ETHICS VALUES IN PUBLIC SECTOR IN REPUBLIC OF SLOVENIA

Mimi Zajc
Ministry of Health, Republic of Slovenia

mimizajc@yahoo.com

Paper to be presented at

The 14th NISPAcee Annual Conference

"Public Administration and Public Policy in Emerging Europe & Eurasia: For Professionalism, Impartiality and Transparency"

May 11 - 13, 2006, Ljubljana, Slovenia
ETHICS VALUES IN PUBLIC SECTOR IN REPUBLIC OF SLOVENIA

Authoress: Mimi Zajc, National Chemical Bureau, Ministry of Health of Republic of Slovenia

Abstract

Considering human values makes mankind more human. The consideration of social values gives an opportunity to the state to operate more humane. To make allowance for these values has influence to the ethical conduct in public sector. Ethical conduct has a great effect on relations between the political interference and professional competence of the staff employed, on the strategic policy and quality of performance of public administration, on the organisational structure, and on the development of human resource management in public sector.

This article is based on research of ethical conduct in public sector of Republic of Slovenia. Public institutions, public servants and as users of public service (citizens) were asked to answer different questions about ethical values.

The article deals with the definition of public ethics. Results of the poll clearly indicate which are the most and the least important values, and show that the public accountability is the most significant value among the proposed public values. The article gives a special emphasis on accountability in public sector. I present responses to the questions of examination of accountability system in public sector, and to whom the public servants should answer to, and how the public accountability system is organized due to detection of misconduct.

Replies of the employees and users of public services to the questions like who has the biggest effect to the formation of the most important values in public sector, and which are the most trusted public institutions, are very important in the policy of the establishment of modern values in the future. The opinion about the reasons of misconduct in public sector can help to avoid improper ethical conduct of public servants and office holders. The results of the research also shows opinions about the chang of ethical conduct due to joining the European Union.

From results of the research, the state and the circumstances of ethical values in public sector can be understood and the strategic policy to organize better education of public servants can be prepared. On the basis of results, the proper system of quality and accountability in public sector can be established, and the system of national integrity can be set up.

In the conclusion I find that the accountability in public sector in Republic of Slovenia is the most important social value. This fact should be seen more clearly by the representatives and office holders. Ethics and values in public sector are still not a part of day-to-day life in Slovenian society. In the future, the effective system of ethics, values and integrity should be put into force by efficient survey mechanisms in which educational system, public and media would be involved. The demand of ethical conduct in public sector is one of the most important requirement of society.

Key words: values, ethics, integrity, citizens, accountability, public sector, public servants.
ETHICS VALUES IN PUBLIC SECTOR IN REPUBLIC OF SLOVENIA

INTRODUCTION

Determination of public values and their consideration is the foundation of the establishing of ethics conducting in public sector. Public values grows in harmony with developing of democratization and increasing the influence of public opinion to the working results of civil servants. As results of the research in Slovenia show that accountability of authority is one of the basic values in civil society. It is very important that the civil society is aware of importance of accountability, particulary for the office holders. This will guaranty that government acts in responsible, regular and ethical manner. This type of action will form goverment which will be honest, the government which will be focused on results and transparency, and the connection between good governance and citizens will intensified.

Citizens have full right to demand the higest level of accountability from their representatives in public sector. Accountability of civil servants for adopted decisions is the basic guarantee to assure the freedom for citizens and it is also the basic condition for effective, impartiality and ethical public sector. Office holders and other public servents in public sector should be aware that the level of accountability has influence to the level of trust in politics of government.

The consideration of public values by politicians, office holders and public servants will ensure that citizens´s oppinion about ethical conduct and level of public trust would change.

PURPOSE

Part of the research of ethical conduct in public sector of Republic of Slovenia was focused on values in society. The result shows, that accountability in public sector represents the most significant value among 40 proposed. The polls were answered by important public institutions, employed in public sector and users of public sector.

This article is based on research of ethical conduct in public sector of Republic of Slovenia. The article gives emphasis on accountability in public sector..

Replies of the employees and users of public services to the questions like who has the biggest effect to the formation of the most important values in public sector, and which are the most trusted public institutions, are very important in the policy of the establishment of modern values in the future. The opinion about the reasons of misconduct in public sector can help to avoid improper ethical conduct of public servants and office holders. The results of the research also show opinions about the chang of ethical conduct due to joining the European Union.

RESULTS OF THE RESEARCH
Method

The research titled Ethics in public sector has been done from May till September 2004. The results, according to accountability in public sector are presented in the following text.

The poll has been sent to 490 employees of the public sector and 610 users of service of public sector. I received 247 answers from employees and 155 answers from users. The questionnaire (not anonymous) about ethic in public sector was sent to 59 important public institutions which represent parliament, government, courts, political parties, educational, health and cultural institutions. From them, 29 polls were returned.

1a. Sex of inquierees

![Sex of inquierees Graph](image)

1b. Age of inquierees

![Age of inquierees Graph](image)

1c. Level of education of inquierees
2. Do you think that the system of public accountability is surveyable enough?

The graph shows that employees and users of public service agree that the system of accountability of public servants is not clear.

As you can see, more than half of public institutions believe that system of accountability is not surveyable. The fact is, that the important public institutions, like parliament and political parties, particularly those which have representatives in parliament, can make the system of accountability in public sector more transparent by accepting proper laws. In addition, the attorney general and judicial power have the possibility to respect the needs and demands of legality. Unfortunately, the attorney general and judicial power did not respond to the questionnaire. Surveillance function of attorney general, according to judicial function which can sentence, is the
most important function at permanent exercise of public accountability. If there are no consequences for misconduct even the best system of accountability will not work.

3. Public servants are accountable to: (you can pick more than one answer)

The graphs show that the majority of employees and users of public sector believe that public servants are accountable to the citizens and their superiors in rank.

The third graph represents the point of view of public institution and to whom the public servants should be responsible. According to their opinion, the public servants should be accountable to their immediate superiors, following to citizens, audit general, then follows the importance of accountability to the public and at last to the elected representatives.

From all of the graphs shown, you can acknowledge that public servants should be accountable to the citizens. This conviction is shown by employees and even more by users of public sector. Public institutions give their priority to account to immediate superiors. That is the foundation of hierarchic organisation of public sector.
as a traditional organisation. With the globalisation, modernisation and reform of public sector we should be aware that new levels and quality of accountability have emerged and this fact should be taken into consideration by all public servants and office holders. This new quality of public accountability should be recognised by the public institutions which are the policy makers and which can define the mechanism of accountability in public sector.

4. Is the system of accountability organised with the intention to disclose misconduct or non ethical behaviour immediately?

Graph no. 4: The possibility of disclosure of non ethical behavior by system of accountability

This graphs clearly show, that non ethical behavior and misconduct in public sector can not be recognised immediately on the basis of system of accountability. You can also see, that there is every indication that system of accountability does not work or does not work properly.

The following questions were asked just public servants and citizens:

5. Who has the influence on forming the most important values in public sector?
Graph no. 5 : The influence of forming the values of public sector

The graphs show that public servants think that the biggest role in forming the most important social values have educational system (on all levels) and public servants, followed by members of the parliament, media, politicians and funcionarji. The less influence to form values have the constitutional judges, international public opinion and non-governmental organizations. The users are convinced that educational system and media have the most important influence to form social values, followed by politicians and members of parliament, public servants. Functionaries (i.e appointed office holders), international public opinion and non-goverenmental organizations do not have significant role in forming social values.

By the replies we can conclude that the influence of educational system crucial to form the values of the society.

6. Whom you trust and believe in the most?
Answers show that 38 percent of the employees do not trust anybody. Other replies show that employees trust and believe the following public institutions: Ombudsman, President of the Republic of Slovenia, President of Constitutional Court, President of Parliament, Prime Minister, Police, Media, and President of Judicial Council. Bank of Slovenia, Attorney General and political leaders are trusted only by 1% of the inquirees.

35 percent of users of the public sector do not trust and believe anybody. Citizens trust and believe public institutions as follows: Ombudsman, President of Parliament, President of Republic of Slovenia, Prime Minister, President of Constitutional Court, Bank of Slovenia, Media, President of Judicial Council, and Police. Political leaders and Attorney General are trusted by 1% of the inquirees.

7. Which are the reasons for unethical conduction of public servants?
Graph no. 7: Reasons for unethical conduction of public servants

Replies show that employees believe that reasons for unethical conduction are as follows: the unethical conduct has no proper sanctions, decresing the morality in general, superiors (bosses) are not models for proper behaviour, insufficient level of education and culture, discontent by financial situation, inadequate legislation, absence of public survey and the demands of superiors are low.

Almost the same opinion was obtained by the users of public sector.

8. Do you expect that situation about ethical conduct in public sector will change due to joining European Union?

The graphs show that the majority of employees in public sector believes there will be no significant changes in domain of ethical conduct, whereas more than 50 percent
of users are convinced that there will be change in ethical conduct in public sector as joining European Union.

The following table represents replies about the most important values in public sector in Republic of Slovenia in comparison with the OECD countries:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Slovenia (Source: Ethics in public sector, the research 2004)</th>
<th>Countries OECD (Source: PUMA, 2000)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Accountability</td>
<td>Impartiality</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Justness</td>
<td>Legality</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professionalism</td>
<td>Integrity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Respect to the citizens (customers)</td>
<td>Transparency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Impartiality</td>
<td>Efficiency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fairness</td>
<td>Equality</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Legality</td>
<td>Accountability</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Efficiency</td>
<td>Justness</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table no. 1: Comparison of the most important values between Slovenia in OECD countries

On the other hand, to Slovenian citizens the most important values are justness, accountability, respect to the citizens, fairness and professionalism, as based on my research.

Discussion

Topic of this article deals with the ethics and social values in public sector. We can ask ourselves about the connection of accountability (as the most important value in Republic of Slovenija) in public sector and ethical conduct of public servants, and the most important values of the whole society.

These days, employees in public sector, especially the office holders and public employees who hold leading positions, do not feel the need to keep broader public informed with their decisions. There are still decisions being made behind the closed doors.

Public, citizens and media will have to be able to demand that policy decision makers inform them about decisions being made, about activity of authority and about final results. Implementation of ethics and important values will depend on the public awareness, media, parliament and other organizations, which have the competence to demand transmission of different information.

As the system of democracy develops, the public awareness of importance of ethics behaviour in public affairs will grow. Citizens will demand higher accountability in public sector and they will take part in defining social values. The performers will take into consideration that their election and nomination for leading positions will be
bound by the level of trust of government, so this individuals will have to behave responsible, ethical and with consideration of the most important values in society.

Conclusion

Considering human values makes mankind more human. The consideration of social values gives an opportunity to the state to operate more humane. To make allowance for this values has influence to the ethical conduct in public sector. Ethical conduct has a great effect to relations between the political interference and professional competence of the staff employed, to the strategic policy and quality of performance of public administration, to the organisational structure, and to the development of human resource management in public sector.

The mankind at present is more complexed than ever. The parliament and government bodies are producing countless rules and regulations to control lives of citizens. This regulations have a great impact on the growth of freedom of every individual and with this growth of freedom the level of ethics in public sector becomes higher. When the level of public participation for decision making is increasing, the accountability to reach the decisions should be bigger.

The answers regarding the public accountability clearly show, that there is a lack of responsibility in public sector in Republic of Slovenia. The opinion of the most of the inquierees who completed the poll, is that the system of public accountability is not implemented enough into daily work of office holders, other public servants and politics decision makers.

From results of the research, the state and the circumstances of ethical values in public sector can be understood and the strategic policy to organize better education of public servants can be prepared. On the basis of results, the proper system of ethics, quality and accountability in public sector can be established, and the system of national integrity can be set up.

The accountability in public sector in Republic of Slovenia is the most important of social values. This fact should be seen more clearly by the representatives and office holders. Ethics and values in public sector are still not a part of day-to-day life in Slovenian society.

In the future, the effective system of ethics, values and integrity should be put into force by efficient survey mechanisms in which educational system, public and media would be involved. The demand of ethical conduct in public sector is one of the most important requirement of society. How to achieve this goal is important assignment of scholars, politics and citizens.

References

7. (http://www.oecd.org/about/html z dne 2. 2. 2004)