

VALUES & ETHICS TOWARDS QUALITY PUBLIC DELIVERY SYSTEM OF MALAYSIA: AN ISLAMIC PERSPECTIVE

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ABSTRAK

Nilai dan etika adalah dua istilah yang sering digunakan sama ada dalam sektor awam, swasta mahupun korporat. Ia digunakan dalam perbualan harian tanpa mengira sama ada dari golongan atasan mahupun bawahan, berjawatan tinggi mahupun rendah. Namun, pemakaiannya kadang-kala tanpa kefahaman yang menyeluruh. Bahkan dari sudut konsepnya juga terdapat pelbagai berbahasan khususnya antara nilai dan etika dari perspektif moden dan Islam. Menjelaskan istilah ini dari sudut konsep moden dan Islam adalah sesuatu yang menjadi asas perbincangan dalam penulisan ini. Pendedahan khususnya oleh pihak media tentang pelbagai bentuk keruntuhan nilai dan etika khasnya di kalangan penjawat awam seperti pecah amanah, penipuan, ketidakcekapan, kelewatan dalam sesuatu proses perkhidmatan, penyalahgunaan kuasa dan sebagainya telah menjadi penghalang kepada keberkesanan sistem penyampaian awam di Malaysia. Oleh itu, penulisan ini bukan sekadar mengupas perihal konsep nilai dan etika dari perspektif moden dan Islam, tetapi juga mengupas konsep tersebut dari sudut amalannya di Malaysia. Penekanan utama dari aspek amalan tersebut ditumpukan kepada dua aspek iaitu kepada pembaharuan perkhidmatan awam yang meliputi aspek dasar, peraturan, pendekatan Islam Hadhari serta pelan Integriti Nasional yang menjurus kepada aspek nilai dan etika tersebut yang diistilahkan sebagai 'civil service reform' dan 'organizational policy'. Amalan-amalan pentadbiran ini, dilihat sebagai mekanisme ke arah mewujudkan sistem penyampaian awam berkualiti di negara ini.

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INTRODUCTION

Everyday and everywhere we shall read and hear about an unethical human behavior and conduct such as stealing, fraud, lying, deceit, conflict of interest, egoism, etc. If this is continuing in this modern world, we are afraid that it will be a serious symptom especially to white color crime either in short or long term. Allah mentioned in the Holy Quran, *'Mischief has appeared on land and sea because of (the med) that the hands of men have earned, that (God) may give them a taste of some of their deeds: in order that they may turn back (from evil)'*. [Surah al-Rum: 40] In organization, plenty of unethical behavior and action is reported as occurred in this modern day. Public offices are no exception. Complaints such as lack of transparency, inconsistency in decision making, abuse of power, lack of trust, bureaucratic, dishonesty, favoritism, seeking pressures by using official position, misusing government information and many more are always heard and read in media.

These immoral values and ethics are against the Islamic teaching and morality and should be seen as a challenge to managerial integrity. In Malaysia, Islamic values and ethics has been introduced and enforced in Civil Service since early years of Independence through the civil service reform and organizational policy. But more has been stressed under the administration of our new Prime Minister Dato' Seri Abdullah Hj Ahmad Badawi. He mentioned seriously about combating bribery and strengthening integrity amongst civil servants. He came out with the idea of 'Islam Hadhari' (Civilizational Islam), National Integrity Plan and focus on human capital development as his major strategy and measure to enhance values and ethics as provided in the Ninth Malaysia Plan.

To put an understanding of values and ethics comprehensively, I will first develop the concept of Islamic ethics and how it could work especially in public organization as my first part of writing. Second part is about the civil service reforms (CSR) and organizational policy (OP) pertaining to values and ethics towards quality delivery system in Malaysia.

Conceptual Understanding Of Ethics

I-What is ethics in contemporary understanding?

Ethics is a common term in reflecting human behavior. And to understanding the Islamic point of views on this aspect, the term must first be well understood. In fact, to understand about work ethics, one should also first understand the term 'ethics'.

Basically, ethics in the Oxford English Dictionary means 'science of morals'. 'Morals' is defined as "concerned with goodness or badness of character or disposition or with the distinction between right and wrong".

The words "ethics" and "morality" have Greek and Latin origins respectively. Traditionally they referred to customary values and values of conduct (as in "cultural ethos" and "social moves") as well as insights about what counts as human excellence.

This term has been defined by many western scholars since many years ago. Lawrence Buell in 'In Pursuit Of Ethics' (1994) said:¹

'Ethics has gained new resonance in literary studies during the past dozen years, even if it has not- at least yet-become the paradigm-defining concept that textuality was for the 1970s and historicism for the 1980s'

According to Buell this term has been repeatedly discussed by many as a way of reminding people about its importance and it has been put in a new expression called "renewal of ethics".² To understand the meaning of ethics, there are many authors who had explained this in their books and I shall pick some of them here. According to Zygmunt Bauman:³

'Ethics-a moral code, wishing to be the moral code, the one and only set of mutually coherent precepts that ought to be obeyed by any moral person-views the plurality of human ways and ideals as a challenge, and the ambivalence of moral judgments as a morbid state of affairs yearning to rectified'.

Bauman views ethics as a code for person with morality. This shows that ethics and morality are two symbiotic terms. Another explanation to ethics is:⁴

¹ Cited from Marchitello, Howard (ed.) (2001). "Remembering Ethics" in *What happens To History, The Renewal Of Ethics In Contemporary Thought*. London: Routledge, p.1.

² *Ibid*, p. 2.

³ Bauman, Zygmunt (1993), *Postmodern Ethics*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, p. 21.

⁴ Lillie, William (1971), *An Introduction to Ethics*, 3rd Edition. London: Methuen & Co LTD, pp. 1-2.

'The normative science⁵ of the conduct of human beings living in societies- a science which judges this conduct to be right or wrong, to be good or bad or in some similar way''.

In conclusion, ethics is always defined as a moral code which can be good or bad depending on values and cultures of the society. Values are ascertained by people's belief about right and wrong.⁶ To determine whether certain act is right or wrong, majority or tradition acceptance will be measured and taken into account.⁷As mentioned by Ricky:⁸

'What constitutes ethical behavior varies from one person to another....although ethical behavior is in the eye of the beholder, it usually refers to behavior that conforms to generally accepted social norms'.

The Standards of Determining 'Ethical' and 'Unethical'⁹

Philosophers are not in agreement regarding the standards of judgment of 'right' and 'wrong' behavior. There have been a number of theories proposed by moral philosophers regarding the determination of value standards. Some of them are as below;

a) No standards or Relative Ethics

Relative ethics maintains that there are no moral rules that apply to all men as such. There are forms of ethical relativity, which would admit of standards for all members of a limited group, but would not hold these standards true for those not belonging to that group. However, there are other more extreme forms of ethical relativity in which

⁵ *Ibid.* Some key terms used in this definition are briefly explained here for a better understanding of the concept. The term 'Normative Science' in the definition is a discipline, which describes or sets standards or rules for the field under consideration. In other words, a normative science deals with 'how things ought to be' rather than 'how things really are'. The term 'conduct' is a collective name for voluntary actions. A voluntary action is an action that a man could have done differently if he had so chosen.

⁶ W. Griffin, Ricky (1999), *Management*, 6th Edition. London: Houghton Mifflin Company, p. 104.

⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹ <http://www.understanding.islam.com> referring to Moiz.Amjad, (2000), *Principles Of Islamic Ethics-An Introduction*.

what is right for any man is a purely individual matter. Thus, according to this point of view, there is no question of any standard at all.

b) The Standard as Intuition

Intuitive ethics maintains that 'good' actions are those, which are believed to be 'good' through the intuition of the individual passing the judgment.

c) The Standard as Law

Legal ethics maintains that 'good' actions are those, which are stated to be 'good' by the law. The word 'law' according to this school includes all such laws that are passed by a higher authority, including God-as in the Law of God, or Law of Moses (pbuh). Thus, Christian or Judaic ethics, which maintains that all that has been prescribed in the divine law is 'good' and all that has been prohibited is 'bad', can be considered as a part of this school.

d) The Standard as Pleasure

This theory holds that pleasantness is the only quality because of which an experience is 'good' or valuable. A good action is an action which leads to a pleasant experience as its consequence, and the right action at any moment is the one which will lead to more pleasant experiences or to greater pleasure than any other actions. It should be remembered that this school do not merely hold that one of the consequences of 'good' is pleasure. On the contrary, it holds that the only thing, which makes an action 'good' is the consequent pleasure that may result from it.

e) The Standard as Determined By Evolution

According to this school, the conduct to which we apply the name 'good' is relatively more evolved conduct, and the conduct to which we apply the named 'bad' is relatively less evolved. The particular moral code accepted by any community at any period of history depends on the natural selection of that community, in accordance with its circumstances.

f) The Standard as Perfection

According to this theory, 'good' action is one, which contributes in making the self 'perfect' and helps in removing all human shortcomings from it.

g) The Standard as Value

According to this school, 'good' actions are those, which produce 'good' or valuable consequences.

With all these factors, we can see that to determine what is 'good' and 'bad' is something subjective and arguable amongst moral philosophers. Everybody shall claim that their theories or opinions are more relevant. Islam is different because, rules of Allah through The Holy Quran and al-Sunnah has laid down the basic principles of what is considered as 'good' and 'bad', 'right' and 'wrong' or 'ethical' and 'unethical'. Nevertheless, it does not mean that we cannot create our own law, philosophy, culture etc. Islamic system recognizes and considers physical, mental and spiritual of human beings as an essential matters for the development of their human resources and the effective utilization of these sources that bring about a good and ethical Muslim. This will be explained later in this writing.

II-What is ethics In Islam?

Ethics in Islam is a reflection of good values whether in behavior, action, thinking or even heart. Indeed, ethics must be a good attitude, behavior, and discipline in any spheres of human living whether it can be seen or not by people. The Quran uses several terms to denote the concept of moral or religious goodness and righteousness. There are *al-Khayr* (goodness), *al-Birr* (righteousness), *al-Qist* (equity), *al-Ḥaqq* (truth & right), *al-'Adl* (justice), *al-ma'rūf* (known & approved) and *al-Taqwa* (piety). Pious actions are referred to *al-Ṣāliḥāt* and impious or sinful actions are termed *Sayyi'āt*. The term *al-Khayr* occurs not fewer than 170 times in the Quran. It can be referred among other in Verse 3: 104 as follows:

"Let there be among you a nation calling to goodness (khayr) bidding the approved (ma'ruf) and forbidding the disapproved (munkar); these are the prosperous".

According to Rafik Issa Beekun ethics is 'the set of moral principles that distinguish what is right from what is wrong. It is a normative field because it prescribes what one should do or abstain from doing'.¹⁰ According to Islam, man has not come into existence on his own and neither is he a product of natural forces that had somehow, by pure chance, combined to produce life. On the contrary, man is a creation of an All Wise, and a Most Merciful Creator.

¹⁰ Beekun, Rafik Issa (1997), *Islamic Business Ethics*. U.S.A: International Institute Of Islamic Thought, Herndon, Virginia, p. 2.

According to al-Miskawih the word insan (man) is a derivative of uns (natural affection) in Arabic which indicates the value of man in Islam.¹¹ However, one should remember that this affection in man is a quality which can be developed through several mechanisms including political enforcement, rules and regulation, motivation and training as well as co-operation with his counterparts.

Allah gave man life, intellect, freedom and authority to choose between good and bad, to do or indulge into evil. Indeed, all these are assets given to test how man thankful to Allah. In Surah al-Shams: 7-10, Allah has presented this knowledge of the human soul as an evidence of the fact that soon, man shall indeed face separate consequences of his 'good' and 'bad' deeds. The Quran says:

'The human soul-the way He molded it and inspired it with knowledge of its evil and its good-bears witness to the fact that indeed he, who cleanses it [of all impiety] shall be successful while he, who corrupts it shall face doom'.

The Quran has, for instance, mentioned wrongfully depriving others of their rights and bribing authorities for this purpose to be a great sin, as a direct contrary to the basic values of justice, honesty and refraining from defrauding others. The Quran says:

'Do not devour one another's wealth through unjust means, nor bribe the authorities in order that you may wrongfully usurp the possession of others-while you are well aware (of its being a sinful act)'

(Sūrah al-Baqarah: 188)

Islamic ethics concept is unique. In contemporary understanding, ethics is a moral or good behavior that visible and judge able. But in Islam, having good intention is also considered as ethical. Several other uniqueness of ethics in Islam are;

1) **Uniqueness in its scopes**- whereby the practice of ethics is not only at work place or place of worship but at any places.

2) **Uniqueness in its judgment**- judgment on ethics is not only in situation that can be measured or seen by people but in any situation and condition. As the One that measure ethics is Allah SWT

¹¹ M. Abdul Haq Ansari (1964), *The Ethical Philosophy of Miskawih*. London: Aligarh, p. 134.

3) Uniqueness in its source- the source of ethics, is not only from human's brain and intelligence but from the Sovereignty of Allah SWT, The Creator of the brain and the al-Sunnah. We get our idea on how to develop and implement ethics in our living from our study and experience after Allah gives His full guidance and motivation.

4) Uniqueness in its rewards- an ethical person will not only be rewarded by his or her employer if he is a worker or a subordinate but it is a guarantee for him to get rewards from Allah SWT. Indeed, what Allah rewards is more than what people can offer.

5) Uniqueness in its punishment- if one can escape from being punished from his mistakes or wrong doing; he however cannot escape from Allah's punishment in the Hereafter. But if he seeks Allah's forgiveness, Allah will always forgive him even if his wrong doing is unforgivable by many people.

As I mentioned earlier, the first determinant of ethics in Islam is Allah The Almighty. Allah Knows everything we do even things in our minds. Allah knows all our actions. This is also what we called as benevolence (*ihsān*) to Allah. That is the reason why Islam emphasizes on the concept of sincerity as an important determinant in every single action. The question is who knows whether you are sincere or not? People do not know what is in your mind even if you confess many times that you are sincere in doing your job for example, only Allah Knows what is in your mind, heart and soul. Allah had said:

قُلْ هَلْ نُنَبِّئُكُمْ بِالْأَخْسَرِينَ أَعْمَالًا

Say: "Shall we tell you of those who lose most in respect of their deeds?"

(Sūrah al-Kahf: 103)

Therefore, what constitutes ethical behavior in Islam is what is permissible for a person to act either according to his culture or personal values. And that act must not differ from the basic principles laid under the teaching of al-Quran and al-Sunnah. Ethics in Islam cannot just be ascertained through human thinking or mentality or traditions. It must be in conformity with the Holy Quran and the teaching of Prophet Muhammad pbuh.

The meaning of conformity with al-Quran and al-Sunnah however, does not mean that one should limit his or her actions to what is directly mentioned in both sources only. For example, the ethics of being sincere, modesty, just, responsive and tolerant. These are some of the values that Allah mentioned in The Holy Quran. But there are

thousands other values that are not stated specifically in The al-Quran such as creative, innovative, inventive etc. Thus, 'conformity' means an actions and attitudes that adhere with the spirit of Islam. Therefore, any values, attitudes, behavior and actions that are in conformity with the spirit and basic principles of Islam are encouraged, permissible and even in some situation is 'a must' to every Muslims. For example obedience to Allah is the root of any other values in human ethics. As Allah has said:

وَمَا خَلَقْتُ الْجِنَّ وَالْإِنْسَ إِلَّا لِيَعْبُدُونِ

"And I (Allah) have not created the jinn and humans but to serve Me".

(Sūrah al-Dhāriyat: 56)

The word 'but to serve Me' is for Muslims to give full obedience to Allah and therefore man's raison d'être. From this start, Muslims learn about obedience, loyalty responsibility and commitment. These values are among the important in today's modern work ethics. And this command of Allah also shows that He knows better about human capability to be the best ethical mankind on earth. Allah's Praise to human is real as He said:

لَقَدْ خَلَقْنَا الْإِنْسَانَ فِي أَحْسَنِ تَقْوِيمٍ

"We have created man in the best of forms"

(Sūrah al-Tīn: 4)

إِنَّا عَرَضْنَا الْأَمَانَةَ عَلَى السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَالْجِبَالِ فَأَبَيْنَ أَنْ يَحْمِلْنَهَا وَأَشْفَقْنَ مِنْهَا وَحَمَلَهَا الْإِنْسَانُ إِنَّهُ كَانَ ظَلُومًا جَهُولًا

"We have perfected his (man's) creation and breathed into him of our spirit. Indeed, Allah has created hearing, your sight and discerning heart".

(Sūrah al-Sajdah: 9)

We offered Our trust to the heavens, the earth and the mountains: but they refused to carry it and were frightened by its burden. However, man accepted to carry it'.

(Sūrah al-Aḥzāb: 72)

In fact, Islam has its own system and discipline to maintain the well being of human attitudes through its Syariah-Islamic law. Among others is the category of Muslim actions. The Islamic law provides five categories of action. First, act that is obligatory and compulsory to all Muslims (that has fulfilled certain requirement) named 'Fardh/wajib'. Those who obey and perform duty will gain reward or if not punishment will be imposed accordingly. This category includes all the five pillars of Islam. Second, act that is optional of whether to do or not to do but it is highly recommended named 'mandub/mustahab' and will get rewards from Allah. Third, act that is not prohibited but not in Allah's favor named 'makruh'. Those who do it will not be punished as if he's doing the forbidden act but he is likely to gain Allah's anger. Finally, act that is unlawful and prohibited or strictly impermissible named 'haram'. Those who abstain it will be rewarded and those who ignore it will be punished.

This system together with the role of heart is the most equilibrium system to judge Muslims work ethic. The role of heart means the intention and the planning itself, if good and sincere is considered as an ethical behavior even though it has not been done yet or it is done but in a very tiny weight. Everything is visible and countable to Allah as ethical. Allah has said;

يَوْمَئِذٍ يَصْدُرُ النَّاسُ أَشْتَاتًا لِيُرَوْا أَعْمَالَهُمْ فَمَنْ يَعْمَلْ
مِثْقَالَ ذَرَّةٍ خَيْرًا يَرَهُ, وَمَنْ يَعْمَلْ مِثْقَالَ ذَرَّةٍ شَرًّا يَرَهُ

'On that day [the Day of Judgment], all people will be resurrected and shown their own deeds, Whoever does an atom's weight of good will behold it then, and whoever does an atom's weight in evil, it will be reckoned unto him with equal precision'

(Sūrah al-Zalzalah:6-8)

In another Ayat He Said:

وَاللَّهُ يَعْلَمُ مَا تَصْنَعُونَ

'And Allah Knows what you do'.

(Sūrah al-Ankabūt: 45)

The determinants of whether certain action, behavior, attitude and thinking are considered ethical or not in Islamic system are based on;

1. The divine sources- al-Quran and al-Sunnah;
2. The Muslims tradition- Views from majority Muslims scholars (*ijmā'*);
3. The common practices (*al-'adah*) of the society that are good practices and yet not contradict with the spirit of Islam; and
4. The faculty of intellect and the freedom of choice which are in accordance to the Islamic spirit and its objectivity.

Thus, the nature of Islamic ethics is composite. It integrates both the material and spiritual aspects. It is also a means for self-development and correction that can bring perfection to our belief (*iman*).

Continuous & Holistic Approaches Of Islamic Ethics At Work Place

In Islam, the standard of values and ethics is that it must be practiced at all times and places. Work ethics is not about being good at certain place, time and aspect or to certain amount of work or to certain individual or for the benefit in this world only but for the Hereafter. It is a responsibility at all times and places which will be rewarded if it is practiced in sincerity and acknowledgement to Allah. The two key words to Islamic standard of ethics are continuity and holistic (*syumul*). They must be fully understood by Muslims before ethics can be practiced successfully in their living and workplace.

Allah said to the effect:

وَابْتَغِ فِيمَا آتَاكَ اللَّهُ الدَّارَ الْآخِرَةَ وَلَا تَنْسَ نَصِيبَكَ مِنَ الدُّنْيَا وَأَحْسِنَ كَمَا
أَحْسَنَ اللَّهُ إِلَيْكَ وَلَا تَبْغِ الْفُسَادَ فِي الْأَرْضِ إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يُحِبُّ الْمُفْسِدِينَ

'But seek, with the (wealth) which God has bestowed on thee, the Home of the Hereafter, not forget thy portion in this world: but do thou good, as God has been to thee, and seek not (occasions for) mischief in'.

(Sūrah al-Qaṣaṣ: 77)

لِيَجْزِيَهُمُ اللَّهُ أَحْسَنَ مَا عَمِلُوا وَيَزِيدَهُم مِّن فَضْلِهِ وَاللَّهُ
يَرْزُقُ مَنْ يَشَاءُ بِغَيْرِ حِسَابٍ

'That God may reward them according to the best of their deeds, and add even more for them out of His Grace; for God doth provide for those He Will, without measure'.

(Sūrah al-Nūr:38)

The aim of being an ethical person must be on improving Muslims' belief and faith on God, so that it may attain well being in earth and the Hereafter. In other words, it is a requisite to one's faith to Allah. Ethical acts are not distinguished from religious acts. The more religious an individual is the more ethical he will also be!¹² In Islam, there will be no such thing as one 'lives up to one's own deeply held values' because it has its standards and principles to be followed. In fact one must check one's progress not only against one's own ideals but against the ideals and behavior of the ethical community and Islamic teaching. Only by this way, an ethical culture can be formed and formulated in workplace. There are at least eight factors that can give stand to continuous Islamic ethical culture:

1. Sincerity to Allah (al-Ikhlās);
2. An understanding of Islamic epistemology on ethics;
3. Self determination (al-yaqīn) ;
4. Parental environment ;
5. Social environment ;
6. Organizational policy;
7. Training and motivation; and
8. Recognition and support

If these factors can be implemented both individually and collectively it will ascertain continuous and holistic Islamic ethics everywhere. Indeed, the highest end of moral and intellectual perfection cannot be fully realized unless there is a recognized political authority to enforce values and ethics.¹³ In Malaysia, there are at least four major

¹² Al-Ghazzālīy (1990), *Ihyā' Ulūm al-Dīn*, vol.1. Damsyik: Dār al-Khīr, p. 15.

¹³ M. Abdul Haq Ansari (1964), *op.cit.*, p.135.

frameworks that enable Islamic values to be inculcated effectively in Malaysian Civil Service;

1. Islam is a national religion;
2. Malaysia is an Islamic Country;
3. The inculcation of Islamic values policy; and
4. Islam Hadhari (Civilisational Islam) as government approach to bring back the glory of Islamic civilization in Malaysia.

With these frameworks, all those factors can be worked out and have been worked out particularly in its public administration through many ways including Circular Letters for civil servants, policies on values, rules and regulations, strategic planning, and recently are through the serious call for integrity through the National Integrity Plan. The idea is to cultivate values as a culture. Nevertheless, if one looks at the region, there are many greater challenges for an ethical culture. An ethical culture is no longer a moral or religious issue but one that affects architecture of public governance, private sector and economic performance of countries. Thus, all the eight factors underlined above should be seriously taken into account and practices without omitting the standard of Islamic ethics which is holistic and continuous in its nature.

Building Continuous Work Ethics Through Civil Service Reforms (CSR) And Organizational Policy (OP)

Not only in Malaysia, but all over the world, the governments and their citizens the world over are engaged in various forms of civil service reform (CSR). CSR does not only involve structural building and law reform but also attitudinal and mental reform. It could also vary from country to country depending on the reasons, motives and expectations. In Malaysia CSR was driven by values to improve public services for citizen besides to boost economic growth. Globalization, democratization, the advent of the computer and information technology and the private provision and expectation of public services are undeniably the vigorous push for CSR all over the world.¹⁴ This is also called as a new paradigm in public administration and Malaysia is not excluded in the process.

The CSR or also named as administrative reforms introduced since independence can be classified into the following focus areas namely;

¹⁴ G. Roth (1987), *The Private Provision Of Public Services In Developing Countries*. New York: Oxford University Press, p. 42.

- a) Structural changes;
- b) Improved productivity and delivery of services;
- c) Office automation and information systems technology for the public sector;
- d) Measuring efficiency and effectiveness;
- e) Improving performance reporting in the public sector;
- f) Total Quality Management;
- g) Attitude and behavioral change;
- h) Strengthening statistical capacity; and
- i) District administration.

Five of the above focuses (b),(d),(e),(f), and (g) are pertaining to the notion of values. Without values, these focuses will merely become an imagination of the government. In the part of attitudinal and behavioral change to accelerate values and ethics in Malaysia, it has been worked out by enforcing code of ethics at workplace, client charter, service counter, quality assurance standard such as ISO, TQM, Quality Day, QCC, awards and recognition and conducive working environment. The decade of the eighties witnessed the beginning of this reformation.¹⁵

Several principles of work ethics can be codified by an organization. In Malaysia, the government had underlined several work ethics for the Civil Service as a principal guideline. Seven fundamental values have been identified and focused for the civil servants; quality, productivity, innovativeness, discipline, integration, accountability and professionalism. They were introduced by many ways. Some were introduced through government policy such as ‘Clean, Efficient and Trustworthy Policy’, ‘Leadership by Example’, ‘Look East Policy’, ‘The Inculcation of Islamic Values Policy’ and ‘Vision 2020’ and recently in 2004 the government introduced the Plan for National Integrity and the Malaysian Institute of Integrity. Take Vision 2020 as an example, the government identifies values as a challenge for the public service as quoted below;¹⁶

‘the development of an administrative system that is mission-oriented and has the inherent ability to focus of effective delivery of quality services; the development of institutional capacity to promote and sustain a climate of creativity and innovation; the ability to respond effectively to complex and rapidly changing environmental demands, and the development of quality

¹⁵ Ahmad, Abdullah Sanusi, Norma Mansor & Abdul Kuddus Ahmad (2003), *The Malaysian Bureaucracy Four Decades Of Development*. Selangor: Prentice Hall, pp. 231-241.

¹⁶ Abdul Hamid, Ahmad Sarji (1994), *The Civil Service In Malaysia: A Paradigm Shift*. Kuala Lumpur: Percetakan Nasional, p. 745.

human resources to facilitate the transformation of Malaysia into a modern industrialized and fully developed nation'

The main objective of Vision 2020 is to make Malaysia a fully industrialized and developed nation. The government envisions that by the year 2020, Malaysia will become a united nation, with a confident Malaysian society, infused by a strong moral and ethical values, living in a democratic, tolerant, caring, economically just and equitable society, progressive and prosperous and in full possession of an economy that is competitive, dynamic, robust, resilient and socially just. Vision 2020 sets a new agenda for the future direction of the civil servant. The civil servant will take the lead role to bring changes not only to the economy of the country but also the people's culture towards values and ethics. To achieve this aim, six core work ethics and values had been identified to be the major focus in government's programmes namely;¹⁷

- 1) Basic Personal Values-such as sincerity, trust, self discipline, commitment, cooperation and moderation;
- 2) Customer Focused Values-such as courtesy, politeness, humanity, efficiency, carrying out work expeditiously and fulfilling the requirements of their customers;
- 3) Leadership values;
- 4) Professional values;
- 5) Productivity and Quality values; and
- 6) Religious values

A manual entitled "Guidelines for establishing performance indicators in government agencies" was issued in 1993 to assist agencies in implementing performance measurement. The performance indicators were incorporated into the agency's annual budget estimates, annual reports and other feedback to the government.¹⁸

Some other reforms were introduced through rules and regulations such as wearing nametags and clocking in to work. There are also written rules and regulations documented as the Code of Conduct under the Public Officers (Conduct and Discipline) Regulations 1993. Civil servants must abide by the ordinary and civil laws that apply

¹⁷ Leong, Ho Khai (ed.) (2001), *Mahathir's Administration performance and Crisis in Governance*. Kuala Lumpur: Times Books International, p. 188.

¹⁸ Muhammad Rais Bin Abdul Karim(1995), "Improving The Efficiency Of The Public Sector: A Case Study of Malaysia", *UNDP Report*, p. 11.

to all citizens, such as the Prevention of Corruption Act 1965 (revised 1970). The precise code of conduct requires that civil servants:¹⁹

- (i) shall at all times and on all occasions give undivided loyalty to the Yang Di Pertuan Agong, the country and the Government;
- (ii) should not subordinate public duty to private interest; shall not conduct in such a manner as is likely to bring private interests into conflict with public duty;
- (iii) shall refrain from private activities that might bring the public service into disrepute or to bring discredit thereto;
- (iv) show efficiency in industry;
- (v) should have honesty and trustworthiness;
- (vi) should show responsibility;
- (vii) shall not bring or attempt to bring any form of outside influence or pressure to support or advance a claim relating to public service, whether the claim is an individual claim or that of a group;
- (viii) shall not be unsubsordinated;
- (ix) shall not be negligent in duty;
- (x) shall maintain a proper reticence in matters of public and political controversy so that one's impartiality is beyond question;
- (xi) shall maintain confidentiality/secretcy of official information; and
- (xii) Shall not accept any gift or consideration as an inducement or reward in the performance of an official responsibility.

The code of conduct aims for 'highly disciplined civil servants who are responsible and committed to their jobs; excellent in job performance; high productivity and quality in the delivery of services; and a clean civil service...'²⁰

Despite these rules and regulations, public service is protected from any kind of maladministration and political interference under several commissions or council appointed by the Yang Di Pertuan Agong. The commissions and councils presently existing are:²¹

- Judicial & legal Service commission;
- Public Service Commission;

¹⁹ _____ (1994), *General and Administrative Orders*. Kuala Lumpur: International Law Book Services, pp. 88-101.

²⁰ *Ibid.*

²¹ Ahmad, Abdullah Sanusi, Norma Mansor & Abdul Kuddus Ahmad (eds.) (2003), *op. cit.*, p. 46.

- Public Commission;
- Education Service Commission;
- Armed Forces Council;
- The Respective State Public Service Commissions and; and
- Election Commission.

To uphold the integrity of the Malaysian civil service, the government continuously emphasizes the need for civil servants to maintain the trust that the public has in them through the inculcation of Islamic values to encourage ethical practices.

Besides regulations, mental preparation towards ethical behavior is very vital. There are three moral qualities called the 'operative virtues' which support ethical mental attitudes. These are;

- 1) the quality of optimism which enables a public servant to deal with the vast complexity of choices without becoming paralyzed to action;
- 2) courage which can be identified as abiding by principles in an unpopular cause; and
- 3) fairness that is the ability to play fair and place principle above personal needs for recognition, status and power.

Thus, being ethical is not about action per se but also attitude and mentality that full with good, positive and dynamic values. Turning to and exercising religious values will put this aim into reality. Besides, disciplinary system in administration is very important to assist people to conduct their job with continuous ethics. Policies and institutional building will directly or indirectly enhance the government objective towards better government service. Ethical government according to Tan Sri Dato' Sri Ahmad Sarji, former Chief Secretary to the Government, Malaysia (1990-1996):

*'means much more than laws. It is a spirit, an imbued code of conduct, an ethos. It is a climate in which, from the highest to the lowest ranking officials, some conduct is instinctively sensed as correct and other conducts as being beyond acceptance.'*²²

²² Paper presentation title "Ethics and Accountability For Good Governances In The Private Sector and The Civil Service". Kuala Lumpur: Institute Of Islamic Understanding, 14-15th January 2003.

All these reforms and policies are in accordance to Islamic values and ethics and need to be pursued vigorously. Besides, it must also be measured and reviewed from time to time to fully obtain the public confidence and respect as they do not expect this to be rhetoric. As quoted from Tunku Abdul Aziz, The President, Transparency International Malaysia in his public lecture said:²³

‘The issue of an ethical culture is a complex issue requires a large amount of clarity and dedication. There is no distinction between a private and public sector when discussing the accountability. The ethical demands fall on everyone in public life whether they are politicians, member of the profession, business executives. It is their duty to help their institutions serve the public interest and live up to their justifications. Their decisions must be motivated by considerations of public interest and their actions subjected to public scrutiny at all times’.

On top of these policies and regulations towards ethical public services, the Prime Minister YAB Dato’ Seri Hj Abdullah Ahmad Badawi has also announced the approach named as ‘Islam Hadhari’ (civilisational Islam) to bring the glory of Islamic civilization to the development of the country. And that is to be achieved by focusing on ten fundamental principles including:

- 1) Faith and piety in Allah;
- 2) A just and trustworthy government;
- 3) A free and independent people;
- 4) A vigorous pursuit and mastery of knowledge;
- 5) Balanced and comprehensive economic development;
- 6) A good quality of life for the people;
- 7) Protection of the rights of minority groups and women;
- 8) Cultural and moral integrity;
- 9) Safeguarding natural resources and environment and
- 10) Strong defense capabilities.

All these ten principles carry the essential values to prosperous. Therefore, building an ethical culture within the civil service is not only about responsibility but also public trust in globalizing world. Public trust is a very fragile commodity. It is not only difficult to win but it is also hard to regain. Civil servants must not lose sight of the fact that their very survival depends on the public trust and that must be shown

²³ Public lecture 12/05/04 at the Hilton Hotel, Petaling Jaya, Selangor.

from demonstration of their willingness and ability to run public office with quality values and ethics.

Integrity and unity in a multi-ethnic, multi-lingual, multi-cultural and religions country in Malaysia are also asset values to this agenda. This has been assured by the UNDP in regards to changes in public management reform:

‘Issues of institutional values, beliefs and norms and of individual attitudes, led to a focus on organization culture and how this might be changed by policy makers and top managers’.²⁴

The need for values and ethics exercises are therefore not only to reward the beholder but to gain greater achievement and excellencies in profession. Should the civil servants aware of the greater challenge in the era of globalization is not about physical and material sufficiency, but efficiency of the usage.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the origin or the motivating factor in adherence to ethical principles under the Islamic ethical philosophy is primarily the articles of faith in Islam. An attitude of deviation from ethical principles is a practical negation of ascription to the elements of Islamic faith. Furthermore, Islam has given full guidance and standard to values and ethics not only for Muslims but mankind as a whole. Practicing them full heartedly will form an ethical culture in everybody’s life and make their implementation in workplace become realistic and easy. In Malaysia, inculcating Islamic values has become a national policy and it has come to its 20 years of practice. Although the journey to an ethical culture is no end, standing on our religious and cultural values of sincerity, benevolent, honesty, integrity, justice, fairness, equity and love in civil service practices will bring Malaysia to prosperity and a good example to other Muslims’ countries especially in its delivery system.

²⁴ UNDP (1995), *Public Sector Management, Governances and Sustainable Human Development*. New York: United Nations Development Programme, pp. 3.