

## Ethics in Public Administration

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### **ABSTRACT:**

Interest in subjects connected to the ethics of the sovereign good has grown in the contemporary era. This topic has been the focus of several research, and academics have discussed numerous moral and philosophical conundrums connected to the idea of ethics in public administration. We discovered that the theoretical underpinnings of ethics in public administration may be divided into three primary groups: (1) Rules-based ethics, which are based on obligations (2) Ethics that focus on maximising utility and are result-based (3) Virtue-based ethics, which are based on admirable traits. The public servants' desire to adapt their working practises fundamentally will play a key role in the success of the reforms of the public administrations. The State should enhance and modernise the public service in this direction, and implement an employment structure that better reflects the qualities of the service. Because of this, the government should focus its efforts on creating a favourable public perception of the state and its administration as a professional goal that is focused on the provision of services. The significance of ethics in contemporary governance methods will also be discussed in this study.

**Keywords:** Public Administration, Ethics, moral and philosophical conundrums,

### **Introduction**

Since the 1970s, there have been substantial developments with the advent of administrative ethics. These changes have been promoted by and driven by the concept of public administration in the new era. The concept of ethical considerations is given a key role in modern civil governance. Public administration has a number of obstacles while adopting ethics, and it is challenging to overcome these obstacles. This is mostly because ethics is embedded in a theoretical framework. This idea is based on solid institutional and functional levels of interaction between the organisation and public servants.

The topic of ethics in public service is the practical application of moral concepts in government. Ethics is a person's attitude toward behaving ethically, according to Chapman (2002). It is about principles and how to apply them in a certain circumstance. Rule, consequence, and virtue are the three subcategories of ethics. How we see the ethics of public service is heavily influenced by the political environment that shapes their form and determines how they are carried out.

The fact that the idea of ethics is often seen as abstract and difficult to operationalize in reality is one of the major obstacles to its implementation in public administration. Understanding the many sorts

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### **Ethics in Public Administration**

*Dr. Khamosh Meena*

of ethics that may be used in various settings is crucial for the efficient implementation of ethics in public administration. Rule-based, result-based, and virtue-based ethics are the three major categories of ethics that are often used in public administration.

#### **Rules-based ethics**

Deontological ethics is another name for rule-based ethics. Deontology is a phrase derived from the Greek roots *deon*, which means obligation, and *logos*, which means knowledge. Therefore, deontology may be seen as the study of obligation. This point of view contends that making morally sound decisions requires knowledge of the laws governing obligations. Typically, responsibilities, norms, and obligations are imposed by a higher power in a deontological or rule-based society. Being ethical follows the higher authority's rules, so to speak. Administrators make ethical decisions in accordance with rule-based public administration ethics through using principles. Public managers who use rule-based ethics establish an individual's ethical duty to behave based on accepted or settled principles. Public managers must be familiar with a set of principles and have the logical ability to apply those concepts to particular circumstances in order to adopt this strategy.

#### **Results-based ethics**

As opposed to rule-based or deontological ethics, result-based ethics, also known as teleological ethics, places more emphasis on the objectives, purposes, and goals that follow from acts than on the principles that come before those activities. According to consequentialism, which is a subset of teleological methods in general and utilitarian approaches in particular, there are no moral precepts that can be used to justify a course of action in advance. Depending on how it affects other people, a decision is right or incorrect. An effective strategy for preparing public managers to make difficult moral decisions seems to be the result-based ethics approach. It is widely practised and its principles are universal. The main result-based value in the public choice model, which is mostly inspired from utilitarianism, is maximising the number of individual preferences. Maximum individual choice in a society is what is desired. The teleological or result-based viewpoint dominates academic research on public administration and policy. Because of the focus on efficiency, cost-benefit analysis, the market model, game theories, and public choice, what is morally or ethically acceptable must be evaluated in terms of the usefulness of the results.

#### **Virtue-based ethics**

Virtue-based ethics differ from other ethical approaches in that they are concerned with an individual's whole character, or how they should be as persons. What form of life is ideal for humans is an issue that virtue-based ethics aims to address. This in turn is connected to people's particular preferences. Virtues are seen as the propensities to choose the good or noble for their own sake and to avoid the bad or ignoble. The emphasis of virtue-based ethics is on the part that character plays in ethical action. In contrast to deontological or rule-based ethics and teleological or result-based ethics, virtue ethics often places more of an emphasis on the actor than the deed. Instead than emphasising performing good things, there is a focus on being a good person. In virtue-based ethics, morally admirable qualities are connected to moral or ethical behaviour. People believe that behaviour

reflects their own morality. Good deeds are a mark of virtue, whereas poor deeds are a mark of vice.

### **Ethics in new public administration**

The idea of privatisation has been promoted in contemporary public administration all around the world. It is apparent that this idea is connected to the strategies that encourage the growth of efficiency and effectiveness, which results in the creation of great public service delivery. The idea of "privatisation in contemporary public administration" is pushed in Savas' (2000) paper. According to Walsh et al. (1997), it is also acknowledged that the introduction of new market mechanisms encourages the effective implementation of public services in businesses. Walsh acknowledged in his analysis that the privatisation of government in the UK has given rise to a new paradigm, which has encouraged changes in both organisational and cultural requirements. The objectives of these reforms include lowering the costs associated with government operations, identifying methods to reduce the immediate impact of public employees' actions, and changing the way in which the public views government in general.

This kind of privatisation manoeuvre not only questioned the prevailing reality of public administration ethics, when administrators were seen as technical specialists, but also revealed the kind of functioning that disregards workers' sound judgement.

### **Reinventing Government**

The phrase "reinventing government," used by Osborne and Gaebler in their important book on the topic in 1992, received increased attention in the 1990s, under the presidency of Bill Clinton. Increasing the efficiency of governance and establishing a new vision and mission strategy for public service were two main areas where this approach sought to modernise and improve public administration. This included, among other things, implementing more moral practises to increase governance's efficacy and efficiency by making a distinction between outcomes and resource consumption. In order to better match public service with the demands and expectations of the general public, a new mission statement was also put forward.

As a consequence of these initiatives, new public management systems including privatisation, decentralisation, debureaucratization, and citizen collaboration gained increasing prominence, changing the scope and duties of public administration. The focus was moved away from conventional public administration and toward a more market-based approach to public management thanks to these ideas, which were mostly adapted from the private sector. As this new strategy attempted to enhance the quality of public service delivery and better fulfil the requirements of residents, ethics was considered as a key component.

The argument put out by those advocating for professional management of public administration was that it would be more effective and efficient than the current system. They suggested dismantling big institutions into smaller, easier-to-manage hubs, giving public service delivery more freedom and independence. This was seen as a crucial component of the newly proclaimed economic institutional ideal. Overall, these initiatives aimed to develop a public service that would better meet the needs of the people it was designed to serve by being more responsive, effective, and efficient.

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### **Ethics in Public Administration**

*Dr. Khamosh Meena*

## Principles of Ethics

The two prominent theories that shape moral conduct in the public sphere—ethics of the sovereign good and ethics of the service of goods—must be the focus of attention. We'll also compare them to the previously described collaborative ethics. Remember that we are not implementing any particular tactic or approach; rather, we are implementing what may be referred to as a "vulgar Kantianism" or a "vulgar utilitarianism" in the present day (Harmon, 2005).

### Ethics of the sovereign goods

The ethics of the sovereign good is the set of guidelines that one adheres to while behaving. The definition of the ethics of the sovereign good is a collection of criteria that allow different interpretations of "what is good" to be evaluated. The same ethical principle is typically interpreted differently by different people, which is often seen in real-world circumstances. People try to alter the concept of "good" to fit their desires based on their conception of what is "good." Recognizing the viewpoint that best exemplifies the ethical values is thus crucial.

The core issue with the ethics of the sovereign good is its assertion that it is the ultimate arbiter of moral judgements. It often assumes a linguistic positivist approach, which is another issue. The ethic of the sovereign good is especially appealing since it has a propensity to define appropriate ethics by taking into account the greater group as well as the individual while doing so. As a result, it won't fix the specific issues; instead, it will lead us into an improbable and unfamiliar aporia (from its point of view).

### Ethics of the provision of commodities

The maximization of inputs to outputs and efficiency are the key ideals that the ethics of the service of commodities promotes. When it comes to the service or sale of products, there are basically three factors that are significant.

They are its judgmental standards, communal perspective, and reciprocity logic. Additionally, it is obvious that the ethics of the sovereign good are primarily focused on the market.

Service of products is fundamentally dependent on reciprocal trade. In essence, it makes the assumption that individuals are rational and have the ability to choose the products and services they want. As a result, if a person loves a certain commodity or service, they may make a deal with a reliable trader on the terms of buying the same good or service. The person may sell products and services for money to reimburse the trader for their labour and materials. This is a peaceful procedure that is only hampered by failure to deliver the items in accordance with the conditions agreed upon. The social good will decrease as a consequence of this. However, when things are going well, what is beneficial to the individual also benefits the group as a whole.

### New ethical approach

It is essential to have management that provides for the uniformity of professional ethical principles and an Aristotelian method of accommodating ongoing changes. This accomplishment is grounded on

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## Ethics in Public Administration

*Dr. Khamosh Meena*

real ethics-based politics, which are uniform and standardised. Moving away from coercive bureaucratic requirements and toward more consensus-based behaviour is necessary for the common benefit. Therefore, inventive approaches and combined strategies are required for the present situation. As a result, we advise that a public governance moral structure might have the following elements:

- 1) Tools for accountability
- 2) Monitoring systems using both internal and external question forms
- 3) Creation of beneficial policies that reward moral behaviour and encourage moral attitudes

Application of audit procedures at the intergovernmental level is number four. Number five is official socialisation (such as structure, knowledge, and direction).

- 6) Carefully establishing channels for reporting wrongdoing
- 7) A stronger call for citizenship.
- 8) Defining the duties of management
- 9) Successful communication

### **Conclusion**

We discovered that the theoretical underpinnings of ethics in public administration may be divided into three primary groups: (1) Rules-based ethics, which are based on obligations (2) Ethics that focus on maximising utility and are result-based (3) Virtue-based ethics, which are based on admirable traits.

Cognitive ethics techniques are often categorized as rule-based ethics and result-based ethics. This school of thought asserts that morality may be grounded in reason by using a logical procedure to decide what to do in a certain circumstance. Reality, however, defies simplistic formulas; cognitive ethics triumphs over faith in the capacity of reason to discern and pursue what is right. Following broad standards, such as rule or outcome, is just one aspect of ethics. Understanding of the real substance of a person's morals cannot be produced by an obsession with the process of making judgements. Therefore, virtue-based ethics offers a viable alternative to the unending arguments in cognitive ethics between rule-based and result-based approaches.

Despite the fact that morality is rooted in human feeling, reason is nevertheless crucial in moral decision-making. The phrasing of problems is never entirely technical since the heart is often engaged with indifference and logic. Ethics is about developing the right character, not merely following the rules. Even while we have no influence over other forces, we do have power over our own actions. Rules and consequences, whatever significant they may be, are best understood in the context of a person's character. Every action is judged in relation to a person's moral character or fibre. Being is a prerequisite for doing, hence one must first uphold moral standards before acting morally. Therefore, virtue ethics is more than simply a style of thinking; it is a way of life.

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### **Ethics in Public Administration**

*Dr. Khamosh Meena*

Therefore, reducing their contradictions and creating the conditions for their peaceful coexistence, mutual support, and complementary fulfilment would be the key goals rather than favouring one ethical principle or imperative over another. As a result, to turn moral conundrums into questions that may be resolved, ethical reasoning must be broad and reflective. Therefore, modernisation and change in public administration apply in a number of ways that are applicable both locally and internationally to the civil service and public administration as well as to civil society. As a result, ethics must provide certain latitude in the creation of good judgements on public management. It is obvious that government workers are more qualified to address a person's needs. As a result, in today's public administration, morality and ethics must always come first.

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