

A PRELIMINARY DISCUSSION ON THE LINK BETWEEN NORMATIVE AND EMPIRICAL RESEARCH IN PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION: THE CASE OF PUBLIC SERVICE ETHICS*

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Abstract

With the effect of its fundamental pillars (i.e. public law and political philosophy), public administration both as a study and a practice is inherently “normative”. It is highly difficult to find a topic in public administration that does not have a normative dimension. In this context, all the students of public administration address normative issues directly or indirectly, deliberately or unintentionally. The following question has been mainly discussed in this paper: “How can a normative issue in public administration be analysed systematically on the basis of empirical data within a methodological framework?” In this paper, this complicated question has been dealt with a special reference to public service ethics in Turkey within the boundaries of the design and findings of the research previously conducted for a different aim by the authors: A normative research on the normative dimension of public service ethics in Turkey (i.e. basic norms and legal-administrative regulations and institutional mechanisms based on such norms); an empirical research on the cultural dimension of public service ethics in Turkey (i.e. the cultural strengths and weaknesses of Turkish public administration in combating unethical conducts); and the link between the normative and empirical research.

Keywords: Normative research, empirical research, public administration, public service ethics, Turkey.

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Öz**Kamu Yönetiminde Normatif Araştırma ile Ampirik Araştırma Arasındaki Bağlantı Üzerine Öncül Bir Tartışma: Kamu Hizmeti Etiği Örneği**

Hem bir bilimsel çalışma hem de bir uygulama alanı olarak kamu yönetimi, kendi asli temellerini oluşturan kamu hukuku ve siyaset felsefesinin etkisiyle, özü gereği “normatif”tir. Kamu yönetiminde normatif bir boyuta sahip olmayan bir konu bulmak oldukça zordur. Bu bağlamda, kamu yönetimi üzerine çalışanlar doğrudan veya dolaylı olarak, özellikle veya özel bir amaç taşımaksızın normatif sorunlara değinirler. Bu makalede, esas itibariyle, şu soru tartışılmıştır: “Kamu yönetiminde, ampirik veriler temelinde, normatif bir sorun bir metodolojik çerçeve içerisinde sistemli olarak nasıl analiz edilebilir?” İşte bu makalede, söz konusu karmaşık soru, yazarlar tarafından daha önce başka bir amaçla yapılmış bir araştırmanın planı ve bulgularının sınırları içerisinde, Türkiye’deki kamu hizmeti etiğine özel olarak değinilerek ele alınmıştır: Türkiye’de kamu hizmeti etiğinin normatif boyutu üzerine normatif bir araştırma (temel normlar ve bu normlara göre şekillenen hukuksal-yönetimsel düzenlemeler ve kurumsal mekanizmalar); Türkiye’de kamu hizmeti etiğinin kültürel boyutu üzerine görgül bir araştırma (Türk kamu yönetiminin etik olmayan davranışlarla mücadelede kültürel olarak güçlü ve zayıf yönleri); ve söz konusu normatif ve görgül araştırmalar arasındaki bağlantı.

Anahtar Sözcükler: Normatif araştırma, ampirik araştırma, kamu yönetimi, kamu hizmeti etiği, Türkiye

INTRODUCTION

With the effect of its fundamental pillars (i.e. public law and political philosophy), public administration both as a study and a practice is inherently “normative”. It is highly difficult to find a topic in public administration that does not have a normative dimension. For example, public service ethics as the best accountability system recognise that “control is normative ... rooted in values and beliefs” (Mintzberg, 1996: 81). In this context, all the students of public administration address normative issues directly or indirectly, deliberately or unintentionally. As the NDPA Research Group at Leiden University (2005) points out, those who would like to do “normative research” as such are faced with several crucial questions: “How to carve out normative research topics?” “How to carry out normative research?” “How to link normative research to empirical research?” “How to communicate the findings of normative research?”. Discussions on such questions provide new ideas and

developments in the methodology and contents of normative research or research on normative issues in public administration.

As students of public administration, the authors have been received some requests to deal with ethical matters covering various aspects of public administration. However, they are always puzzled with the “establishment of a sensitive balance between the rich normative dimension of public administration and the practical necessities of empirical research in public administration”. Although the review of a normative issue through empirical research in social sciences is not a brand new development, its application in the field of public administration (especially in the field of public service ethics) is quite a new academic interest for the students of public administration, particularly for Europeans (see NDPA Research Group at Leiden University, 2005; and Huberts, Maesschalck and Jurkiewicz, 2008b: 252-253). Not only American scholars (see Menzel, 2005) but also European scholars (see Huberts, Maesschalck and Jurkiewicz, 2008a) have recently more focused on empirical research in the field of public service ethics. Although it was common to expect that European scholars would focus more on theoretical, conceptual, and definitional issues (see Lawton and Doig, 2005) and American scholars would more emphasise the empirical (Menzel, 2005), the recent papers, which were presented at the ethics sections of recent ASPA and EGPA conferences, show that Europeans are now focused on empirical research as well as discussions on normative aspect of ethics. In particular, the book, a by-product of papers presented at *the First Transatlantic Dialogue on Ethics and Integrity of Governance* in Leuven in 2005¹, provides a good balance between conceptual and empirical research. As Huberts, Maesschalck and Jurkiewicz, who are the editors of the book, emphasised, the combination of papers “offers greater evidence of the need for cross-dialog and shedding of preconceived limits on what we need to know and how we should go about knowing it” (2008b: 253).

The topic chosen for this paper is also a reflection of authors’ concerns with and their recent studies on public service ethics: “Normative research on the normative dimension of public service ethics in Turkey (e.g. basic norms and legal-administrative regulations and institutional mechanisms based on such norms); empirical research on the cultural dimension of public service ethics (e.g. perceptions and attitudes of public and public servants) in Turkey; and the connection between normative and empirical research in the field of public service ethics”. The following question will be discussed within this framework in this paper: “How can a normative issue in public administration be analysed systematically on the basis of empirical data within a methodological framework?” This highly complicated question will be dealt with a special reference to “public service ethics” in Turkey within the “boundaries” of the

design and findings of the research previously conducted for a different aim by the authors (see Ömürgönülşen and Öktem, 2005 and 2006).

After some general remarks on the theoretical discussion on the normative dimension of public administration, answer for that question is going to be searched as much as authors can. The answer for the question will hopefully illuminate the issue of linking normative research to empirical research in public administration.

1. GENERAL REMARKS ON THE NORMATIVE DIMENSION OF PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION

The “value neutrality” (objectivity) is considered by many social scientists to be a virtue that every social researcher should try to achieve in his/her scientific enterprise. Objectivity is generally used by researchers, who believe in value neutrality rather than normativism, to minimise personal prejudice and bias, and to guarantee that social reality will be presented as it is, rather than as it is interpreted or imagined by the researcher. The main principles of value neutrality (objectivity) are: Social sciences are value free, that is, their goal is to study “what is” and not “what ought to be”; and social scientists should be value free, that is, they should rule out value judgements, and should exclude subjective views, personal bias and personal convictions when working as academics. Value judgements should be reserved for philosophers, moralists or politicians, not for social scientists. According to this view, social scientists are thought to be technicians for consulting and not social reformers. They should be neutral observers and analysts. Thus, the personal views and value judgements of the researcher should be kept out of research. The researcher should remain distant from and neutral to the research object, the respondents, the techniques of data collection and analysis, and to the findings of research (see Sarantakos, 1998: 18, 19; Neuman, 2003: 91).

The opposite view in social research constitutes the theoretical position of “normativism”. The main principles of normativism are: Social sciences are normative by nature; in addition to studying “what is”, they should be concerned with “what ought to be”. The general orientation of people is based on and constructed with values; these values direct people’s thinking and action; and they cannot be isolated or ignored. Social scientists ought to have a standpoint on social issues, and they must produce value judgements if they wish to solve such issues. They have the same right as any one else to be normative. Value neutrality or objectivity is impossible, unnecessary and even undesirable. For some social scientists, it is used as an excuse for an uncritical acceptance of the status quo. Intrinsic evaluation, feelings and beliefs are

significant and influential. Disclosing the inevitable bias or personal feelings and beliefs is less dangerous than pretending to be value free. The requirements of objectivity are particularly against the fundamental principle of qualitative social research, which encourages intersubjectivity, closeness between the elements of the research and involvement of the researcher in the whole research process (see Sarantakos, 1998: 18-19; Neuman, 2003: 91).

There is a “third view” or a “middle view” on this issue between “pure” value neutrality and normativism. Value neutrality or objectivity is a diverse and complex concept. It refers to the relationship between research methodology and society. In this sense, value neutrality may be impossible and even undesirable. It also refers to the relationship between researcher and the researched. In this framework, value neutrality may be a virtue to adhere. Although complete value neutrality may be unattainable, some degree of value neutrality in certain stages of social research (e.g. planning, data collection, analysis and interpretation of findings), may be possible and even desirable. Value neutrality or objectivity requires the independence of data and results from the person of the researcher (see Sarantakos, 1998: 19). It is getting commonly accepted that any quantitative or qualitative research is expected to contain truth value, applicability, consistency and neutrality (see Guba and Lincoln, 1989).

As is discussed in the Working Conference organised by NDPA Research Group in 2005, the normative (moral and philosophical) roots of public administration is important to examine and understand the true nature of public administration. Meanings of some basic concepts in this field such as government, constitution, citizen, democracy, public interest and public service ethics are not neutral in any scientific sense but with full of value-judgements. They are strongly linked, for example, to what sort of institution we think ethical administration is, can be, or ought to be. In other words, they are tied to our notions of morality. In this sense, one cannot think about governmental actions or ethical/unethical conducts in the absence of moral considerations (see Spicer, 2005: 8). As Berlin observed, it is “nearly impossible to achieve neutrality” in statements about “moral and social life” because “the words themselves are inescapably charged with ethical or aesthetic or political content” (1979: 157). Scholars inevitably “bring to their study something other than empirical data” (1979: 167). Whenever we think about governmental actions, such thinking is likely to reflect “some sort of vision of politics, ethics, and humanity”. In light of this, public administration almost inevitably involves with value-laden concepts about morality and politics (Spicer, 9, 10).

Public administration, which started to emerge in the the late 19th century as a new and independent branch of social sciences, adopted the principle of

exclusion of values from public domain with the effect of value-free positivist science understanding of that time. However, this value-free or sterilised model has its own problems. Although public officials are required to implement the decisions and policies of government neutrally like administrative eunuchs without taking their values into consideration in the Weberian bureaucracy model, ethical understanding which dominates the founding principles and policies of the State, may contradict the individual ethical understandings of public officials (see Thompson, 1985).

Such an explanation does not mean that objectivity should be avoided in normative research; but it means that some popular and ready-made research guidelines should not be taken for granted. It is not always possible to separate between “is questions” and “ought-questions” in public administration. The questions such as “what should government do?” and “what should be the role of administrators”, for example, in combating corruption do not admit to an answer using a clear-cut methodology. Unlike the questions of empirical science, they are inherently normative (philosophical or ethical) questions involve with value judgements. Therefore, it is difficult to construct a methodological framework to study the normative dimension of public administration systematically (see Spicer, 2005: 1-2). There is no a “clear-cut guideline” or a “recipe book” for implementing a normative research in public administration, as Berlin mentioned in considering questions of political theory (1979: 146).

Apart from quite a few early writers such as Wilson and Goodnow and a number of contemporary writers such as Rohr (1986), Stillman (1998) and Stivers (2000a), Spicer aptly argues that mainstream public administration writers have a marked tendency to downplay the importance of the history of political and social ideas in public administration research (2005: 5-6). The indifference of mainstream public administration writers to normative questions may partly lie in their strong pragmatic orientation. As Waldo points out, practical considerations are likely to be more crucial than an abstract philosophy (1984: xxxviii). Many public administration writers may simply believe that the exploration of the abstract political philosophy has little practical value for administrative practices. In addition to the pragmatism of some writers, the desire among other writers to render public administration research more scientific may also contribute to this tendency. Many of them, if not necessarily subscribed to positivism, follow the lead of social science positivists like the late Simon and seek to focus the attention of the field on relatively narrow and well-defined empirical questions, which seem readily amenable to scientific investigation. They are also inclined to avoid broad and enduring moral and political questions, which are difficult or even impossible to reduce to empirically testable hypotheses. Such writers tend to accept Simon’s advice

that, if public administration is to be a science, then it must be “concerned purely with factual statements” and “there is no basis for ethical assertions in the body of a science” (1945/1976: 253). For public administration writers who has such a positivist bent, any activity dealing with value-laden normative questions is an irrelevant or pointless exercise in the development of a science of public administration (see Spicer, 2005: 6-7).

Spicer argues that an examination of moral and political ideas is not only desirable, but also essential, to understand public administration since such ideas do, in fact, have an effect upon the thinking and discourse of public administration writers. Public administration as an academic field has strong roots in a deep rationalist faith. This faith is not only evident in the early history of the field, but also seen in the search within public management for a more scientific approach to governance. This is a sort of faith that the major problems of administration and governance can be resolved through value-free social science (2005: 10-11). However, by referring to the Waldo’s view (1984: 21) on this point, Spicer indicates that such a belief itself “reveals not the absence of any political theory, but rather the presence of a particular type of political theory. A belief that the major problems of public administration are technical and subject to scientific resolution reflects itself a form of political theorizing.” (2005: 11). In this respect, moral and political ideas inevitably affect the research on public administration, no matter how hard researchers might try to remove them. Spicer also argues that all of this does not mean that researchers are always compelled to moralise. Nor are they forced to abandon the standards of objectivity or to retreat into relativism in searching administrative facts. They should not seek to remove all notions of morality and values from their thinking and vocabulary. Instead, they should “try to understand the moral and political ideas, which are implicit in much of the language that [they] use to talk about the ‘facts’ of public administration” (2005: 11-12).

Tendency to downplay the importance of the history of political and social ideas in public administration research is particularly evident among contemporary writers in the so-called “reinventing government” movement since this approach is politically and ideologically neutral in the eyes of its proponents (see Gore, 1993: ii). Its principles are applicable to all types of organisations in all kinds of political systems regardless of ideology (see Osborne and Plastrik, 1997: 44 and 47). Spicer argument about reinventing government movement in American case (2005: 6) is, in fact, true for a more widespread approach, “new public management”. The new struggle is now taking place between the methodological orientations of traditional public administration and new public management.

Scholars who have adopted the new public management approach attempt to claim the conceptual high ground in the field by distinguishing themselves from what they refer to as the traditional public administration approach, which provide us with a form that is neither pure science nor conventional wisdom, and a stance that preserves the publicness of public administration (see Stivers, 2000b) (i.e. more respect for law, citizenship rights and public values such as public interest). It is argued that the roots of new public management or at least, the public management approach seem to lie in public administration's failure to respond adequately to the challenge of the post-War behavioural revolution (see Kettl, 1990; Lynn, 1994) - in effect, to the indictment in Simon's *Administrative Behavior* (1945/1976) and seminal essay, "The Proverbs of Administration" (1946/1997). As mentioned above, Simon and other behaviouralists charged public administration with being too descriptive and insufficiently explanatory. Behaviouralists dismissed normative ideas like the "public interest" because they could not be studied scientifically, only argued about. Evolving from the behaviouralist call to make the study of public administration more scientific, public management has conceptualised the activities of public agencies as susceptible to exacting scientific study (Fountain, 1994). However, new public management champions a vision of public managers as emulating not only the practices but also the "values of business". It should be kept in mind that business values embedded in the culture of market economy have also normative dimensions (e.g. "the sacred invisible hand in the free market").

Furthermore, an additional question should be asked in social sciences in general and public administration in particular: "Are normative issues universal or local?" or "Are some of them more universal in the sense that they seem to appear across different cultures whereas others are more local?" We definitely need comparative studies on this issue (see Spicer, 2005: 3). "How do values affect public administration in different cultures and countries?" "Is it possible to have value-free solutions for public administration in a country with has a different culture?" Since each country's administrative thinking and practices are shaped by its own particular moral and political ideas, those administrative practices cannot be simply transferred from one country to another (Rosenbloom, 1999). All those questions and problems are also valid for ethics in general and public service ethics in particular. As the main things which ethics deals with, are value judgements and principles of conduct, debate on whether norms are universal or culturally-bounded is inevitably comes to the agenda (see Kuçuradi, 2000: 21-22). As a matter of fact, most cross-cultural studies on ethical attitudes and perceptions report that national culture has a significant influence on ethical attitudes and behaviors" (Palau, 2001; Tsui and Windsor, 2001; Ahmed et al., 2003; Christie et al., 2003; Su, 2006; and Park et al., 2008).

Public service ethics, which is the main concern in this paper, is an important subject for both traditional public administration and new public management approaches which claim to explain the management problem of the public domain. On one hand, the traditional public administration approach emphasises the normative dimension of public service ethics through examining basic ethical norms and legal regulations and institutional mechanisms required for establishing an ethical administration. On the other hand, the new public management approach tries to establish links between public service ethics and transparency, accountability and responsiveness in the name of more efficient administration. Public service ethics also contains both universal norms and culturally-bounded norms as mentioned above. Therefore, public service ethics is a very good choice to examine the connection between normative and empirical research in the field of public administration.

2. HOW CAN A NORMATIVE ISSUE IN PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION SUCH AS PUBLIC SERVICE ETHICS BE ANALYSED SYSTEMATICALLY ON THE BASIS OF EMPIRICAL DATA WITHIN A METHODOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK?

Despite the fact that the roots of debates on public service ethics are in the depths of time, such debates in modern sense have intensified since the 1970s. Watergate Scandal in the U.S. was particularly effective in the intensification of debates on public service ethics (Goss, 1996: 578). Various political and bureaucratic scandals in many Western countries have taken attention of public opinion to corruption in political-bureaucratic system (Bowman, 2000: 673). In the face of mounting demands of the public about “good” government in the 1990s and 2000s, the issue of establishing an ethical administration and combating corruption has been taken as a global issue and given priority by Western governments and international organisations (see Mills, 1999; Behnke, 2002; and Kernaghan, 2003).

Turkish public administration has also experienced serious and gradually expanded ethical crises since the mid-1970s (see Aktan, 1992: Chp.2 and 1999; İTO, 1997; TÜGİAD, 1997). These crises are not only a part of global ethical crises in public administration, but also a result of a broad structural and operational degeneration of political-bureaucratic system (Emre, Hazama and Mutlu, 2003: 438). The side effects of political instabilities since the mid-1970s and so-called neo-liberal economic policies and new managerial techniques conducted since the early 1980s have contributed to the erosion of social values. Such corrupt social and political values have also influenced all activities of Turkish bureaucracy. However, a new wave of interest in ethics has emerged in Turkey since the early 2000s due to recent efforts for accession to the European

Union (EU) and for overcoming serious economic crisis of 2001 (see Ömürgönülşen and Öktem, 2005 and 2006).

In spite of increased global and national concern and efforts about public service ethics, the determination of the boundary and its fundamental pillars and elements of public service ethics as a normative field by taking major theories of ethics into consideration (see Cooper, 2004; and Rohr, 2004) and the questioning of this normative issue through empirical data are still significant question marks in the minds of scholars who are interested in public service ethics. Those questions mainly stem from the lack of consensus among scholars on the fundamental research questions of the field as well as the richness and multi-dimensional features of public service ethics (see Demirci, 2007).

Public service ethics concerns with “both normative values and principles at abstract level and the perception and application of those values and principles by public servants at operational level”. The idea of neutral public employee, either as in the case of politics-administration dichotomy advocated by the traditional public administration approach or as in the case of responsiveness to all customers advocated by the new public management approach, is not sufficient to explain the reality in the public service, particularly problems in the field of public service ethics. The interpretations of the code of ethics, the religious and moral rules of society, bureaucratic and organisational culture, and individual factors such as individual ethical understanding and development level, personal values and personality traits, parental and family influences, peer groups and colleagues, life experiences, situational factors altogether may have an effect upon the conducts of a public servant in practice. There is also a very problematic area in public service ethics, i.e. the day-to-day ethical dilemmas public servants face in their work, including what to do when rules requires one action and personal belief another, and whether it is ethical to dissent from agency or government policy. It is highly difficult to balance the often competing responsibilities (see Lewis and Gilam, 2005). In addition, there are always some controversies between a nation-wide ethical code for the public service and the ethical codes of professional organisations most public servants belong. Therefore, the reconciliation of these codes has become a necessity (see Denhardt, 1988: 65) for establishing an ethical administration in any country.

Public service ethics (an ethical administration in one sense) has a “strong normative base” (rules and institutions) that can be examined through a normative (prescriptive) analysis. In other words, this normative issue by nature can be discussed and analysed “normatively” through reviewing legal-administrative documents and institutional structures designed for combating (preventing and penalising) the unethical conducts of public servants. However,

enacting necessary legal documents based on accepted ethical norms, establishing proper institutional structures and penalising public servants who do not conduct ethically are not enough to understand the true nature of public service ethics. The practice of public service ethics (i.e. the ethical or unethical conducts of public servants in practice) is closely related to the culture, particularly political-bureaucratic culture of a country. Therefore, public service ethics has also a “behavioural dimension” (conducts of public servants and attitudes of the public) that should be examined “empirically” (see also Lewis, 2008) as well with a special reference to cultural dimension. This fact has led us link the “normative research” (i.e. the search for the normative dimension of public service ethics with a legal-institutional perspective) to the “empirical research” (i.e. the search for the cultural aspect of public service ethics with a cultural perspective), which is quite an important task for the students of public administration.

2.1. Background Information about the Turkish Socio-Political Culture affecting Public Service Ethics in Turkey²

Turkish governments have tried to make some legal-administrative regulations and institutional reorganisations under the name of “administrative reform” in order to cope with structural and operational dysfunctions, including ethical problems, in public administration since the World War II (see KAYA, 1991), but these attempts could not bring a successful result because of their ignorance of the cultural (socio-political culture) dimension of the problems (Emre, Hazama and Mutlu, 2003: 438).

Since the public service ethics concerns with the values and behaviour of civil servants, ethical problems of public administration should be analysed not only in legal-administrative context but also within a cultural context (see Emre, Hazama and Mutlu, 2003). Most of the authors on the issue of public service ethics and corruption advise considering cultural relativity when searching for applicable prescriptions for unethical conducts, particularly in non-Western settings (for example, see Kernaghan and Dwivedi, 1983; Khassawneh, 1989; Cooper, 1990; and Emre, Hazama and Mutlu, 2003). Therefore, in an examination of the ethical dimension of Turkish public administration, analysing some features of the Turkish bureaucratic culture is helpful to understand the feasibility of proposed solutions to ethical problems (Emre, 1993; Emre, Hazama and Mutlu, 2003: 438).

Public bureaucrats, depends on the bureaucratic tradition of the country concerned, may adopt various personal missions, which are not always in accordance with the general interest of the public, in the lack of well-defined ethical codes for the public service. Either they become an elite group isolated

from the public and identify their personal interests with the public interest in accordance with their worldview (i.e. modernising mission) or they become an entrepreneurial group and clearly put their personal or group interests before the public interest (i.e. enterprising mission) (see Stever, 1988: 88).

With the effect of “bureaucratic ruling tradition” inherited from the Ottoman Empire, the founders of the Republic (i.e. the political and bureaucratic elites) established a highly bureaucratic state in Turkey in the 1920s and 1930s. Although they put emphasise on law and order, they perceived themselves as the “state elite”, whose mission was “modernising” Turkey. The state elite could keep control of the country with a “étatist” economic and bureaucratic system until the end of the World War II. Since the bourgeoisie were a dependent ally of the state elite and the peasants were living in a closed world, there was no serious organised opposition against the state elite and its political party (i.e. the Republican People’s Party/*Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi*). A guardian type of bureaucracy in a state-centred polity was the essential feature of the single-party politics. With the transition to multi-party politics after the World War II, the state elite was challenged by a new and “anti-state” political elite represented by a new political party (i.e. the Democrat Party/*Demokrat Parti*). The Democrat Party and its successors (the Justice Party/*Adalet Partisi* in the 1960s and 1970s and the Motherland Party/*Anavatan Partisi* after 1980) were actually grand coalitions of liberal intellectuals, bourgeoisie, and peasants and came to power with the society’s demands of change since 1950. The new political elite attempted to substitute a party-centred polity for the state-centred one. Within this framework, they aimed to create a bureaucracy subservient to their governments (i.e. party-book bureaucracy) instead of a guardian-type of bureaucracy through strategies politicising and financially depriving the bureaucracy. The politicisation of civil bureaucracy by the anti-state political parties was also facilitated by the fragmentation of the bureaucratic elite during the 1960s and 1970s as a consequence of socio-cultural and economic policies of these parties. During these decades, the earlier official ideology of Republic (i.e. Kemalism) came to be rivalled by various leftist and rightist, as well as religious ideologies. In the second half of the 1960s, the primary purpose behind the politicisation of bureaucracy was to bring to the higher levels of the bureaucracy those sympathetic to the government. In the 1970s, this basic motive was coupled with unbridled political patronage and the staffing of the bureaucracy with partisans (see Heper, 1985). As Emre and his colleagues point out, all these developments led to the corrosion of ethical values in the bureaucracy on the one hand, and the opening the door for traditional elements of social values to enter into the bureaucracy on the other. This meant the stabilisation of “allaturca” administration (i.e. a type of administration with heterogeneous cultural values) (2003: 440).

In spite of all negative developments against the bureaucratic ruling tradition, which can be criticised in terms of democratic values such as participation, accountability, and transparency, a “law and order” understanding still remained and the bureaucratic control mechanism against corruption was still in effect more or less until the so-called “liberal revolution” of the early 1980s. The Motherland Party (MP) Governments under the premiership of Mr. Turgut Özal were not late to catch the liberalisation and globalisation movements in international settings. The major slogans of the MP governments were “open to outside world”, “liberalisation of the economy”, “privatisation”, “minimal state”, “de-bureaucratisation”, “being the government of the people”, “pulling down taboos” within the general framework of “big transformation” claim of Mr. Özal. All these slogans refer, in practice, to a struggle against the established “bureaucratic and moral values” (Emre, Hazama and Mutlu, 2003: 440-441).

Prime Minister Özal and his close entourage wanted to decrease the influence of the bureaucracy as a whole in accordance with their so-called “liberal revolution” because bureaucrats could not summon the dynamism their government’s policies required. They also believed that the bureaucrats had an aloof and condescending attitude toward the people. Despite this liberal rhetoric, the MP governments were under no compulsion to convert the bureaucracy with some legal-patrimonial characteristics into a rational-productive or even a legal-rational one in the Weberian sense. Instead, during the 1980s, they tried to turn the bureaucracy into a virtually their subordinate arm (i.e. the party-book bureaucracy) through further politicisation and reorganisation policies. Almost all authority and responsibility in public affairs were concentrated in the hands of the prime minister and his close entourage. The relegation of career bureaucrats to virtually insignificance or the side-stepping of the traditional bureaucracy accelerated the de-bureaucratisation process in general, a particular manifestation being increasing disregard for rules and regulations in the name of “getting things done without delay” (“*işbitiricilik*”). With little respects for legal-administrative rules, bureaucracy and business worlds were freed from all control mechanisms (see Heper, 1989 and 1990; and Heper and Sancar, 1998).

Nevertheless, this tendency gave rise to serious erosion in social and economic ethic (i.e. “personal achievement whatever the social and moral costs may be!”/“*köşeyi dönme!*”); and to bureaucratic corruption (i.e. “My civil servant knows how to survive well!”/“*Benim memurum işini bilir!*”) in the long run (see Birand and Yalçın, 2001: 267, 341-343; Kafaoğlu, 2001: 21-22). Although Turkey has been suffering from big, interventionist, and cumbersome government (see Aktan, 1995), launching some economic and managerial strategies, without understanding and adopting the essence of the policy of

withdrawal of government, resulted in further corruption through damaging public service ethics. Corruption in the economic sphere around Prime Minister Özal, his family and his close entourage was the primary public concern in the 1980s (Aktan, 1992: Chp. 2/III; Emre, Hazama and Mutlu, 2003: 441-442).

Corruption in the economic sphere has soon spread to other spheres of the Turkish society during the Coalition governments of the 1990s. In the triangle of corrupt politicians, corrupt bureaucrats-security forces, and Mafia, many legal and ethical rules and standards were ignored in the name of sorting out the economic and domestic security problems of the country (Emre, Hazama and Mutlu, 2003: 442). In spite of progress in the early 2000s in recovering the loss occurred for government because of some bankrupt banks and firms, some irregularities are still seen in some national and local privatisation and public contract bids. Various corruption allegations about national and local politicians of the governing party (Justice and Development Party/*Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi*), which is a more conservative-religious form of Democrat Party-type grand coalition, have increased recently. There is no progress can be reported either concerning the issue of changes to the extent of parliamentary immunity. This is, of course, not a good record for the Government (Ömürğönülşen and Öktem, 2007: 131-132).

In brief, political instabilities since the mid-1970s and socio-economic policies pursued since the early 1980s have accelerated social disintegration and caused erosion in the value system of the Turkish society. Political and administrative corruption has increased with the degeneration of judicial system and bureaucratic control mechanisms.

This is obviously not an optimistic picture of Turkey in relation to public service ethics. Many questions might be come into minds about the socio-political and cultural factors hinder the enforcement of legal-administrative regulations and mechanisms for combating corruption.

Recent researches on the cultural base of the values in the Turkish bureaucracy (see Emre, 1993; and Özen, 1996) have provided us an opportunity to make an assessment on this issue. The results of these researches show that the significant element of Turkish bureaucratic culture is “collectivism, solidarity and harmony” in “community” or “groups”. The literature on the Turkish culture also supports this finding (see Ergun, 1991; and Güvenç, 1993). In contrast to “individualistic” culture, the special characteristics of “collectivist” culture are loyalty to his/her own community, solidarity and harmony with the other members of the community, and individual irresponsibility. In a collectivist culture, community (i.e. family in the broader sense, friendship groups, membership of a profession or a government

department) is responsible for taking care of individuals and community leaders have an extraordinary prestige in communities concerned (see Emre, 1993: 136-137). Like ordinary Turkish people, the Turkish bureaucrats feel secure themselves only in a community. They try to develop good interpersonal relations in the community (i.e. the public bureaucracy) in order to survive in the political and bureaucratic arena. The guardianship for group interests is also the easiest way to get beneficial posts in the bureaucracy. This also means the development of negative attitudes against other communities or groups. The forming of a community or a group as a way of getting extra benefits makes impartiality impossible in practice in the Turkish bureaucracy. That is why, independent or impartial ethics committees might not function in Turkey. The extraordinary prestige of political and bureaucratic elite and their poor personal responsibility also facilitate the expansion of corruptive activities in the public sector (Emre, Hazama and Mutlu, 2003: 450-451).

The “unquestionable state” is strong cultural value, which is a negative aspect of the bureaucratic ruling tradition, in Turkey by itself. This is the main obstacle to transparency and accountability of government. As is mentioned above, “protecting the interests of the State” is one of the official duties of civil servants. Every kind of activities which are done in the name of protecting the interests of the State, even if it is a crime or offence, might be seen, not legally but morally right. Also, some other cultural values encourage the concealment of crimes or offences committed in the name of the State. A Turkish proverb clearly defines the collectivist mentality of the Turkish people on this manner: “a broken arm should remain inside the sleeve” (“*kol kırılır yen içinde kalır*”). It means “you should not wash your dirty linen in public” (Emre, Hazama and Mutlu, 2003: 451-452).

In spite of the existence of a value such as “unquestionable state”, it should be emphasised that ordinary people who long took place in the periphery of the society and were isolated from the government of the country by the state elite do not show any respect, in practice, to the protection of public money and property against any kind of corruption. A general expression, “the property of the State is belong to everybody but nobody” (“*devletin malının herkese ait olması ama hiç kimseye ait olmaması*”) might explain this attitude. Furthermore, ordinary people are not refrain from capturing some parts of it in illegal ways since they regard that public resources were controlled by the Sultans or the state elite for a long time in the history and now it is their time to use them. As a matter of fact, another Turkish proverb perfectly explain this manner: “the property of the State is plentiful and the one who does not possess it is obstinate” (“*devletin malı deniz yemeyen domuz*”). This general attitude can also be explained through an ancient tradition of the Turks. Traditional Turkish folk stories tell about “feast (*toy*) tradition” in which tribe leaders open their

tents once a year for pillage. Since that was an egalitarian society, no personal wealth was tolerated but distributed. This method of wealth distribution would continue in one way or another. This attitude reminds that the word of Calvin Coolidge: “Nothing is easier than spending the public money. It does not appear to belong to anybody. The temptation is overwhelming to bestow it on somebody”.

However, a new wave of ethics has emerged in Turkey since the early 2000s. Both recent struggles for accession to the EU and serious economic crisis of 2001 are real turning points in Turkey’s combating corruption. On the one hand, Turkish governments are required to adjust Turkish national anti-corruption legislation to that of the EU in the process of accession to the EU. Developing ethical legal-institutional infrastructure is seen one of the significant criteria for enhancing the administrative capacity of Turkish public administration. On the other hand, Turkish governments are strongly asked to take some institutional and legal-administrative measures for anti-corruption in order to get financial aid from international financial institutions such as the IMF and the World Bank in the process of economic recovering. In addition, widespread political and bureaucratic corruption is regarded by the Turkish public opinion as the main cause of economic and financial crisis of 2001 (see Ömürğönülşen and Öktem, 2007: 112-113). Such domestic and global developments have affected both academic works (see Şen et al., 2005) and the programmes of governments (e.g. new laws and by-laws were enacted, international conventions were ratified, a national supervisory board for ethics was established) (see Ömürğönülşen, 2008) in Turkey as well. When the steam for reform gets dense, governments take more serious steps towards ethical administration (i.e. early 2000s) and when they lose their interest for reform (i.e. mid and late 2000s), corruption allegations increase significantly.

2.2. The Case of Public Service Ethics in Turkey

In this section of the paper, the task which links the “normative research” to the “empirical research” is going to be done through searching answer for the research question mentioned in Introduction within the framework of the findings of the research previously conducted for a different aim (i.e. “understand the legal-institutional and cultural pillars of the ethical administration in Turkey”) by the authors (see Ömürğönülşen and Öktem, 2005 and 2006).

In the authors’ aforementioned research, the importance of the link between the “normative research” (i.e. the search for the normative dimension of public service ethics in Turkey) and the “empirical research” (i.e. the search for the cultural aspect of public service ethics in Turkey) was just indicated in

order to understand the true nature of public service ethics in Turkey. In accordance with this aim, firstly, the “normative dimension of the question” was revealed by the critical review of legal and administrative documents based on ethical norms (e.g. basic norms in codes of ethics) and elaborating on the institutions and mechanisms (e.g. courts, council and commissions of ethics, anti-corruption bodies, inspection offices) of Turkish public administration. Thus, the strong and weak aspects of legal and institutional infrastructure of ethical administration in Turkey were discovered at “general level” (see Ömürgönülşen and Öktem, 2005). This review was, of course, done in the light of a framework designed in accordance with both international (Western) standards and the particular needs of Turkey. So, mainly “ought questions” (about norms, regulations and mechanisms) were dealt with on this dimension.

The findings of the research indicate that although the Turkish public administration had some necessary legal instruments and institutional mechanisms against many kinds of unethical conducts (including various types of corruption) at the time of research conducted, legal-institutional deficiencies in the system (e.g. a general code of ethics for all public servants and a single independent authority for combating corruption as the EU suggests, see European Commission, 2004) could (or should?) be developed in time. As a matter of fact, some of the insufficient aspects of legal instruments and institutional mechanisms have recently been rectified in the process of accession to the EU. If so, why has the Turkish public administration experienced a serious ethical crisis since the second half of the 1980s? It was also indicated by the findings of the research that whether such new instruments work or not in practice (i.e. proper enforcement of rules and proper functioning of institutions) partly depends on the political-administrative culture of the country. This fact led the authors to search for the cultural dimension of the question on mainly empirical basis.

Thus, secondly, the “behavioural (cultural) dimension of the question” was tried to uncover at a Turkish state university’s political science and public administration department which educates potential candidates for the public service (see Ömürgönülşen and Öktem, 2005 and 2006). In order to conduct a qualitative empirical research about the cultural dimension of the question, Schein’s (1999) “interview model” was adopted and then adjusted in accordance with the aim of research.

Since culture is “deep, extensive, and complex covering all aspects of reality and human functioning”, if an organisation is not achieving goals or can do better, one does need to “get in touch with the deeper cultural assumptions that are driving” him/her (Schein 1999: 58). Schein claims that surveys and questionnaires to measure culture do not reach “tacit shared assumptions” of

organisations since one would not know what to ask about, or asking about a shared phenomenon is inefficient and possibly invalid (1999: 59-60). In order to uncover those assumptions which are tacit and out of awareness, Schein's interview model (1999) is likely to be more effective. Since the authors are well aware of the methodological and practical limitations of technique of questionnaire and they believe that it is highly difficult to obtain honest answers from respondents in a very sensitive topic such as public service ethics, Schein's interview model was preferred and then adjusted³.

This adjusted model had a facilitator component (the authors in this case) who created the setting for three separate working (self-study) groups composed of "academic colleagues" (six academics of whom two were newcomers), "undergraduate students" (twelve senior students) and "graduates" (twelve graduates who were working as public servants at the time of research done)⁴. The interviews with first two groups were made in April 2005 (see Ömürğönülşen and Öktem, 2005) and the interviews with the last group were made in April 2006 (see Ömürğönülşen and Öktem, 2006). This model with all these three components was employed to bring some tacit shared assumptions of Turkish public administration on public service ethics to consciousness within the "modest limits of this research". The effects of cultural factors (e.g. historical traditions, artefacts, proverbs, moral and religious sanctions, public shame, cognitive preparations, cooperation) in the ethical development process of Turkish public bureaucracy were assessed through this model with the help of modest findings related to the case of a Turkish state university. Even cultural and religious norms which are in essence are normative ethical norms derives from moral traditions (see Lewis, 2008: 46) were examined through an empirical (behavioural) analysis. Thus, both normative and behavioural aspects of the question were analysed in that research by taking normative research-empirical research links into consideration.

2.3. Methodological Limitations of such an Endeavour

Although cultural perspective is very important to understand both whole bureaucracy and individual bureaucratic organisations (see Ott, 1989), even Schein (1985) warns that this perspective has its own problems, limitations and dangers. Therefore, both the problems of cultural perspective used to understand the cultural foundations of ethical/unethical conducts in the Turkish public service and the limitations of adjusted interview model used to uncover the cultural dimension of the issue empirically were taken into account in this qualitative empirical study.

First of all, measurement in social phenomena is a classic debate (see Dooren and de Walle, 2008). Especially, culture with its social, organisational

and individual dimensions in public administration is not an easy variable to measure. What and how we are measuring some aspects of it is a critical matter. Furthermore, such an attempt does not produce a static picture in each time (Freeman and Sherwood, 1970: 159). So, the results of adjusted interview model, which was used by the authors to assess the effects of cultural factors in the ethical development process of Turkish public bureaucracy should be taken into consideration within the framework of such limitations.

Second, there is a close relationship between the perceptions, attitudes and behaviours of public officials and national culture as we mentioned above. The findings of a cross-cultural study, to which the authors contributed, indicate relationship among nationality, cultural orientation and attitudes of people toward different ethical applications (Park et al., 2008) based on Hofstede's (1980) dimensions of cultural orientations. This study refers to the works of Palau (2001), Tsui and Windsor (2001), Thomas and Au (2002) and Smith and Hume (2005) in order to give evidence of the "influence of culture ethics generally". It also mentions that most cross-cultural studies on ethical attitudes and perceptions have reported that "national culture has a significant influence on ethical attitudes and behaviors" (see Ahmed et al., 2003; Christie et al., 2003; and Su, 2006) and national culture is "an important factor in explaining individual ethical attitudes preferences" (Su, 2006). Culture is also shown "to be closely linked to ethical decision making through its influence on valuations, reasoning, attitudes, and individual preferences" (Leung et al., 1995; Chen et al., 1997; Lu et al., 1999). Therefore, it can be expected that culture to have an influence "through shaping people's perceptions" on: "what kind of activities are perceived as wrongdoing", and "what is considered the appropriate response to wrongdoing" (Park et al., 2008: 929-930). In order to take culture and especially national culture into account in their analysis, the authors conducted their research in the light of discussion on the Turkish socio-political culture affecting public service ethics in Turkey.

Third, there are some difficulties, which are faced by researchers in the field of cultural study of organisations, in the areas of conceptualisation, operationalisation, data collection and interpretation and the focus (see Tayeb, 1994). For this reason perhaps, the students of organisational behaviour usually work in the context of middle (meso) level (Merton, 1957 cited in Bacharach, 1989: 512) rather than a macro level. The subject of "bureaucratic culture" can also be reviewed at macro (i.e. the whole Turkish bureaucracy), meso (i.e. particular public organisation, public service or corpse of public servants) and micro (i.e. individual public servant) levels. The authors also attempted to enter into this problematic research area with this preliminary step at meso (i.e. a state university and different public organisations in various public service areas) and micro (i.e. academics, students and graduates who were working as public

servants) levels rather than at a macro level. They tried to derive some significant clues about the common values, perceptions and attitudes of Turkish public bureaucracy in respect to public service ethics from the actual values, perceptions and attitudes of the individual respondents.

Fourth, closely related with the problem emphasised above, particular and limited findings of a local research cannot be generalised to the whole public bureaucracy. Although there are some common cultural elements in the Turkish public bureaucracy, Turkish bureaucrats' values, perceptions and attitudes about public service ethics may vary to some extent from one service class to another (see Ömürgönülşen, Öktem and Bilgin, 2009a) and from older generation to younger one (see Ömürgönülşen and Öktem, 2009b). Authors are very well aware of this problem and would not claim that this study easily overcome the methodological difficulties associated with this type of research. To what extent do those students bring their own cultural values to the Turkish public bureaucracy? To what extent are those graduates who work as a public servant in different public organisations under the influence of common values and behavioural patterns of Turkish public bureaucracy? These are highly difficult questions to answer and require more comprehensive empirical field studies.

Although it is not wise to generalise the findings of a study covering just one organisation or one group to the whole public sector since each public organisation or a group of public servants is expected to have its own unique administrative culture and socio-political environment, public organisations or groups of public servants usually resemble to one another and have similar cultural characteristics. State universities, especially those with a relatively strong traditional background based on public funding and strict public financial control, have quite similar bureaucratic tendencies from which any large bureaucratic public organisation would benefit and/or suffer (Öktem et al., 2003: 178-9, 182, 184). Those academics, students and graduates in the authors' research are affiliated with a Turkish state university's political science and public administration department, which educates potential candidates for the public service. Those students are from, more or less, similar socio-economic background (i.e. urbanised middle class) and inclined to enter to the public service. As a matter of fact, most of them are likely to do so like graduates who were interviewed by the authors. So, in the face of existence of very limited empirical research in this field, the findings of such a preliminary research can be an important clue in the way to understand the general picture.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

In this paper, the issue of analysis of a normative issue in public administration on the basis of empirical data within a methodological framework has been dealt with a special reference to public service ethics in Turkey within the boundaries of the design and findings of the research previously conducted for a different aim by the authors. This attempt shows that how a normative issue in public service ethics (i.e. establishing and proper functioning of an ethical administration in accordance with all internationally accepted standards and norms in Turkey) can be assessed on the basis of empirical data (i.e. the cultural strengths and weaknesses of Turkish public administration in combating unethical conducts). The findings of the empirical research also constitute an input for legal-administrative measures to be taken by politicians and public administrators and those measures can be elaborated by a normative approach. Those findings may also give rise to other normative questions (e.g. how could/could not commonly adopted but inherently passive traditional religious-moral rules and sanctions be utilised in public service ethics beside to secular measures in a secular state?) which can be discussed in another study. Thus, there is a close connection between normative research and empirical research and the communication of different research findings should be provided.

NOTES

¹ The First Transatlantic Dialogue on Ethics and Integrity of Governance, 2-5 June 2005, Leuven-Belgium, the Public Management Institute of the Catholic University of Leuven&ASPA&EGPA.

² For further discussion in the similar lines (however in connection with values in public administration) see Ömürgönülşen and Öktem (2009b: 143-146).

³ The technique of interview is, without any doubt, much time consuming than the technique of questionnaire in collecting data (i.e. organising and conducting interviews) and analysing the qualitative data gathered (e.g. decoding, classifying and then interpreting the data) and it has also its own objectivity and reliability problems stemming from its qualitative nature. Although it seems that this technique has been used recently more often than before in social sciences including the field of administrative sciences, questionnaire-type techniques are still more preferred among researchers (see Kutanis, Bayraktaroglu and Yıldırım, 2007).

⁴ In this model, the interview session takes at least half a day for each working group. The facilitators, who create the setting and provide the model, ask provocative questions until the working group brings some important shared tacit assumptions of the culture to consciousness. This interview session is about problem areas that matter to the “continuing success” and performance of an organisation (Schein 1999: 65-66, 68). Those steps are: (1) meeting in a room with a bunch of flipcharts, to focus on “ethics

performance” to improve; (2) reviewing the concept of culture existing at levels of “visible artifacts”, “espoused values”, and “shared tacit assumptions”; (3) identifying the artifacts characterising the organisation; (4) (after an hour or so) identifying the organisation’s values (often written down and published); (5) comparing values and artifacts in the same problem areas where they do not support each other, and there are inconsistencies and conflicts indicating that “a deeper tacit assumption is operating and driving the systems”; and (6) assessing the pattern of shared assumptions identified in terms of how they aid or hinder accomplishing the goals (achieving an ethical public administration).

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