

Importance of ethical values for effective Public Administration

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Abstract: Effective public administration is the stabilizing force of society. Ethics in public administration is essential for fostering trust, accountability, integrity and effective governance. In the context of India's diverse and complex society, value-based administration promotes social justice and equitable resource distribution. Ethical frameworks can guide the process of decision making, enhance the legitimacy of public institutions and contribute to the sustainable development of the country. Indian political system reinforces ethical standards in public administration for maintaining democratic principles, enhancing citizen satisfaction and achieving holistic national growth. In this paper, an attempt is made to understand the concept of ethics in public administration and its challenges and adverse impact on society. Several strategies to promote ethical values in public administration are also suggested in this paper. Despite consequences and ethical dilemmas, the political system cannot survive without public servants, in order to deliver government services to the doorsteps of public without any hindrance. Core values of ethics need to be adopted at every level of the administration system. The strength of Indian democracy lies in the effective and transparent system of administration.

Keywords: Public administration, Ethics, Democracy, Accountability

Introduction:

Public administration plays a significant role in the modern society. State manages and influences almost the entire life of the community. The well-being of the entire community depends on public administration. Public administration as part of governmental activity is as old as human civilization. The goals of the public administration changed considerably over a period of time, during the earlier periods' maintenance of law and order and collection of revenues were primary functions of the state and welfare functions were rarely taken up by the government. Introduction of welfare state programs due to multiplication of state functions, the scope of public administration has increased considerably. The people in the modern society depend on administration throughout their life. Though there are different types of governments, administration provides a number of services for the people such as basic needs of life, social security, health, housing, education, protection of their rights and so on. Public administration is necessary to maintain stability in society as it plays the role of social changer. Public administration is also a core component of government for formulating and executing the development plans. At present there is hardly any aspect of citizens' life which does not come under the influence of public administration. If public administration fails to accomplish its goal, the functions of the whole structure of modern society would collapse. This has made public administration a constituent key power in the modern state.

Ethics in public administration forms an important pillar of governance by shaping the behavior and decision-making power of officials entrusted with the public welfare. The core concept of public administration involves the management and implementation of governmental policies and services that directly impact the life of citizens. Hence adherence to the ethical principles ensures that the actions are carried out with transparency, accountability,

integrity and there by fostering public trust and confidence in governmental institutions. In recent decades the essence of ethical standards has been highly recognized, as important not only for maintenance the legitimacy of government but also for promoting effective governance. Ethical lapses during the service delivery such as favoritism, corruption and conflicts of interest can erode the public trust and undermine the credibility of public administrators. On the contrary a commitment With ethical standards facilitates service delivery and decision making process easier, which makes positive impact on the national development. This paper tries to explore contribution of ethics for the effective public administration.

Objectives:

- ❖ To understand the principle of ethics and it's evolution in public administration of India.
- ❖ To explore the importance and impact of ethics in public administration.
- ❖ To find out the challenges and strategies for promoting ethics in public administration.

Understanding the core of Ethics in public administration:

Ethics deals with values and morality. The word 'ethics' is derived from the Greek word ethos, which denotes custom, character or habit. These are accepted set of principles and standards to guide the thoughts, behavior and actions of people. Plato, the father of political philosophy held the view that 'if person knows what the good life is he or she will not act immorally'. Whereas Aristotle the father of political science who adopted a scientific and empirical approach to the concept of ethics. For him, 'Ethics is nothing but the way of living as social and political institutions are reflection of society and its values'. State came into existence for the betterment of the people. Hence ethical standards for state while administering the duties and responsibilities considered essential since the beginning of state and administration. Ethics refers to the moral considerations and principles that guide the behavior of public servants or individuals working in government establishment. Ethics being integral part of public administration, it focuses on how the administrators should act in order to work responsibly. Ethics deals with morals, whereas public administration is all about decisions and actions. As States grow powerful in order to survive the public.

The history of ethics in Indian governance and public administration is deep-rooted and intertwined with its vast cultural, philosophical and historical development. Ethics and morals are true components of Indian society. Indian ethical thought has roots in ancient texts and scriptures like the Vedas, Upanishads and the teachings of Gautama Buddha and Mahavira. These texts emphasize the value such as Dharma or righteousness, Karma or action and Ahimsa or non-violence which have strengthened and influenced the ethical and moral practices in governance. During Mauryan period ethical governance principles were articulated in treaties like Kautilya's Arthashastra. It elaborately mentioned the duties and responsibilities of administrators by emphasizing the value of justice, integrity and welfare of the people. During the medieval period ethics in administration continued to evolve with Islamic and Sufi influences adding to the ethical discourse. The concepts such as justice and equity became integral part of governance under the rulers like Akbar. During the British colonial era they have introduced western concept of governance and intermixed ethics with existing Indian principles. This period witnessed the emergence of codes of conduct for administrators emphasizing impartiality, rule of law and accountability. After independence in 1947 India's constitution incorporated principles of liberty, equality, justice and fraternity and so on. Government set the foundation for ethical governance through the institutions like Central

Vigilance Commission and Lokayukta acts were established in several states to promote accountability, transparency and integrity in public administration.

After independence India adopted mixed development model led by government and private sectors. Indian Polity and administration shaped by the legacies of British imperial mode of administration and Gandhian ideology. Major acts passed between 1858 to 1947 significantly impacted Indian administration process and introduced several administrative reforms based on ethical framework.

The first Administrative Reforms Commission (ARC) was set up in 1966 to recommend several measures to improve the efficiency of civil servants which emphasized to inculcate ethical values in work place. Successive governments set up committees and commissions to address issues of corruption and maladministration in the bureaucracy and importance given to the principals of accountability transparency and integrity in public administration. During Post reform period efforts were made to streamline administrative processes, reduce red-tapism, and enhance accountability through measures like the Right to Information Act (RTI) in 2005. The Second Administrative Reforms Commission was set up in 2005 to revamp public administrative system, introduced many training programs, codes of conduct, and anti-corruption measures to clean up the system.

Incorporation of ethical values in administration especially after independence marked by , initiatives, reforms, and institutional mechanisms aimed at promoting transparency, accountability, and integrity in the bureaucracy. Despite challenges such as corruption and bureaucratic red tape, efforts are made to strengthen ethical standards in public administration for the betterment of political system.

Exploring the importance of ethics in public administration

Modern India is encountering a crisis of values where we observe people showing lack of concern for their fellows. India being a diverse and most populated country the activities of the government depends upon the proper execution of projects and programs. Hence the administrators supposed to be efficient and expert as well as duty conscious so that the nation is benefited by their wisdom and knowledge. Thus the ethical values for the administrators considered as essential in modern times.

- Ethical values in public administration plays a dominant role in upholding public trust. The relationship between ruled and rulers or public and civil servants is essential while coming into the development of nation or personal progress. When public officials act ethically while delivering the services they demonstrate competence and commitment to serve the best interest of public.
- Adherence to ethical standards delivering public duties promotes transparency and accountability in government actions. It will ensure that public servants work for protecting best interest of public rather than personal gain. Ethical values in preventing miss utilisation of public resources.
- Civil servants are responsible for making policies and implementing programs that affect a diverse section of population. By following ethical guidelines say administrators can ensure that these decisions are made in partially and without bias. They should work for promoting justice end equality for all citizens.
- Ethical conduct in civil service leads to more efficient service delivery when public officials act ethically they are more likely to make proper decisions based on experience and merit according to the public interest rather than personal relationship or motivations this results in the effective and timely delivery of public services to those who are in need.

- Ethical values in public administration promotes professionalism and integrity among public servants by adhering to the ethical standards administrators demonstrate a commitment towards upholding the values of integrity honesty accountability while delivering their service these intern helps in building a culture of professionalism within government institutions and fosters a sense of pride and responsibility among public servants.
- Ethical values are essential to check the arbitrary actions of government servants in order to promote welfare of all. Ethical values underscore the sense of administrative responsibility there by reduces delay in execution of programs.
- To eradicate corrupt practices and abuse of power ethical standards are essential for civil servants. To foster legitimacy and credibility of public institutions government servants should follow ethical standards while taking decisions in order to improve efficiency of Administrative process
Practice of ethics in public administration is for the effective working of which will enhance public trust. Promotion of good governance and to create just and equitable society is impossible without ethical values.

Consequences of ethical shortcomings in public administration

Ethical value lapse among government servants have profound and far-reaching implications that can compromise the integrity of public administration and hinder the development of our nation and can erode public trust. These shortcomings are multifaceted and affecting not only the administration structure of the country but also society as a whole. Here are some of the key impacts..

- India is one of the strongest and robust democratic setup in the world. Ethical values is another name for India. Ethical value lapse can undermine democratic processes which will leads to the concentration of power, reduced accountability and integrity and will diminish citizens participation in the political process. Unethical actions can lead to legal challenges which will result in costly litigation for the government and further straining public resources. It will lead to the weakening of democratic institutions.
- In India execution of policies made by legislators is the responsibility of administrators, any ethical lapse can hinder the implementation of policies as decisions may be influenced by personal gain rather than the public interest which will result in ineffective governance.
- Shortcomings in ethics often lead to corrupt practices including bribery, fraud and embezzlement undermining the integrity of public institutions.
- Lack of ethical values in administration will lead to cynicism which in turn erodes the foundational trust which is necessary for effective governance if public lose faith in government institutions it may trigger public outrage and protest finally leading to social unrest and instability which can disrupt governance and public order.
- Moreover ethical lapses can result in unequal treatment for certain group of people which will adversely impact on disadvantaging communities.
- Another important adverse effect is lapse in ethical values while administering the duties can result in dislocation of public funds and resources with projects being approved based on bribes, favoritism or personal connections rather than merit. It can deter both domestic and foreign investment harming economic growth of the country.

Challenges in promoting ethics in Indian administration

- Corruption in India is deeply entrenched in every section of public institution making it difficult to eradicate and promote ethical behavior. India ranks 93rd out of 180 countries on corruption perception index published by Transparency International in 2023.
- Genuine commitment is lacking among political leaders which hampers efforts to enforce ethical standards and reduce corruption. The administrators under the government sector are bound by political decisions.
- Existing laws in India are poorly enforced leading to gaps in accountability and transparency.
- Bureaucratic inertia and resistance to reform within the administrative system can obstruct the efforts to promote ethical practices, also lack of adequate training programs to sensitize public officials about value of ethics and integrity is significant hurdle
- Moreover a general sense of apathy among the public regarding unethical behavior in administration can reduce the pressure on officials to act ethically.

Addressing these challenges requires a multifaceted approach including legal reforms enhanced training and education program stronger enforcement mechanisms and fostering a culture of integrity and accountability within public administration structure is essential.

Mechanisms implemented by Government of India in order to promote ethical values in public administration

❖ Legislative policies :

- Prevention of Corruption Act, 1988 is considered one of the path breaking law that provides for the prosecution of officials involved in corruption and bribery.
- Right to Information Act, 2005 permits to access governmental information to ensure accountability and transparency in administration.
- Whistle blower Protection Act, 2014 protects people who expose cases of corruption in public administration.

❖ Institutional framework :

- Central Vigilance Commission is an Apex level body for preventing corruption and ensuring integrity in administration.
- Lokpal and Lokayukta Institutions investigates allegation of corruption against public officials.
- Comptroller and Auditor General which takes prime role in auditing government expenditure to ensure proper utilization of public funds

❖ Public participation and social audits :

In India many states passed Citizen Charter acts to set the standards of Service delivery on time. Community participation in the auditing of government programs insurance accountability and transparency. At present social audit mechanism is gaining where public can participate directly in the debates and discussions with government officials which collectively aims to foster a culture of ethics and integrity in administrative process.

Strategies to promote ethics in Indian public administration

When we come to the strategies to promote ethical values in public administration which involve multifaceted approach combining legal, institutional, and educational aspects

- India needs to strengthen its anti corruption laws in order to prevent corrupt practices in administration
- Central and state Vigilance commissions needs to be to effectively combat corruption
- To detect and prevent unethical practices in within government departments internal audit system needs to be improved
- Comprehensive ethics training in the curriculum of civil service Training Institute needs to be incorporated
- Government should organize regular seminars workshop and courses on ethics and integrity for government employees at all levels
- Government should expand digital governance system to reduce human discretion in service delivery thus minimizing opportunities for corrupt practices in administration.
- There should be mandatory regular and transparent disclosure of assets by public servants is essentially needed.
- Anonymous channels for reporting unethical practices in administration should be promoted and secured
- Institutionalized social audits mechanism needs to be encouraged by involving citizens in monetary government projects and services.
- Government should recognise and reward public servants who demonstrate exemplary ethical conduct through awards and commendations.
- Digital platforms at every level needs to be improved to publish government data decisions and procurement details to promote openness.
- Grievances redressal mechanisms should be strengthened to ensure effective, accessible, and response you to citizens complaints.
- Public awareness campaigns should be conducted to create awareness to educate citizens about their rights and importance of ethics in public administration.

Conclusion

Ethics in public administration is fundamental concept to maintaining the accountability, integrity and trust essential for effective governance. Ethical values ensure that public officials act in the best interest of the citizens by upholding principles of fairness transparency and Justice. Ethical values help in fostering a culture of ethical behavior, government cant enhance public trust improve the Service Delivery System and prevent corrupt practices and abuse of power. Motivated and value based personnel is a blessing for any organization design to achieve certain objective. Such committed personal will work hard to accomplish the goals with in time frame setup for the programs. Administrators with ethical standards never work for their narrow vested interest or comforts. Ethical conduct among public servants build CS sense of confidence among the public which reinforces their fight in the administrative system. In the context of Indian tradition, the Dharma which encompasses moral conduct, represents righteous behavior. This good ethical behavior among civil servants needs to be deep-rooted in the system of Administration which will impact nation's overall development. People have to realise the fact that they are the masters and their role in modeling administration is very great in achieving efficiency in administration. Ultimately a strong ethical framework is vital for the sustainable development of any society as it promotes good governance, social equity and the overall well-being of the Society.

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