
ETHICS OF BUREAUCRATIC APPARATUS IN PUBLIC SERVICE

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1. Introduction

The current practices of bureaucracy in public service are still lacking in terms of cost, time, and public service mechanism. In practice, public service management is not an easy conduct to perform. Essential to the public service is the apparatus' skills to provide service in accordance with diverse characteristics of the community coming from various backgrounds that demand efficiency of service in terms of time, cost, and other aspects. Such cases might occur since the procedures of service do not regulate the obligations of service providers and the rights of the service users. Normatively, most of the public service procedures only regulate the obligations of the community as the service users. The lack of efficiency and assurance in public service causes the service users to pay extra extortion money to the service provider to speed up the service process. In addition, the service users tend to delegate a person to finish the process in the service agency rather than finishing it by themselves.

The issue of public service apparatus' ethics in Indonesia receives less attention compared to other countries, despite that it has been widely acknowledged that morality is one of the main concerns of public service in Indonesia. To worsen, such misconduct in public service is being taken for granted and seen as usual practice of bureaucracy in Indonesia. Ethics is often viewed as an element that is less associated with public service. In spite of the view, ethics is a significant aspect that determines the success of public service as well as the public service providing organization.

It is a common notion in the scholarly literature of public administration that administration ethics is an essential part of the organization. As Mulyadi (2016) explained, bureaucrats must be embedded with universal norm values and ethics to shape their attitude and actions towards good practices of public administration. In addition to that, bureaucrats are demanded to be adept in adjusting themselves in various situations. Such conducts reflect the maturity in maintaining good ethics to achieve the consensus that is able to solve problems in public service. The lack of ethic codes is also seen as an issue of public service in Indonesia; the absence of such ethic codes results in the lack of freedom in questioning the existing morality norms that have been established. The existing norms is so deeply entrenched that it have been established regardless of the dynamics of changing times.

Freedom and autonomy in ethics are lacking in Indonesia since most of the practitioners still let themselves be dictated by other parties. In addition to that, most of the practitioners in public administration tend to prioritize the interest of select individuals/groups regardless of the workplace setting. In the context of a public organization that upholds and emphasizes equal service to all individuals, such conducts are considered an immoral and disgraceful act. Therefore, situational awareness of job duties and hierarchy is of paramount importance in performing the appropriate ethic of service.

Mutual commitment and synergy between bureaucracy actors are highly required to establish moral ethic values in public service. Hence, a mechanism of legal protection that regulates ethics in public service is necessary; such a mechanism is treated as the legal reference regarding the principles, violations, and sanctions to impose regarding public service ethics. The author contends that severe sanctions are to be imposed on bureaucracy actors with immoral attitude, or those who commit misconducts or violations against the principles of public service bureaucracy,

B. Discussion

Considering the complexity of issues in practices of public service, the authors opine that the implementation of public service ethics is essential to be applied in bureaucratic organizations in Indonesia; such conducts are to be implemented in holistic manner to cover all problems in the public service bureaucracy. Every level of public service bureaucracy is required to maintain a mental outlook and attitude that reflect noble characteristics and ethical principles. A service provider is obliged to develop oneself and show commitment in understanding and implementing the ethical principles that uphold the moral policies and justice during one's duties. The context raises concerns on the extent to which the understanding and implementation of public service ethics by Indonesian governmental bureaucraties are fostered. Henceforth, a critical and in-depth study regarding the public service ethics in bureaucratic agencies is of paramount significance to address the common misconducts in public service units, such as uncertainty of service, extortion, and denial of rights and dignity of the service users.

Petterson, J.B., & Blackwell, T. L. (2005) formulate four guideline principles of improvement of service towards the customers: 1) equality: equal treatments to all kinds of service users. A public service agency is demanded to practice rational bureaucracy principles that consistently provide quality service to all kinds of customers regardless of political affiliation, ethnicity, social background, religious belief, and others; 2) equity: equal and just treatment towards the underprivileged community; 3) loyalty: the loyal attitude shown to the constitution, the law, superordinates, subordinates, and work colleagues. The loyalty is performed equally to all parties; there is no single party that receives greater loyalty than other parties; 4) responsibility: the service providers should take responsibility for all of the conducts made. All service providers must avoid the characteristics of “yes man” without being responsible for their own actions.

In this section, the authors propose several postulations formulated by the authors and other supporting references in terms of ethics in public service bureaucracy. This section proposes the notion that bureaucracy is a whole unit composed of the apparatus, the organizational aspects, the dynamics of political infrastructure, and the intra-institutional relationship under the context of the Republic of Indonesia. The attitude shift towards good practices of public service ethics requires commitment and cooperation from all parties; it will not be realized if there are only select individuals who are aware of the responsibility of maintaining good ethics of public service.

1. Quality of Service as a Determinant Factor of Ethics of Bureaucratic Apparatus in Public Service

In the present work, the authors contend that the quality of service users is an essential aspect that determines the ethics of public service providers. Considering the importance of customer service towards the progress of socio-economic aspects of a region or country, the service activities in bureaucratic or private organizations must be oriented to the fulfillment of customer satisfaction. The notion is in line with Sinambela (2017) that customer satisfaction, in its practice, does not only encompass the satisfaction of service providers, but also other principles, i.e.: 1) The customer is the most important person; 2) The customer is viewed as the object that generates profit; 3) The service provider must avoid debates or disputes with the customer. If necessary, the service provider must prioritize the customer’s requests; 4) Referring to the notion of “customer is king”, a customer will leave the service and find other services if s/he is involved within a dispute and lost the argument; 5) The customer will always have feeling of joy, dislike, boredom, and in some cases, might show unreasonable prejudice; 6) Every customer wants to be prioritized and treated with special attention, customers do not want to be underestimated.

The previous notions correspond with a notion by Tjiptono (2000), who argues that service quality is a dynamic state that associates closely with product, service, human resources, as well as the process and environment of office; these elements are expected to fulfill or exceed the expected service quality. Tjiptono adds that service quality is the effort of the fulfillment of needs in accordance with the customers’ desire as well as the accuracy of delivery, in ways that service is intended to satisfy customers’ expectation. A service of good quality embeds several criteria as follows: 1) Timeliness of service, including waiting time for transactions and payment processing; 2) Service accuracy, i.e., minimization of errors in services and transactions; 3) Courtesy and friendliness when providing services; 4) Ease of access, i.e., the availability of human resources to serve consumers, as well as supporting facilities such as computers to find the availability of a product; 5) Customer convenience, such as location, parking space, comfortable waiting room, cleanliness, information availability, and so on. Therefore, the authors expect that, in the near future, all public services will be able to prioritize the interests of customers; such conducts will impact positively on the region’s local own-source revenue. Good services will attract more customers and provide benefits to the government sector in terms of regional investment.

The notion of quality is highly relative to the perspective employed in viewing what a “quality” is. Trilestari (2008) elaborates three basic orientations of quality that are consistent with each other: customer perception, product, and process. For a product of service, the orientations can generate success for the organization in terms of customer satisfaction. The success of quality service provision relies on the characteristics of service as follows: 1) Service is intangible in nature, service is very opposite in nature compared to goods; 2) Service actually consists of real action that influences social action; 3) production and consumption of services are inseparable because in general, both events occur at the same place.

Referring to the previous scholarly notions, the authors conclude that service quality reflects the conducts that are able to satisfy the customer needs or demands. A service is regarded to be of quality or satisfactory if it is able to satisfy the demands of customers. If the customer is not satisfied with the service provided, the service is viewed as not of good quality or inefficient. Therefore, it is important for a service to maintain its quality and always focus on customer satisfaction.

2. Quality of Process as a Determinant Factor of Ethics of Bureaucratic Apparatus in Public Service

The authors define the quality of the process as the dynamic condition that influences the service, the human beings as service users, process, and environment; such elements are expected to fulfill or exceed the customer's expectation. A government with high ethics and morality in carrying out its authority is demanded to have high accountability and respect for the demands and aspirations of the community in terms of the public service process. This is in line with Tjiptono (2000), who opines that service quality can be interpreted as an effort to meet the needs and expectations of customers in the public service process. The quality of service can be identified by comparing the perceptions of consumers on the real service they receive with their own expectations regarding the service attributes of a company. If the service received or perceived is as expected, then the service quality is viewed as good and satisfying, if the service received exceeds the customers' expectations, then the service quality is perceived as very good and of high quality. Conversely, if the service received is lower than expected, then the service quality is perceived as bad.

According to Kotler (2002: 83), service is every action or activity that can be offered by one party to another, which is basically intangible and does not result in any ownership. The production can either be associated with one physical product or not. Service is the behavior of producers in order to meet the needs and expectations of customers in order to satisfy them. Kotler also claims that this behavior can occur before, during, and after the transaction. In general, a higher standard of service will result in higher satisfaction and more frequent repeat purchases. The word "quality" contains many definitions and meanings; different people will interpret it differently. Nevertheless, as based on several definitions in the previous part, there are some similar elements of quality: 1) Quality includes efforts to meet or exceed customer expectations; 2) Quality includes excellent products, services, people, processes, and the environment; 3) Quality is an ever-changing condition.

Quality is the overall characteristics of products and services conducted to meet certain needs. Service quality is described by Parasuraman et al. (1991) as a form of attitude that is related (but not equivalent) to satisfaction, which is the result of a comparison between expectation and performance (Primiani and Ariani, 2005: 179). Beltrami distinguishes three phases in the evolution of quality in the public sector: quality in the sense of respect of norms and procedures; quality in the sense of effectiveness; and quality in the sense of customer satisfaction (Beltrami, quoted by Loffler, 2001: 9).

As based on the scholars' notions above regarding the quality of the service process, the authors conclude that the quality of the service process is all forms of activities carried out by the apparatus in order to meet public expectations. The determinant factors of the quality of the service process involve: 1) the convenience in obtaining services in relation to the location of the service; 2) clarity of information about the services provided, and; 3) protection against the impact of service outcomes

3. Quality of Professionals as a Determinant Factors of Ethics of Bureaucratic Apparatus in Public Service

In the world of public service, ethics is defined as a moral philosophy or values known as professional standards or code of ethics. The correct code of behavior should be obeyed by the service provider. Professionals formulate what kinds of actions, which behaviors, and what attitudes must be carried out or avoided by the apparatus. The application of ethical and moral practice is reflected in the code of ethics that the bureaucracy applies. The authors consider that the code of ethics in Indonesia is still limited to a number of groups, for example, medical experts or legal experts. For other professions, however, such codes of ethics are still not visible, despite that many argue that the religious values and moral ethics of Pancasila are sufficient as the guidelines of work or behavior. However, according to the authors, the real problem is how these values are applied. The author is fully aware that the absence of such code of ethics provides an opportunity for service providers to put aside the public interest. The presence of the code of conduct functions more as a direct control tool for the attitudes and behavior of the apparatus at work, considering that not all aspects of work are completely regulated through the existing regulations in a public service organization.

Moeljono (2003: 107) states that professionalism consists of three elements, namely knowledge, skill, and integrity. Further, these three elements must be based on strong faith, gratefulness, and sheer willingness to learn continuously. That said, work professionalism is a person's ability and skills to carry out tasks according to their respective fields and levels in a timely and accurate manner.

Professionalism also concerns the match between the abilities possessed by the bureaucracy with the needs of the task. This means that the skills and abilities of the apparatus reflect the direction and goals the organization wants to achieve. Kurniawan (2005: 73) states that professionalism can be defined as a person's ability and skills in doing work according to their respective fields and levels. Further, professionalism concerns fitness between the abilities possessed by the bureaucracy (bureaucratic competence) with task requirements. Danim (2002: 23) also states that professionalism can be defined as the commitment of members of a profession to improve their professional abilities and continuously develop the strategies they use in doing work in accordance with their profession.

Based on the description of the explanation above, the writers conclude that professionalism is the reflection of the ability or competence; a professional officer has the required knowledge, skills, ability, and is supported by experience that is acquired only by performing a particular job for a long period. Professionalism also describes the provision of services in accordance with the field of knowledge without prioritizing personal interests and respecting clients as respecting the service provider oneself. In addition to the previous notions, the authors conclude that professional attitude can be formulated as follows: 1) Professionals have an attachment to work throughout their life; 2) Professionals have a strong motivation or conscience as the basis for choosing a professional career; 3) Professionals have a group of knowledge and specific skills that they have acquired through long education and training; 4) Service-oriented professionals use their expertise in meeting public needs and demands; 5) Professionals form professional associations that determine acceptance criteria, educational standards, licensing, and regulatory boundaries in the profession, and 6) Professionals have strength and status in their fields of expertise and specific knowledge.

Professionals in governmental institutions are obliged to improve their service conducts. As regulated in Law No. 25/2009 concerning Public Service, it is mandatory for an institution to provide service that is of good quality, professional, effective, efficient, simple, transparent, timely, and responsive. Therefore, based on the definition and function of the organizational structure, it indicates that the organizational structure has a vital role in an organization in ways that the organizational structure significantly affects service quality. The orientation of decision making is arranged by considering the disadvantages of a centralized and decentralized system if the components of the supporting organizational structure are well arranged so that the division of workload or specialization is arranged according to needs, the components can support each other, the authority of duties and responsibilities is clear and does not overlap, the distribution and levels within the organization allow for effective monitoring, and the decentralized organizational structure allows for adaptation or flexibility. Excessive centralization can create confusion and reduce the enthusiasm of the implementers in carrying out activities. Meanwhile, excessive decentralization can complicate monitoring and coordination activities.

C. Conclusion

Ethical values are inseparable in a bureaucracy that provides public services. The public service bureaucracy consists of human characters based on virtuous qualities that produce policies that benefit society and prevent the justification of any means to achieve the goals. This character must be shown not only to live up to the values of truth and fundamental freedom but also the value of struggle. The ethical values are reflected in the following conclusions:

1. Service Quality The commitment of the apparatus in public service includes professionalism and ethics. Therefore, such commitment is realized by prioritizing the needs of customers who receive services so as to produce excellent service.
2. Process Quality The quality of service delivery is characterized by a process that creates satisfaction for service recipients. The skills of the apparatus in providing service are a reflection of whether the public service process is considered good or bad.
3. Professional Quality Professionals must reflect the apparatus who are experts in their fields, understand what they are doing, and carry it out with full responsibility and are regularly monitored by the leadership in accordance with the hierarchy of authority.

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