



Presidential Address: Leadership, Morals, and Ethics

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Presidential Address: Leadership,
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Synopsis

South Africans have experienced material change since the 1980s. The country saw the end of apartheid and the beginning of a new era under the leadership of a man who raised expectations of a Rainbow Nation and an equal society. Unfortunately, this has not since transpired. There has been a dearth of effective leadership, with daily reports of unethical behaviour in the media. Productivity is low, the economy has deteriorated, unemployment is higher than ever, and South Africans are finding themselves becoming more polarized as a society.

At the same time the South African mining industry, which has the potential to be the catalyst for national economic growth, has shrunk significantly. This is partially due to both an evolving and increasingly turbulent global environment, and a result of international divestment as the legislative and socio-economic environment becomes increasingly difficult.

This industry traditionally supported the activities of the Southern African Institute of Mining and Metallurgy (SAIMM), but this has also changed. The SAIMM is now finding it difficult to retain members and as a consequence is in the process of repositioning itself around six pillars of value to arrest this decline. One of these pillars is about enhancing ethical awareness, and by extension, establishing a climate where ethical leadership can thrive, because this is now urgently needed in South Africa.

This address briefly describes the challenges facing South Africa, the mining industry and the SAIMM, and how the organization is responding to remain relevant in today's rapidly changing world. Morals, ethics, and leadership are explained in support of a call for higher levels of ethical awareness, and more ethical leadership, in all areas of South African society.

As professionals, SAIMM members are already committed to ethical behaviour, and accordingly, are well placed to assist in making this happen.

Keywords

ethical awareness and leadership.

The SAIMM in turbulent times

The Southern African Institute of Mining and Metallurgy (SAIMM) has a proud history that extends from its inception in 1894 following the discovery of gold in Johannesburg in 1886, through to today, spanning a period of over 125 years. The objectives of this non-profit organization are:

- To identify the needs of its members
- To ensure that their requirements for knowledge are satisfied
- To represent and promote the interests of its members.

The SAIMM has been achieving these objectives by

- Providing mentorship and promoting the professional development of professional members and continuing education of other members, including student members
- Working together with other professional associations when engaging with government and mineral industry forums where appropriate
- Representing the interests of members on statutory bodies, including the registration of professionals linked to the international reporting codes and the Engineering Council of South Africa (ECSA)
- Facilitating networking and the exchange of technical information *via* SAIMM-hosted conferences
- Providing free access to an internal technical library and to an external library containing papers from around the world (*via* OneMine.org)

Presidential Address: Leadership, Morals, and Ethics

- Assisting needy students with tuition, meals, supplies, travel, and accommodation through a Scholarship Trust Fund established for the purpose;
- Publishing a globally recognized and respected monthly technical Journal
- Fostering international contact and cooperation between similar institutes for professional recognition by peers internationally.

However, despite these and other initiatives, the SAIMM is shrinking. Figure 1 shows that membership numbers are dwindling, a sign that members are becoming less interested in the activities and offerings of the Institute.

Further analysis (Figure 2) reveals that it is primarily the male members from the Associate and Member categories that are leaving, and that the SAIMM is failing to attract more female members.

Reduced membership means fewer volunteers to participate in the Technical Programme Committees, which are fundamental to the organization's fundraising efforts and to its commitment to disburse information and knowledge to members. The SAIMM is also experiencing reduced attendance at conferences, which translates to lower levels of income. Figure 3 shows that the SAIMM has been spending more money than it has managed to raise over the past seven years, and approximately R18.5 million has been withdrawn from savings to cover the deficit.

This is clearly not sustainable and the SAIMM has accepted that it cannot continue to function as usual, or to do the same things that it has always done and expect different results.

Numerous megatrends (Figure 4) have been simultaneously impacting how people interact, communicate, operate, or

simply exist, with one another, and these global dynamics are responsible for a world that is now changing faster every day.

The mining industry is not immune from the effects. It has also been steadily and continuously changing in order to remain globally competitive, and the SAIMM has had to start innovatively adjusting and adapting to this new landscape, because of its close links to this industry. A series of workshops was conducted in 2019 to examine what SAIMM needed to do to:

- Ensure that it remain current and relevant to its members
- Embrace modernization of the mining industry
- Support and enhance the professional needs and development of its members
- Extend its reach and influence
- Enhance networks and increase membership.

These workshops culminated in a new vision statement with general alignment on the following six 'Pillars of Value' upon which the strategy to revitalize the SAIMM is now based:

- Professional development
- Emerging professionals
- Networking and strategic relationships
- Diversity and inclusion
- Conferences and events
- Improving ethical awareness.

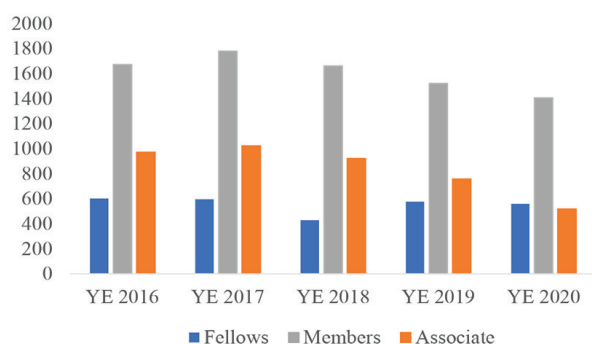


Figure 1—Gradual reduction in fee-paying members (i.e. excluding students)

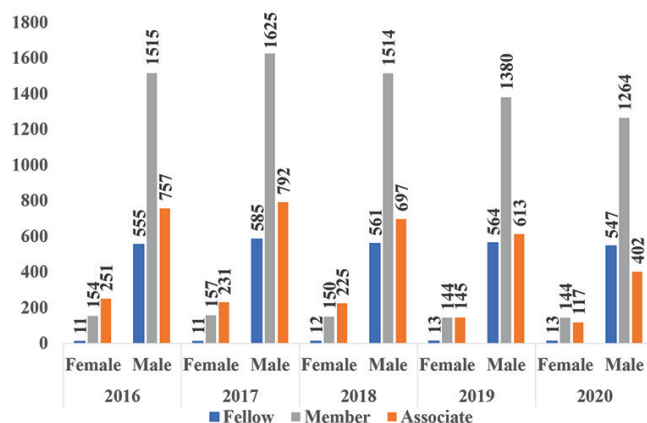


Figure 2—SAIMM membership: gender mix

Vision
To be an independent and globally recognized platform for the development of the African minerals industry of the future.
 (A.S. Macfarlane and S. Ndlovu with the support of Office Bearers of the SAIMM, 2018)

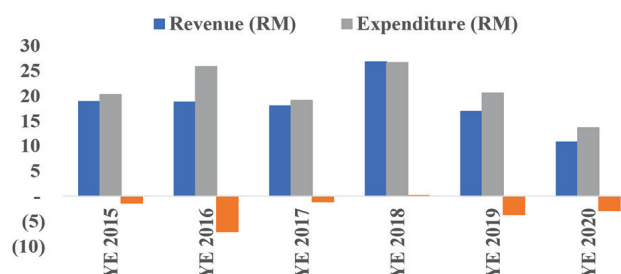


Figure 3—SAIMM losses since 2015

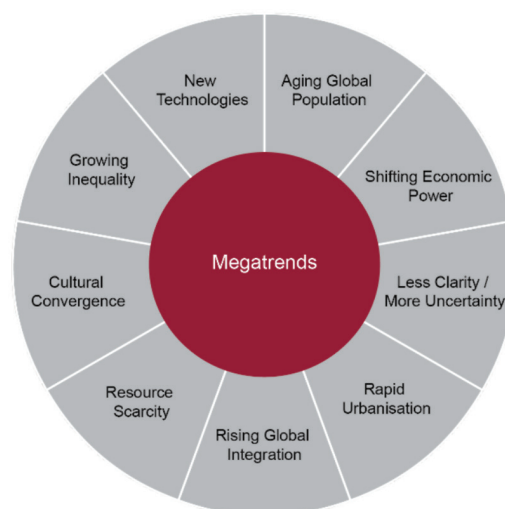


Figure 4—Global dynamics (megatrends)

Presidential Address: Leadership, Morals, and Ethics

Various Council members volunteered to take responsibility for entrenching these Pillars of Value, and to ensure deliberate and sustained progress in delivering such value to members. Value proposition have been clearly articulated for each Pillar of Value, and these are now being professionally tailored to enable SAIMM representatives (the volunteers) to effectively engage with members and all other stakeholders to communicate the organization's strategic intent, and to secure their support and increased involvement with the SAIMM. Covid-19 has forced the SAIMM to accelerate its efforts on the necessary marketing material and on the roadmap for implementing the strategy.

Improving ethical awareness

Improving ethical awareness is recognized as a key means of ensuring that members, and indeed all of the SAIMM's stakeholders, both see and experience the value of being associated with the organization. The value proposition for this 'Pillar of Value' also makes specific reference to promoting ethical leadership within the SAIMM.

Sustained ethical conduct by members will ensure that they can work, and live, in an environment where they are inspired by one another and respected by others, including the broader South African society. This will be possible if each and every member actively promotes ethical awareness and ethical behaviour, by making ethics real and visible to all stakeholders, both internally and externally.

To this end, work started on revisiting the SAIMM's Code of Ethics, which, although sufficient to address past ethical concerns, did not necessarily provide sufficient guidance regarding the SAIMM's values and principles in the context of today's evolving and increasingly complex world. The Code has, as a consequence, now been modified and reads that members must:

- Have due regard for the welfare, safety, and health of the general public (including employees and fellow professionals) and the environment in all activities
- Discharge their duties to employers and/or clients effectively and competently, with fidelity and honesty as well as respect their employer's confidentiality
- Uphold the dignity and standing of their respective professions and the objectives of the Institute
- Only undertake work that they have been adequately trained for, have the necessary experience of, and are therefore competent to perform
- Strictly avoid advertising their professional services in a self-laudatory way or in a manner that would undermine the dignity of the Institute
- Refrain from malicious or negligent conduct that would injure the professional reputation or business of others
- Continue their professional development throughout their careers
- Comply with the Constitution of the Institute and, where applicable, those of legislated Codes of Professional Conduct.

The revised Code of Ethics is essentially a short-list of specific principles and value statements to guide members' behaviour and their decisions, both at work and in the broader South African community. The underlying intention was that it should avoid being specific so as to prevent inadvertent limitation of the application of the ethical and behavioural principles contained therein. In other words, the revised Code of Ethics now has

more of a value-based leaning than that of a rules-based code of ethics, and when interpreting it, both the ethical and behavioural principles must be applied to advance and promote the spirit and the letter of the SAIMM's Code of Ethics.

The SAIMM's Code of Ethics also provides for the suspension or expulsion of members, but this does not prevent the organization from negative exposure as a consequence of unethical behaviour, and members may need to proactively act to prevent possible violations, which can both damage the SAIMM brand and lower the levels of trust and cohesion within the Institute.

Values-based codes of ethics

This type of code emphasises the principles and values of a common ethical culture. It is intended to be less prescriptive and relies on continuous communication between people for ongoing alignment in an ever-changing world.

Rules-based code of ethics

This is more of a prescriptive and controlling approach that defines specific rules about what is acceptable and unacceptable.

(D. Rossouw and L. van Vuuren, 2020)

Ethical and moral decay

In addition to having to cope with a rapidly evolving global environment, South Africans have also had to deal with the consequences of money laundering, bribery, fraud, and corruption, often involving high-profile companies and prominent political or business leaders.

Numerous businesses in the private sector have had their reputations damaged by allegations of corruption, or corporate collusion, including:

- Enron, 2001. The media revealed that the energy company's accounting practices were amiss, resulting in bankruptcy. The share price dropped from a high of US\$90.75 in June 2000 to less than US\$1 by the end of November 2001. Many of the executives and employees were charged with fraud or conspiracy
- KPMG, 2016. South Africa's Companies and Intellectual Property Commission (CIPC) accused the auditing firm of sub-standard quality controls while reporting on the South African Revenue Service. KPMG was also accused of helping the Gupta family write off a wedding as a business expense
- Steinhoff, 2017. South African pension funds incurred huge losses due to 'accounting irregularities' that resulted in the furniture company's share price dropping by 85%. The auditors responsible for the 2014, 2015, and 2016 financial statements are being investigated by the Independent Regulatory Board for Auditors (IRBA)
- CIPC accused McKinsey & Company of contravening the Companies Act by misleading Eskom in dealings with the Gupta-aligned Trillian Capital Partners
- PwC was cited in an IRBA investigation for not disclosing irregularities in the procurement practices of South African Airways.

These types of governance failures indicate a lack of ethics and ethical leadership. It appears that most of the people encountering unethical behaviour are doing little about it.

Presidential Address: Leadership, Morals, and Ethics

Unfortunately, the stream of regular reports on fraud and corruption (Figure 5) keeps chipping away at the resolve, and efforts of those few people and business actually trying to make a meaningful difference.

Ethics in business and politics has fortunately been receiving increased attention because of the many large corporate failures (Rhodes, 2006), and today most of the bigger companies are incorporating ethics and codes of conduct into their employee development programmes. However, reports of fraud and corruption do not seem to have slowed, despite these efforts. Studies have suggested that the 'internal bias' or 'situational influences' of individuals may be where attention needs to be directed.

Enron culture was about increasing the short-term share price without concern for the longer-term consequences, and everyone turned a 'blind eye'. This is an example of 'situational influence', where people are less likely to intervene when others are around to do so. Individuals need to learn to recognize the threat of 'internal bias' or 'situational influences' when facing a situation where their personal values seem to be in conflict with corporate culture. This is important.

Internal Bias

Some people believe that their ethical standards are higher than the average and as a consequence are more likely to overestimate the morality of their own behaviours, particularly in situations that they may not have encountered before.

(Ross and Nisbett, 1991)

Situational Influences

Bonuses, promotions, prestige, loyalty to an employer or even cultural aspects, can impact a person's behaviour or decision making, where even people with honourable motives can be influenced to do unethical things when finding themselves in difficult situations.

(Milgram, 1974)

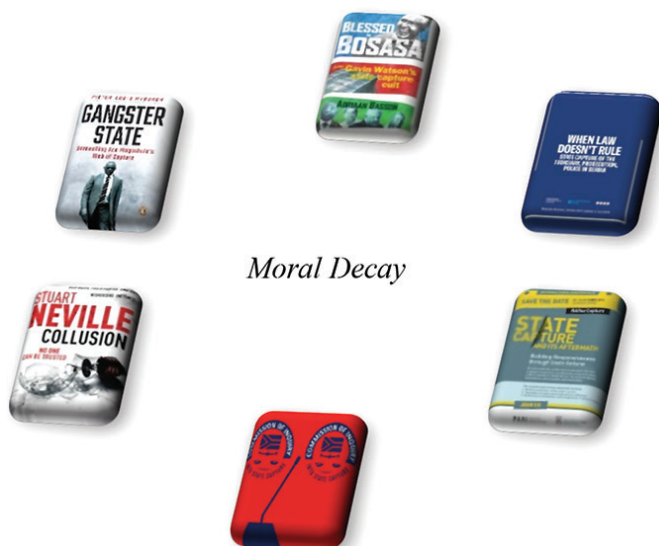


Figure 5—Fraud and corruption

Repeated reports of moral and ethical transgressions contribute to increasing the incidence of unethical behaviour across all levels of South African society. They also negatively influence investor confidence due to growing perceptions of the state of corruption in South Africa. In fact, South Africa has been placed squarely among countries deemed to have a serious corruption problem. Many investors, intent on avoiding political infighting, legislative uncertainty, skills shortages, infrastructural bottlenecks, and increasing taxes are looking elsewhere to grow their wealth.

Transparency International, a global coalition against corruption, publishes an annual Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI). The 2019 survey used feedback from thirteen executives on their perceived levels of public sector corruption, to rank 180 countries on a scale of zero (highly corrupt) to 100 (fairly clean). The 2019 CPI (Figure 6) shows that South Africa has slipped to the 70th position and now ranks lower than eight other sub-Saharan African countries.

Business for South Africa (B4SA), which comprises the Black Business Council and Business Unity South Africa, has been developing plans for economic reform. These plans include the mining industry, which should be growing and not contracting. The sector contributed about 8% to South Africa's GDP and about a third of our exports last year. It also employed some 450 000 people directly, and when the multiplier effect is taken into account, is responsible for many more jobs.

Mining is a significant industry and could play a materially larger role in economic reform if it were able to attract the necessary investment to explore more and to address infrastructural bottlenecks. Unfortunately, this may not be possible in the light of current investor perceptions.

There are of course numerous other problems that have emerged as a result of unethical behaviour across South Africa. Unemployment is increasing, while at the same time the country is having to deal with a dwindling skills base. Covid-19 has exacerbated the current situation. It is unlikely that people and businesses will continue to work and engage in the same way after the pandemic. South Africans are generally concerned with what the future has in store for them, and one consequence of this is that they are becoming increasingly polarized, with higher levels of prejudice evident everywhere.

Reversing the trend of moral decay

South Africans are now facing serious political and economic uncertainty and leadership is sorely needed. People at all levels in our society need to consider taking the time to influence those around them to make better choices and to do what is right, and the chances of this actually happening would be materially better if there were higher levels of ethical awareness prevalent amongst the general public in South Africa.

SAIMM members are well positioned to contribute and make a difference in this regard. They are already obligated by their profession to maintain the highest ethical standards, and are 'part and parcel' of South Africa and its mining industry. Each and every member should be mindful of this, and consider the implications of their choices and actions, or lack of actions, on society, and perhaps ask even themselves:

- If it is enough to simply follow a list of ethical guidelines
- If they care enough and are courageous enough to try and influence a better outcome

Presidential Address: Leadership, Morals, and Ethics

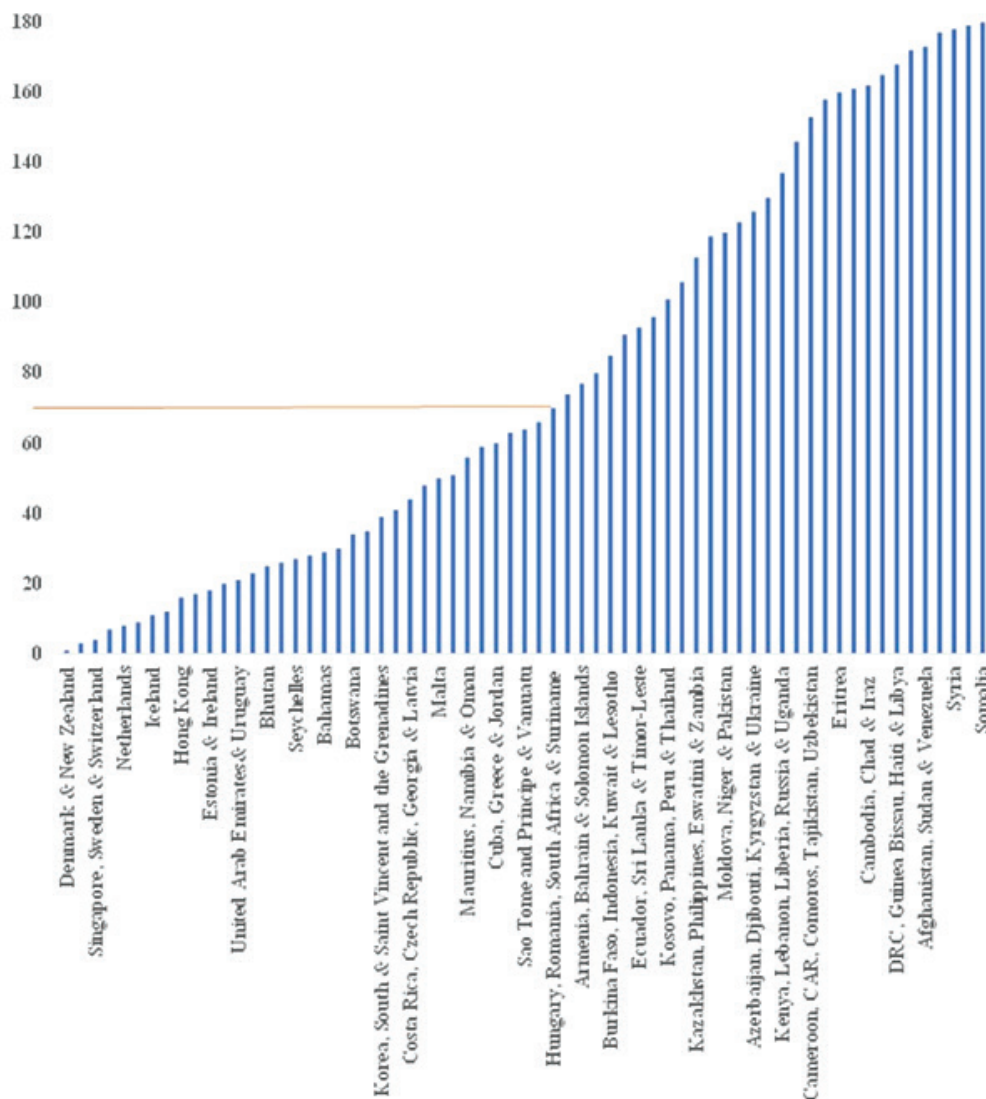


Figure 6—South Africa's position in the 2019 Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI)

- If they would be comfortable if they failed to act when knowing that they could and should have
- If they are sufficiently attuned to what is 'right and wrong' from a moral point of view
- If they are prepared to stand up and speak up, when they see something wrong?

It is proposed that a Code of Ethics, although necessary, is simply not enough. While useful as a general guide for how people should act, codes don't seem to be sufficient to ensure ethical conduct. There simply needs to be significantly more awareness around the importance of morals and ethics, in addition to following the abundance of ethical rules already available.

Members should not simply adopt a 'checklist' mentality when making ethical decisions. There are clearly people who are capable of easily circumventing rules for personal gain. Complacency around the importance of personal morals or ethical principles will not help in reversing this trend of moral decay. By talking and living ethics in the workplace and elsewhere, SAIMM members can contribute to building trust and developing partnerships, which will encourage the broader community to start working collaboratively for a better future. This type of

behaviour will also contribute to enhanced governance, not only in the mining industry, but also among South Africans in general.

There will, however, be situations where the rules are unclear, nonexistent, not applicable, or even in conflict with one another. When a member encounters someone making, or about to make, a poor choice, he or she may feel obligated to act, but unsure of what to do. In such instances, members are encouraged to contact SAIMM's office manager for assistance, which could be through:

- *Peer advice*—appropriate contact can be facilitated with either a SAIMM Fellow or other suitable mentor.
- *A hotline*—where a question or a concern can be raised through an internal link, hosted by an external service provider, to keep information confidential to the extent permitted by law.
- A frequently asked questions link to a list of answers to the more common questions by members uncertain of the usual procedures or processes relating to the issue at hand.

Note: These links have been contemplated to serve solely as a means for members to obtain guidance as opposed to ignoring a situation. The intention is not to 'police' but to try and proactively prevent violations before they occur.

Presidential Address: Leadership, Morals, and Ethics

The ability to care and the courage to actually take a stand and ‘buck the trend’ are traits of a leader. However, many leaders acquire influence through the authority and power that comes with their position in an organization. This places them in a space where they can make a real difference, but many do not. Some of them actually hold the view that they need do only as much as what is contractually or legally required and no more. This type of thinking, or mindset, is not consistent with that of leaders who are concerned about the needs of their followers.

Effective leaders understand the importance of morality in today’s mix and are capable of influencing the right ethical behaviours while also accommodating moral differences. They have an appreciation of what it takes to lead and understand the difference between morals and ethics.

The best way to protect the ethical culture of an organisation is to actively promote it, practice it, train in it, update it, and make it real and visible to external and internal stakeholders.
(J.D. Sullivan, 2008)

Morals versus ethics

Cognisance needs to be taken of the difference between morals and ethics (Figure 7) to effectively and discerningly weigh up right from wrong.

These words both relate to ‘right’ or ‘wrong’ and are often used interchangeably, but they actually mean different things (Table I).

Morals are principles upon which our judgements regarding right and wrong are based. They are mostly shaped by our social, cultural, or religious beliefs. While unlikely to be the same for people from different social, cultural, or religious environments, they don’t usually change when a person operates in a different

context. A decision on right or wrong from a moral perspective may not always appear rational. We need to remember that when people act according to their morals, they are doing what they personally believe to be right. For example:

- Eating meat may be immoral in some cultures, but perfectly acceptable in others
- Public displays of affection may be a problem in some places, but not in others
- Certain attire in one place of worship may not be acceptable in another, where different views of morality exist.

While our personal notions of right and wrong are often inherited and accepted without question, we still need to understand that diversity is here to stay and that we all should to try to understand one another’s views.

Ethics, on the other hand, are more practical than morals. They are a set of values and principles of conduct that tell us how to behave or act in a social system, like a workplace, organization, or profession. They are consistent in the same context, but can vary depending on the social system to which they apply. Ethics are also not always moral and conflict can occur. For example:

- A doctor may agree with views on euthanasia, but cannot act due to his code of ethics
- A person chooses not to steal because he could go to jail, not because he actually believes that stealing is wrong
- A lawyer must defend his client despite knowing that the client is guilty.

We usually want to act ethically, even if the ‘rules’ do not agree with our personal views, because we don’t want our peers to judge us, and so there will be times when we will need to compromise on our personal morals. Ethics can therefore be considered as a rational way of choosing between competing morals or when there is not a clear right or wrong answer.

Globalization has added a new dimension to ethics. There are more frequent conflicts between cultures, values, and beliefs as a result of the changes around communication and deregulation. However, while there are differences, these are not significant. Western views on ethics around motivation, character, and integrity, which are inherited from the likes of Aristotle, Plato, Socrates, and Niccolò Machiavelli, are not dissimilar to those based on the philosophical traditions of Confucius and Sun Tzu from the East (Resick *et al.*, 2006).

Ethical decision-making requires leaders to consider a decision from different perspectives so that they can clearly see the bigger issues and make decisions that also minimize unintended consequences. This type of awareness should traverse every level of an organization.

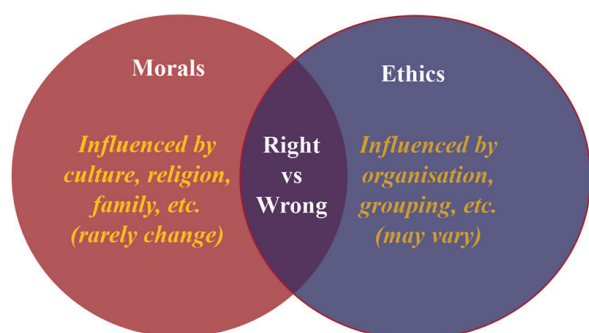


Figure 7 – Morals versus ethics

Table I

Morals versus ethics

| | Morals | Ethics |
|-------------|---|---|
| Definition | Latin word ‘mos’ (custom) Internal personal principles regarding right and wrong. | Greek word ‘ethos’ (character). External guiding principles of conduct for a group or society. |
| Description | Unrelated to professional work. Linked to personal values and influenced by society, culture, or religion. Generally unwavering as long as beliefs remain unchanged. A function of culture or religion and can go beyond societal norms. | Can relate to professional work For group alignment and influenced by profession, organization, etc. Can vary from one group or place to another. Reasonably uniform within a given context. |

Presidential Address: Leadership, Morals, and Ethics

Although ethics is very subjective to an organization, the practice of good ethics in business leads to improved productivity and good morale.

Ethical leadership is leadership that is directed by a respect for ethical beliefs and values and for the dignity and rights of others.
(T. Watts, 2008)

Ethical leadership

There are several leadership labels in the literature, including:

- Courageous leadership
- Situational leadership
- Decisive leadership
- Servant leadership, and more recently
- Ethical leadership.

Much has been written about leadership and there are numerous descriptions of the various types of attributes that academia ascribes to leaders who are effective. For example, these types of leaders:

- Make the hard decisions
- Are courageous, have integrity, and lead by example
- Are mindful of the impact of their views on others
- Create a sense of community and team spirit
- Are caring, fair, honest, and respectful
- Embrace diversity and develop social cohesion
- Connect with their employees
- Do what they truly believe to be right
- Do not tolerate ethical violations.

A question often asked is whether people need first to be appointed, or otherwise provided with authority, before trying to lead. Everyone, however quiet or reserved, has the potential to lead, but only if they care enough about the people around them. They would need the courage to act if an opportunity, or a threat, materializes which could impact the people around them. Leadership is tied to purpose and has nothing to do with position.

Leaders exist in the moment, and it is only that very moment when leadership is actually required. There are three simple levers that people can pull to successfully lead in the moment.

- (1) **Insight**—The first lever relates to knowing something that the people around you don't. It may be something that could cause them harm or an opportunity for them to choose an alternative course of action for their benefit.
- (2) **Courage**—The second lever relates to having the courage to act, because you effectively run the risk of losing the support of the people you are trying to lead. This assumes that you actually care for the people that you are with.
- (3) **Skill**—The third lever is about having the ability to change the minds of those people who do not know what you know, at a rate that they can absorb. If you don't get this right you are likely to fail in your efforts to influence their decisions or actions. Many people do fail but at least they had the conviction and courage to stand up when it mattered.



Another consequence of the prevailing global dynamics is the greater attention now paid by leaders to ethics with a moral dimension. More particularly, a respect for moral differences is an essential part of ethical leadership, where decisions and actions are guided primarily by principles of respect, fairness, honesty, integrity, and accountability. These leaders, *inter alia*:

- Serve others and not strictly narrow individual interests
- Create spaces where people are more tolerant, understanding, and respectful of each other
- Seek to increase ethical awareness as this encourages people to self-regulate
- Are more able to embrace the levels of diversity that have emerged with globalization
- Are concerned with moral development, virtuous behaviour, and will usually contribute to developing a more cohesive society.

Ethical leaders are generally in touch with their own values, but are also capable of considering the morals of others when leading. They are not afraid to do what they truly believe to be right, even when it is unpopular or inconvenient. They have the courage to act for the common good of their followers, in the moment, when it counts.

Conclusion

South Africans are in desperate need of leadership, and SAIMM members can contribute in this regard. South Africa exists in a rapidly changing global environment and its citizens are facing uncertain times at home. The world is being increasingly challenged by climate change, shortages of arable land and potable water, sustainable energy needs, food security, and a huge growth in urban populations. Closer to home, South Africa's GDP is dropping dramatically. South Africans are experiencing unemployment, corruption, civil unrest, xenophobia, and polarization, in a climate of continual political and economic uncertainty. This has occurred as a result of many years of endemic corruption and a dearth of effective leadership.

Despite all of this, South Africa's constitution is standing firm and positive progress is being made against corruption. It is time for South Africans to start standing together to contribute to an accelerated economic recovery in the national interest, and effective leadership is required to boost the performance of South Africans by elevating accountability at all levels in our society.

It is specifically ethical leaders, capable of caring for the interests and aspirations of people around them, while remaining true to their personal sense of what is right and what is wrong, that are sorely needed. These leaders will enhance the prevailing levels of trust and respect in their communities and this will, in turn, lead to the standards of integrity and loyalty that South Africa requires of its citizens.

The SAIMM is already adapting to change to make sure that it is able to effectively serve both its members and a mining industry that needs to keep pace with the best in the world. The Institute is committed to increasing ethical awareness amongst its members, but remains reliant on the collective effort and support of all of its members to lead by example and, whenever possible, to influence their peers to make the right choices.

Developing and maintaining this type of culture of integrity within the SAIMM may arguably be the single most important thing that its professionals can do to promote the real value of the SAIMM, and the benefits that it and its members can bring to the mining industry and to South Africa. Indeed, as professionals,

Presidential Address: Leadership, Morals, and Ethics

they are already well placed to actively contribute by leading ethically to make a difference and promote ethical awareness and the importance of ethical conduct. They should do this whenever and wherever the opportunity arises.

Everyone is responsible for creating ethical leadership
(P. Kariuki, 2019)

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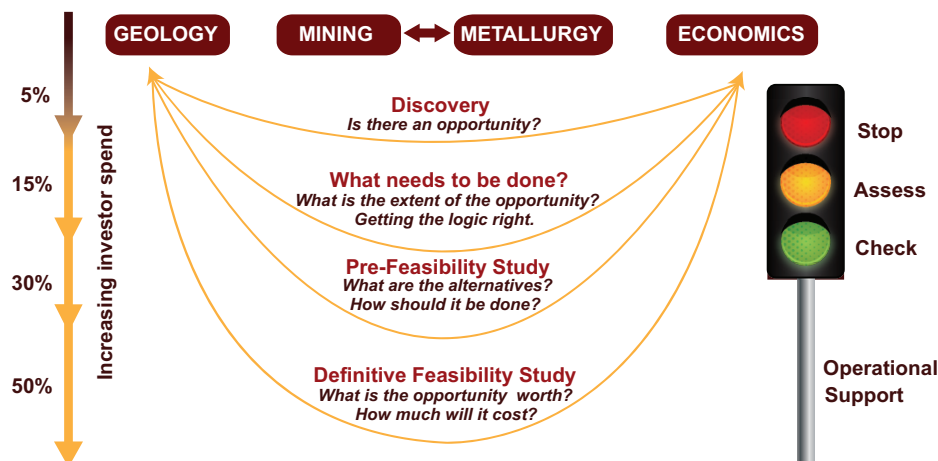
Diana van Buren,
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