

Chapter 18

The Importance of Ethics Education in Public Administration Within the Context of Global Challenges

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ABSTRACT

The issue of “ethics,” which is frequently emphasized in the development and transformation processes of public administration (PA) and stands out in the context of combating problems, crises, and corruption in the discipline, is becoming more important in today’s global world. In parallel, studies on the place and importance of ethics education in PA have been increasing in recent years, especially with the emphasis on the ability of ethics to provide solutions to these problems. In this context, this study addresses the place and importance of ethics education in PA education and training in the world and in Turkey. In this framework, firstly, the relationship between PA and ethics and the importance of ethics education in PA are examined. After that, the examples of educational institutions providing ethics education in the world and in Turkey and their educational contents are analyzed. The study ends by making a comparison concerning the subject in the world and Turkey and making various suggestions.

INTRODUCTION

The concepts of “ethics” and “public ethics” with their applications have emerged as essential issues discussed in the PA discipline in recent years. Nowadays, the importance of creating an ethical PA for the solution of the problems, turbulences, crises, and corruption in the PA, parallel to the changes, transformations and development processes experienced by the discipline in the historical process, has become undeniable. Therefore, especially after the 1970s, the issue of ethics began to be more intensely involved in the various reform efforts in PA.

The relationship between PA and ethics is closely related to the emergence of the administration concept, so it is possible to say that the origins of ethical debates in PA date back to very ancient times. As time went by, the phenomenon of “change” has deeply affected the values, habits, relationships, attitudes, behaviors, expectations, and people’s living standards. It also affected social institutions such as public agencies, especially in terms of their administrative and cultural structures and functioning systems. These changes improved the PA and ethics relation in many ways, and ethics become much more significant than before for PA (Öktem & Ömürgönülşen, 2005, p. 231; Kılavuz, 2003, p. 46; Uluğ, 2009, p. 3-4; Sayan, 2010, p. 147; Usta, 2011, p. 40).

In today’s rapidly globalizing world, governments can provide better services to their citizens if they can keep pace with the changing structures, insights, and developing technology. However, this confronts them with a wide variety of new challenges. Public institutions and public officials have an important responsibility to deal with these challenges. Within the framework of this responsibility, both public institutions and public officials take various decisions and actions with ethical consequences, and they need not only laws and regulations but also ethical principles to guide them. Therefore, it is not possible to deal with the new challenges only with the legal and institutional infrastructure, but also the existence of an ethical infrastructure is vital.

In addition to these, it is incredibly significant for public officials to have an educational background of ethics in terms of dealing with the complex decisions they must make every day. Moreover, considering the necessity of struggling with more diversified challenges in avoiding unethical behaviours while performing their duties in today’s globalized world, the issue of “ethics” and ethical education given before and during the service becomes a substantial element for both public and public officials and the discipline itself. Thus, especially in recent years, the studies regarding public ethics started to have an important place in the PA discipline and “ethics education” also became a crucial part of the pre-service and in-service training processes for the public officials in many countries.

In this general framework, this study aims to examine the relationship between PA and ethics and the increasing significance and place of the “ethics education” in PA education. This analysis focuses on the pre-service and in-service training processes and the undergraduate, graduate and doctorate level of PA education together in the light of the general approaches and studies regarding the issue with the comparative examples from the World and Turkey. The study argues that ethics has an important place in the fight against global problems, especially corruption, and improving PA discipline at all levels. It also underlines that the studies on “ethics” and “ethics education” in PA vary, intensify, and gain importance in the discipline each day.

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