IMPORTANCE OF ETHICS AND WORKING CULTURE
THE EMPLOYEES’ OF THE DISTRICT MUNICIPALITY

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Abstract
Currently ethics and working culture are the subjects discussed very often. Employees working in public sector inevitably use stuck with ethic and working culture problems. The articles appear in the press almost every day about the officials' abuse of their position or corruption cases. More and more often the courts receive applications concerning breaches of ethics and working culture.

The article analyses peculiarities of ethics and working culture in public sector. Authors try to reveal and evaluate the specialities of the ethic and working culture of the Klaipėda district municipality's employees.

Key words: working culture, ethics, employees, municipality.

Introduction
Ethics covers various areas of life: personal, public and professional relations. Personal ethics studies the well-being of certain individual and his development methods. Social ethics emphasizes well-being of society, duties of individual persons in the society. In the professional ethics main attention is paid to the behaviour of the representatives of special field (Raipa, 2001). Employees working in public sector inevitably stuck with ethic and working culture problems. Perhaps even more often that the representatives of other fields, because they are constantly communicating with people, help them to solve their problems every day, inform people about governmental decisions (Wagner –Tsukamoto, 2005).

When having some contact with employees at municipality, people judge the morality and working culture of higher officers and public institution according to their behaviour (Chen, 2005). Therefore ethic and working culture of municipality employees should be as high as possible. Ethic is important not only in communication with customers (external environment), it's important also internally in the organization, in the mutual relations between colleagues and staff members (Paliduskaitė, 2001). Ethical problems might cause various different consequences. Some of them are solved almost unnoticed; the others have strong impact on individuals separate persons and organizations. Ethical problems might occur and disappear or have continuous character.

The purpose of the study – to disclose the importance of ethics and working culture of the employees of the Klaipėda district municipality. Object of the work – ethics and working culture of the Klaipėda municipality employees. Methods of the work – analysis of scientific literature, analysis of legislation, survey with questionnaire, statistic analysis of the data, graphical modelling, specifying and summarizing and logical abstraction.
Results

In our everyday life we use notions of ethics, morality, virtue and other similar ones quite widely. However not always we think about their contents and significance. Sometimes we refer these notions in wrong places, very often we identify them, use them as synonyms. However we shouldn't mix these notions and divide them: ethics is a field of certain knowledge, science; morality and virtue – are its research subjects (Kulik, 2005).

Concept "Ethics" has its background from ancient Greek word "Ethos". This word meant in the beginning usual place of living (in the poems of Homer) later it acquired new meanings: "habits, temperament, custom, character" (Fassin, 2005). Following the notion ethos Aristotle has created the adjective “Ethicos” (ethical). He named by this adjective special sort of human virtues – human temper, virtues of character, i.e. temperance, self-control, charity, bravery, etc. And the science which investigates such features, virtues was called "ethice" (ethics) by Aristotle. To this notion was made especially for the certain research area, to define the science (Vasiljevičienė, 2000). Ethics is a matter of science, validating moral issues rising between human being and surroundings, in the mutual relations of human beings, among people related by various connections (Kučinskas, 2003).

Lithuanian authors present various descriptions of ethics. Professor G. Beržinskas (2001) describes ethics as a philosophy of morality, theory, the human activity purpose of which is in internal perfection of the personality (Beržinskas..., 2002). Professor D. Vyšniauskienė (1999) in the book "Verslo etika (Business ethics)" gives the following definition of ethics: Ethic is practical philosophy talking about human behaviour in his practical activity (Vyšniauskienė, 1999). Professor of Klaipėda University V. Kučinskas (2003) defines ethics as a subject of science, validating moral issues, rising between human being and his surroundings, mutual human relations and relations among human beings related to each other by various connections; it's a branch of philosophy analysing values and evaluating human acts (Kučinskas, 2003).

Each system functions following the order stated (Gudas, 2000). Processes of social system and procedures and their handling are defined by certain documents. The ethics of employees of municipality administration is analysed in the article. As the bigger part of the employees of municipality administration are state officers (In the municipality administration of Klaipėda region – 57%), the ethics and working culture of state officers are analysed in this paper.

The Lithuanian Republic law of public service defines the following:

"Public officer is a physical entity, performing his duties at state service and performing the activity of public administration"LR Valstybės tarnybos įstatymas (Law..., 2002). Besides the laws regulating ethics and working culture of public officers there is a government decision of Lithuanian Republic on the confirmation of rules of ethics of the activity of public officers. The purpose of these rules is indicated in the decision – "to determine the principles of activity and behaviour, which should be followed by the public officer, implementing his rights, performing
his duties and functions stated in legal regulations, to increase the confidence of the society in public officers"14. (LR Vyriausybės..., 2002).

In order to disclose the peculiarities of ethics and working culture of the employees in public sector we have chosen municipality of Klaipėda region for the research. Empirical research survey) was performed in order to find out the ethical and working culture problems of the employees of municipality of Klaipėda region, when the employees of the administration of the municipality were interviewed. The period of the research – March – May 2006.

There are 58 employees working at the municipality of Klaipėda region. All the officers of the municipality are working full – time. The head of municipality – director of administration – has subordinate deputy of the director and the departments, services, supreme specialists as well as the dozens of regional villages and towns are subordinates to these persons. After the analysis of the empiric research data was done it can be stated that 57% of the respondents are familiar with legal regulations regulating ethics of the employees and working culture, 25% – partly and 18% unfamiliar.

Asked how they understand what ethics is, most of the respondents – 73% answered that ethics is a science about the norms of behaviour, morality. 13 % stated that this is a science researching morality and virtue. Although there were presented descriptions of ethics of various authors (all given answers were correct) the majority chose most often used, most widely spread notion of ethics that ethics is a science researching morality.

Most of employees – 83% – participating in the survey agree with the statement that it is expected from the public officers to have higher ethical standards and norms than ordinary citizens. It shows that public officers understand that people are applying towards them higher standards in to comparison to other employees; they require to predict the future and to take in to consideration possible outcomes. Also 57% of the interviewed agree that public officer forms the opinion of many citizens to the whole authorities.

Even 87% of the interviewed stated that they are following special rules of ethics and working culture in their job, 13% didn’t know anything about such rules. 65% of the interviewed think that they should follow professional values and standards, 20% – ethical standards, 15% – organizational values. It shows that professional and organizational values are more important for the officers than personal ones. This is a good sign because that is the difference of the officers in public sector from the officers in private sector.

The hardest is to take personal responsibility for 48% of the respondents, it is hard to obey the laws and implement them for 29% of the employees. As one of the employees has mentioned it is the hardest part to obey to the laws, because laws are changing constantly, and sometimes they are really very confusing, complicated and absurd. 23% of the interviewed stated that the hardest thing is to serve for public interests.

The answers of the respondents how often the employees of municipality face with ethical and working culture problems we can see in Table.
Spread of the answers of respondents how often the employees of the municipality face ethical and working culture problems

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ethical and working culture problems</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Quite often</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very often</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rare</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Never</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Never thought about it</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: own research.

Such spread of the answers of respondents might be explained that the interviewers were from different departments of municipality, they stuck with different kind of problems, they are solved in many various ways by the managers of the departments, and so in some cases they are spread more in some less or not spread at all.

It is thought that the activity of the employees of municipality should be honest. It means that it should be fair, open, correspond to the existing norms of behaviour and always increase the welfare of people. However sometimes under certain circumstances the situation requires not to be completely open and telling the real truth because of completely understandable good intentions or precautions. Sometimes the circumstances make us say that the silence is the best thing, sometimes it is thought that “the truth should be used economically”; sometimes it’s better to lie or to confuse.

Interviewed employees treat as an inappropriate behaviour at work transmission of secret information, use of organizational property for personal needs, harassment towards the colleagues, conflicts at work. Most of respondents negatively evaluate giving or acceptance of gifts, or grafts, because they treat it as the beginning of corruption (53%), attempt to bribe, to gain the employee to the side (47%).

To the answer what is a gift for the job done 80% of the respondents answered that its flowers, the others have mentioned candies, verbal or written thanks, special literature, helping to perform the job better, souvenirs. All employees who participated in the survey confirmed with one accord that they treat as graft money, most some other material values; the others have mentioned drinks, souvenirs, candies. It shows that as a sign of thanks for the employees of municipality are small gifts such as flowers, candies, various souvenirs; the gifts of bigger value are treated as graft.

To the question whether the respondents have stuck with graft or other kind of bribe most of them answered that they have heard about it from the mass media or acquaintances, also 27% of the employees affirmed that they themselves gave or took a graft. According to the opinion of municipality employees who participated in the
survey people do not disclose non-ethical deeds due to many various reasons: they don’t believe that effective means will be taken, very often such behaviour might be treated as a blight, they don’t want to destroy old and useful relations, it could bias against themselves, it’s not their business and also because none acts like that.

Respondents think that the best would be to limit not ethical acts of the employees for the managers themselves behaving ethically, developing the consciousness of the employees, strengthening control.

The research which was done helped to know the ethical and working culture problems of the employees of Klaipėda region municipality; to find out their point of view to the ethical problems, their actions when facing one or another kind of problem.

**Conclusions**

1. Ethics and working culture in the work of public officers is nonetheless important than in the work of other professions, because they have to communicate with people every day.

2. State officers are the medium link between the citizens and political power, their behaviour and working culture forms the people’s opinion about the whole authorities, morality and ethics of high officers. It is very important to educate officers, to recognize and solve ethical problems, because this could be one of the ways of avoiding them.

3. Conflicts in the work of public officers are the negative appearance, because of their negative impact on the person itself and the people around - customers, colleagues. It has negative impact on the efficiency of work, communication, working atmosphere.

4. The employees of the municipality who participated in the survey agreed with the opinion that the standards of ethics applicable to the public officers are stricter than those applied to ordinary citizens and also the proper image of the employee helps to support public confidence in service.

5. After separate evaluation how men and women face ethical problems it appeared that men face ethical problems quite rare (66%), women face ethical problems very often (27%), or quite often (27%). Employees who have been working at municipality for 10 or more years face ethical problems more often as well. The salary and education has no influence.

**References**


ВАЖНОСТЬ ЭТИКИ И РАБОЧЕЙ КУЛЬТУРЫ СЛУЖАЩИХ ОКРУЖНОГО МУНИЦИПАЛИТЕТА

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В настоящее время этика и рабочая культура – темы, которые очень часто обсуждаются. Служащие, работающие в общественном секторе, неизбежно сталкиваются с этими проблемами. В прессе почти каждый день появляются статьи о злоупотреблении чиновников их положением. Все более часто суды получают заявления относительно нарушений этики и рабочей культуры.

Цель работы – исследовать важность этики и рабочей культуры в окружном муниципалитете. В статье авторы раскрыли и оценили особенности этической и рабочей культуры служащих муниципалитета Клайпедского района.

Ключевые слова: рабочая культура, этика, служащие, муниципалитет.