Course Learning Outcomes for Unit V

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

1. Use information or technology resources to research domestic or international current events and ethical practices.
2. Explain the personal aspect of ethics in an organizational setting, that support effective decision making in a leadership capacity.

Unit Lesson

Representing the Public: How to meet Ethical Obligations

What motivates public administrators? Martinez (2009) asks this question in the context of the public administrator’s primary function—it is not profit? Unlike the private sector, public organizations are true to the “cause of the agency” (p. 77). Deciding how to act ethically in every situation is a constant challenge for any leader working for a public agency. It can be argued that regardless of complex or new situations, public leaders have an obligation to act responsibly for the purpose of self-respect, the mission of the organization, and the challenge, owing constituents or outside stakeholders the assurance of public trust.

When ethical decisions or stances are required, Svara (2007) describes a problem-solving model using three categories of review: Description, Analysis, and Decision.

1. Description
   a. Clarify the facts of the situation.
   b. Assess the interests of all parties who have stakes in the outcome for the situation and how they are potentially affected; stakeholder analysis.

2. Analysis
   a. Determine your duty in this in this situation considering the obligations and responsibilities of your position and your professional role.
      i. Consider one’s position and place in the organizational structure and what one is expected to do by the organization.
      ii. Consider any professional obligations that are distinct from what the organization expects; specific standards for one’s profession and general obligations, including advancing the public interest and promoting the democratic process.
   b. Analyze the situation according to each ethical approach.
      i. Virtue based: What would a good person do in this situation?
      ii. Principle based: What principles apply to the situation?
      iii. Results oriented: How does one promote the best consequences?
   c. List options.
3. Decision
   a. Choose the best alternative
   b. Provide a reasoned justification for the decision.
   c. Monitor and evaluate results. Make adjustments if necessary.

Options are reviewed from a different perspective in the Description stage. Based upon the position of the organization, the public administrator must determine the important variables to consider that pertain to character, the actions derived from the outcomes, and what the least amount of damages or consequences would evolve if certain decisions are made. The outcomes derived from these questions can now be developed into a set of options. Svara (2007) mentions that during Analysis, alternative perspectives are designed – an important variable to consider is that limited sets of alternatives are not established, some that may “ignore an important ethical perspectives” (p. 109). After all three perspectives are reviewed; it will be much easier to justify (make a Decision on the basis of least damaging and most productive.

**Inspector General and auditors:** Public administrators must also be knowledgeable that protections exist to abbreviate or stop dissemination of information when confidentiality is tied to public safety. The public has the “right to know,” but only to a certain limit. Offices such as the Inspector General (IG) and the Government Accountability Office (GAO) are independent agencies that represent external inspections on the operations of public offices. Duties of these agencies provide accountability, auditing, and financial analysis inspections. Some results are of public record, other results are not, they are protected by laws of confidentiality.

This week’s assignment requires you to recall a relatively current event and identify that a certain framework of validation of ethics is followed (or not) during the course of ethical decision-making.

**References**


**Supplemental Reading**

The following article can be found in the CSU Online Library:


**Suggested Further Reading**


Learning Activities (Non-Graded)

After you finish with the material in Unit V, reflect on your experience and write about it. What did you learn? What did not quite make sense? Can you apply the concepts you learned toward your career? How? The purpose of this assignment is to provide you with the opportunity to reflect on the material you learned and to expand upon those thoughts.

This is not a summary. A reflection journal is an opportunity for you to express your thoughts about the material by writing about them. Reflection writing is a great way to study because it increases your ability to remember the course material.

Use these guidelines as you reflect on the course material:

1. Write at least one page
2. Include your thoughts about the course topics.
3. Include your thoughts about the case studies.
4. What did you learn?
5. What did the case studies teach you?
6. What did not quite make sense?
7. What would you like to learn more about?
8. How will the material assist you in achieving further academic goals?
9. How will the material assist you in achieving further career goals?
10. Include your strategies for capitalizing on your strengths and overcoming your weaknesses.

Format your reflection paper using APA Style. Use your own words and include citations for other articles as needed to avoid plagiarism. If you are feeling creative, try creating a reflection blog. Once you have completed the course you will be able to revisit the knowledge you gained in the course.

Non-graded learning activities are provided to aid students in their course of study. This is a non-graded activity, so you do not have to submit it.