Organizational Applied Ethical Model: Interaction between Learned Ethics and Intentional Ethics

Mudit Mendiratta[1], Anita Mendiratta[2]

[1]Senior Project Manager, Tech Mahindra Ltd., Noida, India
[2] Assistant Professor, Keshav Mahavidyalaya, University of Delhi, India

---***---

Abstract - *There is appreciable work done to identify the positive organizational ethics but the decision makers still not able to bolster the business ethics in the organization. This paper makes an attempt to develop Organizational Applied Ethics Model (OAEM) and highlighting the relation between Learned Ethics and Intentional Ethics. The interaction between the ethics and philosophy of the managers to frame organizational ethics is delineated in this model. The paper recognizes the need to transform the intentional ethics of the manager so that it converges with learned ethics for the best application of organization code of ethics in letter as well in spirit and termed this new brand of managers as psychologist managers for the positive organization. The paper suggested to ameliorate the literature by developing positive traits to promote positive ethical orientation of Organizational psychologist managers. These psychologist managers would then act as a change agents and would able to act ethically at managers and group level.*

*Key Words***: *Ethics, Organizational Ethics, Learned ethics, Intentional Ethics, Psychologist Managers*.

1. INTRODUCTION

It is imperative that the character of an individual needs to be ethical, not only for a sound business but also for a well progressive country and specifically, for the establishment of peace and happiness around. An ethical individual would see and act in the interest of the society which what otherwise a non-ethical person tries to ignore. The need of today is to make a society where all the people including the aged, adults and children get a fair and just environment to flourish, an equal opportunity to get heard and a peaceful place to live. This is possible when the people have the knowledge of self and of an ethical being.

This paper makes an attempt to connect the ethical perspective of an individual with the underlying philosophies. The domain of philosophy is broader and it is beyond the scope of this article to address all the issues and therefore, I will be focusing on the constructs related to its relevance to contributing in formation of positive organization. The oxford dictionary[i] meaning of philosophy is a theory or attitude that acts as a guiding principle for behavior. Philosophy is the study of abstract problems detached from the challenges of everyday life (Small, 2004). It has developed from religious contemplation into empirical science and can be sub divided into a variety of sub categories that includes moral philosophy and the origins and justifications of moral codes and analyzing issues such as justice, happiness , and right and wrong behavior (Small, 2004). The individuals with varied philosophies have different ethical perspective and values which in turn, govern their behavior and roles that they play in different capacities as a member of the family, society or an organization.

Going forward, Positive institutions are desirable in and of themselves, but they also serve as processes that offer coherent and concordant values and philosophies that may guide and inspire their members, and as mechanisms to facilitate and promote other valued outcomes (Alex Linley et al., 2006). Huhtala et al. (2013) showed with the results that the more ethical the organizational culture was perceived as being, the more often the managers reported having organizational goals, which were related to the success and performance of their organization. If the culture of the organization was perceived as less ethical, it was related to an increased probability of naming goals not related to the organization, thus ethical organizational culture functions as a context for setting personal work goals. It has been recognized that besides 'getting the job done', it is also important how it gets done and that valuing ethical practices can be a significant asset to the organization (Huhtala et al., 2013).

In any organization, the individuals acting in the capacity of managers are supposed to collectively frame code of Organizational Ethics. The organization entrusts this responsibility with the managers as they have an educational background to understand the importance of ethical principles and experience to comprehend the unforeseen situations. The idea behind this is that the Organizational Ethics should be followed by all with respect to letter and spirit both.

The manager pre-occupied with the philosophy about the ethical theories and principles provide justifications to rationalize the decisions and to deliberate different interpretations. At times, they face ethical dilemmas to deal with diverse elucidations. For instance, one may assume that withholding few of the material facts are not unethical and generates more profits and stability of job as well as business. However, the interpretations to the word *little* and

material would be different for the different managers. As a matter of fact, there is not always a trade-off between being ethical and earning profits. There are Companies which are ethical, spend on their corporate social responsibility for better stakeholder's relationship and simultaneously earn handsome earning. Consequently, the spirit of Organizational Ethics may get distorted with the superfluous justification framed by the managers acting for their own interest while dealing in the grey areas and that may lead to the heterogeneous application by different managers working with their own ethical philosophy of organizational ethics. It will not be an exaggeration to say that the philosophy of the business is the collection of philosophies of the individuals working therein.

There is appreciable work done to identify the positive organizational ethics but the decision makers still not able to bolster the business ethics in the organization. This paper makes an attempt to develop Organizational Applied Ethics Model (OAEM) and highlighting the relation between Organizational applied ethics, Learned Ethics and Intentional Ethics. The Organizational ethics are formal code of conduct and are derived from the roots of its culture which is inherent in nature. On the other hand, the values and philosophies of managers are specific and intentional. Further, ethics may well be understood in the context of its theories (learned ethics) and the intentions associated with the applications of those theories (intentional ethics). The interaction between the ethics and philosophy of the managers to frame organizational ethics is delineated in Organizational Applied Ethical Model.

2. Organizational Applied Ethical Model

2.1 Concept

Organizational ethics defines the role of the organization while transacting with all the stakeholders including employees, customers, dealers, government and society as a whole. It plays a role in deciding the future course of action that many a times involve plethora of alternatives. The implementation of ethical principles for straight situations is comparatively easier to decide upon but when it lies in the grey area, the execution depends upon the ethical understanding and commitment that stems from the philosophy of the manager. It is a tedious job to choose between the alternatives for which nothing can be clearly specified that results in ethical dilemmas. Different managers behave differently in the same situations given their different ethical perspective and philosophies that govern their behavior.

Learned Ethics are the organizational code of ethics derived from the society norms, the existing laws and multi-cultural environment. These are taught in the organization via orientation programmes, ethical training and workshop to make the employees learn ethics to oblige and follow. On the other hand, Intentional Ethics are guided by the values and

philosophies of a manager that decide the application of the knowledge gained from leaned ethics. It is this factor in this relationship is of paramount importance.

Chart -1: Organizational Applied Ethics Model

Organizational applied ethics (OAE) is the result of learned ethics implemented by the managers with their given set of philosophies in general business dynamics. In other words, OAE is the product of two forces inside the organization, namely, Learned Ethics and Intentional Ethics. If these two forces are in congruence with each other, there would be negligent gaps between the organization code of ethics and its real applications in the unforeseen situations. However, if the values and philosophies of the manager does not support the organization code of ethics then the time, energy and the cost involved in teaching the learned ethics to the manager will go waste. It implies that the contradiction in Intentional and learned ethics will increase the gap between the learned ethics and applied ethics. These two factors should complement each other to enable the smooth application of organization code of ethics. Also, the gap between the learned ethics and its application to real business situations is attributed to intentional ethics.

2.2 Development of Psychologist Managers

Hitherto much importance is given to learned ethics because it is assumed to be a catalyst to foster ethical behavior. Nevertheless, the utility of learned ethics is limited and not sustainable if not supported by inherent philosophy of the managers. The components of learned ethics are organizational ethics and values of society. It is to be noted here that whenever the manager switches the job, these components of learned ethics needs to be adjusted and adapted again. However, the societal norms are fixed and given to some extent, but at the same time, the organization ethics keeps changing from one organization to another. The manager has to learn a new ethical conduct related to the new organization whenever he switches the job and might

face ethical dilemmas. On the other hand, a manager with inherent ethical philosophy and being an ethical character is less prone to ethical dilemmas. There is the need to transform the intentional ethics of the manager so that it converges with learned ethics for the best application of organization code of ethics in letter as well in spirit. Therefore, it is better to inculcate intentional ethics in the philosophies of the managers through positive psychology. The paper termed this new brand of managers as psychologist managers for the positive organization.

This insight would help these psychologist managers to arrange more productive workshops for the benefits of organization. It is difficult for managers with contradictory values and unethical philosophy to act ethically. Non-ethical philosophy acts as an impediment to inculcate learned ethics through conferences, workshop in organizations. Here, the stimulation from the organization to teach for the modification and adaptation of learned ethics would be futile given the intensity of unethical philosophy of the managers. Therefore, I attempt in this paper to ameliorate the literature by developing positive traits to promote positive ethical orientation of Organizational psychologist managers. The aim is not to develop a particular value whilst a collection of positive experience among employees to de-stress their mind to make them receptive to new ideas by shedding their conventional old philosophy and habits to respond positively. The orientation session and intervention techniques would help them get acquainted with the joy of giving, sense of gratitude, importance of friendship amongst them so that they would be able to rework on their values and attitudes. It would help them to develop positive traits such as honesty, character strength, courage, develop resilience, broaden the mind set and encourage them to reframe their ethical orientation.

These psychologist managers would then act as a change agents and would able to act ethically at managers and group level. Their organizational role would include recognizing ethical issues and moral situations, employing moral reasoning, applying moral theories with practical feasibility rather than imposed ethics for choice of best alternative in a given situation. It will lead to the formation of positive organizations with fair and just environment, improved moral sensitivity and moral decision making. In this scenario, there would be encouragement of virtues like honesty, integrity and courage, equal opportunity to get heard and equal treatment of competing and conflicting interest of stakeholders. Consequently, the managers with positive subjective experiences and positive traits would contribute in formation of positive institutions.

2.3 Ethics and Positive Organization

The positive organizations would hence be developed in particular, but my intention is not to limit its aspect and it can be generalized to other spheres of areas. The purpose is to build positive ethical characteristics in the manager

through positive psychological intervention. However, it is still a growing area of research and empirical analysis is required to establish the whole process.

Managers who possess the characteristics of being ethical is able to act ethically at manager's level and group level. Enhancing manager's abilities to recognize ethical issues and moral situations will increase the frequency with which employees make moral considerations, employ moral reasoning, and exercise moral theories, which will in turn facilitate the emergence of intentions to do good. The ethics should not be imposed and learned, whilst are self-applied. The ethical managers do not give himself an option for myriad of alternatives to accomplish a task but only the right alternative.

3. Conclusion

The managers aiming to produce ethical employees have to understand that positive psychological intervention is imperative at grassroots level of organization. The insertion of ethics is difficult to implant until and unless they understand the positive traits and their cyclical effects.

Cameron and Caza (2004) pointed that evidence exists that positive practices (e.g., respectful treatment, personal development) produce positive affect in employees (e.g., satisfaction, well- being), which produces positive individual behavior (e.g., retention, engagement), which, in turn, produces organizational effectiveness (Lyubomirsky et al., 2005), in which the last link is under examined. Cameron and Caza (2004) found the evidence that positive practices do, in fact, predict organizational performance. The preponderance of research has evidenced that when organizations take a positive approach to their corporate culture and their employees, the organizational bottom line ultimately benefits (J. Mills et al., 2013).

The ethical individuals cannot produce the unethical organization and vice- versa. The ethical organization culture produces fearless employees with minimal ethical dilemmas, have the authority to do right things without inhibitions and rely solely on ethical principles. The stakeholders of such positive organization would have more trust and confidence over its practices. This kind of positive organization will be a win- win situation for all the stakeholders including the nation and the world.

The organization needs positive optimistic ethical people for creating and managing resources and relationship and to interpret the code of business ethics in fair manner. The individuals in the organization should practice positive experience and traits to reframe and modify their ethical understanding to lay a strong foundation for obliging business ethics to form positive organizations. The individuals should be encouraged to understand the importance of positive emotions through orientation sessions and intervention techniques to experience joy, gratitude, hope, pride, inspiration and love. It helps the

individuals to develop positive traits that would help them to broaden the mind-set and encourage them to reframe their ethical orientation.

REFERENCES

[1] ALEX LINLEY, P., JOSEPH, S., HARRINGTON, S. & WOOD, A. M. 2006. Positive psychology: Past, present, and (possible) future. *The Journal of Positive Psychology,* 1**,** 3-16.

[2] CAMERON, K. S. & CAZA, A. 2004. Introduction contributions to the discipline of positive organizational scholarship. *American Behavioral Scientist,* 47**,** 731-739.

[3] HUHTALA, M., FELDT, T., HYVÖNEN, K. & MAUNO, S. 2013. Ethical organisational culture as a context for managers' personal work goals. *Journal of Business Ethics,* 114**,** 265-282.

[4] J. MILLS, M., R. FLECK, C. & KOZIKOWSKI, A. 2013. Positive Psychology at work: A conceptual review, state-of-practice assessment, and a look ahead. *The Journal of Positive Psychology,* 8**,** 153-164.

[5] LYUBOMIRSKY, S., KING, L. & DIENER, E. 2005. The benefits of frequent positive affect: does happiness lead to success? *Psychological bulletin,* 131**,** 803.

[6] SMALL, M. W. 2004. Philosophy in management: A new trend in management development. *Journal of Management Development,* 23**,** 183-196.