



A Review on Current Practices and Public Service Values Towards Implementation of Reform in the Public Office

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Abstract:

Good governance is the ultimate aim of every public office in the Philippines. The way public servants deliver their services in the public office is something that draws attention to the public particularly to the clients, which oftentimes draw criticism whenever the public office fails to deliver good services. As public servants, under the 1987 Constitution, we are mandated to establish a career service, promoting morale, efficiency, integrity, responsiveness, and courtesy. Thus, these set of public values should be given emphasis by the public servants. Public servants should uphold the highest form of values expected of them by the public. The way the public view public office is crucial and critical since it oftentimes creates a negative connotation. Although the current practices in the public office are frequently analyzed and measured in terms of efficiency and proficiency, the impact of public service values is often ignored. As a result, there is little support to the idea that public service values may have caused an impact on the practices in the public office, thus affecting the productivity. This article seeks to provide insight into the relationship between public service values and productivity in the public office. This study analyses the role of public service values in the practices in the public office. This article concludes with a brief implementation of transformational reform in the public office.

Index Terms: Accountability, Ethics, Good Governance, Integrity, Organizational Culture, Public Administrators, Public Servant, Public Office, Public Service, Public Service Value

I. INTRODUCTION

In a rapidly changing society, there is a need for efficient and fast delivery of services. People would agree that they are ultimately satisfied with the customer's service if they were able to have access to fast services, given the technological advances today. However, the delivery of services of public office has been viewed as a partially negative in the public's point of view, simply because they find the services inconvenient. When comparing both the services of private and public organizations, most people would agree that private firms can deliver better and faster services than that of public organizations. Most could blame that the inefficiency of services was caused by a lack of initiative to have access to technological advances. Some would blame it to the lack of funds to hire more people to do the job. But some would say that the people working in public offices are also to blame since they are the ones responsible for the delivery of services. There seems to be a growing implication that public servants are slacking at work, to the point of linking corruption where certain public officials could be bought or bribed to expedite the public services. It is a challenge to the Civil Service Commission (CSC) of the Philippines to reverse the growing culture of the negative impression to the public servants, as public servants should uphold high morale and positive values. One of the main goals of CSC is to make sure that agencies hire only the best and the brightest in the government service, believing in the rationale that excellent human resource means excellent public service. Unfortunately, the bureaucracy of corrupt and unexceptional practices had been part of the public office culture, throughout the century. Given that the public servants are already in the government position, it

is a challenge to uphold public service values. Although many people can say that corruption in the public office is a hopeless case, the researcher believes that it is still a work in progress and that the culture can be reversed into something positive. Through the means of introducing a transformational approach to the reformation of values, the public servants could eventually take their jobs seriously and try to be responsible and accountable. This literature review shall focus on the public service values for good governance, as advocated by the CSC. These are Ethics, Integrity, and Accountability. Throughout the review, the goal of the researcher is to provide a link between these public service values and the current practices in the public office. It is essential for the public office to revisit their current practices as a means of determining if their rendition of services could uplift the satisfaction rating of the clients. After all, the satisfaction rating of services offered could reflect the mandate of the certain government agency. Public servants have an important role to satisfy the public's view of the agency. It is essential to identify the ideal public service values that could influence productivity and cultivate responsiveness. This literature review will discuss the ideal public service values that can affect and uplift the performance and responsiveness of the public servants. In a culture where public servants were deemed as corrupt and slacking, it is essential to conduct studies that can uplift the public servants' morale and optimism.

II. RESULTS

Theory of Public Service Values

The value that an organization contributes to the public or society is known as Public Value. This is a theory for public

management that was first introduced by Professor Mark Moore of the Harvard Kennedy School of Government in 1995. Moore focused on producing excellence when it comes to public management. He introduced the concept of Public Value Management in which it focuses on the needs of the public. He suggests that the organization should focus on building values rather than achieving targets. In his concept, he also introduced the Strategic Triangle, which is composed of three elements. These are Strategic goals and values; the authorizing environment; and operational capability. Strategic goals and values are also known as the “Value Circle”, in which it relates to the aims of the programs being created where impacts and performances could be measured (Williams and Shearer, 2011). The second point is the environment in which both individuals and the organization operate. In order to achieve the aim of the public organization, external stakeholders such as other government agencies, interest groups or donors are essentially invited to participate or support the public organization’s programs or projects (Williams and Shearer, 2011). This means that the public office should be accountable to these groups in order to maintain good relationships. The third point of the triangle is the resources. This includes finances, personnel, and the skills the public office needs in order to carry out the programs and projects. In order to achieve the aims of the organization, public managers should be responsible for managing such resources. The model includes features of corporate strategy that can be used by public managers to orient their leadership aims. The goals must be practically valuable, politically sustainable and administratively feasible. The aim of the model is to provide the public managers the decision to create programs that can produce impact to the public and can upgrade the performance of those creating the programs, which are the public servants. With the support of external stakeholders and the public, efficiency of services can be achieved. Public managers are accountable for creating programs that could benefit the public. Thus, the public value should be given importance and should also be practically attainable so that public servants could readily commit. Moore points out that the aim of managerial work in the public sector is to create public value (Fisher and Grant, 2013). While both the public and private sectors would want to produce good services, public sectors would often use authority in order to achieve their goals. By means of authority, citizens are required to pay taxes, and in return, public sectors should be able to show the result where their taxes are going. Ultimately, citizens are expectant that public office should produce desirable results in the exchange for the taxes being cultivated. The advantage of Moore’s concept on public value is that it leads to an approach that can be used in everyday practice and is considered flexible in the application (Williams and Shearer, 2011). The negative side is that it fails to develop a secure foundation and clarity in practice (Williams and Shearer, 2011). The lack of commitment in applying public values in practice often leads to poor services and unsatisfactory ratings from the public. Another description of public values was defined by Barry Bozeman (2007), who is the author of the book entitled “Public Values and Public Interest”. According to Bozeman, public values focus about (1) the rights, benefits, and prerogatives to which citizens should (and should not) be entitled; (2) the obligations of citizens to society, the state and one another; and (3) the principles on which governments and policies should be based. He believes

that the basic needs of the individuals, group, and society as a whole, are influences to generating public values. His belief was supported by Meynhart’s view on Public Value. He suggests that public value’s creation originates in relationships between the individual and society, constituted by subjective evaluations against basic needs, activated by and realized in emotional-motivational states, and produced and reproduced in experience-intense practices (Meynhart, 2009). Studies have shown that values play an important role in public administration. Public administrators are widely influenced by social and cultural values in which organizational values are accepted as long as they are consistent with those wider values (Molina, 2015). Molina was able to suggest that leaders in public service (public administrators) play an important role in developing an organizational culture that will promote values. This also is quite a challenge, since leaders would naturally think that the values they share with the organization are legitimate or right in their own mind. Eventually, these values can be adapted by their subordinates, whether positive or negative. Molina and McKeown (2012) presented a theory that identifies which values of public administrators are important at work. Those values influence their daily administrative behavior and decision making. They implied that public administrators exhibit ethical, professional, democratic and human values, in which they believe, promote the attitude, skills, and behavior that are essential in the public service (Molina, 2015). These values were later categorized by Molina as “public service values”. Molina points out also that these public service values represent the character traits we expect in public administrators. When occupying a position as a public servant, one can expect that he or she should possess these values, and should be committed to doing so. Molina (2015) was able to present a Model of Public Service Practice showing virtue ethics perspective. Virtue ethics perspective helps to understand the role of public service values in achieving primary good. Public service values can be understood as virtues of public administration that shows certain skills and behavior that are good for the public (Molina, 2015). Based on the studies conducted, it can be understood that public service values can influence decision making. Results of the decision of public administrators can affect the productivity of public services. If further emphasized, public service values can be enumerated into many categories, showcasing many traits that can benefit the public. The focus however of this study is to identify the three public service values that are applicable to the needs of the Filipino public towards good governance, identified as Ethics, Integrity, and Accountability.

Three Major Public Service Values

A. Ethics

In the Philippines, the public service system such as the Civil Service Commission plays an important role in gearing the nation, particularly the public sector, towards good governance. One of the main public service values that uphold good governance is Ethics. According to Merriam-Webster Dictionary ethics is the discipline dealing with what is good and bad and with moral duty and obligation. It is known to be a set of moral principles. In general, it is a philosophy in dealing with what is right and wrong, according to the human perspective. This is the set of standards on what human should do, which ultimately benefits society. Public officials in the Philippines were guided

by Republic Act No. 6713, otherwise known as the Code of Conduct and Ethical Standards for Public Officials and Employees. The rules stipulated in the law should be practiced by public officials or employee at all times. It was specifically indicated that public servants should carry out their duties with responsibility, integrity, competence, loyalty, patriotism, justice, and lead with modest lives, upholding public interest over personal interest. Such values comprise ethics, which is essential for the public good. Such norms are promoted to battle out the negative connotation of corruption amongst public servants. Ethics and values play important roles in the smooth operation of the public administration system (Michiel, 2011). Public values can be defined as those norms having a consensus about the rights, benefits, and privileges to which citizens are to be entitled (Michiel, 2011). Values are cultivated through norms of a culture, either from family, friends or the organization. Ethics deals with values that are a part of the organization's culture and helps in shaping decisions for social responsibility and to the external environment (Menyah, 2010). Different cultures can cultivate a different set of values. Ethics is highly given importance in the Philippines since it has been part of the culture of Filipinos to live morally. These set of values from home were eventually adapted into the organization, as it can benefit the public. The public expects the public servant to act and live ethically at all times. Thus, these set of values can serve as a guide on how a public servant should behave. Ethics is a guide to human conduct that plays an important role in leading a good life through the application of moral principles (Sirswal, 2014). It is related to the issues of rightness or wrongness. It is believed that what is right in the eyes of human is ethical, and then what is wrong is considered unethical. Sirswal believes that the world is facing a crisis in leadership wherein most leaders do not have a humanitarian global mindset. Personal values sometimes tend to show an increase in personal well-being than of the well-being of others, which leads to a crisis in ethics and humanity. As human beings, we tend to sometimes believe in our own personal values in which we think highly on what could benefit us rather than what could benefit others. Since values are also beliefs, we fail to think that some values are unimportant or simply unethical towards others, which creates an ethical crisis. What we think is right may be wrong to others. For public administrators, adherence to high-level public service values such as ethics can produce trust and assurance from the public (Michiel, 2011). On the contrary, promotion of incorrect values can lead to decreases in these essential elements of good governance, as well as to poor decisions. Hence, poor decisions could cause a ripple effect in the performance of the public servants, which eventually leads to negative satisfactory or perception of the public. Ethics is an important value that public administrators should possess since the public highly expect that public administrators simply should do what is right. Although it is expected that they should act ethically, the public should not rely on the personal integrity of the officials to act according to ethical norms (Lawton, Rayner and Lasthuizen, 2013). Unethical behavior naturally occurs in most public offices since it became part of their culture or system, and that they fail to remember the traits expected as public servants. It was suggested by Lawton, Rayner, and Lasthuizen to put compliance mechanisms to guide the behavior of individuals. Part of their research also is the gathered idea from other countries wherein regulatory frameworks based on a set of guiding principles are used. In

order to determine ethical standards, Lord Paul Bew from the Committee on Standards in Public Life introduced seven principles of public life for public servants. These are Selflessness, Integrity, Objectivity, Accountability, Openness, Honesty, and Leadership (Bew, 2014). He suggested adopting a strategic programme to reinforce these principles and creating a framework required to support ethical standards. He believes that ethical standards are important in the delivery of public services because society is healthier when decisions of public office are fair and not influenced by personal interests. Ethical standards could benefit the economy due to an increase of confidence in international relationships. Taxes also rely on public trust, wherein the public expects to receive benefits and welfares from their taxes. When ethical standards are followed, the public can enjoy the services tailored to their individual needs. But when ethical standards are neglected, it can cause damage to public trust and discontentment. The success of good governance depends upon the conduct of public administrators and what the public considers to be their conduct (Menyah, 2010). It is important that public administrators practice and ensure ethical conduct since they have a special responsibility to society. In all circumstances, personal self-interest should not dominate their duties to do good to the public. Otherwise, the conflict of interest may cause ethical dilemmas. An ethical dilemma arises in a scenario that demands a choice between opposing sets of principles (Menyah, 2010). Oftentimes, these are experienced by public leaders, in which they find themselves in conflicting situations which often affects their decisions. In every country, public administrators are guided by laws to protect against any conflict of interest. It is essential that public administrators be impartial and that the public office should not be used for private gain or advantage (Aranas, 2016). Most would believe that people make ethical choices because of the individual values of a person and that he/she can be blamed for poor or unethical practices. Menyah suggests that values, attitudes, beliefs, and behavior patterns of the organization culture usually reflect the ethical practices, in which ethics is as much an organizational issue rather than a personal issue. The organizational culture of a public office can affect personal actions and decisions of public servants. One of the ultimate goals of public service is to gain public trust. Public trust is often defiled due to the failure to uphold the principles of ethics in the public office. Public servants can regain the public's trust by exercising moral values, balancing public values and contributing to the ethical progress of the nation (Vogelsang-Coombs, 2016). Hence, transformational programs for public servants are recommended in order to uphold ethics towards good governance.

B. Integrity

According to Merriam-Webster Dictionary, Integrity is a strong adherence to a code, especially of moral or artistic values. It means uprightness of character or action. It is defined as a notion of consistency of actions, values, principles, expectations, and outcomes (Kang, 2016). As defined by the CSC, integrity is closely linked to ethics and is also known as moral uprightness and strong adherence to honesty and fairness. In relation to ethics, it is viewed as honesty or truthfulness of one's action. It is something that is untainted or unaltered. It simply means doing the right thing even if nobody sees you. It is a character or values mostly expected in a leader. Leadership is integrity that walks the moral high ground (Osisioma, 2011). Character can

also be related to integrity. A leader is supposedly consistent in his views, behavior, character or actions. The consistency of character is the key to defining integrity. If upholding to what is right is the intention of integrity, leaders or public servants alike should not be bribed, bought, swayed, forced, or made to do something that disregards moral standards. When it comes to public servants, integrity should be demonstrated in their conduct of public, professional and private lives as this would eventually strengthen the public's trust (Lawton, Rayner and Lasthuizen, 2013). The confidence of the public in their ability to provide good public services could be built up. Likewise, they should also demonstrate the highest standards of professional ethics and competence and to be carried out in their duties and daily practices as public servants. Integrity has been one of the major issues of public administrators in the Philippines. Since it speaks of uprightness of character, in reality, not all public administrators or servants could adhere to its principles. Corruption is one of the main reasons for the loss of integrity. It has been a norm in our culture that taints public servants and service. For this reason, the public has lost of trust in public administrators, which could, later on, cause an effect in the effectiveness of public services. In order to monitor the observance of integrity, Hoekstra and Kaptein mentioned in their study of various procedures such as pre-employment screening, integrity training, integrity risk assessment methodologies, audits and reporting, and investigation procedures. These are some of the many instruments that have been developed and adopted by various countries to observe integrity. Nowadays there are a lot of measures on the content of integrity policy and instruments an organization could implement. However, the organizational aspects of integrity on how it should be institutionalized within organizations have been neglected (Hoekstra and Kaptein, 2012). As expounded by Hoekstra and Kaptein, the institutionalization of integrity is the process of shifting integrity ambitions into the intended outcome, by means of support structures, specialized agencies and officers, and formalization processes within a given context. Examples of these integrity systems that are focused on combating corruption are International NGOs, such as Transparency International, the Council of Europe, the United Nations, the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, and the OECD. In a study presented by Hesus Rivera Libres, he introduced the relevance of the Values Education and Araling Panlipunan curricula in terms of promoting patriotism. Although his study focuses on inculcating Values Education and Araling Panlipunan to students, it can also be reviewed by public administrators as a reminder. The value of patriotism by having integrity in each citizen will eventually transform public service for the better (Libres, 2015). Public servants are to maintain integrity at all times since it is an understanding of trust expected by the public. They have the right to expect honesty and fairness in all aspects of public service. Establishing integrity in the public office may be a challenge for all public servants, it is still a necessity to always walk the talk, or simply lead by example. It is their duty to uphold integrity as it is the key to building the public's trust. Although there are several agencies in the Philippines who can monitor integrity in the public offices, it is not enough to monitor each public office on a daily basis. Therefore, reformation programs shaped according to the public office's needs could be developed, by their own Human Resource Divisions or other related units within the same office.

C. Accountability

According to Merriam-Webster dictionary, accountability is the willingness to accept responsibility or to account for action. It means to act keenly in justifying and clarifying one's action to relevant stakeholders (Molina, 2009), in most cases through public funds. As public servants, it is a must to have responsibility for every action or decision. They must always be prepared to give an account to their decisions and submit themselves to any examination or review by appropriate agency/office (Lawton, Rayner and Lasthuizen, 2013). A public servant should always keep in mind of the phrase that says "public office is a public trust". Accountability is conjoined to the word responsibility. By being responsible, they should uphold the public's trust by ensuring all government transactions, particularly public funds, are transparent and spent accurately. Transparency and access to public information play vital roles in constructing a government that is capable to the needs of the public (de Durand, Aldea, de León, Arzola, Sobrino, González and Morales, 2015). All actions and decisions made by the public administrators or servants should be carried out with conscious responsibility. They are the so-called implementers of public policies, in which they should be accountable for official actions (Menyah, 2010). The public is the provider of public funds, through taxes, fees, or other authorized collections, and they would normally demand that public administrators or servants adhere to every law and ethical standards. The focus of public administrators or servants is to deliver appropriate services for the benefit of the public. In the Philippines, the most notable form of unethical practice is corruption. It is an issue that degrades public servants throughout the history of public administration and is still a major issue as of today. Any decision that is against the law could cause damage to public trust. This is why public servants should be careful enough to follow such laws and practices. There are certain agencies that act as observer, examiner, or watcher for public servants. Some of these are the Commission on Audit, Office of the Ombudsman, and Civil Service Commission, to name a few. These agencies encourage public accountability. These agencies also focus on program effectiveness and performance of public offices. If public servants or public offices are found to be questionable on their practices, public hearings are frequently carried out in order to examine if such actions have already violated the constitution. Accountability promotes compliance with government goals and objectives, in which it greatly aims towards the quality of public services, and ultimately meeting the needs of the public (de Durand, Aldea, de León, Arzola, Sobrino, González and Morales, 2015). The lack of accountability hinders the delivery of good services that the public deserves since the public funds or budget is often mishandled. In this matter, the effective use of public funds should be properly disclosed to the citizens, and that public servants should adhere to every law as mandated by the constitution. Open and transparent governance can generate trust among the public, and may even attract various stakeholders worldwide, which may strengthen the country's economic stability and earn a sound reputation.

The Link between Public Service Values and Current Practices

Public administration is ultimately action-oriented (Molina, 2009). Values are essential on how we can assess our actions. In

other words, values notify our attitudes as well as the standards of our conduct that reflects our procedures (Molina, 2009). Clearly, the values we possess can be linked to our action. Hence, public servants' action or performance at work could be associated as to what type of values he/she possesses. Employee's action could create a critical impact on the organization, whether it may be in a private or public sector. In order to achieve desired performance standards, employees are to be engaged in promoting the right values in the public office. Moreover, employee engagement fits with the core values of initiative, which encourage responsiveness and sensitivity to public needs and quality service (Eldor and Vigoda-Gadot, 2013). It is therefore highly recommended that public administrators or servants be engaged in promoting good public service values, in order to create positive public services. While values declarations in public offices clearly express how a public servant should behave, in practice, public servants appear to neglect and uphold these values, due to the adopted culture when entering into the service. Culture is best defined as the behaviors and beliefs characteristic of a particular group (O'Riordan, 2015). According to O'Riordan, organizational culture has been used by researchers to describe the practices that organizations develop around their employees and the values of the organization. It is a significant factor in achieving strategic objectives and optimal performance in organizations. Different operating environments also cause an impact on the organizational culture which is why it is challenging on the part of public service. If deemed necessary for the benefit of improving public service, culture change should take place. This is essential to make improvements to the organization and to the employees' behaviors. It can also lead to the provision of better customer service and to achieve positive results and objectives. Culture change could take place through the introduction of programs tailored to the needs of the organization. In order to maintain or be re-aligned with public service values, it is necessary to have continuous learning, through the means of training or professional education. Professional education plays an important role in shaping the administrative context by instilling a set of professional values that transcend the operational environment and organizational culture in which public administrators work (Molina and McKeown, 2009). By studying law enforcement education, it gives emphasis on values that are necessary for public service. In the Philippines, there are various laws that govern public administrators or employees. One, in particular, is the Republic Act No. 9485, better known as the Anti-Red Tape Act or ARTA, which was created to address other problems in good governance. Under this law, red tape acts are battled by checking government offices and evaluating how fast and efficient they are in responding to the needs of their clients. Although such laws are widely disseminated across the public offices, it could be beneficial if public servants could learn it deeper, by means of capacity building or training for reformation. This is necessary so that they may fully utilize the learning and apply reformation in their respective organizations.

III. SUMMARY

It is noted earlier in this paper that public servants should uphold the highest form of values expected of them by the public. It is important to know that public servants need to be constantly reminded that they are appointed and that the values they

possess should uphold the public's interest. In the Philippines, it has been a challenge for the public office to gain the public's trust due to the practices that failed ethical standards and morality. The root cause of these failed practices is due to the prevailing negative culture in the organization that has been passed on from generation to generation. Based on the gathered researches, there is limited information as to how reformation can be applied. It only comes to show that values are not prioritized. Failure to prioritize the need for reformation of public service values has led to a perception where most public officials or administrators are corrupt or dishonourable, hence affecting the delivery of best services. The need for reformation is essential to uplift the public's trust. Prioritization to the reformation of public service values could eventually improve public service, which is very much needed today.

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