
State of Ethics in the Public Service of Bangladesh: What are Public Servants Thinking?

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Abstract: *The purpose of the study is to find out the thoughts of public servants pertaining public service ethics in Bangladesh. Using a structured questionnaire this explorative study collected data from public servants working in various public organizations in Chittagong district. The paper reveals that, according to public servants financial constraints, desire to exert power and individual understanding of morality leads to unethical behavior. While factors like culture and mentality, education, attitude and behavior, rise in income level and social accountability may enhance ethics; the government, employees and civil society are the key actors in this regard. The corroboration and contradiction of the findings with existing literature are also analysed. The study indicates that though policy changes in the financial area may not result in major improvements but changes in the training and education sector may lead to better ethical standards. Social accountability acts as one of the potential factors of public service ethics but a more organized, skilled and impartial civil society can increase its effectiveness. Here an attempt has been made to provide a platform for future research as very limited study has been carried out from this perspective in Bangladesh.*

1. Introduction

Ethics in the public sector has taken a downhill direction both in the developed and developing world. Public trust on the public service in countries like UK, Australia, Belgium and Italy, is on the decline (Haque 1998b; Landry 1993; Christensen 1997; Halligan 1997; Hondegheem 1997; Millar and McKeivitt 1997). The condition prevailing in Bangladesh is all the more gloomy as the public service is eroded with unethical behaviour and transgression (World Bank, 1996). No one talks about ethics anymore (Khan *et al*, 1995: 596). This has an overarching adverse effect which requires immediate attention.

Ethics are statements, written or oral, that prescribe or proscribe certain behaviours under specified conditions (Nigro & Nigro 1989:37). Public service ethics is defined as broad norms that delineate how public servants – as agents of the state, and where applicable, as members of an established profession such as accounting law, etc. – should exercise judgment and discretion in carrying out their official duties (UNDESA 2000: 5). It encompasses a broad and widening range of principles and value which include objectivity, impartiality, fairness, sensitivity, compassion, responsiveness, accountability, equity, professionalism, integrity, efficiency, justice and courtesy (UNDESA 1999; OECD 2000; EU 2004; Pevkur 2005; Molianen 2007; OECD). Public servants are to adhere to these core values or else the consequences may go against public interest and for this reason it is important to unfold the actual picture.

Not much research has been done in the area of public service ethics in Bangladesh. Especially the thoughts of public servants in this regard have been left nearly unexplored which is apparent from the dearth of relevant literature. And the related literature that is found does not fully concentrate on public service ethics in Bangladesh. A large number of the research has been done on accountability and corruption, where there are some references of ethics. Some reports of national and international organizations (IGS: 2008, GOB: 2008; WB: 1996; TIB) bring out the problems that are prevalent due to lack of ethics in the civil service, and provide suggestions.

The number of studies, done by individual researchers (Khan: 1997; Khan, Rahman and Siddique 1995; Aminuzzaman; 1996, Kim et al 2013) that have directly addressed the subject is not many. In most cases the issue of ethics has been attended to while explaining corruption (Zafarullah and Siddique: 2001; Khan, 1998). Some authors have focused on the role of non-coercive measures like religion, social accountability etc. (Noor: 2008; Iftekharruzaman 2010) in promoting ethics.

Organizational structure, organizational culture, individual attribute and social context effect ethical decision making (Wart & Denhardt, 2001). The social context and administrative structure attribute in the composition of the attitude and behaviour of public servants (Ethics handbook). While institutional mechanisms of accountability are important safeguards against corruption of all types, ethics and ethical standards are much more complex and internalized virtues that must be developed in the political as well as administrative cultures of a country (Farazmand, 2002: 129). Disciplinary measures provide guidance for procedural actions whereas it is the judgment of the public servants that determine the decisions of their actions. Therefore, what the public servants think about the ethical standards of the public service is worth knowing as their values and beliefs are the major element of the administrative culture. What do they think are the reasons behind unethical behaviour in this sector? According to them which factors and actors might assist to ensure ethical behaviour? This study aims to find out the answers to these basic important questions. It gives a general overview of the causes and possible remedies, from the public servants perspective, providing a fundamental platform for future research. This perspective will aid researchers and policy makers in understanding this highly sensitive field and to make recommendations or policy changes for a better ethical administration. The article begins by describing the background and methodology of the study. The next section presents and analyzes the findings of the study and where they stand in line with previous studies. The last section outlines the views of public servants

about unethical behavior and tries to provide directions by assimilating their thoughts.

2. Background of Public Service Ethics in Bangladesh

The lack of ethical standard and conduct in the Bangladeshi public sector has its roots in the British rule. The sub-continent was ruled by the British for about two hundred years (1757-1947). Thus the public service of Bangladesh has inherited most of its characteristics from the British colonial administration. During the colonial rule it was mainly authoritarian and elitist in nature and was meant to serve the imperial interest. Patronage system dominated the entry into the covenanted civil service which led to a shortfall of competent civil servants. Warren Hastings laid down the foundation for a standard of conduct. Lord Charles Cornwallis further improvised the standards. The measures that Cornwallis adopted were: firstly, the pay and allowances of the civil servants were substantially enhanced to enable them to live a decent and comfortable life during and after office; secondly, he fought against the abuses of patronage which was the mode of entry into the company's civil service. As a result, the standard of morale was raised; integrity and devotion to duty began to grow. At the end of the 20th century the Islington Commission laid down an enduring policy to promote the morale of the civil service which created the foundation of pay and salary determination. Although the approach was not specifically aimed at ethical issues and standards of behaviour of civil servants, the British rule in this way made an effort towards enhancing public service ethics.

During the 24 years of Pakistani rule after the partition from India in 1947, the civil service continued the tradition. The civil servants were highly accused of corruption, lack of integrity and honesty. They considered them as the privileged class.

Even today the situation has not changed much. The public servants are not inspired by the spirit of serving public interest. The behavioral patterns of bureaucrats have dramatically altered due to changed social, economic and political factors. All these have greatly influenced drastic changes in

the values, norms, beliefs and perceptions of bureaucrats (Khan, 1998:34). The civil service is still wedded to the authoritarian norms, procedural formalism and secretive deliberations of the colonial period, and offers little convincing evidence of the development of any ethos of public service (World Bank, 1996: 61). The citizens are seen as beneficiaries and the public servants the benefactors. The civil service of Bangladesh does not have any codified laws of ethics. Legal guidance for ethical behavior are scattered in various laws like, the Government Servants Conduct Rules 1979, and the Government Servants (Discipline and Appeal) Rules 1985. These rules take in hand behavioral standards which may be detrimental to the integrity and honesty of civil servants and administering of punishment. Although there is a plethora of rules and regulations about the proper behavior of government officials, in reality they are not properly enforced. The various loopholes and inconsistencies of these rules and regulations enable public servants to deviate from the professional ethical standards. In addition to rules and regulations the social and cultural context also influences the ethical standard of the public service. The rampant corruption, pilferage, lapses in responsibility, patronage, and bureaucratic overindulgence in the public service bears the evidence of the crying need of ethics in the public service of Bangladesh. ‘The arrogance of high office, unethical behaviour, failure to respect legislative intent and apathy towards work have been rampant’(UNDP, 1993).The extent of lack of ethics and it’s severe need in the public service of Bangladesh can be understood from the observation of the World Bank Report: “The decline in the reputation of the Civil Service along with the growth in the ease and acceptance of graft, have created conditions of ‘adverse selection’ – it is generally believed that many who have been applying for public services jobs in recent years seem to be motivated less by considerations of public service, professional pride, or prestige, and more by calculations of the possibilities for rent-earning. It is perhaps, no coincidence that recent recruits to the Civil Service seem to prefer the revenue services over the traditionally more prestigious administrative and foreign services” (1996:68). The public service has created such a reputation that applicants

are attracted to the opportunity of rent seeking rather than its professional pride.

3. Methodology

This empirical study is exploratory in nature. This study conducted a survey on Class I civil servants working in various government offices in Chittagong district. Class I civil servants were selected because ‘class I officials form a well-organized interest group, able to distort policy to their own ends, and that politicians and senior officials show favoritism in awarding employment opportunities and contracts’ (Mukherjee, et al., p 32). The study was conducted on thirteen public offices which fall under five selected ministries. These offices were chosen as these organizations represented five important ministries and also for the nature of their work and responsibilities i.e. service delivery and financial orientation. All the other organizations could not be brought under the sample frame due to their large scale and limited accessibility. The sample frame, that is, the number of Class I officers working in the selected 13 offices, consisted of around 1000 officers. The calculated minimum sample size was 249 with confidence level 95% and margin error 5%. In order to get a higher response rate the sample size was determined 350. A stratified proportionate random sampling method was used to select the sample size. Then a proportionate random sample was taken from each ministry in order to have an equal representation.

A close-ended questionnaire was used to collect data. The respondents were asked to choose their top three answers of each question, according to precedence, ranging from minimum six to maximum nine options. The analyses were based on frequencies. A range of work has been done in the field of ethics by various international organizations like the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA), United Nations Public administration Network (UNPAN), Transparency International (TI) and the World Bank (WB). In Bangladesh, the GoB and some research institutes (IGS-BRAC) have conducted studies on NIS with reference to

public service ethics. Prominent scholars have also emphasized on ethics in the public service in their scholarly writings. Along with the research findings the study has also benefited from these publications.

4. Findings and Analysis: Views of Public Servants on Reasons and Remedies of Unethical Behaviour

The responses of the participants regarding the reasons of unethical behavior and factors and actors of ensuring ethical behavior are discussed here with reference to present condition. All the answers were asked to be given in order of the preference of the respondents.

4.1. Reasons for Unethical Behaviour

There are many reasons for public servants to go astray and engage in unethical behaviour. The reasons vary from person to person. To acquire the perception of the respondents in this regard they were asked to select three reasons among nine options. It is shown in table 12 that 65.2% (n=163) of the civil servants under the study stated that financial constraint was the main reason for immoral behaviour among civil servants. ‘Desire to exert power’ (24.8%, n=62), ‘Individual and family interest’ (23.6%, n=59) and ‘Political view’ (18.4%, n=46) were mostly cited as the second preferred reason. As the third preferred reason ‘Desire to exert power’ (24%, N=60) was again mostly chosen. ‘Individual and family interest’ (18.4%, n=46) and ‘Individual understanding of moral and moral values’ (20.8%, n=52) were the other two highly selected reasons.

Table 1. *Reasons for Public Servants to Become Inclined Towards Unethical Behaviour*

Reasons	First Reason		Second Reason		Third Reason	
	F	%	F	%	F	%
Financial constraints	163	65.2	36	14.4	25	10

Political view	16	6.4	46	18.4	21	8.4
Individual and family interest	27	10.8	59	23.6	46	18.4
Intention and emotion	5	2	14	5.6	11	4.4
Desire to exert power	15	6	62	24.8	60	24
Ignorance of rules	1	.4	8	3.2	13	5.2
Individual understanding of morality and moral values	20	8	16	6.4	52	20.8
Behaviour of administrators	3	1.2	9	3.6	13	5.2
Understanding of organizational morals	--	--	--	--	9	3.6

The collected data indicates that ‘financial constraint’ (65.2%, n= 163) is the major reason for civil servants to get involved in unethical behaviour. In Bangladesh civil servants are not sufficiently paid (PARC, 2000) and the salary is not competitive with the private sector. It does not allow the civil servants to meet the requirements of a comfortable life. While this cannot be an acceptable reason for unethical behaviour it does carry some meaning.

The Government has set up National Pay Service Commission from time to time. Some commissions increased the basic pay to some extent, but still none of them were able to produce an all inclusive pay structure. During the 80s there was a decline in the level of salary, especially at the top levels, which have had serious repercussions on the performance of the public servants like low levels of efficiency, low morale, absenteeism, rent seeking and the deteriorating quality of new entrants (World Bank 1996: 118). To maintain a decent living standard many of them resort to moonlighting to supplement their official income (UNDESA 2000). Among other non-official sources of income- such as inherited property, spouse’s income and savings from travel allowances- bribe is a major one (Mukharjee, 2001). The respondents thought that the second most important reason for unethical behavior was ‘desire to exert power’

(24.8%, n= 62 and 24% as third choice). History provides evidence of many atrocities that has taken place in the pursuit of power. In the field of public service it is no exception. 'The necessary conditions for corrupt practices are (a) existence of power and/or position of power and/or protection of powerful persons and (b) existence of opportunity to use such power deliberately for personal or parochial gain (Harendra Kumar De, 1998; Ahmed, 2002)'. Starting from politics to administration the fight for power exists everywhere.

Every person has an individual way of perceiving things. The same thing can be looked at from different perspectives by different persons. No matter how broad the legal and social guidelines are available they cannot cover the whole spectrum of administrative discretion making which leaves room for understanding one's own values and motivations (Wart & Dendhart, 2001). Therefore, the actions of public servants are also guided by their own 'understanding of morals and values' (20.8%, n=52) and this was selected as the third reason though 'desire to exert power' gained higher score. Although they are trained with certain organizational values; their personal outlook also plays an influencing role here. These moral values are usually taught at the family level. The environment in which a person is brought up also matters. The values that are practiced in childhood have a lasting impact on human psychology. These values are likely to be reflected later in the practical life which includes the work place. In addition the society also has a big role in building one's morals and values.

'Individual and family interest' (18.4%, n=46) was another reason that received quite a high score as third choice. Rule 27 of the Government Servant Conduct Rules (1979) prohibits any sort of nepotism or favoritism – 'No Government servant shall indulge in parochialism, favouratism, victimization and willful abuse of office.' But the civil servants do not precisely abide by these rules and engage in unethical behaviour either to serve their individual interest or the interest of the members of their family. Allegations of nepotism, favoritism, cronyism and regionalism against civil

servants are widely known (WB 1996, 2002; PARC 2000; Anissuzzaman 1985, Huque 2001, Farazmand, 2009) and has become institutionalized (Rahman,2005). Arbitrary criteria rather than due recognition of merit for promotion have contributed to erosion of moral values and frustration among employees, inducing them to adopt canvassing and other means of influence for career advancement (PARC, 2000: 84). The intention to please their superiors- which may prove to be fruitful for promotions, transfers and ACRs – works in the back of the mind while making decisions. Another form of influence from family and friends is known as *tadbir*. When interested parties cannot directly contact officials they communicate through relatives (Rahman, 2005). Benefits for oneself or family members are taken from the vested interest groups in exchange of undue public service. For example, tenders are often given to bidders who serve the personal interest of both political leaders and bureaucrats, who also are in connivance in this regard (Quadir, 2012).

‘Political view’ (18.4%, n=46) also got some attention as a reason for deviating from ethical behaviour. This is not surprising as it is now clear to all that the public service is highly polluted with politicization (Jahan, 2006; Panday 2012 Daily Star).Most of the civil servants are directly or indirectly politically affiliated. The political ideals do not remain simply personal but effect the official actions. It becomes worse if the official is a blind supporter of a particular party. Decisions are guided by political interest rather than public interest. This works totally against the impartial feature of a public servant.

All the reasons mentioned above give impetus to the deteriorating status of ethics in the public service. the ordinary citizen become the main victims, ‘who has to be content with poor service delivery, corruption and the bad behaviour of street-level bureaucrats’ (Khan 2003: 396).

4.2. Factors Ensuring Ethical Behaviour

Improvements in various influencing factors can bring a positive change to the overall scenario. The participants were requested to select the

factors they thought would help in ensuring ethical behaviour of public servants.

Table 2. Factors that Can Ensure Public Service Ethics

Factors	First Factor		Second Factor		Third Factor	
	F	%	F	%	F	%
Culture and mentality	133	53.2	26	10.4	4	1.6
Education	39	15.6	37	14.8	7	2.8
Attitude and behaviour of administrators	60	24	57	22.8	19	7.6
Social accountability	5	2	40	16	39	15.6
Legal measures	1	.4	10	4	17	6.8
Separation of politics and administration	3	1.2	35	14	44	17.6
Rise of income level	9	3.6	44	17.6	93	37.2
Exposure of the media			1	.4	27	10.8

Most of the respondents (53.2%, n=133) selected ‘culture and mentality’ as the first factor in ensuring ethical behaviour of civil servants. As Aristotle opines, “behavior is the result of socialization and habit, as ethics, a derivative of ethos (habit) implies” (UNDESA, 1999:103). Apart from systemic defects—the offshoot of outmoded structures and procedures, the bureaucracy is still entrenched in an administrative culture, which is influenced by notions of clientelism and an attitude of paternalism toward the people (Zafarullah and Siddique, 2001:482). Although there are many formal rules and regulations it is mainly the informal rules or the culture that mostly influences the behaviour of the civil servants. As Stan Davis (1984) puts it, culture is “a pattern of beliefs and expectations shared by the organization’s members. These beliefs and expectations produce norms that powerfully shape the behavior of individuals and groups”. It

becomes the normal way of doing things. Some cultures carry good characteristics that lead to efficiency and progress, while others introduce and follow negative practices. Thus the public service of Bangladesh has also developed some 'bureaopathologies'¹. The components of this bureaucratic culture viewed by Khan (1998) are: corruption, authoritarianism, centralisation of authority, elitism, lack of transparency, lack of accountability, citizens treated as children, resistance to change. Paternalism and clientelism to the people is still ingrained in the bureaucratic culture of Bangladesh. This type of culture has made the civil servants apathetic and carefree about their responsibilities. In Bangladesh, public satisfaction with essential public sector services is quite low, and the common citizens are quite unhappy with the indifferent, discourteous, arrogant, and corrupt behavior of public servants (Zafarullah et al., 1997; Haque 2001: 104).

Attitude and behavior are important attributes of any culture. About 23% of the respondents think that _attitude and behaviour of administrators play an essential role in ensuring public service ethics. This again proves that there is a serious problem with the administrative culture and the attitude of the civil servants which is well known even among the service itself. Unfortunately this is not good news. As it is much harder to establish ethical values where the public servants know that their colleagues are engaged in unethical behaviour. This indicates that the culture of the organization is accustomed to irregularities. This type of culture is not conducive to promoting ethical behaviour. The public perception about the behaviour of civil servants is not a pretty one. Individual encounters with officials identified —unnecessary harassment, procrastination in deciding simple problems, discourteous and arrogant behaviour, keeping customers waiting for hours before attending to their needs, frequent absence from office, not maintaining appointments, ignoring pleas for reconsideration of a problem, unwilling(ness) to correct mistakes, and making unabashed approaches for pecuniary benefits|| (Khan et al, 1997: 18; IGS, 2006:51).

¹ Bureaopathologies refer to unhealthy behaviours in organizations. For detail discussion see, *What really is Public Maladministration* (1991) and *The Dynamics of Public Administration* (1971), by G.E. Caiden

The culture and mentality of a civil servant depends mainly on the upbringing and social environment. It usually takes time and develops over the years. While these may take certain amount of time to change, the study suggests that the attitude and behaviour of civil servants can be improved through proper education and training. The results of the research also acknowledge the need for education in this matter (15.6%, n= 39 as first choice). Training is a form of education. It has become a must in the context of Bangladesh mainly for two reasons. First, given the deteriorating quality of education in our universities and the consequent lower educational level of civil service recruits, training has to help fill in some of the gaps in their education besides imparting necessary motivation and skills in preparing them for their jobs. Second, in addition to poor recruitment over the years, training of officers has also been grossly neglected in our country since independence. It's impact is now being sharply felt with a drastic decline in efficiency and capability at all levels of the bureaucracy (Siddiqui 1996:74). There are in total twenty-five training institutions along with the apex training institution BPATC. All these institutions render training to all classes of government officials and employees. All class I officers are required to undergo the foundational training course within the first year of their service. In spite of this elaborate training system the training does not appear to be fruitful (PARC, 2000).

The 'rise in income level' (37.2%, n=93) was listed as the highest third preferred factor. Rise in the income level might have a positive effect to some extent but not a far reaching one, unless and until other disciplinary measures are effectively enforced and behaviour conducive to ethics coincide. Again increasing the salary structure is not an easy task especially for a low income country like Bangladesh.

If the culture and mentality, attitude and behavior of the public servants are based on ethics and appropriate education, social accountability, legal measures rise in income level and the separation of politics and

administration can be ensured then it will give way to such an environment where ethics can thrive.

4.3. Actors to Ensure Ethical Behaviour

The government does not work alone. Just as its overall performance, the ethical system is also influenced by various groups or institutions. Here, these are referred to as actors, including the government itself. The respondents chose three top actors that they thought would be crucial in augmenting the ethical administration.

Table 3. Actors Ensuring Ethical Behaviour

Actors	First Choice		Second Choice		Third Choice	
	F	%	F	%	F	%
Citizens	76	30	17	6.8	51	20.4
Environment and society	13	5.2	20	8	13	5.2
Employees	63	25.2	89	35.6	32	12.8
Government	96	38.4	97	38.8	39	15.6
Private sector association	--	--	13	5.2	20	8
Public sector association	1	.4	11	4.4	26	10.4
Civil society	1	.4	3	1.2	69	27.6

According to table 3, the ‘government’ (38.4%, n= 96) and ‘employees’ (35.6%, n=89) itself were mostly responsible for its optimum output and were prominent as both the first and second preferred actors. The government is the navigator of the state. So it is obvious that the responsibility of guiding the country towards a positive direction lies in the hands of the government. All the three branches of the government – legislative, executive and judiciary – must work in coordination with each other. Each branch must play its part properly. The employees are the running force of the government. They implement the policies. Each employee has to properly carry out their responsibilities to enable the

government to function effectively. In Bangladesh both the government and the employees seem to lack in effectiveness and efficiency. The World Bank (1996: 3-4) illustrates the Government based on commonly held views as preoccupied with process, too pervasive, too centralized, overly bureaucratic, too discretionary in governance, unaccountable and unresponsive, wasteful, and institutions to be avoided.

Their role is crucial for the overall performance of the government. They have the ability to change the administrative environment in either direction- may it be positive or negative. Several reforms have been resisted by the bureaucracy (khan 1998) which provides the evidence of their capability. For decades, the administrative state and public administration provided stability and continuity to governance and political systems even in the midst of paralyzing political crises, upheavals and revolutions around the world (Farazmand, 2002: 139).

‘Civil society’ (27.6%, n=69) was the top most third choice among the actors. In present day world, civil society is one of the strong elements that influence government activities. Given the new global nature of the competition for scarce resources, the private sector and civil society – as investors and consumers of public goods and services – are demanding more information and accountability from the public sector for its performance and use of public resources (UNDP & UNDESA: 2004). Civil societies can be formed based on faith, community, profession and many other factors. They can enhance accountability and transparency of the government by demanding information, creating public awareness on public policy matters, independently monitoring and evaluating the activities of the government. A strong civil society mediates effectively between the citizenry and the government (Blind 2006:17). Free flow of information backed by freedom of information law is indispensable, so is the space for civil society and citizens at large to organize themselves and articulate demand (Iftekharuzzaman & Hussein 2010:6). In Bangladesh the civil society is a conglomerate of various groups including journalists, academicians and theatre groups, religious groups, mass organizations,

indigenous community groups, trade unions, NGOs and other professional groups. NGOs form a significant part of the civil society. Most foreign donors or aid agencies are increasingly portraying NGOs as the means of democratization, remedies for poverty, constituents of a civil society, and substitutes for state agencies in developing countries, although the government may often consider them a threat to its political power (Hulme and Edwards, 1997; Princen and Finger, 1994; Haque 2002:423). Areas of involvement of the civil society in the context of Bangladesh are policy advocacy, mobilization of public opinion, demand creation, active participation in policy formulation process, bridging the gap between citizens and government, pressurizing the government with the help of the media, supporting the popular movement in favour of a given policy issue, lobbying with the donor groups/development partners, playing the role of mediator/ arbitrator between citizens and government, and policy analysis, etc (CPD 2001: UNPAN). The civil society at times has proved to be strong. One major example is the role that they played in the overthrow of the dictator government in 1991, commonly known as the Ershad regime¹. The civil societies seem to be vigilant. But political affiliation has disrupted their progressive intentions and objectives.

Generally, civil societies engage in policy advocacy, public awareness building about government activities etc, thereby helps to put pressure on the government to become accountable and transparent. If the civil societies in Bangladesh become more organized and free from political affiliation then they can have considerable positive influence on the policy making process and other activities of the government. The civil society should be more inclined towards proposing policies rather than mostly trying to oppose them. On the other hand instead of considering them as enemies the government should pay more attention to the advocacies of the civil societies.

5. Conclusion

¹ H.M Ershad was the President of Bangladesh from 1986 to 1990. He was known as an autocratic military leader and was eventually overthrown from power by overwhelming public demand.

Normally it is expected that civil servants should act ethically. But in reality there are deviations from this expected behaviour. This explorative study acts as a platform for addressing this rather sensitive issue of the public service. Knowing the causes of unethical behavior, and which elements and people may be the crucial contributors in improving the situation is of great significance. Specially the thoughts of the public servants helps to get a perspective from the inside. However the study focuses only on the preliminary thoughts of the public servants which leave room for further research.

The study reveals that while policy changes in the financial sphere may not result in major improvements but modifications in the training and education sector may lead to better ethical standards. An interesting finding of the study is that financial constraint was one of the main reasons for unethical behaviour. On the other hand, a big portion of the respondents thought that a rise in the income level would help in curbing unethical behaviour. Over the last decade, the cost of salaries and allowances for public servants has increased more than three times in nominal terms, and as percentage of GDP it has increased from about 3% to 4.2% (WB 1996; UN profile 2004). But no significant improvement in ethical behavior has been noticed. Though raising the salary may improve the living standard of the public servants it does not indicate that it will have a positive effect on ethical standards. The results also point out that it is not only the low salary but also the desire to exert power, fulfill personal and family needs and influence of political views that allures them to engage in unethical behavior. The administrative culture of Bangladesh is engraved with various 'bureaupathologies' like corruption, elitism, lack of accountability and transparency, nepotism, authoritarianism, irresponsiveness etc. Culture cannot be changed in a short time. Ethics oriented education and training may bring a more professional change to the outlook of the public servants and inspire them towards the practice of the core values of public service ethics. The training methods do not give much emphasis on the psychological training methods which may be crucial in developing the mentality and attitude of the civil servants. Curbing the political influence

on administrative discretion is a must to ensure ethical decision making of civil servants for which there is no alternative of positive political commitment.

From a social perspective the study confirms that social accountability acts as one of the major factors of ethics. Again it is interesting to see that the public servants in the study have admitted that the civil society has an important role in ensuring ethics in the public service. The role of civil society should not be underestimated in this regard as it is the major component of social accountability, which on the other hand works as an internal accountability mechanism to ensure ethical behaviour of public servants (WB 2005; Malena, Forster and Singh, 2004). Analysis of these ‘ambiguous associations’ (Read and Pekkanen, 2005) is not yet complete, but it is now being recognized that many modes of popular association eliciting participation are not always independent but linked to the state in several ways (Ahmad 2008: 17). A more organized, skilled and impartial civil society may increase the prospect of having a more effective impact in enhancing ethics in the public service. Practice of values has significant impact in this regard. The values that are appreciated more in society have the possibility of being more applied in individual life. If society is indifferent about the practice of negative values, like dishonesty, deception, irresponsiveness etc., then these values are encouraged to flourish which eventually leads to deterioration of ethical standards.

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