A Connection Between Corruption and Unethical Behaviour of Public Officials

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Introduction

Recently unethical behaviour in Lithuania is an essential problem in society. All cases of misuses of authority and other forms of corruption are uncovered publicly. These cases are discussed by the representatives of various studies. Aspects of ethics in the public sector become relatively important. Values and professional principles, public confidence in state offices and similar matters are analyzed wider. The discussions on why the project of state officers code is still not approved in the Seimas (The Parliament of Lithuania) and what the reasons for the delay are and how they influence public administration are going on more often. It is thought that not even avoiding to denote the criteria of state officers ethical behaviour by the code, but also the description of relevant concepts (such as moral, ethic principles, corruption and etc.) determine tolerance of unethical behaviour in the public sector. Consequently, a more serious problem appears and that is corruption. It seems that problems connected with ethics, morality and corruption are analyzed in the scientific literature, however, authors think that there is a lack of more obvious empirical research accent in the sphere of a connection between unethical behaviour and corruption.

The aim of this research – to distinguish an essential relationship between corruption and unethical behaviour of public officials, appealing to the authors’ research 1 to prove or deny it.

The goals of the research:
1) to introduce the analysis of concepts “morality”, “ethics”, “corruption” and “responsibility”;
2) to reveal the connection between morality, ethics and corruption in the public sector;
3) to estimate the point of view of state officials towards moral and ethic values.

The object of the research – the characterization of morality, ethics, corruption and responsibility their awareness in the state service.

The methods of the research: the analysis of scientific literature and documents; questionnaire poll.

Analysis

It is important to note the main concepts such as “morality”, “ethics”, “corruption” and “responsibility” in order to distinguish essential connections between state officials unethical behaviour and corruption.

According to Hans Kelsen, “morality applies responsibilities from inside” (Kelsen H., 2002). Alois Halders describes morality in a narrower meaning, i.e. as “entirety of standards of strict compulsory behaviour and their relevance to the life attitude” (Alois Halders, 2002). Otherwise, morality is understood as a long making system of standards, which is accepted and followed by the members of a community. This is the product of social wisdom and a regulation unity (Valdas Pruskus, 2003). The word “ethos” is a Greek word which means a habit and a custom. (Alois Halders, 2002) This is described as Philosophy of morality and is a practical part of philosophy. The conception of ethics as “reflective practice” is related with Aristotel. This means that those concepts are closely connected. And it is possible to assert that ethics is a critical analysis of morality. Even in literature ethics is identified with morality. And this is the discipline which tries to know and describe morality as ethics (Palidauskaitė J., 2001). And it is obvious that these concepts are very closely related with other concepts such as “corruption” and “responsibility”, because corruption is determined as unethical and inappropriate behaviour of moral standards. A relevant charge for society, state or a person himself is clear. The problem how to encourage to follow the rules which can motivate a appropriate behaviour and stimulate anti-corruptional behaviour arises. An individual tends to understand the definition that “morality is a system of standards and regulations” and it is possible to break them. It is important to prove the usefulness of obeying the rules and regulations. Disobeying them shows that it is not useful as in this way good name, duties and confidence can be lost. The basis of ethic behaviour is thoughts, responsibilities, decisions to act in a proper way to get the standard of life.

The person will be able to behave properly if...
he perceives the importance of ethics and inner usefulness of decisions. As J. Palidauskaitė says “Even good people can decide upon bad decisions if they do not think about a moral aspect” (Palidauskaitė, 2001). Especially they should be important for the representatives of different state institutions, because the duties of state officials are connected with the authority institutions and society. State officials must respect a person and a state, be fair, not selfish, honest, impartial, be equal for every Citizen regardless of his beliefs, background, social situation, to solve their problems honestly, not to use the authority inadequately and dishonestly and also to be responsible for their decisions. That is why there is a problem how to choose the right applicants for the positions in the state service, where they could fulfil all the expectations, control themselves and would not use the authority in the wrong way, would follow ethic standards, be moral. Otherwise, a state official must behave in an ethical way when he performs his duties and realises his rights. Thus, it is possible to state that ethics in a state service is a Standard in behaviour of a state official.

According to many states constitutional practice, the duty of state officials is a constitution which gives the basis for state service ethics, denoting absolute virtues, which become central. The declaration of state service principles (Lietuvos Respublikos Konstitucija, 1992) is shown in constitutional documents which reflect the requirements for state officials. Articles of the Constitution of the Republic of Lithuania states that the state authority is exercised by the Seimas, the Government and the Court. The authority is limited by the Constitution. State offices are for people. State officials and officers must do their duties in a proper way, follow the requirements for discipline and duty. The state mechanism is very effective in a state, society and personal life. This depends greatly on responsibility, honesty of people who work in state service. Part 1 the Law on State service of article 3 that the service of the Republic of Lithuania is based on the rule of law, equality, political neutrality and the principles of career. Following these principles in the state service makes human rights, interests safe, also, the economical wealth will be soon guaranteed. On the other hand, the security of a state law mechanism from threat is also important. Especially huge damage to the state activity is made when there is a threat from “inside”, i.e. state officials themselves break the legal acts and behave unethically.

State officials are responsible for the functions and performance of state offices, have the rights and responsibilities to provide certain public service, but when they perform these duties in improper way, they ruin the service job in various aspects, stop or even break the implementation of projects and the law. In this way, directly or not, a break of human rights and freedom appears and the wealth of the members of society becomes poorer (Viešasis administravimas, 2002).

Empathically, the consequence of the offence in the state official job and unethical behaviour during the period of office job depends on the importance of causer’s duties: severe consequence is done by the causers who have higher position in the state office job, especially on the political point. So it is possible to say that the law offence for the state or unethical behaviour during office job, constitutional attitude towards the power and its purpose to help people is perverted or neglected and this stops people’s confidence not only in the state service, but the state itself.

There are four state service principles for state officials (Lippmann W., 1995):

1) to obey the law and implement it. Officials are obliged to act according to the law and implement it. They can not overstep their own competence otherwise they have to follow the law. The constitution is the basis for citizens confidence and officials actions frames.

2) to serve the society concerns. While implementing the authority decisions state officials have to serve for the society without any advance attitudes. It is suggested to have a distance of personal, group interests in a professional activity and to follow common society interests.

3) to assume personal responsibility. State officials are responsible for their decisions and behaviour. Professional competence is very important. Professional knowledge and practice is its basis. A state official has to take care for developing his professional skills.

4) to avoid making damage. The decisions that are made by the state official have to be the best ones though there is no guarantee for the consequence.

After the research, it was clear that assuming personal responsibility is the most important thing for the state officials i.e. displaying and developing the importance of the competence. However, in the authors’ opinion, these are only declarative statements which do not reflect the reality because the state officials relate their personal responsibility only with legal, but not with moral responsibility. Thus, professional ethics and moral values are often dismissed as not having any formal influence neither on their professional nor on personal life.
It must be noticed that rather often the most important values disregarded and this determines the wish to earn more, to influence others, to do a favour for important people and so on. Paradoxical, but above mentioned motives remind motives of good work, so we have to look for the sources of corruption not in the actions of an individual, but in an inner culture of an organisation. This culture is determined by corporate thinking and usual ways of making solutions. Certain stimulus have to work in order to encourage performing duties professionally and not to harm the society. It is necessary to form organisational honesty. In this way the values are strengthened, the worth of public organization gets bigger, and the society relies on it. So the corruption thrives if the state service principles and ethic rules are not followed.

Aristotle used The term “corruption” to describe this phenomenon as a broken form – tyranny of monarchy. The word “corruption“ is derived from latin word “corruptio", which means deterioration, bribery (Tarptautinių žodžių žodynas, 1985). The other dictionary of international words expands the explanation and states that corruption is when a state official or political figure takes a bribe for a certain service, favour or breaking the law and on the purpose of gaining the usefulness for both sides. (Tarptautinių žodžių žodynas, 1999). Part 2 of Article 2 of the Corruption Prevention Art of the Republic of Lithuania part states that corruptional activities are bribery, cooperation during bribery and other criminal actions committed in the sphere of public administration or performing public service in order to get profit for oneself and other people: misuse of the service position or exceeding the authority, forgery of documents, fraud, grabbing the wealth, revealing the state secret, divulging commercial secret, providing wrong data about income, profit or wealth, informing about illegal way of earning money or gaining property, interfering into the activities of state officials or public administration when making such actions, requiring a bribe, hiding or trying to conceal the bribery. (Law on Corruption Prevention of the Republic of Lithuania, 2002). Emphatically, the same description of corruption acts is given in part 2, page 3 of The Special Investigations Service Statute of the Republic of Lithuania (Liečuvos Respublikos Specialiajų tyrimų tarnybos įstatymas, 2003). Thus, having become familiar with the literature, where the term “corruption” is used, we can draw a conclusion that in this way officials behaviour, misuse is described.

Corruption is a common phenomenon in the state service. Even though official statistics is not threatening yet, it is understood that corrupted actions which were noticed are only a small part of real corruption. The research shows that the corruption in the public section appears in various forms (table 2).

### The forms of corruption

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The Forms of Corruption</th>
<th>Yes</th>
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<th>Often</th>
<th>Sometimes</th>
<th>Don't know</th>
<th>No</th>
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<tr>
<td>Presents</td>
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<td>15</td>
<td>27</td>
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<tr>
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<td>18</td>
<td>19</td>
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<tr>
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<td>21</td>
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<td>31</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Patronism</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bureaucracy</td>
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<td>31</td>
<td>36</td>
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According to the data of the research, it is possible to state that very often the corruption in the public sector appears in these forms:
1) nepotism,
2) bureaucratic corruption.
The research data does not allow to distinguish the forms of the corruption which is seen not widely. So, it is stated that all the forms of corruption are rather widely spread and exist in the public section.

It is necessary to emphasize that a frequent phenomenon connected with breaking ethic standards in the public section is the misuse of the position in order to gain personal benefit (Table 3).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Misuse of position</th>
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<th>Often</th>
<th>Sometimes</th>
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<th>No</th>
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It is possible to state, that devaluation the principles of state officials behaviour and the importance of common values is the presupposition of corruption. J. Palidauskaitė denotes, that an individual (his principles, values, personal circumstances) and his job (the order of the job, the influence of colleagues, contacts) is the lowest level, of corruption factors. On the Meso level the organization is important, i.e. its leaders, the structure of an organization (size, functions, control and audit system, responsibilities) the culture of an organization (aims and mision, values and standards, the code), staff policy (selection and tuition. awards and stimulation). On the Macro level the law, political-administrative structure and social surrounding is important (Palidauskaitė, 2005).

The word “value” in the Dictionary of Philosophy is explained as regulations necessary for the individual and social life, patterns of orientation, standards of behaviour which should be followed. People have to follow them thinking about certain phenomenon and controlling their actions (Alois Halders, 2002). It is important to follow moral standards.

The research of estimating values showed that not all of them are treated in the same way (see pict. 1):
1) responsibility, honesty and fairness are distinguished as the most important;
2) accountability, openness and productivity are the least important

![Figure 1. Assessment of state service values](image)

It is proved that human resources can not get larger without a very close network of values in the society and in particular institutions. Responsibility, fairness, honesty, integrity, darity, confidence are very important values and our life cannot be quality without them. In non-fiction corner values are responsibility and accountability which can block the corruption. Implementing all the values in an institution requires a special point of view on empolee’s and employer’s relationship, moral climate, social potential potency, human dignity. The mass media propagate mass culture products, advertise consumer’s behaviour, thinking and this penetrates state institutions. In the process of globalization people become more pragmatic, looking for a benefit only for themselves and this makes good conditions for corruption.
The Law, standards and professionalism of officials help to support morality in a public life and state service. The unity of these elements is the ethics tools. These are the means and conditions protecting from an undesirable behaviour and encouraging to behave according to moral standards (Vasiljevičienė, 2004). Otherwise the structure of ethics can be described as a means which encourages professionalism and high standards of behaviour. Different countries stress different elements of ethics (managerial, control and sanctions). Authority, resources and constant attention is necessary for the infrastructure of ethics. Every system and element has to be implanted systematically. The misuse of authority, conflicts, nepotism, corruption, irresponsibility appear, if the system is not seen. If there are no general standards and wishes to follow them, a chaos and misuse starts. In conclusion, it is possible to show the functions of ethics infrastructure: control, examples, management. The most vivid element of ethics infrastructure is supervision institutions in Lithuania. But we cannot forget responsibility for the opposite behaviour for the law or unethical behaviour.

We can often hear a saying that “to be responsible means to be dutiful”. So what does the word responsibility mean? What is it? A Lithuanian Dictionary defines responsibility as regarding law, moral and official requirements (Dabartinės lietuvių kalbos žodynas, 2000). Philosopher L. Archangelskas thought that responsibility is a preparation to look at the consequences. (Žemaitis V., 1983). We think this is not a correct definition and it cannot be used as it contains a logical error idem per idem.

Considering the definitions of responsibility, the attention should be paid to the essence of responsibility which states that it has to be related with the duty. For instance, the dictionary of philosophy says that responsibility is (...) specific, social and moral legal relation of a person with the society, which has a peculiar performance of moral responsibility and law standards (Filosofijos žodynas, 1975). This explanation of responsibility in service is accurate and reasoned that responsibility appears together with society and is valid only in society. On the other hand, the necessity for people to live together required to use subjective rights while performing certain duties for each other and on which basis people can live and feel secure (Vaišvila A., 2000). Considering this, duty is necessary to be treated as a factor which is able to lead to the concept of responsibility. This means that state officials and officers carry out their duties wrongly (or do not carry them out at all) when they are dishonest, truant, do not follow the principles of being neutral, equal, during state service break ethic standards. Often these officials can be called irresponsible ones. In our opinion, such state officials disorganize the state system and interfer with guarantee for human rights, public interests security, legacy in the society, state life, economic wealth and so on.

The research conclusions

It is not enough to consolidate a legal responsibility and breaking ethic standards formally, it is necessary to educate offenders so that they can understand that moral virtues, ethic standards and moral responsibilities are more important factors concerning the aims of the Constitution of the Republic of Lithuania which help to reduce the corruption in the state.

The motivation to remain honest is weak in Lithuania. According to the data of the research, it may be further weakened if senior officials and political leaders use public office for private gain or if those who resist corruption lack protection. Or the public service may have long been dominated by patron-client relationships, in which the sharing of bribes and favors has entrenched.

Realization of the state service principles and professional ethics and moral values would allow for the elimination of conditions for corruption manifestations in various categories. The planned outcome of such undertakings corresponds to the people’s expectations as to an ideal Lithuanian open society. The drafting, approving and abiding by the effective codes of ethics for public servants and state politicians and codes of ethics for businessmen should become one of the priority tasks of the fight against corruption and corruption prevention.

References

Such concepts as “morality”, “ethics”, “corruption” and “responsibility” are analysed in the article. And they help to distinguish an essential relationship between corruption and unethical behaviour of public officials. A tough relationship which reflects and explains the concepts is seen while distinguishing the main features of the concepts. A special significance of morality, ethics and moral responsibility is emphasized in the article in order to stop the corruption in the state.

While analysing a connection between corruption and unethical behaviour of public officials, the authors make a conclusion that public officials realize the significance of ethics and principles of state duties and they refer responsibility as the main one. However, they do not understand that moral responsibility for disturbance of ethic regulations is more important than juridical one and they tend to assess their actions formally.

**Key words:** moral, ethics, principles, corruption, responsibility, state service, state officials.

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**Summary**

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