
5. attitude of political bosses towards administrators
6. precedents and traditions established by the ministers and legislators
7. the soundness of service conditions of civil servants particularly salary
8. dynamics of internal relations in the organization
9. soundness of training programmes organized to promote the professional consciousness among administrators
10. attitude of general public towards the administrators

### 3.5 Hindrances

The various factors, which hinder the observance of administrative ethics by the civil servants, can also be called *factors for maladministration, pathologies or ethical dilemmas*. These factors are stated as follows:

1. corruption
2. favouritism
3. bribery
4. indifferentism
5. officiousness
6. departmentalism (bureau philosophy)
7. nepotism
8. lawlessness
9. political influence
10. external pressures

### 3.6 Modes of corruption

The Central Vigilance Commission (CVC) has identified the 27 modes of corruption. These modes are in verifying degrees found in both developed and developing societies, for example United States of America, Britain, France, India, Brazil, and many African countries. These modes of corruption are:

1. Causing loss to the Government by negligence or otherwise.
2. Wrong assessment of claims of displaced persons
3. Moral turpitude
4. Acceptance of sub-standard stores/works
5. Showing favours to contractors and firms
6. Abuse of official position/powers
7. Acceptance of gifts
8. Replacement of new postage stamps by used ones
9. Misappropriation of public money/stores
10. Unauthorized occupation and sub-letting of government quarters
11. Possession of disproportionate assets
12. Misuse of government employees for personal work
13. Non-delivery of money orders, insured covers, value payable parcels, and so on
14. Irregularity in the grant of telephone connections
15. Incurring pecuniary obligations of persons with whom the public servants have official dealings
16. Abnormal delay in the settlement of compensation claims to displaced persons
17. Acceptance of illegal gratification in recruitments, postings, transfers and promotions
18. Cheating in connection with the sale/purchase of plots for residential purpose
19. Borrowing money from contractors/firms having official dealings with officers
20. Irregularity in the grant of import/export licences
21. Under-assessment of income tax, estate duty, and so on for pecuniary gain
22. Production of forged certificates of age, birth, community, and the like
23. Misuse of imported and allotted quotas by various firms with the connivance of public servants
24. Misuse of advances sanctioned for purchase of scooters/cars and other advances
25. Purchase of immovable property without prior permission/intimation

26. Irregularities in the reservation of seats in Railways/Air

27. Claiming force travel allowance, house rent allowance, and so on

Way back in 200 B.C., Kautilya in his book Arthashastra identified 40 different modes of corruption. He also referred to its inevitability and thymus remarked: “just as it impossible not to taste that finds itself at the tip of the tongue, so it is impossible for a government official not to eat up at least a bit of the king’s revenue.” On the problem of identifying the corrupt official, he observed: “just as it cannot be found out whether a fish swimming through water drinks or not, so government servants cannot be found out while taking money for themselves.”

### 3.7 Anti – corruption committees

Owing to the cancerous effect of corruption in many countries, both developed and developing societies, anti-corruption mechanisms have been instituted and some of the examples are shown below.

These are named by various names either as committees or commissions. The following are examples of some of these committees or commissions:

**American Douglas Committee:** At the time of Second World War (1939-45), the American society witnessed various cases of corruption, business malpractices, illicit operations, willing/dealing, and unhealthy nexus between politicians, administration in business. Hence, the American Senate (Upper House of the Congress) appointed a sub-committee under the chairmanship of Paul Douglas, a member of the Senate. The committee’s report of Ethical Standards in Government caught the attention not only in USA but all over the world.

**British Nolan Committee:** In 1994, the British Government appointed a Committee on Standards in Public Life under the chairmanship of Lord Nolan. The committee recommended seven principles to ensure highest standards in public life. These principles must be observed by the holder of all public offices.

These are as follows:

- selflessness
- integrity
- objectivity
- accountability
- openness
- honesty
- leadership

**Indian Committees:** The following committees have brought out the prevalence of corruption and decline in the administrative ethics in India:

1. Bengal Administration Enquiry Committee (1944-45) headed by Rowlands
2. A.D. Gorwalas’ Report on Public Administration (1951)
3. Railway Corruption Enquiry Committee (1953-55) chaired by Acharya J.B. Kripalani
4. Santhanam Committee on Prevention of Corruption (1962-64)

In newly independent states, corruption is being dealt with, for example, **Zimbabwe Anti-Corruption Commission:** The Constitution of Zimbabwe [Amendment No. 20 of 2013], establishes the Anti-Corruption Commission to investigate and report on all corrupt acts and activities in the Zimbabwean society.

## IV. CONCLUSION

It is safe to conclude this article by re-visiting Paul H. Appleyby who argues that morality and administration cannot be separated and that one would not doubt that morality in public administration is sustained by patience, honesty, loyalty, commitment to service, cheerfulness, and courtesy.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

- [1]. Britain: The civil service: Vol 1, Report of the Committee 1968 – chairman: Lord Fulton, London, Her Majesty’s stationery office, June, 1968.
- [2]. J. J. N. Cloete: Introduction to Public Administration: Pretoria, J. L. van Schaik, 1985.
- [3]. Paul H. Douglas: Ethics in Government, Cambridge, Massachusetts, Harvard University Press, 1953
- [4]. W. Fox and Ivan H. Meyer: Public Administration Dictionary: Juta and Company, 1995
- [5]. Funk and Wagnall’s: Practical Standard Dictionary of the English Language: J. G. Fergusson and Associates, Chicago, Illinois, 1946
- [6]. S. X. Hanekom, R. W. Rowland and E. G. Bain: Key Aspects of Public Administration: revised edition; Southern Book Publishers 1987 [ISBN 1868122891]
- [7]. S. B. M. Marume: Normative factors in public administration: LAP Lambert Academic Publishing, Berlin, Germany, 2015 [ISBN 978 – 3 – 659 – 49921 – 0]