

## Course Learning Outcomes for Unit VI

Upon completion of this unit, students should be able to:

6. Apply knowledge of ethical theories for appropriate use, resolving real-world problems facing public managers.
  - 6.1 Integrate and apply philosophical theories of ethical decision-making into work place scenarios.
  - 6.2 Explain and justify the implications of corruption in the workplace and how the framework of trust quickly dissipates.
  - 6.3 Compile and analyze ethical scenarios for unproductive or unsuccessful governing.
  - 6.4 Compose new knowledge with recommendations for improved processes derived to support the public sphere.

### Reading Assignment

#### Chapter 7:

Integrating Ethics with Organizational Norms and Structures

#### Chapter 8:

Safeguarding Ethical Autonomy in Organizations: Dealing with Unethical Superiors and Organizations

### Unit Lesson

The textbook readings cite several scenarios that describe ethical and moral decision-making processes that produce positive and consequential results. Cooper (2012) advocates that the time when ethical authority is most needed is when situations become very complicated. The textbook cases take place during the time span of the Civil War, World War II, Vietnam War, and a scenario that takes place in the U. S. State Department. No new revelations or strategies to resolve ethical dilemmas are reviewed nor expected. The resolution in all cases narrows in scope to personal conviction, organizational values, and most good and least harm.

Individuals may exploit circumstances where they are employed. But, sadly, there may also exist workplaces where systematic corruption is a powerful factor located in the culture of the public organization.

What individual ethical factors must leaders consider when organizations are considered a model of corruption? According to Gerald (2009), the following conditions may be present when corruption exists in an organization:

- Outwardly, the organization references a formal ethical guidance policy in place, but day-to-day workplace practices display no evidence of ethical practices.
- Ethical violations are evident and not reported by the organization.
- Leadership encourages penalizations for certain ethical practices.
- Protections are available for unethical violators, which include organizational defenses, and unfair treatment abounds for revealing whistleblowers.
- No support or safety structures are available for accusers, while disbelief is in place for external stakeholders.
- Honest and moral employees are threatened into a silent mode if potentially unethical information is made public.
- Brave whistleblowers are aware that organizational retaliations may be probable if questionable practices are leaked.

- Violators may claim unfair discrimination if accused of unethical actions because their practices have been unnoticed or ignored in the past.
- In the long term and without external pressures, continued presence of questionable actions is deemed appropriate.
- If violators are formally charged, the process may allow no or insignificant sanctions to occur because these type actions rarely are reported.

It is fortunate that most organizations do not have the characteristics listed but are in the minority where these conditions exist. Individual groups can also be located within an organization and can adapt their own set of values or work philosophy. Examples or subsets include committees, project groups, or work teams. These groups define their own standards and may deviate from the overall organization's value system. It is usually more common to find unethical (bad) people in good organizations rather than smaller groups with conflicting norms. If the conflict is too severe, then most individuals decide to leave the organization.

The negative scenarios of unprincipled individuals or system faults only provide a portion of the explanation of corruption. Most "bad" people are not the ones who fail miserably working for nonprofits or government agencies. Professionals or decent people usually commit the unethical acts. How can this occur, and what are the scenarios that lead normal workers to bad decisions? Ethical lapses seem to be very common in government organizations, even serious legal violations occur when least expected. Most violations materialize for those who want to advance their cause by any means necessary; others blame the action of other people.

The unit assignment requires a review of your workplace (private or public) organization. Individual, organizational, community, or international work practices can cause conflict when values disagree. The intensity levels of human pressure also may rise when the stakes are very high. These conflicts may derive from personal and moral codes, workplace accepted values, or a public entity value system. The assignment will describe a witnessed account that will identify the results when ethical issues and risks associated with employees and their organizations disagree.

#### References

- Cooper, J. L. (2012). *The responsible administrator: An approach to ethics for the administrative role* (6th ed.). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Gerald, C. (2001). Applying virtue ethics to the challenge of corruption. *The Innovation Journal*, 6(2), article 2.

#### Learning Activities (Non-Graded)

*The Internet can provide you with a wealth of information concerning the topics in this unit. For example, the following link discusses the concerns surrounding ethics and the public service:*

Gordon, P D. (2003). The ethics map: a map of the range of concerns encompassed by ethics and the public service. Retrieved from <http://users.rcn.com/pgordon/homeland/ethicsmap.pdf>

Non-graded Learning Activities are provided to aid students in their course of study. You do not have to submit them. If you have questions, contact your instructor for further guidance and information.