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Q10

Case study. In recent times, there has been an increasing concern in India to develop effective civil service ethics, code of conduct, transparency measures, ethics and integrity systems, and anti-corruption agencies. In view of this, there is a need being felt to focus on three specific areas, which are directly relevant to the problems of internalizing integrity and ethics in civil services. These are as follows: Anticipating specific threats to ethical standards and integrity in the civil services, Strengthening the ethical competence of civil servants, and Developing administrative processes and practices which promote ethical values and integrity in civil services. Suggest institutional measures to address the above three issues.

UPSC Civil Services Mains 2019 · GS IV · 20 marks · Ethics Case Studies

Case Studies on above issues.

Core demand of the question

- India seeks civil-service ethics, codes, transparency, integrity systems and anti-corruption agencies. Focus on three areas: anticipating threats to ethical standards; strengthening ethical competence of civil servants; developing administrative processes that promote ethics and integrity
- Suggest institutional measures for these three issues

Revision summary

- **Three tasks:** see threats early, train the officer, and design the desk so honesty is easier than graft.

Threats need risk maps, rotation, lifestyle checks and a working whistle-blower law.

Competence needs live-case academies, mentoring and integrity in empanelment.

Processes need RTI **Section 4**, DBT, charters, social audit, digital files and civil-service boards.

Use CVC, Lokpal, CAG and academies together, not a new empty agency.

Introduction

The case is not a street incident; it is a design problem. India already names codes, transparency, and vigilance bodies. The demand is to build three muscles: see threats before they mature, train the person, and shape the office so that honesty is the easy path.

Body**Stakeholders**

- Civil servants at every rung, including the probationer who copies seniors.
- Citizens and firms who meet the desk.
- Political executives who set the tone of postings.
- **Existing bodies:** Central Vigilance Commission, Lokpal, Information Commissions, Comptroller and Auditor General, Union Public Service Commission, and training academies.
- The media and whistle-blowers, who are informal sensors if they are not treated as enemies.

Ethical issues

- Integrity cannot be only a poster in the academy if the first wet posting teaches the opposite.
- Over-criminalising honest error can freeze the third muscle (process) while the first muscle (threats) grows in the dark.
- **Values:** integrity, objectivity, accountability, courage, and compassion in delivery.

(1) Anticipating specific threats to ethical standards

- **Map high-risk posts:** procurement, mining, policing, tax, and land. Publish a risk register, not a secret lament.
- Use integrity pact and e-procurement data to flag bid-rigging patterns before a scam is a newspaper.
- Lifestyle and conflict-of-interest declarations that are actually read, including family benami risks.
- Rotation calendars announced in advance so that a minister's midnight transfer is visible as an exception.
- **Horizon scanning:** new threats such as social-media blackmail, cryptocurrency kickbacks, and algorithm bias in welfare lists.
- **Institutional homes:** a strengthened Central Vigilance Commission and departmental vigilance that do preventive studies, not only trap cases; the Comptroller and Auditor General's performance audits as early warning; Financial Intelligence Unit inputs where money trails appear.
- **Lawful door for the person who sees a threat:** the Whistle Blowers Protection Act, 2014, with protection that is real enough that anticipation does not mean suicide of career.

(2) Strengthening ethical competence of civil servants

- Foundation and mid-career courses that use live dilemmas (tender, riot, hush money), not only a lecture on Nolan.
- Mentoring by officers with a clean record, named and honoured, so that the hidden curriculum is not the fixer.
- **Assessment of integrity in empanelment:** 360-degree inputs with safeguards against a faction veto.
- Psychological support and counselling so that debt, addiction, and isolation are treated before they become a bribe.
- **Constitutional literacy as a skill:** Articles 14, 19, 21, and Conduct Rules as decision tools.
- Exchange with Information Commissions and social-audit teams so the officer feels the citizen's side of the counter.
- **Institutional homes:** Lal Bahadur Shastri National Academy of Administration and State academies with a mandatory ethics module; Indian Institute of Public Administration; a Chief Vigilance Officer who trains, not only polices.

(3) Administrative processes and practices that promote ethics

- **Reduce discretion where it is only a bribe window:** Direct Benefit Transfer, online queues, published checklists, and the Right to Public Services model.
- Proactive disclosure under **Section 4** of the Right to Information Act, 2005 so that the citizen does not buy what should be free on the website.
- Citizens' charters with named officers and time limits, backed by grievance systems (CPGRAMS and State portals).
- Social audit, as under the **Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act, 2005**, extended in spirit to other beneficiary works.
- File notings that cannot vanish; digital records with audit trails.
- Civil services boards and stable tenure so that process is not reset every time an officer says no (T. S. R. Subramanian direction).
- A Lokpal that takes up high cases, and departmental inquiries that finish, so that process is not delay-as-reward.
- Protection of bonafide decision-making (the next question's concern) so that process does not become paralysis.

Options at system level

- **Option 1:** Only new agencies, no change in postings or tenders.
- **Merit:** a press release.
- **Demerit:** another building that files the same delays.
- **Option 2:** Only sermons and yoga, no law.
- **Merit:** cheap.
- **Demerit:** the wet posting still teaches theft.
- **Option 3:** Join the three: sensors, trained people, and redesigned desks, using bodies that already exist.
- **Merit:** coherent.
- **Demerit:** requires political will to lose the transfer weapon.

Reasoned action

- Do not invent a fantasy super-law. Use the **Central Vigilance Commission Act, 2003**, the **Lokpal and Lokayuktas Act, 2013**, the RTI Act, 2005, Conduct Rules, e-procurement mandates, and training academies - and make them talk to one another through a published integrity action plan for each ministry.

Flow diagram

Anticipate threats -> Risk registers and vigilance
 Ethical competence -> Academy cases and mentoring
 Ethical processes -> RTI DBT tenure boards DBT tenure boards
 Risk registers and vigilance -> Internalised integrity
 Academy cases and mentoring -> Internalised integrity
 RTI DBT tenure boards -> Internalised integrity

Conclusion

Anticipate threats with risk maps, data, and whistle-blower protection. Build competence with case-based training and integrity in empanelment. Shape processes with RTI, digital trails, service guarantees, social audit and stable tenure. Institutions already named must work as one system, not as separate posters.

Facts & figures

Central Vigilance Commission Act, 2003

Gives the CVC a statutory base for vigilance in Union organisations, including preventive work if it is actually resourced.

Lokpal and Lokayuktas Act, 2013

High independent inquiry into allegations against public functionaries; part of the anti-corruption institutional stack.

Whistle Blowers Protection Act, 2014

A lawful channel to report public-interest wrongdoing; essential if threats are to be anticipated by insiders.

RTI Act, 2005, Section 4

Proactive disclosure that reduces the darkness in which integrity threats grow.

Lal Bahadur Shastri National Academy of Administration

The principal foundation academy for All India Services, where ethical competence must be taught as a skill, not a slogan.

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