Strategies for Elevating Ethical Consciousness

Carol Cuadrado
Rutgers University
School of Public Affairs & Administration
Ethical Challenges
Professor James Davy
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In the realm of public administration, the intersection of law and ethics presents a complex landscape where adherence to legal statutes does not always equate to ethical conduct. As Kickham, Sharpe, & Aguirre assert in a "A Primer on Ethics in Public Administration," while the law provides a framework, the ethics offer a deeper understanding of moral principles that guide decision-making. Public administrators grapple with ethical dilemmas daily, with the repercussions of their choices impacting real lives (Kickham, Sharpe, & Aguire, n.d.). As the Executive Director of a sizable government organization or a nonprofit community based agency, comprising 120 individuals, it becomes imperative to cultivate a heightened ethical consciousness among all employees.

In alignment with Terry L. Cooper's teachings, I would prioritize several key areas to elevate the ethical consciousness of everyone within the organization. Firstly, I would lead by example, recognizing that my actions as the Executive Director set the tone for the entire organization. By consistently demonstrating ethical behavior and decision-making, I can inspire others to follow suit. Additionally, I would focus on establishing clear ethical standards, communicating these expectations to all staff members. This includes outlining ethical principles, codes of conduct, and organizational values that serve as guiding principles for decision-making. Furthermore, providing ongoing ethical training and education is crucial. Through regular workshops and sessions, staff members can gain a deeper understanding of ethical dilemmas and develop the necessary skills to navigate them effectively. Encouraging ethical autonomy is also paramount, as it fosters an environment where individuals feel empowered to exercise their own moral judgment. Open dialogue and reflection on ethical issues within the organization are also essential, providing opportunities for staff members to discuss and debate ethical dilemmas and reflect on their own values and responsibilities. Though, it is worth noting that while allowing

for individual interpretations, it is essential to hold staff members accountable for their decisions and actions. Additionally, implementing mechanisms for reporting ethical concerns anonymously and without fear of retaliation is vital to ensure transparency and address ethical violations promptly. This approach draws upon various ethical principles outlined by Cooper, including deontological ethics which emphasizes moral duties and obligations, the teleological ethics focused on outcomes and consequences, altruism prioritizes the well-being of others, virtue ethics cultivates virtuous character traits, justice brings fairness and equity, accountability ensures responsibility, transparency fosters openness and honesty, and integrity indicates consistency and adherence to ethical principles (Cooper, 2012). By integrating these principles into organizational practices and culture, I can elevate ethical consciousness fostering an environment of integrity, responsibility, and trust among all employees. Furthermore, I would focus on implementing a code of conduct, per Cooper's teachings, that is also essential for fostering ethical behavior within an organization. A code of conduct can complement the ethical principles of Cooper, as they serve as a set of guidelines and expectations for employees, outlining the organization's values, ethical standards and expected behavior. While ethical principles provide overarching guidance, a code of conduct offers specific guidelines and rules that employees must follow. These codes of conduct can cover various aspects of behavior, such as conflicts of interest, confidentiality, professional conduct, and compliance with laws and regulations. These guidelines translate ethical principles into actionable steps that employees can follow in their daily work. As Executive Director, I would seek to provide examples of ethical dilemmas commonly encountered in the organization, as well as suggest appropriate courses of action based on ethical principles. I can also use the code of conduct as a valuable resource for training and educating employees about ethical expectations. Training sessions can use the code

to illustrate ethical principles in practice and discuss how to apply them in different situations. The code also sets the stage for enforcing ethical standards. It outlines the consequences of violating the code and the procedures for reporting ethical concerns. By holding employees accountable for their actions, the code helps maintain a culture of integrity and trust. I would also consider modifying the code of conduct to adapt to changes in the organizational environment and for emerging ethical challenges. Another important initiative is a regular review and updates to the code to ensure that it remains relevant and effective in guiding ethical behavior. When prompted by an ethical challenge, I will address it by applying Cooper's design approach in ethical dilemmas. This involves systematically analyzing the ethical dilemmas. I would clearly define the ethical situation and its implications for stakeholders. I would engage all applicable stakeholders, including employees, board members and external partners in the decision-making, assess the available options and their potential impact on ethical principles, organizational values, and stakeholder interests. My goal is to not only solve the immediate dilemma, but to also strengthen ethical practices and organizational resilience in the long term.

The importance of exercising ethical leadership in addressing an ethical dilemma is also emphasized, by Craig E. Johnson, in his 6th Edition of "Meeting the Ethical Challenges of Leadership." Similar to Cooper's suggestions, Johnson emphasizes modeling ethical behavior and communicating clear ethical expectations. Johnson asserts that ethical leadership comprises two fundamental elements: personal moral conduct and moral influence. Ethical leaders earn their titles, not only through their own moral actions in fulfilling their duties, but also by shaping the ethical atmosphere within their groups, organizations, and broader society. Both dimensions, Johnson says, are indispensable. He adds that leaders must embody virtues like justice, humility, optimism, courage and compassion while navigating ethical dilemmas inherent to their roles.

Furthermore, they shoulder the responsibility of fostering ethical behavior among their subordinates. These dual responsibilities are interlinked, as leaders serve as exemplars for their organizations. As the Executive Director of a large scale organization, I am committed to nurturing ethical conduct by embodying these qualities and cultivating a culture of integrity and accountability throughout the organization. I aim to maintain impartiality, refrain from showing favoritism to anyone, to mitigate conflicts of interest between the organization and external engagements, to steer clear of actions that could be perceived as violating the law or ethical standards, and to always uphold honesty and truthfulness in my personal and professional conduct. I am prepared to undertake self-evaluations to assess my ethical conduct and leadership qualities. Additionally, I am committed to furnishing the organizational team with leadership evaluations of myself and others in supervisory roles within the organization to address any concerns or areas for improvement. I will work toward establishing structured team meetings, with the intent of fostering productive discussions focused on tasks, promoting constructive listening and modeling a culture of collaboration. It is imperative to also provide a platform for minority opinions and to uphold positive norms while adhering to ground rules for effective decision-making. Individuals unwilling to participate or collaborate, or those displaying destructive behavior that undermines organizational cohesion and ethical standards, will be addressed in a professional manner and if deemed appropriate, I shall relieve those individuals of their duties with the organization (Johnson, 2018). This multi-faceted approach shows a commitment to transformational leadership within the organization. I would articulate a compelling vision for the future, work toward inspiring and motivating employees to excel, exhibit integrity, passion and resilience thereby setting a standard for behavior. My goal is to empower and trust my team, to delegate authority and encourage autonomy while providing

personalized support. By recognizing individual strengths and needs, I am able to offer mentorship and development opportunities to foster growth. I would welcome new ideas and promote teamwork across the organization which encourages innovation and collaboration. It is only through feedback, recognition, and continuous learning opportunities, that you create an environment where employees feel valued and supported. Facing challenges with resilience and optimism, leaders instill a solution-focused mindset and cultivate a supportive organizational culture. Through these transformative leadership practices, I look to inspire the team to achieve exceptional results and drive positive change within the organization.

Additionally, as the Executive Director, I would leverage Appreciative Inquiry (AI) principles and incorporate them into my set goals for organizational improvement. This approach can be valuable, as it focuses on strengths, values and positive experience within the organization to foster a culture of ethical integrity and continuous improvement. "What we believe sets AI apart from other approaches to change is its explicit intent to search from a strengths-only perspective for latent, untapped capacity to pursue shared images of a preferred future. These shared images of what is possible ignite the desire to work together in new ways to co-create that future. In this way, AI becomes generative; it discovers, builds, and expands capacity to corporate over and over again" (Barrett & Fry, 2020). Drawing from Barrett and Fry's perspective, my approach would be to conduct AI interviews or focus groups with employees at all levels, encouraging them to share stories and experiences of success and excellence. These sessions provide valuable insights into what is working well within the organization and help identify areas of strength and high performance. Additionally, strengths-based surveys can be administered to further explore individual and collective strengths and talents across different teams and departments. By focusing on employees' positive attributes, I can better understand their core competencies and

leverage them for future success. Furthermore, facilitating visioning workshops allows employees to collectively envision the ideal future of the organization based on its strengths and values. These workshops encourage dialogue around aspirations and goals, fostering a shared sense of purpose and direction. I would incorporate AI principles into performance reviews and feedback processes that focus towards recognizing and building upon employees' strengths, contributing to a more positive and constructive work environment. Overall, by embracing AI techniques and strategies, I can cultivate a culture of positivity, collaboration, and continuous improvement, ultimately driving success and innovation.

Through the combined efforts of Terry L. Cooper, Craig E. Johnson, Frank Barrett and Ronald E. Fry's Appreciative Inquiry, an organization can undergo a transformative journey towards ethical excellence and organizational success. By integrating the ethical principles advocated by Cooper and Johnson, such as leading by example, establishing clear ethical standards, and fostering ethical autonomy, the organization cultivates a culture of integrity, accountability, and ethical consciousness among its staff. This foundation of ethical leadership and decision-making sets the stage for the implementation of Appreciative Inquiry principles.

Through Appreciative Inquiry, the organization shifts its focus from problem-solving to strengths-based approaches, leveraging positive experiences, successes, and aspirations to drive organizational change and development, By engaging stakeholders in appreciative conversations, visioning workshops, and action planning initiatives, the organization harnesses its collective wisdom and creativity to envision and pursue a future aligned with its values and aspirations.

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