

# Chapter 51

## Examining the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Workforce Leaders' Perceptions of Ethical Leadership and Organizational Health

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### ABSTRACT

*This study examines the relationships between instructors' perceptions of their leaders' integrity as measured by the Perceived Leadership Integrity Scale (PLIS), and the instructional systems organizational health. The sample involved six hundred fifty (650) instructors who were surveyed online. Pearson product correlations revealed statistically significant relationships between Perceived Leader Integrity (PLI) and the composite score of the seven Organizational Health Inventory for Schools (OHI-S) dimensions. Multiple regression analysis showed the OH Index to have a strong independent effect with the factors of consideration, institutional integrity, and academic emphasis. These findings will broaden understanding of the relationship between leadership and ethics, an important link to effectively managing instructors utilizing today's technologies for classroom instruction.*

### INTRODUCTION

Leaders of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century will certainly need to master the technologies of their trade. As important as mastery of technology however, are the mastery of ethical leadership and the effects of leadership on organizational health (Petty & Farris, 2012; Petty & Hill, 2005). It is agreed by adult educators

that the Internet, Web 2.0 technologies and other cutting edge expertise have changed the classroom. But how does the leader now effectively interface with teachers in an ethical and organizationally healthy way? Few studies have explored the role of ethics on leadership (Petty & Brewer, 2008).

Educational leaders have the responsibility of creating effective learning communities (Strike,

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2007), ones that are built and sustained by ethical leadership (Glanz, 2006; Sergiovanni, 1992; Starratt, 2003). Ubben, Hughes, and Norris (2007) advised that a school leader in a learning community must structure an organization in a way that allows individuals to “continually [expand] their capabilities to shape their future—leaders are responsible for learning” (p. 25). Owings and Kaplan (2003) and Levy (2004) concurred. The quality of each individual within an organization determines the quality of the organization in its entirety (Strike). The ISLLC (CCSSO, 1996) and ELCC (NPBEA, 2002) standards suggested that school administrators must exemplify an ability to foster a school culture contributing to both student learning and staff growth. When students and faculty members are connected within a learning community, they view themselves as team members working together to attain moralistic objectives (Petty, Lim, Yoon, & Fontan, 2008; Strike, 1999).

Ethics is a part of every decision a leader must make, and the ethical integrity of a leader guides every choice (Northouse, 2004). Leithwood and Riehl (2003) emphasized that effective leaders must model appropriate actions and dispositions. Followers' perceptions of their ethical integrity greatly affect the overall success of those leaders (Craig & Gustafson, 1998).

Sergiovanni (2007) suggested the culture within the school is what holds the organization together, and at the center of a positive culture is a cohesive vision and strong values. An ethical organization cannot function for long without an ethical leader (Aronson, 2001). Aronson described ethical leadership as not only fostering ethical behavior, but, more importantly, promoting effectiveness. Effective schools are healthy schools (Browne, 2002); they are organizations that avoid persistent, systemic ineffectiveness (Miles, 1965). Healthy schools have effective principals who are dynamic, supportive, and influential (Hoy & Tarter, 1997). The creation of healthy schools

lies in the hands of the principals (Leithwood & Riehl, 2003; Miles, 2002; Sergiovanni, 2006).

This study examined the multiple aspects of organizational health and the effects leaders have on this important ethical concept. Although this is a single study, it involved more than 600 instructors in the Southeastern US and the implications are broad ranging with comprehensive leadership principles for today's leaders of educational programs using instructional technologies.

## NEEDS

Ciulla (1995) argued that researchers were spending too much time researching the definition of leadership; instead, they should have been determining what characteristics made a good leader. In a more recent article, Ciulla (2003) proposed that a good leader was not simply effective, but also morally good. Therefore, the question of concern posed from Ciulla's earlier article became whether ethics was actually the difference between a good leader and an effective one.

Research into ethical leadership has been a fairly new development (Craig & Gustafson, 1998; Fowler, 2010; Northouse, 2004; Strike, 2007), with few studies published to date. Understanding the relationship between leadership and ethics has relied strongly upon conducting research from a variety of perspectives, cultures, and disciplines (Ciulla, 2005). Northouse recommended more intensive and more rigorous research in this area to clarify the relationship between leadership and ethics and to identify possible implications for policy and decision making.

Society today finds itself in an era of ethical decline (Bennett, 1999). Boeing, Enron, Tyco International, WorldCom, HealthSouth Corporation, and Arthur Anderson are among the major corporations impacted by severe ethical issues over the past decade (Uhl-Bien & Carsten, 2007). Walker Information National Study (2001) conducted re-

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