

A Critical Review of Ethical Practices in the Public Sector of Saudi Arabia

Abstract

Governments and agencies around the world are continuously seeking new ways and measures to promote the establishment of efficiency and efficacy leading to development of quality deliverance of public services. Saudi Arabia is of no exception. In this paper we examine, ethical practices in Saudi Arabia and especially, as they relate to employment practices. We identified current practices, provide an analysis of these practices, and provided suggestions in which they can be improved to achieve higher levels of efficiencies.

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Introduction

19 Administration ethics is an important field of study since the mid-1970s, undoubtedly motivated
20 by the paradigm of the New Public Administration that placed the issue on the agenda of public
21 administration. The recent paradigm of Reinventing Government has also an imperative position
22 in ethical concerns (Cooper, 2001). Given that, work and literature about this subject have
23 largely expanded and its application to practice became quick while rich evidence appeared all
24 over the world.

25 Furthermore, we are in an era where high profile lapses by public-sector leaders in ethical and
26 moral judgment are frequently exposed, citizens have come to expect increasingly higher
27 standards of ethical conduct as a broad range of activities are now viewed as immoral (Bowman,
28 1990). Increasing awareness and changing societal values have been linked to the public's
29 interest in ethics management (Maesschalck, 2004). Accordingly, citizens have become more
30 assertive and demanding toward leaders in the public-sector showing less tolerance for leaders'
31 mistakes, shortcomings, and structural challenges. As such public leaders are generally expected
32 to meticulously conform to standards higher than those aligned with personal morality (Lewis,
33 1991). Thus public leaders can often find this expectation to maintain collectively high and even
34 idealistic levels of ethical responsibility to be quite overwhelming.

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Purpose of Research

37 The common method in attempting to deal with the ethical responsibility of public officials has
38 been the promulgation of codes, policies, and other guidance standards. Accordingly, there has
39 been a proliferation of scholars and practitioners attempting to address the issue of ethics within

40 public administration through ethical recommendations, suggestions, and various guidance
41 principles. As promoted by Cooper (2001), ethics in public administration is not a transient
42 concept but has proven to be an approach which has shown a great deal of sustainability which is
43 fundamental to the area of public administration.

44 This paper will i) examine the general context to practice ethics in the general profession, ii)
45 examine the constitutive ethics of general service, iii) discuss the principles of conduct of
46 the general service, iv) examine the establishments and procedures taken to promote the
47 high standards of conduct, and v) discuss the prevention of misconduct and how they can
48 be identified and managed. Much focus is placed on these factors as they relate to
49 employment practices in the public sector of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA).

50 The determinants of ethics in public administration with regard to the individual attributes of
51 public/civil servants include ethical decision-making skills (Richardson & Nigro, 1987), mental
52 attitude (Bailey, 1964), virtues ((Dimock, 1990; Dobel, 1990) and professional values (Van Wart,
53 1998). Secondly, the organizational structure dimension is explained by clear accountability,
54 collaborative arrangements, dissent channels, and participation procedures (Denhardt, 1988;
55 Thompson, 1985). Third, the political organizational culture includes artifacts, beliefs and
56 values, and assumptions (Schein, 1985). Leadership is important in the development,
57 maintenance, and adaptation of organizational culture (Scott, 1982; Schein, 1985; Ott,
58 1989). Ethical behavior is encouraged when organizations have a climate where personal
59 standards and employee education are emphasized, where supervisors stress the truth, and where
60 employees regularly come together to discuss ethical problems (Bruce, 1995, 1994). Finally,
61 societal expectation includes public participation, laws, and policies.

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Principles of Ethics

63 For this research, we will concentrate on the two leading models- (ethics of the sovereign good
64 and ethics of the service of goods) that are involved with ethical thoughts and actions within the
65 public sectors. Furthermore, we will also compare and contrast them with the collaborative ethics
66 that were mentioned above. It has to be kept in mind that we are not taking any particular or
67 specific approach but rather will be taking the modern understanding of could be called “vulgar
68 Kantianism” or a “vulgar utilitarianism” (Harmon, 2005).

69 The only substantive way for ethics to influence behavior or vice versa in Saudi Arabia would
70 have to occur though the road of Islamic religion. This pathway is not as difficult, constricting,
71 or worrisome as it may appear for two main reasons. First, considerable commonality exists be-
72 tween secular and Islamic ethics. Normative ethics, duties, and obligations have much in
73 common between the two types of ethics. Second, Islamic scholarship throughout its history has
74 found no difficulty in incorporating advances in medicine, economics, and sociology. This is
75 facilitated by well-known principles of Islamic jurisprudence principles, which are used in
76 producing a religiously approved opinion (i.e., fatwa) of ethical nature on new and emergent life
77 issues (Tamim, Hejaili, Jamal, al Shamsi, & Al Sayyari, 2010). As Bhuiin, Abdul-Muhmin, &
78 Kim (2002) explained, it is important for the private and public sectors to understand consumer
79 attitudes toward ethical business practices, government regulations, consumer rights and
80 interrelationships in Saudi Arabia.

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Ethics of the Sovereign Good

82 The ethics of the sovereign good is nothing but the set of guidelines based on which an
83 individual acts. The ethics of the sovereign good is identified to be a set of values from which the

84 different views on ‘what is good’ can be judged. It can be commonly seen in real world scenarios
85 that many people have different versions of the same ethical concept. People try to twist the
86 concept to fit their needs based on their conception of the “good”. Therefore it is important to
87 identify the viewpoint that holds the true spirit of the ethical guidelines.

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89 **Ethics of the Service of Goods**

90 The values that are promoted by the ethics of the service of goods are mainly efficiency and
91 maximization of the inputs to outputs. Basically there are three aspects which are important
92 when it comes to the service of goods.

93 They are logic of reciprocity, its view of the collective, and its criteria for judgment. It can also
94 be clearly seen that the ethics of the sovereign good are mainly targeted towards the market. At
95 the very core, service of goods is based on mutual exchange. Basically it assumes that people are
96 rational and have the freedom to choose what goods or services they want. For all of the above-
97 mentioned, the research will seek to compare practices in Saudi Arabia and North America and
98 Europe. It must be noted that all Saudi citizens are Moslems, and a large portion adhere
99 strongly to Islamic teachings. Because Islamic teachings pervade a Moslem’s daily actions
100 and thoughts, ethics in general are seen through the prism of Islam (Tamim et al., 2010).

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The results of inquiries of ethics in the public sector focus on seven different factors. The first describes the context to practice ethics in the general profession. The second describes the constitutive ethics of general service. The third focuses on the principles of conduct of the general service. The others focus on the establishment and procedures taken to promote the high standards of conduct.

The answer can be as follows:

First: General service in the kingdom of Saudi Arabia is divided into two sections:

- 1- Government general service: this service is done by official permanent employees in steady jobs such as civil service regulation and military service regulation (officials regulation – individuals regulation) and some special regulations such as judgment regulation, teaching board members regulation and others, as there some employees performing part of these services complying with labor regulation.
- 2- Companies and establishments employees: companies that provide direct services as such as (telecommunication, water, and electricity) and such companies have private regulations as their employees comply with labor regulation.

Second: for the government employees – general sector "employees be nominated according to specified conditions set by civil service regulation" such as (worthiness, goodness of conduct and behavior, health fit, having required qualifications for the post, not condemned before in punishment or moral, honesties crime except at least three years

125 passes for the judgment, not terminated from the government services for disciplinary
126 reasons except at least three years passes for the judgment)."

127 Also regulation consists of many obligations and impermissible things to the employee of
128 general service, obligations stated in article (11): "employee should be lofty of all what
129 breaching the job ethics and dignity either in the workplace or outside, and should be
130 tactful in his behavior with public, his leaders, colleagues, and people under his leadership,
131 spend the time of work for his post tasks , do the orders assigned to him in strict way and
132 honesty in the limits of regulations and instructions", as the regulation in its article (12)
133 prohibited the employee to use the abuse and receipt or request bribe in any kind of what
134 is stated in the anti-corruption regulation, or receipt of gifts and donations or other directly
135 or in mediation for the purpose of temptation , and discloser secrets of his post even after
136 leaving the work ; also article (13) stated that employee should refrain of performing trade
137 directly or indirectly or participate in establishing firms or accept to be in their board of
138 directs or any job in such firms or commercial shop, as well as in the article (14) of the
139 regulation , employee is not allowed to combine between his post and practicing another
140 profession .. ; in the article (15) each employee is responsible of his actions as he
141 responsible of his good conduct and behavior in the work in the limit of his specialization ,
142 also regulation included the salaries , allowances , remuneration , compensations and end
143 of service allowances; also those employees have special discipline bylaw in case of
144 financial or administrative violations called employees discipline regulation.

145 **Third :** for companies of general benefit such as (telecommunication , water , and
146 electricity) such employees followed up through their management teams and ministries

147 that supervise their work and have their own bylaws which with regard to their salaries,
148 financial remuneration and incentives, as well as forbidden deeds and the employees who
149 break the law be punished according to what included in punishment bylaws in such
150 companies as per labor regulation.

151 **Fourth:** an evaluation of profession performance bylaw is included to assess the general
152 service employee in the government. An annual report must be prepared about the
153 employee performance, tracking his/her behavior, good acting in work and direct him/her
154 accordingly.

155 **Fifth :**there are bylaws according to them the employee shall be punished in case of
156 violations against his profession such as bribery, contravene against the general fund,
157 abusing and falsification in the official prints.

158 **Sixth :** in addition to the self-monitoring made by the government executive authorities ,
159 there are some other control bodies such as (control and investigation authority, general
160 control council, national authority of corruption fighting, human rights authority,
161 investigation and general claims, ministry of finance, and ministry of civil service) each in
162 its specialization monitoring and follow up with regulations execution and investigate with
163 any of the employees in the government sector in case of violation or contravene during
164 performing his job.

165 **Seventh :** government authorities conducting training and developing means and using the
166 recent techniques in order to promote their general performance as well as its employees
167 by providing them with training opportunities inside and outside , and benefit from some
168 of consulting bodies aiming to promote the general service performance in the authority.

169 There is a high committee for the administrative organizing in the kingdom called "high
170 committee of the administrative organizing" its location at the general management –
171 concerned authority, government employees training.

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173 **Discussions**

174 As Al-Khatib, Rawwas, & Vitell (2004), concluded in their previous study, relationships with
175 one's employees, co-workers, or superiors create ethical dilemmas. They found that people
176 "perceive all ethically challenging situations as unethical and had significant differences
177 among themselves regarding the ethical perceptions of self, as compared to perceptions of
178 peers', and top managements," p. 309.

179 Understanding the different ethical practices as they relate to employment practices
180 provide a general knowledge for leaders and citizens of KSA as well as others from around
181 the world who conduct business and interactions with representatives from the public
182 sector in Saudi Arabia. While these general practices are noted, the leaders within the
183 public sector are able to critically reflect on current practices to understand and identify
184 areas for improvement to gain higher levels of efficiencies and increase employee
185 productivity.

186 Globally the concept of privatization has been promoted in new public administration. It is
187 seen that this concept is related to the measures which promote establishment of efficiency
188 and efficacy leading to development of quality deliverance of public services (Radhika,
189 2012). While, we are not necessarily advocating any changes in this paper, any relevant

190 strategies for maximizing efficiencies and fulfilling stakeholder expectations would need to
191 be considered.

192 Conclusion

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193 Governments and agencies around the world are continuously seeking new ways and measures
194 to promote the establishment of efficiency and efficacy leading to development of quality
195 deliverance of public services. Saudi Arabia is of no exception. Given our assessment and
196 identification of areas in which practices can be improved, it is the intent to further
197 advance the discussion and practice of more effective ethical practices. In this paper we
198 examine ethical practices in Saudi Arabia and especially, as they relate to employment
199 practices. We identified current practices, provide an analysis of these practices, and
200 provided suggestions in which they can be improved to achieve higher levels of efficiencies.

202 Furthermore, the paper will increase the awareness of business ethics and preventing the
203 escalation of any moral issues that could arise. We expect to see and participate in
204 continued research in this area and an ongoing discussion on ways to have the most
205 progressive and effective public services.

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