



**Principals' Lived Leadership Experiences in Dealing with Ethical Dilemmas in Schools:
A Phenomenological Approach.**

BY

Christopher Brian Mantel

218078645

**A dissertation submitted in fulfilment for the Master of Education Degree in the
discipline of Educational, Management and Policy, School of Education, University of
KwaZulu-Natal**

Supervisor: Dr. P.E. Mthembu

December 2020

DECLARATION

I, Christopher Brian Mantel, declare that

i. The research reported in this dissertation, except where otherwise indicated, is my original work.

ii. This dissertation has not been submitted for any degree or examination at any other university.

iii. This dissertation does not contain other persons' data, pictures, graphs or other information unless specifically acknowledged as being sourced from other persons.

iv. This dissertation does not contain other persons' writing unless specifically acknowledged as being sourced from other researchers. Where other written sources have been quoted, then:

a) Their words have been re-written, but the general information attributed to them has been referenced;

b) Where their exact words have been used, their writing has been placed inside quotation marks and referenced.

v. Where I have reproduced a publication of which I am an author, co-author or editor, I have indicated in detail which part of the publication was actually written by myself alone and have fully referenced such publications.

vi. This dissertation does not contain text, graphics or tables copied and pasted from the internet, unless specifically acknowledged, and the source being detailed in the dissertation and the references section.

Signed:

A black rectangular box redacting the signature of Christopher Brian Mantel.

Date: 26 January 2021

Christopher Brian Mantel

STATEMENT BY SUPERVISOR

This dissertation has been submitted with my approval.



26/01/2021

Supervisor: Dr P.E. Mthembu

Date

DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my late grandmother, Georgina Van Rooyen. Throughout my life she supported me through every endeavour and constantly assured me that I could achieve anything that I set my mind to. This work is dedicated to her as she would have loved to see the man I have become today. I trust that through God's grace, the hard work and dedication I have endured in completing this dissertation puts a smile on her face.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

First, I would like to thank my supervisor Dr. Pinkie Mthembu for encouraging me and for always sharing her expertise in assisting me in the completion of this dissertation. Without her expert input and constant willingness to assist, this work would never have reached its conclusion.

Second, I would like to thank all of the school principals involved in the study and for providing me with extremely valuable information which ultimately made the study what it is.

Third, I would like to thank my partner, Nicole Schwulst for always encouraging me and for being there for me during times of uncertainty. Without her impeccable caring attributes, this dissertation would not have been possible.

Last, I would like to thank my mother and father, Brian and Sonia Mantel for their constant encouragement for me to achieve greatness. Their understanding around my working full-time and studying part-time has been a blessing in that they would ensure I attended to my work even at the expense of family functions. I would further like to thank my entire family and friends for their understanding when I was not able to attend family as well as various functions.

I have an indescribable level of love for all of you.

ABSTRACT

Principals are involved in decision making on a daily basis. Their work is often complex and demanding as they deal with a range of competing demands while dealing with diverse stakeholders who include parents, staff, students, the public, systems and districts. As a result, school leaders are challenged to make difficult ethical decisions while coping with pressures from these diverse groups, whilst also ensuring that schools function and learners get a quality education. Consequently, principals face ethical dilemmas. The purpose of this study was to explore principals' lived leadership experiences in dealing with ethical dilemmas in schools. Consulted and reviewed literature suggested that ethical dilemmas were a pertinent area of concern for principals. Additionally, the reviewed literature suggested that there was a lack of development and training in dealing with ethical dilemmas and that it was crucial that more research be conducted. This provided the motivation in conducting the study.

Framed by systems theory, this qualitative study was underpinned by the interpretive paradigm. The sample consisted of four school principals from the Umgungundlovu District. Data was generated through face-to-face, semi-structured interviews.

The findings of the study suggested that the task of being a principal is an extremely arduous one and can have severe repercussions on the livelihoods of principals if they are to deviate from acting in an ethical manner. Second, it became evident that principals must ensure they understand the various systems or areas they are surrounded by in order to be able to identify within which areas ethical dilemmas arise to better be able to deal with them. Third, principals should follow specific frameworks, guidelines or models in dealing with ethical dilemmas, for them to visualise the impact an ethical dilemma could potentially create within other areas of the school. Fourth, principals must lead democratically, whilst adapting their leadership practice depending on the situation and instill the constructs of ethical leadership. Finally, principals lack adequate training in dealing with ethical dilemmas.

LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

DBE	Department of Basic Education
FEDSAS	Federation of Governing Bodies of South African Schools
HOD	Head of Department
IPA	Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis
RSA	Republic of South Africa
SACE	South African Council for Educators
SASP	South African Standard for Principalship
SGB	School Governing Body
SMT	School Management Team

TABLE OF CONTENTS

DECLARATION	i
STATEMENT BY SUPERVISOR.....	ii
DEDICATION.....	iii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	iv
ABSTRACT.....	v
LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS	vi
TABLE OF CONTENTS.....	vii
LIST OF TABLES & FIGURES	x
CHAPTER 1	1
INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND	1
1.1 Introduction.....	1
1.2.1 Background.....	1
1.2.2 Rationale for the study	3
1.3 Statement of the problem and purpose of the study.....	5
1.4 Objectives of the study.....	5
1.5 Research questions.....	6
1.6 Definitions of key concepts	6
1.7 Limitations of the study	6
1.8 Overview of the study.....	7
1.9 Chapter summary.....	7
CHAPTER 2	9
LITERATURE REVIEW	9
2.1 Introduction.....	9
2.2 School principals' responsibilities in dealing with ethical dilemmas.....	9
2.3 Principals and leadership	11
2.4 Schools embedded in other systems	14
2.5 Conceptualising ethics and the implications for principal leadership	15
2.6 Ethics and its implications for principals.....	16
2.7 Ethical judgement and considerations	17
2.8 Ethical decision making.....	19

2.9 Ethical dilemmas in schools.....	21
2.10 Dealing with ethical dilemmas in schools	25
2.11 The best interests of students/learners and moral agency	27
2.12 Lack of training, development and support in dealing with ethical dilemmas	28
2.13 Chapter summary	29
CHAPTER 3	30
THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK	30
3.1 Introduction.....	30
3.2 Systems theory / Systems thinking	30
3.3 Application of Systems theory and Systems thinking to the research	30
3.4 Figure 2: A model for conceptualising ethical dilemmas (Cranston, et al., 2004, p.7) .	34
3.5 Chapter summary	35
CHAPTER 4	37
METHODOLOGY AND RESEARCH DESIGN	37
4.1 Introduction.....	37
4.2 Locating the study within the interpretative paradigm	37
4.3 Research Approach	38
4.4 Research design	38
4.4.1 Sampling method	39
4.4.2 Data generation method	40
4.4.3 Data analysis method	40
4.4.4 Issues of trustworthiness	41
4.4.5 Ethics in research	43
4.5 Limitations of the study	44
4.6 Chapter summary	44
CHAPTER 5	45
DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS	45
5.1 Introduction.....	45
5.2 Profiling the participants.....	46
5.3 Understanding ethics.....	47
5.4 The importance of being ethical	48
5.5 The causes of ethical dilemmas	50
5.6 Lived experiences of ethical dilemmas.....	51

5.6.1 Learner centred lived experiences	51
5.6.2 Staff centred lived experiences	54
5.6.3 Parent and school governance centred lived experiences	57
5.6.4 Community centred lived experiences.....	59
5.6.5 Departmental centred lived experiences	61
5.6.6 Policy centred lived experiences.....	64
5.7 Lived experiences of ethical dilemmas as interconnected and interdependant	66
5.8 Dealing with ethical dilemmas.....	67
5.8.1 The ethical dilemma resolution process.....	68
5.8.2 Leadership strategies in the process of ethical dilemma resolution.....	70
5.8.3 The importance of ethical leadership in dealing with ethical dilemmas.....	72
5.9 Limited training and support in dealing with ethical dilemmas	74
5.9.1 Policy borrowing and the support from principal’s colleagues	75
5.9.2 Types of training received in dealing with ethical dilemmas	76
5.10 Advice to current as well as aspiring school principals to deal with ethical dilemmas	78
5.11 Chapter summary	79
CHAPTER 6	81
SUMMARY OF THE STUDY, KEY LEARNINGS, IMPLICATIONS AND CONCLUSION.....	81
6.1 Introduction.....	81
6.2 Summary of the study	81
6.3 Summary of findings.....	83
6.3.1 Principals’ lived experiences of ethical dilemmas.....	84
6.3.2 Dealing with ethical dilemmas.....	84
6.3.3 Leadership strategies in dealing with ethical dilemmas	85
6.3.4 The importance of ethical leadership.....	85
6.3.5 Lack of sufficient training in dealing with ethical dilemmas	86
6.4 Key learnings, recommendations and concluding remarks	87
6.4.1 Implications for principals and recommendations for further research	88
6.5 Chapter summary	89
REFERENCES	90
APPENDICES	96

LIST OF TABLES & FIGURES

Figure 1: Schools embedded in other systems (interconnectedness and interdependence)	33
Figure 2: A model for conceptualising ethical dilemmas (Cranston, Ehrich, & Kimber, 2004, p.7)	34
Table 5.2.1 Participant profiles.....	46

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

1.1 Introduction

Today, principals find themselves situated at the forefront in dealing with a highly complex array of ethical dilemmas that they are bombarded with as the leaders of their schools (Cranston, Ehrich, & Kimber, 2006; Kutsyuruba & Walker, 2013; Wise, 2015). This study seeks to explore principals lived experiences of ethical dilemmas and how they deal with them in their schools. However, it is their competing sets of values, morals and demands that shape the way in which they ultimately reach conclusions in terms of their decisions (Glanz, 2010). Principals' ethical decision making skills are imperative and sought after in ensuring that all their decisions benefit all the stakeholders involved, with an emphasis on keeping the best interests of learners in mind (Cranston et al., 2006; Karakose & Kocabas, 2009). Therefore, this research's key focus was to explore principals' lived leadership experiences of ethical dilemmas as well as how they deal with them in their schools. This chapter, firstly discusses the background and rationale of the study. Secondly, the statement of the problem and the purpose of the study are presented. Thirdly, the study's objectives and research questions are stated, and finally, the visualisation and deployment of the key definitions relatable to the study are given. Thereafter, a brief summary of each chapter is provided as a conclusion.

1.2.1 Background

The nature of schooling and school leadership are, without doubt, ethical pursuits (Starrat, 2012). Starrat (2012) states that the importance of ethical leadership has never been greater. Starrat (2012, p. 17) postulates that "Given the present context of schooling, the continued neglect of the ethical side of the teaching and learning process is no longer an option". This statement indicates that principals should always strive to maintain the highest level of ethical behaviour as they exercise their leadership in schools while remaining committed to providing the highest quality and excellence of teaching and learning for all learners. Their efforts have to be based on the highest moral and ethical conscience and commitment. Glanz (2010) advocates for ethics as a key component of leaders' decision-making. He propounds that "the most egregious sign of mediocrity...is the absence of an ethical lens to guide strategic decisions" (Glanz, 2010, p. 81). Notwithstanding principals' efforts in practising their roles ethically, their leadership has become more challenging as a result of increased pressure to achieve higher expectations for learner and academic improvement, regardless of the circumstances (Glanz, 2010).

Principals are required to deal with an extensive variety of ethical dilemmas daily and are under a considerable amount of pressure given the complexity of the context of schooling organisations (Cranston et al., 2006; Kutsyuruba & Walker, 2013; Wise, 2015). An ethical dilemma is a situation in which those in leadership positions are required to choose between competing sets of principles, values, beliefs or ideals (Cranston et al., 2006; Karakose & Kocabas, 2009). Thus schools are considered as extremely complex organisations (Edrogan & Sezgin, 2020). It is therefore imperative that principals have an ethical stance in ensuring that they deal with various dilemmas that arise both professionally and ethically. Ethics involves the way in which individuals should act when confronted with a dilemma (Cranston et al., 2006; Karakose & Kocabas, 2009). Ethics can be seen as how we decide to live our lives as well as how we behave and make judgements about rights and wrongs (Karakose & Kocabas, 2009).

When principals find themselves in situations where they have to choose between competing sets of principles, values, beliefs or ideals, this is where ethical dilemmas occur (Cranston et al., 2006; Karakose & Kocabas, 2009). The principal, therefore, is required to consult on the matter with various stakeholders and reach a conclusion on what the most feasible option will be for dealing with this dilemma. Therefore, with complex organisations such as schools, it is imperative that principals make ethical decisions in order to keep the best interests of all stakeholders in mind (Begley & Stefkovich, 2007; Wise, 2015).

According to Kutsyuruba and Walker (2013), ethical decision-making by principals has become a topic that has gathered a vast amount of attention within the field of education. Ethical decision making entails staying true to your moral principles, while also being aware of the complexity of ethical issues and being sensitive to the differing views of your employees', whilst managing conflicts that may arise (Blackman, 2018). Kutsyuruba and Walker (2013) further state that problems experienced by principals, from the external environment as well as within the educational system create daily ethical dilemmas for them. These dilemmas may range from teacher accountability, where conflicts arise amongst school management as well as staff, all the way to pressures from parents or at times, even the broader community in which the school is situated (Kutsyuruba & Walker, 2013).

In a study conducted by Wise (2015), prominent dilemmas faced by principals in the United States included financial resources (lack of funds in areas where stakeholders perceived a need for more funding), community issues as well as a lack of time due to the vast number of

responsibilities principals have. In alignment with this, a national survey conducted by MetLife (2013, p.23) in the US, stated that the majority of principals claim that their responsibilities have altered drastically in the last five years and also that the occupation has increased in complexity. Principals in modern society are at the forefront of ethical dilemma occurrences, and the decisions they make affect the schooling organisation, within a variety of systems (Leppard, 2018; Oyebade, 2000). Therefore, it is imperative that school principals have an understanding of systems theory and systems thinking, which is the theoretical lens through which this research is viewed. For this study, a systems view highlights schools as multi-layered systems and stresses the interconnected nature of these systems; embedded within the schools as well as within the broader context of the education system and the communities in which they are situated.

Cranston et al., (2006) assert that values, morals and ethics are the key elements when it comes to the leadership of a schooling organisation. Consequently, educational leadership comprises a moral purpose whereby educators and principals have a “duty of care” to ensure they act by implementing decisions in the best interests of both students and staff. Ethical leadership thus entails principals’ striving to maintain the highest ethical behaviours as they exercise their leadership in schools while remaining committed to providing the highest quality of teaching and learning for all learners (Starrat, 2012).

1.2.2 Rationale for the study

This study sought to explore and share insight into principals’ lived leadership experiences of various ethical dilemmas and how they deal with ethical dilemmas that arise daily within their schools. There is a vast body of literature on ethical dilemmas faced by principals, however dealing with these dilemmas in an ethical manner is where principals seem to lack insight (Cranston et al., 2006; Karadag & Tekel, 2017; Karakose & Kocabas, 2009; Kutsyuruba & Walker, 2013;). Therefore, the objectives of this study involved providing detailed descriptions of principals’ lived experiences of ethical dilemmas as well as the ways in which they dealt with them. This ultimately provided insights into how exactly other principals may learn to adjust their leadership practices and ethical decision making processes, to ensure the most feasible and worthwhile decisions are implemented for the benefit of the educational organisation in its entirety.

Tshaka (2009) simply defines ethics as being able to differentiate between right and wrong whilst being familiar with the context in which the ethical decision is being made. According

to the Constitution of South Africa (RSA, 1996) public administration must be governed by the democratic values and principles enshrined in the Constitution. Section 195 (1a) of the constitution states that a high standard of professional ethics must be promoted and maintained at all times (Republic of South Africa, 1996). This implies that principals as public administrators must constantly ensure they remain professional in their dealings on a continuous basis, as they are the accountable officers within their particular schools. The (Department of Basic Education (DBE), 2000) South African Council for Educators (SACE) is aligned to the constitution as it promotes a code of professional ethics binding all members registered with SACE to following the code. The policy on the Standard for Principalship focuses on enhancing school principals' professional image and competencies (RSA, 2016). Embedded in the principal's leadership and management of the school are core societal, educational, and professional values reflected in how principals deal with all matters pertaining to the curriculum and human resources (RSA, 2016). Accordingly, it is imperative that principals make professional and managerial decisions based on informed judgments that ultimately result in appropriate actions (RSA, 2016).

According to Ezrogan and Sezgin (2020), ethical dilemmas are constantly formed due to the complex configuration of schooling environments as they encompass a wide variety of stakeholders. As an aspiring principal, I have noted the constant and highly complex ethical challenges that principals face daily. In my career thus far, I have observed that the principals I have worked under find it challenging at times to deal with a variety of ethical dilemmas' such as staff accountability, discipline issues and difficult members of school governing bodies (SGB's). I have observed the stress they have encountered and were forced to endure as a result of such dilemmas. I have viewed first-hand the stress and hardships principals have been required to endure in response to the dilemmas they have been faced with. This encouraged me to embark on a research journey with the key goal of exploring how exactly principals have experienced ethical dilemmas and their ways of dealing with them.

Professionally, my aim was to provide school leaders, as well as myself with the richly described, lived experiences of my participants, to increase our collective awareness of these dilemmas and to equip them as well as myself with the knowledge gained from the participants, to allow us to collectively discover how to better handle the inevitable conflicts principals experience on a daily basis, emerging from competing sets of values and demands (Ezrogan & Sezgin, 2020).

Therefore, the professional implication of this research was to provide educational leaders with principals lived experiences of ethical dilemmas and ethical decision-making processes, so that they are better able to make tough ethical choices with integrity and from an ethical stance.

1.3 Statement of the problem and purpose of the study

Ethical decision making for principals while faced with competing priorities is key to ensuring that schools function successfully (Karadag & Tekel, 2017). Hence, school leaders should aim to make ethical decisions within the context of educational settings (Kutsyuruba & Walker, 2013). It is evident that many principals are not adequately equipped to deal with the ethical dilemmas they are faced with daily (Cranston et al., 2006; Karadag & Tekel, 2017; Karakose & Kocabas, 2009; Kutsyuruba & Walker, 2013). I thus considered it appropriate to pursue a study to understand the lived experiences of the ethical dilemmas principals face within their schools. Moreover, it is crucial to understand the most effective and most ethical ways of dealing with dilemmas from a leadership perspective. Literature suggests that principals are able to make professional ethical decisions by means of constantly keeping the best interests of learners in mind (also referred to as moral accountability) (Begley & Stefkovich, 2007; Cranston et al., 2004). Also by following the constructs of the SACE Code of Ethics (RSA, 2016).

However, despite what has been mentioned above, there still seems to be a gap in the effective implementation of the constructs of the SACE Code of Ethics (RSA, 2016) and the manner in which some principals regard ethics in carrying out their professional decisions. A study conducted by Kutsyuruba and Walker (2013) emphasises that there is a need for further studies that point out key ethical dilemmas that principals are faced with in order to provide them with the competencies to increase their awareness of these dilemmas as well as to better handle conflicts between sets of varying values and demands. The purpose of this study was to add to current literature by exploring principals' lived experiences of ethical dilemmas in their roles as school leaders and to understand how exactly they deal with ethical dilemmas. To fulfil the purpose of this study, I sought to address the following objectives and research questions:

1.4 Objectives of the study

1. To explore principals' lived experiences of ethical dilemmas in their schools.
2. To understand how school principals' deal with ethical dilemmas that arise in their schools.
3. To examine the lessons learnt from principals' lived experiences of ethical dilemmas and the leadership strategies they use to respond to ethical dilemmas in their schools.

1.5 Research questions

1. What are school principals' lived experiences of ethical dilemmas in their schools?
2. How do school principals' deal with ethical dilemmas that arise in their schools?
3. What lessons can be drawn from the principals' lived experiences of ethical dilemmas and the leadership strategies they use to respond to ethical dilemmas in their schools?

1.6 Definitions of key concepts

The defining and conceptualisation of key concepts relatable to the study are of key importance as individuals may have varying views of these concepts. Provided below are the definitions of key concepts used throughout this study.

Ethical dilemma: A situation whereby those in leadership positions are required to choose amongst a competing set of principles, values, beliefs or ideals (Cranston, et al., 2006; Karakose & Kocabas, 2009). Ethical dilemmas are considered to be extremely complex problems that arise when leaders are challenged to achieve more than one objective (Billot, Cranston, & Goddard, 2007).

Ethics: Ethics can be defined as “moral principles that govern a person's behaviour or the conducting of an activity” (Kutsyuruba & Walker, 2013).

Ethical leadership: Ethical leadership involves acting according to moral principles in your day to day decision-making (Blackman, 2018). In simpler terms, it involves choosing the right decision or rather ‘doing the right thing’ (Blackman, 2018).

Ethical decision making: Ethical decision making entails staying true to your moral principles, while also being aware of the complexity of ethical issues and being sensitive to the differing views of your employees’ (Blackman, 2018).

Schools as systems: For this study, a systems view of the school highlights the school as a multi-layered set of systems and the interconnectedness of these systems; embedded within the school as well as within the broader context of the education system and the community (Bayeni, Bhengu & Mchunu, 2020).

1.7 Limitations of the study

With interviews in phenomenology being my only data collection technique, this limited my study to two primary and two high school principals in the Umgungundlovu District. Hence, the phenomenological findings were restricted to the experiences of the individuals involved

in the study. Therefore, the ability to generalise the findings to other principals in other areas will be narrow. This is because the findings of the study may differ in other contexts. These were limitations as there were not other principals in the area that met the required experience.

The impact of the Covid-19 pandemic served as a further limitation as participants were not eager to meet face to face for interview purposes. Interviews were therefore conducted via the zoom meetings platform for those participants that were not willing to meet face to face.

1.8 Overview of the study

This study comprises six chapters.

Chapter one focusses on introducing the study as well as providing background literature related to the study. The chapter is organised under the following key headings: introduction, background and rationale, statement of the problem and purpose of the study, objectives and research questions, definitions of key concepts and finally the limitations of the study.

Chapter two provides a discussion of literature in relation to the study topic. The chapter explores local and international empirical studies, providing key literature in relation to ethical dilemmas that are prevalent within schools, along with the leadership techniques and ethical considerations attributed to dealing with ethical dilemmas.

Chapter three presents the theoretical framework and its relevance to the study.

Chapter four provides the research design and methodology utilised in the study. It covers the methods and tools of data generation, along with the data analysis, issues of trustworthiness and lastly, the ethical considerations of the study.

Chapter five includes the presentation of data generated in the field, the analysis thereof and discussion of the lived leadership experiences of the participants in relation to the study topic, research questions and objectives.

Chapter six provides a reflection on the research process by first providing a summary of the research journey. Secondly, it includes an in-depth discussion of the key learnings and findings. Thirdly, the chapter concludes with a presentation of recommendations emerging from the research process with concluding remarks.

1.9 Chapter summary

This chapter focussed on introducing the study as well as providing background literature related to the study. This was organised under the following key headings: introduction,

background and rationale, statement of the problem and purpose of the study, objectives and research questions, definitions of key concepts and finally the limitations of the study. The following chapter will provide an in-depth review of the literature surrounding the identified phenomenon of the study.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

Principals experience ethical dilemmas on a frequent basis (Cranston, et al., 2004; Erdogan & Sezgin, 2020). The sub-headings below act as the key elements of literature relevant to the study and portray a vast body of literature in relation to the research topic or phenomenon. In short, with principals being the key source of information in this study, it is crucial that they are described first, along with their duties they are required to perform in conjunction with the relevant policies as the leaders of their educational institutions. Ethics is thereafter conceptualised as well as the various components comprising it. Lastly, the key ethical dilemmas that are prevalent within schools both locally and internationally are discussed in-depth underpinning the way in which principals have been accustomed to dealing with ethical dilemmas.

2.2 School principals' responsibilities in dealing with ethical dilemmas

School principals are required to deal with an extensive array of complex tasks and are further required to ensure their effective implementation (Bush, 2008). According to the National Center for Educational Statistics (NCES, 1994), the school principal is viewed as the highest ranked administrator in primary as well as in high schools. It is further stated that principals and other individuals accountable for the total operation of a school are often referred to as school leaders. According to the Department of Basic Education (2019), they describe school principals "as the managers of schools and key delivery agents in the education system, school principals are the most important partners in education". This suggests that principals are the driving force in delivering enhanced educational outcomes which ultimately confirms that the academic performance within a school is directly related to the capabilities and commitment of the principal (Hallinger & Heck, 2010).

Principals, as the head administrators of their institutions, are accountable for the total operation of their schools (NCES, 1994). The NCES (1994) further emphasises that principals are constantly pressurised to ensure the improvement of teaching and learning within their schools. However, their duties extend far more widely than this as they are responsible for ensuring the ongoing positive reform of a school, whereby they are required to ensure the raising of student achievement on a continuous basis.

School reform can be considered somewhat of an arduous task for principals as the literature suggests that they lack the ability to implement a shared vision for the school (NCES, 1994). It has been noted that principals who engage the entire community, as well as the staff in making decisions, allow for a greater commitment to be attained toward school reform initiatives (NCES, 1994). Furthermore, Principals are responsible for refining their schools' communications with parents as well as various stakeholders in the school community. This responsibility entails working with parents when disciplinary issues arise, when students are not succeeding academically, as well as when parents have any other concerning matters (NCES, 1994). If this is not adhered to, this is where ethical dilemmas are formed (Erdogan & Sezgin, 2020). Principals are required to practise a proactive approach in dealing with ethical dilemmas pertaining to parents as well as the immediate community to ensure that issues are resolved as a matter of urgency (Cranston et al., 2006). Furthermore, Cranston et al., (2006), state that principals holding leadership positions are expected to act justly as well as ensure the successful promotion of good, whilst demonstrating moral and professional accountability. In addition to this, principals are accountable for all decisions or actions taking place within their schools.

According to the RSA (2016), there are eight key interdependent areas that constitute the core purpose of the principal in any South African context. According to this policy, the areas of an effectively performing principal include: 1) Leading teaching and learning in the school, 2) Shaping the direction and development of the school, 3) Managing the quality of teaching and learning whilst securing accountability, 4) Developing and empowering oneself and others, 5) Managing the school as an organisation, 6) Working with and for the community, 7) Managing human resources (staff) in the school and finally, 8) Managing and advocating extramural activities. In the South African context, schools face a wide array of circumstances arising out of, amongst others, socio-economic, cultural, and language diversity (RSA, 2016). Therefore, it is crucial that principals are guided by the aforementioned interdependent variables, to fully understand their arduous task as the leaders of their institutions and limit the experiences of ethical dilemmas.

With the school at the micro level, there are a variety of systems that affect decisions taken by a principal (Oyebade, 2000). It is therefore imperative that principals are aware of the needs of the direct community (middle level) in which the school is situated, as well as be familiar with legislative frameworks and policies prescribed by the Department of Basic Education (macro level) to ensure they are able to carry out their duty in the most proficient and ethical manner.

Although these systems may be broader than the school spectrum, it is important that principals have knowledge of them as they are all considered to be interconnected as well as interdependent, ultimately affecting the schooling environment in its entirety .

The next section focusses on the leadership strategies and practices that Principals, as the leaders of schooling institutions, should engage with to ensure effective teaching and learning environments' are created. The constructs of ethical leadership are also discussed.

2.3 Principals and leadership

The primary function of principals is to lead their schools in the most effective and proficient manner, ensuring that a sense of quality within their schools can be attained (Bush, 2008). Furthermore, the leadership practices they display have a major impact on the school's current as well as future performance (Hallinger & Heck, 2010). This may lead to leadership practices that affect the school either positively or negatively. In the past, researchers have attempted to describe a variety of leadership styles simply because there is no one particular style that may be considered universal or rather applicable to all principals (Amanchukwu, Olulube, & Stanley, 2015). Consequently, an effective leader may therefore direct the vision of a school in a manner that supports particular organisational objectives. Whereas in contrast, an ineffective leader may create a schooling environment that detracts from the organisational objectives. According to Amanchukwu et al., (2015), effective leadership arises from deep within an individual and an effective leader is expected to be experimental, an initiator of change, courageous, visionary, flexible, innovative, passionate, imaginative as well as creative. It may seem far-fetched that a single individual should encompass all of the aforementioned characteristics, however for the effective leadership of a schooling organisation, these characteristics are crucial in leading a school towards the attainment of high performance and excellent educational outcomes.

Bush (2008), asserts that traditionally principalship encompassed the role of acting as an administrator or manager, whereas recently the notion of leadership has overtaken these roles as the key element in the effective operation of a school. In addition, principals are viewed as the individuals in charge of their schools' performance, therefore their effective leadership practices in ensuring the positive development of their schools are of high importance as they embark on the journey to realise their schools' mission, vision and organisational objectives.

According to Kutsyuruba and Walker (2013), leadership works in conjunction with the process of change, the vision, values and purpose of the school. In addition, they further emphasise that

management is related to maintenance, implementation or rather technical issues. This statement implies that effective leadership is crucial in developing and enhancing the school's foundations. Furthermore, Johnson (2004), asserts that upon assuming the role of leader, ethical burdens are inevitable and through the consequences involved in having influence over others, ethics is the bedrock of leadership. In other words, this statement implies that it is imperative that leaders lead from a perspective or stance that is predominantly ethical in nature.

A major influence on principals' leadership practices encompassing an ethical stance involves holding genuine regard for learners' best interests (Begley & Stefkovich, 2007). In order to make ethical decisions, principals must constantly ensure they refer to the question, "what is best for my students?" This concept is discussed in the latter part of the literature review; however, in its simplest terms, principals must at all times ensure the decisions they make are beneficial to the learners within their school. In addition to this, there are a host of leadership practices that exist, ultimately allowing principals to ensure they implement decisions that are ethical as well as beneficial to learners.

In attempting to understand the key leadership styles or strategies relevant to South African principals, the (RSA, 2016) (SASP) emphasises five main kinds of leadership relevant to the effective operation of a school. The policy further states that the principal has the overall responsibility for leading and managing the school and is accountable to the employer, the Provincial Head of Department and, through the School Governing Body (SGB), to the school community. The principal is further responsible for leading, managing and evaluating the curriculum. By doing so, the quality of teaching and learning will be ensured. According to the policy document, principals should demonstrate the effective practice of all of the following five leadership types: 1) Strategic leadership, 2) Executive leadership, 3) Instructional leadership, 4) Cultural leadership and 5) Organisational leadership. These five leadership types are briefly summarised below.

Strategic leadership implies principals ensuring that they implement various strategies for the growth and maintenance of that growth in all areas of their schools (RSA, 2016). Executive leadership focusses on building relationships and maintaining them as well as the formation of new ones (RSA, 2016). Instructional leadership requires leaders who are able to achieve the mission and vision of the school (RSA, 2016). Cultural leadership implies the understanding of various cultural and religious beliefs of all stakeholders in a school and to ensure these cultural and religious beliefs are policy driven and aligned to the values of the school

community (RSA, 2016). Organisational leadership entails the school SMT and SGB working toward improving and maintaining a high organisational structure by ensuring budgeting takes place and hiring appropriate individuals for vacancies within the school (RSA, 2016).

In relation to the five main prescribed types of leadership as prescribed by the (RSA, 2016) policy, it is concerning to note that ethical leadership is not considered as a key or rather a prominent type of leadership in creating effective schooling environments. However, as a principal, it is crucial that throughout the practice of these types of leadership, they remain ethical, ultimately taking the constructs of ethical leadership into full consideration (Leppard, 2018). Within this study, ethical leadership is considered a significant role in ensuring the successful implementation or utilisation of these aforementioned leadership practices. Principals may be strategic, executive, instructional, cultural and organisational leaders; however, without infusing an ethical stance through these practices as well as through their decision-making processes, principals' may encounter ethical dilemmas (Leppard, 2018). This is not to say that ethical leaders are not presented with ethical dilemmas, but rather if they embrace and recognise the value of ethical leadership throughout their varying leadership strategies, they will find their task as a principal and dealing with ethical dilemmas, less arduous and daunting (Leppard, 2018).

According to Cheteni and Shindika (2016), ethical leadership has been proven to benefit schooling organisations. Ethical leadership involves acting according to your moral principles within your day to day decision-making (Blackman, 2018). Therefore, ethical leadership entails staying true to your moral principles (while also being aware of the complexity of some ethical issues), being sensitive to the differing views of your employees and managing the conflicts that may arise. Kutsyuruba and Walker (2013) are in agreement in this regard and state that ethical leadership involves the implementation of appropriate conduct through personal and interpersonal interactions, which further includes the promotion of appropriate conduct toward sub-ordinates through a process of clear communication, reinforcement techniques as well as decision-making. Tshaka (2009) emphasises that the combination of ethics and leadership forms the adjective ethical which clarifies the concept of leadership. Cheteni and Shindika (2016) explain that ethical leadership reduces staff absenteeism, poor conduct and raises job satisfaction. In agreement with this, Conrad (2013) asserts that ethical leadership is a crucial element in successful organisational operations, particularly in countries that are plagued by acts of corruption.

In a study conducted by Leppard (2018), a vast array of principals stated that the concept of shared decision making is a key characteristic of ethical leadership in dealing with ethical dilemmas. The study further reveals that principals acknowledged the nature of schools as well as school leadership as primarily ethical. Concurring with this, the findings of a study conducted by Cranston et al., (2006), reveal that school leadership comprises two imperative parts. Firstly, it is about relationships and secondly, it is about the care and development of both students and staff.

Locally, Tshaka (2009) asserts that although South Africa was once divided in the apartheid era, that it still remains divided both economically and racially. Due to these divisions, there are many realities in South Africa and these realities severely impact the approach taken toward ethical leadership (Tshaka, 2009). Cheteni and Shindika (2016) argue that a number of African countries encounter misuse of public funding as well as corruption and that these behaviours are attributed to a lack of ethical leadership.

From the above discussion, it becomes apparent that principals are central to the effective operation of schools and their leadership strategies affect the school either positively or negatively. It is therefore important that principals approach the leadership of their schools from an ethical stance to ensure that their schools will function effectively, ultimately achieving the objectives of the organisation, whilst keeping in mind the interconnected nature of the systems they are surrounded by when making ethical decisions. The next section shares insights around the concept of schools being embedded within other systems.

2.4 Schools embedded in other systems

The importance of understanding schools and school decision making processes from a “systems” perspective is crucial (Leppard, 2018). Ethical dilemmas are not solely prevalent or rather caused by situations taking place only within the boundaries of the school, but rather they also become evident and are caused by elements from broader systems which the school is surrounded by. These overarching systems have a major impact on the effectiveness of the school as well as on the decision making processes of principals in the process of ethical dilemma resolution (Leppard, 2018). In other words, principals need to be aware of how a decision taken in one system of the school may affect other systems of the school (Leppard, 2018).

In the context of this study, the systems approach consists of three systems that are all interconnected as well as interdependent (Leppard, 2018). The first system, situated in the

middle of the other systems is that of the micro system (school) which consists of a variety of other systems within it. These include systems such as the schools finance system, staffing system, school policies, parents, as well as any other system you may find within a school. The second system, surrounding the micro system (school) encompasses that of the middle system which consists of the direct community as well as other direct stakeholders involved with the school. The last system, which is the largest system, surrounding both the micro and middle systems is the macro system, consisting of the Department of Basic Education (DBE) as well as particular legislative frameworks and policies that are the driving force behind educational institutions. Given the interconnected nature of these three systems, it is crucial that principals understand that decisions taken within, for example, a dilemma in the middle system may have an associated future effect on the other two systems it is surrounded by (Leppard, 2018). In this regard, Leppard (2018), defines a system as, “any perceived structure whose elements hang together because they continually affect each other over time”. Therefore, it is crucial that principals attempting to make ethical decisions are aware of how various parts of a system interact and influence one another. Principals need to ensure that when they make decisions, they are aware that any particular decision taken in resolution of an ethical dilemma may affect systems in a variety of other ways (Leppard, 2018). These affects could be positive or negative. The following section explores the conceptualisation of ethics.

2.5 Conceptualising ethics and the implications for principal leadership

According to Kutsyuruba and Walker (2013), ethics can be defined as “moral principles that govern a person's behaviour or the conducting of an activity”. In addition to this, Cranston, et al., (2004) assert that ethics is the way in which people should conduct themselves within their daily dealings in life. These conceptualisations of ethics emphasise the importance of principals living a just life in order for them to create successful teaching and learning environments within their schools. With ethics being viewed in this way, Cranston et al., (2004), further go on to state that ethics involves individuals encountering a variety of choices, where they must make the best decisions that allow them to lead by example within their relationships with other individuals. Consequently, it is argued that when this ethical approach is not followed, it is a pivotal reason why principals may encounter ethical dilemmas. Tshaka (2009) simply defines ethics as being able to differentiate between right and wrong whilst being familiar with the context in which the ethical decision is being made.

According to Cranston, et al., (2006), the exact meaning of ethics in educational terms is a highly contested terrain. They further state that it is often misconceived as misconduct or fraud

or as other types of illegal behaviour. However, they assert that ethics focuses on integrity, honesty, values and professional codes, which every principal should embrace in their personal characteristics. In support of this, Burgh and Freakley (2000), argue that ethics is what we ought to do. In other words, what the correct thing to do is, depending on the situation or decision at hand. Principals are often faced with decisions that have no clear-cut resolution, this is where they ultimately find themselves in an ethical dilemma (Cranston, et al., 2006). In other words, an ethical dilemma arises when principals are confronted by an issue that consists of competing principles, values or beliefs. Similarly, Evers (1992) proclaims that individuals in leadership positions are anticipated to continually do right, endorse good behaviour and act in an honourable and just manner.

Ethics is the way in which we should live our lives through our actions and behaviours (Cranston, et al., 2006). When principals encounter scenarios where there are competing sets of values, beliefs, principles or ideals, this is ultimately where ethical dilemmas resonate and begin their formation. Furthermore, Kutsyuruba and Walker (2013) emphasise the importance of ethics by stating that ethics does not merely provide a guide for quality decision making but rather it encompasses the continual reflection of one's own professional values as well as providing a critical means of thinking with regard to the effective analysis of ethical dilemmas. Following a conceptual understanding of ethics, the next section examines the implications of ethics for school principals.

2.6 Ethics and its implications for principals

Starrat (1991) states that principals, as heads of their institutions have a moral responsibility to ensure they create an ethical environment for effective teaching and learning to take place within their schools. Similarly, Kutsyuruba and Walker (2013) emphasise that “leaders become products of their own creations”. In simpler terms, an ethical school climate promotes leaders’ and followers’ moral development, ultimately allowing them to improve their ability to make and implement tough ethical choices. Individuals, therefore, will become moral agents. Moral agency is considered to be characterised by living an ethical lifestyle, developing positive character traits, following the principles associated with ethics and lastly, caring for others (Kutsyuruba & Walker, 2013).

Regarding the complexities of our society today, various scholars have developed multidimensional frameworks that describe the impact that a diversity of ethical perspectives has on principals (Begley & Stefkovich, 2007). According to Kutsyuruba and Walker (2013),

scholars have responded to these complexities and have conceptualised the approaches or rather ethical considerations of an ethic of justice, ethic of care, ethic of critique, ethic of profession and the ethic of community, ultimately allowing principals to draw together an integrated framework to enhance ethical practice.

Starrat (1994) elucidates that understanding and interpreting each of the aforementioned ethical approaches or themes is key in the wholesome development of a moral person. The ethic of justice focuses on concepts such as rights, law, policies and equality. Loyalty and trust form part of the ethic of care. The ethic of critique's key aim is to awaken our attention to the inequalities within schools as well as society at large. Professional ethics involves ethical considerations that are prevalent in policies such as the "Principals' Professional Code of Ethics". Finally, the ethic of community involves all stakeholders, namely, parents, learners and other community members pursuing the moral purposes associated with effective teaching and learning within schools (Kutsyuruba & Walker, 2013).

Ethical considerations are considered as being key elements in determining an ethical climate within a school (Kutsyuruba & Walker, 2013). In accordance with these considerations, principals, through their decision making processes, need to ensure they make effective judgements in making their decisions. The following section sheds light on the concept of ethical judgement and further expands on the various ethical considerations that principals should consider.

2.7 Ethical judgement and considerations

Ethical judgement is considered to be an important factor in making ethical decisions. Ethical judgement involves making choices or rather decisions based on a value based belief that a certain decision is the most appropriate ethical alternative (Berkovich, Eyal, & Schwartz, 2011). In the same study, it was noted that ethical judgement begins with a process of elimination, where one ethical consideration is chosen above the rest. Kutsyuruba and Walker (2013) assert that ethical considerations broaden and supplement the borders of negotiation for school principals through admiration, persistence, responsibilities and intervention on behalf of students and other interested parties or stakeholders.

It is further noted within the same study that researchers have produced and enhanced multidimensional frameworks' that display the full impact of a host of ethical perspectives on school principals (Kutsyuruba & Walker, 2013). Furthermore, as a response to the ethical challenges which principals face, an integrated framework comprising ethical considerations

may be developed by principals to assist them in ensuring ethical practice is achieved. Starrat (1994) states that the approaches encompassing such an integrated framework consist of the ethic of justice, ethic of care, ethic of critique, ethic of profession, and ethic of community.

The ethic of justice covers individuals' rights, law, related policies as well as the concept of equality and fairness (Kutsyuruba & Walker, 2013). Karadag and Tekel (2017), assert that the ethic of justice strives to answer three pertinent questions: 1) Does a specific rule, law or right exist in response to an ethical dilemma? 2) Why is this right or rule correct in terms of a specific ethical dilemma? 3) How should this right or rule be achieved?

The ethic of care is vital in ensuring the good of human beings within the schooling organisation. Here, the focus is on loyalty, trust and individual empowerment (Kutsyuruba & Walker, 2013). Sharing similar sentiments, Karadag and Tekel (2017) state that the ethic of care presents three pertinent questions that ethical leaders need to ask themselves when tasked with an ethical dilemma. These include, 1) Who will benefit from my decision? 2) Who will be affected by my decision? 3) What long-term effects exist in relation to my decision? In respect of these questions it can be further noted that within this consideration, principals must take into account the effect that their decisions may have on others.

Kutsyuruba and Walker (2013), describe the ethic of critique as an autopsy of modifications, communal righteousness and human pride, and the morality of social and political confrontation intended at wakening our devotion to the injustices established in schools and in the general public. Karadag and Tekel (2017) agree with this and state that the critiquing of ethics is essential in relation to the difficulties that educators face, such as race, gender and class. These authors further assert that the following four questions describe the perspective which the ethic of critique seeks to answer. 1) Who determines the rules, laws and specific policies? 2) Who gains an advantage from these specified rules? 3) Who is accountable? 4) Which individuals' voices are being heard or not heard?

In terms of the ethic of community, Kutsyuruba and Walker (2013), describe it as the collective engagement of all stakeholders within a school to reach the attainment of moral schooling. This consideration is crucial as the entire community within which a school is surrounded ultimately has an impact on the effective teaching and learning environment created within the school.

The findings of Kutsyuruba and Walker's (2013) study displays the need for a balance between these ethical considerations. It was discovered that principals balanced specific legal

requirements (ethic of justice), the requirements of all stakeholders (ethic of caring), the understanding of the effects their decisions may have on all stakeholders (ethic of critique), the joint venture and democratic stance in terms of stakeholder involvement (ethic of community) as well as ensuring that high standards are implemented within the profession (best interests of students). According to Berkovich, et al., (2011), it is essential that principals use these ethical considerations simultaneously. They further state that ethical considerations assist in school principals' decision-making processes. The following section sheds light on the concept of ethical decision making.

2.8 Ethical decision making

Principals are faced with an ethical dilemma when they are confronted with more than one ethically correct alternative (Boru, 2020). School leaders aim to make ethical decisions within the context of educational settings (Kutsyuruba & Walker, 2013). These authors go on to state that the landscape of ethical decision-making by educational leaders as moral mediators has come to be a topic of amplified importance within the domain of educational administration. This statement implies that principals' occupations have become increasingly complex and this may perhaps be due to the complex nature of ethical dilemmas becoming prevalent within schools. Therefore, attention is required for principals to ensure they make ethical decisions when confronted with ethically challenging circumstances.

A host of researchers contend that educational leaders or principals are duty-bound to always consider using learners' best interest as the core driver of their decision-making processes (Begley & Stefkovich, 2007). Learners are at the heart of educational institutions and without them, a school would merely be a set of walls and paper. Therefore, principals' decision-making processes should align with the best interests of its learners, ensuring that an effective teaching and learning environment is fashioned. In agreement, Begley and Stefkovich (2007) proposed a model for guiding educational leaders in making decisions based on learners' best interests. This model consists of three broad elements, namely, rights, responsibilities and respect.

Principals frequently state that their actions or decisions are justified as being in the learners' best interests (Begley & Stefkovich, 2007). However, it was noted that the best interests of learners were more organisational or policy related rather than having a genuine regard for learner well-being. A prime example of this may be policies such as zero tolerance policies. According to Begley and Stefkovich (2007), genuine regard for the best interests of learners

comes to light as an extensive influence on principals' leadership practices in two ways. A body of research indicates that principals' valuation processes are deeply concerned with lucid consequentialist orientations grounded on a concern for the well-being of learners. Furthermore, research on how principals retort when faced with ethical dilemmas suggests that the best interests of learners figures glaringly as a meta-organiser and decisive influence on these principals' decision making.

In a study conducted by Kutsyuruba and Walker (2013), the process of ethical decision making, as characterised by the participants, involved making the right decision that would ultimately benefit the situation the most. It was discovered that the participant principals reflected on four key questions: A) Will the decision I make be the correct one? B) Did I utilise time effectively and not rush making the best decision? C) What if my decision is wrong? D) What if my decision makes things worse? These questions play a pivotal role in evaluating as well as assisting in the resolution of ethical dilemmas. In the same study, the researchers discovered that participants felt pressurised to make popular decisions rather than fact-based decisions. However, it was noted that as long as the decisions were taken by following the principle of keeping the best interest of the learners in mind, then it was permanently considered as being an ethical decision.

According to Leppard (2018), learning and collaboration should be considered as an ethic itself as it is an essential factor in the practice of ethical leadership. In the same study, it was noted that the principals interviewed all agreed that shared decision-making, also known as bottom-up decision making is a key characteristic of ethical leadership. Therefore, this suggests that all stakeholders within a school context should be consulted before a decision is made regarding issues that affect them. This allows for an ethical decision to be made with consideration for all stakeholders' best interests being kept at heart. Kutsyuruba and Walker (2013), were in agreement with this and stated that the participants involved in their study believed that ethical decisions should not only be focussed on learners but also on all stakeholders linked to the school. Furthermore, many participants in the study pointed out that ethical decisions are fashioned when the best interest of all affected individuals is considered (Kutsyuruba & Walker, 2013). Furthermore, principals interviewed in the same study characterised leadership as a practice rather than a role. It is critical that principals practice ethical leadership within their schools to ensure organisational objectives are attained effectively (Leppard, 2018).

Ethical practices such as professionalism, democracy, care, inclusion, due process, justice and social justice are key elements in principals' personal or professional codes of ethics and leadership (Gardiner & Tenuto, 2015). Principals are required to ensure the effective implementation of these practices in order to make decisions ethically. Similarly, Karakose and Kocabas (2009), list five key principles in making ethical decisions. These are: Respecting autonomy, doing no harm, being just, benefitting others and being faithful. It is assumed that in order to make ethical decisions, it is essential that principals adopt all of these practices as well as the principles described by the two authors.

The findings of a study conducted by Leppard (2018), indicate that with schools being considered as complex, social systems, ethical choices or decisions are continuously associated with ethical dilemmas. This in turn illustrates the direct relationship between schools as complex social systems in harmony with ethical decision-making. In agreement with this, Karakose and Kocabas (2009) assert that it is vital that school principals receive specialised training regarding ethical decision-making. It was further noted that schools and tertiary institutions should provide this essential training and assist in providing support structures for school principals.

The following section illustrates the various ethical dilemmas prevalent in schools both locally and internationally.

2.9 Ethical dilemmas in schools

Ethical dilemmas are situations that are prevalent in all schools worldwide, and these dilemmas can be sparked from within the micro system (school), the middle system (community), the macro system (Department of Basic Education, legislative frameworks' and policies) and ultimately give rise to constant, daily challenges for school principals (Erdogan & Sezgin, 2020; Fullan, 1993; Hodgkinson, 1991; Rebore, 2001; Sergiovanni, 1992; Sockett, 1993; Starrat, 1991; Strike & Ternasky, 1993).

Ethical dilemmas are considered extremely complex problems that arise when leaders are challenged to achieve more than one objective (Billot et al., 2007). Cranston, et al., (2004), state that an ethical dilemma arises from a situation that necessitates a choice being made among competing sets of principles, values, beliefs or ideals. It was further noted that ethical dilemmas are not situations in which a decision can be made between a right and a wrong alternative, but rather that they occur when principals are faced with a right versus right scenario or a wrong versus wrong scenario. Principals therefore need to take into account

various ethical considerations in order to make the right ethical choices (Kutsyuruba & Walker, 2013).

Ethical dilemmas are ‘the bread and butter of educational leaders lives (Cranston et al., 2006). In many cases, when a dilemma occurs, people in leadership positions avoid dealing with the matter. However, if leaders are to benefit the organisation in its entirety, it is essential that they acknowledge and confront these dilemmas, ultimately finding resolution (Cranston et al., 2006).. In a schooling context, principals are the ones accountable for their institutions (RSA, 2016). It was further noted that if ethical dilemmas are not dealt with as soon as they are birthed, they can cause a dysfunctional schooling environment plagued by ethical dilemmas.

Gardiner and Tenuto (2015) classified a specific type of ethical dilemma as being a leadership dilemma. They described this as a situation where principals are required to utilise their leadership and decision-making skills, whilst being hesitant about what exact frameworks should be applied in attempting to resolve the ethical dilemma. In addition to this, Cardno (2007) states that principals must ensure that their focus is based on improving learners' achievements. Worldwide, criteria-based restructurings have amplified the notch of liability for principals (Billot et al., 2007). This is highly relatable to any schooling organisation's main goal, which is creating and implementing an effective ‘teaching and learning’ environment. This is where a particular type of dilemma occurs and the organisational needs, as well as individuals’ needs are in conflict. Cardno (2007) explains this type of dilemma as a leadership dilemma. This kind of dilemma involves leadership at all levels of the school (from classrooms and the entire institution) as they are the influencers of the learning and teaching environment (Billot et al., 2007). Furthermore, within leadership dilemmas tensions arise between the organisational leader (principal) where he/she is involved directly as well as the individuals tangled in the dilemma. This then creates an organisational dilemma within the school. Therefore, an organisational dilemma involves the leader indirectly, mediating through distributive leadership, where all parties work towards a long-term solution (Billot et al., 2007).

In a study conducted by Styron (2011), titled, ‘Critical Issues Facing School Principals’, the ethical dilemmas principals faced included accountability, discipline, external support, funding, safety, staffing, and time. Similarly, the study mentions that the most critical dilemma experienced by principals was that of accountability. Data from another study conducted by Kutsyuruba and Walker (2013) reveals that the most frequent ethical dilemmas recorded from the participants’ schools arose between school administrators and professional staff. These

principals reported ethical dilemmas and the need to mediate professional conflicts. These ethical dilemmas included professional misconduct, teaching loads, communication issues, dishonesty, the abuse of school property and personal conflicts.

Cranston, et al., (2004), recorded various dilemmas that became prevalent in the literature. They stated that common ethical dilemmas included the following: having to decide whether to provide professional development for underperforming staff members or to dismiss them. Dealing with tensions that arise when teachers are promoted from one position to another and competing accountabilities where teachers are required to provide a service to students and the department for providing financial and specific performance objectives that are essential.

In a later study conducted by Cranston, et al., (2006), they mention that Berry and Dempster (2003), were able to categorise ethical dilemmas into four key areas. These areas included learners, staff, financial matters, resources available as well as inputs from the external environment. The most pertinent learner-centred ethical dilemmas were due to learners being harassed, intimidated and bullied by other learners. In terms of staff, principals explained that the monitoring of staff performance created ethical dilemmas. Regarding financial matters, resources and the external environment, pertinent ethical dilemmas arose when issues pertaining to change were implemented, specifically when the changes clashed with the culture of the school or around particular resourcing strategies.

Karadag and Tekel (2017), reveal more current ethical dilemmas that are prevalent in schools. Evidently in their study, both primary and high school principals experienced ethical dilemmas pertaining to decision-making. An example provided from the study is as follows: “A teacher wants a day off on the schedule. But I can’t do it, and it doesn’t fit. I tell them I can’t. Then the teacher goes and gets someone from the provincial union to call me. After they call me, this time I fix the schedule and redo it for that teacher. I go against my own word.” In addition to this, the majority of ethical dilemmas that school principals experienced through pressure from senior management on deciding something resulted in the principals obeying their superiors’ orders. The path that school principals follow when pressured by senior management is to explain the event in detail and try to convince them. Principals generally obey their superiors’ orders when they fail to convince them. However, the thing that disturbs principals is when they have to obey the orders of senior management while it goes against a promise they have made to the parents, students, or teachers (Karadag & Tekel, 2017). Karadag and Tekel (2017)

further discovered that principals faced ethical dilemmas relating to the use of corporal punishment by teachers and also to issues of staff dress codes.

A study conducted by Styron (2011), reveals a disturbing trend with respect to school safety. In his study, accountability was noted as one of the most pertinent issue experienced by principals while school safety was considered the least critical. The researcher in the study noted that the issues arising from accountability might have been why principals seemed to lack the ability to address issues pertaining to school safety, which is currently an issue prevalent in schools throughout the world. Issues of school safety include bullying, ill-discipline, violent acts, and the possession of dangerous weapons. Concurring with this, Kutsyuruba and Walker (2013) noted that they received a poor response rate from principals when conducting a similar study. This may support the disturbing trend revealed in Styron's (2011) study, that principals may be inundated with dilemmas of accountability, revealing that they have limited time to respond to studies pertaining to the issues they are facing. This emphasises the compacted, complex life of principals and the lack of time available for their professional, ethical development as school leaders.

With emphasis on a more local context, there are a variety of ethical dilemmas that are more common in South African schooling organisations (Naidoo, 2015). Although ethical dilemmas are prevalent throughout the world, where many are similar, Naidoo (2015) emphasises five various sources of ethical dilemmas relevant to South African schools.

First, the variance between the ethic of care and formal regulations. An example of this may include a teacher leaving school without permission from senior management. Eventually the situation is discovered and a dilemma is formed (Naidoo, 2015). Secondly, is the friction between the ethic of justice and school norms. This dilemma could involve a situation where a school provides scholarships to learners who are academically inclined whereas others feel the scholarship should be open to learners with strong sporting abilities as well (Naidoo, 2015). Thirdly, divergence in the ethic of confidentiality and school rules may create an ethical dilemma. An example of this may include a learner reporting misconduct, while those in leadership positions need to choose whether to follow the school rules as well as keeping the confidence of the learner in mind (Naidoo, 2015). Fourthly, is the conflict between the ethic of loyalty toward colleagues and that of school regulations. An exemplar of this may be a teacher witnessing a colleague using corporal punishment methods and considering whether to report the colleague contravening the law or remaining loyal to the colleague and not reporting the

offence (Naidoo, 2015). Fifthly, the source may include conflicting ideals between family agendas and academic achievements. Here an example may be that a learner is not coping with mathematics and is advised by the school to change his/her subject package to mathematical literacy. The parents, however, are adamant that their child remains in the mathematics class and the school must ensure this even though it is clear that the learner is not coping adequately (Naidoo, 2015).

It is evident that there are a variety of ethical dilemmas that exist both locally as well as internationally. However, it can be noted that there are many cases that are similar throughout the world. Throughout the reviewing of literature on prevalent ethical dilemmas in schools, it became evident that principals were mainly faced with ethical dilemmas aligned to learners, the accountability of staff, staff promotions, school safety issues as well as other resource issues. The following section deals with how the literature describes principals' strategies in dealing with ethical dilemmas.

2.10 Dealing with ethical dilemmas in schools

Building on local and international literature on the lived experiences of ethical dilemmas in schools and related practical examples of ethical dilemmas, this section extends the discussion to literature that frames further ways in which principals can effectively deal with ethical dilemmas. According to Boru (2020) dealing with ethical dilemmas always results in an attempt to do the right thing. Furthermore, these ethical dilemmas occur due to competing values as well as conflicting interests (Boru, 2020). Dealing with ethical dilemmas and resolving them constitutes a constant, daily practice for principals (Cranston, et al., 2004). This section provides various strategies and models that the literature suggests principals have followed to deal effectively with ethical dilemmas.

Cranston, et al., (2004) provide strategies to enhance the framework of ethics within schools. They state that an ethics audit within the following areas of a school are crucial: debating and discussing the values and functions prescribed by the school within the institution, whilst also taking the community's input into consideration; the implementation as well as constant development of a code of ethics for the school and the constant implementation of adequate training for staff (Preston & Samford, 2004). In addition, Duignan (2004), proposes authentic leadership and mentoring whereby a team approach within the school can be adopted, ultimately creating an essential body of leaders that can resolve ethical dilemmas effectively. Furthermore, Cranston, et al., (2004) assert that effective developmental opportunities during

which school leaders can learn how to effectively deal with ethical dilemmas is crucial as this is considered likely to pave the way forward for creating effective schooling organisations.

Cranston, et al., (2004), assert that it is important that principals utilise a model (figure 1 in theoretical framework) to visualise where ethical dilemmas arise, as well as understand how they affect other systems of which they are comprised.

Following a similar approach to Cranston, et al., (2004) model, Karadag and Tekel (2017) state that there are five pertinent questions that exist, that educational leaders need to ask themselves when confronted by, and dealing with ethical dilemmas. These include, 1) What is the most beneficial decision for learners? 2) What are the personal and professional codes of ethics which educational leaders (principals) must abide by? 3) Which of these ethical codes should be taken into consideration when making a decision? 4) How would society feel about the decision? 5) What would be the most suitable way to respond to the ethical dilemma? These questions reflect the most current consideration of factors pertinent to the resolution of ethical dilemmas in schools that are recorded in the literature. However, in attempting to differentiate between the two approaches, it is evident that both current and older literature suggest similar ways of dealing with ethical dilemmas. In addition, current or more recent literature differs from past literature in the sense that, according to the questions proposed by Karadag and Tekel (2017), an ethical code of consideration is crucial in the successful management of ethical dilemmas.

Cranston, et al., (2004), assert that their model, when utilised in dealing with ethical dilemmas, is a crucial framework for principals, displaying a process involved in identifying and resolving ethical dilemmas. In agreement with this, Karadag and Tekel (2017), further state that principals should be accustomed to and have sound knowledge of specific policies, laws and legislation. Furthermore, they mention that it is crucial to ensure that justice within the school is implemented, whilst considering all stakeholders needs when aligned to the vision and mission of the school. An example here may be that when a specific vacancy becomes available within a school, all staff are notified of the position and are accorded equal opportunities to apply for the vacancy.

It is important to note that past literature and current literature are in agreement with the considerations and processes that principals should undertake when attempting to deal with ethical dilemmas in an ethical manner. It is evident that principals lead and live complex lives and it is important that they, as the leaders of their schools, work within a framework that assists

them in being able to identify from within which systems ethical dilemmas may arise, whilst further keeping in mind the way in which a decision could potentially affect other systems comprising the school and its context.

The literature further suggests that in order to deal with ethical dilemmas competently, commendably and in an ethical manner, principals need to ensure that they consult various individuals if they are not fully informed about a specific ethical dilemma. They are also required to ensure that they have sound knowledge of specified policies, laws and legislation pertaining to specific ethical dilemmas. It should be noted that principals need to embrace all of the above to effectively deal with ethical dilemmas. This will ultimately create a schooling environment that is able to promote a profound level of excellence. A key element in successfully dealing with ethical dilemmas is constantly keeping the best interest of students, as well as all other stakeholders in mind. The next section discusses the importance of keeping the best interests of students in mind.

2.11 The best interests of students/learners and moral agency

Throughout the review of the literature, there has been a constant factor that has characterised research that has been conducted around the phenomenon of ethical dilemmas in schools and the way in which principals successfully deal with such dilemmas (Cranston, et al., 2006; Karadag & Tekel, 2017; Karakose & Kocabas, 2009; Kutsyuruba & Walker, 2013). Throughout the course of this literature review, the concept of keeping the best interests of students or learners in mind when attempting to make ethical decisions has been consistent. This section strives to emphasise the importance of this element for principals as they embark on resolving ethical dilemmas within their schools.

Kutsyuruba and Walker (2013), emphasise the importance of leaders (principals) being moral agents, morally accountable individuals who ensure contract accountability within their schools. According to these authors, moral agency implies a leader acquiring the ability to make morally bound decisions by understanding the differences between right and wrong variables. For example, a principal allowing learners to grow beards because of their culture might be considered the right thing to do, whereas in contrast, not allowing these learners their cultural right could cause further ethical dilemmas for the principal. Kutsyuruba and Walker (2013) describe a moral agent as being an individual who lives in an ethical manner, develops his/her moral character through following the guiding principles associated with ethics. Therefore, moral agency is a crucial factor in making ethical decisions that will cause no harm

to any stakeholder within a schooling organisation (Kutsyuruba & Walker, 2013). Starrat (1991), is in agreement with this and asserts that principals must be morally responsible individuals.

According to Cranston, et al., (2004), being morally accountable implies that principals are concerned with wanting the best for students or learners. The concept of professional accountability suggests that principals are required to ensure the profession's standards of ethics at large are maintained. Fullan and Hargreaves (2004), are in agreement with this and state that the two accountabilities mentioned emphasise that educational leadership is fundamentally based on having a moral purpose. These authors further described the concept of contractual accountability. Contractual accountability involves the accountability of the principal to the government or system within which the school operates (macro system) (Cranston, et al., 2004). Literature further suggests that when contractual accountability is in competition with moral or professional accountabilities, there is a far greater chance of an ethical dilemma being created (Cranston, et al., 2004). Berkovich, et al., (2011), state that school principals are required to act in a moral manner, implement a morally just school climate, whilst dealing with extremely complex ethical dilemmas within environments that are in a state of constant change. Furthermore, and in support of this view, Karakose and Kocabas (2009), state that although principals may engage themselves with the notions of moral responsibility and ethical standards, if these notions are not translated into practice, they are considered meaningless.

In concluding this section, principals need to ensure that they are morally bound to all of the aforementioned accountabilities to ultimately ensure that a value-based schooling environment is created. Additionally, without schools adopting a value-based system, it is evident that they will at some point become dysfunctional. This section further emphasises the importance of principals taking the concerns of others into consideration when making morally ethical decisions. The next section draws attention to the lack of training for principals in dealing with ethical dilemmas.

2.12 Lack of training, development and support in dealing with ethical dilemmas

The literature suggests that a lack of training with respect to dealing with ethical dilemmas is prevalent and it is evident that many principals are not adequately trained to deal with the ethical dilemmas they are faced with on a daily basis (Cranston, et al., 2006; Karadag & Tekel, 2017; Karakose & Kocabas, 2009; Kutsyuruba & Walker, 2013; Mollo, 2010). Cranston, et al., (2006), assert that with schools being such complex organisations, where there are constantly

competing sets of principles, beliefs and ideals, specific attention must be paid toward the area of ethics and ethical dilemmas. Interestingly, the authors provide the following claim based on the findings of their study. Their study indicates that 68% of principals who formed part of their sample had received no development or access to programmes that they could attend, focusing on ethical decision-making or the resolution of ethical dilemmas. This finding is considered significant because dealing with ethical dilemmas and resolving them in an effective manner is essentially the ‘bread and butter’ of principals’ lives.

In addition to this, fairly recent literature still shows that principals are not receiving adequate training with regards to ethical decision-making and the effective resolution of ethical dilemmas (Mollo, 2010). Mollo (2010), asserts that within the South Africa context, where corruption is rife, there are criteria, measures and institutions that must be formed, ultimately focussing on preserving integrity and the promotion of ethical principles. The trend of a lack of training in South African schools is considered highly concerning as principals are constantly faced with ethical dilemmas (Mollo, 2010).

2.13 Chapter summary

This chapter served to review the literature around which the study is based. An array of literature was consulted, beginning with the responsibilities and duties of principals as well as the specific leadership practices that they are required to abide by. Thereafter, the concept of ethics was discussed in-depth, followed by the key ethical dilemmas that are prevalent within schools both locally and internationally. These were discussed along with associated literature underpinning the way in which principals have been accustomed to dealing with ethical dilemmas. The next chapter sheds light on the theoretical framework utilised in the study.

CHAPTER 3

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

3.1 Introduction

Depending on the research type, some theoretical lenses through which research is viewed have an effect on how empirical data is retrieved and analysed, whereas some research also strives to draw on a variety of concepts (Bertram & Christiansen, 2014). The theoretical lens through which this research was viewed played a crucial role in obtaining a range of lived leadership experiences.

3.2 Systems theory / Systems thinking

The theoretical lens through which this study is framed is that of ‘Systems theory’ and ‘Systems thinking’ and is complemented by the model for conceptualising ethical dilemmas created by Cranston, et al., 2004., p.7. The concept of “Systems theory” was first used in the 1940’s by Ludwig von Bertalanffy and then extended by Ross Ashby in 1964 (Leppard, 2018). In 1968, Von Bertalanffy was attempting to create a reaction against reductionism as well as revive the unity of science (Leppard, 2018). Therefore, Von Bertalanffy is considered to be the originator as well as principal author of Systems’ Theory. Systems thinking underpinned systems theory as the lens through which this research is viewed.

3.3 Application of Systems theory and Systems thinking to the research

The key aim of this research is to apply the tenets of systems theory and systems thinking, complemented by Cranston, et al’s., (2004) model for conceptualising ethical dilemmas. Here an interpretation is made between relationships of how principals understand the schooling environment along with the various systems that encompass it (micro, middle and macro) in relation to how they react and respond to real ethical dilemmas, the ethical principles they follow and their leadership practice in terms of the ethical dilemmas’ they have experienced as leaders of their schools.

According to Leppard (2018), systems theory has developed immensely over the years. It can be further noted that systems thinking is the way in which one understands how different parts of a system or organisation interact with and influence one another. Consequently, it is therefore critical that principals are aware of all of the various systems they are surrounded by as the leaders or visionaries in their educational institutions, particularly when attempting to make ethical decisions. A decision taken today may have a significant effect on other systems

within or surrounding the school in the long run. In support of this, Leppard (2018), discovered that principals did not characterise a school as being a system, however, they did describe the thinking and behaviour which was consistent with Sterman's (1994), definition of systems thinking. Sterman (1994) described systems thinking in the following manner: it is, 'the ability to see the world as a complex system, to understand how everything is connected to everything else in which you can't do just one thing because all the parts interact with each other' (Sterman, 1994, p. 291).

Systems thinking requires principals to view systems in isolation (Leppard, 2018). This allows principals to have a more open view of the systems they are surrounded by. It enables them to discover to what extent their decisions may affect other systems or areas internally (micro system) and externally (middle and macro systems). Ethical considerations made by a principal and systems theory/thinking go hand in hand (Leppard, 2018).

A system is 'any perceived structure whose elements hang together because they continually affect each other over time' (Leppard, 2018). In line with this, Betts (1992) states that a system is a set of elements that function as a whole to achieve a common purpose. For the purpose of this research, a school therefore consists of a variety of systems that have an effect on it. These can ultimately be negative or positive effects. Therefore, it is crucial that systems within a school function in a positive manner in order to attain the principle goal of a school, which is to construct and maintain an effective teaching and learning environment. Schools ultimately provide a service to the local community and principals are the individuals who are accountable for the effective service delivery of education at their schools (Leppard, 2018).

A subsystem is a component of a larger system. Occasionally, the larger system is referred to as a supra-system (macro system) when it is talked about in relation to its subsystems. The school as a micro system is embedded within middle and macro systems, ultimately affecting principals' decision-making, which may lead to ethical dilemmas (Betts, 1992). Schools are affected by all of these systems. Therefore, the key aim is to view these systems as the lens through which the study was conducted as it is imperative that principals keep in mind the vast array of systems they are surrounded by when attempting to make ethical decisions.

According to Oyebade (2000), a system means, "complexes of elements standing in interaction" comprising of either open or closed systems. The closed system as the name suggests, neither takes in nor emits matter. In contrast, an open system comprises a continuous input and output of both energy and matter. Oyebade (2000), further states that all systems

except the smallest have subsystems and all but the largest have supra systems, which are their environment. In light of this, schools are classified as open systems and open systems theory states that any organisation is dependent on its environment. An organisation (a school in this context) imports various forms of energy from the environment and transforms that energy into other forms.

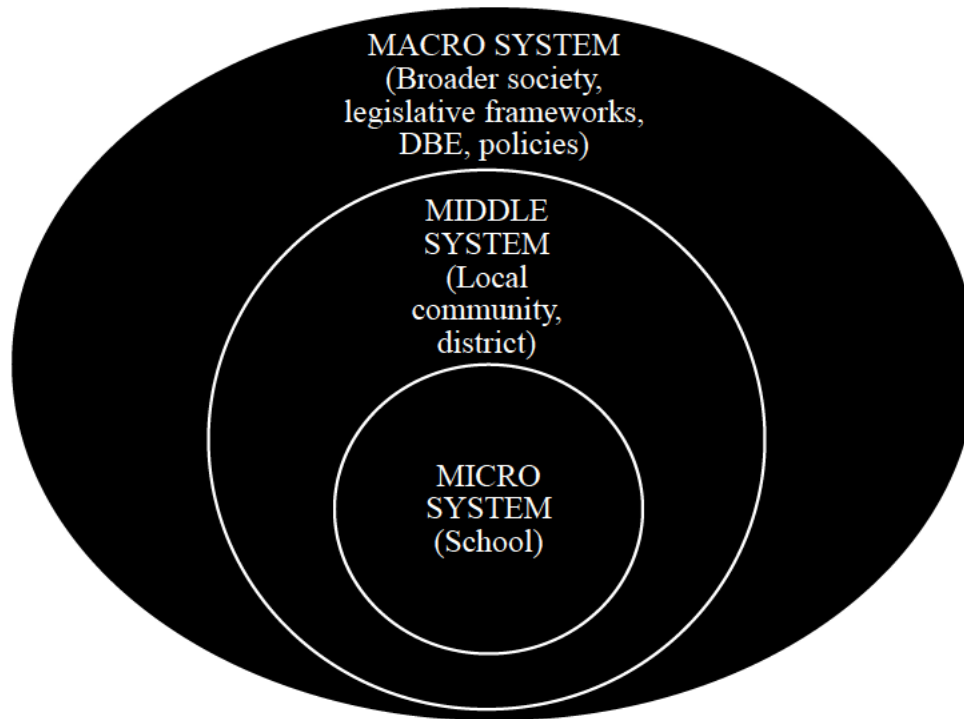
Keeping in mind the critical aspect of understanding how the various levels or systems within a school interact with one another, during this stage the organisation or school provides a service (Oyebade, 2000). Something is done to the input. For instance, learners are taught subject material. The output is then exported (with value added) to the environment, ultimately providing benefit to the environment as a whole. This reflects another example of how systems can influence and affect one another. Betts (1992) concurs and further states that schools are social systems and are regarded as open systems. Schools therefore are living systems and without living people they are merely concrete and paper. As living systems, they are in a constant process of interaction with their communities and other institutions. The school system is seen as a living and dynamic organisation, and though a complete system on its own, yet it is a subsystem of the nation's educational system.

Oyebade (2000), examines education as a process that involves human resources (learners, teachers, and ground staff), material resources (buildings, equipment), financial resources, constraints (law, requirements of policies, values, and goals) as well as existing knowledge in the society as the five forms of input. The aforementioned involvements are considered subsystems within the micro system and these are all interconnected and interdependent within the micro system.

For the purpose of this study, the school is depicted as a micro system and is therefore influenced by the middle and macro systems and vice versa. The macro system refers to prescribed policies, legislative frameworks, the Department of Basic Education (DBE) as well as the broader society within which the school is situated. In terms of the middle system, it encompasses the local district as well as the direct community within which the school is situated. The microsystem, therefore, consists of the school. Schools are thus viewed as embedded within other systems and these systems are all interconnected and interdependent. Principals, or rather participants interviewed during the process of data generation were required to consider and reflect on all of these systems when discussing and sharing their lived leadership experiences in dealing with ethical dilemmas. Provided below is a visual

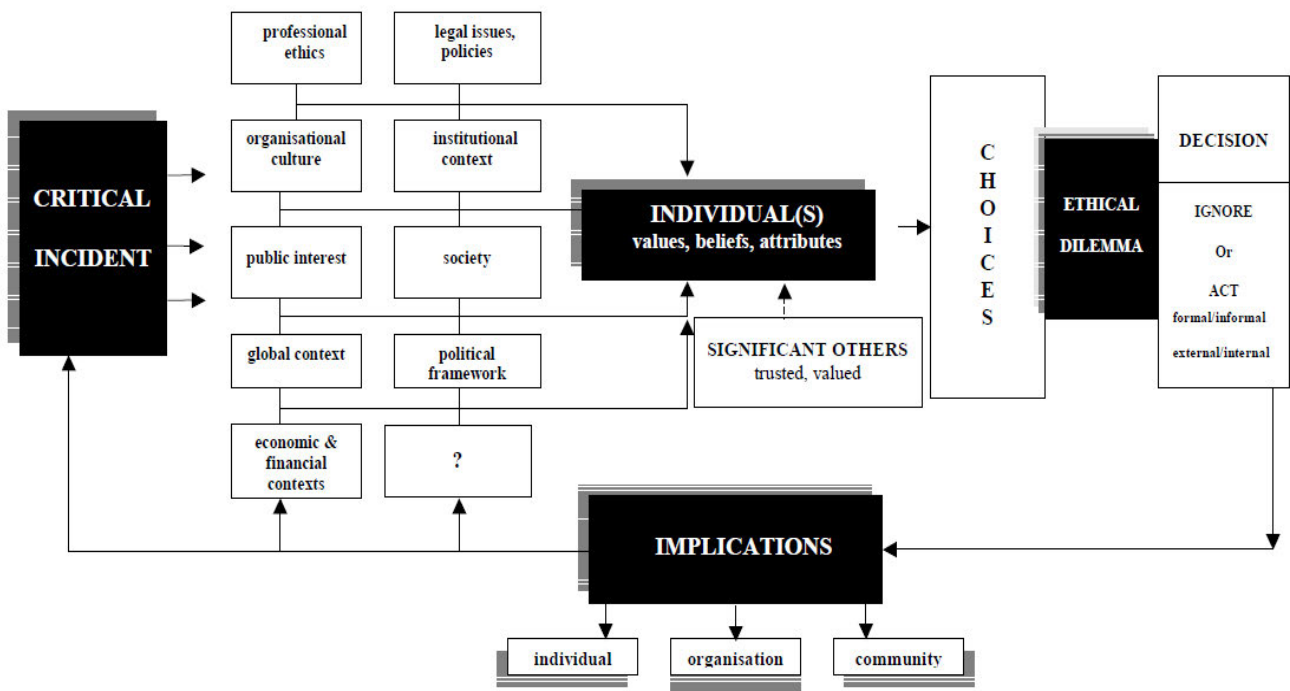
representation of how the theoretical framework was utilised in the study, in order to understand the complexities of the phenomenon fully.

Figure 1: Schools embedded in other systems (interconnectedness and interdependence)



With ethical dilemmas being an extremely broad concept, comprising a host of issues, it was important that the lens through which this research was viewed, was compacted into various systems which allowed interviewed principals to make sense of and interpret the data in an efficient manner. In support of this, Leppard (2018), states that literature focussed on school leadership neglects the significance of school system characteristics as factors that impose upon decision-making processes, thinking and organisational culture in educational institutions. In order to complement the theoretical framework of systems theory, Cranston, et al., (2004, p.7), provide a model for conceptualising ethical dilemmas.

3.4 Figure 2: A model for conceptualising ethical dilemmas (Cranston, et al., 2004, p.7)



The model provided above illustrates the decision making processes as well as the effects they have on principals who face ethical dilemmas. It further identifies the relationships that exist between the individual, school (organisation) and the community. Interestingly, and in complementing the tenets of systems theory and systems thinking it reveals the interconnected nature of all the various systems that may have serious implications for the resolution of an ethical dilemma if they are not considered (Cranston, et al., 2004). Therefore, the model is a useful framework to fully understand the effect a decision may have in the resolution of an ethical dilemma and provide insight into whether it will affect the community (middle system) directly or indirectly.

The model consists of five main parts. According to Cranston, et al., (2004), there is a clear interdependence and interconnectedness amongst the five components. They further assert that ethical dilemmas do not follow patterns that are considered linear, but rather the decision-making process in resolving an ethical dilemma involves re-looking at, and reviewing the various components, using their proposed model, and the way in which they influence one another.

What follows is a discussion of the various parts of the model as described by Cranston, et al., (2004). The model is initiated by the ‘critical incident’ which causes or rather brings to light the ethical dilemma. Secondly, the focus moves to the competing forces that may have an

impact on the ethical dilemma. These consist of nine competing forces, namely: professional ethics, organisational culture, public interest, global context, economic and financial context, legal issues, instructional context, society and the political framework. Interestingly, as described by the developers of the model, the un-named force (?) is an exemplar of a force that is not yet recognised, but that may become evident in the future. This emphasises the constant fluidity of thinking that a principal is required to engage in.

The third section of the model shows the challenges encountered whilst attempting to resolve ethical dilemmas. It is here that individuals' values and beliefs are exposed, reflecting their cultural as well as religious beliefs (Cranston, et al., 2004). Furthermore, this section also forms part of the consultation process of specific individuals. These consultations may include individuals who are directly involved in the ethical dilemma as well as outside individuals such as lawyers who are able to provide professional knowledge on a matter, assisting in the resolution of the ethical dilemma.

The fourth section of the model consists of the choices or decisions that are made from amongst competing sets of values, beliefs or ideals (Cranston, et al., 2004). Here, the decision may be to ignore the dilemma or suggest alternative ways to deal with the matter at hand. As mentioned previously, ensuring the ethical dilemma is dealt with in an ethical manner is crucial. If a principal decides to continuously ignore a matter or matters, it may foster a dysfunctional teaching and learning environment. Lastly, non-action or taking action when resolving the ethical dilemma may have serious consequences for the principal, the school and the community, depending on how exactly the matter is resolved (Cranston, et al., 2004). Consequently, principals must ensure they are knowledgeable regarding the way in which their decisions, in relation to a particular ethical dilemma, may give rise to other ethical dilemmas if they do not consider the impact they may have on other systems influencing the school. This model displays a useful representation of the way in which systems affect one another through the ethical decision making process and complements the tenets of systems theory and systems thinking.

3.5 Chapter summary

This chapter discussed the lens through which the study is viewed and is provided as its own chapter to emphasise its relevance and importance to the study. It is considered crucial that principals have an understanding of all the systems (as displayed in the complementing model) that their school is surrounded by to ensure they can implement the finest decisions possible,

ultimately imposing no negative effects on the other systems of the school. The next chapter focusses on the methodology and research design utilised in the study in order to obtain the lived experiences of the phenomenon under research.

CHAPTER 4

METHODOLOGY AND RESEARCH DESIGN

4.1 Introduction

This study aims to explore principals' lived leadership experiences in dealing with ethical dilemmas in their schools. The study is based on obtaining an understanding from participants and is therefore a qualitative study as it depended on obtaining detailed, rich descriptions of the phenomenon. Therefore, this study's practical implication is to discover the lived experiences of the ethical dilemmas that principals are faced with on a daily basis and to understand how they manage to deal with these quandaries.

This chapter begins by locating the study in its relevant paradigm and thereafter, the methodology, as well as research design of the study, is unpacked. Furthermore, the methods involved in collecting and analysing the data retrieved are discussed. Lastly, the ethical implications of the study are described along with an explanation of limiting factors experienced throughout the process of the study.

4.2 Locating the study within the interpretative paradigm

The research paradigm within which this study was conducted consists of the interpretive paradigm. The interpretive paradigm utilises qualitative measures in conducting research (Bertram & Christiansen, 2014). Qualitative research involves understanding how people interpret their experiences, how they construct their worlds and also what meaning they create from these experiences (Merriam, 2009). In light of this description of the purpose of qualitative research, it is clear that this study was well located within this paradigm. This reflects the key aim of this research, to gain a deeper understanding of principals' lived experiences in dealing with ethical dilemmas within their schools. In addition to this, utilising the interpretative paradigm allows for the interpretation of subjective meaning to be obtained from the participating principals involved in the study, and who have experienced the particular phenomena at hand. Creswell and Poth (2018) further state that the interpretative paradigm is based on naturalistic research as it strives to gain information from participants within their contexts and situations that occur naturally. The study therefore explores principals' present experiences in relation to the phenomenon. The participants in this study, being principals, contributed their own experiences, values, beliefs and attitudes in relation to the study's objectives. The way in which they perceived their individually unique lived experiences of the phenomenon differed from the experiences of other principals involved in the study. Therefore,

the participants' perceptions will also be different to those of other principals not involved in the study. This is because all principals hold varying perspectives or perceptions in relation to the phenomenon under research.

4.3 Research Approach

This study follows a qualitative research approach. "Qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them" (Merriam, 2009). The key purpose of the study was to make sense of school principals' lived experiences in dealing with ethical dilemmas on a daily basis and how they as leaders of their schooling organisations are able to effectively and ethically deal with these situations. Qualitative research consists of multiple realities of a single event and researchers do not find knowledge within this approach, but rather they create it.

4.4 Research design

Due to this study's focus on understanding principals' lived leadership experiences of ethical dilemmas prevalent in their schools, I utilised a phenomenological approach in conducting my research. This allowed me to obtain the detailed, rich experiences of the participants in relation to the phenomenon under study. Pietkiewicz and Smith (2014) assert that phenomenological research is about gathering unique experiences from individuals through their own experience. The study relied heavily on gaining an understanding of principals' individual experiences.

A phenomenological point of view relies extensively on the way in which human beings experience, perceive or feel a certain phenomenon. In line with this, by interviewing principals, I sought to access their inner worlds and infuse myself within their experiences. Through this process I was effectively enabled to record their personal lived experiences of ethical dilemmas experienced in their schools.

Phenomenology was initially introduced by Edmund Husserl in 1980 (Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2014). Martin Heidegger, a student of Edmund Husserl, built on phenomenology and developed hermeneutics phenomenology. Hermeneutics is used in conjunction with interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) (Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2014). Hermeneutics accounts for human beings' uniqueness of experiences and language, then combines the two in order to create new meaning. As the researcher, it was therefore important that I foregrounded the importance of principals' lived experiences in their own words. This was emphasised by utilising direct extracts from the principals' transcripts.

Pietkiewicz and Smith (2014) discuss hermeneutics further by describing the hermeneutic circle. This focuses on interpretations and understandings of meaning that are formed during the phenomenological process. In other words, the researcher and the participant have a connection with the phenomenon through living in the present world. The researcher brings in his or her own understanding of the phenomenon and will gain revised knowledge through the research process.

Finally, in hermeneutic phenomenology, interpretation is a profound element and the writing process continues the interpretive purpose. In addition to this, Van Manen (2014) asserts that the process involved in writing a phenomenological text is considered as being a process that is reflective, as it recovers and expresses particular individuals' (principals') experiences in the way they have experienced the phenomenon throughout their lives. Furthermore, Van Manen (2014) emphasises that through this process, individuals (principals') may become enabled to act with practicality in their daily dealings, with the achievement of superior introspection and sensitivity.

4.4.1 Sampling method

In terms of the sampling methods utilised in the study, the sample consisted of four school principals from four different schools. The sample included only principals who had at least three years' experience as principal at their current institutions. With ethical dilemmas being prevalent in both primary and high schools, two principals from primary schools were chosen as well as two principals from high schools. A further reason for the inclusion of both primary and high school principals was because of a lack of principals within the researched district who met the preferred level of experience. It further allowed for a comparison of the complexities of both primary and high school principals' experiences of the phenomenon to be attained.

IPA researchers attempt to generate a purposive sample (Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2014). The sampling method I utilised was purposive. The study focussed on principals in particular, and their experience as principals within their leadership roles at their current institutions. Purposive sampling was an appropriate choice in conducting the study as it is the school leaders' lived experiences of ethical dilemmas that was under study, with the aim of obtaining in-depth and detailed descriptions and experiences from them (Bertram & Christiansen, 2014). All four principals, who were purposively selected are from fee-paying schools in the Umgungundlovu district.

4.4.2 Data generation method

IPA falls within a specific data generation approach that ultimately invites participants to offer detailed, rich, first-person accounts of their experiences (Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2014). Data was generated by conducting face-to-face, semi-structured interviews that comprised open-ended questions, delivering detailed, rich responses about the phenomenon under research. The participants were asked open-ended questions to ensure their unique, individual lived experiences were obtained. The experiences and understanding of a particular phenomenon may be maximised with the use of open-ended questions (Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2014). In-depth interviews were over one hour long allowing the participants to feel comfortable in sharing their experiences. Sound rapport was ensured at the start of the interview (Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2014).

An atmosphere of transparency and flexibility was established between the researcher and the participants (Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2014). This atmosphere was created by undertaking an informal conversation with each participant, prior to the initiation of the research interview. The interviews were also started by asking the participants a few introductory questions (Appendix A), merely to prompt them to want to share their lived experiences openly and with no prejudice.

4.4.3 Data analysis method

IPA strives to obtain specifically detailed meaning through the experience of the participants, within the construct of the phenomenon being researched (Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2014). IPA requires the participant to reflect on his or her experiences in relation to the phenomenon, whilst the researcher aims to decode the participants' experiences by asking key questions in order to obtain detailed, rich descriptions (Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2014). Communication between the researcher and the participants ignites a variety of understandings, values and concepts (Fleming & Vandermause, 2011). In other words, the researcher and the participants are interconnected during the interview process. In conjunction, they stimulate the growth of knowledge and meaning in association with the phenomenon under research.

Within the constructs of IPA, the use of idiography was crucial. This concept may be described as the process of interviewing participants individually, in relation to a particular phenomenon (Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2014). This allowed for participants' experiences to be recorded separately and thereafter their experiences were compared to discover similarities and differences in their experiences. Data reduction then took place to discover varying patterns in

the text suitable to the proposed research (Bertram & Christiansen, 2014). An inductive process of organising the data was utilised in order to form varying categories and themes, ultimately identifying patterns in the data (Bertram & Christiansen, 2014). The use of a reflective journal was highly beneficial as it allowed me to reflect on my own knowledge and preconceived ideas around the phenomenon and ultimately allowed for a comparison of data retrieved from interviews to be compared to my own previous knowledge (Laverty, 2003).

The audio-recordings were listened to several times to ensure a deep understanding of the principals' experiences. Thereafter, the interviews were transcribed and re-read on a continuous basis to ensure a thorough and in-depth immersion was created in the process. My key aim was to get as close to the data as possible through listening to the transcripts over and over.

Thereafter, the various themes were categorised into clusters (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Each of these various clusters was accompanied by a description and displayed in table form. Themes were added, removed and divided into sub-themes depending on their relevance to the next stage (Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2014). Themes and transcriptions were then explored in relation to current literature findings, ultimately enabling and ensuring synthesis. According to Groenewald (2004), rich descriptions from a particular phenomenon, should be reflected upon within the writing process by pasting direct extracts from the transcripts. In addition, these rich descriptions ultimately enhanced the value of the data being analysed.

Within the remaining stages of data analysis, the themes from the recorded table were then described and thoroughly explained by utilising direct extracts from the interviews in a narrative format. This process allowed for the revelation of the participants' experiences to be effectively portrayed in their uniquely individual voices. During this process, the data was also compared to the consulted literature. In addition to this, the process of utilising the constructs of IPA ultimately endorsed the visibility of the researcher's remarks and commentaries along with the participants' experiences to become visible.

4.4.4 Issues of trustworthiness

When conducting qualitative or interpretive research, it is important to consider the trustworthiness of the study (Bertram & Christiansen, 2014). Consequently, it is suggested that the concepts of credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability be used. This section strives to explain how these constructs of trustworthiness were achieved.

Credibility has to do with whether the findings reflect the experiences of the participants involved in the study (Bertram & Christiansen, 2014). This study focussed primarily on the

lived leadership experiences of four school principals, therefore their explicit experiences aided in providing a sense of credibility to the study as it reflected the reality experienced by the participants in relation to the phenomenon under research. The quality of the descriptive nature inherent in the data analysis further determines the credibility of the research (Laverty, 2003). Data generated was therefore appropriately rich in description and detail as hermeneutic research relies heavily on rich descriptions. Credibility was further ensured by utilising an audio-recording device to ensure that the interviews were transcribed verbatim with accuracy. This therefore ensured that construct validity was maintained in the most prominent tool utilised to ensure the quality of the research. Questions within the interviews with principals were also asked in more than one way, ultimately ensuring that the answers provided were in clear alignment with one another, ensuring credibility. The participants involved in the study were also handed their particular interview transcripts after they were completed, for them to verify the accuracy of the content. The participants sent confirmation emails in this regard. The practical implication in performing the above, ultimately ensured the credibility of the study.

Transferability refers to how well the research might be transferred into another context (Bertram & Christiansen, 2014). All four schools involved in the research fall within the same quintile. However, transferring the findings may be narrow due to the unique and individual experiences of the participants being solely associated with themselves and their perceptions of the phenomenon.

Dependability refers to the researcher accounting for possible variations in the study (Bertram & Christiansen, 2014). This study falls within a phenomenological approach, therefore variations in the study are considered as being quite possible. These variations could be a result of cultural differences between schools as well as the differing organisational structures within them. Dependability was largely ensured by comparing the findings of the study to previous studies within the field to discover the key differences between them (Bertram & Christiansen, 2014). According to Guba and Lincoln (1988), dependability involves the quality of the data that is being assessed. This was ultimately achieved by allowing a trusted academic colleague to peer review the data captured in the transcripts.

Confirmability however, was enhanced by ensuring the research process was transparent, which implied allowing for enough detail to be available, so that the reader might reach a similar conclusion (Bertram & Christiansen, 2014).

4.4.5 Ethics in research

It is of utmost importance that research studies follow specific ethical principles (Bertram & Christiansen, 2014). Prior to conducting this research, it was essential that permission from the University of KwaZulu-Natal (UKZN) ethics research office (Appendix D) as well as the KwaZulu-Natal (KZN) Department of Education (DOE) (Appendix C) was obtained. In respect of autonomy, all four school principals were approached regarding the study and all four were given the chance to decide whether to participate in the study by providing written consent. Participants understood that their participation was voluntary and that they could withdraw from the study at any given time.

Regarding non-maleficence, it is important that research should do or cause no harm to any individual involved in the research or outside of it (Bertram & Christiansen, 2014). The principals were made aware that the research might become publically available, therefore confidentiality was assured. School names as well as participant names were replaced by pseudonyms to classify the various principals and their schools (Namely, schools A, B and C). The participants were free to select their own and their schools' pseudonyms in order to safeguard their identities. Principals were informed that they would in no way have themselves or their schools placed in jeopardy.

Principals who had agreed to participate in the study were told they would be offered a copy of the document after its completion. This could provide beneficence as the findings and comparisons between the participants' lived experiences could be of benefit to them (Bertram & Christiansen, 2014). It was assumed that allowing principals to compare how they deal with ethical dilemmas in their schools, with principals' approaches at other schools within the same study, could facilitate awareness of new strategies that might benefit them in enhancing their ethical dilemma practices.

The participants were informed of intention of my study, which was to gather information on their lived experiences of ethical dilemmas and how they deal with these matters within their schools. By providing the participants with relevant information around the topic, this allowed them to become aware of the potential benefit that the research could provide. In addition to this, it was crucial to inform the participants what recent literature around the phenomenon reveals and to inspire them to explore the topic further.

The following section covers the limitations experienced during the study.

4.5 Limitations of the study

With interviews conducted within the constructs of phenomenology being my only data collection technique, this limited my study to two primary and two high school principals situated within the Umgungundlovu District in KwaZulu-Natal. The findings were restricted to the experiences of the individuals involved in the study as the experiences and perceptions of others in relation to the phenomenon may differ. Therefore, the ability to generalise the findings to other principals in other areas will be narrow. This is due to the findings of the study possibly differing in other contexts. These were limitations as there were not other principals in the area that met the required experience.

The impact of the Covid-19 pandemic served as a further limitation as participants were not eager to meet face to face for interview purposes. Interviews were therefore conducted via the zoom meetings platform for those participants that were not willing to meet face to face.

4.6 Chapter summary

This chapter focussed on presenting the research design and methodology of the study in its entirety. Firstly, it was stated that the study was located within the interpretive paradigm and followed a qualitative approach. Secondly, the utilisation of phenomenology as a research methodology was presented, wherein semi-structured interviews were utilised as the data generation tool through purposive sampling of four school principals in the Umgungundlovu District. It was then noted that data reduction was utilised as the desired data analysis method. The attention to crucial ethical issues such as anonymity and informed consent, non-maleficence and beneficence was also discussed. Issues of trustworthiness including credibility, dependability, transferability and confirmability, and a small number of limitations were also elaborated on. The following chapter focusses on the data analysis and findings of the study, where identified themes emerged from the data, related to the phenomenon under research.

CHAPTER 5

DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

5.1 Introduction

The previous chapter outlined the methodology as well as research design and explained how data was generated to meet the objectives, aims and crucial research questions of the study. This chapter discusses and provides an in-depth analysis of the data that was generated in the field through semi-structured interviews with four school principals, two from primary schools and two from high schools. A range of crucial themes pertaining to principals lived experiences of ethical dilemmas emerged.

As required by phenomenological research, direct extracts from the transcripts are provided in order to display the explicit lived experiences of the participants in relation to the questions posed around the phenomenon. Thereafter, and within each theme, a discussion is presented where the experiences of the participants are compared and related to the literature that was reviewed earlier. The lived experiences of principals', their understanding of ethics and its importance, and the perceived causes of ethical dilemmas are presented first. Secondly, their experiences of ethical dilemmas are presented. A sub-theme that emerged within this section focusses on the interconnected and interdependent nature of principals' lived experiences of ethical dilemmas. Thirdly, the complexities that differentiate primary and high school principals' ethical dilemma experiences are discussed. The fourth theme discusses principals' lived experiences of dealing with ethical dilemmas and the leadership strategies they have in place to assist them. Lastly, the remaining two themes address issues of limited training and support in dealing with ethical dilemmas and further offer recommendations from participating principals to assist current and aspiring school principals in dealing with ethical dilemmas.

The presentation of the data through the remainder of this chapter was informed by the following research questions:

1. What are school principals' lived experiences of ethical dilemmas in their schools?
2. How do school principals deal with ethical dilemmas that arise in their schools?
3. What lessons can be drawn from the principals' lived experiences of ethical dilemmas and the leadership strategies they use to respond to ethical dilemmas in their schools?

5.2 Profiling the participants

Participants involved in the study were required to have been principals at their respective schools for a minimum of three years. This was done to ensure that valuable lived leadership experiences were accessible as it was believed that principals who had served a school for at least three years would be able to draw on an appropriate range of experiences in relation to the phenomenon. It became evident that one of the participants had international experience as a deputy principal in New Zealand which provided valuable insights and comparisons to not only a local context but also an international context. Each principal had a variety of experiences that contributed to the study immensely. Their pseudonyms, for the purpose of this study, their years of experience as principal as well as whether they are a primary or high school principal is provided in table 5.2.1 below:

Table 5.2.1 Participants profiles

<u>Participant</u>	<u>Primary / High school</u>	<u>Years of experience as a principal at current school</u>	<u>Years of experience as a principal in total</u>
1. Mrs Naidoo	Primary	3 years	3 years
2. Mr Henwood	Primary	16 years	26 years
3. Mr Darcy	High	8 years	8 years
4. Mr Alfred	High	13 years	13 years

The table displays the varied experience of the principals involved in the study. Mrs Naidoo has the least experience, followed by Mr Darcy, Mr Alfred and Mr Henwood has the most experience at their current institution. Mrs Naidoo, Mr Darcy and Mr Alfred had only been principal at their current institution, whereas Mr Henwood had been principal at another school giving him a total of 26 years experience as a principal. Mr Darcy also had experience as a deputy principal in New Zealand. Throughout this chapter, emerging themes pertaining to the specific themes identified in the introduction of this chapter are shown in the exact order that they are displayed in the table. Not all principals experienced ethical dilemmas within all themes. After the presentation of their unique lived experiences within the range of themes, their experiences are considered in the light of the literature covering the various theme. Next, the themes that emerged from the data are discussed. In exploring principals' lived experiences

of ethical dilemmas, it is crucial that their understandings of ethics, the importance of being ethical and the causes of ethical dilemmas are initially discussed.

5.3 Understanding ethics

In pursuit of the objectives of the study, the interview process began by establishing an understanding of what exactly the principals' understanding of ethics was, as it is often a lack of an ethical stance or ignorance of the specific constructs of ethics that ultimately creates ethical dilemmas. Within this theme, the principals were asked to share their understanding of ethics. Mrs Naidoo describes her understanding of ethics as being a set of grounding principles. She said the following:

Ethics encompasses very strong grounding principles to lead, and the way in which you lead people, and the manner in which you conduct yourself with integrity and honesty. Basically it is principles that should be integrated with your conscience, with which you guide your leadership.

Mr Henwood expresses a similar understanding and mentions that ethics revolves around the construct of integrity:

To be a principal, I believe first of all you've got to be an individual with high moral standard, you've got to be courageous, honest with yourself, honest with people and that all comes with integrity because without those elements, principals will fall short. I would define it in one word and just say, integrity. I think that encompasses everything to do with ethics.

Sharing similar sentiments to both Mrs Naidoo and Mr Henwood, Mr Darcy believes that ethics is all about your morals. He said:

It's really your morals basically and what's right and what's wrong and how you guide people.

In providing an understanding of ethics, Mr Alfred brought forward other pertinent factors associated with ethics. He said:

Ethics is basically operating with a value system that guides you. So that you make fair, consistent, legally acceptable decisions. Decisions that do not violate any people's rights. Be it human rights, labour rights or whatever rights that the constitution guarantees. Operating in an ethical way is a very value based decision making.

These understandings align with reviewed literature in the sense that ethics is morally bound. Literature suggests that ethics can be defined as, “moral principles that govern a person's behaviour or the conducting of an activity” (Kutsyuruba & Walker, 2013). The understandings further suggest that a principal is required to embrace and practice a high level of moral standards. Mr Henwood agrees that as the leaders of schools it is crucial that principals are consistently honest and need to hold the construct of integrity in extremely high regard. Kutsyuruba and Walker (2013) further emphasise the importance of ethics by stating that ethics does not merely provide a guide for quality decision making but rather it requires a continual reflection on one's own professional values as well as a critical means of thinking with regard to the effective analysis of ethical dilemmas. In addition to this and in support of Mr Darcy's understanding of ethics, Cranston, et al., (2004) assert that ethics is the way in which people should conduct themselves within their daily dealings in life. Mr Darcy asserts that ethics is all about one's morals and how one deals with people. The literature is therefore in agreement with the principals' lived experiences and understandings of ethics. Principals further suggest that being and acting ethical is crucial, particularly when dealing with ethical dilemmas. After discussing how principals understand the concept of ethics, the importance of being ethical and implementing an ethical stance or framework within the schooling environment became a further pertinent theme.

5.4 The importance of being ethical

In exploring principals' lived experiences of ethical dilemmas and after discovering what principals' understand about ethics, it was crucial to gain an understanding of how principals valued the importance of being ethical. According to the principals involved in the study, adopting an ethical stance is extremely important in creating an ethically bound and effective school where effective teaching and learning could take place. Regarding the importance of being an ethically bound individual and implementing ethical practices within the schooling environment, Mrs Naidoo said:

As a principal, I think people tend to see schooling and a principal just as someone imparting a curriculum and people require children learning something. However, I'm of the opinion that the role function has a very much of a broader base. We mould the lives of children, the community, parents and even the people that we work with, the staff and this is a pivotal role that depends on how you manage the different stakeholders that you have at school and it includes obviously other varied duties of the

principal and I am strong on human values. I believe there needs to be congruency between the head, the hand and the heart.

Mr Henwood concurs with Mrs Naidoo by saying:

It is the key to being a successful principal, it is extremely important. If the principal should behave improper in any way, parents, teachers, learners, they react and people want you to behave in a responsible, fair and dignified manner. It is important that schools are managed with an extremely high level of moral integrity and have moral values, such as honesty and professionalism. Then the whole school performs far better.

Sharing similar sentiments, Mr Darcy experiences the effective implementation of an ethical stance in the following manner:

You can't preach one thing and do another because you can't pull a will over children's eyes.

Interestingly, Mr Alfred asserts:

There is no greater framework to operate within a school environment than one that is based on ethics. Which of course is underpinned by values that you hold dear. Of course it inspires confidence in the people that you are leading, it assists with the smooth functioning of the school. You treat people consistently, you treat them in a just and fair manner. People see you as somebody who's transparent, people see you as somebody who's operating with integrity. So all of those things when you put them together, ethics forms the bedrock for me to manage a school and to manage it entirely.

Mr Henwood, Mr Darcy and Mrs Naidoo agree that adopting an ethical stance is crucial for the effective operation of a school. Mr Henwood mentions that without following an ethical framework, a principal will eventually fall short, ultimately creating a dysfunctional teaching and learning environment plagued by ethical dilemmas. In addition to this, the characteristics of ethics such as honesty, integrity and fairness as described by Mr Henwood and Mr Darcy emerge as key values that must be infused into a schooling environment to ensure its effectiveness. Kutsyuruba and Walker (2013) emphasise that “leaders become products of their own creations”, therefore, as Mrs Naidoo asserts, there needs to be congruency in the schooling environment between the head, the hand and the heart. Mr Darcy supports this as he shares his view of the importance of being consistently ethical.

In support of these views, Mr Alfred further discusses the importance of being ethical and creating a school environment that is based on values. He maintains:

Once those values are eroded, you can never re-cast them because that is who you are and it speaks to who you are and what you are trying to achieve in the school environment.

These findings of the importance of ethics suggests that if a school environment is not operating on the basis of morals and an ethical framework, eventually the school will become a dysfunctional teaching and learning environment plagued by ethical dilemmas. It further suggests that if the constructs of ethics are not understood and implemented, that dealing with ethical dilemmas would be a far more difficult task. Reviewed literature states that principals, as heads of their institutions have a moral responsibility to ensure they create an ethical environment for effective teaching and learning to take place within their schools (Starrat, 1991). In addition to this, principals concur that in order to avoid the severity of ethical dilemmas, it is crucial to adopt an ethical stance in the schooling environment and to live their lives in accordance with the construct of ethics. As Mr Alfred asserts that once values are eroded within a school, it is difficult to restore them because those around you believe that that is who you are. The following theme displays principals' lived experiences of the causes of ethical dilemmas.

5.5 The causes of ethical dilemmas

After discussing principals' understandings and the importance of ethics, it seems logical to explore the causes of ethical dilemmas as revealed by their lived experiences. During the study, it became increasingly evident that ethical dilemmas arose from an extensive array of areas. Principals' lived experiences show that ethical dilemmas arise from within schools themselves, from the direct community and from the Department of Basic Education. These areas ultimately give rise to constant, daily challenges for school principals (Kutsyuruba & Walker, 2013). In analysing principals' lived experiences of ethical dilemmas in these pertinent areas, principals shared their experience of what they believe causes ethical dilemmas. Mrs Naidoo said:

I can't pin-point it to one thing, it could be personalities of people, it could be departmental demands, the parents and their demands, the children and their demands and it could be relationships amongst people. Mismanagement, discipline, all of that

can cause an ethical dilemma. I tried to put it into a concise slot but there is so much more to it.

Mrs Naidoo's response shows that ethical dilemmas are situations that arise through a multitude of causes. Mr Darcy supports this and said the following:

Well, there's a whole range of things.

Sharing similar sentiments with both Mrs Naidoo and Mr Darcy, Mr Alfred agrees that there are a range of reasons for and causes of ethical dilemmas. He further insinuates that ethical dilemmas are formed because of differences in cultural practices and ideas. He said:

If you operate within a system, there's obviously going to be competing values and those competing values are important to the stakeholders. It's also rooted in differences in cultural practices and ideas.

These experiences confirm that ethical dilemmas arise from a variety of sources and the reviewed literature concurs with Mr Alfred's experience, that ethical dilemmas emerge where there are competing sets of values, beliefs or ideals at play (Cranston, et al., 2006). Interestingly, Mrs Naidoo feels that varying personalities amongst individuals may also constitute factors that contribute to the formation of ethical dilemmas. She further mentions that the formation of ethical dilemmas may be due to the fluctuating demands of various stakeholders involved in a school and issues of mismanagement and discipline.

After discussing the experiences of principals in terms of ethics, their perceived importance of ethics and the causes of ethical dilemmas, the following themes emerged through the process of data analysis: learner centred, staff centred, parent and school governance centred, community centred, departmental centred and policy centred ethical dilemmas. Data reduction enabled the formation of these themes and principals' lived experiences of ethical dilemmas were categorised as follows:

5.6 Lived experiences of ethical dilemmas

Principals shared several lived experiences of ethical dilemmas. I decided to group them into seven sub-themes which I present below.

5.6.1 Learner centred lived experiences

Data reveals that learner centred ethical dilemmas were common in the lived experiences of principals. Learner centred ethical dilemmas refer to ethical dilemmas that are in direct relation

to or are formed by the learners of a school. Mr Henwood shared his lived experience relevant to learner centred ethical dilemmas:

We had a young girl in grade 6 and she had a serious relationship with a boy in grade 7 and what the two of them would do is they would organise to meet in the toilets at a particular time and they would cavort. In grade 9 the principal had to call her in, call the mother in, together with the school counsellor to say that your daughter has confessed that she is pregnant. There it was also about ethics, the mother's interpretation of ethics, my interpretation of ethics but at the end of the day the child was the one that suffered.

Mr Henwood explains that this ethical dilemma was due to a clash of values between himself and the parent. His belief is that if the parent had shared similar values to his own values and beliefs, then the child would not have ended up in such a situation. Cranston, et al., (2004), states that an ethical dilemma arises from a situation that necessitates a choice being made among competing sets of principles, values, beliefs or ideals. Mr Henwood's experience demonstrates a choice being made by the parent that was in competition or conflict with his own values and beliefs.

Sharing similar sentiments to Mr Henwood, Mr Darcy experienced an ethical dilemma where competing sets of values and beliefs were also at play. His lived experience was as follows:

It was all to do with bullying, damage to property, breaking bounds. You would have a meeting and the parents would then challenge, "my son would never do such a thing", I said excuse me ma'am, just come around to the table here, have a look on the screen here, look there and there's the son smashing stuff, kicking stuff, going ballistic and they try and turn it around and say, "yes, but why do you have a camera in there?" I say there's a camera in there because there's damage of property.

Mr Darcy explains that parents always seemed to take their children's side when it came to ethical dilemmas caused by learners. As a result, further ethical dilemmas were created by competing sets of values and beliefs about what he and the parents considered as being right or wrong behaviour. If parents were to understand that what their child was doing was not right (unethical behaviour), Mr Darcy asserts that ethical dilemmas such as these could be resolved much sooner. Berry and Dempster (2003) share similar experiences relating to bullying and mention that parents would often favour their child by saying their child would not do such a thing.

In terms of first team sport initiations, Mr Darcy further shared the following experience:

They used to write the boys jersey number in with a wire brush and all these crazy things. I said what you can do is you can make them be duty boys, sing a song, tell a joke, all those sorts of things. They can have a haircut. You physically can't manhandle a boy to do exercises at 3am. So even like with rugby or first teams or whatever, again you can't do initiation, because it's against the law.

Mr Darcy asserts that learners, parents and past-pupils of the school need to understand that many traditions that took place in schools previously, were not bound by the host of policies and legislative frameworks that exist today. Mr Darcy explains that one needs to follow the law at all times and break away from previously implemented traditions that are not in alignment with those laws.

With respect to a situation where a decision was taken to alter the school badge after a marketing audit was conducted, Mr Darcy shared the following lived leadership experience he was faced with:

The grade 10 boys were all stripping their badges off and they threw them in the quad and they wrote all sorts of stuff on their badges. The prefects were cross, so I said right, "get the whole lot of them", and we pulled them here into the boardroom to talk to them. So I said, "now you put all those badges out on the table here, all of them and you have those guys in there." So they were all in there and I said, "guys, you know what? I'm confused here? are you proud of your school?" Yes, sir, we are! I said, "and you're proud of your badge? Yes, yes sir! I said, "well why would you go and write obscenities? and those things on there? and desecrate? why would you do that? I don't understand?" You could see their mind going huh? and I said, "you know there's a way of going about this, if you feel strongly about something, send me an email, come and see me, write a letter to me, go see the senior prefects or whatever but do you think this is the right way to go?" No, sir it's not. So I said, "I'm not going to punish you but you need to learn from this, so if you feel strongly about something there's another way to go about it." So, we left it at that.

Mr Darcy asserts that the cause of this ethical dilemma was merely the high level of passion that the boys have for the school and the conflicting views between himself and the boys over what is considered as being right or wrong behaviour. Dempster and Berry (2003) assert that pertinent ethical dilemmas arose when change was implemented, specifically when the change

clashed with the culture of the school. Mr Darcy's experience reveals a clash with the culture of the school and he maintains that he needed to remind the boys of the values which the school stood for in order to resolve the ethical dilemma. He further reminded them that they should just have come and spoken to him before taking matters into their own hands.

In relation to learner centred ethical dilemmas, an incident occurred where a learner was caught videoing under a teacher's skirt. Mr Darcy shared the following experience:

We had the up skirting matter. Where a rugby player filmed. That was a big moral dilemma. It was silly, it was a stupid thing to do, but that lady went for him and the husband went for him and he went to a hearing, he got punished and then I added on more. They wanted him not to play rugby again, they wanted this, that and the next thing. I said what? you can't do that, he's been punished, been to women's refuge, so they took that decision of the school to the human rights commission in Pretoria and human rights came back and said the school has handled this beyond what was expected of them. So that was a positive affirmation.

Through Mr Darcy's lived experience, he highlights the differing values between the learner and the teacher involved in the ethical dilemma. He explains that the teacher involved in the situation was not happy with the outcome of the incident even though the learner had been punished and had been required to work in a women's refuge. Clearly, the teacher believed that the punishment was not enough and wanted the boy to be excluded from playing rugby. This example resonates with other experiences in this theme suggesting that individuals' personal beliefs play a pivotal role in the manner in which principals experience ethical dilemmas pertaining to learners. Mr Darcy's experience further shows the extent to which an ethical dilemma can be escalated beyond the school spectrum. Although the ethical dilemma was initiated from within the school, the teacher involved in the incident then escalated the situation to the level of the human rights commission, making the ethical dilemma experience a far greater task to deal with.

The following theme draws on the lived ethical dilemma experiences of principals that are staff centred.

5.6.2 Staff centred lived experiences

Data reveals that ethical dilemmas relating to issues with staff are considered to be common examples of ethical dilemmas experienced by principals. Through the interview process,

principals shared a variety of lived experiences pertaining to ethical dilemmas involving school staff. Mrs Naidoo shared her experiences:

Appointments in the school, staff moving from SGB posts to department posts. Staff need to know what systems are in place to ensure an ethical dilemma is not created.

Staff wanting the day off. Some staff are extremely hard working whereas others are not. However, the leave needs to go into the correct category because people will talk.

Being careful of who to delegate to. Staff must not see it as favouritism.

Mrs Naidoo reveals three areas of staff centred ethical dilemmas that she has experienced. She asserts that when vacancies become available within the school, staff need to be aware of the systems in place to ensure ethical dilemmas are not created. Cranston, et al.,(2004) assert that tensions that arise when teachers are promoted from one position to another create countless ethical dilemmas for principals. Issues of staff wanting a day off was further emphasised and Mrs Naidoo mentions that the leave being taken needs to be put into the correct category. She further stresses the importance of delegating to all staff. Her lived experience shows that particular staff cannot always be the main recipients as others view that as favouritism. In analysis of Mrs Naidoo's lived experiences it is evident that staff need to be cared for, provided with a sense of involvement and feel that they work within an environment that follows the principle of equality.

Sharing similar sentiments with Mrs Naidoo's lived experience, Mr Alfred said:

Sometimes there are teachers within your school competing for a particular position and you may find that if you don't communicate openly about what your views are and how you're going to ensure that the best candidate gets the job, you may find candidates trying to buy your favour as well. You may find somebody coming to you on a daily basis and bringing you baked stuff and flowers to your office. That's why, as soon as there is a vacancy at the school, I announce it to the entire staff and I say to them, "ladies and gentlemen there is this position that is available, please note, this is my position."

Mr Alfred places emphasis on the importance of communicating the availability of positions to the entire staff so that all are welcome to apply. In agreement with Mrs Naidoo, he shares the view that staff need to have equal opportunities to ensure that ethical dilemmas are not created whilst searching for the best candidate for a position. Mr Alfred further asserts that

often, staff members would apply for a particular position and then try and buy his favour by means of providing him with food or flowers.

Drawing on issues involving corporal punishment, Mr Henwood explains:

A staff member hitting a child and the child then has cut themselves and the staff member tries to lie her way out of her behaviour. It most certainly is problematic and there again we just had to do what a principal has to do and hand it over to the department. They send in an independent investigator who deals with the investigation and we take it from there.

Mr Henwood describes experiences such as these as being problematic. Karadag and Tekel (2017) mention that principals still face ethical dilemmas relating to the use of corporal punishment by teachers, despite it not being permitted, and this may be why it is considered particularly problematic. Mr Henwood refers to a staff member trying to lie her way out of the situation which exacerbates the difficulty of dealing with it. Emphasis is placed on Mr Henwood merely handing the situation over to the department.

Mr Henwood shared a further lived experience relating to the accountability of staff:

I had a situation where a secretary failed to protect a very confidential document and it got leaked out into the wrong hands and I had to face some very serious consequences because of that. Now where is the ethics in this? A secretary failing to do her job properly led to unnecessary conflict and what have you, so these are some of the very real things.

Mr Henwood asserts that this experience had its origin in unethical practice and poor accountability by his secretary. In a study conducted by Styron (2011) accountability of staff is shown to be an area of great concern which contributes to the formation of ethical dilemmas, whether it be in accordance with the law or basic office policy. Mr Henwood further notes that through this experience, unnecessary conflicts were created.

Sharing similar sentiments, Mr Darcy experienced a similar ethical dilemma:

I put a camera in here in the staff room, there was money being stolen. The individual took vouchers out of the pigeon holes, went down to the mall, spent the vouchers, came back and put the vouchers back in. So I called him in, I didn't have to say anything, "I said come in please, I had a witness, I said, "check here, can you tell me what's going

on here?” ...he said, “sorry it was me”, I said right, you have two options. You either resign today or you’re going to have to be arrested. So he said, “I’m out of here”, wrote a letter, paid back the money and was gone.

Mr Darcy’s experience resonates with Mr Henwood’s experience. Both examples display poor accountability and professionalism by staff.

Mr Alfred further mentions an issue he experienced where teachers have over-friendly relations with learners. He shared the following experience:

You find that an educator is becoming over friendly with a particular child. Now, the educator may argue that this is part of my holistic and nurturing duty that I’m nurturing the child. Then you have to pull the educator in and say to them, this is what the code of conduct says about these kinds of things and this is the impression that is being generated around the school campus. When you are doing this kind of thing, you may have all the noble intentions but it’s the perception of people that is different, and also you are dealing with a child, a child’s norms of reference and your norms of reference may be two different things.

Mr Alfred displays an ethical concern that the data reveals is only relevant in high schools. Kutsyuruba and Walker’s study (2013) reveal that the most frequent ethical dilemmas arose between school administrators (principals) and staff. Mr Alfred further mentions that although an educator might not have seen anything wrong with his/her actions, the impression created around the school campus was quite different. He further asserts that a child does not necessarily understand a teachers’ holistic approach and interprets the situation incorrectly.

This theme portrayed principals’ lived experiences of ethical dilemmas that were staff centred. Principals lived experiences within this theme share in common poor levels of accountability and professionalism by staff. The following theme explores the experiences of principals that were categorised into the theme of parent and school governance centred ethical dilemmas.

5.6.3 Parent and school governance centred lived experiences

This theme provides principals’ experiences of ethical dilemmas related to competing sets of values among parents and in particular parents who form part of the School Governing Body (SGB). Interestingly, many lived ethical dilemma experiences involved SGB parents and their children. Mr Alfred commented that when he was required to reprimand or punish SGB

parents' children, he would often receive a backlash from the SGB, which he considered completely unethical. Mrs Naidoo had the following experience to share:

I think one of the very strong ones that came through in the time when I took over was this whole system of technology. We've got cameras and so we capture footage, but clearly, look at the policy and I sought legal advice here, you are not at liberty to share the camera footage to all in sundry. Should a parent demand this, then they need to go via the legal system and request for the footage to be shown. We did have incidents of that nature but fortunately I think having a system in place and working through like a sort of protocol that you have actually helps the situation.

Mrs Naidoo explains that when the situation occurred, parents were under the impression that they were at liberty to receive camera footage regarding an incident while policy states that they are not at liberty to do so. She mentions that this creates further ethical dilemmas as parents do not seem to understand why this is so. She emphasises that she consistently has to remind parents of the legal implications associated with sharing footage of children.

Mrs Naidoo and Mr Alfred also shared similar experiences of parents preferring a particular teacher for their child. Mrs Naidoo said:

Parents and their preference for a particular teacher or non-preference for a teacher. Each scenario is totally different and you approach it very differently. Some parents you can easily listen to and say, I think you're going overboard, you're being overprotective, your molly coddling and they will take that, another parent won't take that so easily.

Mrs Naidoo explains that she has experienced a variety of ethical dilemmas where parents prefer a particular teacher over another. She shares that through her experience, every situation is different because some parents agree with her whereas others don't. Sharing similar sentiments, Mr Alfred provided the following example:

A parent whose child was an above average child, walked into the school, he was on the governing body and walked into his child's classroom unannounced and then came back to me and said that he is unhappy, because the race group of the person teaching his child indicates that his child is not receiving the best education at the school. It did not end there, and at the next SGB meeting, he built up a little dossier of evidence but

he said that the teacher's incompetent. I had to say to him that you are championing the rights of your individual child and that's not your mandate.

Mr Alfred's experience builds on Mrs Naidoo's and reveals how such experiences can escalate if parents do not agree that they are being overprotective. Mr Alfred further shared an experience where SGB parents attempted to gather support after an incident involving their children at SGB level:

Parents sometimes have their own agendas' as well. Two boys on the monitor camp decided to break away from the trail and go off to another area and smoke some weed. Although the field guides and the educators' who were there smelt it and reported it and two parent members from the SGB who's children these were tried to drum up a bit of support at the SGB level. I stood firm and the chair of the SGB also stood firm so we were able to say to the parents, look this is not going to happen and you can appeal the decision, write to us and appeal and we will take it from there.

Mr Darcy experienced an ethical dilemma where he was unsure of what action to take:

I've had to suspend and debadge the chairmen of the SGB's son, that's an ethical dilemma, I mean because he's my employer and debadge his son. Do I do it or don't I do it?

Through Mr Darcy's experience he mentions that one should always remain consistent in situations such as these. He said:

You can't have two sets of rules, oh you're so and so's son so you're not doing anything about it now.

The lived experiences of ethical dilemmas within this theme place emphasis on the difficulties experienced by three principals in relation to ethical dilemmas involving parents. The following theme explores principals' lived experiences of ethical dilemmas that are community centred.

5.6.4 Community centred lived experiences

Data reveals that the community surrounding a school contributes immensely toward principals' lived experiences of ethical dilemmas. Community centred incidents were revealed as being significant in the formation and escalation of ethical dilemmas. Mr Henwood reported the following experience pertaining to ethical dilemmas associated with the community:

We had an influx of African children, the community decided at that time that they wanted to create an independent school. The chairman of the school was also acting on the governing body of the new school and that in my opinion was grossly unacceptable. It was unethical and decisions that were taken at the school were not necessarily taken in the best interest of the school because he had an enormous influence on the rest of the governing body, but then he would take what was decided at the school and he would take it to the new school and it was just such a conflict of interest. We managed through a process and it was a very difficult process to get him to stand down as the chairman.

Mr Henwood explains that parents were not happy with the influx of these children at the school, so they began forming a private school in the area. Mr Henwood states that he was completely unaware of the involvement of the SGB chairman in the formation of the new school until he realised that the SGB chairman was favouring the new school rather than the current school he served. This in turn created an ethical dilemma that required the SGB chairman to step down from his role. Mr Henwood described the process as an extremely long and difficult task. This experience explicitly demonstrates the effect the direct community of a school may have on its functioning. Mr Henwood further shared an experience where a picket was held outside the school. He described it in the following way:

The governing body for whatever reason, decided that they were going to hold a picket outside the school and gave the parents false information as to why they were holding the picket outside the school. Here we have a situation, ethically, I did what I had to do, yet I received no support from the department whatsoever and there are very strict guidelines, rules and regulations for SGB's and these parents acted illegally by protesting or holding a picket outside the school without the knowledge or my knowledge. They should've actually been disciplined by the department, they should have been struck off the role of being on the SGB, yet the department did nothing about it and failed to give me the necessary support which made me feel extremely vulnerable and unsupported.

Mr Henwood's account places emphasis on the effects that the direct community can have on the effective functioning of a school. His experiences further indicate that communities may act on information that is not always correct, adding additional ethical complications.

In contrast to Mr Henwood's experiences, Mr Alfred commented that traditional practices in schools, passed down from year to year are a way in which further ethical dilemmas are experienced.

Mr Alfred shared the following experience with regards to the direct community:

There was a tradition that the outgoing grade 12's would spray shaving cream on the other learners and when I got there, I said look guys, it's not the way that we would like to say goodbye to you, but you will not subject other children to egg throwing and all of that kind of nonsense. They would throw rotten eggs at the juniors and I had many angry parents and I had many angry children. I had children crying in my office. Their conduct was unacceptable, even though they were warned and so they were not allowed to attend their formal matric farewell. Parents wouldn't accept that and that evening at the matric farewell, the parents burst into the hall very violently. Parents regarded the incident as very trivial and felt that the punishment that was levied on the children was unjustified. Now parents are supporting us because they understand and they see the values, also that you cannot have fun and infringe on somebody else's dignity, which is not on.

Different from Mr Henwoods experience, Mr Alfred's account shows that traditional practices that have been passed down from generation to generation of a school community may have a severe impact on the school, especially when change is necessitated at the school to make it a more effective and welcoming teaching and learning environment. Berry and Dempster (2003) assert that change creates many ethical dilemmas specifically when the change clashes with the culture of the school.

The lived experiences of ethical dilemmas within this theme placed emphasis on the difficulties experienced by two principals in relation to community centred issues. The following theme deals with principals' lived experiences of ethical dilemmas that are centred on the department of education.

5.6.5 Departmental centred lived experiences

Through the process of data reduction, data reveals a host of lived ethical dilemmas that relate to the Department of Basic Education (DBE). Mr Darcy shared the following experience:

If I've got a state employee, I can only give them a warning is all I can do, if it's anything more than that it's got to go to the department and even in Mr A's case, he got away with it.

Mr Darcy shares that he experienced an ethical dilemma pertaining to a departmentally paid staff member where he could not deal with the issues at hand with the respect and disciplinary action he felt they deserved because policy dictates that it is the department's responsibility to manage those issues. He further discusses his experience with Mr A and said:

He's still passionate about the school and doesn't negative social media as much anymore.

Mr Darcy explained that this matter involved an individual bringing the school's name into disrepute via social media. Of course, this had serious repercussions for the school, however, the individual in question was able to get away with his unethical behaviour and was merely transferred to another school after an extremely long and difficult process. Mr Darcy explained further:

He got a transfer, but he got demoted as well so, he was transferred and demoted, it's very sad actually because he made a huge contribution to the school but unfortunately he just dug his own grave literally.

In terms of allegations of racism experienced by Mr Darcy, he explained the following:

Then when the department did the investigation into the racism allegations, we never got any report back at all because they found nothing.

Mr Darcy asserts that the department provided no report back. This emphasises the lack of support received from the department when it came to issues such as these. Mr Alfred further shared areas of concern regarding the appointment of staff by the department, he gave the following example:

If a state paid educator resigns, then the department wants to send a teacher who's surplus from another school to that position. Sometimes that is done based on nepotism, it's probably some officials' relative or friend. We have taken an ethical stance that sure we need to accommodate excess staff, we recognise that but you need to give us a list of five people and we will interview those five people and make a decision as to who we are going to take.

Mr Alfred mentions that he consistently insists that the school decides who receives the departmental post and that the interview process allows the best candidate for the position to be assigned to the school. By doing so, he reveals that he operates from within an ethical framework, ultimately showing his superiors that his decision cannot be swayed. Mr Alfred also shared his experience of being bullied by his superiors and had the following to add:

Sometimes they bully you. There have been cases where these officials have acted beyond their mandate and charge principals for insubordination. We go according to the law, it must be fair, transparent, it must show that the process was equally accessible for others as well and at the end of the day the SGB is going to make a decision for the best interest of the school. We always make sure that we follow due process. Always make sure there are value principles underpinning all of this and if you do that, sooner or later they see, no this guy can't be swayed because he's operating within an ethical framework.

In focussing on departmental budget allocations, Mr Alfred shared the following experience:

So you get a section 21 school, that's when they give you your budget or allocation for the year, you can then choose service providers. Obviously we and the SGB have taken the decision that we will ask for three quotes, we will check-out the vendors and so on and make sure that they comply with all the requirements because the last thing you want to do is give somebody a contract and the person is unable to fulfil the contract or takes the money and runs. So they try and push that onto you but again you have to be ethical.

Mr Alfred's comment suggests that departmental officials attempt to force specific service providers onto principals, ultimately situating them in an ethical dilemma, where they are required to decide whether to remain ethical or follow the instruction of their superior. As mentioned by Mr Alfred, principals appear often to be bullied by departmental officials, with the implication that some principals may rather be swayed in their decision because they are frightened of being charged with insubordination.

Mr Darcy and Mr Alfred agree that the process of expelling a learner is extremely difficult as there is a raft of paper work that is required and more often than not the department rejects the expulsion of the learner. In terms of the expulsion of learners, Mr Alfred shared the following experience:

9/10 times you find that the department wouldn't even consider all the factors that were taken into account. They would just say this expulsion is not approved and then what happens is and fortunately again, we have a very good governing body, they take the matter on legally and they say, the reasons why and again you have that create a problem between the department, the school and the parent because now the parent is suddenly armed with this decision by the department and wants to now start dictating terms and conditions at your school, which you don't want.

Mr Alfred further noted that the department also abruptly calls to advise him that a child must be accommodated and accepted into the school. All four of the participating principals shared similar experiences. Mr Alfred expressed the following:

There's always political interference as well. Get a call from head office to say that you have to take the child in the school.

Mr Darcy shared a similar experience where he was told by a departmental official to accept a learner despite the learner's academic results not meeting the standards of the school. He commented as follows:

I said you are putting us into a compromising position because there's a waiting list and people know that and I'm not going to, so ill accept him because you're telling me I have to accept him but I just want you to know I'm not happy about it.

Although the law stipulates that every learner must be placed in a school, Mr Darcy asserts that this is unethical behaviour of them because the school has a waiting list. The lived experiences of ethical dilemmas within this theme place emphasis on the difficulties experienced by two principals in relation to ethical dilemmas that are department centred. The following theme relates to principals' lived experiences of ethical dilemmas that are policy centred.

5.6.6 Policy centred lived experiences

Data reveals that many ethical dilemmas experienced by principals relate to specific policies, laws and legislation. Mr Darcy shared his experience with respect to corporal punishment in another country prior to South Africa barring the use of corporal punishment:

I gave a whole lot of boys a smack with a bat, the old tennis bats, 8 or 9 of them, these were young guys and junior school kids that were just causing havoc. The principal said, "do you realise this is illegal and its assault and this is not South Africa and you can't do that?" So then I got on the phone and phoned the parents. Of the seven boys,

it was six of the seven that said, "if he does it again give him another hiding" and the 7th was obviously the complaining boy's parent. But I mean, I could have lost my job there and then.

Mr Darcy asserts that his experience was influenced by his preconceived beliefs in corporal punishment methods. He mentions that although at the time he may have believed that corporal punishment was the best disciplinary method, he then faced an ethical dilemma and was concerned for his job.

Mr Alfred held the view that the department did not consider the differing contexts of schools in terms of the formulation of certain policies. Mr Alfred provided the following example:

The department sometimes has a view that their policies are applicable to all schools, no matter what their size, shape or complexity and that often is a source of a problem.

Mr Alfred mentions that every school is different and policies need to be different depending on the context and availability of resources at schools. He further insinuates that every school has its own issues and that the department needs to take such factors into consideration to avoid problems.

Mr Alfred mentioned that according to South African law, a child can have an abortion at the age of 12 without parental consent. Mr Alfred shared the following experience relating to the law on child abortions:

A child can have an abortion at the age of 12 and they don't need parental consent. You get a whistle blower who comes and says to you, sir so and so has gone for an illegal abortion. Now, do you inform the parent or not? Because the child doesn't need the parent consent. We say to the parent and we say to the children right at the get go that we are also very cognoscente of children's safety. So based on the safety rationale we will report the matter to the parent and what the parent does with the matter thereafter is up to the parent. We make it known to our children, we say to our RCL and our prefect body that we will report to the parent if such a thing happens, because obviously safety of the child is paramount. If that child is bleeding in a back door clinic, bleeding to death it wouldn't sit on my conscience very easily.

In relating this experience, Mr Alfred mentions that a learner had reported to him that another learner in the school was pregnant and was going to have an abortion. After discovering who the pregnant learner was, he immediately called her in. Mr Alfred recalls that although the

learner was allowed to have an abortion according to South African law, he still had a duty of care and safety toward the learner as the principal of the school. He further notes that many high school learners that attempt abortions don't have these procedures at hospitals but rather at back door clinics. In terms of the safety concerns for the child, Mr Alfred states that he would contact the parents and inform them of the legal implications of their child's decision but also to notify them that he was concerned about the health and safety issues in undergoing the procedure.

The lived experiences of ethical dilemmas within this theme place emphasis on the difficulties experienced by two principals in relation to ethical dilemmas that are policy centred.

5.7 Lived experiences of ethical dilemmas as interconnected and interdependent

Data reveals that although principals' lived experiences of ethical dilemmas were classified into learner, staff, parent, departmental and policy centred experiences, all of these areas were interconnected and interdependent. It was found for example, that principals experiencing an ethical dilemma that is learner centred, would in most instances encounter that ethical dilemma gaining momentum and ultimately becoming a departmentally centred ethical dilemma. Principals were asked to provide examples of how a decision taken to resolve an ethical dilemma that was learner centred could potentially affect the school in other areas such as the community and the department. Mrs Naidoo said:

It depends on the nature of the dilemma, sometimes you can solve it in house, like if its minor issues. At other times you probably will need intervention from outside and how it affects other systems is you may not have the legal ramification and the legal knowledge or jargon to deal with certain issues.

She further went on to share a current and valuable example with respect to the Covid-19 pandemic:

It's like in a case like covid, imagine you had a death at school. So you need to be concerned about the social wellbeing of everybody, the staff, security, their insecurities and then it spills out into the families. This whole fear of covid actually impacted on staff as well. You might have a case where somebody says, "I might as well resign because I don't feel safe or secure." So that is where it does affect other systems.

Mrs Naidoo asserts that her experience of Covid-19 demonstrates the effects of an ethical dilemma on other systems or areas of the school. She explains the fear associated with the virus

and how this affects the school at the community level. Sharing similar sentiments, Mr Henwood said:

Whatever happens in one area of the school affects every other aspect of the school and they are so intertwined that a bad decision in one area affects the rest of the school. A good decision in one area affects the school positively.

Adding to what Mrs Naidoo reported, Mr Darcy shares a practical experience to demonstrate the effect of how a decision taken within a particular area of the school spills outward and creates numerous other issues in other systems of the school. He said:

The learner centred ethical dilemma of the political party incident for example, the communities first complaint was from an old boy of a specific race group. Then you deal with the matter and the community are immediately affected by that. So it's already out there, and they ask, what are you doing about it? Then the department interfered in the process and they stopped us from having the hearing, which is totally illegal, they can't do that. You've got to be consistent and fair otherwise there's no credibility.

Mr Darcy's lived experience asserts the interconnected nature of the various systems within the school and how an ethical dilemma in one area may cause a host of ethical dilemmas in other systems of the school. Leppard (2018) asserts that it is crucial that principals equip themselves with an understanding of how systems or areas of a school interact and effect each other over time. Mr Henwood suggests that decisions need to be good to ensure they impact on the school positively in other areas. The following theme reveals the complexities of lived experiences of ethical dilemmas between primary and high school principals. The following theme reveals how principals deal with ethical dilemmas through their lived experiences as principals

5.8 Dealing with ethical dilemmas

This section reveals the lived experience of how principals deal with ethical dilemmas in their schools. Principals were asked to explain how they dealt with ethical dilemmas. Mrs Naidoo said that dealing with ethical dilemmas often requires a varied approach depending on the nature of the ethical dilemma. She said:

If it's come directly to me then I would investigate the matter, collect the information, try not to be judgemental, be as objective as possible. Give both parties an opportunity to have their say and share the information. Then if there is a need, then we call a team

because sometimes you can be partial if you're on your own. Depending on the nature of the incident is where I decide if we need legal advice or if we need a disciplinary committee or if we need departmental intervention. You might need psychosocial services, it just depends.

In contrast to Mrs Naidoo's approach to dealing with ethical dilemmas, Mr Henwood says that he always removes emotional distractions. He said:

In all of the occasions, I've taken the personal emotions out and I have dealt with them professionally. I have been consistent and you cannot allow emotional distractions to influence you, you've got one chance to do the right thing the first time round.

Mr Darcy expanded on Mrs Naidoo's experience by saying:

Gather all the facts, listen, get the people in, hear what the story is and then from there you go ahead and make a judgement on how I'm going to deal with this moving forward.

Similarly, Mr Alfred said:

You have got to be upfront, open and talk to them. Say things to them so that they understand what your value system is and what underpins your value system. Of course the other thing is, you have got to live those values as well. You can't say I'm a transparent leader and then you go and do other things.

Lived experiences suggest that Mrs Naidoo, Mr Darcy and Mr Alfred share a high level of commonality in the manner in which they deal with ethical dilemmas. They mention gathering all facts and information pertaining to an ethical dilemma to ensure a fair and transparent judgement is made going forward. Mr Henwood mentions that he removes all emotional distractions and does not allow them to become a distraction. The following sub-theme discusses the approaches principals take in dealing with ethical dilemmas, with a focus on whether they utilise a specific ethical dilemma model, framework or policy in the resolution of their experienced ethical dilemmas.

5.8.1 The ethical dilemma resolution process

This section reveals how exactly principals reach resolution in terms of their experienced ethical dilemmas with the use of frameworks, policies, approaches or models. Mrs Naidoo shared her experience as follows:

The first step is to get information, you don't just out a suspension or rap out a punishment. The very important thing is to listen, collect information, get counsel and the most important thing is communication, to allow stakeholders to feel that I'm going to have a fair representation here.

Mrs Naidoo places emphasis on the importance of taking all opinions on the matter into account. In contrast, Mr Henwood prefers a more policy driven approach toward the resolution of ethical dilemmas. He shared the following:

The South African schools act, the employment of educators' act is very clear as to how to behave. Your learner code of conduct, your staff code of conduct, the SACE code of conduct, those are the pillars that one would use when dealing with these ethical challenges. Depending on the situation that is on the ground, whether it is a learner type, staff influence or parents, that is the way you would have to deal with it. In dealing with those frameworks, you can't go wrong. Its policy.

Adding to Mr Henwood's experience of dealing with ethical dilemmas, Mr Darcy follows a similar approach:

I've got my own views but I try to keep it objective. I refer to the code of conduct, SACE. That's a guideline because you can't be accused of being subjective and inconsistent and favouring. Getting all the facts, if need be, getting advice, especially with some of the very serious stuff like legal advice.

Differing from the other principals, Mr Alfred shared the following approach where he explains a set of questions that he asks himself when confronted with ethical dilemmas:

I ask the following questions in my mind: What is the fair thing to do? What is the context that governs this matter? Has a decision been made that was based on values that the school upholds? I look at whether there are any extenuating factors that need to be taken into account. Have people operated within our framework of values? Is it fair, transparent, righteous, just?

Karadag and Tekel (2017), state that there are five questions that educational leaders need to ask themselves when dealing with ethical dilemmas. These include, 1) What is the most beneficial decision for learners? 2) What are the personal and professional codes of ethics within which educational leaders (principals) must abide by? 3) Which of these ethical codes should be taken into consideration when making a decision? 4) How would society feel about

the decision? 5) What would be the most suitable way to respond to the ethical dilemma? Mr Alfred agrees with these questions. He further states the importance of incorporating an ethical framework. He said:

In a sense there is a framework. Sometimes that framework may not be acceptable to everybody because sometimes people want to take the short route, but if your model is a model that is based on all those values. You have got no problems.

The differing opinions of principals within this section are interesting as Mr Henwood and Mr Darcy are policy driven thus they are able to ensure they follow protocol to avoid being accused of wrong-doings, whereas Mrs Naidoo follows strict guidance from all stakeholders to ensure the ethical dilemma may be resolved effectively. In the study conducted by Cranston, et al., (2004), it emerges that it is critical for principals to utilise a model (figure 1 in theoretical framework) to visualise where ethical dilemmas arise, as well as to understand how they affect other systems or areas of a school. Cranston, et al., (2004), assert that their model, when utilised in dealing with ethical dilemmas, is a crucial framework for principals, outlining a process for identifying and resolving ethical dilemmas. Interestingly, no principals mention utilising a model such as this. Kustyruba and Walker (2013) propose an integrated framework comprising ethical considerations to ensure that ethical practice is achieved. Mr Alfred concurs as he defends asking himself questions and mentions that, in a sense, there is a framework that he utilises.

The following section focusses on specific leadership strategies principals have in place in order to successfully deal with ethical dilemmas.

5.8.2 Leadership strategies in the process of ethical dilemma resolution

Data reveals that dealing with ethical dilemmas does not solely rely on an approach, framework or model but that effective leadership is also considered as a crucial factor in dealing with ethical dilemmas. Mrs Naidoo shared her experience of the leadership strategies she has in place in order to deal with ethical dilemmas effectively:

You lead by democracy, but remember democracy has certain limitations, sometimes it may be necessary to tell somebody listen, let's do this this way. I just think you need to lead by example. Role modelling, because your leadership styles actually engenders trust in those foundations. You've got to walk the talk, if you actually can show by example that you're fair, honest there's integrity, there's accountability and responsibility, in your daily action, that for me is very important as the leader and then

you can have buy in by your staff because then they say but there is consistency in this person.

Mrs Naidoo mentions that leading democratically and by example is crucial but that sometimes an autocratic stance is needed. She further mentions that by showing she is fair and honest she receives buy-in from her staff where they trust her. Agreeing with Mrs Naidoo, Mr Henwood explains that a combination of delegation, democratic leadership as well as autocratic leadership strategies are crucial. He said the following:

One cannot be effective, efficient or professional if one allows unethical behaviour or actions and then demand they be treated the same on another occasion. Leadership means that you have to be ethical, consistently ethical, have the same integrity, the same moral values and if you want to lose your role as leader, then behave differently in different situations. Delegation is very important but with delegation, you cannot delegate accountability, you can delegate responsibility, but you as the principal remain accountable for what happens. I would say that I am pretty democratic, but when it comes to service delivery, I am rather autocratic.

Mr Henwood agrees with Mrs Naidoo and adds the importance of delegation, however noting that accountability cannot be delegated. He further mentions that principals need to act ethically and consistently if they are to remain in their role as leader. Mr Darcy's opinion is that one needs to ensure one is consistent in every situation and agrees with Mr Henwood's views of leading for ethical dilemma resolution. He said the following:

If you're setting an example and you're setting the standards and if you are wavering in that regard, then how can you expect your staff or the rest to follow you. You can't have double standards.

Further agreeing with Mr Henwood, Mr Darcy said the following in terms of his leadership strategies:

Ultimately its autocratic, you have to because when the pawpaw hits the fan there's only one person, it's me, it's not the deputy, it's not the SGB chairman it's me. They can't do anything about the SGB chair, they can't bully them but they can bully or try to bully the principals, and they do. They do or they try to anyway. The buck stops with the principal, so you rely on those teams to make good decisions and also if they are not sure, that they consult you. Just like I consult the governing body and I consult

lawyers, my deputies as well. There's no ways in this day and age that you can just run along and do things on your own. I mean it's difficult.

Concurring with Mr Henwood, Mr Alfred said the following in terms of the importance of leadership:

I think leadership is paramount when it comes to running an institution on an ethical basis and if you are a principal leader you will make sure that you live the values that you expose, you don't just say things and act in a different way. You have got to be that model. You have got to model the way in every step. If you are not modelling the way, don't expect others to follow you.

Adding to Mrs Naidoo's view, Mr Alfred emphasises the importance of democratic leadership:

I think you have got to be a democratic leader. You have got to be able to listen, be a smart listener, also be consistent, be righteous, act with integrity and all of those are principles of democratic leadership.

The ultimate purpose of principals is to lead their schools in the most effective and proficient manner, ensuring a sense of quality within their schools' can be attained (Bush, 2008). Findings suggest this can be achieved by creating an environment that is democratic in nature where principals act as role models for all stakeholders. Principals remaining consistently ethical is also crucial. Data reveals that although principals' leadership strategies are democratic in nature, they are also autocratic when the need arises as they are the accountable agents at the end of the day. This theme therefore ultimately reveals the importance of principals leading a democratic school environment and the importance of their leading by example by being consistently ethical. The following section reveals the importance of following the practice of ethical leadership in the process of dealing with ethical dilemmas.

5.8.3 The importance of ethical leadership in dealing with ethical dilemmas

As mentioned in the previous section, the lived experiences suggest that effective leadership is paramount in the process of dealing with ethical dilemmas. Data distinctly reveals the importance of ethical leadership in dealing with ethical dilemmas. Principals were asked to share their experiences on whether ethical leadership was important in dealing with ethical dilemmas. Mrs Naidoo shares the view that ethical leadership is important in dealing with ethical dilemmas. She said:

It is an important factor in dealing with ethical dilemmas, you need to have some kind of guiding principles and I mentioned them, fairness, responsibility and accountability. You need to have that in your, as they say persona and as characteristics as well. You're walking the talk, you show it by the principles of truth, integrity and that for me, that's how I would envisage an ethical leader.

Similarly, Mr Henwood said the following:

A principal who fails to behave in an honest, moral, and integral manner, they are going to create lots of conflict for themselves. It's going to be unethical, you have to deal with matters ethically, professionally, responsibly, taking all opinions into account and the problem is you have to sift out opinions with real facts. There are challenges, there's no two ways about it but to be a successful leader it is important to be extremely ethical when dealing with dilemmas or challenges. You've got to have high morals, integrity, deal with matters professionally and you need to respect your staff in every way.

Mr Henwood agrees that ethical leadership is important in dealing with ethical dilemmas. Mr Darcy shares a similar explanation supporting both Mrs Naidoo and Mr Henwood's views by saying that:

If you don't have any moral fibre or ethical beliefs, then you are going to struggle to have any ethical leadership at all. Issues of being honest, truthful and a person of integrity, I think is very important. Obviously an ethical leader is got to be honest with himself. I always talk about honesty and how honesty starts with you. Looking at yourself in the mirror, and then of course integrity, doing the right thing. Those two characteristics I think are very important.

Mr Darcy adds to this by saying that if there is a lack of moral fibre or beliefs based on ethics one would lack any kind of ethical leadership. He asserts that being an ethical leader involves being honest with yourself and also doing the right thing. Mr Alfred added to Mr Darcy's comment and said:

You have to be an ethical leader yourself, before you try and deal with issues of an ethical nature. If you are not ethical, its simply not going to work. You have got to be a role-model. You have got to have your own values and they must be values that other people want to aspire to. There are a number of cases where principals have been

charged for misconduct because they have behaved in an unethical manner and then done things that don't fit in. Things that don't resonate with an ethical leadership style.

The findings clearly emphasise the importance of ethical leadership and provide profound evidence of the importance of ethical leadership in the process of ethical dilemma resolution. Blackman (2018) asserts that ethical leadership involves acting according to your moral principles within your day to day decision-making and the findings agree with this. In addition, principals value the importance of implementing ethical leadership into their practice. This ensures that their decisions are carried out in an ethical manner. Kutsyuruba and Walker (2013) state that ethical leadership involves the implementation of appropriate conduct through personal and interpersonal interactions, which further includes the promotion of appropriate conduct toward sub-ordinates through a process of clear communication, reinforcement techniques and decision-making. The findings suggest that principals must act as role models and demonstrate appropriate conduct toward staff, which aligns with Kutsyuruba and Walker's position (2013). The following theme reveals the lack of training and support currently provided to principals in dealing with ethical dilemmas in schools.

5.9 Limited training and support in dealing with ethical dilemmas

Data reveals that principals' lack sufficient training in dealing with ethical dilemmas. This ultimately hinders their ability to deal with ethical dilemmas effectively. Participants were asked whether they received adequate training in dealing with ethical dilemmas. Mrs Naidoo said:

You probably get the theoretical aspect in your studies. However, the reality is through the experience.

In contrast to Mrs Naidoo's statement, Mr Henwood follows a different approach in terms of gaining experience where he learns from the good and the bad characteristics of principals he has worked under. He said the following:

As a principal no one trains you to behave ethically. That comes with experience. Working under principals, you gain an understanding of their good points, their bad points and you try your level best not to repeat their bad points.

The comment provided by Mr Henwood shares a similar view to that of Mr Darcy, who added:

Look there is stuff from the department but, it's more academic than this sort of stuff. We were not trained for any of it, I promise you.

Mr Alfred's experience was also significantly similar to Mr Henwood's experience. He said:

I became despondent with the type of leadership that I witnessed and I said to myself, if I ever get into one of those positions one day in my career. I would need to empower myself.

The lived experiences suggest that principals are not adequately trained to deal with ethical dilemmas. Three principals agree that they managed to deal with ethical dilemmas through empowering themselves as well as through their experiences of dealing with ethical dilemmas. In support of this, Mollo (2010) asserts that in South Africa, where corruption is particularly rife, there are criteria and measures that must be observed as well as institutions that must be created, to focus on the preservation of integrity and the promotion of ethical principles. Consulted literature supports the view that principals have difficulty in dealing with ethical dilemmas in an ethical manner and also emphasises that this is an area where principals seem to lack insight (Cranston, et al., 2006; Karadag & Tekel, 2017; Karakose & Kocabas, 2009; Kutsyuruba & Walker, 2013;). The following sub-themes reveal the ways in which principals gained assistance from colleagues in order to deal with ethical dilemmas despite receiving insufficient formal training. The second sub-theme reveals the way in which principals manage to receive training in dealing with ethical dilemmas.

5.9.1 Policy borrowing and the support from principal's colleagues

Data reveals that principals receive support from their colleagues in dealing with ethical dilemmas. Principals shared their experiences of gaining assistance from principal colleagues through the sharing of ideas, policies and specific frameworks. Mrs Naidoo said:

The principals group is a very nice meeting place where people share their experiences and you learn through them, to know how issues are being dealt with. Sometimes you go to the motivational talks and we are fortunate in the school that I belong to. We attend a principal breakfast where people share and you just think, I'm not alone in this, but there's some who are left to their own. We would say, I'll give you the framework I've been using, have you got something like this? and they obviously will engineer it to meet their own needs, but people do share.

Adding to this, Mr Darcy said:

You also learn from your peers, from your colleagues and you share. We have got groups, WhatsApp groups that we share information on. We are on a big group together

and we just share. I say, hey guys can you help me with this problem? and they say, yes, sure. Try this, here you go. Otherwise you are in a vacuum, starting from scratch every time.

These experiences suggest that with principals not receiving adequate formal training to deal with ethical dilemmas, they had to engineer a platform where they could easily access assistance in dealing with ethical dilemmas. What is concerning however, as Mrs Naidoo mentions, is that there are unfortunately principals who are left to their own devices. The following sub-theme reveals the types of training received by principals in dealing with ethical dilemmas.

5.9.2 Types of training received in dealing with ethical dilemmas

This sub-theme reveals principals' experiences of the limited training they receive in dealing with ethical dilemmas. During the interview process, principals consistently mention the training they had received from two specific areas. These included the Federation of Associations of Governing Bodies of South African Schools (FEDSAS) as well as the Department of Basic Education (DBE).

Mrs Naidoo shared her experiences in terms of the training she had received:

FEDSAS, I attend their webinars and you'll have a whole lot of principals' on there so you'll have sharing of ideas. The department, they're very difficult to get hold of and to get the resources for a school because they are always saying they are so stretched.

Agreeing with Mrs Naidoo, Mr Henwood observes that he had a positive experience with FEDSAS in comparison to what was provided by the DBE. He said:

The webinars, training and support that one gets from an organisation like FEDSAS is invaluable. As someone that has been enlightened professionally in a professional manner from FEDSAS, now hearing someone from the department who is on the wrong track completely. That is the expectation that they have, the expectation that you will go and deliver something according to their prophecy and you know that it is ethically wrong to do that so, who do you hold onto? The one who is most ethical, that's the long and the short of it because you can't go wrong doing the most ethical thing.

Mr Henwood states that a specific issue that was discussed by FEDSAS, prior to the DBE addressing it, was according to him, neither appropriately nor professionally covered by the DBE workshop presenters when compared to the manner he was enlightened by FEDSAS. He

mentions that this may have serious repercussions as FEDSAS is an organisation that only supports schools which can afford to join it. This begs the question whether the correct message is being conveyed to principals who are not engaged in FEDSAS workshops. Mr Darcy, with international experience of training added:

I have been blessed by working overseas. I have been on many courses and learnt so much, which I wouldn't have learnt here, which has been lucky. Overseas, they prepare you for those roles. So you go from a post level 1, middle management, then courses for that, then you go from that to being a deputy and courses in that, so as you move up the ladder you get lots of knowledge.

Mr Darcy asserts that it is evident that South Africa is still far behind in terms of training for specific roles and other participants mention that after being placed in positions of high leadership within a school, there is little or no training to assist principals in dealing with ethical dilemmas. Mr Alfred agrees with Mr Darcy and says:

Sadly, the department did not give us any training for that, even when I became a deputy or principal, we were never called to an induction or a workshop or training. There was not even mention of ethics. If you had to ask me in my 12 years of being the principal here, 12 completed years. I would say one a scale of 0-10. I would say its 1 only. They simply leave you to resolve your own dilemmas by yourself.

Regarding FEDSAS training, Mr Alfred said the following:

FEDSAS, I have attended one or two of their workshops, they are excellent. My only concern is that one has to be careful in simply buying into a particular organisation and their views on a matter. One has to be very careful that you don't lock yourself into a battle mould with the department all the time and sometimes, FEDSAS can take that approach. Its FEDSAS versus the department.

Mr Alfred emphasises that principals should never buy into one particular approach. Mr Alfred further confirms the importance of gaining knowledge beyond what is required for one's own benefit. He further shared the following in relation to preparing his management team for ethical dilemmas:

I empower my management team as much as I can. We go through ethical dilemma scenarios and we respond to them.

Mr Alfred observes that he has to empower his management team as it is unlikely they will be prepared to deal with ethical dilemmas in any other way. The following and final section makes recommendations for aspiring and current school principals to better be able to deal with ethical dilemmas.

5.10 Advice to current as well as aspiring school principals to deal with ethical dilemmas

Principals are accountable for the success of their schools. The data reveals principals' recommendations to assist current and aspiring school principals to be better able to deal with ethical dilemmas. This theme shares principals' thoughts on what current as well as aspiring school principals can do to enhance their ability to deal with ethical dilemmas professionally and ethically. This is what Mrs Naidoo said:

The school situation is very challenging; it poses a different picture each day you go in to school. I think the very important thing is the people you work with, you need to build trust there, with the very staff that you work with and as they say, charity begins at home. If you can start it in your school and work through positive affirmations, building your staff, working on their strengths and then being aware of their weaknesses but not owning in on it, that is very important.

Mr Henwood takes a similar stance, however, he also asserts that more training with regard to ethical dilemmas needs to be initiated, as stated by Mollo (2010). Mr Henwood said:

I think it would be proper for the department to workshop principals or aspiring principals before they become a principal. The department needs to also embrace the professionalism of organisations such as FEDSAS and see their value. My recommendation would be that the department uses professional people, chartered accountants and the likes, to empower prospective principals. Before you can apply to become a principal, one should actually go through a process, or a specific course or if you aspire to become a principal, you need to give evidence that you have empowered yourself by attending courses. A lot of principals have lost their jobs simply because they have done one silly mistake in terms of the finances. My recommendation is that the department does a lot more work in bringing principals up to speed or aspiring principals' do a lot of work themselves, to come up to speed with all the demands of what is expected of them.

In contrast to the opinions expressed by Mrs Naidoo and Mr Henwood, Mr Darcy said:

Try and assign yourself a mentor. Give yourself a mentor who's been through that experience. An older, wiser individual, who can give you guidance.

Sharing similar sentiments to Mrs Naidoo's earlier statement, where she discusses the theoretical aspects covered in her studies, Mr Alfred recommends the importance of developing oneself in a professional manner. His advice was:

Read. Engage yourself in professional development and growth. Engage in further studies. Engage with people from other sectors. Involve yourself in activities with organisations such as FEDSAS, the governing body federation, the national school alliance, the South African Principals Association. You have to also become knowledgeable of legislation, become knowledgeable in terms of policies. If you're going to be depending on experience all the time you'll find yourself coming short in certain areas.

In agreement with this, Karadag and Tekel (2017) state that principals should be accustomed to and have sound knowledge of specific policies, laws and legislation. This section discusses what the data revealed as recommendations to current and aspiring school principals to better deal with ethical dilemmas. According to the principals, acquiring a mentor, engaging in further studies, becoming knowledgeable about the law, liaising with individuals from different sectors and ensuring a positive relationship with staff are all crucial.

5.11 Chapter summary

This chapter discussed and provided an in-depth analysis of the data that was generated in the field. A host of themes and sub-themes emerged in achieving the objectives of the study. Firstly, principals' understanding of ethics, their views of the importance of ethics and the causes of ethical dilemmas in their experiences were discussed. Secondly, their lived experiences of ethical dilemmas were discussed under the following themes that emerged: learner centred, staff centred, parent and school governance centred, community centred, departmental centred and policy centred ethical dilemmas. A sub-theme that also emerged within this section focussed on the lived experiences of ethical dilemmas being interconnected and interdependent. Thirdly, the complexities that exist between primary and high school principals ethical dilemmas were discussed. The fourth theme displayed principals lived experiences of dealing with ethical dilemmas and the leadership strategies they have in place to assist them in dealing with ethical dilemmas. Lastly, the remaining two themes addressed issues of limited training and support in dealing with ethical dilemmas and further offered

recommendations from participating principals in assisting current and aspiring school principals in dealing with ethical dilemmas. The next chapter offers a summary of the study, key learnings, implications and the conclusion.

CHAPTER 6

SUMMARY OF THE STUDY, KEY LEARNINGS, IMPLICATIONS AND CONCLUSION

6.1 Introduction

This study sought to explore principals' lived leadership experiences of ethical dilemmas and how they deal with them in their schools. It further sought to discover the leadership strategies principals have in place in order to deal with ethical dilemmas effectively. These experiences were explored through four school principals in the UMgungundlovu district, of which two were primary school principals and two were high school principals. These principals were required to meet a minimum of three years' experience as principals at their current institutions. It was believed that three years' experience as the head of their current institutions would ensure that their lived experiences of the phenomenon would be valid as well as valuable.

This research was important in attempting to gain a deeper understanding of principals' lived leadership experiences of dealing with ethical dilemmas. The study was therefore based on the assumption that all principals struggle and find dealing with ethical dilemmas an extremely arduous task. This chapter concentrates on a summary of the research journey by providing a summary of key aspects of each chapter and further sheds light on the findings that emerged through the research process. These are discussed in alignment with the theoretical framework and associated literature. Key learnings, implications for principals, recommendations for further research and concluding remarks then conclude the chapter.

The research questions of this study were as follows:

1. What are school principals' lived experiences of ethical dilemmas in their schools?
2. How do school principals deal with ethical dilemmas that arise in their schools?
3. What lessons can be drawn from the principals' lived experiences of ethical dilemmas and the leadership strategies they use to respond to ethical dilemmas in their schools?

6.2 Summary of the study

Chapter one presented an overview of the study. It included the introduction, background of the study, rationale, problem statement, definitions of key concepts, limitations of the study as well as the objectives of the study. This was structured to uncover any prevalent gaps in the literature. The background of the study showed that principals in today's modern era are at the

forefront when dealing with ethical dilemmas, and the decisions they make affect the schooling organisation, within a variety of systems or areas (Leppard, 2018; Oyebade, 2000). In addition to this, it was necessary to note early on in the study that the importance of ethical leadership was a crucial factor for the successful operation of an effective school. Therefore, principals as public administrators must constantly ensure they remain professional in their dealings, as they are the accountable officers in their particular schools (RSA, 2016). SACE is aligned with the constitution and it consists of a code of professional ethics, binding all members registered with SACE to follow the code. Furthermore, the Policy on the South African Standard for Principalship focuses on enhancing the professional image and competencies of school principals (RSA, 2016). Embedded in the principal's leadership and management of the school are core societal, educational and professional values which are reflected in the manner in which principals deal with all matters pertaining to the curriculum and human resources. Therefore, it was essential to note that principals must make professional and managerial decisions based on informed judgments that ultimately result in appropriate action.

Chapter two presented the review of literature in relation to the phenomenon. Keeping in mind the key research questions of the study, the literature review firstly discussed the duties and responsibilities of principals, paying particular attention to South African school principals. Principals' leadership practices in accordance with the South African Standard for Principalship (RSA, 2016) were thereafter discussed, linking the importance of combining various leadership strategies together within the constructs of ethical leadership. The way in which schools are embedded within other systems or levels was also briefly discussed and further elaborated on in the third chapter. With "ethics" being a central concept in the study, it was theoretically conceptualised, while exploring ethical implications for principals in its effective implementation within schools. Thereafter, various ethical judgements, considerations and decision-making processes in association with the construct of ethics were discussed.

The remaining section of the literature review focussed on pertinent lived experiences of ethical dilemmas that had been recorded both locally and internationally. The way in which principals dealt with ethical dilemmas according to empirical research was also discussed. Emphasis was also placed on moral accountability, ensuring that the best interests of learners and various stakeholders within a school are kept in mind when making decisions. The chapter concluded with a discussion around the lack of training for principals in dealing with ethical dilemmas.

Chapter three introduced the theoretical lens utilised in the study. This was included in the study as its own chapter to emphasise its central importance for the study. A systems theory and systems thinking approach was adopted and informed the study greatly. This systems approach consisted of the micro, middle and macro systems, with the school situated at the micro system, being surrounded by the middle and macro systems. The systems approach to the research allowed for ethical dilemma experiences, captured directly from the participating principals to be presented effectively. It further allowed for comparisons to be made between the various lived experiences of ethical dilemmas, showing that all of the systems or areas are interconnected as well as interdependent. The complementing ethical dilemma model, created by Cranston, et al., (2004) supported a discussion of the development of ethical dilemmas, their sources, implications and the areas they follow.

Chapter four presented a discussion of the research design and methodology of the study. The study was informed by the interpretive paradigm which ultimately allowed for lived experiences to be extracted from the participants in accordance with the phenomenon at hand. I utilised a phenomenological research design which was crucial in gaining the lived leadership experiences of the phenomenon. The use of this design allowed for principals' lived experiences to be displayed as they were recorded, permitting comparisons to be made between their individual experiences. The conducting of semi-structured interviews was the data generation tool utilised to ascertain the lived experiences of the participants. The data obtained from the semi-structured interviews was transcribed verbatim, analysed and categorised into various themes. A range of themes emerged and these were discussed in chapter five.

Chapter five focussed on the data analysis and findings of the study. Data revealed a host of themes in relation to the phenomenon. These findings are discussed in the next section.

6.3 Summary of findings

This section presents the findings that emerged during the research process in relation to the following: principals' lived experiences of ethical dilemmas, complexity between primary and high school principals' lived experiences, dealing with ethical dilemmas, leadership strategies in dealing with ethical dilemmas, the importance of ethical leadership in dealing with ethical dilemmas and the lack of sufficient training in dealing with ethical dilemmas.

6.3.1 Principals' lived experiences of ethical dilemmas

The first research question pursued an understanding of principals' lived experiences of ethical dilemmas. Principals' lived experiences of ethical dilemmas were found to be learner, staff, parent, departmental and policy centred. The findings suggest that although principals' lived experiences of ethical dilemmas were classified into learner, staff, parent, departmental and policy centred lived experiences, all of these areas were interconnected and interdependent. In line with the theoretical framework of this study, learner, staff and parent centred ethical dilemmas fall into the micro system. Community centred ethical dilemmas fall into the middle system and departmental and policy centred ethical dilemmas fall into the macro system. It was found that principals' experiencing an ethical dilemma that is learner centred for example, would in most instances encounter that ethical dilemma gaining momentum, ultimately becoming a departmental centred ethical dilemma. This ultimately shows how all of these areas affect each other over time. Leppard (2018) supports this observation and asserts that a system is 'any perceived structure whose elements hang together because they continually affect each other over time'. Sterman (1994, p. 291) concurs and says that principals need to view the world as complex systems, "to understand how everything is connected to everything". It was therefore found that principals need to understand how all systems and areas of the school are connected.

The findings further suggest that principals value the importance of being ethical through their lived experiences of dealing with ethical dilemmas and that if they were to deviate from being or acting ethically, their schools would not operate optimally. Principals' experiences of ethical dilemmas further showed that competing sets of values, beliefs or ideals, differences in cultural practices, differing personalities, fluctuating demands of stakeholders, mismanagement and discipline were contributory causes of their lived experiences of ethical dilemmas.

6.3.2 Dealing with ethical dilemmas

The findings of this study suggest a variety of ways in which principals can successfully deal with ethical dilemmas. Dealing with ethical dilemmas and resolving them, constitutes a constant, daily practice for principals (Cranston, et al., 2004). Cranston, et al., (2004) propose an ethical dilemma model which illustrates the flow of an ethical dilemma along with the systems it may affect on its path to resolution. The findings of this study suggest that principals were not aware of any particular model or framework such as that proposed by Cranston, et al., (2004) model in resolving ethical dilemmas. The data indicates that they rather deal with ethical

dilemmas by following what their school code of conduct and SACE stipulates. In addition to this, the findings further suggest that principals manage to deal with ethical dilemmas through their experience as principals. It was found that all participating principals shared one particular similarity in their specific processes of dealing with ethical dilemmas. This is the manner in which they gather all of the relevant information pertaining to the ethical dilemma, no matter the system it falls within, and then attempt to resolve the issue. It was further discovered that after gathering information, they would consult a host of other professional individuals if the need arose. These individuals included professionals such as lawyers and chartered accountants. In addition to this, a pertinent finding is that principals shared specific school policies (policy borrowing) and assisted other principals when the need arose. It was found that principals communicated with one another via WhatsApp groups, assisting each other to deal with various ethical dilemmas.

6.3.3 Leadership strategies in dealing with ethical dilemmas

Another pertinent finding was the various leadership strategies principals implement in dealing with ethical dilemmas along with the crucial importance of ethical leadership. According to Hallinger and Heck (2010), the leadership approaches and strategies that principals implement have a major impact on the current and future performance of the school. The findings suggest that principals agree that their leadership affects the school either positively or negatively. Furthermore, Amanchukwu, et al., (2015) state that there is no one universal leadership style that is effective for all school principals. The findings suggest that principals agree with this, however, they favour an interchanging between various leadership strategies and approaches in dealing with ethical dilemmas. The importance of being a democratic leader was found to be a crucial element in the successful operation of an ethical school. Principals would allow subordinates to share ideas and give opinions as prescribed by a democratic society. However, it was discovered that when a final decision on a matter needed to be made, they followed an autocratic stance because as the leaders of their institutions, they were the ones held accountable at the end of the day. It was further discovered that participants agreed that the constructs of a democratic schooling environment have a close relationship with the tenets of ethical leadership.

6.3.4 The importance of ethical leadership

The findings suggest that principals, as the leaders of their schools, felt they would not be leading their schools effectively unless they followed the constructs and principles of ethical

leadership. Ethical leadership involves acting according to one's moral principles in one's day to day decision-making (Blackman, 2018). In simpler terms, Blackman (2018) asserts that it involves choosing the right decision or rather 'doing the right thing'. As mentioned previously and in conjunction with the findings of the study, ethical leadership and democratic leadership are the key leadership strategies that principals are able to effect in their schools to ensure effectively functioning schools are created. Leppard (2018) is in agreement with this and asserts that shared decision making is an imperative foundation of ethical leadership.

The findings also suggest that an ethical leader embraces a host of leadership strategies, whilst ensuring the tenets of 'ethics' are bound to their leadership practice. Cranston, et al., (2006) are in support of this finding and reveal that school leadership comprises two important parts. First, that it is about relationships and second, that it is about the care and development of both students and staff. In addition, Leppard (2018) asserts that ethical leadership is about having good relationships with your staff and students. The findings suggest that it is crucial to have positive relationships with staff in order to deal with ethical dilemmas effectively.

Finally, the findings reflect that a principal must ensure that he/she enacts the constructs of ethical leadership, through their leadership practices to ensure an effective teaching and learning environment is created and maintained. The findings further suggest that without following the constructs of ethical leadership, principals would lose their moral compass and have difficulty in dealing with ethical dilemmas.

6.3.5 Lack of sufficient training in dealing with ethical dilemmas

The final finding of the study was that principals had not been trained sufficiently to deal with ethical dilemmas. Through the review of literature, it became evident that research shared similar sentiments with regards to insufficient training being received by principals. The study conducted by Cranston, et al., (2006) reveals that 68% of principals whom formed part of their sample had received no development or access to a program that they could attend with a focus on dealing with ethical dilemmas. This finding was considered quite concerning, as dealing with ethical dilemmas and the resolving of them in an effective manner, is essentially the 'bread and butter' of principals' lives. Fairly recent literature still shows that principals are not receiving adequate training with regard to dealing with ethical dilemmas (Mollo, 2010). The findings of this study show that principals still lack development and training from the DBE. However, it was found that schools fortunate enough to be a part of FEDSAS, had been able to

receive at least some sort of training in dealing with ethical dilemmas. It was further discovered however, that schools have to pay to be part of FEDSAS and not all schools have the available finances for this. This shows that some principals are unfortunately left to their own if they are not able to be a part of FEDSAS. The findings further show that in other countries such as New Zealand, teachers, HOD's and principals are all trained for their positions prior to occupying them.

In closing, all of the findings suggest that the DBE needs to support principals with adequate training in order for them to deal effectively with ethical dilemmas. They also need to take heed of the value that private entities such as FEDSAS provide to school principals who are able to be a part of their association.

6.4 Key learnings, recommendations and concluding remarks

In this section, the key learnings from the research process are explained. These are followed by recommendations to assist aspiring school principals in dealing with ethical dilemmas as well as recommendations for further research. The section concludes with a brief summary of the chapter as a whole. The key learnings of this research consist of five valuable points which are discussed below:

The first key learning point is that through exploring the lived experiences of principals, the magnitude of the task of being a principal is unpacked. It is an extremely arduous task that can have severe repercussions on their livelihoods if they deviate from acting in an ethical manner in their decision making processes.

The second key learning point revolves around principals ensuring that they follow a systems approach in dealing with ethical dilemmas so that they are aware of how ethical dilemmas are interconnected and interdependent, thus affecting other systems or areas of the school. It became evident in the findings of the study that principals must ensure that they understand the various systems, such as the micro, middle and macro in order to be able to identify which areas ethical dilemmas may arise from. It is imagined that if principals understand the effects of systems on other systems, they will be able to resolve ethical dilemmas more easily without creating further ethical dilemmas within other systems.

The third key learning point is that principals should follow specific frameworks or guidelines, such as the model proposed by Cranston, et al., (2004) when dealing with ethical dilemmas. This would allow them to visualise the impact an ethical dilemma could potentially have on the schooling organisation.

Fourth, the leadership strategies principals utilise within their schools must be democratic in nature and should embrace the constructs of ethical leadership. Furthermore, the key learning point here is that principals should adapt their leadership styles or strategies, depending on the situation at hand.

The final key learning point is that principals still lack adequate training for dealing with ethical dilemmas in an efficient and ethical manner. Participants viewed this as an extremely important function which demands far greater attention. The lack of training ultimately affects the way in which principals have experienced dealing with ethical dilemmas.

6.4.1 Implications for principals and recommendations for further research

A key focus of this study was to explore the lived experiences of ethical dilemmas that plague principals as well as to understand how they manage to deal with them effectively. With this being the professional motivation for conducting the study, further implications for current and aspiring school principals are discussed in an attempt to provide them with knowledge, enabling them to better handle the inevitable conflicts that face leaders of schooling organisations. Current and aspiring school principals may be able to handle ethical dilemmas more effectively if they follow the recommendations provided. Recommendations for conducting further research into the phenomenon are also discussed at the end of this section.

Firstly, it is crucial that principals create a school environment that is based on trust, transparency and strong ethical values to ensure that ethical dilemmas are minimised, but when they do occur, that they may be resolved with ease. The schooling environment needs to be one where all feel as though they are part of the process in reaching the organisational objectives. Secondly, principals should assign themselves a mentor who can assist them in their efforts. In addition to this, experienced principals are able to share great insight into the process of resolving ethical dilemmas. Finally, it is crucial that principals go above and beyond to gain further knowledge around ethical dilemmas. It is recommended that current and aspiring school principals engage in activities that enhance their ability to deal with the complex occupation.

Therefore, it is imperative that an engagement in further studies takes place, and that relevant policies and legislation are consulted and thoroughly understood. These are considered to be the most valuable ways in which current and aspiring school principals can equip themselves to deal effectively with ethical dilemmas.

It has been noted that principals do not receive adequate training for dealing with ethical dilemmas. Therefore, it is crucial that further research be conducted on the phenomenon to allow current and aspiring school principals to gain deep knowledge of the phenomenon through current literature.

In concluding the study, recording principals' lived leadership experiences in dealing with ethical dilemmas in schools enabled this research to provide additional knowledge for current and aspiring school principals, to assist them in the arduous task of constantly facing and dealing with complex ethical dilemmas.

6.5 Chapter summary

This chapter focussed firstly on presenting a summary of the research journey. Secondly, a discussion of the key findings and learnings was presented. Thirdly, recommendations for current as well as aspiring school principals were provided to assist them in dealing with ethical dilemmas. Finally, recommendations were made for further research into the phenomenon.

REFERENCES

- Amanchukwu, R., Olulube, N., & Stanley, G. (2015). A review of leadership theories, principles and styles and their relevance to educational management. *Management*, 5, 6-14.
- Bayeni, S., Bhengu, T., & Mchunu, B. (2020). Growing Our Own Timber! Lived Experiences of Five School Principals in Using a Systems Thinking Approach for School Development. *SAGE*, 1-12.
- Begley, P., & Stefkovich, J. (2007). Ethical school leadership: defining the best interests of students. *Educational Management Administration & Leadership*, 35(2), 205-224.
- Berkovich, I., Eyal, O., & Schwartz, T. (2011). Making the right choices: Ethical judgments among educational leaders. *Journal of educational administration*, 49(4), 2-18.
- Berry, V., & Dempster, N. (2003). Blindfolded in a minefield: principals' ethical decision-making. *Cambridge journal of education*, 33(3), 457-477.
- Bertram, C., & Christiansen, I. (2014). *Understanding Research*. Pretoria: Van Schaik Publishers.
- Betts, F. (1992). *How systems thinking applies to education*. Retrieved November 11, 2020, from ASCD Learn. Teach. Lead: <http://www.ascd.org/publications/educational-leadership/nov92/vol50/num03/How-Systems-Thinking-Applies-to-Education.aspx>
- Billot, J., Cranston, N., & Goddard, T. (2007). International studies in educational administration. *Journal of the commonwealth council for educational administration and management*(1), 30-45.
- Blackman, A. (2018). *What Is ethical leadership? how to be a more ethical leader*. Retrieved February 25, 2020, from Envatotuts.: <https://business.tutsplus.com/tutorials/what-is-ethical-leadership--cms-31780>
- Boru, N. (2020). Ethical Dilemmas: A Problematic Situation for Teachers. *International Journal of Progressive Education*, 16(3), 1-8.

- Burgh, G., & Freakley, M. (2000). Engaging with ethics: ethical inquiry for teachers. *Engaging with ethics: ethical inquiry for teachers*.
- Bush, T. (2008). *Leadership and management development in education*. California: SAGE.
- Cardno, C. (2007). Leadership learning: the praxis of dilemma management . In J. C. Billot, *International studies in educational administration* (pp. 33-40). ISEA.
- Cheteni, P & Shindika, E. (2017). Ethical Leadership in South Africa and Botswana. Fort Hare. Retrieved April 9, 2021, from www.anpad.org.br/bar
- Conrad, A. M. (2013). Ethical leadership in Kazakhstan: An exploratory study. *The Journal of values based leadership*, 6(1), 1-11. Retrieved from <http://scholar.valpo.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1072&context=jvbl>
- Cranston, N., Ehrich, L., & Kimber, M. (2004). Right versus wrong and right versus right: understanding ethical dilemmas faced by educational leaders. *Australian Association for Research in Education*, 1-17.
- Cranston, N., Ehrich, L., & Kimber, M. (2006). *Ethical dilemmas: the bread and butter of educational leaders lives*, 44(2), 1-10.
- Creswell, J., & Poth, C. (2018). *Qualitative inquiry and research design choosing among five approaches*. Thousand Oaks: SAGE Publications.
- Department of Basic Education (DBE). (2000). South African Council for Educators act (SACE). *Professional code of ethics*, 1-16.
- Department of Basic Education (DBE). (2019). *Importance of principals*. Retrieved June 12, 2020, from <https://www.education.gov.za/Informationfor/Principals.aspx>
- Duignan, P. (2004). Being an authentic leader in a contemporary world. *Prime focus*, 2-4.
- Erdogan, O & Sezgin, F. (2020). Ethical dilemmas that school administrators and teachers experience: Reasons and coping strategies. *Pegem journal of education and instruction*, 10(2), 593-634.

- Evers, C. (1992). *Ethics and ethical theory in educational leadership: a pragmatic and holistic approach*. London: Falmer.
- Fleming, S., & Vandermause, R. (2011). Philosophical hermeneutic interviewing. *International journal of qualitative methods*, 10(4), 367-375.
- Fullan, M. (1993). *Change forces: Probing the depth of educational reform*. London: Falmer.
- Fullan, M., & Hargreaves, A. (2004). What is worth fighting for? working together for your school. *Australian council for educational administration*.
- Gardiner, M., & Tenuto, T. (2015). Reflections of practicing school principals on ethical leadership and decision-making: confronting social injustice. *The Journal of Values-Based Leadership*, 8(2), 1-11.
- Glanz, J. (2010). Justice and caring: power, politics and ethics in strategic leadership. *ISEA*, 38(1), 68-86.
- Groenewald, T. (2004). A phenomenological research design illustrated. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, 1-24.
- Guba, E., & Lincoln, Y. (1988). Criteria for assessing naturalistic inquiries as reports. *American Educational Research Association*, 1-25.
- Hallinger, P., & Heck, R. (2010). Leadership for learning: Does collaborative leadership make a difference for school learning. *Educational management, leadership & administration*, 38(6), 654-677.
- Hodgkinson, C. (1991). *Educational Leadership: the moral art*. New York: University of New York press.
- Johnson, C. (2004). *Meeting the ethical challenges of leadership: Casting light or shadow*. California: SAGE.
- Karadag, E., & Tekel, E. (2017). A qualitative study on the moral dilemmas of elementary and high school principals, 10(1), 88-96.

- Karakose, T., & Kocabas, I. (2009). Ethics in school administration. *African Journal of Business Management*, 3(4), 126-130.
- Kutsyuruba, B., & Walker, K. (2013). Ethical challenges in school administration: perspectives of Canadian principals. *Organisational Cultures: An International Journal*, 12(3), 85-96.
- Laverty, S. (2003). Hermeneutic phenomenology and phenomenology: a comparison of historical and methodological considerations. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, 1-29.
- Leppard, L. (2018). School principal responses to ethical dilemmas. *Forum on Public Policy*, 2-15.
- Merriam, S. (2009). *Qualitative research*. San Francisco: John Wiley & Sons Inc.
- MetLife. (2013). *The MetLife survey of the American teacher*, 3-115. Retrieved February 05, 2020, from <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED530021.pdf>
- Mollo, S. (2010). Reflections on ethical dilemmas: A South African perspective. *Commonwealth association for public administration and management*, 20-25.
- Naidoo, E. (2015). *Ethical leadership in schools: voices of school principals and teachers from three secondary schools in Durban*. Durban: University of KwaZulu-Natal .
- NCES. (1994). *Public and private school principals in the United States: A statistical profile*. Retrieved June 10, 2020, from <<http://nces.ed.gov/pubs/ppsp/97455-2.html>>.
- Oyebade, S. (2000). Applying the general systems theory to students conflict management in Nigeria's tertiary institutions. 37-42.
- Pietkiewicz, I., & Smith, J. (2014). A practical guide to using interpretative phenomenological analysis in qualitative research psychology. *Psychological Journal*, 20(1), 7-13.

- Preston, N., & Samford, C. (2004). *Encouraging ethics and challenging corruption*. Sydney: Federation press.
- Rebore, R. (2001). *The ethics of educational leadership*. New Jearsey: Merrill prentice hall.
- Republic of South Africa. (1996). South African Constitution. *Republic of South Africa*, 1-120.
- Republic of South Africa. (2016). *South African Standard for Principalship*, 3-19.
- Sergiovanni, T. (1992). *Moral leadership: Getting to the heart of school improvement*. San Francisco: Jossey-bass.
- Sockett, H. (1993). *The moral base for teacher professionalism*. New York : Teachers college press.
- Starrat, R. (1991). Building an ethical school: a theory for practice in educational leadership. *Educational administration quarterly*(27), 185-202.
- Starrat, R. (1994). *Building an ethical school: A practical response to the moral crisis in schools*. London: Falmer.
- Starrat, R. (2012). *Cultivating an ethical school*. New York: NY: Routledge.
- Sterman, J. (1994). Learning in and about complex systems. *Systems dynamics review*, 10(2-3), 291-330.
- Strike, K., & Ternasky, L. (1993). *Ethics for professionals in education: Perspective for preparation and practice*. New York: Teachers college press.
- Styron, J. (2011). Critical issues facing school principals. *Journal of College Teaching & Learning*, 8(5), 1-10.
- Tshaka, R. (2009). The dilemma of ethical leadership in present-day South Africa. *Missionalia*, 37(2), 153-160.

Van Manen, M. (2014). *Phenomenology of practice*. California: Left Coat Press, Inc.

Wise, D. (2015). Emerging challenges facing school principals. *NCPEA Education Leadership Review*, 16(2), 1-13.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A – Interview Schedule

Research Questions

1. What are school principals' lived experiences of ethical dilemmas in their schools?
2. How do school principals' deal with ethical dilemmas that arise in their schools?
3. What lessons can be drawn from the principals' lived experiences of ethical dilemmas and the leadership strategies they use to respond to ethical dilemmas in their schools?

Interview Questions

Introductory questions:

- Please tell me about yourself briefly?
- What has your experience been like as the leader of a school?
- How long have you been a principal?
- What made you decide to become a principal?

1. In your years as a principal you must have come across the concept of 'ethics'. What is your understanding around this concept?
2. Based on your experience as a principal, is ethics or being ethical important? Why do you say so?
3. In your opinion, does the effective implementation of an ethical stance allow for the effective operation of a school?
4. In your experience, what would you say an ethical dilemma within the schooling scenario constitutes? (What causes an ethical dilemma?)
5. Within which systems (micro, middle or macro systems) do these ethical dilemmas prominently arise from?
6. How does the decision taken to resolve an ethical dilemma affect other systems within and outside of the school?
7. Please share some of your lived experiences with regards to ethical dilemmas in your role as school leader? What kinds of dilemmas have you been faced with?
8. In your dealings as principal, how have you dealt with these ethical dilemmas?
9. Do you follow a specific criteria/formula or model when a dilemma arises to assist you in making the right/ethical decision?
10. How do you ultimately reach a decision in terms of the dilemma at hand?

11. In your opinion, is leadership an important facet when it comes to being ethical and why?
12. What leadership strategy/style would you say is most suited to being an ethical leader in the process of ethical dilemma resolution and why?
13. What leadership strategies do you have in place to assist you in dealing with ethical dilemmas? How does it assist you?
14. Based on your experience, is ethical leadership an important factor in dealing with ethical dilemmas?
15. Based on your experience, and in your view, how would you envisage an ethical leader? What characteristics would they have and how would they lead their schools?
16. In your experience, do you feel you were adequately trained to deal with ethical dilemmas, or is this merely something you have been able to grasp only through the experience of dealing with dilemmas?
17. What recommendations would you offer to current as well as aspiring school principals to assist them in dealing with ethical dilemmas?
18. Is there any other information you would like to share that you feel will be relevant to the study?

APPENDIX B – Letter requesting permission to conduct research from principals

30A Chasedene Road
Chase Valley
Pietermaritzburg
0181
10 July 2020

The Principal

LETTER SEEKING PERMISSION TO CONDUCT A STUDY

My name is Christopher Brian Mantel, I am a student at the University of KwaZulu-Natal, and currently registered for a Master's Degree in Educational Leadership, Management and Policy. The requirements of completing my masters includes conducting a study. I am requesting the permission to conduct a study with you as one of my principal samples. The title of my study is: Principals' Lived Leadership Experiences in dealing with Ethical Dilemmas' in Schools: A Phenomenological Approach. Your school was purposively selected as I believe that you as the principal are perceived to have an in-depth knowledge and experience that would assist in conducting the study. I request the permission to interview you as the principal of the school. You will be interviewed for at least 60 minutes. Each interview will also be voice-recorded.

PLEASE TAKE NOTE THAT:

- There will be no financial benefits that participants may accrue as a result of their participation in this research project.
- Your identity will not be divulged under any circumstance/s, during and after the reporting process. You as the participant may choose a pseudonym for yourself as well as your school.
- All the responses, observations and reviewed documents will be treated with strict confidentiality.
- Participation will always remain voluntary which means that participants may withdraw from the study for any reason, anytime if they so wish without incurring any penalties.

- Participants will be purposively selected to participate in this study and they will be contacted well in advance for interviews.
- The interviews shall be voice-recorded to assist in concentrating on the actual interviews.

Your positive response in this regard will be highly appreciated. Please fill in the declaration form consenting to my request to conduct a study. Should you need further information regarding the matter, you may contact me, my Supervisor and the Research Office of the University. Details are as follows:

P. Mohun
HSSREC Research Office,
Tel: 031 260 4557 E-mail: mohunp@ukzn.ac.za

Supervisor:

Dr P.E. Mthembu
Email address: Mthembup@ukzn.ac.za

Yours sincerely

Christopher Mantel
218078645
079 845 2867

Declaration

I..... (Full names of the principal) of -----(School name) hereby confirm that I have been informed about the nature, purpose and procedures for the study: Principals’ Lived Leadership Experiences in dealing with Ethical Dilemmas’ in Schools: A Phenomenological Approach. I have received, read and understood the written information about the study. I understand everything that has been explained to me and I consent voluntarily for the school to be part of the study. I understand that the school is at liberty to withdraw from research at any time should the school so desire.

I agree/ do not agree for the use of an audio recording device.

Signature of Principal

Date

.....

.....

School stamp

.....

APPENDIX C – Letter from KZN Department of Education



KWAZULU-NATAL PROVINCE
EDUCATION
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

OFFICE OF THE HEAD OF DEPARTMENT

Private Bag X9137, PIETERMARITZBURG, 3200
Anton Lembede Building, 247 Burger Street, Pietermaritzburg, 3201
Tel: 033 3921062 / 033-3921051

Email: Phindile.duma@kzndoe.gov.za
Buyi.ntuli@kzndoe.gov.za

Enquiries: Phindile Duma/Buyi Ntuli

Ref.:214/84184

Mr Christopher Brian Mantel
30A Chasedene Road
Chase Valley
PIETERMARITZBURG
KWAZULU-NATAL
0181

Dear Mr Mantel

PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH IN THE KZN DoE INSTITUTIONS

Your application to conduct research entitled: **"PRINCIPALS' LIVED LEADERSHIP EXPERIENCES IN DEALING WITH ETHICAL DILEMMAS IN SCHOOLS: A PHENOMENOLOGICAL APPROACH"**, 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 07 August 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/Mrs Buyi Ntuli at the contact numbers above.
9. Upon completion of the research, a brief summary of the findings, recommendations or a full report/dissertation/thesis 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.


Dr. EV Nzama
Head of Department: Education
Date: 07 August 2020

GROWING KWAZULU-NATAL TOGETHER

APPENDIX D – Ethical Clearance Certificate



04 September 2020

Mr Christopher Brian Mantel (218078645)
School Of Education
Pietermaritzburg Campus

Dear Mr Mantel,

Protocol reference number: HSSREC/00001818/2020

Project title: Principals Lived Leadership Experiences in Dealing with Ethical Dilemmas in Schools: A Phenomenological Approach.

Degree: Masters

Approval Notification – Expedited Application

This letter serves to notify you that your application received on 22 August 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 September 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,



APPENDIX E– Turnitin Report

Turnitin Originality Report

Processed on: 24-Dec-2020 11:32 AM CAT

ID: 1481063172

Word Count: 40559

Submitted: 1

Dissertation By Christopher Mantel

Similarity by Source	
Similarity Index	
6%	
Internet Sources:	6%
Publications:	1%
Student Papers:	0%

2% match (Internet from 15-Feb-2019)

<https://www.sapanational.com/files/POLICY-ON-THE-SASP--2-.pdf>

< 1% match (Internet from 15-Dec-2020)

<https://business.tutsplus.com/tutorials/what-is-ethical-leadership--cms-31780>

< 1% match (Internet from 21-Jul-2020)

https://mafiadoc.com/organizational-cultures_5b737d84097c470c6e8b470f.html

< 1% match (Internet from 19-Oct-2020)

<https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1193595.pdf>

< 1% match (publications)

[Jacqueline Stefkovich, Paul T. Begley. "Ethical School Leadership", Educational Management Administration & Leadership, 2016](#)

< 1% match (Internet from 14-Nov-2019)

https://ir.dut.ac.za/bitstream/10321/2564/1/MGWEBA_C_2017.pdf

< 1% match (Internet from 29-Jul-2020)

http://uir.unisa.ac.za/bitstream/handle/10500/26575/thesis_tadesse%20hailu%20afework.pdf?isAllowed=y&sequence=1