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Appeal of Ethical Accountability in Public Administration

Accountability for my deeds and sound consciousness – that is my Constitution.

(Ladislav Ťažký, in: Troligová, 2002, p. 26)

1. Introduction

State and local governments form a rather complex, multi-level network of relations, which are further complicated by laws, regulations and obligations. What is more, those relations are affected by personal ethical accountability for a certain community, whether on a national, regional or local level. This accountability is often motivated by deeply rooted personal ethical values and norms as well as by external factors resulting from the functioning of the bodies of public administration. Besides that, all those relations are under constant and dynamic changes and on-going reforms which might become simpler or even more complicated, more successful or less successful. In the modern world ethical and spiritual values are mostly overshadowed by the economic motivation, namely economic prosperity and growth.

What's more, they might be influenced by the implementation of the new managerial propositions, by the tools which are used in private sector, new legislative acts, and new principles of decision-making and ideas of good governance, creating thus public-private-civil sector mix fostered by the intention to become more effective and to offer more efficient, more modern and more intelligent ways of providing public services. But, as it is expressed by Bivins *The role of public relations in general, regardless of environment, is not only to provide a professional service, but also to act with attention to the highest ethical standards.*²

At the same time all those ideas are closely interrelated with the new public management which is based on its four maxims: rationalization, decentralization or devolution, distribution, and authorization, omitting

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² T. Bivins, *Responsibility and Accountability*, in: *Ethics In Public Relations: Responsible Advocacy*, K. Fitzpatrick and C. Bronstein (eds.), SAGE Publications, Inc., Thousand Oaks, London, New Delhi 2006, p. 38.

ethics altogether, or understanding it as a peripheral matter having the character of business-like functioning public administration or “enterprise-like governing”, strongly interconnected with performance measurement technology. As it is observed by Lisa A. Dicke and P. Boonyarak in their study “Ensuring Accountability in Human Services: The Dilemma of Measuring Moral and Ethical Performance” *it is not difficult to measure the costs or quantities of many inputs, activities, and outputs, on the other hand, it is often very difficult to measure outcomes that are related to the moral and ethical dimension of accountability.*³

Recently the renewed focus on ethics and standards in public sector is a response to widespread evidence of declining public confidence in public administration. In Slovakia, according to the research done by Transparency International Slovakia, ordinary citizens perceive public administrators as reluctant to solve their problems on time, being superior, averse, even conceited and arrogant, possessing low level of qualified knowledge and competence. The majority of citizens’ objections regarding the administration’s personnel pertained to their destructive behavior at work, incompetence, their abuse of power, having special privileges, tendency to mismanage information, and all in all acting inconsistently and failing to assume their responsibilities and accountability. People are concerned about the integrity and standards of public administrators’ behavior, their ethical and professional competences in decision-making processes asking for stronger responsiveness to the interests of public service users. They are asking for clarification and reinforcement of administrators’ and representatives’ status in the context of public transformation changes and reforms. Last but not least, there is a need to increase trust and shared understanding between citizens and public officials, based on the basic ethical principles, standards and general rules that should govern in public administration in order to help to identify good or bad behavior and what is right to do and what is bad.

Finally, it is an effort to provide clearer ethical framework focusing on both organizational as well as administrators’ personal responsibility and accountability. And, as it is expressed by Craig Johnson, organization has to foster ethical leadership which requires *a leader who must take special responsibility for what’s going on inside his or her own self, inside his or her consciousness, lest the act of leadership create more harm than good.*⁴

All the mentioned provisions are in a close connection with the establishment of good governance and smart local communities; it is gradually known that without the confidence of the public and ethicality of

³ L. A. Dicke, P. Boonyarak, *Ensuring Accountability in Human Services: The Dilemma of Measuring Moral and Ethical Performance*, in: *Ethics in Public Management*, H. G. Frederickson and R. K. Ghore (eds.), M.E. Sharpe, Inc., New York 2005, p. 195.

⁴ E. C. Johnson, *Meeting the Ethical Challenges of Leadership, Casting Light or Shadow*, SAGE Publications Ltd., London 2009, p. 4.

public administration management, the ideas of the good civic democratic society cannot be fulfilled and democracy cannot work. Nowadays it is generally accepted that building up a high-quality public administration on the state and local levels is not only determined by the application of the modern processes of digitalization and the up-to-date managerial business-like leadership omitting ethical, moral and human aspects of leadership. It is difficult to imagine good governance without the ethical management and smart citizenry communities. It is one of the indispensable requirements and aims of the public administration, if they are to care for the well-being of others and to serve citizens in order to be as close as possible to them and to their needs, that members of the general public are the ones who are directly affected by decisions made at all levels of public administration. Ethics, as it is mentioned by H.G. Frederickson, *is very much more than an attempt, e.g. to combat corruption, it is also an attempt fostering to do good.*⁵

The successful adoption of the mentioned maxims is closely interrelated with public administration accountability in the sense of answerability to the public for one's actions, behavior and decision-making processes. According to some authors, accountability towards the public has several distinct dimensions: hierarchical, legal, professional, political, moral and ethical. However, it is difficult to consider somebody to be ethical if he is not accountable. *Accountability is more than a set of legalistic obligations. It is also a moral, professional, and ethical construct that results when public officials and contractors serve with a commitment to do the right things.*⁶ It is the internal aspect of the activities being undertaken that is relevant to the individuals affected by them.

In our contribution we will concentrate our attention on the moral and ethical aspects of accountability which should be applied in the public administration environment if quality services to citizens are to be assured.

2. Organization context, responsibility and accountability

At the beginning of our considerations regarding accountability in the public sector, we try to concentrate our attention on the concepts of responsibility and accountability as well as the differences in their substance related to the perception and use of those terms – in spite of the fact that they are often used interchangeably as synonyms – and we try to point at the difference which exists between their use, not only in everyday life but also in the theory and practice of public administration.

⁵ G. B. Adams, D. L. Balfour, *Public Service Ethics and Administrative Evil: Prospects and Problems*, in: *Ethics in Public Management*, H. G. Frederickson, R. K. Ghore (eds.), M. E. Sharpe Inc., New York 2005, p. 167.

⁶ L. A. Dicke, P. Boonyarak, *Ensuring Accountability in Human Services: The Dilemma of Measuring Moral and Ethical Performance*, in: *Ethics in Public Management*, H. G. Frederickson, R. K. Ghore (eds.), M. E. Sharpe, Inc., New York 2005, p. 188.

Usually responsibility is defined as the feeling of ownership for one's life, for situations including one's accountabilities for responding when things go wrong, while accountability is perceived as a process of making, keeping and managing agreements within internal relations of administration and public governance. Max Weber describes responsibility as "the ability to contemplate things as they are with inner calm and composure before allowing them to affect one's actions, "an attitude of detachment towards things and people".⁷ And in the same way as Weber, Hannah Arendt stresses the importance of impartiality as a quantity for judgment, and dangers of ignoring reality. Both of those underline Arendt's concern with the public and its plurality of perspectives. Besides possessing an aptitude to empathy, which is, of course, of crucial importance, what is equally needed is a capacity for impartiality in judgments and thus avoiding subjective and biased solutions.

Concise Oxford Dictionary defines responsibility as the state or fact of being responsible, seeing it as the opportunity or ability to act independently, and at the same time to make decisions without authorization. Responsibilities are considered to be like duties, which one is required to do as part of one's job, role, or legal obligation. Webster's New World Dictionary of the American Language describes responsibility as a condition, quality, fact, or instance of being responsible, having an obligation and reliability, possessing a skill to be able to distinguish between right and wrong, to think and act rationally. Subsequently, it is declared that being responsible applies to one who has been delegated some duty or responsibility by one in authority and who, at the same time, is subject to penalty in case of default.

According to Aristotle moral responsibility was understood in connection with a moral agent originating in his capacity to reason what good action is and taking into account its consequences, and willingness of the agent to act free from external circumstances. For Aristotle, a decision is a particular kind of aspiration resulting from consideration, one that expresses the agent's conception of what is good.⁸ By the moral rights theory, a moral agent is an autonomous subject, someone who can make choices and view self as responsible for consequences of his/her actions. According to this tradition, there exist absolute moral duties arising from the absolute moral rights which we possess simply because we are human beings. These rights, as it is pointed out by Torbjörn Tännsjö, appear to act as a "side-constraint".⁹

⁷ M. Weber, *Politika ako povolanie*, Spektrum, Bratislava 1990, p. 33.

⁸ R. Geffert, *Institutions and Organizations in Philosophy and Ethics – Historical Institutional Metamorphosis of Western Civilization Fundamentals*, "E-LOGOS", 2013, no. 13, p. 11.

⁹ T. Tännsjö, *Understanding Ethics. An Introduction to Moral Theory*. Edinburgh University Press, Edinburg 2008, p. 5.

On the other hand, accountability is depicted as being obliged to account for one's acts, to be capable of being accounted for, accountability implies liability for which one may be called to account, to be answerable for one's deeds, it implies a legal or moral obligation for which one must answer to someone sitting in a judgment. MacMillan English Dictionary presents the following definition: Accountable is understood as a state of being in a position where people have the right to criticize you or ask you why something happened, to give explanation for something bad that has happened, especially something you are responsible for.

From what was said it follows that the basic difference between responsibility and accountability is that responsibility involves having authority over one's actions and the roles taken on by public administrators. It implies a responsibility to perform certain actions and tasks associated with specific job roles and a specific status, whereas accountability means being liable or answerable for one's deeds and acts in public service. Responsibility covers an area of one's duty or obligation assigned to an individual by the nature of his/her hierarchical position, function and work in a certain public administration institution or organization. So they are expected to carry out the basic requirements of their jobs. Responsibility could thus be viewed as a set of determined professional obligations associated with a job and tasks. As it is defined by Thomas Bivins, *narrowly defined, role refers to a job description, which, in turn, encompasses, but is not limited to, function. A responsible actor may be seen as one whose job involves a predetermined set of obligations that must be met in order for the job to be accomplished.*¹⁰ Further on in connection with discharging the administrative role, he recognizes:

1. Primary obligations, functions associated with the role fulfillment, which might be sufficient to do.
2. Functional obligations covering the sphere of ethics and moral commitment. Thus, responsibility assumes that the actor besides being a qualified professional becomes also a moral agent possessing a definite level of moral maturity, professional moral virtues and ability to reason, and at the same time, putting the needs of the community above his or her selfish interests.

Responsibility, then, is composed of two interrelated and interdependent dimensions: fulfilling functional requirements and fulfilling moral obligations, dictated by one's own consciousness, character traits and virtues, as well as professional qualities.

In accordance with the teleological conception which had already appeared in the Ancient times in the philosophical conceptions stated by Confucius, Plato and Aristotle, good people of the high moral quality make

¹⁰ T. Bivins, *Responsibility and Accountability*, in: *Ethics In Public Relations: Responsible Advocacy*, K. Fitzpatrick, C. Bronstein (eds.), SAGE Publications, Inc., Thousand Oaks, London, New Delhi 2006, p. 20.

good moral choices and therefore moral character plays an important role in ethical responsibility and leadership. Professional ethics encompasses the standards of ethical behavior aimed at accomplishing ethical goals and objectives. Teleological approach suggests that one must be well-informed to do the right things for a believably just cause and to serve the proper interests. Regarding the teleological moral principles and their application in the responsible decision-making processes in public administration, the public administrators should be encouraged to apply the given rules, norms and directives with the aim to pursue the greater good for the community and to justify if their action is appropriate to changing conditions. In this way they have to use their creativity and flexibility to consider the action and its consequences, and be willing to act free from external conditions. In addition, teleological considerations tend to demand a level of accountability corresponding with the level of responsibility. Following this idea, it can be said that responsible and accountable public actors are not willing to set aside their ethical values and intentions only to praise the subordinates or their superiors. In spite of many obstacles they should strive to create acceptably ethical organization environment.

A responsible actor in public sector is understood by Bivins *as one whose job involves a predetermined set of obligations that have to be fulfilled in order for the job to be accomplished.*¹¹ Bivins as well as many other ethicists emphasize the weight of a responsible- accountable-actor who is capable of keeping his/her personal integrity and instead of having “robust traits of character” (term used by Torbjörn Tännsjö), possessing adequate professional virtues to make choices according to one’s own insight, intuition or ethical consciousness, and at the same time not neglecting the respect of basic ethical public administration values and norms to serve the people and to steer clear of being under the influence, pressure or control of other actors, e.g. financial groups, political actors, or someone’s secular individual interests. Leader actors and administrators possessing these quality traits are according to Johnson *true to themselves, reflecting consistency between what they say publicly and how they think and act privately. In other words, they practice what they preach and consequently they are also honest in their dealings with others.*

The action, its outcomes and consequences for individual human beings and community are in the center of attention of the theoretical conception known as utilitarianism. The utilitarian theory, which was for the first time presented by the English philosopher, lawyer and social reformer Jeremy Bentham, had been based on the view of human beings as naturally driven towards pleasure and happiness away from pain and unhappiness. And therefore, they have an interest in pursuing the former and avoiding the latter. On this basis Jeremy Bentham built up an ethical theory that had one

¹¹ *Ibidem.*

basic principle – the principle of utility, which means the greatest good for the greatest number of people, putting the ends over the means, which were used to achieve those ends, or to what is generally best in most contexts. This conception contains some advantages and disadvantages as presented by Craig Johnson:

Advantages:

- Is easy to understand
- Is frequently used
- Forces us to examine the outcomes of our decisions

Disadvantages:

- Is difficult to identify and evaluate consequences
- May have unanticipated outcomes
- May result in decision makers reaching different conclusions.¹²

In the sharp contrast to utilitarianism is deontological conception, which considers responsibility to be the act of observing the standards of a “right” conduct. Having the authority in the practical reason, the action is independent of its goals or what one’s interests are. Deontological ethics or the principle-based theory is duty-bound, founded on respecting duties, prohibitions which are bound to the moral agent irrespective of consequences. According to deontological ethics, some types of actions are prohibited and some are obligatory, irrespective of their good or bad ends. The best known representative of deontological ethics is the German philosopher Immanuel Kant. He declares that there is one general idea and that is the supreme and absolute duty to perform, he calls it “categorical imperative”, meaning: without exception. All people are connected with a universal rule, engraved in their awareness, one that does not require any further justification: follow only those maxims that you would want to become public law. Being rational means we understand that these duties exist, but we are not under the control of others, we possess a free will and moral autonomy to accept and perform them. *Human perfection lies not only in the cultivation of one’s understanding but also in one’s will, moral turn of mind, in order that the demands of duty in general be satisfied, it is a duty to raise himself out of crudity of his nature, out of his animalism more and more to humanity...*¹³ The integrity of his deontological ethics rests in his idea that a man seeking his rights has not the right to violate anyone else’s rights. Public administrators are legitimized by Kant’s universal humanity, which is reflected in the rule of ethics law, and its vow to respect and to treat other human beings *as an end in itself, and never merely as a means*.¹⁴

¹² E. C. Johnson, *Meeting the Ethical Challenges of Leadership, Casting Light or Shadow*, SAGE Publications Ltd., London 2009, p. 138.

¹³ I. Kant, *Ethical Philosophy, Grounding for the Metaphysics of Morals*, Hackett Publishing Company, Cambridge 1983, p. 44–45.

¹⁴ I. Kant, *Ethical Philosophy...*, p. 43.

Using the words of John Deigh *These standards have authority in practical thought in virtue of the authority of their source, just as community's laws have authority in virtue of the authority of legislator or legislative body that enacted them. And in either case they have such authority independently of the ends and interests of those, whose conduct they regulate.*¹⁵ In public administration the emphasis on duty promotes determination towards consistent and answerable behavior. Respecting the right of others is an important guideline to keep in mind when making moral and ethical choices. As it is expressed by Johnson *"Seeking justice, truth and mercy is more inspiring than pursuing selfish concerns"*. Further on he qualifies advantages and disadvantages of deontological conception in the following way:

Advantages:

- Promotes persistence and consistency
- Is highly motivational
- Demonstrates respect for others

Disadvantages:

- Exceptions exist to nearly every "universal law"
- Actors may have deformed consciences
- Is demonstrated through unrealistic examples
- Is hard to apply, particularly under stress.¹⁶

From what was said, a typical definition is that accountability concerns the processes by which those who exercise power, whether as governments, elected representatives or as appointed officials, must be able to show that they have exercised their powers and fulfill their duties properly. It follows that accountability must consist of an individual internal constraint on one's behavior corresponding to an individual intellectual sense of duty, and moreover, it must embody an externally imposed set of community requirements which are highly desired and obligatory for the organizational and professional behavior in public administration. In this connection C. Johnson has stressed that *denying accountability and shifting blame undermine public trust and shift people's focus from solving problems to defending themselves*¹⁷ Public administrators, and mostly their leadership must be accountable not only for themselves but for the organization as a whole. They are accountable for the changing administrative organization culture in favor of the personal professional and ethical growth, supporting processes towards abandoning destructive and abusive unethical behavior and helping an organization to transformation towards the higher self-esteem and more supportive environment.

¹⁵ J. Deigh, *An Introduction to Ethics*, Cambridge University Press. Cambridge 2010, p. 16.

¹⁶ E. C. Johnson, *Meeting the Ethical Challenges of Leadership, Casting Light or Shadow*, SAGE Publications Ltd., London 2009, p. 142.

¹⁷ E. C. Johnson, *Meeting the Ethical Challenges...*, p. 26.

Summing up, we can conclude that the basic implication is that the main difference between responsibility and accountability is that responsibility can be shared while accountability cannot. Being accountable suggests being not only responsible for something, but also ultimately answerable for one's actions, misjudgements, defaults in decision-making, and to be ready to undertake themselves to be controlled and judged by those, whom they have their obligation to serve. The term implies the idea of taking into account the consequences of one's actions for the wellbeing of others. As it has been expressed by Dicke and Boonyarak *accountability is more than a set of legalistic obligations, it is also a moral, professional, and ethical construct that results when public officials and administrators serve with a commitment to do the right things and take into consideration consequences of their actions.*¹⁸

3. Accountability in the public sector

However, the general dilemma of accountability in public sector is quite difficult, full of twists and turns, especially in the complex world of public sector decision-making, where various forms of accountability come into play in order to fulfill the basic precondition to take a relevant ethical decision in a specific situation. We have to note that much of the behavior of public administrators is determined by the expectations which are placed on them by the accountability system under which they work. They are motivated by the dictum of what others might expect of them to do, what kind of behavior seems to be a proper one. What is more, they are expected to act in the most rational way under certain institutional conditions and to predict the consequences of those actions. Keeping in mind the inner and outer influences on administrator's accountability connected with their behavior and decisions made, two basic levels of accountability could be distinguished:

The first level of accountability is purely self-interested and results in actions that, according to organizational environment factors, may result in dismissal, or an award and promotion.

The higher level of accountability is aimed at the endeavor to be in accordance with the normative ideals and respect for basic ethical professional values and virtues. Those are set by the organizational professional culture and one's personal ability, feeling and personal intuition for the specificity of a situation when making decisions.

According to Treviño, the higher level of ethical conduct and accountability is subject to the personal character, which is determined by

¹⁸ L. A. Dicke, P. Boonyarak, *Ensuring Accountability in Human Services: The Dilemma of Measuring Moral and Ethical Performance*, in: *Ethics in Public Management*, H. G. Frederickson, R. K. Ghore (eds.), M.E. Sharpe, Inc., New York 2005, p. 188.

one's "*the internal or external locus of control*". It means that an individual with a high internal locus of control believes that outcomes are primarily the result of his/her own efforts, whereas an individual with a high external locus of control believes that life events are determined primarily by fate, luck or powerful others.¹⁹ The locus of control is not stable and unchanging; it develops over time through interactions with other people, life experience, education, and considerably by the social environment.

Concerning the decision-making-processes, individuals with a high internal locus of control see the outcomes more clearly and they are ready to take responsibility and personal accountability for consequences of their actions and decisions. They see themselves as being of charge of their own fates; therefore, they are more resistant to pressure to do things that they are convinced are wrong or unethical.

Individuals with high external locus of control constantly blame bad luck, other people or simply unfavorable external factors for their failures and ethical lapses. In professional work they need a kind of guidance, like codes of conduct, directives etc. to make them more responsible for their actions and accountable for their decisions.

According to Dubnick and O'Kelly the public administration accountability mechanism recognizes the following basic attributes:

1. Accountability connected with answerability, determined by *one's position within an organizational hierarchical structure*.
2. *Managerial expectations and organizational setting* considerably influence responses and rational calculations of public administrators and their decision-making.
3. *Public administration professional culture* which comprises the basic normative elements of the agreed institutional behavior and elements of professional identity and role-based expectations within a certain profession.
4. *Legal responsibility* characterized by Melvin Dubnick and Ciarán O'Kelly as more formalized expectations, created in the forms of legally-based rules and regulations.
5. *One's personal perception* of one's status in a community, where the mentioned attributes come into play.²⁰

If administrators rely more on principles, then according to Melvin Dubnick and Ciarán O'Kelly, they exercise a thin ethical accountability, but if their decisions are based on the specific situation and specific

¹⁹ L. Treviño, K. Nelson, *Managing Business Ethics. Straight Talk About How To Do It Right*, Wiley 2010, p. 119.

²⁰ M. Dubnick, C. O'Kelly, *Accountability through Thick and Thin: Moral Agency in Public Service*, in: *Ethics in Public Management*, H. G. Frederickson, R. K. Ghore (eds.), M. E. Sharpe, Inc., New York 2005, p. 148.

relationships that often involve intensive, daily contact with people, then they are motivated by a thick moral framework and accountability.²¹

Being an accountable actor means to be subjective to external factors, as each is liable for his or her deeds and decisions to a certain community and is subjective to their control, judgment, praise or criticism. Even when people in public service know what the right thing is, they often find it difficult to do because of the social, institutional, group or organization compulsion upon them. The public service can be for the most part influenced by the public administrative management, their ethical demeanor or unethical misbehavior. Without the support of public administration management, the ethics initiatives are simply hopeless. A lot of ethicists are of the opinion that leaders and generally the ethical atmosphere of organizations are mainly responsible for the ethical standards that govern the behavior of individual employees within public administrative institutions and organizations. Those are the leaders and their sense of being responsible and personally accountable set the moral tone. It is the reality today that unethical institutions, organizations, management and their leaders pose an actual threat to the ethical individual, who becomes employed there. If the management and organization is not responsible enough and not supportive regarding the ethical behavior and accountability, it cannot be expected from the public administrative employees. If the management avoids their duties concerning the ethical assistance and presenting a good and an appropriate example for their employees, then the employees might look for it somewhere else and the result of it might be the guidance which can be far away from the ethical behavior. When the management is led by the less principled leaders, then the group's ethical accountability and decision-making performance declines.

For impulsive and selfish leaders, the abuse of power makes it easier to pursue their private interests without considering the needs of others and common good. Unfortunately, abuse of power by public administrators and elected representatives seems to be a common reality we meet in our everyday life. As it is mentioned by Craig Johnson: *They are likely to justify their actions by claiming that their rights and interests take priority over obligations to others...another significant ethical burden associated with leadership are the greater privileges they enjoy, therefore they must give the same careful consideration to the abuse of privilege as to the abuse of power.*²² Incompetent and bad leaders called by some ethicists "the toxic leaders" are likely to cause prevalence of destructive and unethical atmosphere in public administrative organizations, where it is difficult to speak about following one's responsibilities and accountability towards community.

²¹ *Ibidem*, p. 140.

²² E. C. Johnson, *Meeting the Ethical Challenges of Leadership, Casting Light or Shadow* SAGE Publications Ltd., London 2009, p. 15.

The presence of a healthy ethical policy reduces unethical decision behavior. The greatest effect, however, might be achieved when an organization's ethical policy is accompanied by highly qualified, well-organized, competent and ethical leadership accompanied by open, fair and efficient communication within the public administrative organization. In case of ill, irresponsible behavior and unethical decisions, the agreed fixed statement of sanctions needs to be implemented.

Other important factor which plays a crucial role in creating a responsible-accountable agent, who provides services and decision-making in public administration is a guarantee for administrators to have freedom to make their own decisions. It means to give them freedom to choose a proper way of solving problems, determined by a specific situation. The right to apply their discretion in practice is *a kind of individual's internal moral compass that guides the public servant through the morass of ethical dilemmas*.²³ This is what would separate the accountable actor from those who must entirely rely on the last word made by an external authority being totally dependent in terms of their deeds, motivation and intentions as administrators are expected just to respond and adjust.

So the ideal public administration model represents the amalgamation of the responsible-accountable-actor, which embodies personal qualities, such as being self-motivated, possessing appropriate character traits and professional qualities and virtues, and at the same time taking into consideration inevitable necessities of the external environment. They observe the law and professional norms in order to safeguard the integrity of the organization, and avoid faults or misdeeds, which might violate the public trust. The most common misdeeds are corruption, nepotism, favoring certain individual groups and, what is even worse, being unable to resist the pressure of dominant financial groups. On the other hand, officials with qualities and values such as being responsive to the community needs, willing to listen and not only giving orders, and accepting the general public participation in governance of public affairs at all levels assure the people that those officials and representatives are responsible and accountable, and are ready to serve them and ready to improve the quality of their lives.

Moreover, it means to carry out public service with regard to the ambitions of a new public administration culture emphasizing transparency, to do away with corruption practices, fostering professionalism, competence and effective communication, both within the in-house public relations and the relations with public. All those attempts and endeavors would not be possible without professional responsibility and personal accountability honored by all employers and representatives of public administration.

²³ G. B. Adams, D. L. Balfour, *Public Service Ethics and Administrative Evil: Prospects and Problems*, in: *Ethics in Public Management*, H. G. Frederickson, R. K. Ghere (eds.), M. E. Sharpe Inc., New York 2005, p. 122.

4. Conclusion

Ethical culture of public administration is a result of a constant process and it is hard to imagine a healthy ethical environment in public administration without individuals taking responsibility for their actions. According to Craig Johnson, those principles are:

- *Greater self-awareness and self-confidence* to meet the coming ethical challenges and problems, which might be a considerable ethical burden for administrators, therefore, it needs the required personal qualities mentioned previously.
- *Ethical role modeling*, leaders and officials with higher quality of their character continually confirm positive traits and it does not matter what context they find themselves in.
- *Healthy moral imagination* is closely connected with the moral ideas and sensitivity to ethical dilemmas. Having an idea or picture of what it means to achieve success, enables an actor to see their pursuit as something important, meaningful and fulfilling. Possessing the sensitive capacity indicated by Clarkson as the selective perceptual filter is of subjective nature, officials with the higher perceptual filter of sensitivity are capable to be better oriented in the ethical terrain and more successfully achieve sound and matter-of-fact decisions, grounded in their personal and professional moral principles.
- *Sound moral reasoning and better follow-through on choices and making decisions* – means, first of all, to adhere to moral principles when dealing with problem-solving, to bring together all relevant facts of the situation in question, and let those show the way to the practical and constructive conclusion.
- *Resistance to group, organizational, and societal pressures to compromise personal standards* are closely interconnected with the respect for integrity and accordingly require rational fulfillment of administrators' and representatives' responsibilities, and their personal accountability.
- *Creation of healthier ethical climates* calls for fostering transparency of inappropriate behavior or performance in public administration institutions and organizations. Such transparency reshapes the ethical environment in favor of a positive ethical culture, one that respects and protects the rights of individual citizens and community, as well as public servants.²⁴

Finally, we can conclude that merely issuing a formal and official declaration of the necessity of ethical standards will not help to improve the situation to encourage ethical culture in public administration institutions

²⁴ E. C. Johnson, *Meeting the Ethical Challenges of Leadership, Casting Light or Shadow* SAGE Publications Ltd., London 2009.

and organizations and will not help elimination of unethical behavior either. Ethical management and ethical organization culture must be understood as a process, which needs its everyday run-through implementation, enhancements and improvements accompanied by the efforts of public administration employees to resist the pressure caused by the global trends under which they are forced to work. A result of this is the reality that they do not have enough time to accomplish their duties properly. Adams and Balfour note that there is “*no long term*” for fulfilling their duties, their freedom is considerably abridged, as they have no time and no guarantee to adjust to newly created conditions *Long-term commitments are seen as anachronisms, even as luxury, ... the short-term orientation of the new global economy tends to undermine character, especially those qualities that bind people to each other and furnish the individual with a stable sense of self... which means keep moving, don't commit yourself, and don't sacrifice...*²⁵

In spite of what has been said before regarding negative influences of the global environment on the public administration workers, it is necessary to emphasize that they cannot shun responsibility and accountability commitments, which have to become inseparable from their personal and professional consciousness. It is best articulated by the words of the famous Slovak writer Ladislav Ťažký, from his famous treatment “*Testimony of my Consciousness*”. Let us finish our contemplation of responsibility and accountability using his ideas and words: *We are not angels, we are only the people, and that is the reason why we have to behave to each other respecting the principle of humanity and compassion, observing at the same time accountability and obligation for our deeds done in the circle of our family, our rural community or township, our nation, and last but not least, before our consciousness which is, let us call it, our ethical and moral constitution, our supreme law which stands above all laws and thus helping us to follow all public and divinity laws.*²⁶

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²⁵ G. B. Adams, D. L. Balfour, *Public Service Ethics and Administrative Evil: Prospects and Problems*, in: *Ethics in Public Management*, H. G. Frederickson, R. K. Ghere (eds.), M. E. Sharpe Inc., New York 2005, p. 127–128.

²⁶ L. Ťažký, *Testimony of my Consciousness*, in: Troligová, 2002, p. 27.

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Appeal of Ethical Accountability in Public Administration

Abstract

The contribution is focused on one of the most fundamental ethical values and principles applied in public administration environment – responsibility and personal accountability of public officials and administrators, who have to be liable and answerable for their deeds and actions towards certain community, regional or local, and towards general public as well. The introductory part deals with the explanation of two concepts in question, responsibility and accountability regarding the processes of making, guarding and managing agreements, decisions and expectations in any relations, covering the area of public administration from the ethical point of view. The theoretical contemplation takes into consideration teleological and deontological conceptions, followed by practical summary of the public administration accountability mechanism. Finally, the basic ethical aspects and accountability levels are dealt with, keeping in mind that inner and outer influences on administrators' and public officials' accountability are connected with their behavior and decision-making.

Keywords: public administration, ethics, responsibility, accountability, administrators, public users

Odpowiedzialność etyczna w administracji publicznej

Streszczenie

Głównymi elementami, na których bazuje niniejsze opracowanie, są fundamentalne wartości etyczne i zasady stosowane w otoczeniu administracji publicznej – odpowiedzialność i rozliczanie (się) urzędników publicznych oraz zarządców administracji publicznej, którzy odpowiadają za swoje działania skierowane do społeczności lokalnych, regionalnych oraz do społeczeństwa ogółem. We wstępie zwrócono uwagę na dwa pojęcia, które stanowią oś rozważań – odpowiedzialność i rozliczanie (się) zarządzających w procesie podejmowania, monitorowania i zarządzania porozumieniami, decyzjami i oczekiwaniami w relacjach odnoszących się do obszaru administracji publicznej ujmowanych z etycznego punktu widzenia. Rozważania teoretyczne obejmują teleologiczne i deontologiczne koncepcje bazujące na praktycznych wnioskach dotyczących mechanizmu kształtowania się odpowiedzialności w administracji publicznej. W artykule omówiono wewnętrzne i zewnętrzne wpływy na zachowania i proces decyzyjny administratorów oraz urzędników publicznych w kontekście ich odpowiedzialności, jak również zróżnicowanie poziomów odpowiedzialności.

Słowa kluczowe: administracja publiczna, etyka, odpowiedzialność, rozliczalność, administratorzy, użytkownicy publiczni