



Mains Practice Question

Q. Codes of ethics and codes of conduct are often used interchangeably, but they have different meanings and functions. Explain the differences between codes of ethics and codes of conduct and provide examples of each. (150 words)

13 Apr, 2023 GS Paper 4 Theoretical Questions

Approach

- Start your answer by introducing Code of conduct and code of ethics.
- Differentiate between both using examples.
- Value addition by providing recommendations for effective implementation of these codes.
- Conclude accordingly.

Introduction

- Codes of ethics and codes of conduct are both important **tools for promoting ethical behavior in the public sector**. While **codes of ethics provide overarching principles** and values, **codes of conduct provide more specific rules** and guidelines for behavior.
- Effective implementation of these codes is critical for ensuring that public officials behave ethically and responsibly.

Differences between Codes of Ethics and Codes of Conduct:

- Codes of ethics are **broad statements of principles and values that guide behavior**, while **codes of conduct are specific rules and guidelines for behavior**.
 - **For example, a code of ethics for civil servants would contain a declaration of values** reflecting public expectations of the relationship between the civil service and the government, legislature, and the public, with specific reference to political impartiality, accountability for actions, and responsibilities to the government of the day.
 - On the other hand, a **code of conduct for civil servants would provide specific guidelines on issues such as acceptance of gifts, conflict of interest, and acquisition of property**, as enunciated in the **Central Services (Conduct) Rules, 1964** and analogous rules applicable to members of the All India Services or employees of various State Governments.
- **Codes of ethics** are often **voluntary and aspirational**, while **codes of conduct are typically mandatory and enforceable**.
 - For instance, a **code of ethics** for civil servants would be **aspirational in nature** and would encourage officials to maintain the highest ethical standards.
 - On the other hand, the **Civil Service code in India is a legally enforceable** code of conduct that outlines the Civil Service's core values and the standards of behavior expected of all civil servants in upholding these values.
- **Code of ethics enables employees to make independent judgments** about the most appropriate course of action whereas **the code of conduct** enables employees to work in **compliance with rules and actions**.
 - For instance, code of ethics for civil servants would say that actions of officers should be driven by larger common good, leaving enough room for individual judgement.

- On the other hand, code of conduct would state that civil servants will not indulge in bribery etc.

Implementation of Code of Ethics and Code of Conduct in the Public Sector:

- To be effective, codes of ethics and codes of conduct **must be communicated clearly and consistently to public officials** at all levels of government.
 - Examples of effective implementation include **training programs under Karmyogi mission, regular reviews and updates of the codes, 360 degree performance appraisal of civil servants etc.**
- In addition, codes of ethics and codes of conduct should be **integrated into broader systems of accountability and transparency, such as public reporting on ethical violations and independent oversight by bodies** such as ombudsmen and audit committees.

Conclusion

- In India, while **there is no prescribed code of ethics for civil servants**, there are conduct rules that contain specific activities deemed undesirable for government servants. Therefore, there is a **need to lay down more generic norms as recommended by Hota committee and 2nd ARC.**
- By adhering to codes of ethics and codes of conduct, **civil servants can promote integrity, impartiality, and commitment to public service**, which are essential for maintaining the trust and confidence of the public in the government.

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