

MAINTENANCE OF AN ETHICAL PUBLIC SERVICE: THE IMPORTANT ROLE OF VIRTUE ETHICS

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INTRODUCTION

Ethical standards of behavior within public administration have received criticism in recent years, notwithstanding major scandals in three and four decades ago. Various levels of government, ranging from Federal through State to Local governments have had the share of fallen ethical standards in the past. Citizens become more critical of the activities of public administration, particularly where public administrators are entrusted with the power and the duty to manage inadequate resources and provide critical services to the citizenry. There is still much dissatisfaction in the ethical behavior of public service even in the era where several regulations, laws, and code of ethics are put in place to guide the behavior of public administrators.

Moral principles are at the center of the philosophical underpinnings of public service. The concerns of these underlying principles heavily depend on the internal values and personal responsibility for individual (public officer) moral attitudes and conduct in the affairs of service to the citizenry (Bailey, 2010; Baxley, 2007; Besser-Jones, 2008; Brady, 2005; Clarke, 2010; Curzer, 2010; Hacker-Wright, 2007; Hursthouse, 1990; Kamtekar, 2004; Kawall, 2009; Keller, 2007; Kristjánsson, 2008; Kupperman, 2009; Martinez, 2011; McAleer, 2007; McAleer, 2010; Merritt, 2000; Prinz, 2009; van Zyl, 2009). Pragmatists have emphasized the use of external control for behavior of public administrators, among them are institutional arrangements or codes of conduct and environmental conditions or societal values which support those desired behavior (Brady, 2005; Clarke, 2010; Curzer, 2010; Hacker-Wright, 2007; Kamtekar, 2010; Kupperman, 200; Kupperman, 2009; Martinez, 2011; McAleer, 2007; McAleer, 2010). It is undeniable fact, that the day-to-day behavior and ideal values of public servants are influenced by both internal values and external factors (Curzer, 2010). Concern for the unethical behavior of public servants in recent years is on the rise, and these have been attributed to external causes (Hacker-Wright, 2007).

Ethics, according to Goss (1996), is "system or code of conduct based on universal moral duties and obligations which indicate how one should behave; it deals with the ability to distinguish good from evil, right from wrong and propriety from impropriety" (p. 8). Values on the other are "core beliefs or desires that guide or motivate attitudes and actions" (Goss, 1996, p. 8). As a rule of thumb, individual public servants are expected to have a moral standard or ethical standard of their own in addition to their professional roles or code of ethics as prescribed in their places of employment (Clarke, 2010; Curzer, 2010; Hacker-Wright, 2007; Hursthouse, 1990; Kamtekar, 2004; Kawall, 2009; Keller, 2007; Kristjánsson, 2008; Kupperman, 2009; Martinez, 2011; McAleer, 2007; McAleer, 2010; Merritt, 2000; Prinz, 2009; van Zyl, 2009).

Last two decades have witnessed an outpouring of written works on ethics and morality in the field of public administration. The focus is particularly on the ethical standards of people in government as well as the public service which is made up of public administrators. These considerable publications in the area of ethics for public officers were accelerated by the American Society for Public Administration (ASPA) and the National Association of Schools of Public Affairs and Administration (NASPAA) following the concern with ethical standards after major scandals such as Watergate and Iran Contra affair (Merritt, 2000; Prinz, 2009; van Zyl, 2009). These major scandals left various bodies like ASPA, placed higher emphasis on professional standards and ethics in the public service (Merritt, 2000; Prinz, 2009; van Zyl, 2009). Ethics and moral virtue are not new to public administration; they have been present since the history of public administration (Denhardt, 1991).

The phases of public administration have changed in recent years. The role of career administrator has increased as compared to several decades ago. The career administrator is more involved in policy making than previously thought (Hacker-Wright, 2007; Hursthouse, 1990; Kamtekar, 2004; Kawall, 2009; Keller, 2007; Kristjánsson, 2008). Policy making was previously in the domain of elected officials (Keller, 2007; Kristjánsson, 2008). Public administrators are busily involved in policy making due to societal complexity and the unique and expertise a career administrator possesses (Clarke, 2010; Curzer, 2010; Hacker-Wright, 2007; Hursthouse, 1990; Kamtekar, 2004; Kawall, 2009; Keller, 2007; Kristjánsson). For this reason, the demand for more responsiveness and more responsibility from the career administrator by the general public has increased compared to several decades ago (Clarke, 2010; Curzer, 2010; Hacker-Wright, 2007; Hursthouse, 1990; Kamtekar, 2004; Kawall, 2009; Keller, 2007; Kristjánsson). These duties have made the bureaucracy more professionalized than it was in previous decades (Denhardt 1988a). Critical to ethics of the public servant in previous decades was centered on the "ethic of neutrality, the ethic of structure that enables the public administrator to serve as a policy maker, and also to be a moral agent and make judgments and also advocate" (Thompson 1985, 556). These fundamental beliefs have changed since the

discovery of the major scandals that took place in the history of the United States (the Watergate and Iran Contra affair) (Kawall, 2009; Keller, 2007; Kristjánsson). The issues regarding democratic rule, professional expertise, and discretion have increased the ethical concern for public administration.

One of the common methods to deal with administrative misconduct is the enactment of a code of ethics. The federal government for example issued ethical guidelines or ethical codes in 1958, 1961, and 1978 to regulate the behavior of public officials (both elected and appointed) (Cohen and Eimicke, 1995). States also follow suit, like the federal government, with code of ethics (Cohen and Eimicke, 1995). This is because citizens have the right to demand that both elected officials and public servants follow disciplinary ethical codes to guide them in the decisions they make since these decisions have direct effect on citizens (Kawall, 2009; Keller, 2007; Kristjánsson, 2008; Kupperman, 2009; Martinez, 2011; McAleer, 2007; McAleer, 2010; Merritt, 2000; Prinz, 2009; van Zyl, 2009). For example, the State of New York has ethics law which covered issues such as “restrictions on outside compensation, conflict-of interest provisions, prohibitions on gifts over \$75, substantial financial-disclosure provisions, and limits on participation in political parties (Cohen and Eimicke, 1995, 101). It also include “ a two-year revolving-door policy and restrictions on the appearance of former government officials before agencies for which they previously worked, prohibitions against legislators taking bribes, and empowerment of the Ethics Commission to impose fines (Cohen and Eimicke, 1995, 101). All these were to guide the behavior of both elected and appointed officials.

Issues related to ethical conduct of both elected and appointed public officials have become a major subject of attention. In previous decades, Watergate scandal and the Iran-contra scandal were the dominants issues. Reagan administration has witnessed the resignation of “over 150 top level appointed officials” due to ethical violations (Cohen and Eimicke, 1995). In recent years, the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) scandal and spying by National Security Administration (NSA) were at the center stage of attention. The most recent that is yet to leave the airwaves is the Bridgegate scandal in New Jersey (The Guardian). For example, the IRS scandal received wide public criticism. This is because the institution intentionally targeted and place hold on the processing of applications for tax-exempt status received from hundreds of organizations with presumably conservative indicators such as “Tea Party,” “Patriots,” or “9/12” in their names (The Guardian). Additional revelations in the early part of 2014 indicate that 83% of nonprofits organizations that were targeted for IRS surveillance were conservative. There was public agitation about the behavior of IRS officials over this scandal, targeting particular segments of the public. In the other related issue, Edward Snowden, an IT specialist working for US contractor Booz Allen Hamilton, revealed a number of mass-surveillance activities undertaken by the NSA (The Guardian). The NSA is able to access information stored by major US

technology companies, and also without individual warrants or due judicial process, undertook mass-intercepting data from the fibre-optic cables which make up the backbone of global phone and internet networks (The Guardian). The revelations have resulted in increased concerns on the “growing domestic surveillance, the scale of global monitoring, trustworthiness of the technology sector, whether the agencies can keep their information secure, and the quality of the laws and oversight keeping the agencies in check” (The Guardian). The public has become very skeptical about the activities of the government on citizens, asking critical questions whether those placed in authority be trusted. Citizens have lost trust in government particularly after the IRS scandal and NSA activities.

The issue of ethics is a must for public administrators in federal, state and local governments. The reason for this is that public policies have a forthright effect on the citizens. Consequently, ensuring ethics in the public administration workplace is necessary for effective policy making and implementation. Ethics in public administration is considered as a form of self-accountability or an “inner check” on the conduct and activities of public administrators (Rosenbloom, 1989). Public administrators need these ethics as they exercise administrative discretion during the performance of their duties. Public trust on the government is important since public trust depends on how these duties are carried out by public administrators (Kupperman, 2009; Martinez, 2011; McAleer, 2007; McAleer, 2010; Merritt, 2000; Prinz, 2000). As a result, it is important to maintain ethical standards in the implementation of government functions in various levels of government, to ensure citizens trust in government (Kupperman, 2009; Martinez, 2011; McAleer, 2007; McAleer, 2010; Merritt, 2000; Prinz, 2000).

Leaders in the public sector are held accountable by the citizenry and stakeholders. Hence, public leaders are expected to conform to standards higher than personal morality. Several scholars in both the academia and practitioners have attempted to address the issue of ethics in public administration and how public administrators must ensure ethical standards are held in high esteem. This paper attempts to explore the ethics in public administration workplace. The central theme of this paper is how can public administration maintain ethical standard in public administration workplace? This paper believes that virtue ethics have an important role to play in the maintenance of ethics in public service.

The rest of the paper is divided into five sections. The second section examines the foundation for public administration ethics. The third section discusses the brief review of ethical theory. Section four examines the importance of ethics in public administration and how major scandals have shaped ethics in public administration. The final section examines virtue ethics as practical tool and guideline to assist public servants to be both ethical and effective public managers.

The Foundation for Public Administration Ethics

According to Cohen and Eimicke (1995), scholars like Woodrow Wilson, Luthur Gulick, Frederick Taylor, the followers of scientific management as well as the municipal reform movement leaders during the 1920s and 1930s believe that it is important that the principles of efficiency, efficacy, and expertise in the neutral execution of duties must be the guiding principles for public administrators. Cohen and Eimicke (1995) believe that the assumption that “the responsibility of public administrators was to effectively carry out, but not question or evaluate, the dictates of their superiors and elected officials was clearly not sufficient” (p. 99). Public ethics and personal ethics are different as criterion in values and guiding principles (Cohen and Eimicke, 1995; Lewis, 1990). Lewis (1990) posits that ethics is the systematic way of thinking about morals, conducts, and judgments about right and wrong. Public ethics is beyond performance; hence, public ethics are action oriented in judgments of right and wrong (Cohen and Eimicke, 1995). Obligation, responsibility, personal view as well as general perspective are among the many perspectives suggested by Lewis (1990).

Various scholars note that ethics in public administration was a result of a confluence of values, virtues, and visions during the early days of the American history. Scholars further posit that the Founding Fathers design the American democratic governance on secular ethical and moral precepts (McAleer, 2010; Merritt, 2000; Prinz, 2000). The intention was to achieve the common good for the American people. It is believed that the ethical and moral values as well as the virtues and visions of normative system predated the Republic and formed the core believe of the Republic (Prinz, 2000). The sense of developing a vibrant public service by the Founding Fathers paved the way and served as the milestone for the democratic governance on which the Republic was founded.

Cooper (2004) has identified five different sources as the foundation for public administration ethics. Values in regimes, constitutional theory, and the founding principles of the Republic are one of the foundations. Citizenship theory, social equity theory, virtue or character based ethics, and public interest are other foundations of public administration ethics (Cooper, 2004).

Founding Thought, Constitutional Theory, and Regime Values as foundation for public administration ethics is credited to the work of John Rohr in his book first published in 1978. Rohr (1978) argue that public administration ethics are grounded in the American tradition espoused in the constitution and the regime values upon which the constitution rests. According to Rohr (1978), public administration ethics are found in the U.S. Constitution, the U.S. Supreme Court’s interpretations and regime values. Rohr identifies freedom, equality, and property as the regime values and went a step further to indicate that there are more to these three values. Rohr admonished public administrators to be familiar with the values enshrined in the constitution. He

further notes that public administrators must have in mind when accepting employment in a regime because they need to understand the core values of the regime and must be willing to uphold those values (Rohr, 1978).

Another school of thought holds the belief that the active participation of citizens in governmental activities is another foundation of ethics in public administration (Cooper, 2004). The role of public administration is derived from the citizens; hence administrators are “representative of citizens, professional citizens, or fiduciary citizens” (Cooper, 2004, p.44). Citizens have entrusted the roles they previously performed in the hands of public administrators, because public administrators have the required skills, time, resources, and technical training to do it more effectively than the ordinary citizen (Brady, 2005; Clarke, 2010; Curzer, 2010; Hacker-Wright, 2007; Kamtekar, 2010; Kupperman, 200; Kupperman, 2009; Martinez, 2011). There is therefore the justification for public administrators to be responsive to the citizen and being accountable to citizens as well. That is why public administrators must respect the dignity of the individual citizen as well as foster civic engagement and virtue. Public administrators are surrogates of the citizenry, hence, apart from their hierarchical bonds and obligation to their superiors, they must also develop horizontal bond with the citizenry for whom they serve.

Social equity has its root from the Rawlsian theory, which is associated with the New Public Administration in the late 1960s and early 1970s. Social equity is ethical principle with normative perspective. Rawl, in his theory of Justice in 1971 argue that justice is the central organizing principle of government. Hence, justice serve as the specific criteria upon which social equity must be established.

Lilla (1981) is credited to the extant work on virtue and argue that public administration must develop democratic ethos in public organizations based on character appropriate for public service. Lilla (1981) criticizes rational approach to ethical decision making. He accused the system of being a means of just training administrators in rational decision making that they deemed fit at any time, hence, this lacks normative foundation which will end up serving the few leaving the majority. He espoused establishment of character for public service. Pincoffs (1986) also support Lilla on the character as the basis for public service. Pincoffs (1986) posits that the ability to excogitate the character of others in any society is an essential part of moral skill. Pincoffs (1986) argue that, “it is our daily business to assess, to appraise, to judge persons” and it is a “task so important and central in life that it takes on a life of its own; it is the central stuff of drama, film, literature, and history and of several psychological and social sciences and arts” (p. 166–67).

Several other scholars have followed the work of Lilla and Pincoffs, indicating the important role of virtue related to character (Hart, 1984; Kalu, 2003). For example, Hart (1984) indicates the

need for virtue to be considered as one of the focus of administrative ethics in public service. Hart (1984) indicates superior prudence, moral heroism, caring or love for humanity, trust in the citizenry, and a continuing quest for moral improvement as the character trait of public administrators (p. 117). Radey (1990) supports the argument of Lilla and Pincoffs on the use of character for virtue in public service, and went further to indicate how important life stories can be used to shape professional ethics. Character or virtue is among the many components of normative ethics and foundation of public administration ethics (Kawall, 2009; Keller, 2007; Kristjánsson, 2008; Kupperman, 2009; Martinez, 2011; McAleer, 2007; McAleer, 2010; Merritt, 2000). Similarly, Cooper (2004) posits that among all the “rational analysis of morally charged situations, ethical principles, citizenship obligations, and regime values will come to naught without the courage of our convictions” on character or virtue (p. 398). Without character to “walk our walk and practice what we preach, ethics is ultimately an empty exercise” (Cooper, 2004, p. 398).

The public interest is the fifth foundation of public administration ethics. According to Cooper (2004), public interest as a foundation of ethics, play an important role in normative administrative ethic and serve as the moral compass, directing the fundamental obligation. Public interest poses questions before, during, and after every administrative and policy decision making process and implementation (Cooper, 2004). Some of these questions include “Are you acting on behalf of broad shared interests or limited particular ones?” (Cooper, 2004, p. 399). Public interest according to Cooper (2004) helps us rethink our plans and efforts in attempt to address social issues that confronts public administrators daily. Public interest “provides an intuitive navigational beacon that points us in the right direction” particularly in times of scandal or gross misconduct (Cooper, 2004, p. 399).

A Brief Review of Ethical Theory

There are different ethical theories that are used to explain ethics in different discipline. Among them include consequentialism, teleological ethics (sometimes used for egoism), contractarian / social contract theories, rights/ justice theories, natural law theories, religiously-based ethics, relativism, and universalism. This paper discusses five ethical theories, including egoism (the self and its needs), utilitarianism (overall pleasure and pain for all concerned), deontology (duty), Rawls theory of justice, and virtue ethics (McAleer, 2007; McAleer, 2010).

Egoism believes in self-interest. That is acting in one’s own interest with no regards to others. Psychological egoism which is a theory of human behavior believes that people are by nature self-interested and therefore routinely act to advance their own interests (Jones, Felps and Bigley, 2007). Ethical egoism, which is the other type of egoism is a form of normative ethics which holds the believe that “people ought to act exclusively in their self-interest” (Jones, Felps

and Bigley, 2007, p. 138). The welfare of others is not relevant to an egoist, unless, it affects his or her own welfare. This ethical theory has no moral standing. Commitment to other people's welfare is not an obligation.

The utilitarianism is credited to the work of Hume (1740), Bentham (1789), and Mill (1863). Utilitarianism seeks to promote the welfare of humanity and admonish people to act in ways that will lead to the greatest total benefit without harmful consequences (Jones, Felps and Bigley, 2007). Utilitarian theory believes in universality which implies all who are affected and not one particular individual as it is in the case of egoism. There are two forms of utilitarianism. Act utilitarianism according to Jones, Felps and Bigley (2007), "involves maximizing benefits relative to costs for the discrete decision in question and rule utilitarianism involves following rules that are established in order to achieve the greatest net positive consequences over time" (p. 139).

Deontological ethics or Kantian ethics departs from both egoism and utilitarianism. Kantian ethics reject the argument by utilitarianism which focuses on consequences. Kant argues that the consequences of an act cannot be used to determine a person's good will (Jones, Felps and Bigley, 2007). According to Kant, good consequences can arise by accident from an action motivated by the intension to cause harm to an innocent person, and alternatively, bad consequences can also arise from an action that has good motive (Jones, Felps and Bigley, 2007).

Kant's theory is regarded as deontological because he argues that to act morally right, people must act from duty. Kant believes that it is the motives that matter and not the consequences of the action but rather the motives of the person acting. Deontological ethics takes the normative ethical position that based morality of an action on rules. It is regarded as a rule-based ethics, duty and obligation. Deontological ethics is contrasted with several other ethical theories, including consequentialism, virtue ethics, and pragmatic ethics. Kant's theory and deontological ethics believe an act performed for personal satisfaction has less moral weight but has more moral weight if performed because it is a duty to do so.

Rawls in his theory believes that justice for the individual, not collective welfare, as the "first virtue" of social institutions (Rawls, 1964, 1971a, & 1971b). Rawls argue reconciliation of liberty and equality. Rawls' conclusion is that inequalities are just, provided they result in benefits for everyone, but with specific emphasis on the least advantaged in the society.

Virtue ethics is another ethical theory that focuses on human virtues. According to virtue ethics, the right act is the action a virtuous person would do in any circumstances. Pincoffs (1985) argues that virtuous character should be a primary goal of all human condition. Pincoffs (1985) identifies four types of virtues including aesthetic, ameliorating, instrumental, and moral. Virtue

ethics is more like a habit that is acting out of habit. Jones, Felps, and Bigley (2007) posit that virtue ethics is person based rather than action based. It places emphasis on the virtue or moral character of the person undertaking the action, instead of the ethical duties and rules, or the consequences of the actions (Jones, Felps and Bigley, 2007). The whole life of a person is central to virtue ethics rather than the actions. Virtue ethics goes beyond the rightness or wrongness of actions, but it rather sorts to provide characteristics of a good behavior or a good person (Jones, Felps and Bigley, 2007).

The Importance of Ethics in Public Administration

The trends in public sector are changing with its own challenges to governance that requires ethical decision making (Kennedy and Malatesta, 2011). With the growth in population, the size of government at various levels has had more responsibilities. It is necessary for public administrators to perform their duties ethically; this is because citizens expect public administrators to be competent and trustworthy in the discharge of their duties which must conform to the constitutional values (Kennedy and Malatesta, 2011). Policy making does not rely on the elected officials alone. Public administrators now have delegated power to make laws on behalf of the elected officials. Citizens rely on these government agencies made up of public administrators for essential service such as healthy food, portable water, good roads, and public safety. It is important to trust agencies to discharge the numerous duties delegated to them in competent and ethical manner. Corruption allegations and mistrust in agencies put fear and panic in citizens due to the manner in which citizens rely on these agencies for these essential services (Kennedy and Malatesta, 2011). As observed by Kennedy and Malatesta (2011), “skepticism and distrust affect more than just the political system” but the entire society is affected (p. 160).

Ethical standards are important to ensure efficiency in public administration and also prevent moral hazards (Menzel, 1997). Administrative hazards arise due to inefficient and ineffective decisions and actions. This usually happens when individual interests or the interest of the administrator do not align with the public interest which is a form of unethical behavior (Kennedy and Malatesta, 2011). Thus, ethical standards will prevent administrative inefficiencies that characterized public agencies (Menzel, 1997).

Interest in ethics in public administration is on the rise, due to the numerous ethical lapses among public sector leaders in recent years. This has led to citizen’s demand for accountability and more ethical standard in public administration with less tolerance for the shortcomings, mistakes, and administrative challenges that public administration faces. For this reason, citizens expect public administrators to live above the standard measure of personal morality by living adequate ethical responsibility (Lewis, 1991).

Ethical responsibility can be dealt with through the establishment of ethical codes, policies, and other forms of standards that guide the work of public officials. Scholars have suggested various recommendations and suggestions that are based on ethics for public administrators. For example Weber (1947) posits that the bureaucracy was created to minimize human touch and maximize standardization. This is expected through various regulations such as impersonal rules, procedures, and ethical codes. This guidance will minimize the inefficiency that had characterized public administration. Menzel (1997) notes that ethical values are critical elements of public administration and it serves as body and soul of public administration.

Friedrich and Finer Debate on Rational and Anti-rational Ethics in Public Administration

The debate between the rational view and the anti-rational view of ethics in public administration is dated back to the early writers on public administration. For example, Spicer (1995) identifies Rousseau, Comte, Mill, and Dewey as modern philosophers of rational views that have influenced American public administration. Spicer (1995) further identifies Locke, Hume, Smith, and Burke as anti-rational philosophers. Most of the founders of public administration in the early 1900s such as Wilson, Goodnow, White, Taylor, Fayol, Mayo, Gulick, and Weber were rationalists except Follett who did not represent the rational view in public administration (Spicer, 1995). Philosophers in support of the rationalist view believe in the power of science reason to reach reality, thus, human behavior can be predicted and controlled (Spicer, 1995). On the other hand, philosophers in opposition to rational view also believes that human beings cannot have the complete knowledge to control social order, thus, values are important elements to understanding reality (Spicer, 1995).

The debate further deepens in the early part of 1940s between Friedrich and Finer on the most effective way that public administrators can be accountable in a democratic system of government. The debate was centered on the role of professional standards and individual values in public accountability.

Friedrich and Finer debate, in the beginning of 1940s, about the most effective way to ensure accountability of public officials in democratic system introduced the anti-rational paradigm shift in the field. This debate is an important figure in deciding whether professionalism or individual conscience has the superiority to draw the framework for administrative ethics (Brady, 2005; Clarke, 2010; Curzer, 2010; Hacker-Wright, 2007; Kamtekar, 2010; Kupperman, 200; Kupperman, 2009; Martinez, 2011; McAleer, 2007; McAleer, 2010). This importance is based on the fact the Friedrich and Finer debate referred to the role of professional standards and individual values in public accountability, which can be reflected in the same framework of administrative ethics. The tension between the rational view that advocates professionalism and the anti-rational view that supports the role of individual conscience, values, and politics can be

clearly seen in this debate(Kawall, 2009; Keller, 2007; Kristjánsson, 2008; Kupperman, 2009; Martinez, 2011; McAleer, 2007; McAleer, 2010; Merritt, 2000; Prinz, 2009; van Zyl, 2009).

Friedrich (1940), a rationalist, believes that public officials can effectively be accountable through internal checks, thus, professional standards and technical knowledge to ensure accountability. Friedrich (1940) idea is that society is becoming complex and there is the need for professionals like public administrators to handle ethical decisions because since public administrators have the knowledge for proper understanding of how to deal with ethical issues(Kawall, 2009; Keller, 2007; Kristjánsson, 2008; Kupperman, 2009; Martinez, 2011; McAleer, 2007; McAleer, 2010; Merritt, 2000; Prinz, 2009; van Zyl, 2009). Finer (1941), anti-rationalist, believes that public administrators or these professionals cannot make the appropriate decision and ensure public good as argued by the rationalists. Finer believes the internal rules and checks proposed by rationalist will lead to corruption in public administration (Shafritz, et al., 2005).

The tension on which way to go regarding ethics in public administration has not ended. Scholars on ethics in public administration have been shaped by the rationalist and anti-rationalist streams on whether to depend on professional standards or on individual conscience to make administrative ethics which will ensure public administration function more effectively(Bailey, 2010; Baxley, 2007; Besser-Jones, 2008; Brady, 2005; Clarke, 2010; Curzer, 2010; Hacker-Wright, 2007; Hursthouse, 1990; Kamtekar, 2004; Kawall, 2009; Keller, 2007; Kristjánsson, 2008; Kupperman, 2009; Martinez, 2011; McAleer, 2007; McAleer, 2010; Merritt, 2000; Prinz, 2009; van Zyl, 2009). As cited by Kyarimpa and Garcia-Zamor (2006), there is no agreement about the most effective way to handle the ethics in public administration.

Virtue Ethics: The Practical Tool and Guideline to Ethical Standard

Virtue ethics emphasize the role of character rather than the action and the consequences. It looks into the person acting rather than the action itself. Thus, the moral character of the person undertaking the action is more relevant(Hacker-Wright, 2007; Hursthouse, 1990; Kamtekar, 2004; Kawall, 2009; Keller, 2007; Kristjánsson, 2008; McAleer, 2010; Merritt, 2000; Prinz, 2009; van Zyl, 2009). Virtue ethics has gained considerable grounds in recent years. Some of the early proponents of virtue ethics include Aristotle and Confucius. Virtue ethics deemphasizes consequences, rules, and particular acts. It places the focus on the kind of person or the person acting in particular. Virtue ethics is not concern with the primary aim whether intention is right or wrong, or whether a person is following the correct rule or procedure, or in other case whether the consequences of action are good or bad(Bailey, 2010; Baxley, 2007; Besser-Jones, 2008; Brady, 2005; Clarke, 2010; Curzer, 2010; McAleer, 2010; Merritt, 2000; Prinz, 2009; van Zyl, 2009). Virtue ethics focus on the person acting and whether good character (moral virtues) is

expressed or not. The nature of virtue ethics has led to many variations where different theorists and traditions have developed different virtues and vices. The character traits of virtue ethics are not innate. But they are formed as a result of actions that humans by nature have freely selected. Humans are not born honest or liars but we become liars or honest people through repeated action of telling honest or liars. Moral virtues are believed to have contributed to social harmony which also enables us to behave or act reasonably. It further enables us to have the right intention (Kupperman, 2009; Martinez, 2011; McAleer, 2007; McAleer, 2010; Merritt, 2000; Prinz, 2009; van Zyl, 2009).

Scholars believe that a virtuous person will be kind in all situations over a lifetime because that is the character and not because of utility maximization or because of duty. Virtue ethics scholars criticize deontological because it is duty based, as well as consequentialist theory because it is based on consequences (Kristjánsson, 2008; Kupperman, 2009; Martinez, 2011; McAleer, 2007; McAleer, 2010; Merritt, 2000).

Virtue ethics could address the many challenges public servants face in decision making where the laws or the rules are silent or the rules are outdated. Administrators without virtue will implement rules or regulations that are outdated and detrimental to the society. They will do so just because that is what the law states (Kupperman, 2009; Martinez, 2011; McAleer, 2007; McAleer, 2010; Merritt, 2000). Conscience and judgment becomes silent, making administrative work more by the rules only. Acting from virtue is to act from some particular motivation. Consequently, there are certain virtues that are necessary for correct moral decisions, and to correct moral decisions require correct motives (Kupperman, 2009; Martinez, 2011; McAleer, 2007; McAleer, 2010; Merritt, 2000).

It is sometimes very difficult to deal with which course of action or moral decision to take when confronted with difficult and complex decision making issues. Virtue theories posit that by being the sort of person we want to be, such as with the character traits, making correct moral decisions will come by itself. Moral decision making become natural side of the individual Kristjánsson, 2008; Kupperman, 2009; Martinez, 2011; McAleer, 2007; McAleer, 2010; Merritt, 2000).

Public administration has seen the debate over conflict of interest in recent years where the rules and regulations put in place have all failed. Virtue theorists believe that the rules cannot work by themselves; they need good people with good character (Kupperman, 2009; Martinez, 2011; McAleer, 2007; McAleer, 2010; Merritt, 2000). As a result, there has been increase in administrative corruption, through the awards of contracts and subcontracting in public administration. According to Adams (2006, 2010), the narrowing of ethics into conflict of interest issues is reflected by the reporting of the numerous allegations of official impropriety

under headlines of 'ethics scandals,' and by the fervor to regulate official behavior through so-called 'ethics laws' and 'ethics regulations' (p. 162).

Administrative discretion by street-level bureaucrats who represent the frontlines of government policy interacts directly with the public. The decision of these bureaucrats and their discretion and the power they wield is overwhelming which can impact on the public negatively if the action is wrong (Brady, 2005; Clarke, 2010; Curzer, 2010; Hacker-Wright, 2007; Kamtekar, 2010; Kupperman, 200; Kupperman, 2009; Martinez, 2011). LeBar (2009) posits that the low-level public service employees (street-level bureaucrats) perform their duties under ambiguous agency goals, targets with limited or inadequate resources. These roles are performed with combined and substantial discretionary authority. They are required to interpret policy, sometimes, on a case-by-case basis. The result is that, there is huge difference between government policy in theory and policy in practice which is detrimental to the general public (LeBar, 2009). As a result, virtue ethics will guide public servants, particularly, street level bureaucrats to make good decisions that will be moral and will be in the interest of the public.

CONCLUSION

This paper explores ethics in public administration and the various foundations that formed ethics in public administration. The further examines the various ethical theories and the debate between rational view of ethics and anti-rational view of ethics. Current literature suggests there is no agreement about the most effective way to handle the ethics in public administration (Kyarimpa and Garcia-Zamor, 2006). However, with the current trend and development in public administration, it is important for public administration to adopt pragmatic approach to virtue ethics in order to address the many challenges faced in public administration.

This study reviews literature on ethics in public administration with a particular emphasis on how virtue ethics could help address the many challenges facing public administration in recent years. The dignity, high sense of public interest, and honor of public administration has been affronted. This paper argues that virtue ethics has the potential to address issues of administrative ethics through the consideration of individual conscience of public officials since the actual source of judgment is the individual conscience.

With the many rules, regulations and the code of ethics that are in various public sector organizations, ethical standards in public administration is still on the loose. This has led to loss of trust by citizens in public administration. Corruption is on the rise, so is conflict of interests. Street-level bureaucrats have wielded powers to make decision, which are sometimes detrimental to the ordinary citizens. The cure to these menaces is virtue ethics. Various literature suggest how teleological and deontological ethics have failed in recent years (Kawall, 2009; Keller,

2007; Kristjánsson, 2008; Kupperman, 2009; Martinez, 2011; McAleer, 2007; McAleer, 2010; Merritt, 2000). Not that the rules are not in place but the character traits are lacking to enable public administrators make good judgments in the decisions they make. As results, emphasis on virtue ethics in public administration will help address the many challenges facing public administration, particularly in recent years. In support of this argument, studies have also demonstrated how organizations that hire purely on the basis of virtue ethics have higher growth, both in efficiency, efficacy, as well as employee turnover (McAleer, 2007; McAleer, 2010). This is a clear indication, that virtue ethics can play important role in the fallen ethical standard in public administration (cooper, 2004).

There are some limitations to this study. First, there are practical implementations challenges to virtue ethics in public administration. The application procedure of virtue ethics is always a problem. Second, it is undeniable fact that the rule would amount to a decision procedure for determining what the right action was in any particular case.

In conclusion, virtue ethics has the greatest potential to impact on public administration workplace because various studies have demonstrated its effectiveness in organizations and how it has transformed organizations from different levels including structure and culture of the these organizations.

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