

# Ethics in public administration



Accountability in public administration is a very important aspect to civil service in every country. Dr. Beaumaster defined accountability as an objective responsibility which involves responsibility to someone, or some collective body (2010). Integrity, transparency and accountability are basic principles of public administration; therefore, governments must have a checks and balances systems that ensures the honesty and integrity of their local bureaucracies. These principles must be adopted and exercised in the country as well as in public administration. Accountability must be carried out in administration in order to have a transparent and integral government system. Although transparency, integrity, and honesty are all intertwined, they are different things. Transparency refers to the reliability in information keeping and providing citizen services for the country. Integrity refers to honest ethical practices, which deter corruption in the administration of public services.

Public administrators and state heads must develop accountability criteria that is fair and not one sided. All public administrators and political leaders must be aware of these rules and regulations to abide by so that there are no weaknesses in the process, which can be taken for granted by the public servants and politicians. The first basic step in the accountability process in public administration is to recognize the efficacy of power. According to McKinney and Howard (1998), the power or authority is necessary to carry out any development program; however, transparency, integrity and accountability can not be obtained by simply cutting powers of administrators (p. 463-470).

The struggle for attaining more and more power between bureaucrats, presents an issue. And if this power struggle is not eliminated, this is a conflict that has potential to become progressively worse in the future. Accountability is a complex process. Government agencies have to address and tackle abuse, which is a practice that is essential in attaining government and public goals. Public trust of bureaucracy and government is very important in a democratic country and this can be only achieved by having a fair and strong accountability process in the country. Coercive political power takes place when a public officer takes advantage of their power and misuses it for self-benefit rather than the public's good. When this occurs, it breaks trust of citizens and lowers public opinion towards public administrators and the government itself. The unethical decisions and acts performed by the public officials are also within the realm of accountability. The other types of issues in public administration which may arise are blaming of errors on other officers than oneself, leaking confidential information (i. e. whistle-blowing), fabricating time/quality/quantity and reports, misusing of expenses allowed, taking gifts/favors in exchange of preference or personal benefits to clients, taking unnecessary days off and taking extra time for breaks like lunch and dinner, are some examples of acts by public administrators that jeopardize transparency, accountability, honesty, and integrity (Gordon and Milakovich, 2009, p. 93-95).

In short, accountability is the process for ensuring that public monies and powers must be used effectively and with honesty for public services only. There must be no misuse of any public power or money by the public administrators and government itself. This also brings trust relationship

between the public and the government and its departments. Accountability is a process which must be adopted in every department of the country.

- Efficiency and Effectiveness

Efficiency and effectiveness are important in public administration. Efficiency and effectiveness are desired in every aspect of public administration. An example of this is proper spending of citizens' tax dollars. Tax payers' monies must be used effectively and efficiently; therefore, utilization of funds must be careful, constructive and productive on order to carry out the overall good of the public. Effective public administration is of fundamental importance because the public needs services delivered in a timely manner. In order to ensure proper implementation of programs and services, political demands of the ruling government adopt low cost efficient and effective processes based on the public interest of the country.

Efficiency refers to attaining a goal of providing the best services possible for the least amount of money and resources. It is always important to provide optimal public services for the least amount of cost, especially during today's economic hardships. Effectiveness refers to making sure the work done is according to public demands, accountability process is carried out and democratic process is observed (Box, 2009, p. 254-255). The decisions made in the public sector are according to demands of the public, which are revealed through discussions between citizens, discovering issues, developing policies and rules, and managing public administrators to implement services and programs.

Public administration can be effective and efficient if the processes adopted by public administrators are efficient, fast and according to needs of the government and public. E-government processes bring efficiency and effectiveness in the public sector by minimizing the time scales on public level and inter-department communication and processes. E-government enables the public administrators and departments to offer citizen service through one click and their precious time saved. E-government includes online services provided to citizens of the country. This increases the efficiency and effectiveness in spending public money and for right purpose (Cloete and Petroni, 2005, p. 148-149). E-government has assisted in eliminating time spent standing in long lines and has helped to reduce the red tape that citizens are forced to deal with in many public institutions.

The success of any government and public administration can be measured by efficiency and effectiveness. Public opinion regarding effectiveness and efficiency can be measured from time to time by conducting satisfaction surveys, consultations with people directly, and direct individual interaction. From a government policy making standpoint, legislation must be made with the public's interests in mind. Policies must be designed and implemented in accordance with how the public feels their hard-earned tax dollars should be spent.

In conclusion, efficiency and effectiveness are two basic principles of public administration and both must be present in any successful agency. Public administrations that design policies with consultation of the public, consider their requirements and also take feedback about their policies are successful with spending the public's money honestly, effectively and reliably. The <https://assignbuster.com/ethics-in-public-administration-essay-samples/>

spending of public money must be done according to citizens' needs and different tools can be adopted for finding what the public needs and requires by the government and public administration. Public services must be delivered effectively and efficiently so that there most of the output can be achieved with the public money and resources.

- The Legitimacy of the Administrative State

Legitimacy is all about the source of power and who has it (Beaumaster, 2010). The legitimacy of the administrative state claims that it offers opportunities to community engagement and also provides a method for scientific decision making. Rohr (1986) emphasized that the blending of executive, legislative, and judicial powers are aligned according to the separation of powers in a democratic community (p. 35). Rohr argued that the legitimacy of the administrative state was originally meant for the American Senate. It provides a sustainability and permanence to the government system of America and plays a balancing role in different constitutional departments of the country government. The Senate also focuses on the limitations present in representations in the House of Representatives.

The legitimacy of the administrative state empowers future public administrators for playing their own autonomous role by selecting one of the constitutional masters that might clash with one another (Spicer, 2007, p. 2-3). Rohr (1986) worked on two basic principles: the people of the country if follow illegitimate powers and this is happening in present political environment, a legitimate state must be present to avoid such things (p. 35). Questions regarding the legitimacy of the administrative state emerged two

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centuries ago. The legitimacy was questioned because the constitution did not provide the bases for organizations.

Citizens must trust their government because legitimacy can only be achieved when their trust is garnered. The legitimacy of the public administrative state can be accomplished by means of expertise, public service, leadership qualities, and vision. Public administrators are responsible for the legitimacy of the state by having direct communication with the community by using their bureaucratic expertise, vision of the government, political leadership and best public service delivery. The legitimacy of the administrative state brings the sustainability to the country and ultimately to the state itself.

In conclusion, Legitimacy of the administrative state has four sources: constitution, legal, public perception, and professionalism (Beaumaster, 2010). They must deliver effective citizen services with honesty and ensure that the vision of the government is achieved. These efforts bring the legitimacy of the state in view point of the people of the country. The state is considered as stable and strong in terms of its constitution and legislative actions. The legitimacy of the administrative state also empowers the government to accomplish their policies and people who elected them to the house must trust them to bring legitimacy.

In Saudi Arabia the women cannot travel abroad without the permission of responsible man such as father, brother, and husband. Males in Saudi Arabia has the ultimate power and authority; they are legitimates because they have some power that woman don't have. Even in some workplaces like

government and public sector services, there are some certain jobs that are male dominant. So those males have legitimacy that females don't have. Moreover, children under eighteen can't travel without permission of male guardian. So, those male guardians have legitimacy because they have ultimate power and authority. Also the Customs inspector and Passport officers have legitimacy to stop anybody in the airport. They have the power and authority to do so. They also have to use ethics in their decision making so they will not be held accountable for any mistaken situation.

- The Politics-Administration Dichotomy

The Politics/Administration Dichotomy idea was explained by Woodrow Wilson in his article "The Study of Administration". This article is considered the backbone of public administration. The dichotomy offers an enduring image to elected political members, public officers, and students of the public administration. This depicts the real issues of policy and administration decisions which struck in government. Politicians or elected members are liable for policy making and agenda setting. Policy decisions and policy and program implementation is the responsibility of public servants. This dichotomy is meant for eliminating politics in the government departments and leaving elected politicians within the realm of legislation. Svava (1998) explained that observations have shown that it is effective to create boundaries of public administration and develop a normative relationship between public administrators and elected politicians in a democratic community (p. 51-58). Wilson suggested that a dichotomy is inevitable because government policies must be via politics while its enforcement must be non-political administration. He also emphasized a <https://assignbuster.com/ethics-in-public-administration-essay-samples/>



more business-like approach to civil service and stressed that public administration is indeed a science of its own irrelevant of political science. Wilson's theories assisted in forming the foundation of American bureaucracies in the early 1940's. The politics-administration dichotomy had been in existence in Europe a century earlier.

According to scholarly research, Sapru (2006) claims that Wilson's findings that were presented in *The Study of Administration* regarding the dichotomy are ambiguous (p. 56). For the first time in American history, Wilson changed the mindset of public administration by viewing from a scientific, systematic perspective. Wilson's dichotomy also encouraged that the government recruit professionally educated bureaucrats in order to achieve a professional administration in America. Adopting this dichotomy meant making partisan-based appointments and the utilization of political power to get support for certain policies and programs. He was also successful in creating an image of government where administrators were dependent on political and partisan chief executives of the country due to a centralized approach to government. Wilson believed that administrators had to be granted a certain amount of discretionary decision making power by their chief executives in order to be efficient.

Brownlow (1956) was a famous consultant of public administration matters who praised the idea of politics-administration dichotomy presented by Woodrow Wilson. Brownlow believed that Wilson laid a foundation for a study program that allowed anyone in the country who is interested in art or the science of public administration to research the topic (Brownlow, 1956). In the modern era, Woodrow Wilson's role in public administration is not

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denied. However, it might be argued whether he is the founder of public administration or only a dominant personality for the growth of public administration in America. Wilson's essay about public administration was part of the administration and politics as the social, political and intellectual ferment till the 19th century (Durham, 1940, p. 1-6). Wilson's essay presented ideas on how to approach and successfully conquer a rapidly changing American economy through social and political-administrative order.

- The Issue of Representation

Representation is also a crucial pillar that relates to who should represent “the will of the people” according to Dr. Beaumaster(2010). The issue of representation is present across the globe in public administration. This issue comprises on gender, race, or ethnicity factors. The public administration of any country must be comprised of all races, genders and ethnic groups. The effective representative bureaucracy offers a public administration of all people in terms of demographics so that true representation of all groups is involved in decision making process of the public administration and government. The active representation occurs in bureaucracy when they represent the views of those with similar demographic backgrounds (Box, 2007, p. 138-139).

Representation issues must be decreased in order to increase the quality of public services. Female representation is another major issue in public administration due to lack of representation of females. American governments have historically been dominated by the white male and men typically hold political positions and chief executive offices. Diversity needs <https://assignbuster.com/ethics-in-public-administration-essay-samples/>

to be present in public officials so that diversified issues like religious, ethnic, gender or any other demographic issues can be properly and fairly addressed. Individuals belonging to lower socioeconomic classes must be represented, as well. The American government is based on an idea of equity; therefore, a government that recognizes diversity is one that is representative of all populations. In the event representation lacks within certain populations (i. e. minority populations), then there is a chance those of the power elite receive the most representation. The representation of the African American population is less when compared to the representation that the Caucasian population has historically received, which has caused problems for black communities across the United States. Furthermore, lack of representation of the black communities has resulted their distrust of government officials and agencies (Mosher, 1994, p. 142.)

Representation issues are heightened when immigrant and minority populations are represented inadequately in public administration. This also creates miscommunication and does not develop trust relationships among immigrants and public administrators. Similarly, race, ethnic and gender issues create problems. Environments of this nature also compromise efficiency and effectiveness. Representation must be according to the demographics of the country, state and local level. All people must have their proper representation. Females must have their own representation in the public administration as well as in House of Representatives so that all policies and rules are made according to the needs of the females in the country. Minorities must also be represented in government and in public

administration so that the laws will be aligned according to their religions and independent beliefs.

In conclusion, the true representation of every class must be present in the administrative departments and government. This true representation enables government and administrators to develop and implement according to the needs of the people in specific demographics. Equal gender rights must be present in the country and community and this is only possible when there is equal representation of males and females in the decision making process.

- The responsible public administrator

Cooper presented the idea of “ The responsible public administrator” in which he suggested that the primary responsibility of the public administrator is to deal with public interest with honesty and common good responsibility which emerges from the fiduciary role of public administration (Boje, 2008, p. 72). According to this theory, public administrators are individuals that rely upon their own expertise and neutrality. The actions they take are based on scientific and neutral principles.

Cooper emphasized that a responsible public administrator knows how to decide an ethical choice in which one might be involved in right action versus wrong action and even sometimes right action versus right action. The individual must build up the skills of moral imagination which involves the capability to create a “ movie in our minds” which must consider the dynamics of the environment in which ethical choice must be taken care (Menzel, 2007, p. 54). Also, Svava indicated that accountability is required in

government and nonprofit organization. Being responsible and accountable for action are very important for ethical administration (2007). No government in the world is perfect. Mistakes and corruptions always happen because we are human being not angels. According to Madison in the Federalist paper 51. “ If men were angels, no government would be necessary...”(Kettl, 2003).

The goal of the responsible public administrator is to practice good ethics, develop a creative reflection of a situation, while laying down the public service values (Cooper, 1990, p. 6). This emphasized how public servants are held responsible by the public and elected officials to act ethically and not take advantage of their powers. Public administrators must behave ethically during the administration of public service and practice making value-based decisions while performing their duties. Public administrators that are responsible know when take the right action versus the wrong action. Poor ethical practices can be detrimental to an agency’s success. Ethical decisions must be in compliance with the mission, vision, and values of the organization.

Cooper’s framework provides a solid base for all aspects of public administration within the realm of decision making. Cooper stressed that public administrator must balance professional, personal, and organizational values. This framework enables public servants while they are performing their duties to make decisions neutrally and ethically. Their decisions must be according to the rules and regulations of the government and must not violate any political and governmental rules. The framework not only reiterates the importance of wise ethical practices, but it also demands that

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their actions remain ethical and practically neutral. Svvara(2007) stated “ Public administrator has sufficient independence to be responsible for the action.”

In conclusion, the responsible public administrator is important for the integrity of democratic societies. Citizens of the country benefit when public administrators handle local and national social matters neutrally, ethically, and in accordance with the law. The democratic government is more likely to be successful if they have responsible public servants because they are the ones that are primarily in charge of implementation. Responsible administrators engage in ethical decision making practices that benefit the entire society, not just themselves. Responsible administrators are committed and dedicated to carrying out the overall public good.