

*Section II 'Public Awareness', Chapter 2*

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**'Selling' of Ethics**

**Introduction**

Mutual understanding between public sector employees and citizens is very crucial in ethical management of public services. There are many techniques and tools to support or improve it. Citizenry as customers are not very much interested in internal processes, hierarchies and other intra-organizational issues. However, in many cases, citizenry evaluates public servants through their attitudes towards them and public servants' conducts. It implies that image of public administration and its employees are important to all who are customers. Nowadays, simultaneously to compliance-based ethical management other aspects like integrity-based solutions must be taken into consideration in public sphere. It means that customers require more 'non-legal' activities showing public administration as an organization composed of people who are fragile, responsive and responsible towards citizenry. 'Selling' of ethics is an approach which we are trying to develop in this paper to show another dimension in ethical management. We believe that to some extent 'non-legal' instruments are more important to streamline public administration and make it more 'citizenry-friendly'.

'Selling' of ethics could be acknowledged as an element of integrity-based ethical management method. In general, it is about to promote good and proper conduct in professional interrelations. On the contrary to compliance-based ethics management, formal structures, punishing of unethical behavior of public servants, etc. are not so important in integrity-based ethical management (and 'selling' of ethics as well). Of course, it doesn't mean that this method of ethical management is an alternative to the second one. These two methods of ethical management are complementary to each other. (J. Bartok, 2001:54). In this chapter we would like to focus on shared values, good practices, home applied ethics vs. work applied ethics and many other components of mentioned above integrity-based ethical management.

'Selling' of ethics relates to building public awareness through mentioned elements. This task is very hard task to fulfill because of different variables which influence level of mentioned awareness. For instance, culture, history of nations, political determinants, etc. are just few variables which are important when talking about morality and ethics. Nowadays, we must take into consideration more factors than listed above. For example globalized market economy determines – to some extent - marketization of public services and influences standardization of ethical approach to public administration.

'Selling' of ethics might be understood also as purchasing certain type of 'values' from public servants. According to this, people are consumers who receive goods on the basis of market principles. In other words, people live in state which is comprehended as a 'big store' fulfilled with different kinds of merchandise. To be successful in 'selling' of these 'goods' public

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administration, state representatives, etc. must use all acceptable marketing methods to convince people, that public administration is ethically managed!

First and the foremost issues to be explained are values seen from two perspectives: personal and professional. On one hand we have civil servant who suppose to be professional expert dealing with many public tasks. The same civil servant, is – on the other hand – somebody's child, life partner, parent, etc. and as such have to live in a world of non-professional values. These two worlds meet somewhere and if balanced between them is reached we may have a 'perfect' civil servant. 'Selling' of ethics starts with definition of values and standards of professionalism.

All values are organized into value systems, in which values are ranked in terms of their relative importance. (K. Kernaghan & D. Siegel, 1995:313) Additionally, there are general values and more specific (or specified) values what depends on countries, societies, etc. When talking about public administration certain number of values could be named: i.e. accountability, responsibility, integrity, neutrality, responsiveness, etc. It is very hard to decide which of these values is the most important one. However, values are not the only determinants of ethical or unethical behavior of civil servant. In general, very basic impulses for all actions taken by human in every environment are emotions and feelings. Of course, there is a difference between impulse and action itself. When we take actions, make-decisions we need to deliberate over an issue, problem to solve. (vide: P. Singer 1999; B. Skarga 2008) For instance, helping needful people is coming from our egoistic approach to life. We want to appease our conscience after overspending in luxury store, buying comfortable car, etc. When we see someone whose living standard is below accepted level or handicapped who need to have new artificial limb, we feel sorry and it makes us to help them. In the matter of professional ethics, especially in the public sector, these issues could be named responsibility and accountability, and have different meanings. First, people should feel responsible for the society they live in and state which is giving all necessary means to secure their future. Citizens must be responsible for their political choices which are important not only for economic development but also for any other aspects of state's functioning. It means that single citizens are accountable to the state and other citizen fellows. Taking this issue from another perspective, state, its authorities and administrative apparatus are responsible for citizenry welfare. State representatives are accountable to the citizens. Mentioned above issues of responsibility and accountability are crucial to public administration. (vide: T. L. Cooper 1998:65) There is an important relation between these elements which may cause a lot of interdependency between society and state. Unethical behavior of state representatives generates resistance from citizens which influences success or failure of many internal reforms. In other words, to be successful in governing, authorities must be responsive to social needs. Unresponsivity equals – in this case – unethical behavior. For instance, increasing number of cars in the city, lowering quality of main roads, etc. causes very heavy traffic. This situation implies that public authorities should consider new solutions for all roads users and other stakeholders (drivers, bikers, pedestrians, lands' owners, etc.). It means that new roads should be built or current traffic should be reorganized. Public administrator must

act in a way to satisfy all parties involved in solving this problem. On one hand there should not be any resistance to new infrastructure, but public administration cannot take the line and all arguments (against or for) must be taken into consideration. If public administrators will ignore one of these factors it may cause an impression of low responsibility. How to convince citizenry that public administrators are responsive, responsible and accountable?

According to Agryriades (2006) there is a discrepancy between political rhetoric and reality in the public sphere. We have to deal with political relativism which does not go with community needs. Public administrator who is unable to see difference between business and governance could not be moral. 'Selling' of ethics in terms of good governance is a process which must prevent before diversification of society for those who have money to pay for public service and those who are poor. Additionally, distinction between clients' needs and community needs is undesirable. (*Ibidem*)

Second important issue which needs to be taken into consideration here is professionalism of public servants. This element goes along with specialization of work and variety of tasks which must be fulfilled by the governing institutions. There is no doubt that public administration is serving different types of subjects acting in many spheres. 'Public managers environment is very complex and complicated, involving multiple constituencies, responsibilities, and challenges' (D. Gueras & Ch. Garofalo, 2005:5) It means, that all fields should be covered with exact coherent policies. Such programs have to be written down and implemented by professional and experienced administrators. Effective ethical management and policy making is full of many additional challenges than mentioned above (i.e. ethical dilemmas). In professional organization which hires professional employees ethic could be noticed as a threat, because home applied ethics does not go along with careers office. Additionally, obedience of rules and statutes hinder tasks fulfillment (in clerks' eyes). In this case, 'selling' of professional ethics is related to codes of conduct which suppose to be present in every public organization. Missions and any other official statements about role and importance of particular public agencies must be commonly known. In other words, public administrators ought to know that non-legal regulations are there to help them in dealing with potential dilemmas. To be successful in introducing and implementing mentioned instruments every citizen or potential clients have to be ethically educated. To simplify, win-win situation in successful public service (from ethical point of view) happens when both sides are aware of their rights, duties and responsibilities. To 'sell' professional ethics twofold actions must be taken. Firstly, internal actors (i.e. civil servants, etc.) should be involved in setting up professional codes of ethical conduct. Public administration employees must be professionally trained specialists who have no doubts while dealing with any case. 'Codes can reduce uncertainty among public servants as to what constitutes ethical and unethical behavior'. (K. Kernaghan & D. Siegel, 1995:361) Secondly, external actors (i.e. citizens, community members, etc.) should have full access to professional codes of ethical conduct which suppose to be clearly written and transparent. Additionally, there must be also a kind of Citizen's Chart which would help in keeping equal relationship between citizen and public administration. Codes promote public trust

and confidence in the ethical behavior of public servants. For instance, 'tax payers – following K. Kernaghan & D. Siegel (1995) – can be better assured that they will be treated fairly and impartially, and that public servants are less likely to use their positions for personal gain'.

Third core issue in 'selling' of ethics touches public administration directly and indirectly, and is related to legality and law obedience. However, we think that public administration was established to implement of established laws, this task may, to some extent, hinder professional administrating of public life. According to general principles of the 'Rule of Law' public administration as a part of executive branch of power must act on the grounds of law and within forms given by the law. Thanks to this principle, rights of people are protected against domination of bureaucracy over citizenry. In addition, wherever man live (in one unified country) he/she may expect the same or at least similar regulations. Nevertheless, public administration could be 'cursed' with legal norms. On one hand any reorganization or structural improvement could not be fulfilled because of lack proper legal norms or even overregulation in this matter. On the other hand, public administrators who are going to make a decision in somebody's case might have too much of discretionary power. Outcomes of such a situation could be lack of decision because public servant is not sure if he/she can make it or, even worse, all decisions will be positive, what means that decision maker doesn't care at all about public interest. There is also a civic dimension of legality and law obedience. Overregulated public administration is malfunctioning. Bureaucratic machinery is not able to process all incoming motions. Thus, it doesn't work effectively.

In spite of all burdens brought buy overregulation, legality of public administration is very important in the context of 'integrity-based ethical management'. Promotion and usage of declared values and standards are important. However, public administration should have specific mechanisms helping with operationalization of these elements. In other words, before values became part of formal civil servants life, must be 'translated' into language of norms – legal norms. Of course, it doesn't mean that these norms suppose to be voted at the national levels. Nevertheless, without operationalization we would still have a list of 'pious wishes'.

'Selling' of ethical values is fulfilled through many instruments which are very helpful with monitoring of expected and professional behavior. These instruments – according to J. Bartok (2001) – prevent of unethical actions. Integrity-based ethical management relies on transparency, conflict of interest's prevention and public administrator's responsibility. To obtain a satisfactory levels of each mentioned components a lot of effort must be given to create proper working conditions. It is about organizational culture and well-working structures which helps in human resources management, development of civil servants skills and professional knowledge. Another important element in 'selling' of ethics is forming up advisory team structures responsible for solving ethical dilemmas.

## **Conclusions**

Successfulness in building ethical infrastructure depends on many variables. In this case the most important element of this infrastructure is human with his/her feelings, emotions and morality. In spite of analysis of very well tailored organizational structures we should focus on values which are mixture of personal and professional features. To achieve the most desirable effects in ethical management such activity as promotion of ethics called in this paper as 'selling' of ethics seems to be the most important one.

To wrap up, 'selling' of ethics is an element of integrity-based ethical management. It concerns of – mainly – informal and unenforceable values which are promoted by the organization into two directions: internal and external.

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