

NURTURING THE PUBLIC SERVICE, SECURITY AND SAFETY WITH INTEGRITY

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ABSTRACT

Integrity is like a mighty tree that stands out in the forest. Its roots are deep, supporting a tall and hardy trunk and its top is a crown of branches with green leaves. It blooms with large cluster of fruits in brilliant colours, ripe and ready to scatter its seeds. Birds and other animals find comfort perching on its secure branch. The main idea of this article is to focus on the public officials in their conduct of public affairs to inculcate such moral values as: integrity, consistency, impartiality, responsibility, accountability, trustworthiness and maintenance of a high degree of ethical and moral standards in ensuring and securing public security and safety in the society. Hence the objective is to generate more of this people who are well informed of the moral values in the light of the qualities. The community should expect to find in them as public servants with unquestionable integrity, who preserve high ethical standards under all situations and circumstances. As well said by Martin Luther King, the ultimate measure of a man is not where he stands in moments of comfort and convenience, but where he stands at times of challenge and controversy.

Keywords: *integrity, public administration, public servant, public security, public safety, Islamic perspective.*

Introduction

The roots of education are bitter, but the fruit is sweet. Hence, the essence of the National Integrity Plan is to educate us to become a person of good values and high integrity. The public functionaries should always be alert of the rules which apply in the work situation and which govern their conduct. Only if a public official has the knowledge of objective on moral principles then only can he or she be assured of leading an ethical and moral life. It is realized that not only physical fitness is necessary but high intellectual, spiritual, moral and emotional skills are also required and relevant for positions of public servants (Cloete, 1992).

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In our society, there is a widespread concern by the public about corruption. These days we hear a lot about acts of nepotism, theft, bribery, etc. from the public purse. Besides this, there is a general concern about maladministration and inefficiency in the public sector where something seems to be not correct. Therefore a clear code of ethics is required which specifies the guiding moral values or principles that will govern the public service and reduce or prevent corrupt practices and unethical behaviour in question. The basic concern of this article is to prove that applied ethics as an area of philosophy attempts to arrive at an understanding of the nature of human values, of how we ought to live and of what constitute a right conduct. At the same time, we are often faced with the consideration of 'why we ought to act morally', for example, that there is a course of conduct which a person should morally choose, irrespective of his likes or dislikes.

This action would be the right thing to do despite a person own self-interest or preferences. That is why we hold individuals responsible for the moral judgment they make or ought to have made. This aspect of judgment making is the subject matter of moral philosophy and ethics. The fact that corruption and maladministration must therefore be interpreted as a total absence of moral and ethical culture in the conduct of public service, security and safety. Thus, what is needed to lead a moral and ethical life? What could be a possible remedy to prevent or eradicate these unprofessional practices in the public administration?

The Nature of Morality and Ethics

Most philosophers draw a distinction between 'ethics' and 'morality' while others treat these two concepts as synonymous. The concepts 'ethics' and 'morality' interchangeably (Gildenhuys, 1991; Maklin, 1982); these terms are concerned solely with the elucidation and justification of morality and more generally with questions about how one should live, about what could count as a good reason for a person acting in this way rather than another, and about what constitutes a good life for human beings. On the other hand, moral judgments can be described as involving matters of right or wrong, ought to be or ought not, a good action or a bad one (Kimmel ,1966; Macklin, 1982; Hoffman & Moore, 1990).

It is noted that meta-ethics, which was very influential among early Greek philosophers, has received renewed attention in recent years. We now live in a world in which there is a great deal of uncertainty about basic norms and values, and it is also a fact that many of the decisions that confront us these days are much more complex morally and ethically. That is why most philosophers are now expected to be so much more ethically sensitive than they used to be. Some

philosophers see this as no more than a natural consequence of the increasing influence of morality on society in general. But others go further and interpret it as symptomatic of the transformation of philosophy into a new type of social institution. As its product becomes more tightly woven into the social fabric, philosophers have to perform new roles in which ethical considerations can no longer be swept aside. What all this means is that public institutions depend on the acceptable moral and ethical bases in order to flourish. It is then possible and even desirable to develop a recipe for moral and ethical behaviour among public institutions and public officials with the emphasis upon commitment to moral norms and values.

This commitment needs to be supported by an ethical and moral culture in a particular institution. Although it is hard to pin down the meaning of ethics because the views that many people have about ethics are shaky, Hoffman and Moore (1990), Gildenhuis (1991) and many other philosophers support the proposition that: 'Ethics is the study of what is good or right for human beings'. Dowling (1999) also agrees that by 'ethical' or 'ethics' we mean established norms, practices, policies, rules, or codes intended to guide an individual in terms of good (bad) or right (wrong) behaviour.

The above definition is obvious that an individual administrator is able to decide morally whether or not to accept or reject a particular ethical rule, or practice, as being a morally right way of behaving. It is obvious from this definition that ethics is a set of rules which sets out what constitutes good (bad) and right (wrong) behaviour. Such rules are usually directed at professional workers, guiding them in the way they ought to choose (or ought not to choose), or guiding them about what it is the right thing (or wrong thing) to do in a given kind of situation. For example, we talk of a moral or ethical person or of an act which is morally or ethically accountable. On what basis do we judge certain forms of human behaviour or decisions taken as right or wrong, good or bad, acceptable or unacceptable? According to Gildenhuis (1991), the moral consciousness of any public official will indicate the moral norms which ought to be adopted and integrated into his or her life, taking personal interests into account, as well as considering and protecting the interests of others is considered acting ethically.

According to Ziman (1998), a scientist, ethical issues always involve interests or feelings. Ziman says that ethics is not just an abstract intellectual discipline; it is about the conflicts that arise in trying to meet real human needs and values. However, being ethical clearly is not a matter of following one's interests or feelings. A person following his or her feelings may recoil from doing what is right; in fact, one's interests might frequently deviate from what is ethical.

Velasquez (1982) on business ethics also confirms the notion of the necessity of morality and he says:

“The moral point of view . . . does not evaluate standards according to whether or not they advance the interests of a particular individual or group, but goes beyond personal interest to a universal standpoint in which everyone’s interests are impartially counted as equal”.

It is noted that to act morally in the public service environment means ensuring that the consequences of the public services are not detrimental to others, or to put this more positively, ensuring that public service activities contribute towards the personal wellbeing of others and societies at large. But this depends on the gradual creation of a political and public climate favouring impartiality, trustworthiness, a sense of responsibility and accountability, and the maintenance of a high degree of ethical and moral standards in the public sector. For example, it is more important to look honest than it is to get anything done.

Since we live in a world in which there is a great deal of uncertainty about basic norms and values, many decisions that confront public officials these days are much more morally and ethically complex. As a result, in the academic field, the subject of philosophy is now striving for excellence in the teaching of ethics in all disciplines. The objective is to develop well-qualified public servants who are impartial and consistent, and who are practically competent persons ready to serve in both public and private sectors. Today the demand is to have well qualified personnel with unquestionable integrity who preserve high ethical standards under all circumstances. In the past few years there has been a growing interest worldwide in the ethics of various spheres of life. We talk of ethics or introducing ethics or philosophy as a subject to be taught not only in academic institutions, but also throughout social, political, economical, and legal life. The emergence of this interest in many fields of studies means that ethics is now recognized as an important subject. Let us now turn to actions which justify the need of ethical and moral conduct, to start with administration, social, political, economic and legal dimensions.

Corruption and Maladministration as Moral and Ethical Problems

What may be publicly considered as a most reprehensible act in a society may not be given similar treatment in another. Consequently, the preparation of a list which includes all forms of unethical conduct is difficult and may be dangerously misleading. However, the following are examples of these activities that according to Dwivedi (1978) are generally considered unethical in many countries:

- i. Bribery, theft, nepotism;
- ii. Conflict of interests (including such activities as financial transactions to gain personal advantage),

- iii. Misuse of insider knowledge;
- iv. Protecting incompetence;
- v. Regulating trade practice or lowering standards in such a manner as to give advantage to one or to family members,
- vi. The use and abuse of official and confidential information for private purposes.

Such activities may produce many disadvantages for a society. For example, inefficiency, mistrust of government and its employees, distortion of programme achievements, waste of public resources, encouragement of racial discrimination and eventual national instability. Under what circumstances are these actions called corrupt? It seems best to start by citing an example. By 'corruption' we intend 'the violation of the intent of explicit official laws, rules, and purposes for purposes of personal gain or the advancement of the private agenda'. If, for example, one violates an explicit and public rule in order to further the interests of a private company or corporation, so that its interests come to replace those of the public, this person is guilty of corruption. Samuel Huntington (1979) in Ekpo writes:

"Corruption is a behaviour by public officials, which deviates from accepted norms in order to serve their private ends".

Corruption takes place when a public servant, in defiance of prescribed norms, breaks the rules to advance his or her personal interests. We are concerned here with public office or public institutions together with public officials, which behave in both unexpected and unacceptable ways. What constitutes unexpected and unacceptable behaviour may seem to be a rather personal and individual judgement, but to some extent they are members of groups with ground rules regulating behaviour. Regardless of how dedicated they may be to personal gratification, group members operate under some constraints if the group is to survive. If any group as a public institution is to continue as an operating entity, there must be some agreement among the members regarding how they are to act towards one another and at least a tacit consensus on what constitutes unacceptable behaviour. What is at issue is the existence of a standard of behaviour according to which some actions break some rules, written or unwritten, regarding the proper purposes to which a public office or a public institution may be put to. For example, it is when a person is able to use his or her influence to gain or receive something that is not justified under a country's legal and administrative regulations. According to Dwivedi (1978), 'Corruption can exist only if there is someone willing to corrupt and is capable of corruption'.

On the other hand, Ekpo (1979) argues that corruption in a modernized society is thus, in part, not so much the result of deviance of behaviour from accepted norms, as it is the deviance of norms from the established patterns of behaviour.

New standards and criteria of what is right and wrong lead to a condemnation of, at least, some traditional behaviour patterns as corrupt. What is at issue in all the cases of corruption cited is the existence of a standard of behaviour according to which the action in question breaks some rules, written or unwritten, about the proper purposes to which a public office or a public institution is put to.

Corruption naturally tends to weaken or to perpetuate the weakness of the government bureaucracy. In this respect, it is incompatible with political, social and economic development. "The corruption of one government is the generation of another", (Mill, 1960). Corruption and maladministration are among the most important unethical (wrong) conduct in the public sector. Current writing about corruption has attempted to challenge the earlier speculation that corruption is a phenomenon with no negative consequences. Huntington (1971) has argued that corruption takes place when a civil servant is in defiance of prescribed or accepted norms, breaking the rules to advance his or her personal interests. Thus it is the behaviour which deviates from the duties of one's public role because of private pecuniary or status gains or violates rules against the exercise of certain types of private influence. This included such behaviour as bribery (if a public official accepts gifts from thankful members of the public, for services rendered, this does not count as gratitude but as bribery); nepotism (which is a use of the power to advance the interests of friends or of a member of one's family); misappropriation (which is illegal appropriation of public resources for private use); theft (which is taking money or property meant to benefit the public with the intention of permanently depriving the public of it). To maintain a high level of integrity in the public sector is an absolute necessity. However, according to Caiden (1982), those who mean to take charge of the affairs of government should remember two of Plato's rules:

- i. To keep the good of the people clearly in view so that regardless of their own interests they will make their action conform to public interests; and
- ii. To care for the welfare of the public and not serve the interest of a certain individual so as to betray the rest.

The general happiness results if we tolerate all other-regarding individual actions. The purpose of the institution of morality, utilitarian's insist, is to promote welfare by minimizing harms and maximizing benefits. In short, corruption is wrong insofar as it tends to produce pain and displeasure. Administrative officials must satisfy the general body of citizens that they are proceeding with reasonable regard to promote the balance between the public and private interests. Wheare (1973), on the other hand, describes maladministration as an action based on, or influenced

by, improper considerations or improper conduct of the public affairs. The matters handled by public officials, no matter how small and unimportant they seem to them, usually are very important to the individual claimant or client. According to Fieldman (1977), in any community without a general consensus on moral norms and values, authentic and sound society is actually impossible. Gildenhuis (1971), describes maladministration as 'a wrong action' because maladministration frequently transgresses the ethical norm of "respect of other persons". In brief, this means that showing respect to others is how everyone wants to be treated for him or herself.

This presupposes a number of practical conditions. For example, if a public official considers an act to be personally morally right, he or she must consider any relevant similar act to be right for the same reasons. This is one version of the principle of impartiality, that is, 'I should respect others (as persons) because this is how I would want to be treated myself'. According to Downie and Telfer (1969) showing respect to others as a person is how everyone wants to be treated and this presupposes a number of practical conditions. Among many underlying philosophical questions we need to consider this ethical norm is when one says that the public official is morally obligated to show respect for others, what exactly is he or she supposed to do; why should they show such respect; how exactly are they to show this respect?

To maintain a high level of integrity in the public sector is an absolute necessity. The purpose of ethics in the public sector is to eliminate the uncertainty between what seems to be right and what is in fact wrong. As the practical problems of maladministration and corruption are ethical issues, solving these problems lies within the precepts of ethics. Ethics is a moral science, an exposition of what is good or bad, right or wrong. Ethics is concerned with the development of human behaviour according to certain moral norms. What is judged morally wrong will be always wrong, especially if it has deleterious effects, and of course, if it is destructive and incompatible with a system of public order. Corruption is among the most important manifestation of unethical conduct in the public sector. Let us consider some measures to prevent or eradicate unprofessional actions or the malpractices in issue.

Remedies to Combat Corruption and Maladministration Practices

The issue of remedies is only a small part of the main subject of how to ensure good public administration. Although it is small, it is important and likely to become increasingly so. As a matter of fact, much is currently being said and written about the possible remedies or measures to control both corruption and

maladministration. It would be a mistake to think that there is no cause for everyone's concern, particularly philosophers or ethicists. Public service decisions and actions are thought to need more social, political, economic, and legal control. A new focus on the moral-ethical aspects of public life is called for. It is essential that measures exist; even if we cannot curb corruption and maladministration completely, at least we can play an effective role in controlling and eradicating occurrence of both unethical, immoral actions and malpractices in question.

It is essential to remember that both corruption and maladministration pervade the entire environment and do not necessarily focus on a particular area, and that whatever measures will be implemented need to taken into account the broad spectrum of both occurrences. It is opined that corruption refers unequivocally to blatant and deliberate dishonesty in the use of public money and goods, while maladministration is rather a dysfunctional condition in which the taxpayer is the loser but in which the official is not necessarily enriched. These two phenomena, however, are closely related and could possibly be placed on a continuum with corruption as the extreme pole on the negative side. But when remedies are being considered it quickly becomes clear that one has to do with differing issues, although there are points of contact. Wheare (1973) described maladministration as:

“Administrative action (or inaction) based on or influenced by improper considerations or conduct. Arbitrariness, malice or biases, including discrimination, are examples of improper considerations. Neglect, unjustifiable delay, failure to observe relevant rules and procedures, failure to take relevant considerations into account, failure to establish or review procedures where there is a duty or obligation on a body to do so, are examples of improper conduct or maladministration”.

It is submitted that corruption and maladministration result in an erosion of confidence in many public institutions and its public servants. Practically all countries have enacted some kind of corrective and punitive measures to deal with ethical offenses in the public services. It seems profitable to consider the nature of ethics in the light of what qualities one would expect to find in public officials who are to serve the society effectively. The parallel step now is to ask what qualities one would look for in a public official. There are certain beliefs, items of knowledge, abilities, that *qua* public officials need if they are to effectively use the formal criteria (as they must if they are rational) and more especially if they want to flourish in their conduct of public affairs:

- i. In order to be able to respect another person, an official needs to believe in the importance of the needs and interests of the other person to be like for themselves;

- ii. In order to be impartial, the official ought to see a given situation from the other person's point of view, as well as his own. If this is correct, then he or she will need the ability to understand the emotional state and feelings of others as well as his or her own;
- iii. A more practical implication of the rule concerns the knowledge of such things as the relevant area of the law, the social norms, the conventional expectations of society at large and of different social groups. This means that he or she should be adequately informed;
- iv. Another practical ability the official needs is that of communicating his or her thoughts and feelings to others consistently;
- v. The official also need to think out choices of actions and possible ways of dealing with problems in advance of situations requiring a rapid response. That is why such positions require qualifications, experience and training; and
- vi. Finally, a public official need to develop a motive to behave in a way that fulfils the idea of showing respect to others, even when they are troublesome or disrespectful towards him.

According to Dwivedi (1978), the general principles which should govern the conduct of a public servant are based on the premise that the maintenance of high standard of honesty, integrity and impartiality are essential to assure proper performance of government tasks, the maintenance of public trust and the confidence and respect of the citizens for their government. To achieve a high standard and to prevent and discourage the occurrence of unethical activities, public servants must know what those activities are and what remedial action may be taken against infractions. A set of ethical guidelines or a code of conduct serves this purpose. The foundation for a code of ethics is the provisions of law relating to public offences, the requirements of public service, and the performance of public servants.

It is important to recognize that the existence of an official code does not in itself impute any lack of integrity and honesty on the part of employees. Rather its main objective is to assist employees in determining the proper course of action when faced with uncertainty regarding the propriety of a contemplated action. The main aim is to prevent employees from unwittingly falling into a situation of conflict of interest, to guide them away from perversion of their integrity by bribery, theft, nepotism, fraud or other corrupt inducements, to help them identify what is permissible and what is not, and to indicate possible courses of action when the impermissible threatens or is brought to their knowledge.

According to Steinberg and Austen (1990), acceptance of public employment adds new factors, namely, that of confidence in the integrity of government and ethical practice on the part of elected, appointed officials. Like it or not, public officials are bound to accept the admonition which says: 'do not pervert justice or show partiality, do not accept a bribe, for bribe blinds the eyes of the wise and twists the words of the righteous.' An ancient line of philosophical thought attempts to demonstrate that to act rationally is to act ethically. Thus, a code of ethics, stipulated as a set of rules which sets out what constitutes good or bad, right or wrong behaviour is necessary to be produced to lay down the general principles upon which more specific provisions may be built as required by certain circumstances. This is to identify moral principles central to good governance of public administration.

Work Ethics and Moral Values from the Islamic Perspective.

Matters that refer to what is right and wrong, particular thought or action in Islam are determined by the divine guidance as outlined in the Holy Quran. As the general rule, Allah SWT says in the Holy Quran: "O ye who believe! Obey Allah and obey the Apostle, and those charged with authority among you" (Chapter 4 verse 39 or *Surah An-Nisa' ayat 39*). Islam expects the Islamic subordinates in the public service to obey their superiors not only by virtue of legal and administrative rules, but because it is the divine commandment.

Sharafeldin (1987) states that Islam requires every Muslim who is capable of working to do so; it is a religious and moral necessity as well as a state requirement and responsibility towards Islamic society. At the same time, Islam protects the freedom of work so long as it is in line with the general Islamic spirit and does not infringe on Islamic law, public service values, or individual rights. Islam urges Muslims who are healthy and capable to work hard and not to depend on charity organizations, individuals, or state welfare system. Work in the Islamic system of public administration is considered an external manifestation of faith. The Holy Quran provides: "As to those who believe and work righteousness, verily, we shall not suffer to perish the reward on any who do a single righteous deed (Chapter 18 verse 30 or *Surah Al-Kahf ayat 30*) and O ye who believe! Fulfill all obligations" (Chapter 5 verse 1 or *Surah Al-Ma'idah ayat 1*).

Work is duty shared between the public service and the public officials. Both of them should be concerned with the existence and continuation of the institution for which they work. However, the public service should not only care about service maximization to the detriment of their workers. Thus selfishness will only lead to the workers' dissatisfaction and pressure for higher wages and benefits. Islam

encourages all Muslims to promote a brotherly environment—an environment that is conducive to efficiency, hard work and competence in one’s job and not one that encourages the development of a negative work ethic.

As far as the personnel functions such as recruitment, selection, appointment and promotion are concerned, the Islamic administrative theory stresses merit. The Quran states: “Truly the best of men for thee to employ is the (man) who is strong and trusty”, (Chapter 28 verse 26 or *Surah Al-Qasas ayat 26*). According to Sharafeldin (1987) strength corresponds to the skill and qualification the job requires and the ability to understand Islamic principles and the power to apply them; trustworthiness applies to the fear of Allah SWT and the moral obligation and commitment to societal and public service goals. It can therefore be argued that Islam contributes to the development of a positive work ethic in the public service as it encourages its followers to work hard and by promoting the “merit” principle.

Concept of Integrity in Islam

There are two concepts in Islam that, among others, define the understanding of integrity; its meaning and method of attainment. These are purity and wholeness. We find that the Islamic definition of integrity resembles the scientific and natural interpretations of the word more than the philosophical or theoretical understanding; insofar that it refers less to the consistency with which human behaviour is aligned to a given moral or ethical dogma, and more to the extent to which human behaviour is brought into agreement with intrinsic human nature.

a. Purity

The Islamic understanding of purity, unarguably, bases itself on the concept of the fitrah (natural disposition of the human being). Prophet Muhammad S.A.W. referring to this natural state of the human being, said: “Every new-born child is born in a state of fitrah. Then his parents make him a Jew, a Christian or a Magian, just as an animal is born intact. Do you observe any among them that are maimed (at birth)?” (narrated by Imam Ahmad)

All creatures, then, including human beings, are born in a state of innate purity; any subsequent defilement of that natural condition results from a variety of social influences and manipulations. It is significant that in the above hadeeth, the impurity that develops, or that is to a degree inflicted, is likened to an actual injury or deformity -- it is a disfiguration of the natural state of the human being. Integrity in Islam refers to the restoration and maintenance of that natural and

primal state of purity. Allah SWT says: “Set your face to the religion of Islam in sincerity which is Allah’s fitrah upon which He created mankind. There is no changing in the creation of Allah. That is the right religion but most people know not”, (Chapter 30 verse 30 or Surah Ar-Rum ayat 30).

b. Wholeness

It is fair to say that completeness is a theme of Islam. Prophet Muhammad S.A.W frequently employed metaphors to explain the message with which he was sent, that invoked imagery of incomplete or unfinished things being brought to completion. For instance, he said: “My likeness and the likeness of the Prophets before me is the likeness of a person who built a house and made it complete and beautiful, except the place of a brick in a corner. So people began to go around it and wonder at it and say, “Why has not this brick been placed?” He said, “I am that brick and I am the final Prophet”. (narrated by Imam Muslim). The imagery of cohesion here reinforces the words of Allah Almighty, in the Holy Quran announcing the final perfection of His Revelation to mankind, (what means):

“This day I have perfected My favor upon you and have chosen for you Islam as your religion.”

(Chapter 5 verse 3 or Surah Al-Ma’idah ayat 3)

It is submitted that integrity in Islam has to do with the consistency of the individual with his or her innate purpose; the totality of the individual’s life being kept in alignment with their intrinsic function. It is not merely the dogmatism of adherence to a relatively arbitrary code of conduct and behaviour, but the preservation of the individual’s purity and authenticity. Whereas the philosophical definition of integrity would take violation of a given code of ethics as what invalidates one’s integrity. In Islam, the violation of integrity constitutes an alienation from one’s nature with drastic and profound consequences that ultimately invalidate one’s very life.

Conclusion

The public service needs public servants who are loyal to their work. The main reason thereof is that the concept of amanah (trust) is that their income is paid through the taxpayer’s money. Therefore, they should use the public funds, inter alia, effectively and efficiently for the benefit of all the members of the society. Positive work ethics and attitude such as loyalty to public service goals and values do not develop automatically. It requires the concerted efforts of all interested members of the society to develop a positive approach to work ethics

and moral values. Therefore an effective promotion on positive work ethics and moral values are very essential propaganda for both the government (Federal and State), educational institutions, caretakers of religions, in general the society and specifically the parents. It is through the upkeep of these moral values and ethics in ensuring that the National Integrity Plan is fulfilled in order to safeguard public security and safety of the country.

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