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## Mains Practice Questions

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**Q.** Examine the types of value conflicts that may be present in public service. (250 words)

20 Feb, 2020 GS Paper 4 Theoretical Questions

### **Approach**

- Briefly introduce the value conflicts in public service.
- Identify and explain the different types of Value conflicts present in public service.
- Suggest ways to handle value conflicts in public service.
- Give conclusions.

### **Introduction**

Public service involves a complex and dynamic nature of the work ecosystem where work culture constantly changes due to changing technologies, growing and changing public expectations, demographic changes and the effects of economic and social globalisation. In this environment economic, political and social values can come into conflict with the professional values of the public administrator.

### **Body**

There are broadly three different types of value conflicts:

- Intrapersonal value conflicts occur within the individual when he or she is faced with competing personal values.
- Interpersonal value conflicts occur between individuals with different ambitions and goals.
- Individual-organisational value conflicts occur when the values employed by an organisation are at variance with the personal values of an employee.

Some specific value conflicts are:

- Efficiency vs Equity: emerges in the context of demands for greater cost-cutting while simultaneously providing quality services to all.
- Cooperation vs Competition: Competitive edge of the private sector as well as inclusivity in providing services to all sections. Eg., healthcare and educational system.
- Rule-bound roles vs discretionary roles.
- The dilemma in trying to reach a balance between the needs of different stakeholders.
- The requirement to provide efficient and effective service within budget and to respond to growing public expectations.
- Between adapting to changing circumstances and the need to maintain existing standards.
- Free market economy versus accountability
- Freedom of information versus Privacy
- Information sharing versus Confidentiality (RTI vs Official secrets acts)

- Managing up vs Managing down: Adhering to the demands of superiors and politicians vs needs of the general public.

### Resolving Value Dilemmas

- Value dilemmas can be resolved through the use of ethical standards or frameworks.
- While intrapersonal value conflicts require an almost exclusively personal self-assessment of work priorities, interpersonal and individual-organisational value conflicts can be resolved through the provision of clear value statements and the motivating capacity of 'value-centred leaders'.
- Value Training: Induction courses for new staff involving case-studies and role-play scenarios; Value seminars and workshops to explore the meaning and practical application of values to everyday workplace scenarios.

### **Conclusion**

Value conflicts are inevitable, particularly in organisations performing multiple tasks and with a range of stakeholders. Rather than an impediment to progress, however, conflict can enhance the quality of decision making through problem identification and deliberation. The challenge for public servants is to cope with and manage conflict and simultaneously make decisions based on the appropriate value-set. For many public servants, managing conflict is something learned 'on the job', but training can assist in the process of prioritising values in times of crisis or difficulty.