

# Strategically Logical and Ethical Decision-Making in Leadership and Management

**S****Sara Rodberg***Florida Atlantic University, USA*

## INTRODUCTION

One of the more complex aspects of leadership and management include the logical and ethical decision making processes required for organizational success. Leaders and managers can strategize methods to guide the logical and ethical decision making process to meet organizational goals and standards and by exercising collaborative efforts and influencing employees to adopt the values and vision of the organization. Several models of leadership can be found in this section about leadership styles and decision making processes, including the Hill Model for Team Leadership, McGrath's Critical Leadership Functions, and the matrix associated with the Revised Leadership-Participation Model. Familiarity with various leadership styles should be explored and established to encourage the flexibility and adaptability needed to be an effective leader. It is also worth mentioning that problem solving models and skills should be reviewed, with particular recommendation to Kolb's Model of Problem Solving as a Dialectic Process (Osland, 2007). Since each organization differs in dynamics and function, one consistent factor is that decision making should be oriented toward the greater good organization with a code of ethics and logic as a guide so that the team members are not forced, however gently, into compromising their ethics and integrity.

Leaders might find that distinguishing what is ethical is shaped by gray area. Essentially, ethics are doing what is considered to be right and according to Thomas Fernandes, "all one needs to do is to look at the positive values of society and the organizations one belongs to, and what is right or wrong should be evident" (2009). Fernandes goes on to describe what ethics look like in a professional workplace as earning the public trust, basic honesty and conformity to law, minimizing conflict of interest, orientation to service and fairness, and compromise and social integration (Fernandes, 2009). Concepts listed as causes of unethical behavior include individual and group dynamics. Control Theory, or cybernetics, explains system dynamics to account for how leaders set goals and motivate followers in multilevel systems and organizations (Kinicki et al., 2011). The individual reasons for unethical behavior consist of lack of understanding of complex strategic issues that obscure ethics, competition for power or position and resources, and conflicting loyalties (Fernandes, 2009). These may include personal biases that influence those behaviors, such as narcissism. Narcissists often approach challenges willingly when there is a greater perceived opportunity for recognition and a tendency to emerge as leaders although they may lack long term interpersonal skills (Hoffman et al., 2013). Group dynamics that fuel unethical behaviors is a far more complex problem faced by leaders and organizations, consisting of groupthink, people who are unwilling to compromise from their ideologies, and negative organizational responses to ideas that are considered different than the norm (Fernandes, 2009). In contrast to complexities like groupthink, Control Theory establishes networks of leadership from past and present theories (Kinicki et al., 2011) to encourage a group dynamic that values diverse ideologies and supports organizational decision making.

DOI: 10.4018/978-1-5225-1049-9.ch119

Fernandes identified how leaders are expected to build an ethical climate, naming several steps as follows: strategic leaders set the tone by demonstrating how they manage ethical issues and make decisions, leaders should establish ethical policies, and then increase and promote awareness of those ethical policies (2009). Transformational leadership is already a leadership approach that appeals to the morals and values of followers, which compliments the topic of ethical leadership, and encourages movement of people toward the path of moral and ethical improvement and production (Zhu et al., 2011). Although it is not unheard of that narcissists may fill leadership and managerial roles, “in highly ethical contexts, [the] deleterious effects of narcissism on ethical and effective leadership become more pronounced” (Hoffman et al., 2013).

## **ETHICAL DECISION MAKING**

The differences between leaders and managers are minimal, but both should practice ethical conduct and model the expectations of the organization, and the first question of how to do so, is answered with identifying what ethical conduct and modeling is (Simonet & Tett, 2012). Osland, Kolb, Rubin, and Turner provided the Rokeach Values Survey in *Organizational Behaviors: an experiential approach* (7<sup>th</sup> ed.) for leaders and employees to evaluate their terminal and instrumental values in terms of greater or lesser importance (2007). The potential results of the survey are exemplified in terms a grid with differentiated quadrants of terminal values ranging from personal to social and with instrumental values ranging from competence to moral. The quadrants are specified as preferences for personal-competence values, social-competence values, personal-moral values, and social-moral values (2007).

At the foundation of any structured organization a code of ethics and conduct are determined. Diversity in society inevitably produces complex circumstances that require strategic planning and decision making by leaders facing any number of professional dilemmas that require an inventory of ethical values. Since the success of the outcomes of strategic planning cannot be restricted to financial means, successful strategic leadership is measured by the perceived “affective autonomy, conservatism, egalitarianism, harmony, hierarchy, intellectual autonomy, and mastery,” which are cultural values that trickle down from leadership to the managerial levels where personal values, collectivism, and self-enhancement are considered to be charismatic characteristics by subordinates (Carter & Greer, 2013). Quoted by Joan Shapiro, William Foster wrote, “Each administrative decision carries with it a restructuring of human life: that is why administration at its heart is the resolution of moral dilemmas” (as cited in Shapiro).

Shapiro names the four paradigms of contemporarily relevant and complex circumstances in education, for example, as justice, critique, care, and the profession, with the last being considered an “independent model” from the other three paradigms (Shapiro, 2011). As an independent paradigm, Shapiro advises that the leader take an inventory of professional and personal ethical codes and where these codes overlap, leaders and managers become aware of consistent and conflicting areas and might now employ one or more of the other listed paradigms in their approaches to decision making strategies and leadership (Shapiro, 2011). This observational process leads to evaluative processes with analyses of strategies to address operational dilemmas in organizational settings. For today’s leadership to be considered ethical, “leaders are expected to demonstrate ethical judgment by being accountable to those they serve...” (Branson & Gross, 2014).

With origins referencing Aristotle, Peter G. Northouse pictorializes the “principles of ethical leadership” naming five as the foundation for developing ethical practices (2016). Those five principles are “respect others, serves others, shows justice, manifests honesty, and builds community” in a non-hier-

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