

**UNDERSTANDING PRINCIPALS' LIVED EXPERIENCES OF ETHICAL
DILEMMAS ON ISSUES RELATING TO EDUCATORS' CODES OF
PROFESSIONAL ETHICS IN UMGUNGUNDLOVU DISTRICT**

BY

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**Submitted in partial fulfilment for the Degree of Master of Education in the School of
Education in the discipline, Educational Leadership, Management and Policy**

UNIVERSITY OF KWAZULU-NATAL

Pietermaritzburg, South Africa

January 2021

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DECLARATION OF ORIGINALITY

I, Celumusa Bethuel Hlongwane, declare that this study on: **Understanding principals' lived experiences of ethical dilemmas on issues relating to educators' codes of professional ethics in uMgungundlovu District**, abides by the following rules:

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ABSTRACT

School principals are the most important educational leaders in education because of the delegated powers vested upon them by the education system. Hence, they need to have strong ethics and morals which will inform their day to day leadership activities in schools.

The study sought to explore principals' lived experiences of ethical dilemmas as they carry out their work of dealing with issues relating to educators' codes of professional ethics. The study further sought to explore strategies applied by principals in their leadership to resolve their ethical dilemmas in their practice of enhancing the educators' codes of professional ethics. The Hunt and Vitell general theory of marketing ethics was used as the theoretical framework for this study. The study adopted an interpretive paradigm located in the qualitative research approach. A hermeneutic phenomenology was employed where semi-structured interviews were adopted as a data generation method. Through purposive sampling, seven local school principals were identified as research participants.

The data generated was thematically analysed which identified codes and themes. The study argues that principals encounter ethical dilemmas daily as they deal with cases involving educators who have violated the codes of professional ethics. Furthermore, the study also reveals that principals handle their ethical dilemmas with difficulty and in isolation as the support they require in the process is not provided by the relevant structures.

DEDICATION

This dissertation is specially dedicated to:

My late parents, Khombisile Lahliwe (*MaNdlovu*) Hlongwane and Mmiseni (*Mbadada*) Hlongwane, for their unwavering love and support. I can only imagine how excited they would have been witnessing my own thesis being published. May their precious souls rest in eternal peace.

My late grandparents, Nomadiphu (*MaNgubane*) Hlongwane and Mshayeni (*Golog' uyabab' uyinhlaba, Shlang'esahlul' abashuk' eMabomvini*) Hlongwane. I am told that, my grandfather foretold my academic journey and even mentioned that I was going to be a teacher. *Kunina ngithi ngiyabonga.*

Lastly, all AmaNgwane (whether in Swayimane, Pietermaritzburg, Estcourt, Msinga, Bergville, Bulwer, and all corners of the globe), I'm saying *bo Masumpa, Zikhali, Sangweni, boMatiwane,* this one is for you.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

First and foremost, I acknowledge herein my dependence on my Lord Jesus Christ as my personal Saviour. I whole-heartedly thank Him for his love, blessings, lessons and triumphs as I travelled on this academic journey for the past two years. None of this would be possible without His grace and mercy. Indeed, *udumo lumfanele*.

Furthermore, this study would not have been possible if it were not for the priceless support and assistance from these individuals:

- My supervisor, Dr P.E. Mthembu for the professional support throughout this journey.
- My lovely wife, Magauta Conity Hlongwane who through God's grace chose to share her life with me. In this journey, she stood by me and sacrificed her own pleasure so that in the end we could achieve this Master's degree together.
- My siblings (Khanyisile, Mandla, Zeph, Siyabonga, Mxolisi, Zithobile, Mlungisi and Nonjabulo) and my in-laws (the list is endless) for their understanding and support.
- The school principals who agreed to take part in this study.
- My uncle (Bab' Omncane) Dr T.M. Mgwaba for his understanding in my journey as a novice researcher.
- Warm and heartfelt thanks go to the Educational Leadership Management and Policy (ELMP) team on Pietermaritzburg Campus (i.e. Prof. T.T. Bhengu and Dr P.E. Myende).
- Finally, to my colleagues of ELMP 2019 class on Pietermaritzburg Campus, Church in Pietermaritzburg and my friends who supported me in various ways throughout this journey.

ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

AWOL	Absent Without Leave
BLSA	Business Leadership South Africa
CEO	Chief Executive Officer
CM	Circuit Manager
CPD	Continuing Professional Teacher Development
DBE	Department of Basic Education
DoH	Department of Health
DP	Deputy Principal
EEA	Employment of Educators' Act
ELRA	Education Labour Relations Act
H-V theory	Hunt and Vitell theory
HOD	Departmental Head (School based)
HoD	Head of Department (Provincial)
IEB	Independent Examination Board
LWP	Leave Without Pay
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
NTC	National Teaching Council
PL1	Post Level 1
RSA	Republic of South Africa
SABPP	South African Board for People Practices
SACE	South African Council for Educators
SASA	South African Schools' Act
SGB	School Governing Body
SMT	School Management Team
SOE	State Owned Enterprise
TRCN	Teachers' Registration Council of Nigeria
WHO	World Health Organization

TABLE OF CONTENTS

DECLARATION OF ORIGINALITY	ii
ABSTRACT.....	iii
DEDICATION.....	iv
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	v
ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS.....	vi
TABLE OF CONTENTS	vii
CHAPTER ONE	1
ORIENTATION TO THE STUDY.....	1
1.1 Introduction	1
1.2 Background of the study	1
1.3 Rationale of the study.....	5
1.4 Statement of the problem	6
1.5 Purpose of the study	9
1.6 Objectives of the study.....	9
1.7 Research questions	10
1.8 Significance of the study.....	10
1.9 Delineation of the study	11
1.10 Definition of key concepts	12
1.11 Organisation of the dissertation.....	13
1.12 Chapter summary	13
CHAPTER TWO	15
LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK	15
2.1 Introduction	15
2.1.1 Principals’ experiences of ethical dilemmas and their implications.....	15
2.1.2 Educational leadership.....	20
2.1.3 Ethical leadership	23
2.1.4 Ethical decision making and implications for principals.....	26
i. Deontology	27
ii. Teleology.....	28
iii. Multi-paradigm approach.....	28
iv. Importance of culture in ethical decision making	29

2.1.5 Ethical dilemmas	30
2.1.6 Codes of professional ethics	34
2.2 Theoretical Framework	38
2.3 Chapter summary	42
CHAPTER THREE	43
RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY	43
3.1 Introduction	43
3.2 Research paradigm	43
3.3 Research approach.....	44
3.4 Phenomenology as a research design	44
3.5 Sampling strategies	46
3.6 Data generation methods.....	47
3.7 Data analysis strategy.....	48
3.8 Trustworthiness of the study	49
3.8.1 Credibility.....	50
3.8.2 Transferability	50
3.8.3 Dependability.....	50
3.8.4 Confirmability	51
3.9 Ethical considerations	51
3.9.1 Autonomy	51
3.9.2 Non-maleficence	52
3.10 Chapter summary	53
CHAPTER FOUR.....	54
DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS.....	54
4.1 Introduction	54
4.2 Participants' career backgrounds	54
4.3 Themes	56
4.3.1 Principals' handling of cases relating to insubordination, intoxication, negligence and AWOL by educators.....	56
i. Principals' handling of cases relating to insubordination by educators	57
ii. Principals' handling of cases relating to intoxication by educators	58
iii. Principals' handling of cases relating to negligence by educators.....	60

iv. Principals' handling of cases relating to AWOL by educators	61
4.3.2 Empathy	63
4.3.3 Fear for safety	64
4.3.4 Open communication.....	65
4.3.5 Adherence versus non-adherence to policies.....	66
4.3.6 No support and the feeling of being isolated	68
4.4 Summary of interview finding themes	72
4.5 Conclusion.....	73
CHAPTER FIVE	75
DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH.....	75
5.1 Introduction	75
5.2 Summary of the study	75
5.3 Summary of findings.....	76
5.4 Discussion	76
5.5 What are the principals' lived experiences of ethical dilemmas as they carry their work of dealing with the issues relating to educators' codes of professional ethics?.....	77
5.6 How do principals resolve ethical dilemmas in their practice of enhancing educators' codes of professional ethics?	80
5.7 What support do school principals have (<i>if any</i>) in overcoming ethical dilemmas as they carry out their duties concerning educators' codes of professional ethics?	83
5.8 Conclusions and recommendations emerging from the study	85
5.9 Areas for future research.....	86
5.10 Chapter Summary.....	87
REFERENCES.....	89
APPENDICES	103
Appendix 1: Ethical Clearance Certificate from University of KwaZulu-Natal.....	103
Appendix 2: Gatekeeper 1 permission (KZN DBE Head Office).....	104
Appendix 3: Gatekeeper 2 Permission (UMgungundlovu District).....	105
Appendix 4: Participant information sheet.....	107
Appendix 5: Participants' informed consent.....	109
Appendix 6: Interview schedule/protocol	110

Appendix 7: Turnitin Report 112
Appendix 8: Editing confirmation letter 113

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1: Hunt and Vitells' Ethical Decision-Making Theory	40
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LIST OF TABLES

Table 1: Summary of ethical dilemmas relating to critical incidents faced by teachers in Israeli schools	33
Table 2: Profile of each participant in the current study	55
Table 3: Research questions and corresponding themes.....	56

CHAPTER ONE

ORIENTATION TO THE STUDY

1.1 Introduction

Through this study, I looked at the lived experiences of school principals on how they handle their ethical dilemmas as they deal with cases related to educators' codes of professional ethics. I aimed to understand and learn from the lived experiences of the selected school principals. This is the first chapter of the dissertation consisting of five chapters. I begin this chapter by providing a background of the study with reference to significance of ethical conduct for educators including school principals. International and national perspectives on educators' misconduct are also presented. I then moved on to discuss the rationale of the study, the statement of the problem, the purpose of the study, the objectives of the study, the research questions, the significance of the study, the delineation of the study, definition of key concepts, organisation of the dissertation and chapter summary brings this chapter to close.

1.2 Background of the study

The significance and value of principals in managing and leading schools cannot be overemphasised. In fact, all organisations (private, public or Non-Governmental Organisations [NGOs]), cannot effectively function without a leader. Some argue that the success and failure of an organisation rests on its leaders' competencies. The same is true with regards to the schools. Principals set the tone on how schools should function (Dinham, 2005; Hoy & Hannum, 1997; Price, Moolenaar, Tschannen-Moran, & Gareis, 2015). Therefore, principals have the responsibility of creating a positive school climate that is welcoming and conducive to effective teaching and learning taking place. In order to achieve this, one may argue that principals should have strong morals and an ethical fibre which will inform their conduct and decision-making processes.

Furthermore, there is also a societal expectation from various interest groups in education that principals should possess ethical values and will thus make ethical decisions for the best possible outcome (Cranston, Ehrich, & Kimber, 2006; Jenlink & Jenlink, 2015; Norberg & Johansson, 2007). These interest groups, (like the school governing bodies [SGBs], parents, learners, NGOs

and other stakeholders in education) expect principals to have a robust ethical fibre and will thus make ethical decisions that are in the best interest of the school community (Cranston et al., 2006; Jenlink & Jenlink, 2015; Norberg & Johansson, 2007). Additionally, principals are expected to do right rather than wrong, to promote good rather than evil and to act justly rather than unjustly (Duignan & MacPherson, 1992).

Subsequently, RSA (2015) emphasises the need for principals to possess professional values like fair-mindedness, patience, empathy, compassion, respect and humility in all dealings and in the promotion and protection of the interest of educators and learners. Also, ethical conduct in the management of financial and other resources by principals is also mentioned as paramount in the Policy on the South African Standard for Principalship. Along with these arguments, Higgs-Klein and Kapelianis (1999) and O'Neill and Bourke (2010) point out that the ethical conduct of principals and teachers is paramount for the effective functioning of the school. They further argue that teachers, including principals, are expected to model socially acceptable behaviour and are obliged to strive for ethical practices in their professional endeavours.

Moreover, ethical conduct by principals will benefit the school in various forms as it yields personal benefits as well as organisational benefits (Bansal & Kumar, 2018; Tyre, 2018). They suggest that principals who conduct themselves ethically, gain trust from other stakeholders and teachers which then makes their job easier and more enjoyable; this in turn will improve organisational performance and commitment as schools with strong ethical cultures tend to perform better than those with weak ethical cultures (Tyre, 2018). Therefore, schools that are ethically led have much to gain. At the heart of the best performing and successful schools, lies ethical leadership (Bansal & Kumar, 2018).

Additionally, the South African Board for People Practices (SABPP) in Naidoo (2015) mentioned numerous organisational benefits of ethical conduct by its leaders and staff. These benefits include enticing and retaining ethical staff members; improved employee engagement and commitment; improved loyalty and support from stakeholders; improved investor, market and donor confidence; and enhanced corporate reputation and brand equity. In addition, he posits on the importance of ethical conduct in promoting organisational benefits because of its enhancement of trustworthiness, efficient, and productive employees that will instil stakeholder and investor

confidence. Schools that are ethically led will also enjoy such benefits. Such schools will attract more ethically inspired educators; as a result, ethical conduct will be the culture of the school. The school will in turn enjoy support from the SGB, parents, community, businesses, NGOs, government departments and other stakeholders with an interest in the school's affairs. Subsequently, the school will gain trust and loyalty from reputable sponsors and donors who can then invest their financial and material resources in the school without any fear of misuse and mismanagement (Tyre, 2018). These organisational benefits suggest that ethical conduct by principals and educators will ultimately improve teaching and learning processes and outcomes (O'Neill & Bourke, 2010).

Regrettably, the opposite will prevail in schools that are unethically led and such schools have much to lose. Unethical conduct by principals will result in the school losing the trust of the SGB, parents, teachers, learners and other stakeholders. This, in turn, will result in a decline in learner enrolment, altered norms and standards, reduced school funds and donations, lowered staff morale, and poor academic performance, to mention just a few drawbacks of unethical negative perceptions. In most cases, the issue of unethical conduct by principals is often overlooked relative to academic performance. The main aspects that would be analysed relate to availability of strategic plans, school improvement plans (SIPs), turnaround strategies, intervention plans and so on, which are mainly related to instructional leadership. However, that should not be the case as Ehrich et al. (2015) posit that ethics and leadership are inseparable as decisions are guided by values.

Furthermore, ethical misconduct by principals will ultimately result in the reproduction of the questionable SIPs (sometimes copied and pasted from the previous years or from neighbouring schools). These plans may be available when requested by the departmental officials, but their availability may not address the needs and the context of the school, if drafted by a principal that is not driven by the ethical values.

Equally important, ethical conduct compliance and meeting societal expectations on ethical values, unfortunately does not solve the ethical dilemmas principals have to deal with daily, when they have to make critical decisions in relation to educators' codes of professional ethics. It is, however, regrettable that in the process, principals have difficulty in handling ethical dilemmatic situations

because of the complexity and openness of schools (Cranston et al., 2006; Kimber & Campbell, 2014; Roche, 1997). Principals are also failing to meet public expectations on ethical behaviour. Reddy (2017) claims that South Africa is in a crisis and in an urgent need of ethical leaders. His sentiments were also echoed by Bonang Mohale (Chief Executive Officer [CEO] of Business Leadership South Africa [BLSA]) who maintains that ethical leadership is the missing link in decision making and has resulted in the failures of large businesses, State Owned Enterprises (SOEs), and public institutions, both locally and globally (Mohale, 2018). Schools as organisations are not exempt from this argument. A shortage of ethical leadership will result in poor critical decision-making in issues pertaining to the educators' codes of professional ethics. This, in turn, will compromise the principals' leadership abilities and jeopardise trust between themselves, their subordinates and other stakeholders.

Subsequently, the prevalence of ethical turpitude at schools by principals and educators has reached worrying proportions globally. For example, a comparison study conducted in England found that both female and male educators had sexually abused students while on duty (Christensen & Darling, 2020). Similarly, based on their study in the United States of America, Abboud, Wu, Pedneault, Stohr and Hemmens (2020) posit that the sexual abuse of children in schools is an issue of great concern and further revealed that 9.6% of students in Grades 8 to 11 had been victimised by educators. Moreover, Kunene (2018) in Myende, Bhengu and Kunene (2020) submits that in Eswatini, at least five principals are dismissed annually for charges levelled against them related to misappropriation of school funds.

Equally important, in the Republic of South Africa, the South African Council of Educators (SACE), in its 2019/2020 annual report detailed 550 cases of educators' misconduct (including school principals) which were resolved and finalised. Of these cases, 38% were in relation to educators instilling corporal punishment and assault to learners; 22,18% were related to sexual misconduct, sexual assault, indecent assault and rape; 16% were in relation to verbal abuse, victimisation, harassment, and defamation by educators; 10,18% were in relation to improper conduct and alcohol abuse by educators; 8,36% were in relation to fraud, theft, and financial mismanagement; 2,55% cases were related to negligence; 1,64% were in relation to racism; 0,55% were in relation to intimidation and murder; 0,36% cases were related to no jurisdiction; and the last 0,18% was related to other cases of misconduct by educators (SACE, 2020). These reports

portray a vivid picture on the ethical turpitude of some educators and principals in schools. They also suggest that educators' malfeasance is a global phenomenon.

1.3 Rationale of the study

In addition, on a personal level, I know of two school principals who have faced difficulties. One was charged and expelled for financial mismanagement and the other is still being investigated for effecting corporal punishment on learners, of which such incidents of the latter are common. I fully concur with sentiments by Serfontein and de Waal (2015) that public schools are not safe from corruption and other unethical practices. It is very common to hear people whispering alleged reports of unethical malpractice by principals.

The malfeasance and unprofessional conduct by principals is worrisome and the desire to understand their ethical dilemmas as they deal with issues around educators' codes of ethics struck my interest. It is a common belief that such unprofessional conduct by principals has resulted from their inability to handle ethical dilemmas and many principals have consequently opted for avoidance when critical decisions have to be made regarding errant educators (Roche, 1997). As a dedicated and ambitious principal in a section 21 school, I have since developed a desire for a deeper understanding of principals' lived experiences in handling ethical dilemmas, with an intention of gaining a deeper understanding of the situation and defusing the unethical dark cloud hanging over our heads by conducting an empirical study.

Equally important, the decision to conduct this study was triggered by my personal ordeal that I encountered as a principal when I had to make an ethical decision to resolve a case involving a Foundation Phase Departmental Head (HOD) in her late twenties and a Post Level 1 (PL1) educator – occupying an entry level position – in her late fifties (59 years to be precise). The HOD had reported the difficulties of working with the educator, citing insubordination as she constantly failed to carry out instructions without any reasonable cause. Further to that, she regularly excused herself without valid permission and reason. Such acts are classified as misconduct as stipulated under Section 17 of Employment of Educators' Act 76 of 1998 (EEA) and the sanctions for such include a fine and a final written warning leading to dismissal, if appropriate (RSA, 1998). The educator had previously been fined, had received a final written warning and was thus facing dismissal. The cases were investigated and were discovered to be legitimate. Ethical dilemmas

emerged to me as a principal when the educator started to show remorse for her misconduct and began to share her personal problems including divorce proceedings and financial difficulties. Additionally, she was due to retire the following year after 25 years of service. If she was dismissed, she would then have lost all her retirement benefits. On the other hand, pressure was mounting on me as the principal, from educators, the SGB, and community, to report the matter to the Department of Education. With all the evidence presented, it was crystal clear that the PL1 educator was guilty of misconduct and had to be dismissed. As a principal, I found myself in a deep ethical dilemma between my conscience and educational policies.

1.4 Statement of the problem

Section 239 of the South African Constitution regards public schools as organs of state because they exercise power and perform public functions in terms of the legislation (RSA, 1996a). Schools form part of a broader public education administration. Furthermore, section 15 of the South African Schools' Act (SASA) provides that every public school is a juristic person (can sue and be sued) and performs its function in terms of the Act (RSA, 1996b). Since public schools operate under a larger public education administration, they are thus bound to practice open, participative and accountable governance, and among other things promote high standards of professional ethics, as per section 195 of the Constitution (RSA, 1996a). Therefore, as the law accords, principals are bound to be ethically driven in their leadership practices.

Furthermore, principals are the most important professional leaders of public schools because the powers of professional management of the school are vested upon them and they individually represent the Head of Department (HoD), the highest official in the Department of Education, as per section 16(3) of SASA (RSA, 1996b). In executing duties as an *ex officio* representative of the HoD, s/he must act professionally in ensuring courtesy and striving for openness and transparency (Crous, 2004). Courtesy entails commitment from public servants (including principals) to be loyal to public goods, avoid any form of conflict of interest, and to practise self-restraint (RSA, 1997). I strongly believe that developing a culture of openness and transparency by principals helps to keep public schools effective, efficient, and free from nepotism and corruption.

In addition, regarding the educators (including principals) vis-à-vis the teaching profession, SACE maintains that they must behave in a way that enhances the dignity of the teaching profession and

must not bring the profession into disrepute (RSA, 2000; SACE, 2002). One may argue that it is for these reasons that a policy framework was drafted on Education Management and Leadership Development which aimed at professionalising principals in South Africa (van der Westhuizen & van Vuuren, 2007). Furthermore, the South African Standard for Principals purposes at improving performance management of principals and the identification of their professional development needs (Marishane, 2016).

By and large, the South African Constitution, SASA, and SACE legally bind principals to be ethical driven and apply the *intra vires* principle (meaning to act within the legal authority) when executing their professional obligations. These regulatory frameworks suggest that ethical conduct by principals is non-negotiable. By virtue of being an *ex officio* representative of the HoD, this intensifies their responsibility to act professionally and ethically. Say for example, in an event a principal has acted in *mora* and abused his position which can result in a school being legally challenged, such proceedings may be directed to the HoD simply because of the *nemo iudex in sua causa* principle (which suggests that no one can judge his own case). The HoD (or his/her delegate) can then counter-charge the respective principal. I would presume principals would have been in better positions if they were acting on their own accord rather than being *ex officio*. Representing the HoD is a responsibility that cannot be compromised.

Similarly, studies have also emphasised the significance of ethical conduct in schools by principals. Ethics are at the heart of school leadership and administration as ethical leaders are to act on what they know to be right and need an ethical framework to guide their actions (Cranston, Ehrich, & Kimber, 2003; Cranston, Ehrich, & Kimber, 2004; Ehrich, Harris, Klenowski, Smeed, & Spina, 2015; Vikaraman, Mansor, & Hamzah, 2018). One may thus argue that ethical leaders are branded by a very strong character and strive for doing what is ethically right. Ethical leaders are the people of honour and altruistic behaviour who consider other peoples' needs before theirs, as ethical conduct requires one to be sensitive to other people as well as to their context (Jenlink & Jenlink, 2015).

Subsequently, principals and educators with ethics can change the world for the better. Such premise is possible as Greenfield (2004) claims that they have an obligation to conduct themselves ethically in the best interest of those they serve. It is therefore not about them, but rather, it is about

the most vulnerable members that they are teaching. Such ethical conduct is what Fullan (2007) regards as moral purpose. Furthermore, Kimber and Campbell (2014) emphasised that acting in the best interest of learners is vital to the morality and ethical functioning of the school. This view is also supported by Schwella (2013) who posits that leaders, including school principals, should be good and ethical in their leadership. He further submits that ethical leaders put the needs of their followers above their own needs; exemplify private virtues such as courage and temperance; and lastly, they lead in the best interest of the public goods.

However, in recent years, South Africa has produced a number of poor-performing public leaders, with evidence of such perceptions found in the media, court cases and on the other public platforms (Schwella, 2013). Correspondingly, Transparency International (2016) in Suleman, Rossouw, and Bounds (2019) reveal that South Africa is becoming an increasingly corrupt country and is ranked among the top 100 countries, worldwide, on the Corruption Perception Index. These submissions were also supported by a Corruption Watch (2016) report which provided a statistical analysis of corruption in South African schools and indicated that it had received reports of 1 100 cases of corruption for the period January 2012 – July 2015. The report further revealed that *firstly*, 54% of the cases implicated principals as primary culprits in corruption activities; *secondly*, principals and SGBs manipulated basic financial rules and regulations for self-enrichment; *thirdly*, 37% of cases were linked to financial mismanagement; *fourthly*, 20% of corruption cases emerged from the theft of funds; *and lastly*, 13% of cases were related to tender corruption.

Similarly, there are widespread reports of principals acting unethically; from bribery to corruption; financial mismanagement to fraud; abuse of power to harassment including sexual harassment, etc. Naidoo (2015) in his study, further reveals that public officials in South Africa are faced with ethical problems and unethical behaviour has become endemic in public organisations. Likewise, Serfontein and de Waal (2015) assert that South African public schools are not safe from corruption. These views are also supported by the Former South African Public Protector (Advocate Thuli Madonsela) in Gould (2012) who also mentioned that the country has reached a breaking point regarding the corruption epidemic in both the public and private sectors. It is disheartening for such a beautiful country like South Africa, which had produced internationally acclaimed ethical leaders like Dr Nelson Mandela, Archbishop Desmond Tutu, Phumzile Mlambo

-Ngcuka and others to receive such degrading remarks regarding its leadership in general. Indeed, cry the beloved country.

Moreover, on the 26/02/2017, the City Press Newspaper also reported on a school principal in the Eastern Cape who was expelled by the Department of Basic Education (DBE) after having sexually harassed three schoolgirls (Fengu, 2017). This is not an isolated case, as Mortlock (2019) also reported on a Malmesbury school principal facing charges of sexual impropriety. Such remarks and evidence about ethical turpitude of educators and principals elicited my interest in the phenomenon and the ethical dilemmas as faced by principals when dealing with educators' misconduct.

1.5 Purpose of the study

This study's aim is to exploring principals' lived experiences of dealing with ethical dilemmas as they carry out their work, which includes managing issues relating to educators' codes of professional ethics. As a school principal myself, I am interested in gaining a deeper understanding of how other principals resolve ethical dilemmas in their daily practices as school leaders. Also of importance to the study is an understanding of the kind of support that principals receive from relevant stakeholders as they deal with the ethical dilemmatic situations involving educators. In order to achieve these endeavours, a hermeneutic phenomenology was employed where semi-structured interviews were adopted as a data generation method. Through purposive sampling, seven local school principals were identified as research participants.

1.6 Objectives of the study

The objectives of the study are:

- To explore principals' lived experiences of ethical dilemmas as they carry out their work of dealing with issues relating to educators' codes of professional ethics.
- To explore how principals resolve ethical dilemmas in their practice of enhancing educator's codes of professional ethics.
- To recommend alternative support measures to be provided to principals in overcoming ethical dilemmas as they carry out their duties with regard to the educators' codes of professional ethics.

1.7 Research questions

- What are the principals' lived experiences of ethical dilemmas as they carry out their work of dealing with the issues relating to educators' codes of professional ethics?
- How do principals resolve ethical dilemmas in their practice of enhancing educators' codes of professional ethics?
- What support do school principals have (*if any*) in overcoming ethical dilemmas as they carry out their duties concerning educators' codes of professional ethics?

1.8 Significance of the study

Several international and local studies have explored the prevalence of ethical malfeasance among educators (including principals) in schools. For example, in studies conducted in England and in the United States of America respectively, evidence revealed that educators sexually abuse students (Abboud et al., 2020; Christensen & Darling, 2020). Similarly, Banja (2013) in Mwelwa and Mulenga-Hagane (2020) report on numerous cases of sexual harassment, teacher absenteeism from work, drunkenness, and improper dressing by educators in Zambia. They further claim numerous forms of examination irregularities being reported almost on a yearly basis. In addition, in another article in Zimbabwe, Magwa (2014) submits that child sexual abuse by teachers has a devastating effect in most schools and is an undetected problem in most countries. Lastly, in Eswatini, at least five principals are dismissed annually for charges levelled against them for the misappropriation of school funds (Myende et al., 2020). These incidents of ethical turpitude by educators are not only limited to the aforementioned countries but reflect a widespread phenomenon. South Africa is not immune to these malpractices as Mthiyane and Mudadigwa (2021) assert, stating that school principals are propelled by factors such as materialism and living beyond one's means; they are thus tempted to abuse school funds and power. They further claim lack of proper lesson planning, joining the profession with financial gain as the main motive and having unsavoury relationships with learners as problematic factors applicable to PL1 educators.

Despite these drawbacks, previous studies by Barnett, Behnke, Rosenthal, and Koocher (2007); Coughlan (2005); Jenlink and Jenlink (2015); Kidder and Born (1999); Leppard (2018); Spangenberg and Theron (2005); and Tyler (2014) reflect a paucity of empirical studies conducted

on ethical dilemmas, as most are of a theoretical nature. In the South African context, I could not find empirical studies that address the issue of ethical dilemmas as faced by school principals.

This study is significant as it aims to understand principals' lived experiences of ethical dilemmas as they carry out their daily work of dealing with the issues relating to educators' codes of professional ethics. It is thought that by understanding how school principals make appropriate ethical decisions when dealing with the issues pertaining educators' codes of professional ethics, the effectiveness of the schools' functions can be enhanced. The study will set a benchmark and trigger further empirical studies to be conducted on understanding ethical dilemmas faced by school principals. Also, as a principal, I believe the study will provide personal and professional empowerment, provide support to other principals and aspiring principals, including offering avenues to develop adequate skills to overcome and resolve ethical dilemmas.

1.9 Delineation of the study

Maree and van der Westhuizen (2009) define delineation as the deliberate and conscious decisions of a researcher to specify and define boundaries and parameters of a study. The central purpose of this study is to explore principals' lived experiences of dealing with ethical dilemmas as they carry out their work of managing issues relating to educators' codes of professional ethics. Therefore, seven school principals from seven different schools were selected to participate in the study. The group of selected participants comprised those with less than five years' experience as principals at the time of the study (two participants); those with five years to less than ten years' experience as principals at the time of the study (three participants); and lastly, those with more than ten years' experience as principals at the time of the study (two participants). With this experiential criterion, I sought to ascertain whether leadership and managerial experience had an effect on the principals' ethical decision making. Furthermore, the sites identified for this study were four primary schools, two high schools and one combined school in the uMgungundlovu District of the KwaZulu-Natal Province. Of these sample sites, five were Quintile 2 schools and two were Quintile 3 schools. This diversity in the choice of sites was informed by the need to accommodate all contextual factors that might influence principals' ethical dilemmas in handling educators' ethical turpitudes. Given the sample size of seven schools in uMgungundlovu District, the findings of this study definitely cannot be generalised or assumed as being representative of the entire district. I hope

this research will inspire more researchers to further investigate school principals' handling of ethical dilemmas in education.

1.10 Definition of key concepts

The following concepts are provided to ensure uniformity and understanding of these terms throughout the study.

Ethical dilemma: occurs when one finds himself in a perplexing situation that necessitates choosing among a set of principles, values, beliefs and ideals. It is intensified by the fact that the decision maker has to choose between right *versus* right and wrong *versus* wrong (Cranston et al., 2004; Ghiatau, 2017; Kimber & Campbell, 2014).

Educational leadership: is described as the school leader's ability to influence and lead educators to the desired purpose (Bush & Glover, 2014).

Ethical leadership: is a demonstration of appropriate conduct by the leader (principal in this study) through his personal actions, interpersonal relationships, and the promotion of such codes to staff members through a two-way communication, reinforcement and decision-making process (Brown & Trevino, 2006).

Codes of professional ethics: are the ethical codes, regulations or guidelines regulating the profession and include the code of conduct produced by various professional bodies or regulatory bodies for their members (e.g. SACE in the case of educators) (Boddington, 2017).

Deontology: are the policies, laws and rules that guide principals' procedures and actions to be taken against any educator who has committed an act of malfeasance (Tyler, 2014).

Teleology: is an act whereby a decision maker (the school principal in this study) carefully considers the consequences of acting against the educator's concealed misconduct. Van der Vyver, van der Westhuizen, and Meyer (2014) argue that a decision maker that is influenced by teleologist principles will seek to act in a manner that will provide happiness and satisfaction to the teachers they lead. These principals do not only regard their teachers as important for their knowledge, but as valuable human beings who must be treated with a great deal of care.

Hermeneutic phenomenology: a study that is informed by the principles of interpreting the lived experience of the participants by emphasising the active role of the researcher in understanding the phenomenon (Koch, 1995; Laverty, 2003; Lopez & Willis, 2004).

1.11 Organisation of the dissertation

Chapter One has delivered the introduction and background of this study; rationale of the study; personal and professional motivation; statement of the problem; purpose of the study; objectives of the study; and key research questions. The significance of the study as well as the delineation of the study are also presented, and the chapter is concluded with the definitions of key concepts.

Chapter Two focuses on the literature review guiding the key research questions as well as the theoretical framework underpinning the study.

Chapter Three presents the detailed account of the research methodology and design to respond to the key research questions. It includes the approach, phenomenology, sampling strategies and analysis of data. An account of ethical procedures is also provided to show how trustworthiness was gained.

Chapter Four presents and analyses data from participants in light of the research questions. The chapter is presented under the key themes that emerged from data analysis.

Chapter Five brings the study to a conclusion. It begins by discussing and concluding the findings. Thereafter, key recommendations and the implications for future research purposes are also presented.

1.12 Chapter summary

This chapter delivered the orientation to the study. It introduced the study on ethical dilemmas as faced by school principals, as they deal with the issues pertaining to educators' codes of professional ethics. It framed the background, rationale of the study, statement of the problem, purpose of the study, objectives of the study, research questions, significance of the study, delineation of the study, definition of key concepts, organisation of the study and lastly, the chapter

was concluded with the presentation of the chapter summary. In the next chapter the literature review and hypothetical theoretical framework supporting this study are presented.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 Introduction

The previous chapter provided the orientation to the study and framed the background, rationale, problem statement, purpose of the study, objectives of the study, research questions, significance of the study, delineations, definition of key concepts, organisation of the study and lastly, the chapter was concluded with the presentation of the chapter summary. The study is aimed at exploring principal's lived experiences of dealing with ethical dilemmas as they carry out their work of dealing with the issues relating to educators' codes of professional ethics in uMgungundlovu District. The study seeks to answer the following three research questions as presented in the previous chapter:

- What are the principals' lived experiences of ethical dilemmas as they carry out their work of dealing with the issues relating to educators' codes of professional ethics?
- How do principals resolve ethical dilemmas in their practice of enhancing educators' codes of professional ethics?
- What support do school principals have (*if any*) in overcoming ethical dilemmas as they carry out their duties concerning educators' codes of professional ethics?

In this chapter, literature related to ethical dilemmas as faced by principals is reviewed and examined. Literature relating to how principals resolve ethical dilemmas and the support needed to overcome their dilemmas is also discussed. The sub-topics that are crucial to this study which are reviewed include educational leadership, ethical leadership, principals' ethical decision making, ethical dilemmas, as well as codes of professional ethics. Finally, the theoretical framework underpinning the study is also discussed.

2.1.1 Principals' experiences of ethical dilemmas and their implications

The decentralisation of the decision-making process as per the South African Schools Act no 84 of 1996, necessitated the devolution of power to schools (RSA, 1996b; Steyn, 2002). Principals were then placed at the centre of ethical dilemmatic and daunting decision making on a regular

basis. Some of the ethical dilemmas that principals deal with include misbehaving staff, people who are abusive to learners and educators, parents who are critical of educators and incidents which take place outside of school but are school-related, etc. In these incidents, principals often struggle to make the correct ethical decisions due to the dilemmatic nature of these incidents (Ehrich, Cranston, Kimber, & Starr, 2012; Norberg & Johansson, 2007).

Among the ethical dilemmas that principals have must deal with, deciding on the fate of the underperforming and long serving educators who had previously contributed to the core values of the school (and in some cases, happen to be the personal friends of the principal) is one of the most difficult exercises (Cranston et al., 2004; Cranston et al., 2006). Indeed, as a principal who is inspired by instructional leadership values, I fully concur with such an argument and am of the view that, it is extremely difficult to adjudicate on matters involving seasoned or effective educators. Their past performance and contribution to the school's academic performance, increases the principals' risk of facing an ethical dilemma and making a questionable decision.

Equally important is the fact that principals as transformational leaders, have the responsibility of providing individualised support to educators; while as managers, they have the responsibility of ensuring the efficiency and the effectiveness of the school (Bush, 2007). Such dualistic responsibilities indicate the inevitability of ethical dilemmas faced by principals. Principals will have to decide between supporting and counselling or dismissing the errant educator (Cranston et al., 2006).

In addition, resolving an ethical dilemma pertaining to an educator who has violated a code of professional ethics poses a great challenge to principals for a number of reasons. Even the most experienced and knowledgeable principal may be unsure of how to proceed in some ethical dilemmatic situations (Barnett et al., 2007). Principals are cognisant that educators are employed based on the EEA and the Education Labour Relations Act 66 of 1999 (ELRA). EEA regulates the conditions of service, discipline, retirement, and discharge of educators; while ELRA prevents retrenchments, plans appointments, promotions and the transfer of educators (RSA, 1995, 1998). These policies serve as the regulatory framework to guide principals on educators' codes of ethics and should be consulted before the decision is taken. They therefore serve as a point of reference and a road map for principals to consult, in every case to be decided on, concerning educators.

However, it is unfortunate that both these policies are theoretical and need action to be implemented. They cannot do the questioning, feeling, thinking, and responding whenever principals encounter their daily ethical dilemmatic situations (Barnett et al., 2007). Therefore, resolving the ethical dilemma becomes the principal's sole responsibility as the supporting documents and policies rely on the principal's reading, understanding, interpretation and implementation.

In as much as the educator may have breached the code of professional ethics, he or she is still a human being, who has a right to be treated in a humane and caring manner. Acknowledging that every educator is a human being, also intensifies the ethical dilemma on the principal as he will be caught between the prescripts of EEA; ELRA; and the South African Council of Educators Act (SACE) 31 of 2000. SACE provides for the registration of educators and protects ethical and professional standards for educators as prescribed by RSA (2000) and the values of *Ubuntu* (meaning humanity). I am of the view that *Ubuntu* leadership can be used to enrich school principals in resolving ethical dilemmas as it contains values such as human kindness, caring, compassion, empathy, respect, warmth, giving and love (Msila, 2008; RSA, 2011). However, we need to be mindful that at times educators might take advantage of the principal's caring character and can deliberately conduct themselves in an illegal or unethical activity, knowing very well that the principal might be empathetic or sympathetic towards them. Therefore, principals should be cautious when being driven by the values of *Ubuntu*.

In choosing the correct ethical decision, Kidder and Born (1999), propose that principals act in a manner that provides the greatest benefit for the majority. The principals are then encouraged to act in a manner that a reasonable person would have followed and lastly, they are encouraged to do as they would like others to do unto them. These actions suggest that ethical decision-making should be about 'putting others' needs before your own. This principle is what Kanungo and Mendoca (1996) regard as *altruism*. They further maintain that altruism is the behaviour that benefits others regardless and ignoring your own personal feelings. Therefore, an altruistic attitude should be the key factor when principals take decisions pertaining to educators who have impeded the code of professional ethics, since altruistic behaviour is motivated by a concern to benefit others and disregarding one's own personal ego (Kanungo & Mendoca, 1996; Mendoca & Kanungo, 2007). However, a stern warning must be conveyed to the 'known' altruistic principals

as they are value-driven and rely on *Ubuntu* leadership. Such principals run a risk of being subjected to abuse by teachers who might take advantage of their caring heart and leniency. Educators might end up carelessly and intentionally violating professional ethical codes while hopeful that the principal will likely sympathise with them and not subject them to disciplinary action.

Along with such argument, at times one regrets the fate of being a principal considering the extent to which we find ourselves trapped between the horns of ethical dilemmas. Balancing through the lens of *Ubuntu* leadership, and taking an altruistic decision, to some extent will be done at the expense of the policies under which the educator is employed and vice versa. It is thus for this reason that consulting other seasoned principals, legal experts and counsellors before an ethical decision is made, becomes crucial (Barnett et al., 2007). It is extremely important for the principal to critically engage the matter at hand and weigh all the available options before consultation. For the principal to hastily consult (quick to run to ‘reliable advisors’), such a principal runs the risk of losing control of his/her school. The danger is that critical decisions will end up being gladly bottle necked and imposed on them by the ‘so called advisors’. The affected principals (other than the reliable advisors) are in the perfect space to handle each case appropriately while being cognisant of its merits and the context. Consulting ‘as an empty vessel’ does not provide empowerment to the principal and at times can have unintended consequences and result in regret.

Moreover, Atkin (2012) points out the uniqueness of each case to be considered, when principals have to resolve ethical dilemmatic situations and further asserts that each case should be analysed on its merits and context. Therefore, principals should refrain, at all costs, from being pressured by a complainant’s preconceived judgements. Procedural and substantive fairness must be paramount in all cases and ethics of justice, profession and care engaged.

Additionally, complexities in ethical dilemmas regrettably result in principals avoiding cases or suspending their morality by compromising their own moral judgement to implement organisational policies (Roche, 1997). One may argue that avoidance is the main reason behind the public perception principals ‘turn a blind eye’ to issues concerning the ethical misconduct of educators. On one hand, suspending morality results in principals acting in an inhumane manner that is against their belief, conscience, ethics, and values and opting for strict departmental policy

adherence. For this reason, some principals end up being labelled as heartless, careless, and cold-blooded.

There seems to be no adequate support given to principals in overcoming the ethical dilemmas they encounter regularly as they strive to make schools an effective place for teaching and learning. Principals find themselves in silos with very few options to solve their ethical dilemmas. This is of great concern since a number of studies such as Campbell (1997); Campbell (2001); Eyal, Berkovich, and Schwartz (2010); Kimber and Campbell (2014); Langlois and Lapointe (2007) have clearly indicated that principals have a difficult time resolving ethical dilemmas while Atkin (2012) asserts that little support is available to principals to solve ethical dilemmas. Cranston et al. (2006) further calls on employing bodies and district offices to provide support to principals on ethical decision making. District officials, as custodians of education, should not act as umpires, spectators, and judges while principals wrestle with ethical dilemmas but must provide substantial support to the distressed principals.

From my point of view, I may also propose for teacher unions to play a more significant role in providing necessary support for principals in enhancing them to resolve ethical dilemmas concerning educators' codes of conduct. A union is an association of workers formed to protect its members from victimisation, in the case of teacher unions, especially from principals (Ntshangase, 2001; RSA, 2000). This narrative has however propelled and armed union members (educators in particular) with whips to threaten principals and has thus contributed to the latter ethical dilemmas because of the fear complex posed by the teacher unions. In a conference presentation adapted from unpublished research findings from six Gauteng schools, it is maintained that unions should not be seen as posing threats to school leadership but rather the two parties should work towards achieving similar goals (Msila, 2013). It is suggested that school leaders should form a positive alliance with powerful teacher unions because the latter has the potential to mould schools into more effective organisations. Therefore, if perfectly blended into the schooling system, teacher unions can assist principals in handling and resolving ethical dilemmas on the issues relating to educators' codes of professional ethics. It requires the need for school leadership to partner with unions in education and minimising confrontational relationships. The toxic relationship between the school management and the teacher unions will undoubtedly intensify ethical dilemmas for the principals.

As discussed previously, ethical dilemmas are so prevalent that Cranston et al. (2006) has called them ‘the bread and butter’ issues to educational leader’s lives. This then calls for competent educational leaders with strong educational leadership abilities, ethics and ethical decision making in eradicating ethical dilemmas. The principals’ ethical dilemmas are also centred around educators’ codes of professional ethics. For this study, I have decided to conceptualise the educational leadership; ethical leadership; principals’ ethical decision making; ethical dilemmas; and educators’ codes of professional ethics as the concepts that are central to this study.

2.1.2 Educational leadership

Bush and Glover (2014) emphasise that a number of scholars have tried to discuss leadership and have resolved that there is no agreed definition of leadership since it is very subjective and yields many interpretations. However, scholars like Bush and Glover (2014) and Mullins (2010) describe leadership as having three facets that involve: process of influence; built in firm personal and professional values; and encompasses developing and articulating the organisation’s vision. Bush and Glover (2014) describe leadership as a process of influencing and leading to the desired purposes. Based on what these scholars are saying, leadership can thus be conceptualised as the process of influencing other people with the leader capitalising on his personal traits in order to achieve the envisioned objectives of an organisation.

Similarly, when leadership is applied in schools (educational leadership), it can be described as the school leaders’ ability to influence educators to follow them through the usage of their professional and personal traits in order to achieve the set objectives of the school. School leaders can be principals, Deputy Principals (DPs), HODs, as well as Master and Senior Teachers. However, for this study, school leadership will be limited to principals as school leaders, with an intention of understanding their plight in dealing with ethical dilemmas on issues relating to educators’ codes of professional ethics. Indeed, schools need competent leaders who will acknowledge the powers vested in them by virtue of being principals. Such powers will empower them in leading and influencing educators in achieving the schools’ mission and vision. Principals must use such powers for the benefit of the school.

Furthermore, effective leadership is vital for school improvement and good student outcomes as principals are critical to school improvement efforts that aim to support students’ success. Schools

that are classified as successful are normally led by competent and sound school leaders (Bush, 2018). Therefore, the success and failure of a school rests on the shoulders of the principal.

Apart from school leadership, principals execute a host of other responsibilities such as school functioning, teaching and student learning (Iachini, Pitner, Morgan, & Rhodes, 2016). Such added responsibilities make the principals' job in leading educational activities even more complex. Some of the added responsibilities on the daily practices of principals include stimulating the school climate (Sebastian & Allensworth, 2012); supporting instructional and school staff (Printy, 2010; RSA, 2015); preserving a vision for the school (Bhengu & Myende, 2016; Hallinger & Heck, 1996); strengthening collaborative capacity and leadership within the school (Copland, 2003; Whitley, 2010); promoting partnerships between the school, students, families, and other community partners (Bhengu & Myende, 2016; Myende, 2018, 2019a, 2019b; RSA, 2015; Whitley, 2010); and serving as a linkage between the school and the district office (Copland, 2003).

Moreover, principals in high performing schools execute these tasks diligently and with dedication. Such schools in turn gain services from qualified and dedicated teachers as good teachers generally like to be associated with the best performing schools (Chikoko, Naicker, & Mthiyane, 2015). These added responsibilities suggest the indispensability of the principal in the smooth functioning and effectiveness of the school. The complex socio-cultural milieu of schools poses new and extended challenges to principals, necessitating a new set of leadership skills, training and competencies.

Additionally, studies by Fuller, Young, and Baker (2011) and Hallinger and Heck (1996) suggest that principals' training programmes are vital for his/her leadership effectiveness and school effectiveness. Contrary to its importance, little attention on the matter is noted in most countries globally. For example, in countries like England and Iceland and many European countries such as Belarus, Cyprus, Denmark, Finland, Hungary, Portugal, Greece, and Sweden; leadership preparation is neglected and teachers become principals without any specialised training (Bush, 2018; Bush & Oduro, 2006; Thody, Papanou, Johansson, & Pashiardis, 2007). In these countries, principals have no formal compulsory qualifications that will prepare them for such the daunting task they face. This phenomenon is also notable in Australia and New Zealand, as the study by Cheng, Mao, Yan, and Elrich (2009) posit that no formal pre-service preparation was

needed to become a school principal in these two countries. This is of great concern since these developed countries set the trend in the educational policy, training, and reform for the developing countries of Africa, Asia, Latin America, and the Caribbean Islands. Absence of adequate pre-service and compulsory formal qualification for principals could result in a global educational leadership catastrophe, which may cause principals to rely heavily on their experience and common sense (Bush & Oduro, 2006) instead of on sound teachings gained through training.

Similarly, on the African continent, in countries like Kenya, Ghana, Nigeria, and Botswana, no formal requirement is needed for principals to be trained as school managers as they are mostly appointed based on their successful record as educators (Bush, 2018; Bush & Glover, 2016; Bush & Oduro, 2006). In addition, Ofoegbu, Clark, and Osagie (2013) point out on the commonality of principals in Nigeria being appointed on the basis of political affiliation, ethnicity, and religion. They further maintain that the principals only had teaching qualifications which meant that educational leadership was vested in the hands of technically unqualified personnel. This widespread deficiency clearly necessitates an urgent turnaround strategy to redesign training programmes for school principals. Fuller et al. (2011) posits that collaboration between heads of states, governments, political leaders, academics, civil society organisations, institutions of higher learning, and teacher unions is required to rethink and redesign principals' appointment and training programmes. They further emphasise that such collaboration is vital as having suitably qualified principals who have received pre-appointment preparation training is crucial for the effectiveness of school leadership.

In addition, this phenomenon of principals lacking formal pre-service training is not only unique to some European and other African countries, but it is also happening in South Africa, as Bush (2018) posits on its prevalence. In Gauteng Province, South Africa, findings from the research conducted revealed that 66 % of principals had not progressed beyond their first degree to complete further postgraduate qualifications (Bush & Oduro, 2006). In Mpumalanga Province, a case study by van der Westhuizen, Mosoge, and van Vuuren (2004) further corroborated such findings and alluded to many serving school principals lacking basic management training prior to and after their entry into principalship positions. These patterns further suggest that in as much principalship is a complex and challenging position, it is still an underrated profession considering its minimal attention to professional development and its leniency towards the need for principals to have post-

graduate educational qualifications. One can also argue that most principals ascend to their positions by default. In their initial training programmes as educators, aspiring teachers had a strong desire to become educators that will effectively disseminate the curriculum. Through their hard work and effectiveness in teaching, they soon find themselves in the highest office at school, sadly, without any adequate skills and training necessary for the new environment. Such a phenomenon is of great concern as Fuller et al. (2011) highlight the importance of principals' preparation programmes in doctoral and research institutions having an institutional capacity to effectively prepare school leaders. Their study further reaffirms the correlation between a principal who attended preparation programmes and his/her effectiveness in ensuring student's achievement.

In his conclusion, Bush (2018) questions other countries' failures to prescribe principals' leadership qualifications if countries like Canada, Chile, China, France, Hong Kong, Malaysia, Singapore, and most of the states in the USA can effectively implement such programmes.

2.1.3 Ethical leadership

The term ethics is derived from the Greek word *ethos* meaning conduct, character or custom (Pietersen, 2018; Shapiro & Stefkovich, 2011; Vikaraman et al., 2018). Pietersen (2018) further describes ethics as a set of standards or values governing human behaviour. In addition, Ehrich et al. (2004) describes an ethical person as someone who possesses character. Based on these scholars, ethics can thus be conceptualised as internal personal traits that each person possesses and forms part of each individual's make up.

Scholars such as Cranston et al. (2004) and Cranston et al. (2006) maintain that ethics are highly disputed. Some define them in terms of what they are not (misconduct, corruption, fraud and other forms of illegal conduct), while others associate ethics with traits such as honesty, integrity, care, justice, love, and prudence. This argument confirms the narrative that defines the uniqueness of each individual. As earlier indicated, ethics are internal personal traits of an individual, it is therefore not surprising that some people possess negative characters resulting in them being labelled as corrupt, fraudulent, dishonest and careless; while others are characterised as being honest, loyal, prudent and truthful. It is worth noting that these characters define each person. Despite these dissonances there is a general agreement that ethics are about relationships and what

we 'ought to do' (Cranston et al., 2004; Cranston et al., 2006). Ethics thus implies how we are expected to live and behave in relation to others. Some people conduct themselves in an unethical manner; while on the other hand, others conduct themselves in an acceptable and ethical manner.

By and large, when applied to school leadership, ethics are about the character of the principal, his/her actions and behaviours in relation others (Pietersen, 2018). Naidoo (2015) claims that ethical leadership is influencing people through principles, values and beliefs that embrace what is defined as the right behaviour. These claims challenge school principals to be value-driven such that through their leadership they are able to shape other peoples' behaviour. Brown and Trevino (2006) suggest that ethical leadership is a demonstration of appropriate conduct by the principal, through his personal actions and interpersonal relationships, and promotion of such conduct to staff members through a two-way communication, reinforcement and decision-making process. If ethical leadership is viewed with the principal at its heart, and his/her ability to disseminate positive values to teachers, thereby developing ethical followers, then it follows therefore that ethical decision making by the principal can be achieved.

Furthermore, in a study conducted in the Netherlands consisting of 167 supervisors and 200 subordinates, Den Hartog and Belschak (2012) suggest that ethical leadership is influenced by the social learning theory as the employees tend to imitate the ethical behaviour displayed by their leaders. If ethical conduct is relative to ethical leaders, and learned by employees, then one would suggest that principals at schools should champion ethical conduct. An ethical principal will ultimately produce or shape ethical educators, learners and ethical SGB members (Ehrich et al., 2015). Similarly, findings from the study conducted in Ireland by Chughtai, Bryne, and Flood (2015) from 216 trainee accountants, revealed that ethical leadership plays a pivotal role in improving employee work, health and well-being. An ethical climate will prevail and cases of misconduct will be minimised in schools that are inspired by ethical leadership. Such a school will ultimately improve its performance, organisational culture, and ethical practices. I strongly believe that ethical leadership is the mother of success in schools, businesses and other organisations.

Research has also proven that there is widespread agreement between researchers globally on the benefits of ethical leadership. Scholars tend to be in agreement about ethical leadership and its importance in improving performance and results. For example, in a pilot study by Vikaraman et

al. (2018) conducted in Malaysian secondary schools, it was revealed that a positive correlation between ethical leadership and employee trust exists as the former helps to develop trust in leaders and to develop a positive working climate in a school. In Iran, another study by Baghestani, Rajabi, and Azimkhani (2019) on 60 females and 50 male educators working in primary schools also showed another positive correlation between ethical leadership and quality of work life. This was due to the fact that ethical leadership also plays a significant role in reducing the work-related stress on teachers. Furthermore, in India, it was shown that ethical leadership sets an ethical tone in an organisation by implementing policies and procedures that promote ethical behaviour among employees while reducing the likelihood of malfeasance (Bansal & Kumar, 2018). Such findings suggest that a school that is led by an ethical principal has much to gain.

Interestingly, similar suggestions were proposed in Africa. For example, a recent investigative study by Adeoye (2020) on 200 respondents from among the non-academic staff at a local university in Nigeria confirmed a positive correlation between ethical leadership, employee commitment, and organisational effectiveness. This view is also supported by Bello (2012) who warns that unethical leadership yields immense organisational dysfunction and failure to attract new employees. In the same vein, in an exploratory study conducted in South Africa, Engelbrecht, Heine and Mahembe (2014) argued that ethical leadership leads to valuable outcomes and has an impact on organisational effectiveness and work engagement. It promotes effective interaction between leaders and followers.

Given these points from various studies in Europe, Asia, and Africa that affirm the importance of ethical leadership in schools, businesses and other organisations, it is thus clear ethical leadership is the backbone of organisational success. Ethical leadership also yields strong organisational culture while creating a sense of trust, work ethics, employee well-being, and reduces work-related stress on employees.

Additionally, Adeoye (2020); Baghestani et al. (2019); Bansal and Kumar (2018); Bello (2012); and Chughtai et al. (2015) claim benefits of ethical leadership and employee's outcomes. Amid these benefits include job satisfaction; job performance; willingness to report malfeasance; organisational commitment; organisational effectiveness; reduced work-related stress; improved group learning behaviour; improved trust between leaders and subordinates; and communication

improvement. These benefits suggest the indispensability of ethical leadership at schools. As earlier indicated, ethical leadership is at the heart of day-to-day functioning of the school. A school that is driven by ethical leadership principles has much to gain and the opposite is thus true.

Nonetheless, Louw (2015) reveals that a study by the Ethics Institute of South Africa among nine universities and 224 educators from primary and secondary schools in Gauteng, Mpumalanga and North West Province, aimed at determining whether ethics are incorporated in the curricula of schools and universities. The findings showed that ethics courses are generally one semester long and accounted for between 2% and 3% of the entire qualification in business schools. Such shocking findings makes one deliberate on how principals and other leaders learn ethical values. Do ethical values come naturally and as a result, do the principals have to rely on their morality and conscience? This could then create havoc since the two are very subjective. I may argue that maybe it is the main reason that has resulted in educators and principals ethical conduct having been questioned and having left much to be desired for some time. If the content on ethics is so minimal at universities, how do we expect principals and other leaders to learn about ethics and be ethical? A huge gap thus exists in terms of training educational leaders about ethical conduct in general. I would presume that such a gap had resulted in SACE considering its registration processes as the newspaper article by Sobuswa (2019) asserts that a decision has been taken for all people applying for registration to produce a valid Police Clearance Certificate, not older than six months. Incumbents with serious criminal records such as sexual offences, murder, and robbery will be denied admission to the teaching profession. This is seen as a step in the right direction because ideally, teaching is a noble profession and should be treated as such. Therefore, aspiring, practising teachers and principals should hold high moral standards and must strive towards the sanctification of the profession and the protection of the minors in their care.

2.1.4 Ethical decision making and implications for principals

Robson, Cook, Hunt, and Alfred (2000) assert that ethical decision making is not only based on decision-making itself, but also on the feelings surrounding the facts and upon the values held, that shape those feelings. It is a process by which individuals use their moral base to determine whether a certain issue is right or wrong (Zollo, Pellegrini, & Ciappei, 2015). While there is a general expectation for principals to make ethical decisions, these researchers are of the view that principals' abilities to make such decisions are a product of their values and as such, I am in

harmony with such narrative. Ethics are deeply rooted in an individual's veins, a principal with sound ethics will undoubtedly be likely to make ethical decisions. Through his/her ethical leadership style, educators will in turn embrace his/her ethical decisions as he/she will be acting in a legally and morally acceptable manner (Jones, 1991).

However, a desktop review conducted by Robbins and Trabichet (2009) in Europe, indicates that a belief that envisaged principals to be ethical decision-makers is recent. Their paper suggests that principals need to develop technical competency in ethical decision-making. Unfortunately, few have been trained in that regard, as their scope of the training programmes does not cover such critical aspects of leadership. A huge gap thus exists in this field; as a result, one may argue that more still needs to be done by universities and teacher training colleges in terms of empowering principals with adequate skills for ethical decision making.

i. Deontology

Ethical decision-making is a highly complicated and subjective activity. This is because the process of decision-making is not based only on facts, but also on feelings surrounding the facts and upon the values that shape those feelings (Zollo et al., 2015). Kant (1785) in Robbins and Trabichet (2009) concludes that the panacea lies in the universal law within the decision to be taken. They propose that it must be right if it can be turned to a universal law, meaning it can be applied to everyone and everywhere due to the presence of reason and the moral law within every man. These universal laws are commonly called as *deontology*, referring to the policies, laws and rules that guide the principal in decision making (Coughlan, 2005; Robbins & Trabichet, 2009; Tyler, 2014). Deontology allows the principal to make a sound and ethical decision. These laws also lead the decision-maker in choosing an action other than the one he would have chosen in their absence (Coughlan, 2005). Despite a formal nature in the Kantian approach, a major drawback might occur when one does not know which decision to make because it is often difficult to know what to do, but that does not mean that the solution does not exist. Thus, it is too generic to assume that uniform reasoning in all humans without providing practical solutions will assist in ethical decision-making. Deontological decision making is thus a *non-consequential* decision-making as such, principals strictly adhere to the given legislation at hand without considering the impact of the decision on the teachers they lead (Cranston et al., 2003; Cranston et al., 2004). To

them, educational policies are sacrosanct and considered ‘the Alpha and Omega’ in forming their decisions.

ii. Teleology

On the opposite extreme of universal laws or deontological approaches to ethical decision-making lies utilitarianism. Utilitarianism has its origins in the 18th and the 19th centuries but still inspires present-day writers (Robbins & Trabichet, 2009). It links the question of ethics with happiness as it entails that the right decision is the one that gives the greatest well-being possible in any given society. It suggests that appropriate decision-making is determined by the *consequences* it will provide (Coughlan, 2005; Norberg & Johansson, 2007; Tyler, 2014). Applying a utilitarian or consequential decision-making process, poses that before acting, principals must carefully consider the consequences of their actions. Such educational leaders consider all possible alternatives to action, value them, and compare the outcome of those alternatives before the action is taken. Ethical decision-making entails acting in a manner that will provide happiness and satisfaction to the well-being of the educators they lead. Their actions and decisions are driven by a caring character towards the educators they lead. Their leadership regards educators as important not only for the skills and knowledge they provide, but as valuable human beings who must be treated with a great deal of care (van der Vyver et al., 2014). These are the principals with a ‘soft spot’ and a caring heart towards their educators. As a result, there is a real risk that these principals will ‘sweep issues under the carpet’ when have to make ethical decisions against educators. Acting in such a manner is sometimes referred to as *teleological* decision-making (Hunt & Vitell, 2006; Thong & Yap, 1998).

iii. Multi-paradigm approach

Stefkovich and Shapiro (2001) have developed the most recent and detailed multi-paradigm approach to ethical decision-making using the Critical Incidents Technique and the ethics of *Justice, Care, Critique, and Profession*. *Ethics of justice* are associated with the rules and regulations written to coordinate the fair treatment of staff and guide the decision-making processes. In search of justice, the principal may refer to these rules and justify his/her decision by following a written piece of legislation. With the *ethics of care*, the focus is care, concern and the connection when moral dilemmas are discussed (Norberg & Johansson, 2007). Such a premise is concerned with the welfare of individuals. A principal that is inspired by ethics of care, in his

decision-making will always strive to act in the best interests and development of his educators. With regards to the *ethics of critique*, such a perspective questions the laws and policies while recognising the social class, race or gender inequalities. Such principals would critique and question policy developers, beneficiaries from the same policy, the person who has the power, and those with silent voices (Norberg & Johansson, 2007). Their viewpoint tends to create awareness of one's individual and less conscious internal values and how they steer a person's conduct. Principals need to compare and review their own personal codes of ethics with those of the school within which they are working. This self-reflection on the side of the school leaders is called *ethics of profession* (Norberg & Johansson, 2007; Robbins & Trabichet, 2009). These approaches guide principals in the decision-making processes.

iv. Importance of culture in ethical decision making

Despite the usefulness of the recent perspectives on ethical decision-making by principals, Robbins and Trabichet (2009) suggest that educational leaders strike a balance between the deontological and teleontological perspectives. They further propose for ethics of justice to be balanced with ethics of care; with the ethics of critique employed to zoom in on the origins of dilemma, participants' roles, and the possible effects of actions. In the process, the principal must also evaluate his own ethical behaviour in relation to the institution's. Their study further emphasises the importance of culture in decision-making at different levels. For example, Eastern and Western cultures are two extremes of the continuum that shape one's decision-making process. Western culture is more individualistic, in pursuit of personal goals, in opposition to community culture, confrontational and willing to take risks that might go against the institution's norms. Conversely, Eastern culture is more of a group culture, in pursuit of group interests, in search of common good for people, respects the rules laid down by superiors, and calls for utilitarian perspective that decisions need to pursue the well-being of the group, and maintain the status quo (Robbins & Trabichet, 2009). Being cognisant of the existence of cultural diversity in an institution is called a multi-cultural approach to ethical decision making.

In essence, the multi-cultural approach to ethical decision-making suggests that the principal needs to be mindful of the different types of culture that might exist in the school and the tensions they may reveal or create (Robbins & Trabichet, 2009). Acknowledging of the diversity in cultural traits among staff members and educators by the principal can assist in his/her initiatives. The principal

needs to thoroughly observe and evaluate his school against these cultures and understand the cultural biases that might be dominant. In the event of the emergence of the ethical dilemma, it is vital for the principal to be able to identify the cultural origins and tensions. This is of utmost importance as culture influences people's behaviour. Robbins and Trabichet (2009) also recommend that principals promote tolerance, respect and appreciation of different cultures. It further suggests that principals seek openness to different cultural values that might manifest themselves as dilemmas. Lastly, it points out the resolution of an ethical dilemma as the function of the active pursuit and understanding of cultural values and exploration of one's own.

However, it is beyond the scope of this study to extensively discuss the models for ethical decision-making as well as the forces affecting the decision-maker to make a required ethical decision.

2.1.5 Ethical dilemmas

An ethical dilemmatic condition arises when one finds oneself in a perplexing situation that necessitates choosing among sets of principles, values, beliefs and ideals (Ehrich et al., 2004; Jenlink & Jenlink, 2015; Kimber & Campbell, 2014). Ghiatau (2017) maintains that an ethical dilemma is a conflict of two equally valid responsibilities that cannot be fulfilled simultaneously in a particular situation, while Shapira-Lishchinsky (2011) describes ethical dilemmas as an inner conversation with oneself, concerning two or more available propositions. Thus, it is a choice between two or more mystifying situations with each side seeming the more appealing course of action to pursue. The situation can cause intense confusion, unsettledness and instability to the decision-maker as they contemplate the ethically appropriate decision. One may argue that it is for this reason that Cranston et al. (2006) regards the prevalence of ethical dilemmas as 'bread and butter' issues because people in general as well as principals frequently find themselves having to choose from sets of contending principles. Based on what these authors are saying, it is thus evident that ethical dilemmas unwillingly force the person to choose between opposing principles. The person finds him/herself overstretched by the circumstances and ends up experiencing inner conflict.

Furthermore, ethical dilemmas are not only limited to principals, but are found across the spectrum including different professions, races, religions and cultures. For example, findings of the study conducted in Sweden by Colnerud (2015) suggest that ethical dilemmas are also experienced by

researchers; while Shapira-Lishchinsky (2009) and Shapira-Lishchinsky, Glanz, and Shaer (2016) noted the prevalence of ethical dilemmas by Israeli nurses as well as among American and Israeli teachers in Jewish schools, respectively. This then clearly proves that ethical dilemmas know no class, culture, religion, geography, and profession. Nobody is immune to ethical dilemmas. Unfortunately, people handle ethical dilemmas with difficulty (Campbell, 1997, 2001; Eyal et al., 2010; Kimber & Campbell, 2014; Shapira-Lishchinsky, 2009, 2011; Shapira-Lishchinsky et al., 2016).

In addition, conflicting values and ideals on ethical dilemmas are intensified by the fact that the person has to choose between right *versus* right and wrong *versus* wrong (Cranston et al., 2006; Ghiatau, 2017). Ghiatau (2017) states that the existence of a clear choice with an alternative considered morally correct and the other as morally wrong, is regarded as moral courage rather than a dilemma. In a school, the caring character (resulting in a good action) of a principal might be in conflict with the implementation of justice (also a good deed) on matters where educators have breached the code of professional ethics. The principal's caring and compassionate trait might be exercised at the expense of the legal prescripts (like the EEA) that regulate the conditions of service, discipline, retirement and discharge of educators in cases that the errant educator might be dismissed from employment, should the matter be reported.

Studies by Shapira-Lishchinsky (2009; 2011) as well as Shapira-Lishchinsky et al. (2016) posit that ethical dilemmas experienced by professionals including teachers and nurses arise from:

- Caring climate versus formal climate. This is prominent in cases where the tension arises from the conflict between caring for students and maintaining the school rules, code of conduct and educational policies.
- Distributive justice versus procedural justice. This is when the tension arises based on a conflict of resources (allocation of resources versus conducting a fair process or a criterion that the school applies when reaching decisions).
- Confidentiality versus school rules. This is when tension emerges between the teachers' desire to maintain students' confidentiality and adherence to school rules.

- Loyalty to colleagues versus school norms. This is the kind of ethical dilemma that emerges when a teacher protects a colleague who has conducted him/herself inappropriately according to the school norms.
- Educational agenda versus school's standards. In this instance, teachers face ethical dilemmas when their perception of the child's best interest differs from that of the parent.

With this in mind, it is worth noting that the above-mentioned critical incidents on ethical dilemmas, as Shapira-Lishchinsky (2011) regards them, are not only applicable to teachers, but are also relevant to school principals. *Firstly*, principals are also susceptible to tussling about caring for an educator who has committed an act of misconduct weighed against the educators' code of ethics. *Secondly*, principals as *ex officio* representatives of the HoD as per section 16(3) of SASA, RSA (1996b) also encounter ethical dilemmas as they wrestle with the management of scarcely allocated norms and standards and the procedure of allocation including budgeting. Budgeting can cause a great deal of tension between teachers, school management team (SMT) members, parents, the SGB and other stakeholders. *Thirdly*, another ethical dilemma that the principals face can emerge when he/she chooses between maintaining the trust of a confiding educator versus adhering to educator's codes of ethics which obligates him/her to report the confidential information to the relevant administration. In addition, principals may witness an SMT member mistreating an educator, or are informed of such mistreatment which is not in line with school norms. In the process, principals find it difficult to confront the colleague. *Lastly*, principals encounter ethical dilemmas when their perception about the teacher's best interest differs from those of the educational officials. Usually, teachers are critical about how educational officials carry out their affairs and believe that officials impose rules that are inconsistent with their professional needs. In all these instances, principals find themselves at the centre for solving and providing school leadership. Several studies have indicated that principals have difficulty in handling such ethical dilemmas (Campbell, 1997, 2001; Eyal et al., 2010; Kimber & Campbell, 2014; Shapira-Lishchinsky, 2009, 2011; Shapira-Lishchinsky et al., 2016).

Similarly, a study by Shapira-Lishchinsky (2011) on 50 teachers (40 women and 10 men) in Israeli schools on the ethical dilemmas based on the above illustrated critical incidents, revealed the following results (Table 1).

Table 1: Summary of ethical dilemmas relating to critical incidents faced by teachers in Israeli schools

Categories	Number of incidents
Caring climate vs formal climate	18
Distributive justice vs procedural justice	13
Confidentiality vs school rules	9
Loyalty to colleagues vs school norms	6
Educational agenda vs school's standards	4

Note. Data for Summary of ethical dilemmas on critical incidents faced by teachers in Israeli schools from Shapira-Lishchinsky (2011, p. 651).

Interestingly, the tension between caring climate versus formal climate (18 incidents) was the most frequent form of ethical dilemma that teachers encountered in their practice. It indicates that caring for others is one of the most important values that teachers consider when dealing with ethical dilemmas. This caring attitude from the teachers hence results in conflict with obeying the school rules. The same will prevail with principals. Principals are caught between caring for an educator and meting out disciplinary measures in line with the educators' code of professional ethics. In the event that an educator has breached the code of professional ethics, an intense struggle will emerge as the principal is torn between caring for the errant teacher and enforcing corrective/punitive measures. This study will also focus more on the ethical dilemma that emerges from a tension between a caring school principal towards his teachers against strict adherence to an educators' code of professional ethics. Ethical dilemmas can be severe and perplexing for the principal as Shapira-Lishchinsky (2009) concludes by alluding that they mostly occur because of inadequate resources and low levels of professionalism.

Moreover, international literature further points to a paucity of empirical studies on ethical dilemmas faced by school principals. The little work done was conducted mainly on other professionals such as psychologists, professors, business leaders, and teachers (Barnett et al., 2007; Coughlan, 2005; Gutman, 2018; Kidder & Born, 1999; Leppard, 2018). However, few empirical studies on the other fields and limited to school principals have been conducted, like in the field of nursing, research and teaching (Colnerud, 2015; Shapira-Lishchinsky, 2009, 2011; Shapira-Lishchinsky et al., 2016). In the African and the South African context, I have not found empirical

studies conducted on ethical dilemmas as faced by school principals. A huge gap then exists in this regard and thus triggers a question on how principals in South Africa deal with the issue of ethical dilemmas. Given this disturbing evidence, one may like to believe that the lack of understanding in dealing with and resolving ethical dilemmas, can be one of many factors that contributes to leadership ineffectiveness and incompetency in our schools, as perceived by many. However, this is subject to further research for approval or disapproval.

2.1.6 Codes of professional ethics

Bass et al. (1996) claim that the concept of the profession has evolved over time. In the past, the concept was previously bestowed only to theology, medicine and law; as such, the three were regarded as learned professions. In the 20th century, a number of occupations were then classified as professions. Consequently, in the 1980s, one of educational reforms was to treat teachers as professionals, so that they would become more effective in their teaching (Strike & Ternasky, 1993).

As a result, conceptualising teacher professionalism by Msibi and Mchunu (2013), citing Talburt and McLaughlin (1994, p. 126), points out that for an occupation to be accorded a professional status it must meet given conditions:

‘Primary among the conditions that distinguish a “profession” from other occupations are specialised knowledge base[s] and shared standards of practice; a strong service ethic; or commitment to meeting the client’s needs; strong personal identity with and commitment to the occupation; and collegial versus bureaucratic control over entry, performance evaluations, and retentions in the profession.’

However, classifying teaching as a profession received numerous oppositions. As a result, some people still do not believe that teaching can be categorised as a profession as it is associated with the social and historical sense of the occupation (Msibi & Mchunu, 2013). They further mention that in the South African context, teaching fails to meet the basic characteristics of professionalism on the basis that our teachers do not specialise in their teaching and their ethical conduct leaves much to be desired. Their argument does hold water, to some extent. However, its major weakness is that the data generation method used in their study was not based on empirical findings but rather on scholarly and popular literature. In their study, Heystek and Lethoko (2001) question the

professional nature of the South African teaching and suggest that it be considered as being semi-professional, that is still striving to become a full profession. For the purposes of this study, such a debate cannot be entertained and education will be treated as a profession despite the objections otherwise.

Apart from such oppositions, international studies clearly indicate that professionalising teaching benefits the process of teaching and learning. In Estonia, Turkey, Germany and Sweden; teachers believe that professionalising teaching will undoubtedly yield educators producing good quality teaching, will create a good learning environment and is important for the sustainability of teacher education (Dodillet, Lundin, & Kruger, 2019; Veisson & Kabaday, 2018). However, it is worth noting that the concept of professionalism is highly contextualised. For instance, in Sweden, professional teachers are characterised by having common knowledge based on lesson planning, teaching and assessment. On the contrary, in Germany, professional teachers mainly rely on their own personality, judgement and do what they firmly believe to be appropriate. This is because their academic studies are up to master's level which is also supplemented by one to two years' practical experience (Dodillet et al., 2019).

Additionally, in Tanzania, a study by Lawrent (2019) maintains that teachers as professionals should be committed to their students, colleagues, school and their own professional development. His study further posits that false promises by the government have a detrimental effect on the teachers' professionalism. He further emphasises how governments' prioritising of teaching as a profession, has a positive influence on how teachers feel and how others, such as students and community members view teaching as a profession. This indicates that the teachers' professional status should be limited only to their scope of practice as educators and not to perform 'extra' responsibilities such as clerical and administrative work.

Equally important are the findings from local studies by Coetzee (2019) and Msibi and Mchunu (2013) that highlight a shocking revelation on the teachers' distinction as professionals based on their race. Their studies indicate that in apartheid South Africa, white teachers were regarded as professionals while their black counterparts were regarded as technicians. This notion further confirms with the study by Dodillet et al. (2019) that teacher professionalism must not be interpreted with universal value as it varies from context to context. It is of utmost importance to

indicate that the old education system was dissolved when South Africa attained democratic in 1994 and with the demise of racial segregation, equality between teachers emerged (Msibi & Mchunu, 2013). South African teachers should strive for ongoing personal, academic, occupational and professional growth through reflective study and research in the areas of specialisation and other related fields (RSA, 2002).

Apparently, in order to guard against encroachment and maintain professionalism by members, the profession is guided by clear codes of professional ethics. These are the ethical codes, regulations or guidelines regulating the profession and include codes of professional conduct produced by various professional bodies or regulatory bodies for their members (Boddington, 2017). She further asserts that the codes of professional ethics were developed, *firstly* in response to catastrophes and scandals by members, *secondly*, in anticipation of possible problems, and *thirdly*, in relation to certain cultural groups. Members must be cognisant of and adhere to the codes of ethics as non-compliance results in heavy penalties and even dismissal. One may argue that the main intention of developing the codes of ethics is to professionalise the profession such that its members do not bring the profession into disrepute through their unethical conduct.

Also, codes of professional ethics are important to members of professional bodies, clients, and the community at large. This is because they outline the procedures for reporting problems and the violation of codes by members (Boddington, 2017). Since the codes aim to professionalise the profession, they are thus enforced and such enforcement may involve sanctions, restrictions to membership of professional bodies as well as legal ramifications. Professional ethics codes encourage members to be conscious of their behaviour, actions and conduct in relation to the profession, other professionals, employers, and clients (learners, parents and the community). Above all, professional ethics codes enable schools to establish ideals, core values, and responsibilities of the profession and serves as a reference on acceptable conduct. They also provide standards for reviewing claims of misconduct and for sanctioning improper behaviour as they further encourage general good conduct from its members (Speight & Foote, 2011). They also increase awareness, maintain consistency and improved quality of service rendered by professionals.

Moreover, in a study conducted in Canada by Schwimmer and Maxwell (2017), it was revealed that codes of ethics exist *firstly* for the reinforcement of public trust by setting forth explicitly and publicly the ethical standards that the public can expect from teachers as professionals. *Secondly*, codes of ethics exist to guide and regulate the professional conduct of teachers as the trustees that oversee the code of ethics provide a guarantee that through formal education they will be held accountable to the standards laid out in the codes. One may thus maintain that these codes are like the constitution guiding the behaviour and conduct of educators as professionals or are like the Ten Commandments in the biblical context that teach, counsel, warn, and guide the Christian believers. They serve the purpose of providing appropriate ethical principles for the profession and are subject to human scrutiny (Bagnall & Nakar, 2018). In a study conducted in Australia, Bagnall and Nakar (2018), reveal that such codes provide assurance to clients (students, employers, and other stakeholders in education such as regulatory bodies) of the quality of teaching to be provided.

In addition, for the teaching profession (and other professions) to be dignified and accorded the status it deserves, regulatory bodies are established to register members and professionalise the industry. These regulatory bodies are found globally. For example, in Scotland and Northern Ireland, the General Teaching Council for Scotland was established to maintain and enhance teaching standards as well as to regulate teaching profession; the same was also formed in Northern Ireland with the intention of promoting continuing professional development (CPD) for teachers (Galanouli, 2010; Weir, 2001). In Zambia, the Teaching Council of Zambia is a statutory body which regulates the registration of teachers and accreditation of all colleges of education; where as in Nigeria, the Teachers' Registration Council of Nigeria (TRCN) that was established in 1993 controls and standardises the teaching profession; while in Ghana, the National Teaching Council (NTC) was set up by Education Act of 2008 in order to improve the professional standing and status of licensed teachers' and their registration (Ezeugbor, 2017; Halliday, 1999; Nawa, 2018). The establishment of such regulatory bodies and councils clearly suggest that a profession is regulated to maintain ethical conduct from its members and professionalise the industry.

Similarly, in South Africa, SACE, was launched in September 1995. SACE is a professional council for educators that aims to enhance the status of the teaching profession through appropriate registration, management of professional development and inculcation of a code of ethics for all educators (RSA, 2000). A statutory body for the teaching profession was established in terms of

SACE Act 31 of 2000. As per section 5(a) of the Act, it promotes, develops and maintains the professional image of the teaching profession in South Africa (SACE, 2002). One may argue that SACE was established for the purpose of maintaining the status and dignity of the teaching profession so that the profession cannot be brought into disrepute by its members.

Furthermore, SACE set the rules that will characterise personal qualities and the lifestyle of educators. These guidelines are commonly known as SACE's Code of Professional Ethics (SACE, 2002). These codes were solely designed for educators hence some people prefer to regard them as simply Educators' Code of Professional Ethics. However, for the purpose of this study, the former will be used. These codes lay down the rules regarding acceptable relations among educators and the learners, colleagues, parents and SACE (de Wet, 2016; RSA, 2000; SACE, 2002). It is worth noting that strict adherence to these codes by educators is not optional. As a result, any educator who breaches the codes is subject to disciplinary actions by SACE. Sanctions on the educator who has been found guilty of breaching the codes include *firstly*, caution or reprimand, *secondly*, a fine not exceeding one month's salary, *and lastly*, removal of the educator's name from the register for a specified period, or indefinitely or subject to specific conditions (SACE, 2002). SACE will always use these codes whenever there are allegations of misconduct labelled against the educator vis-à-vis other educators, parents, learners, the SGB, and the profession in general.

All in all, Educator's Codes of Professional Ethics are not the only sections of legislation that will be used to embody the personal qualities, performance and lifestyle of educators. Other regulatory frameworks that are used to govern and guide the educator include the South African Constitution of 1996; SASA 84 of 1996; ELRA 66 of 1999; EEA 76 of 1998; and other case law examples relevant to the alleged misconduct. However, this study will only focus on the Educators' Codes of Professional Ethics in trying to understand principals' ethical dilemmas when dealing with issues related to educators' misconduct.

2.2 Theoretical Framework

Johnson and Christensen (2012) argue that a theory is an explanation that discusses how a phenomenon operates, why it operates as it does and helps in making sense of the existing knowledge by integrating it into the study. It provides a scholarly perspective in which the research

problem is found and research findings are interpreted (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). The theoretical framework provides the lens to support the researcher in understanding and explaining the phenomenon under investigation thereby linking the study to the existing knowledge in the field.

This study is informed by the Hunt and Vitell (1986) general theory of marketing ethics. Hunt and Vitell's theory (H-V theory) focuses on reasoning processes by leaders as they resolve ethical dilemmatic incidents. The theory was developed and tested based on ethical decision-making by integrating deontological and teleological frameworks in the early 1980s and was presented at the Macromarketing Conference in Vancouver in 1984 (Hunt & Vitell, 2006). They further claim that many scholars have used the theory for teaching ethics and guiding empirical studies.

Furthermore, the theory suggests that whenever an ethical dilemmatic situation arises (perceived ethical problem) and an ethical decision has to be taken, the leader will have to critically consider the alternatives (deontological processes) against the consequences (teleological processes) of his/her decision (Hunt & Vitell, 2006).

Additionally, deontological processes are the set of rules that defines what is right and are used as guidelines and principles regulating employee behaviour and their actions. If the deontological principle has to be applied, the acceptable and the unacceptable employee's conduct is evaluated by comparing the employee's behaviour to the established deontological norms. Suppose the behaviour is judged to be acceptable deontologically, in this case, this will then result in a favourable deontological evaluation. However, if the behaviour is judged unacceptable, it will then result in an unfavourable deontological evaluation (Hunt & Vitell, 1986).

Conversely, teleological processes address the wrongness and the rightness of the action based on the consequences (Thong & Yap, 1998). It is the product of each alternative's perceived consequences, the probability that each consequence will take place, the desirability of each consequence, and the importance of each stakeholder. Consequences may vary from desirable (positive) to undesirable (negative) for the stakeholders (for example the principal, educators, teacher union, the SGB, circuit managers [CMs], and parents) involved and affected by the ethical dilemmatic situation. The theory can be elaborated as shown in the *Figure 1*.

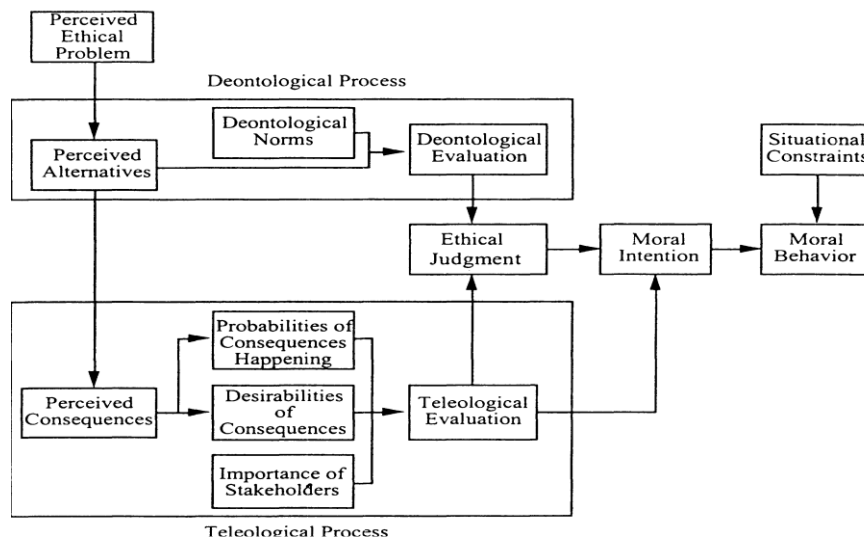


Figure 1: Hunt and Vitell's Ethical Decision- Making Theory

Note: Reprinted from Thong, J. Y. L., & Yap, C. (1998). Testing an ethical decision-making theory: the case of softlifting. *Journal of Management Information Systems*, 15(1), 218.

In Figure 1 above, deontological and teleological processes will result in an evaluation of each process. This involves weighing unacceptable behaviour with the proposed norms as well as against feasible consequences. The theory further proposes that should the consequences of an alternative be perceived to be more positive than negative for the stakeholders (e.g. educators, parents, the SGB, learners, departmental officials, the community at large, etc.), then the teleological evaluation will be positive and vice versa. As a result, perceived positive consequences will influence the teleological evaluation positively and vice versa.

Moreover, the H-V model is centred on ethical judgements. Hunt and Vitell (1986) claim that ethical judgement result from both leaders' deontological and teleological evaluation. A decision maker's ethical judgement will be achieved through the application of deontological evaluation to the appropriate teleological evaluation of the relative good versus evil resulting from each alternative. The theory further suggests that decision makers rely on both deontological and teleological considerations in their decision-making processes. They further assert that some leaders will be strictly deontologist when dealing with ethical dilemmatic situations, ignoring the consequences of their action. These are the principals that are viewed as heartless and only care about strict adherence to the rules and policy. Under their leadership, if the educator has breached

the code of professional ethics, without any hesitation, they will simply weigh such misconduct against the relevant legislation. Conversely, the model suggests that other leaders are strict teleologists and simply ignore deontological rules but will deeply consider the consequences of dealing with educators' misconduct. These are the principals that are perceived as shirkers and will 'sweep the matter under the carpet' or act as mere spectators. They are viewed as 'not in control' of the situation and gradually lose trust from stakeholders. Ethical judgement will also impact behaviour through moral intention (Hunt & Vitell, 1986, 2006; Thong & Yap, 1998). Thong and Yap (1998) suggest that ethical judgement may be different from moral intention because teleological evaluation independently affects intentions. These inconsistencies between ethical judgement and moral intention occur if the decision-makers perceive one alternative to be more ethical and more desirable. Such variations occur because a decision maker's teleological evaluation directly affects his moral intention. If there is no alignment between behaviour and intention when making an ethical judgement or decision, the person will experience a deep feeling of guilt (Hunt & Vitell, 2006).

All in all, the H-V theory exposes the ethical dilemmas that decision makers (principals in this study) encounter daily in their leadership as they deal with educators' malfeasance. Principals find themselves having inner conflict between the deontological principles (codes guiding the profession) and the teleological evaluation. No matter how intense their ethical dilemma is, the decision must be made at the end of the day. Principals would then have to strike a balance between deontological processes in relation to teleological evaluation. Consequences of their decision would greatly take centre stage in competition with the rules to be implemented and their effects on other stakeholders in education. Finally, the judgement would be deemed ethical should the decision maker weigh his deontological principles against teleological evaluation. However, ethical judgement can collide with the decision-maker's moral intention (producing negative results) should he find himself making a decision that he would not have taken under normal circumstances. This results in guilt, unhappiness, regret, and dissatisfaction about the decision. Conversely, ethical judgement can also be in conformity with a principal's moral intention (producing positive results) should s/he find him/herself making a decision that s/he would have taken under any given circumstances and is at peace with his/her action.

Given these arguments, the H-V ethical decision theory is suitable for this study. It affirms the dilemmas that principals face regularly when dealing with ethics. It confirms that principals find themselves being caught up between the horns of legislation regulating employment of educators and the consequences of acting against or in favour of the educator to stakeholders. Through this model, principals will then carefully consider all possible alternatives and weigh them against the consequence of their actions before the decision is taken. Teleological evaluation allows them to introspectively look at their values of *Ubuntu* and can thus provide appropriate support (like counselling) to the educator.

2.3 Chapter summary

This chapter dealt with related reviewed literature on ethical dilemmas faced by school principals as they deal with the issues pertaining to educators' codes of professional ethics. In this chapter, the literature review related to ethical dilemmas as faced by principals were examined and analysed. Literature related to how principals resolve ethical dilemmas and the support they need to overcome their dilemmas was also discussed. Sub-topics that were deemed crucial to this study were also dealt with in this chapter. These included educational leadership, ethical leadership, principals' ethical decision making, ethical dilemmas, as well as the codes of professional ethics. Finally, the theoretical framework underpinning the study was also discussed. The next chapter shall deal with the research design and methodology of the study.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

In the previous chapter the review of the related literature and theoretical framework were presented. In this chapter, the research design and methodology aspects which are the research paradigm, research approach, phenomenology as a research design, sampling strategies, data generation methods and procedures and data analysis are presented. The chapter also discusses the issues of trustworthiness and ethical considerations of the study.

3.2 Research paradigm

This research study is underpinned by the interpretive paradigm, which is characterised by a concern for the individual. It seeks to understand the subjective world of human experience to understand and retain the integrity of the phenomenon (Cohen & Manion, 1994). Interpretivists try to understand phenomena through the meanings that people assign to them. Van Rensburg, Alpaslan, du Plooy, Gelderblom, van Eeden and Wigston (2010) maintain that the interpretive paradigm is a method shared by partakers in the research. This is because it views meaning as being constructed through human beings interacting with each other and playing a central role in understanding and defining a situation to make sense of it. Furthermore, Cohen et al. (2018) submit that the interpretivist paradigm uses the approaches of understanding and hermeneutics to uncover and interpret meanings to attempt to see the social world through the eyes of the participants.

Therefore, this study is perfectly located within the interpretive paradigm because as a researcher, I relied on the participants' lived experiences of dealing with ethical dilemmas and my understanding of the phenomenon was informed by interpreting the data generated from participants. Subsequently, in this study, my understanding of principals' ethical dilemmas was determined by how the participants in their own settings, experience the phenomenon. It was thus informed by interpretive epistemology of the phenomenon.

3.3 Research approach

This study adopted a qualitative research approach. A qualitative research approach refers to any type of research that produces findings not arrived at by statistical procedures or other means of quantification (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). They further maintain that qualitative studies research about the persons' lives, lived experiences, emotions and feelings as well as organisational functioning, social movements, cultural phenomena and interactions between nations. It further aims at facilitating discovery of, or hearing of, the voice of 'others', or people, or experiences being studied (Ezzy, 2002). As Fossey, Harvey, McDermont and Davidson (2002) posit, qualitative research aims to give privilege to the perspective of research participants and to illuminate the subjective meaning, action and context of those being researched.

Therefore, in this study, I relied on the participants' lived experience of dealing with ethical dilemmas and my understanding of the phenomenon was informed by the interpretation of the generated data. At the core of my study was the relative ontology as the reality and interpretation was subjective, hence the study adopted a qualitative research approach (Khan, 2014; Scotland, 2012).

3.4 Phenomenology as a research design

The term "phenomenology" is derived from the word "phenomenon", meaning a fact, or an event in nature that is not fully understood (Kafle, 2011). As a human science, it is a study of lived experience or the life world as it emphasises the world as lived by a person, not the world or reality as something separate from the person (Valle & Halling, 1989; van Manen, 1997). Thus, the main focus of phenomenology is to understand the meaning of human experience as it is lived. At the heart of phenomenology, is the interpretive epistemology which views the world as subjective and individually constructed. Thus, it is one of the extreme ends of the positivism epistemology which views the world as objective yielding universal truth. In brief, phenomenology is the study of lived experience in the world that is subjective and constructed by an individual, in the process producing multiple realities.

As a branch of philosophy, phenomenology was initially developed in the twentieth century by the German philosopher Edmund Husserl (1859–1938) and is founded on the belief that knowledge-based intuition precedes empirical knowledge (Lavery, 2003; Moustakas, 1994). Husserl's theory

is centred around descriptive phenomenological inquiry rather than understanding, and assumes that experience, as perceived by human conscience has value as an object of empirical study. The core tenet of his philosophy is bracketing (*epoche*), which is the belief that the researcher must suspend all his prior knowledge and biases in order to grasp the essence of the lived experiences, in order to engage the phenomenon in a wide-open sense (Chan, Fung, & Chien, 2013; Lopez & Willis, 2004; Moustakas, 1994). However, Moustakas (1994) posits that *epoche* by its virtue, does not necessarily imply that the researcher ignores the understanding and assumption of theories underpinning the phenomenon but, rather acknowledge that those literature studies focused on only one way of exploring the phenomenon.

While Husserl focused on careful description of the phenomenon, Martin Heidegger (1889–1976) (also a German philosopher), gave priority to its interpretation by extending description as a type of interpretation (Lavery, 2003). At the heart of his theory is *hermeneutic phenomenology*. According to Lopez and Willis (2004), the word *hermeneutic* is derived from the name Hermes, a Greek god who was responsible for making clear and interpreting messages between gods. Therefore, phenomenological study that has strong belief in interpreting the lived experience of the phenomenon is known as hermeneutic phenomenology. Hermeneutic inquiry as guided by Heidegger is sometimes known as interpretive phenomenology (Koch, 1995). Hermeneutic phenomenology recognises the researcher as the key player in understanding and interpreting the phenomenon. As a research methodology and an instrument, it places the researcher at the heart of research, to uncover the hidden human experience as it assumes the meaning being embedded in the dialogue between the participant and the researcher. Furthermore, the researcher must attempt to read between the lines in order to reveal the genuine crux of the experience (Lopez & Willis, 2004; McConnel-Henry, Chapman, & Francis, 2009).

A remarkable difference can thus be noted between Husserl's and Heidegger's phenomenological philosophies. Husserl's phenomenological philosophy is descriptive and assumes the researcher plays a passive role in the research process through bracketing (*epoche*) in the form of suspending his biases and prior knowledge. On the contrary, Heidegger's phenomenological philosophy is purely interpretive and recognises the researcher's active role in the research process to unearth hidden truths from the phenomenon. In his theory, the researcher's indispensability can never be

over emphasised. Therefore, a massive notable distinction between the two phenomenological philosophies lies in the researcher's role, i.e. whether passive (bracketing) or active (interpretive).

In order to understand principals' lived experiences of dealing with ethical dilemmas and how they resolve them, in this study, I opted to conduct a hermeneutic phenomenological study as informed by Heidegger's tenets. I decided to choose Heidegger's hermeneutic phenomenology because I sought to gain a deeper understanding of principals' lived experiences of ethical dilemmas as they deal with the issues around educators' codes of professional ethics. Moreover, as my instruments, I used the semi-structured interviews, which also allowed to uncover hidden truths from participants through probing and interjecting. This also in turn enabled me to interpret their lived experiences which were hidden in their non-verbal actions. Hermeneutic phenomenology is a research design that fully interprets a person's lived experience of an event and stresses that only those that have experienced the phenomenon can communicate them to the outside world, hence it is often called an interpretive phenomenology (Chan et al., 2013; Cohen et al., 2018; Connelly, 2010; Groenewald, 2004; Khan, 2014; Mapp, 2008; Sloan & Bowe, 2014). Furthermore, van Manen (1997) asserts that hermeneutic phenomenology describes how one interprets the text of the 'lived' experience and is thus a human science which studies persons. Therefore, principals are well positioned to enrich my understanding of their plight of dealing with ethical dilemmas relating to educators' codes of professional conduct.

3.5 Sampling strategies

For the present hermeneutic phenomenological study, I have adopted the purposive sampling to identify the participants and the research sites. Purposive sampling involves selecting individuals who are knowledgeable and informed about the phenomenon and therefore allows for an understanding of the lived experience (Mapp, 2008). Principals were purposefully selected from seven schools in uMgungundlovu District, KwaZulu-Natal Province, South Africa. This sample size was also influenced by Connelly (2010) and Mapp (2008) who emphasise that it should be as small as possible so that each experience can be examined in-depth. Participants included four females and three male principals. Service experience as principals also influenced the sampling. Participants chosen comprised principals with less than five years' experience as principals at the time of the study (two participants); those with five years to less than ten years' experience as

principals at the time of the study (three participants; and lastly, those with more than ten years' experience as principals at the time of the study (two participants). Such a diverse sample helped me to gain a deeper understanding of their lived experiences of ethical dilemmas on educator's codes of professional ethics. With this experiential criterion, I wanted to ascertain whether managerial experience affected the ethical dilemmas on principals' ethical decision making.

Participants were interviewed in their natural settings. Therefore, the schools that were headed by each of the principals were automatically selected as the sites for the data generation. The sites identified for this study were four primary schools, two high schools and one combined school in uMgungundlovu District. Of these sample sites, five were Quintile 2 schools and two were Quintile 3 schools. This diversity in the choice of sites was also informed by the need to accommodate all contextual factors that might influence principals' ethical dilemmas in handling educators' professional issues.

3.6 Data generation methods

The methods that I used to generate data for this study were face-to-face, semi-structured interviews. Cohen and Manion (1994) argue that an interview enables participants – interviewer and interviewees – to discuss their interpretations of the world in which they live, and to express how they regard situations from their own point of view. Interviews draw a vivid picture of the experience leading to understanding of a shared meaning (Mapp, 2008). I decided to use the semi-structured interviews (see Appendix 6) because they are a technique for generating data and are characterised by having open-ended questions that are developed well in advance and prepared by probes, and furthermore, face-to-face interviews allow the researcher to gain clarity on any ambiguities and important points (Chan et al., 2013; Khan, 2014).

However, with the recent outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, it was highly likely that face-to-face interviews would not materialise. South Africa and many countries have implemented lockdown regulations that limit movement and close contact between people. Given the current state of affairs, face-to-face interviews would not have materialise. The possibility of face-to-face interviews was determined by the level of lockdown at the time of the interviews and the application of relevant COVID-19 protocols. Participants were given alternatives ways in which interviews could be conducted and I ensured that strict adherence to COVID-19 protocols were

maintained. Conversely, telephonic, Zoom meetings and emails with the participants were to be used should the former not materialise. The data generation method that was deemed safe and convenient at the time of the interview were discussed well in advance with each participant considering the lockdown level and other contextual factors impacting contact meetings. As a safety measure against COVID-19, I ensured that all health and safety regulations were observed as stipulated by the World Health Organization (WHO) and the National Department of Health (DoH) (Tirachini & Cats, 2020; World Health Organization, 2020).

All forms of interviews were audio-recorded using an automatic voice recorder with each participant's consent. Two automatic voice recorders were used (one placed closer to the interviewer and the other placed closer to the interviewee). This allowed for the nuances of the interview to be captured, that may have been missed if there were only handwritten notes of the interview (Mapp, 2008). Khan (2014) posits that audio recordings allow for preserving an accurate account of the interviews which can be replayed for analytical purposes. For this hermeneutic phenomenological study with seven participants from seven different sites, audio recordings became the key instrument for generating data. The fact that the interviews were recorded allowed them to be replayed several times to gain familiarisation with the data. Subsequently, field notes were used because the human mind tends to forget very quickly and, therefore field notes are crucial to maintain generated data (Groenewald, 2004).

The length of each interview was between 55 and 80 minutes long so that it could be of good quality (deMarrais & Lapan, 2003).

3.7 Data analysis strategy

Data analysis includes organising, describing, accounting for, and explaining data in terms of the participants' definition and understanding of the phenomenon by noting all the patterns, themes and categories from the data generated (Cohen et al., 2018; McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). It is thus a critical phase of the research as the findings from the participants will be thoroughly studied and scrutinised.

After the data had been generated for this study, I started by transcribing all audio recordings from all seven interviewed participants. I then listened to the audio recordings a number of times and

read the transcripts a number of times, without any presupposition. This then allowed me to identify the emergence of common meaning from the participants. I also kept a journal where I noted specific issues that arose from recordings.

Hycner (1985) maintains that the researcher needs to determine whether a participant's responses address the research question, and if it does, then it is noted as a unit of relevant meaning. To achieve this endeavour, I eliminated responses from participants that were redundant, but Hycner (1985) also warns that this process might indicate a significant meaning to the participant. Once the redundant responses were eliminated, I then clustered common themes from the participants. I then interrogated all the clusters of responses in order to determine if there were one or more central themes. I then wrote a summary of each participant's interview.

In addition, I emailed each participant the transcription and summary from each the interview. This was done in order to check whether the participants agreed with the essence of the interview and made amendments where necessary. This process is what Harper and Cole (2012) regard as member checking. They further claim that member checking is defined as the quality control process by which the researcher seeks to improve the quality, accuracy and credibility of what was recorded. Furthermore, Creswell (2007) emphasises that member checking allows participants to check whether a 'true' or authentic representation was made based on what was said during the interview.

3.8 Trustworthiness of the study

Trustworthiness refers to the extent to which the findings are an authentic reflection of the principals' lived experience of the phenomenon under investigation (Curtin & Fossey, 2007). This claim is supported by Krefting (1991) who posits that trustworthiness is about ensuring the quality of the findings in qualitative research. Trustworthiness guards and channels the researcher against complacency, carelessness and negligence during the study. The subjectivity of the researcher may influence qualitative studies; it is then important to counter this with the standard sieve of trustworthiness. Lincoln and Guba (1986) point out that trustworthiness in qualitative studies can be maintained and improved through credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability.

3.8.1 Credibility

In as much as qualitative studies result in multiple realities, the researcher needs to develop confidence in the truthfulness of the findings from the participants under study. Krefting (1991) asserts that development of truth in findings reflects the credibility of the study. Moreover, she describes the occurrence of credibility in qualitative studies, when the study presents an accurate interpretation of human lived experience that other people who also share the similar experience would immediately recognise such interpretations. For this study, credibility was achieved by ensuring that findings from the seven interviewed principals were honest. Member-checking and triangulation were also used to ensure credibility of the study as the data generation methods were utilised and generated at different time intervals with the seven principals.

3.8.2 Transferability

The quality of a qualitative research can also be achieved should the findings be generalised and be applied to other contexts with other groups (Krefting, 1991; Lincoln & Guba, 1986). Transferability occurs when the findings fit into other contexts outside the study setting (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Krefting (1991) maintains that transferability is more a responsibility of the person wanting to transfer and apply the research findings in his own context other than that of the original researcher. Therefore, for me to produce an applicable empirical study, I was always mindful that my study will impact an academic space and other researchers may use it to further their own research. As claimed by Faan (2016), I provided a thick description specifying the rationale for the chosen methodology, the study setting, participants, clarified the research process and the data generation methods, and specified the process for data analysis so that other researchers may easily decide whether this study can fit in their contexts.

3.8.3 Dependability

Peoples' attitudes, feelings, emotions, and life situations vary over time and are influenced by a number of factors such as death. Such changes might also affect the findings of the study if the participant interviewed was not in a 'good space'. These factors can thus compromise the quality of a study and result in inconsistencies in the findings. Findings of qualitative research need to be consistent if the inquiry had to be replicated with the same participants or in a similar context (Krefting, 1991). Guba (1981) claims that the findings should remain fairly stable should the study

be re-conducted. Trackable variability should be identified that might cause inconsistencies in the study as Guba (1981) and Krefting (1991) regard trackability as dependability and further discuss it as consistency of data even if the inquiry had to be replicated with the same subjects in a similar context. This study ensured that dependability was achieved through inquiry audits (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Research peers (through research cohort groups) were permitted to get involved, participate in, criticise and contribute to the study. The supervisor also examined the process and the products of the study. This helped to ensure clear direction.

3.8.4 Confirmability

Krefting (1991) emphasises that qualitative studies should be free from biases in the research procedure and results. Shenton (2004) argues that it is difficult to avoid operational bias in qualitative research since the researcher designs the sampling and questions. Steps should be taken to ensure that the research findings are neutral and are the result of the participants' lived experiences. Such neutrality in findings is called confirmability (Faan, 2016; Shenton, 2004). For this study, confirmability was ensured through an audit trail. An audit trail refers to a transparent description of research steps from the start to reporting the research findings (Faan, 2016; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). In order to maintain confirmability, I kept all records of activities conducted and the research steps were also fully explained in this treatise.

3.9 Ethical considerations

Ethical consideration deals with what is morally acceptable or unacceptable when engaging with participants in order to obtain data (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). For the study to be ethical, it should not be vulnerable to abuses such as misrepresentation, misidentification and betrayal of trust, nor should it pose potential harm to its participants (Adu-Gyamfi & Okech, 2010). Lovat (1998) posits that ethical considerations in research are required in order to professionalise the study. This can be achieved through the standard sieve of *autonomy* and *non-maleficance* (Adu-Gyamfi & Okech, 2010; Lovat, 1998).

3.9.1 Autonomy

A study is deemed autonomous if the participants willingly participate without duress and coercion and their rights to act as they choose are respected (Freeman, 2000). In order to ensure autonomy

of the study, I issued participants with the information sheet (see Appendix 4) and informed consent forms (see Appendix 5) stating the nature; duration and purpose of the study; as well as the data generation methods; and the potential impact of the study on the participants' health and functioning. The participants were also informed of the voluntary nature of their participation and their right to withdraw at any time prior to or during the research process (Adu-Gyamfi & Okech, 2010). Confidentiality and anonymity of participants were maintained in this research. Coffelt (2017) maintains that confidentiality refers to separating or modifying any personal, identifying information provided by the participants, whereas anonymity refers to data generation without obtaining any personal identifying information. He further submits that confidentiality and anonymity of participants are important in studies as researchers are expected to respect their participants and there is no need to report on the actions of a named person. To achieve this endeavour, the use of pseudonyms of participants and sites became central in this treatise. This was done in order to ensure that everyone's right to privacy was maintained, as enshrined in Section 14 of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (RSA, 1996a).

3.9.2 Non-maleficance

I also ensured that non-maleficance in the study was achieved by ensuring that it caused no harm (either physical or psychological) to participants. I further identified the potential psychological harm in relation to principals' lived experiences of ethical dilemmas like embarrassment; fear; guilt; sorrow; and anger and revealed this to participants during the process of obtaining their consent to participate (Adu-Gyamfi & Okech, 2010). By so doing, I provided the participants with a warning of the possible emotional harm that the study could cause.

However, it is worth noting that I could not have pursued this study without obtaining ethical clearance from the University of KwaZulu-Natal (see Appendix 1), permission from KZN DBE (see Appendix 2); gatekeeper's permission from uMgungundlovu District (see Appendix 3) to conduct the research. This was in addition to obtaining the previously mentioned participants' informed consent (see Appendix 5). Therefore, my endeavour to conduct interviews with principals from the sample schools was subject to ethical clearance from the UKZN Human and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee (HSSREC/00001388/2020), approval from the KZN DBE Head Office, gatekeeper's permission by uMgungundlovu Education District, as well as

being allowed access to each school by the respective principals. All these requests were granted or approved.

3.10 Chapter summary

In this chapter, research design and methodology aspects such as the research paradigm, research approach, research design, phenomenology as a research design, sampling strategies, data generation methods and procedures and data analysis were presented. The chapter also discussed the issues of trustworthiness and ethical considerations of the study. In the next chapter, I will present, discuss and analyse the findings that emerged from the data generation of the study.

CHAPTER FOUR

DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

4.1 Introduction

The previous chapter focused on the research design and methodology aspects which were research paradigm, research approach, phenomenology as a research design, sampling strategies, data generation methods and analysis employed in conducting this study. Issues of trustworthiness and ethical considerations underpinning the study were also discussed. This chapter focused on data presentation and analysis. In presenting and analysing the data I used the key research questions. The data generated was further compared to and contrasted with the literature review and the theoretical framework. The presentation and analysis were guided by the following key research questions: What are the principals' lived experiences of ethical dilemmas as they carry out their work of dealing with issues relating to educators' codes of professional ethics? How do principals resolve ethical dilemmas in their practice of enhancing educators' codes of professional ethics? What support do school principals have (*if any*) in overcoming ethical dilemmas as they carry out their duties concerning educators' codes of professional ethics?

This chapter began with the profiles of the participants (the principals) from the seven schools in uMgungundlovu District that were selected for the study. The chapter then continued with a summary of findings relating to the interviews with the participants and the themes that emerged. These themes were identified as: insubordination, intoxication, negligence and absence without leave (AWOL); empathy; fear; open communication; adherence versus non-adherence; and isolation.

4.2 Participants' career backgrounds

The data collected from participants included gender, school type, qualification, teaching experience, number of years in the current school and number of years as a principal. The participants were purposively drawn from seven schools in uMgungundlovu District and pseudonyms were used in order to maintain confidentiality. *Table 2* below illustrates the profile of each participant in terms of their career backgrounds. It focuses on their qualifications, teaching experience, number of years in management position, and lastly, number of years occupying the

principalship position. Their years of teaching experience ranged from 19 to 37 years with Mrs Black having served the longest. Their experience in principal position ranged between three and 26 years, with Mr Grey serving the longest.

Table 2: Profile of each participant in the current study

Participant's name (pseudonym)	Gender	School name (pseudonym)	Qualification	Number of years' teaching experience	Number of years in management position	Number of years as a principal
Mrs Peach	Female	Earth Primary	BEd Honours	23	8	3
Mr Grey	Male	Jupiter Primary	Med	30	26	26
Mrs Black	Female	Mars Primary	BEd Honours	37	28	19
Mr Brown	Male	Saturn Secondary	BEd Honours	19	15	5
Mr Swart	Male	Starlight Combined	ACE	30	7	7
Mrs Orange	Female	Moon Secondary	Med	23	5	5
Mrs Lime	Female	Comet Primary	BEd Honours	27	6	3

Table 2 above shows summary of the biographical details of the participants. Two participants had less than five years' experience as principals (three years to be exact); another two participants had exactly five years' experience as principals; one participant had seven years' experience; the last two had more than 10 years' experience (19 years and 26 years respectively). From the total number of seven participants selected, four were females and three were males.

4.3 Themes

Emerging themes were informed by the research questions to which they responded. Furthermore, the participants' responses were categorised according to themes that emerged while analysing data. *Table 3* below shows the themes that emerged and their corresponding research questions:

Table 3: Research questions and corresponding themes

Research questions	Corresponding themes that emerged from participants
1. What are the principals' lived experiences of ethical dilemmas as they carry their work of dealing with issues relating to educators' codes of professional ethics?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Principals' handling of cases relating to insubordination, intoxication, negligence and AWOL by educators • Empathy • Fear for safety
2. How do principals resolve ethical dilemmas in their practice of enhancing educators' codes of professional ethics?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Open communication • Adherence versus non-adherence
3. What support do school principals have (<i>if any</i>) in overcoming ethical dilemmas as they carry out their duties concerning educators' codes of professional ethics?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No support and the feeling of being isolated

Table 3 above shows the themes that emerged from interviews. The themes were organised in accordance with the research question they addressed. Findings from the participants revealed that three themes emerged to address the first research question; it also suggested that two themes emerged that address the second research question; and lastly, one theme emerged that addresses the third research question.

4.3.1 Principals' handling of cases relating to insubordination, intoxication, negligence and AWOL by educators

In presenting this theme, I decided to break it down, such that the impact of each phenomenon can be thoroughly analysed in-depth. Each sub-theme was then analysed individually in order to show

how it contributed to the participants' ethical dilemmas. This was important as the findings from the interviews indicated various incidents that emerged as sources for principals' ethical dilemmas. Therefore, the impact of insubordination, intoxication, negligence, and AWOL were analysed individually as shown below:

i. Principals' handling of cases relating to insubordination by educators

Most participants indicated that insubordination as exerted by educators they lead remains a major part of their experience. In elaborating her ordeal as being exerted by a female educator, Mrs Orange emphasised as follows:

At first I thought she was heading for the bathroom. As she was close by, I then made a comment citing who did she left by [asking who she left] in the exam room. She then took me [to task]! Then she told me that she was coming to me and I must wait for her in the office while she was heading for the bathroom. She came back and was seated on the chair facing my table. She stormed me! She said I must not dare come and tell her how to conduct herself in an exam room since she has been a teacher for long before I came here [for longer than I had been at the school]. She further told me that she was in [having] the best day of her life and I was coming to ruin it. After she was done, she left the office.

The above incident of insubordination by an educator towards the principal was not the only case that Mrs Orange experienced in her school. This is how she explained her second experience exerted by a male educator towards her:

He simply did not respond but just left. Approximately after 30 minutes, he stormed into my office and slammed my door closed. He was so furious. He never sat [down]. He then started pointing his finger towards me, citing [saying] that I was not his queen. He continued by saying that he was not going to worship me and will not go crawling in his stomach for me [he will not take instructions from me], and further said I was nothing to him! He kept on shouting at me while standing, and once he was done, he left the office.

In addition, Mr Brown added the following utterances:

When I approached her about the failure to honour the organised weekend and winter classes, she would tell me directly that she does not see any need of participating citing

*being in [on] par with the Annual Teaching Plan (ATP). I would remind her about her performance the previous year, but she would simply say she has the [a] better cohort of learners this year. For your information, the teacher was teaching Life Sciences. I tried to convince her to participate in the plan, but **she would simply refuse**. I then suggested to her to put in black and white why she is not willing to participate so that I can have something to protect myself from the officials. She refused to write the report... During March 2017 holidays, I asked her again to participate in the intervention plan, as expected, **she refused**.*

The above evidence indicates that a significant number of principals experience their authority being undermined by educators. RSA (1998) on its section 17(1)(c) regards insubordination as a form of misconduct occurring when an educator disobeys, disregards or wilfully defaults in carrying out a lawful order given to him/her by a person having authority to give it. Furthermore, sanctions for such malfeasance include a maximum fine, and final written warning up to dismissal. It is a serious form of misconduct.

Participants indicated how the insubordination experienced from educators resulted in deep ethical dilemmas. Principals indicated that they experienced intense confusion when they dealt with these ordeals. One participant (Mrs Orange) went as far as alluding that her ethical dilemma was also enhanced because all the cases of insubordination were directed towards her as a principal. She suggested that maybe it would be a different story if the cases had been reported either by the Deputy Principal or the school HOD citing insubordination from the PL1 educator. This in turn disarmed her authority and she found herself in a deeper and secluded ethical dilemma.

ii. Principals' handling of cases relating to intoxication by educators

Out of the seven participants, only one indicated having experienced educators who abused alcohol during school hours. This was not surprising, considering that the World Health Organization (WHO) had ranked South Africa fifth in terms of global alcohol consumption and further, identified South Africa as a country where heavy drinking is common (Agade, 2019). Mrs Black narrated a saga on how she was caught in an ethical dilemma when she had to deal with one of his educators who was consuming alcohol at school. This is how she posited:

I had this teacher who was abusing alcohol and [was] very rude in the process. The educator in question did not only drink during the weekend, but also during school hours. The teacher was residing in [at] the school cottages which are not far from the classrooms. The teacher would abandon classes and go to his cottage for drinks, then would come back to the class again. This behaviour became a norm; as a result, he was always drunk! Surprisingly, the teacher was an excellent Afrikaans educator. One minute he is [was] in the classroom, then one [the next] minute he was not in the classroom but instead abusing liquor. I tried several times to control his misbehaviour but in vain.

One day I was on the [at a] workshop and not at school, I received a call from teachers at school ordering [urgently requesting] my return as there was a crisis at school involving the [same] teacher which then needed my attention. On my arrival, I was told that he was heavily intoxicated and had brought XX (his dog) from home to school... I was then told that the teacher went on as far as removing the STD V [Grade 7] learners out of the classroom and ordered them to build XX a kennel inside the school premises... The teachers indicated that they tried to stop him and sent the learners back to the class[room]. The teacher then became very rude and carried XX to all the toilets. When asked what he was doing, he simply indicated that he was introducing XX to all the toilets so that he will know which ones belong to the males and females. When the teachers tried to stop him again, he then decided to insult them in the presence of learners. The school was in turmoil.

The above utterances show how alcohol consumption at school can disrupt teaching and learning. Section 17(1)(e) of the EEA states clearly that abusing alcohol at school is a serious form of misconduct and an educator found guilty of such offence must be dismissed (RSA, 1998). Furthermore, SACE (2002) orders the CEO to remove the name of the educator from the register if the educator in question is found guilty of breaching the code of professional ethics. Zooming through the lenses of both the EEA and SACE Act, it becomes crystal clear that the teacher in question was supposed to be dismissed and his name removed from the register.

However, Mrs Black did not know how to handle the situation involving an educator who was abusing alcohol at the school which then led to a chaotic climate. Deep down in her conscience, she knew that she had to do what was right (i.e. reporting the educator to the Department of

Education) but instead she did not. Teaching and learning were adversely affected. Subsequently, pressure was mounting from other educators accusing her of treating the educator in question with 'kid gloves'. She described the whole debacle as depressing as she felt that she was not in control of her own school. Her ethical dilemma was also perpetuated by the fact that she had failed to collect and record all evidence of alcohol abuse by the educator and had previously relied on the verbal warning given to the educator. As a result, she felt that she did not have a strong case against the educator and believed the school would lose should the matter have been escalated to the education officials. To worsen the situation, the issue became even more dilemmatic for the principal as the educator in question reported the principal to the CM. In his allegations, he cited abuse at school by both the principal and other female educators as he was the only male educator at school. The principal was in deep ethical dilemma.

iii. Principals' handling of cases relating to negligence by educators

From the sample of seven participants, two principals indicated that they experienced negligence from the educators. This indicates that a significant number of principals' may experience negligence and indolence from educators when they have to carry out their duties. An educator shall be guilty of misconduct if s/he is negligent or indolent in carrying duties attached to their post (RSA, 1998). In conveying her frustration, Mrs Lime had this to say:

I looked at the [exam] paper again, and soon discovered a number of errors including misspelled words. It was even difficult for me to understand the content of the paper. I then asked about the paper and when was it going to be written. The teacher told me that the paper was to be written in an hour's time. She then became very defensive and while I was talking she was also talking back. She was not listening at all and [was] not prepared to correct the paper.

The educator's behaviour displays a mixture of both insubordination and negligence. While negligence seemed to be dominant in this case, the principal strongly felt that the educator in question was more negligent than disobedient and rude. The principal's arguments were supported by the fact that the educator seemed to have an underlying and undetected psychological problem and she was not coping with the challenges posed by the curriculum needs.

Similarly, Mrs Peach also had this to say:

I had the [a] problem with the teacher who was not performing her duties. I sat down with the teacher after she was reported by the HOD. I had the meeting with [the] educator and warned her of her actions. She showed remorse and promised to change her misbehaviour. After a while, the HOD again reported the educator of [for] doing [repeating] the same misbehaviour. As soon as I had to invite [invited] her again for a meeting, she took sick leave, citing depression. She took 14 days' sick leave. As a result, teaching and learning was adversely affected since the school was not qualifying [did not qualify] to get a substitute educator due to the number of days [leave] she was taking. These became a norm on her behaviour. Subject advisors came to school and discovered that indeed teaching and learning was not taking place on [in] her subjects... These [actions] became a norm and the community threatened to close the school. That was the most stressful time of my life.

Principals as instructional leaders focus on teaching and learning as the schools' primary purpose (Bush, 2011). Thus, effective teaching and learning become the responsibility of the principal, who and is accountable to all stakeholders including departmental officials, SGB, community, and other interest groups. Therefore, it is understandable for Mrs Peach to be stressed by an educator who was indolent in executing her core responsibilities.

Findings from both Mrs Lime and Mrs Peach warn of the employed fraction of negligent educators who are very ineffective in their curriculum dissemination. These participants alluded to being trapped in ethical dilemmas due to the negligence and ineffectiveness of their teachers. Having the educators' negligence being exposed to the departmental officials, other educators, SGBs, and the entire community suggested that principals were failing to exercise their responsibilities as instructional leaders. Furthermore, it intensified their ethical dilemmas as both principals found themselves being clouded by a number of voices from these stakeholders which in turn added to their confusion. Both principals emphasised that these debacles had caused them intense confusion, unsettledness and instability while they were contemplating the correct decision.

iv. Principals' handling of cases relating to AWOL by educators

From the sample of seven participants interviewed, only one had experienced an educator who went AWOL. Ramsberger and Bell (2002) posit that AWOL is an acronym of absent or absence

without leave. Mr Swart asserted on his debacle when one of his educators simply vanished into the thin air without any trace. This is how he shared his story:

The teacher in question simply vanished with no trace at all. I think on the 10th or the 9th day the teacher resurfaces [resurfaced]. I think she understood that being absent for 14 consecutive days without [the] employer's permission will [would] result in her being charged. As a result, I tried several times to contact her but all her cell contacts were not working at all, even the [her] relatives that I knew did not know where the teacher was. Unfortunately, I did not know where the teacher was staying. On her arrival, (I think exactly on the 10th day) one could not tell that it was the same teacher [changes were noticeable].

Mr Swart found himself tussling with ethical dilemmas as a result of an educator who went AWOL. The whole scenario became an ethical dilemma because as a principal, Mr Swart failed to follow all the procedures of curbing absenteeism (including knowing the educator's place of residence). Days absent by the educator in question were compounding, while the principal had not issued the educator with leave forms. Teaching and learning was not taking place in the educator's class and the principal had not reported the matter to the district office. The principal thus found himself in a complex ethical dilemma. The incident was so overwhelming and Mr Swart blamed himself for failing to report the matter to the authorities. Ideally, the principal was expected to inform the authorities and grant the educator leave without pay (LWP), however the moment he discovered that the educator had serious financial problems and was owing money to several people which ultimately made her to go AWOL, it then became difficult for the principal to penalise the educator financially.

All in all, it can be deduced from the above sub-themes that the principals experienced a number of incidents that became ethical dilemmas in their leadership. In this study, only four incidents were reported to have been experienced by principals under study and were further discussed. These incidents resulted in their ethical dilemmas. These included cases relating to insubordination; cases related to intoxication; cases related to negligence; and cases related to educators being AWOL, as experienced by principals. It has been noted that each incident became an ethical dilemma as principals often found themselves in intensely perplexing situations as they

battled with these cases. Most principals further admitted to not knowing what to do as they were struggling with their ethical dilemmatic situations. Not knowing what to do and intense confusion are some of the characteristics of ethical dilemmas (Cranston et al. 2006).

4.3.2 Empathy

All participants acknowledged having experienced the feeling of empathy towards the educator who had violated the codes of professional ethics, thus increasing their ethical dilemmas. The principals maintained that their ethical dilemmas were intensified because they found themselves having to choose between charging the educators in question (right action) or empathising with them (also a right action) (Ghiatau, 2017). Concurring with other participants, this is how Mrs Peach emphasised:

She started to share her personal problems including her only son who was in jail; and was also stressed because she was changed from teaching her favourite subject (which happened to be the core subject which required more teaching time) ... I did not know what to do. The community was pressurising me while on the other hand she shared some of her sensitive and confidential matters including the latest event of her sister that was stabbed. On the contrary, I ended up being more stressed and my health was deteriorating.

In addition, Mr Swart also added:

As a colleague, I relate to a particular problem that you encounter because 'I've been there'. For instance, I lost brothers and have gone to a lot of difficult things in life. Now, the problem therefore is where do I strike the balance between work and to sympathise with you, knowing very well that if I sympathise with you, I will be wrong because I will not be able to apply the law?

Meanwhile, findings from Mrs Black's arguments also reveal her experiences and warns about being too empathetic towards an educator accused of malfeasance. This is how she asserted:

It is because as parents who are principals, we tend to sympathise with the culprit hoping he might change..... As I had earlier indicated, we grownups believe in verbal warnings and tend to be empathic [empathetic] to the teachers, hoping that they will change along

the way. We don't believe in written warnings, of which that is what I was supposed to do.... It is because I became too sympathetic towards the teacher and he capitalised on that and reported me as if I'm the one who was abusing him. But, whatever I did was in the name of Ubuntu hoping that he will change his ways. I didn't know where to start.

This evidence seems to suggest the importance of recording incidents of misconduct by following proper procedures and the need to institute written warnings over and above verbal warnings. As a seasoned principal, Mrs Black was well convinced that being too sympathetic is like 'scoring an own goal'. She has learnt that being empathetic to an educator accused of misconduct does not guarantee the educator's repentance. This is in alignment with Mrs Black's feeling when she cited an old Ethiopian adage which suggests that "no matter how many times you wash a goat; it will still smell like a goat".

4.3.3 Fear for safety

Findings from the participants revealed that empathy was not the only consequential decision-making problem that contributed to their ethical dilemmas; the second one was fearing for their own safety. In considering the consequences of their decision, principals do not only contemplate the repercussions to the errant educator's well-being, but also consider their own safety. This is evident as Mrs Orange posited:

Actually I was scared... I was scared because I knew that my life does not end within the four walls of this school. My life goes beyond this point. I will be alone without the CM at the mall, I will be alone in my house, I will be alone everywhere. Should I decide to take this matter further, will [there] be in [any] trouble? I had fear at that point.

Mrs Orange's evidence was also supported by Mrs Peach who admitted that:

Once the person is dismissed, then what next? The person will take the gun and shoot you. In short, we are afraid to take decisions because of the repercussions of charging educators, in the process we might lose our lives... Yes, it is true, we are scared; as such, some unethical conducts [misconduct] by educators, we simply sweep them under the carpet [hide them].

From the above utterances, we can deduce that in fearing for their own safety, principals encounter ethical dilemmas. Some participants agreed to 'turning a blind eye' to issues of misconduct in fear for their lives. Mrs Lime admitted in her own word by saying “*that’s it, I was scared*”. Fear ultimately disarms principals, weakening their ability to exercise stern authority. The school, unfortunately, will have much to lose and the learners will be severely impacted as they will be at the receiving end of the negative consequences.

4.3.4 Open communication

In resolving the ethical dilemmas, most participants posited that negotiating and deliberating with the educator can be a panacea in solving their ordeal. At the heart of their argument, they cited the errant educators as human beings who had just gone off track and derailed. This can be observed in Mrs Lime’s presentation:

In a polite manner, I then reminded her that I was her immediate senior and the Department relies on my discretion as a principal. I further reminded the teacher in question that she was qualified to teach, therefore [it] was inexcusable for her to produce a Grade 4 paper of such a poor quality... Being humbly [humble] simply mean[s] you deliberate on your differences until you find each other. At the end you convey all the expectations and the rules as stipulated by the department. I still maintain, just humbly [humble] yourself as the principal.

Mr Grey and Mrs Black also shared the same argument respectively, as shown in their submissions below:

I would advise them to sit down and work out their differences. If you can’t resolve them, ask for some external assistance.

.... In some cases, it’s not that principals are not acting. It is because at times there are internal processes (including talking with an educator) between the principal and the teacher which cannot be shared to [with] the outside world until the matter has been exhausted [resolved].

Furthermore, Mr Swart emphasised the importance of advising correctly during the dialogue process. He maintains that such a session solves ethical dilemmas at hand and has a long-term impact on the educator's conduct as it provides empowerment to him/her. His submissions were as follows:

*Therefore, what you need to do as a principal is to **advise correctly**. Advising correctly basically mean[s] to advise the teacher to take leave [of] absence because there are various forms of leave a teacher is given to choose from. I will have to advise correctly because if I force the teacher to come back and teach after those five days has lapsed, I will be being unsympathetic to him.*

Schools need to build structures that will enhance and yield proper and effective channels of communications between school leadership, educators, parents, teacher unions and learners. Suppose each party is quarantined in its seclusion corner, in that case, communication will be paralysed and ultimately toxic relationships will prevail and an intensification of ethical dilemmas will emerge when cases of misconduct have to be attended to.

4.3.5 Adherence versus non-adherence to policies

Findings from participants suggest that principals either abide by the policies regulating educators' codes of ethics as a panacea to their ethical dilemmas or, they simply disregard the policies and use their own discretion to resolve their ethical dilemmas. In agreement with those who abide by the policies, Mr Swart posited:

I then advised her to fill in the leave forms. I further stated that if she fails to provide me with those leave forms, she will be leaving me with no option but to report the matter to the Department of Education citing that she has absconded with no trace at all. (I knew that I had to look for the teacher where she was staying, but in this case she resurfaced while I was battling with that.)

Evidently, Mr Swart's utterances indicate that he is an uncompromising kind of a principal who strongly believes in correcting an educator's misconduct with appropriate action guided by relevant policies. Whether the teacher had financial problems and was owing people a large amount of money which then put her life at risk (as earlier indicated), as per Mr Swart, the fact

remains that she went AWOL, therefore, was required to complete the leave forms as a penalty for her absence. He emphasised the importance of his philosophy citing the effects of not complying to legal frameworks as shown below:

As a principal, you need to put your foot down and follow the procedure, failing which [your lack of action] will backfire in the long run.

Similarly, Mr Grey also added:

I would advise him not to take it personal[ly] as if is directed to [at] him, then to follow the procedures. The principal needs to read all the relevant legislations guiding employment of educators. If the person does not want to change after seating [sitting] with him, that is when you can then take [the] legal route. I would advise the principal to do what is right and forget about the consequences of charging the educator.

Contrary to adhering to the policies regulating educators' codes of ethics, a significant number of principals indicated non-adherence to policies as they dealt with educators' malfeasance. This is evident as emphasised by Mrs Orange:

I disregarded all the policies. Sometimes the policy doesn't work for you, but the context does. This is because you will leave the policy in the office, but will always remain with the contextual factors. A lot was at stake here. Firstly, I am a female principal and have failed and had also acted violently and dramatically (by charging them), so have [had] failed...Yes, it helps you as a principal because you want to manage the institution, not in [and do not want it to be] a toxic environment. You cannot manage the school by charging the people now and again.

Asked about advice she recommends to other principals who are in similar ethical dilemmatic situations, she submitted:

I would advise that in as much [as] charging a person is an easy way out, one needs to consider the consequences. Some would say 'I work with the book' BUT he must bear in mind that he does not work with the books. 'You work by the book on who?' Are you sure on [that] what you see on the outside is the real problem that is going on with this person?

Because what we see at face value, is not the true reflection of what is happening internally in a person.

I agree that we should have [a] code of professional ethics, but we need not to be made to use it even if we feel that at this given point, 'I don't want to'. I think we need to be given liberty and a bit of flexibility because if [of] the contextual factors in schools. At some point you need to dig deeper, other than [than] opting for the easy way out.

Most participants highlighted the difficulty of acting within the confines of the law as they deal with educator's misconduct. Surprisingly, even those who had previously disregarded the policies when experiencing their own ethical dilemmas concurred. One may argue that this indicates a sign of regret for earlier sympathising with an educator accused of misconduct. This argument then suggests that policy adherence is non-negotiable when dealing with the cases involving an educator who has violated the professional ethics codes.

4.3.6 No support and the feeling of being isolated

Most participants noted the lack of support as they wrestled with ethical dilemmatic situations involving educators. They maintained that dealing with the issues single-handedly while those that should have been providing the necessary support either disappeared or blamed the principals, was a cause for concern. This was evident as narrated by Mr Brown:

Surprisingly, she was removed by my union. As we were talking, I also cited to them that I belong to the same union and argued that [I] cannot be treated like that [as someone who belongs to another union]. Strangely, the response that I received as we were talking is that in as much as I am their member, at that point I was representing the employer therefore it matters the least [does not matter] that I was their member... Absolutely, I was on my own. That is why sometimes it is not easy to take ethical decisions (applying the law) because you will be on your own. As such, we tend to overlook misbehaviour. When you charge the teacher, the unions will be present and the CM will be in his office, technically you'll be on your own. Therefore, in summary, it is extremely difficult to charge a teacher. When you have to charge a teacher you need to be in agreement with the CM and the unions. If the three of you don't agree, don't charge the person otherwise you will find yourself swimming in a pool of paraffin without any lifeguards to rescue you.

Mr Brown's utterances provide a vivid picture of how principals find themselves isolated as they deal with educator's malfeasance. Being rejected and at loggerheads with his own union was his worst nightmare. To worsen the situation, his own union was not interested in his evidence and went as far as to tell him that they would remove their teacher (without understanding the case fully) from the school should he fail to reinstate her in Grade 12 (as submitted below):

One day the three union representatives from branch level came to the school. On their arrival, the matter was so huge and seemingly out of control. The union secretary read a very lengthy letter she had written to them. As we were talking, the same educator started crying, portraying a picture that she is the subject of abuse at school...It was just propaganda, just pure fallacy, because there was nothing talking to [no talk of] teaching and learning including intervention plans. She even cited that I was forcing her to teach at night. I tried to elaborate [on] why I had to redo the duty load. Unfortunately, they were not willing listen to my story. Instead, I was perceived as the person who was victimising her, as such was [they were] forcing me to reinstate her [as an educator] in Grade 12. I also insisted that was not going to happen because I am the one who is accountable for the performance of the school. I further requested them (union members) to provide me with a written report clearly indicating that I must reinstate the teacher in Grade 12 so that I can protect myself from the officials. When I asked for that letter from the union reps [representatives] they simply told me that I was being rude and leave [left] them with no choice but to take their teacher.

Mr Brown, in his discourse, also indicated how he soon realised as a principal that he was not in control of his educators but somehow teachers are accountable to their respective unions. Strangely, in this case, the union also dictated the school's teaching timetable and duty load and further instructed the principal to comply with their order. Similar sentiments were also shared by Mrs Peach as indicated below:

The first challenge is the teachers. Teachers don't want to work. As such, it is not easy to take decisions against them whenever they have contravened the code of ethics. Sadly, teachers have support of the unions, which are the enemy of the principal. The unions protect the teachers. Secondly, as principals, we are supposed to provide support to those

teachers that are failing to perform their duties and go as far as unearthing the source of the problem, including collaborating with his [the teacher's] family. In the true sense, there is no time for that. As a principal, you end up being the one who begs the educator. The more you urge the educator, the more rebellious he becomes. Therefore, as principals, we are not in control! I'm fed up.... Unions are the enemy of the principal because they believe we are at war with their members.

Such revelation from both Mr Brown and Mrs Peach suggests that unions disarm principals in terms of taking decisions against educators. It further suggests that unions intensify ethical dilemmas. In managing this ethical dilemma, one would presume the CMs and other district officials (senior to the principal) would play a more active role in supporting the principal, however, the opposite prevails as submitted by Mr Brown:

Later I phoned my CM (remember he was aware about the series of events involving the teacher). As I was talking to him, I could also notice that he was also scared of the unions because he simply said its fine if they are taking their teacher, let them take her, furthermore, we will try to get the [a] substitute teacher. My concern here is that the teacher in this scenario was not developed, because disciplining the teacher is part of developmental programme... I found myself in a deep ethical dilemma now because the person I had hoped will [would] stop them from removing the teacher from the school simply folded his hands [did not act] and the school was left without a teacher. I expected the CM to instruct the teacher to report to school so that the matter can be resolved, instead of allowing them to take the teacher.... Yes, instead he just distanced himself by insisting that I must allow them to take their teacher.

Furthermore, Mrs Peach also conveyed her dissatisfaction with the lack of adequate support provided by CMs as they struggle with ethical dilemmas:

No, it was not enough. I was expecting the district officials, in particular [the] CM to personally convene the meeting with the parents as they were planning to halt teaching and learning. Instead, she would just inform me to tell them that they are dealing with [the] issue as the department. She would go as far as telling me that I should inform the parents that she has instructed me to tell the teacher to take long leave [an extended period of

leave] so that we can [qualify to] get a substitute educator. It only becomes your problem as the principal.

These remarks clearly show that CMs are unavailable to provide professional support to principals as they deal with ethical dilemmas pertaining to educators who have violated the codes of professional ethics. Principals then find themselves in silos, dealing with ethical dilemmas. The easy way out is to ‘turn a blind eye’ to the educator’s malfeasance. This was the view of Mr Brown who alluded that the consensus be reached between the principal, CM and the unions on charging the educator in question. He went on to argue that if no consensus has been reached, he advises principals not to act, as acting in disagreement with the latter is like ‘*swimming in the pool of paraffin with no lifeguards to rescue you.*’ This could be indicative of his perception of the situation as toxic and flammable.

Mrs Orange, in clarifying her ordeal, indicated that her ethical dilemma was also intensified by the fact that the attacks were labelled against her by her own educators. She then had to ‘paddle on her own’ as submitted below:

Yes, I did. I guess it is because all the attacks were directed towards me but not on [at] one of my teachers. I was forced to be calm in trying to protect my dignity as the leader of the institution. I was so lonely and not trusting [of] anyone among the staff members, including my SMT. I felt that I was against the mob. That on its own made me stand my ground and firmly decide that I must not charge anyone, because should I do that, I will be giving them exactly they wanted at the time. That was the most emotional period of my career and, on the other hand, the SMT members felt that the ideal solution was to charge them. It was tough. Yes, I was alone.

Based on these findings from both these participants, the CM and the Union’s action clearly put the principals’ roles of stern authority in a very compromising position. As instructional leaders, the DBE holds principals accountable for educators’ and learners’ academic performance. Educators sign contracts that explicitly refer to their accountability for performing the tasks expected to them (Bush, 2011; Heystek, 2015). In addressing the issue of accountability for principals, DBE drafted the Performance Agreement in 2011 that would hold principals accountable for the performance of educators’ and learners’ academic results. The union’s

behaviour was uncalled for (in the case of Mr Brown) to encroach on the principal's territory and instruct him to reinstate the educator in Grade 12. Principals are accountable for the school performance, and should schools underperform, they will be held accountable, with no the probability of support from the unions being very low. Unfortunately, the CM would also instruct the 'poorly performing' principal to compile a report on under-achievement, forgetting that he was a mere spectator as the unions were dictating to the principal and went on as far as removing 'their educator' from the school. Similarly, the CM will also forget that he was the bystander as the parents threatened to close down the school and unions threatened to disrupt effective teaching and learning.

Furthermore, for these participants found themselves in a complex situation and in the process felt being isolated, deeply entrenched their ethical dilemmas. Being abandoned by their CMs and their respective unions nullifying their membership, meant that these principals had to 'paddle on their own'. This unwillingly forced them to choose between instituting further disciplinary actions against the educators in question or to 'take orders' from the union (which was contrary to their set of beliefs, principles, ideals, and values). In the process, principals expressed being overstretched by these sagas and ended up feeling conflicted and confused. Participants found themselves having inner conversations with themselves, simply because they had no one to talk to. Indeed, being isolated caused immense ethical dilemmas for principals.

4.4 Summary of interview finding themes

- i. The results from the interviews show that the principals' lived experiences of ethical dilemmas as they carry out their work duties included:
 - Insubordination, intoxication, negligence and AWOL;
 - Empathy; and
 - Fear for safety
- ii. The participants also highlighted the following techniques which the principals apply to resolve the ethical dilemmas in their practice as professionals and according to the ethics of the profession:

- Open communication
 - Adherence versus non-adherence to policies.
- iii. The participants finally highlighted the following on the support available to overcome ethical dilemmas as they carry out their professional duties:
- Principals dealt with ethical dilemmas in isolation as little to no support was available.

Since this study is only limited to seven quintile 2 to 3 schools in uMgungundlovu District, serving black African populations, I am unsure as to whether principals in the former Model C schools can share similar sentiments. One has to question whether these issues are based on race, on ethnic group, on geographic or on social class. The question of whether white principals in former Model C schools in Johannesburg Central, Durban or in the northern areas of the city of Cape Town experience name calling, swearing, defiance and fingering from PL1 educators or even other SMT members, exists. It is unclear whether this phenomenon is only prevalent in public schools or whether it extends to the Independent Examination Board (IEB) schools as well. Further empirical studies need to be conducted to address these questions and seek answers.

4.5 Conclusion

This chapter presented data and the discussion of findings. In presenting and analysing the data I used the key research questions. The presentation and analysis were guided by the following key research questions: What are the principals' lived experiences of ethical dilemmas as they carry out their work to deal with issues relating to educators' codes of professional ethics? How do principals resolve ethical dilemmas in their practice of enhancing educators' codes of professional ethics? What support do school principals have (*if any*) in overcoming ethical dilemmas as they carry their duties concerning educators' codes of professional ethics? To contextualise the results of the study, the chapter began with the profile of the participants (principals) of the seven schools in uMgungundlovu District which were selected to participate in the study. The chapter was then concluded with a summary of findings from interviewing the participants in relation to the themes that emerged. These themes were identified as: principals' handling of cases relating to insubordination, intoxication, negligence and AWOL by educators, resulting in ethical dilemmas;

empathy; fear for safety; the need for open communication; the challenge of adherence versus non-adherence; no support and the feeling of being isolated. In the next chapter I will present the summary of findings, conclusions and recommendations for further research.

CHAPTER FIVE

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

5.1 Introduction

The previous chapter presented data from the participants. In presenting and analysing the data, key research questions were used. The presentation and analysis were guided by the following key research questions: What are the principals' lived experiences of ethical dilemmas as they carry out their work to deal with issues relating to educators' code of professional ethics? How do principals resolve ethical dilemmas in their practice of enhancing educators' codes of professional ethics? What support do school principals have (*if any*) in overcoming ethical dilemmas as they carry their duties concerning educators' codes of professional ethics? To contextualise the results of the study, the chapter began with the profile of the participants (principals) of the seven schools in uMgungundlovu District that were selected to participate in the study. The chapter was then concluded by thoroughly discussing the themes that emerged from the data. The themes that emerged were identified as: insubordination, intoxication, negligence and AWOL; empathy; fear for safety; open communication; adherence versus non-adherence to policies; and no support and the feeling of being isolated. In this chapter I will present the summary of findings, conclusions and recommendations for further research.

5.2 Summary of the study

The purpose of this study was to understand principals' lived experiences of ethical dilemmas on issues relating to educators' codes of professional ethics in uMgungundlovu district.

Chapter One of the study began with the introduction, was then followed by the background of the study, the rationale of the study, the statement of the problem, the purpose of the study, the objectives of the study, the research questions, the significance of the study, the delineation of the study, the definition of key concepts, the organisation of the dissertation, and the chapter summary brought the chapter to close.

Chapter Two reviewed literature relevant to the study. This literature covered the topics of principals' experiences of ethical dilemmas and their implications, educational leadership, ethical

leadership, principal's ethical decision making, ethical dilemmas, and educators' codes of professional ethics. The chapter is concluded by discussing the theoretical framework (Hunt and Vitells' ethical decision-making theory) underpinning the study.

Chapter Three discussed the research design and methodology. The study is underpinned by the interpretive paradigm and adopted a qualitative research approach. The research design employed is the hermeneutic phenomenology as adopted from Heidegger's theory. Purposive sampling was used to identify research participants suitable for the study. This research is a phenomenological study on the lived experiences of seven principals in uMgungundlovu district. Semi-structured interviews were used to generate data from participants. The chapter concluded by discussing trustworthiness as well as ethical issues guiding the study.

Chapter Four presented, analysed and discussed data from participants. This is structured according to themes that emerged from data. In the main, the study's findings indicated that all participants experienced difficulty in handling ethical dilemmas on issues pertaining to the educators' codes of professional ethics.

5.3 Summary of findings

The findings of the study indicate the prevalence of insubordination, intoxication at work, negligence, and AWOL as common cases of misconduct actions exerted by educators, as experienced by school principals. In their presentation, participants also reflected on their responses towards educators' malfeasance. Empathy, fear for safety, the need for open communication, as well as adherence versus non-adherence to policies were identified as key themes in school principals' responses to cases of educators' misconduct. Lastly, the participants emphasised limited support and the feeling of being isolated in dealing with cases of educators who have violated the codes of professional ethics, which in turn intensify their ethical dilemmas.

5.4 Discussion

The purpose of this hermeneutic phenomenological study was to understand principals' lived experiences of ethical dilemmas as they carry out their work of dealing with the issues relating to educators' codes of professional ethics. It was also aimed at understanding how principals resolve their ethical dilemmas in their daily practices as school leaders on ethics issues. Lastly, the study

was aimed at understanding the kind of support that principals receive from relevant stakeholders. This chapter includes the discussion of major findings as related to literature on principals' lived experiences of ethical dilemmas, and on how principals resolve ethical dilemmas on their daily practices as school leaders relating to the educators' codes of professional ethics. Lastly, the support that principals receive from relevant stakeholders as they deal with ethical dilemmatic situations involving educators who have violated the code of professional ethics was also discussed. Also included is a discussion on connections between the literature, the H-V ethical decision-making theory and this study. The chapter concludes with a discussion of the limitations of study, areas for future research, and a brief summary.

This chapter contains a discussion and future research possibilities to help answer each of the research questions:

- What are the principals' lived experiences of ethical dilemmas as they carry their work of dealing with the issues relating to educator's code of professional ethics?
- How do principals resolve ethical dilemmas in their practice of enhancing educator's code of professional ethics?
- What support do principals have (*if any*) in overcoming ethical dilemmas as they carry their duties concerning educator's code of professional ethics?

5.5 What are the principals' lived experiences of ethical dilemmas as they carry their work of dealing with the issues relating to educators' codes of professional ethics?

Findings from the participants revealed that principals experience ethical dilemmas daily as they carry out their duties of leading schools. Participants further revealed that common cases of malfeasance that they experience as committed by educators included insubordination, negligence, intoxication, and being AWOL. These cases of malfeasance can be categorised as exogenous, by virtue of being exerted by educators accused of an illegal activity directed at the principal. In these cases, principals find themselves being caught in an ethical dilemma as they weigh the malfeasance against relevant policies as well as the repercussions of acting against the educator.

Furthermore, participants also indicated experiencing ethical dilemmas that are more endogenous since they emerge internally as they battle with educators' malfeasance. These cases include empathy and fear for their own safety. Evidence from participants suggest that five out of seven participants experience feelings of care, concern and being empathetic to the educator accused of misconduct as they try to tackle the matter at hand. This then suggests that a remarkable number of principals are inspired by values of *Ubuntu* in their leadership. These values (like caring, empathy, and respect, attempting to understand the full context) contributed immensely to the principals' ethical dilemmas as they dealt with the cases involving a breach of the educators' codes of professional ethics. With all the evidence presented against the educator in question indicating that the educator is indeed guilty and must be charged, participants posited that their ethical dilemma was intensified the moment they put themselves in the shoes of the wrongdoers.

Interestingly, these revelations from the participants are in alignment with Chapter Two (Section 2.1.5 under Table 1), of the literature review as Shapira-Lishchinsky (2009; 2011) and Shapira-Lishchinsky et al. (2016) as well as Shapira-Lishchinsky and Orland-Barak (2009) point out in principals' experience, the need for a caring climate versus a formal climate as the most common form of ethical dilemma. This then suggests that caring for a malefactor is common among those in leadership positions, including principals.

However, the most surprising utterances from participants was when two out of seven participants indicated fear for their own safety as another factor that perpetuates their ethical dilemmas as they deal with cases involving breaches of educators' codes of professional ethics. These participants said they feared for their lives should they act against the educator. This then results in them avoiding these cases and seeking alternatives to manage the issue rather than instituting disciplinary measures. It was unexpected, considering one would presume principals have legitimate and coercive power and are vested with authority by virtue of holding the highest office in the school. Through fear, principals feel disempowered and as a result cannot exercise their authority effectively.

Furthermore, drawing from Chapter Two of the literature review, under the section (2.1.4 *ii*), on principals' ethical decision-making, studies indicated that appropriate decision making is determined by the consequences it will provide (Coughlan, 2005; Norberg & Johansson, 2007;

Tyler, 2014). Equally important, principals fearing for their own safety in taking ethical decisions against an educator who has violated the code of professional ethics can never be taken lightly, in particular in uMgungundlovu District, as Kunene (2017) reported on a female DP of a Pietermaritzburg high school who was shot and killed multiple times in class in the presence of her Grade 12 learners. This is not an isolated case, as Naile (2015) also reported on another female primary school principal, again in Pietermaritzburg, who was ambushed and also killed after receiving death threats should she not resign. Their fear is thus understandable as these gruesome atrocities occurred within their district and not very far from their own schools. Additionally, Cohen (2014) also reported that South Africa is one of the countries with the highest number of violent crimes in the world. Thus, one may argue that the perception suggesting principals choosing to sweep cases of misconduct under the carpet (when fearing for their lives) might be legitimate. However, further empirical studies need to be conducted to prove or disprove the validity of such thinking.

A theoretical framework drawn from Chapter Two (Section 2.2) of this dissertation submit that some principals consider the consequences of their decisions as supreme, opposed to strict adherence to policies (Hunt & Vitell, 1986, 2006; Thong & Yap, 1998). This resonates with the findings from participants who indicated considering their own safety as paramount and could not offer themselves as sacrificial lambs in pursuit of being perceived as 'no nonsense' principals. These principals are labelled as teleologists in our theoretical framework. Based on the utterances from the participants, this cohort of principals is simply characterised by a cowardice complex. Others disguise themselves under the camouflage of developing and providing support to the educator accused of malfeasance but zooming in on their actions, a fear factor can be easily detected. A teleologist principal may disregard the relevant policies that correct misbehaviour and opt to act according to his/her conscience. Again, the narrative that labels principals as shirkers that turn 'a blind eye' when they have to act against an educator who has breached professional ethics codes, can never be ruled out with teleologists.

I am fully convinced that with a strict teleologist principal in charge, education will be fully compromised and the learners will be at the receiving end of the negative effects. The principal's position is about leading, instructing, directing, guiding, authorising, disciplining, correcting, and regulating. These tasks can never be performed by a principal who cannot assert his/her authority

and does not recognise the legitimate power vested in him/her. To the extreme, an educator might be caught sexually harassing learners, but a teleologist principal would possibly imagine the educator's future that will be jeopardised, leading to a lack of disciplinary action. Not only that, the principal might intensely imagine his own life and family's life in danger should he act harshly against the educator. In empathising with an educator and fearing for his/her own safety, the principal might be even tempted to assist the educator in question to 'get away with murder'. Unfortunately, by so doing, the principal will personally implicate himself as an accomplice in the felony.

5.6 How do principals resolve ethical dilemmas in their practice of enhancing educators' codes of professional ethics?

All participants unanimously asserted their difficulty in resolving ethical dilemmas as they deal with cases involving an educator who has contravened the code of professional ethics. Participants maintained that their difficulty emerges the moment the case is brought to their attention and the malfeasance is matched with the corresponding breached code. Principals then find themselves in a deep ethical dilemma between their conscience and educational policies. They unanimously agreed on the difficulty of resolving such conflict.

Furthermore, as a panacea to resolving their debacle, a sizeable number of participants advised on treating each act of malfeasance professionally. They further argued on creating an atmosphere in the school conducive to the existence and enhancement of open communication between the principal, SMT members, educators, the SGB, parents as well as community at large. Participants further advised that principals sit down with the educator accused of misconduct with an intention of detecting the root cause of misbehaviour. Drastic actions against the educator can then be taken once all support sessions and developmental interventions have been exhausted. One may argue that communication resolves principals' ethical dilemmas as they battle with the educator's misconduct and improves human relations. Providing support and listening to the educator who has breached the codes of professional ethics is in alignment with Chapter Two (Section 2.1.1) of this study where it is asserted that *Ubuntu* leadership can be used to enrich principals in resolving their ethical dilemmas (Msila, 2008; RSA, 2011). The literature review further reveals that *Ubuntu* leadership contains values such as humanness, caring, respect and love. For the principal to provide

support with an intention of unearthing the root cause of misbehaviour before instituting drastic measures, is a clear sign of caring for an educator.

Moreover, principals suggested striking a balance between caring for an educator and implementing the policies as paramount. Participants further indicated the existence of a thin line between the two, hence not an easy exercise. Some participants maintained that caring for an educator should not be done at the expense of disregarding the policies, while some emphasised that policy implementation should outweigh their conscience.

In addition, striking a balance as indicated by participants perfectly resonates with Chapter Two (Section 2.1.4 *iv*) of this study where Robbins and Trabichet (2009) maintain that principals must strike a balance between the ethics of justice and the ethics of care, in order to resolve their ethical dilemmas. Literature reveals that striking a balance between ones conflicting values, causing an ethical dilemma, is the most difficult task to face. It seems that even the most seasoned principal resolve and deal with ethical dilemmas relating to teachers' misconduct with difficulty (Barnett et al., 2007), although the nature and severity of this difficulty may lessen, based on lessons learned from past experience. As a result, Atkin (2012) points out the need for the unique aspects of each act of malfeasance to be considered and advised the most appropriate its treatment should be identified based on merits, as another remedy of enhancing principals' skills in resolving their ethical dilemmas.

Quite tellingly, participants consistently lamented the difficulty of resolving ethical dilemmas relating to educators who breached the codes of professional ethics. A differentiated approach was noted from their findings. In the main, some participants maintained that strict policy adherence to correct malfeasance was a panacea to resolve their ethical dilemmas, while others believed in non-adherence and disregarding the stipulated policies to overcome their ethical dilemmas. The latter has already been discussed as those principals can be categorised as teleologists, strongly influenced by consequential decision making. In this research, they indicated being informed by fear and were empathetic towards the educators accused of misconduct.

In addition, the other cohort represents those principals that are strongly guided by policies in their decision making. These principals asserted that being strong in their administration and record keeping allowed them to collate with ease, the necessary evidence regarding an educator who has

contravened the code of professional ethics. They strongly emphasised following the proper procedure, 'sticking to the law' and regarding the policies as 'Alpha and Omega' in resolving their ethical dilemmas. Their decisions are guided by facts presented against the educator without considering the consequences of their actions.

Subsequently, their belief in decision making in resolving their ethical dilemma is in alignment with Chapter Two (Section 2.1.4 *i*) of the literature review where it is suggested that a decision is deemed fit and proper if it can be turned into a universal law and can be applied to everyone, everywhere (Robbins & Trabichet, 2009; Tyler, 2014). It is further argued that these universal laws are called *deontology* referring to policies, laws and rules that direct the principal in his/her decision making. A strict deontologist principal makes non-consequential decisions by strictly adhering to the policies in order to resolve his/her ethical dilemmas as s/he deals with the cases involving an educator who has violated the code of professional ethics.

Not only do deontologist principals believe in following the proper procedure being at the core of resolving ethical dilemma, but some also support the humane treatment of the educator who has committed an act of misconduct. Such thinking is in line with what former Gauteng Judge President Bernard Ngoepe, said in defence of corporal punishment indicating its acceptance being welcomed provided it is administered with love (Booyse, le Roux, Seroto, & Wolhuter, 2011). Participants' utterances reveal that taking drastic actions against an educator accused of misconduct must be done in an educative approach to the educator concerned while in the same vein must resolve their ethical dilemmas. This can be achieved through open communication in the form of talking openly with the educator in question. Findings revealed that open communication (before implementing the policies) between the principal and the errant educator helps to resolve their ethical dilemmas. They argue that open communication should provide a channel for adequate support to the educator in question because disciplinary action should be educative, as opposed to punitive.

Drawing from Chapter Two (Section 2.1.1) of the literature review, it was suggested that principals treat educators accused of malfeasance in a humane manner (Msila, 2008; RSA, 2011). Therefore, principals have the responsibility of treating such educators with respect, honesty, fairness, and

openness without disregarding these educators' rights. These values support deontologist principals in resolving their ethical dilemmas.

In conclusion, this study is well grounded in the Hunt and Vitell (1986) general theory of marketing ethics, as indicated in the theoretical framework (Section 2.2) of this dissertation. The theory suggests that whenever the principal encounters an ethical dilemmatic situation involving an educator who has violated the codes of professional ethics and an ethical decision has to be made, the principal will have to carefully consider or weigh up the deontological processes against the teleological processes of his decision. The theory further suggests that ethical judgement should be at the centre of ethical decision-making processes. This is because whether a teleological or a deontological decision is taken, it would ultimately be judged as ethical by the principal as he resolves the dilemma.

5.7 What support do school principals have (*if any*) in overcoming ethical dilemmas as they carry out their duties concerning educators' codes of professional ethics?

All participants opined that they faced difficulty in handling their ethical dilemmas. In as much as handling and resolving ethical dilemmas is a daunting task for the principals, participants found themselves feeling 'cornered' and overwhelmed by these situations, with minimal to no support available to them. Principals confirmed handling ethical dilemmas single-handedly with. The CMs (as their immediate seniors), subject advisors and other departmental officials, and SGBs (as partners in education) distanced themselves in these challenging times and ultimately expected the principal to deal decisively with the culprit. Participants expected these stakeholders (CMs in particular) to be closer and more supportive as they dealt with educator's misconduct, unfortunately, this was not shown to happen. In the process, they alluded to pressure mounting from educators, parents, community, and learners towards principals to act against the educator accused of malfeasance. This additional pressure intensified their ethical dilemmas. Most principals voiced their concerns on the lack of support and urged CMs to avail themselves to provide support to principals as they deal with educators' misconduct. It was also evident that some principals expected CMs to personally deal with educators' misconduct. It became clear that some principals lacked the courage to make ethical decisions against an educator and hence shifted their responsibility to their CMs. Lack of information and empowerment on handling educators' acts of malfeasance was also noted as being at the core of principals' shifting their responsibility

to the CMs. Some unequivocally stated their ignorance and lack of experience in handling cases of malfeasance, hence their ethical dilemmas.

Additionally, principals' difficulty in managing their ethical dilemmas as they dealt with misconduct was also intensified by unions. This was the view shared by most participants who argued that unions provide no support to the principals and instead cushion and protect the educator. For them, unions are to blame for educators' malfeasance because the unions appear to have a preconceived sense of responsibility to protect educators against 'abuse' from principals, even before or without verifying the merits of the complaints. Such thinking by unions further propel principals' ethical dilemmas as they handle the cases involving educators who have breached the codes of professional ethics. Principals further argued against the unfairness of their own union membership status being nullified by the unions themselves by virtue of their status as an employer of the educator accused of misconduct. Most principals noted that no support was provided to them by unions and this was a cause for concern. Other principals shared the perception that unions 'lead' the education system, not the departmental officials and CMs.

To put it more simply, utterances from participants suggest that unions have transcended to the sanctuary of leadership and dictate terms to the entire education system, including departmental officials. One could argue that this phenomenon is not unique to education but is prevalent across the entire government system. Unions in South Africa are politically aligned and some have formed alliances with powerful political parties. Such alliances will thus result in unions pursuing the mandate of their political alliance parties at the expense of good governance and leadership. Over the years, a notable trend has been witnessed with the union office bearers being parachuted to the highest offices in government and in the alliance political party. President Cyril Ramaphosa, Gwede Mantashe, Thulas Nxesi, Siphosiso K.K. Nkosi, and Velenkosini Hlabisa are some of those who were union activists who currently occupy high offices in government and in their respective political parties. With unions being so influential in government and in the political space, this clearly intensifies ethical dilemmas faced by leaders (including principals) as they deal with educators' malfeasance (in particular, those that are union affiliates). Principals are threatened (including CMs, as indicated by participants) to act against an educator who has the support of the unions.

Finally, arguments as stated above clearly resonate with the literature presented in Chapter Two (Section 2.1.1). Referring to our literature review, it was revealed that indeed principals handle ethical dilemmas in isolation as they deal with the cases involving breaches of educators' codes of professional ethics. It was further revealed that even policies (such as EEA, LRA, the SACE Act, SASA, and SA Constitution) are inactive and cannot do the questioning, feeling, thinking and responding whenever principals face ethical dilemmas (Barnett et al., 2007). The literature also explicitly states on little support being available to principals as they wrestle with ethical dilemmas pertaining to educators' misconduct (Atkin, 2012). Correspondingly, Cranston et al. (2006) point out that employing bodies and district officials should provide adequate support to principals as they deal with ethical dilemmas concerning educators who are in violation of the codes of professional ethics. In conclusion, it is also argued that unions should provide support to principals as they deal with their ethical dilemmas as opposed to being threatening bystanders (Msila, 2013; Ntshangase, 2001; RSA, 2000).

5.8 Conclusions and recommendations emerging from the study

From the research literature and participants' experiences, several recommendations became apparent that may benefit principals in managing ethical dilemmas as they deal with cases of educators who have contravened the educators' codes of professional ethics. These recommendations, among other things, suggest rethinking the curriculum scope for trainee educators by universities and training colleges. These recommendations may assist to shed light among education policy makers on a number of ethical dilemmas faced by principals while battling with educators' misconduct.

Furthermore, findings from literature and lived experiences as shared by principals in this study revealed that principals encounter ethical dilemmas daily as they carry out their work of dealing with issues relating to the breach of educators' codes of professional ethics. The results also suggest that principals have difficulty in handling and resolving ethical dilemmas with little or no support at their disposal as they deal with educators' malfeasance. In light of these findings, the following recommendations are proposed:

- Universities should offer modules on ethics, theories on ethics and ethical decision making as core modules for all undergraduate educators in order to empower students with adequate skills for resolving future ethical dilemmas.
- Aspiring principals should undergo training and obtain a formal compulsory qualification prior to their appointment as principals. This will be done as a preparatory programme to equip them with necessary skills for the daunting task at hand which includes the management of ethical dilemmas in their daily practices as school leaders.
- SACE and unions should continually provide capacity building to educators and principals on ethical conduct and educators' codes of professional ethics.
- Schools and unions should form constructive alliances and work cooperatively in the management of schools' affairs. Principals and union leaders must see each other as partners in education.
- CMs could provide leadership and necessary support to principals as required, especially as they deal with cases described in this study.
- On a practical level, the establishment of a structure at district level that would deal with disciplinary processes against the educators accused of misconduct, is recommended. Disciplining an educator accused of misconduct should not be the sole responsibility of the principal but a collective endeavour.
- Principals should ideally not preside in cases involving educators from their own schools, with whom they have a professional working relationship. Principals could move around between schools, circuits and districts in investigating and charging educators who have violated the codes of professional ethics.

5.9 Areas for future research

As it has emerged from literature, principals' management of ethical dilemmas as they deal with the cases around educators' codes of professional ethics call for more empirical research studies to be conducted. Some of the areas that would benefit from further research are:

- Literature reveals a paucity of empirical studies that exist on ethical dilemmas as faced by school principals, hence there is a need for more of these studies to be conducted in South Africa, Africa and internationally.
- No empirical studies have been conducted in South Africa that address the issue of ethical dilemmas as faced by principals as they deal with educators' codes of professional ethics.
- This study adopted an interpretive paradigm located in qualitative research, therefore findings cannot be interpreted as a true reflection of the broader population. Conclusions cannot be drawn by using only the findings from qualitative study. A mixed method study that will also include statistical data on the phenomenon can also be conducted to allow for data to be extrapolated to a wider population.
- Hermeneutic phenomenological study's findings are limited to only seven principals in uMgungundlovu District and thus cannot be concluded as a true reflection of a broader population.
- A replication empirical research study that will have a much larger sample could also be beneficial.

5.10 Chapter Summary

The study explored principals' lived experiences of ethical dilemmas as they carry out their work of dealing with issues relating to educators' codes of professional ethics, how principals resolve their ethical dilemmas, and further recommended the support to be provided to principals in managing and overcoming this challenge.

It emerged that principals encounter ethical dilemmas daily and results suggest that principals have difficulty in handling and resolving ethical dilemmas with little or no support available to them as they deal with educators' malfeasance. At the heart of the findings, participants suggested that district officials and unions should provide more support to principals as they struggle with ethical dilemmas involving educators' malfeasance. The study adopted a qualitative approach to answer how principals resolve their ethical dilemmas and the support they suggest is needed while they

are wrestling with the phenomenon. National and international literature was also reviewed to allow for the research problem to be comprehended as full as possible.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Ethical Clearance Certificate from University of KwaZulu-Natal

 UNIVERSITY OF
KWAZULU-NATAL
INYUVESI
YAKWAZULU-NATALI

04 June 2020

Mr Celumusa Bethuel Hlongwane (219090967)
School Of Education
Pietermaritzburg Campus

Dear Mr Hlongwane,

Protocol reference number: HSSREC/00001388/2020
Project title: Understanding principals' lived experiences of ethical dilemmas on issues relating to educator's code of professional ethics in uMgungundlovu District
Degree: Masters

Approval Notification – Expedited Application

This letter serves to notify you that your application received on 20 May 2020 in connection with the above, was reviewed by the Humanities and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee (HSSREC) and the protocol has been granted FULL APPROVAL.

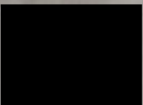
Any alteration/s to the approved research protocol i.e. Questionnaire/Interview Schedule, Informed Consent Form, Title of the Project, Location of the Study, Research Approach and Methods must be reviewed and approved through the amendment/modification prior to its implementation. In case you have further queries, please quote the above reference number. PLEASE NOTE: Research data should be securely stored in the discipline/department for a period of 5 years.

This approval is valid until 04 June 2021.
To ensure uninterrupted approval of this study beyond the approval expiry date, a progress report must be submitted to the Research Office on the appropriate form 2 - 3 months before the expiry date. A close-out report to be submitted when study is finished.

All research conducted during the COVID-19 period must adhere to the national and UKZN guidelines.

HSSREC is registered with the South African National Research Ethics Council (REC-040414-040).

Yours sincerely,



Professor Dipane Hlalele (Chair)

/dd

Humanities & Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee
UKZN Research Ethics Office Westville Campus, Govan Mbeki Building
Postal Address: Private Bag X54001, Durban 4000
Tel: +27 31 260 8350 / 4557 / 3587
Website: <http://research.ukzn.ac.za/Research-Ethics/>

Founding Campuses: ■ Edgewood ■ Howard College ■ Medical School ■ Pietermaritzburg ■ Westville

Appendix 2: Gatekeeper 1 permission (KZN DBE Head Office)



education

Department:
Education
PROVINCE OF KWAZULU-NATAL

Enquiree: Phindile DumaBuyi Ntuli

Tel: 033 392 1063/51

Ref:2448/4021

Mr Celumusa Bethuel Hlongwane
685 Msimbithi Road
IMBALI
3219

Dear Mr Hlongwane

PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH IN THE KZN DoE INSTITUTIONS

Your application to conduct research entitled: **“UNDERSTANDING PRINCIPAL’S LIVED EXPERIENCES OF ETHICAL DILEMMAS ON ISSUES RELATING TO EDUCATORS’ CODE OF PROFESSIONAL ETHICS IN KWAZULU NATAL SCHOOLS, UMGUNGUNDLOVU DISTRICT”**, in the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education Institutions has been approved. The conditions of the approval are as follows:

1. The researcher will make all the arrangements concerning the research and interviews.
2. The researcher must ensure that Educator and learning programmes are not interrupted.
3. Interviews are not conducted during the time of writing examinations in schools.
4. Learners, Educators, Schools and Institutions are not identifiable in any way from the results of the research.
5. A copy of this letter is submitted to District Managers, Principals and Heads of Institutions where the Intended research and interviews are to be conducted.
6. The period of investigation is limited to the period from 15 January 2020 to 10 January 2022.
7. Your research and interviews will be limited to the schools you have proposed and approved by the Head of Department. Please note that Principals, Educators, Departmental Officials and Learners are under no obligation to participate or assist you in your investigation.
8. Should you wish to extend the period of your survey at the school(s), please contact Miss Phindile Duma at the contact numbers below.
9. Upon completion of the research, a brief summary of the findings, recommendations or a full report/dissertation, this must be submitted to the research office of the Department. Please address it to The Office of the HOD, Private Bag X9137, Pietermaritzburg, 3200.
10. Please note that your research and interviews will be limited to schools and institutions in KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education.

UMGUNGUNDLOVU DISTRICT



Dr. EY Nzama
Head of Department: Education
Date: 15 January 2020

KWAZULU-NATAL DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Postal Address: Private Bag X9137 • Pietermaritzburg • 3200 • Republic of South Africa
Physical Address: 24 F Burgel Street • Anton Lembede Building • Pietermaritzburg • 3201
Tel: 033 392 1000 • Fax: 033 392 1200 • Email: Phindile.Duma@kzndoe.gov.za • Web: www.kzndoe.gov.za
Facebook: [KZNDOE](https://www.facebook.com/KZNDOE) • Twitter: [@DOE_KZN](https://twitter.com/DOE_KZN) • Instagram: [kzndoe](https://www.instagram.com/kzndoe) • YouTube: [Kzndoe](https://www.youtube.com/kzndoe)

„Championing Quality Education - Creating and Securing a Brighter Future

divulged. To ensure the protection of the school, and the participants, I will ask the participants to use aliases and pseudonyms for the interviews. Participants are at liberty to withdraw from this research at any point without any penalties or negative consequences. Principals will not be remunerated for their participation in this study. All audio recordings and transcripts from interviews will be stored and locked away for safe keeping by the research supervisor Dr P. E. Mthembu, in her office cabinet at the University of KwaZulu- Natal, Pietermaritzburg Campus. All information and data generated from this study is intended for research purposes only.

Should you require further clarification, please contact my research supervisor, Dr P. E. Mthembu, on Tel: 031- 260 3534 and by email at mthembup@ukzn.ac.za . For queries concerning ethics, please contact Ms Phumelele Ximba on 031- 260 3587 or email at ximbap@ukzn.ac.za.

Yours sincerely

Fieldworker's details:

Name of the student: Celumusa Bethuel Hlongwane

Institution: University of Kwazulu- Natal

Course: Master of Education

Cell: 083 712 55 22

Email: hlongseb@webmail.co.za

For Kwazulu Natal department of Basic Education

Declaration: I agree/ ~~do not agree~~ that you interview the principals of the following school (name _____ the _____ schools)

_____ under my jurisdiction.

Name of the Official and designation: MVUBU T. L.

District: UMGUNGUNDLOVU : Circuit WARTBURG + MSHWATHI

KZN DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Signature: _____
UMGUNGUNDLOVU DISTRICT
KZN UMNYANGO WEZEMFUNDO
2020 -02- 26

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Signature: _____
2020 -12- 7 P
UMGUNGUNDLOVU DISTRICT
KZN UMNYANGO WEZEMFUNDO

Appendix 4: Participant information sheet

Participant information sheet

Dear Participant,

Information regarding participation in a research project:

Title: Understanding principals' lived experiences of ethical dilemmas on issues relating to educators' code of profession ethics in schools.

I am seeking your participation in a research project which will explore principals' lived experiences of ethical dilemmas on issues relating to educator's code of professional ethics in schools.

Research has indicated that ethical conduct by principals is paramount for effective functioning of the school. It yields personal as well as professional benefits as principals who lead ethically gain trust from other stakeholders which in turn improve organizational culture and performance (Tyre, 2018; Weinstein, 2009). However, possession of ethical conduct by principals does not solve ethical dilemmas that they encounter on a daily basis on decisions pertaining to educators' code of professional ethics. Studies further reveal that principals have difficulty in handling ethical dilemmas (Cranston et al., 2006; Kimber & Campbell, 2014; Roche, 1997).

This study seeks to explore principals' lived experiences of ethical dilemmas as they carry out their work of dealing with issues relating to educators' code of professional ethics. It also aims to explore how principals resolve ethical dilemmas in their practice of enhancing educators' code of professional ethics. It will further recommend support measures to be provided to principals in overcoming ethical dilemmas as they carry out their duties concerning educators' code of professional ethics.

This study requires you to be interviewed once. With your permission, the discussion will be audio recorded. The interview will take place after school hours and will not interfere with the normal

running of the school and your work. It is recommended for your school premises be used as a research site but the interview can also take place at any other venue that suits you.

As a participant, you have rights. Your participation in this study is voluntary and you have the right to withdraw from the study at any stage. You have right to be protected from harm, and no detail that will enable you to be identified will be used. You will have access to the transcripts of the interview before they are used in this study. You may delete or change excerpts from the interview. All information is intended for research purposes only. All data recordings and transcripts will be stored in a locked cabinet in the research supervisor's office. On completion of the study, the findings will be shared with you in the form of a hard copy. There is no payment for participation in this study.

Should you require further clarification, please contact my research supervisor, Dr P.E. Mthembu, on Tel: 031- 260 3534 or by email at mthembup@ukzn.ac.za. For queries concerning ethics, please contact Ms Phumelele Ximba on 031- 260 3587 or email at ximbap@ukzn.ac.za.

Yours sincerely,

Celumusa Bethuel Hlongwane

Appendix 5: Participants' informed consent

INFORMED CONSENT FOR PARTICIPATION IN RESEARCH PROJECT

Thanking you in advance
Celumisa Bethuel Hloegwan

DECLARATION FOR PARTICIPANTS

I, _____ (full name of participant) hereby confirm that I understand the content of this document and the nature of this research project and I consent to being interviewed. I hereby give consent for the interview to be audio-taped, and for the data to be used for research purposes.

I understand that

- I am at liberty to withdraw from this research at any time, should I desire.
- That I will have access to all transcripts and rights to change, revise, or withdraw aspects of data that I have given.
- My identity will not be divulged.
- My participation is voluntary.
- There is no payment for participation.

Signature of participant

Date

Should you require further clarification research ethics, please contact Ms Phumele Ximbu on (031) 260 3587 or email: ximbu@ukzn.ac.za at the Human & Social Sciences Research Ethics Administration (HSSREC) located at the:

Research Office, Westville Campus
Govan Mbeki Building
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Appendix 6: Interview schedule/protocol

Interview Protocol

Interview schedule for principals

1. Brief explanation of the study purpose, confidentiality of the process and expectations, use of an audio recorder.
2. Questions from participant (if any).
3. Consent form completion and collection.

Main questions

1. How do principals perceive and describe their ethical dilemmas as they carry out their work of dealing with issues relating to educators' code of conduct?
2. How do principals resolve ethical dilemmas in their practice of enhancing educators' code of professional ethics?
3. What support do principals have (*if any*) in overcoming ethical dilemmas as they carry their duties concerning educators' code of professional ethics?

Biographical questions (background)

1. Briefly tell me some information about yourself personally and professionally. (probe) What qualifications do you hold? (further probe) What teaching experience do you have?
2. How long have you been working in this school? (probe) And how long have you held your position? (further probe) How would you describe your experiences immediately after obtaining the principal position?

Interview schedule

Questions addressing the research questions

3. What is your understanding of ethics and dilemmas thereof? (ethical dilemmas)
4. Tell me about some of the ethical dilemmas you had experienced (if any) as a principal as you dealt with the issues pertaining educator's code of professional ethics. (probe) How did the issue become an ethical dilemma?
5. Did you experience any difficulty when dealing with an ethical dilemmatic situation involving an educator who has breached the code of professional ethics? (probe) How did the difficulty emerged hence ethical dilemmas?
6. Can you please share with us on the measures you applied to resolve such an ethical dilemmatic situation involving an educator who had breached the code of professional ethics?
7. What advice would you recommend to other principals who might be in a similar ethical dilemmatic situation involving an educator?
8. Did you get adequate support from other stakeholders to overcome the ethical dilemmas you faced at the time? (probe) What kind of support did you receive or did you expect to receive? (explain)
9. From whom did the support come or who did you expect it to come from? (probe) How did it come?
10. How would you suggest support be provided to other principals facing ethical dilemmas relating to educators who have committed misconduct?
11. Is there anything that you wish to say that I may not have asked you? In case there is, please share with us.

Thank you very much for your participation and for spending time with me during this interview. I am humbled as I am mindful that you should have used this time for other things that are important to you.

Appendix 7: Turnitin Report

Understanding principals' lived experiences of ethical dilemmas on issues relating to educator's code of professional ethics in uMgungundlovu District

ORIGINALITY REPORT

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SIMILARITY INDEX	INTERNET SOURCES	PUBLICATIONS	STUDENT PAPERS

PRIMARY SOURCES

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Appendix 8: Editing confirmation letter

Geraldine Coertze
Independent Communications Consultant
Language Practitioner -
English Language Academic Editor

Confirmation of Academic Editing

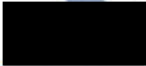
Author: Celumusa Bethuel Hlongwane
Document type: Masters dissertation
Discipline: Education
Academic supervisor: Dr P.E. Mthembu
Institution: University of KwaZulu-Natal

Date: 20 January 2021

Dissertation title: Understanding principals' lived experiences of ethical dilemmas on issues relating to educators' codes of professional ethics in uMgungundlovu District

This document serves to confirm that the above dissertation was language edited during January 2021. Besides this, assistance was provided with the Table of Contents, List of Figures, List of Tables and with checking the format of the references.

The document was returned to the author with tracked changes and comments. A comprehensive editing report accompanied the document. It was the responsibility of the author to accept or reject changes and to attend to issues raised in the comments. The final, corrected version of the document was not proofread.


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Full member: South African Communication Association
Highest qualification: MSocSc (CCMS), UKZN