Blurry responsibility after a decision

Short MIPractice_case reading (MIPractice_org_2025_blurry_responsibility_01)

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Comm. space (D-module): –

(**Mode** short)　(**Reflection** on)　(**A-band** ≈ 4–6 · mixed–adult range)

(**M-band (formal decision owners & process leaders)** ≈ 5–7 · medium–adult range)　(**IA-Box →** `IA_risk`)

(**D-module** off · not activated; dignity strain handled via A/R/IA only)

CASE SNAPSHOT

A decision in a team or organisation has been taken, but it remains unclear who is responsible for which aspects of implementation and how the decision has been communicated. This lack of clarity produces friction, irritation and informal conflict among those affected.

Guiding question:
How mature is the handling of responsibility and communication in this decision process, and does the resulting asymmetry count as functional or inadult?

Actors (roles only):

- **Formal decision maker / decision body** – Initiates, authorises or signs off the decision.
- **Middle management / team leads** – Translate the decision into local practice and distribute tasks.
- **Team members / staff** – Implement the decision in everyday work and live with its consequences.
- **Informal communication hubs** – Spread information, interpretations and rumours across the team.

ACRPD – STRUCTURAL READING

A – Awareness
Decision makers appear to have at least some awareness of the need to decide, but there is limited awareness of how unclear responsibility and communication will impact those affected. Awareness of downstream friction and implementation complexity seems underdeveloped. Early irritation, repeated questions about "who does what," and informal complaints are clear warning signals that responsibility and communication were not sufficiently clarified. There is likely confusion about who owns implementation, who answers questions, and who carries consequences if things go wrong; some actors may assume "leadership owns it," while leadership informally expects "the team will sort it out."

C – Coherence
Officially, the narrative may sound like: "We decided X together" or "The organisation has decided X for good reasons," suggesting collective orientation and rational decision making. In practice, enactments show a gap: communication is patchy or delayed, roles are not spelled out, and different sub-groups receive different messages. Friction and irritation become everyday signals of this incoherence. There is a notable coherence break between the claim of a clear and legitimate decision and the messy, unclear responsibility structure that follows: the decision is treated as finished while the communicative and role work is not.

R – Responsibility
Prior to taking the decision, actors could have clarified who decides, who implements, who communicates, and who monitors impact. After the decision, key responsibility points include naming owners, defining communication channels, and creating feedback loops for those affected. Responsibility appears partially diffused: leadership may see their task as "having decided," while teams feel left with unstructured fallout. Some actors may over-assume responsibility informally (trying to fix everything), others under-assume (waiting passively or blaming "the organisation"). Those affected face uncertainty, duplicated efforts, missed tasks, and possible conflicts; third parties (e.g. customers, partner units) may experience delays or inconsistent behaviour because no one clearly owns communication and follow-up.

P – Power / agency
Formal decisional power lies with leadership or a designated decision body, controlling agenda, timing and official wording of the decision. Informally, middle management and key communicators hold factual power: they decide what gets passed on, how, and with which emphasis. Staff have little power to change the decision but do have power to slow down implementation or to raise resistance. The chosen path used formal decision power but only partially used available alternatives such as co-designing the communication plan, staging a Q&A, or naming explicit owners and escalation paths. Alternatives such as involving representatives of those affected earlier, piloting the decision, or clearly documenting who is responsible for what were not fully used or were considered too time-consuming in the short term.

D – Dignity in practice (short)
While dignity is not explicitly attacked, irritation and friction can undermine everyday self-respect and relational dignity (D1/D2) if people feel blamed for unclear expectations or are left alone with contradictory messages.

IA-BOX – ASYMMETRY CHECK

T · Transparency
Those affected experience opacity regarding who is responsible for what and where to address questions or concerns. The structure of responsibility is not transparent.

J · Justification
The existence of a decision and some hierarchy-based asymmetry can be justified by organisational needs and protected goods (coordination, strategy, efficiency), even if the process is imperfect.

TB · Time-bound
It is unclear whether the current blurry phase is explicitly time-limited (e.g. until a follow-up meeting) or whether it drifts into a semi-permanent state of confusion.

R · Reversibility
The asymmetry and its effects are, in principle, reversible: roles can be clarified, communication can be repeated, and responsibility can be re-assigned more clearly, if actors decide to do so.

IA summary:

Overall, the IA-Box points to an *IA_risk*: the asymmetry of decision power is justified and reversible, but low transparency and unclear time-boundedness create a non-trivial risk that inadult patterns (blame, avoidance, chronic ambiguity) stabilise if no structural clarification follows.

KEY FINDINGS

- Maturity in practice is mixed (A ≈ 4–6/10): the decision is taken, but awareness of downstream effects and role clarity is limited.
- Responsibility concentrates structurally with decision owners and process leaders (M ≈ 5–7/10), not with staff who are left with unclear expectations.
- The IA-box indicates an IA risk: justification for the asymmetry is plausible, reversibility is possible, but transparency is low and time-boundedness is unclear.
- Friction and irritation signal a dignity-relevant strain for those affected, even though the D-module remains deactivated in this reading.
- The future trajectory depends on whether the organisation uses the irritation as a learning impulse to clarify roles or normalises chronic ambiguity.

Conclusion for practice

In sum, the model suggests that the handling of responsibility and communication in this decision process is structurally improvable rather than fundamentally toxic. For practice, this implies that decision-making should be coupled with explicit ownership mapping, a simple communication plan, and clear feedback channels. Focusing on structures and processes—rather than blaming individuals—can turn the current irritation into a starting point for more mature, transparent and dignity-preserving decision cultures.

Trajectory hint

Over time, the case can either move towards higher maturity if the confusion is named and roles are clarified, or slide into a plateau of normalised irritation if ambiguity remains unaddressed.