

**Ethical leadership in South African schools:
Learning from the
experiences and practices of
selected proactive school principals**

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Doctor of Philosophy of Education**

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Educational Leadership, Management and Policy
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DECLARATION OF ORIGINALITY

I, Nompumelelo Priscilla Meyiwa declare that:

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This thesis has been submitted with/without my approval.

Professor Vitallis Chikoko

Date: _____

DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to my late parents, Fikelephi and Jabulani Ndokweni as well as my late brother Ben and his late wife Sis Zamekile. I have always wanted to make you proud.

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ABSTRACT

South African schools need ethical leadership, given the nature and level of unethical conduct that is reported on in schools, with some school principals said to be the perpetrators. Despite the sound policies that apply to the education sector, the situation still seems to persist. This study aimed to understand selected school principals' experiences and practices of ethical leadership in their daily lives. These school principals were reliably believed to be ethical leaders. The study involved exploring and understanding what informed their experiences and practices, how they managed dilemmas and why they behaved the way they did as well as determining what could be learnt from the participants' experiences and practices.

This study adopted a two-pronged theoretical lens, specifically Greenleaf's (1977) servant leadership theory and Bill Grace's (1999) 4Vs model of ethical leadership. The servant leadership theory places the emphasis on the leader serving followers before leading them. The leader does this with the aim of influencing followers to also adopt the spirit of serving others. In the 4Vs ethical leadership model, leaders develop a vision for the organization and use their voices to articulate the vision. This vision stems from their own understanding and conviction of their personal values. All of this is influenced by the will to achieve the common good, which is a virtue.

The study was qualitative, situated within the interpretivist paradigm. It used the narrative inquiry research design. The participants were five school principals from township primary and secondary schools in a selected circuit of the KwaZulu-Natal province.

The findings reveal that the school principals experienced ethical dilemmas that were influenced by, among others, the prevailing socio-economic conditions, political interference, especially from teacher unions, and lack of support from the Department of Basic Education and other stakeholders. Their key practices included shared decision-making, leading by example, accountability and responsibility, empathy and care. They cited having a vision and foresight, empowering followers, serving others, humility, accountability, listening to others and moral decision-making as what informed their practices. These practices were underpinned by values such as integrity, honesty, justice and fairness, empathy and care as well as respect for their practice.

The study established that the school principals studied were accomplished ethical leaders despite the adverse conditions in which they worked. Learning from the study, I propose an ethical leadership model called the Servant Values-based Ethical Leadership (SVBEL) model. The model has potential for school and other leaders to learn from and possibly apply in their own contexts. In short, it proposes that school principals ought to base their leadership on service for others and certain values, so as to contribute towards ethical leadership in schools. The model has four pillars, namely vision, servant leadership, ethics and morals and values, all of which contribute directly to ethical leadership. To implement that vision, the leader ought to employ foresight to enable them to be vigilant and pro-active against possible threats. They should empower followers and encourage them to unleash their untapped potential without the leader feeling threatened in any way. Such leaders serve their followers with humility and they are always accountable. They listen to their followers. Ethics and morals inform their practices and thus they lead by example. Values such as integrity, honesty, justice and fairness, empathy and care as well as respect form an integral part of their personal values.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CEO	Chief Executive Officer
CSLQ	Caring School Leadership Questionnaire
DP	Deputy Principal
EAP	Educator Assistance Program
EDM	Ethical Decision Making
ELRC	Education Labour Relations Council
HOD	Head of Department
KZNDoE	KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education
SACE	South African Council for Educators
SGB	School Governing Body
SMT	School Management Team
SVBEL	Servant Values-based Ethical Leadership
USA	United States of America

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CHAPTER 1

BACKGROUND AND ORIENTATION TO THE STUDY

1.1 Introduction

This study is about selected South African school principals' understanding and experiences of ethical leadership in schools. This research report relies on empirical evidence from the participants' lived experiences. The current state of schools in terms of unethical conduct is quite alarming. In South Africa, many organizations are ethically destitute, and authors claim that ethical leadership is non-existent (Monahan, 2012). This leads to an unnerving rate of misconduct (Plinio, Young & Lavery, 2010). What is even worse is that school principals are identified, in one of the studies, as the major culprits (Mthiyane, 2018). It seems schools have a great need for ethical leaders and ethical leadership. Despite that, I continued to believe that there are still those school principals, though they maybe few, who still act with integrity, are transparent in their actions and encourage others to do the same.

As will be set out below, ethical leadership is not only about following the rules but it is about the inner morality of a leader. Ethical leaders have special qualities that set them apart from the rest.

This chapter introduces the study and consists of the background to the study; statement of the problem; its rationale; and its significance followed by the research questions. I then define the study's key concepts. Towards the end of this chapter, I show how the research report is organized. First, then, is the background to the study.

1.2 Background to the study

South African schools seem to be replete with unethical conduct by learners, teachers and even school principals. I have witnessed this first-hand in my 24 years of teaching experience, in all four schools at which I have been employed. In this study, unethical conduct refers to the kind of behaviour or conduct that is unbecoming and morally unacceptable. The terms *behaviour* and *conduct* are used interchangeably in this study. Just as a background, this study briefly touches on unethical conduct, citing a few examples reported in the literature, the causes and the impact thereof in schools. It is imperative to emphasize that the study's focus is on the selected school principals' experiences and practices of ethical leadership, including what informs these and what can be learnt from

them. It is the level of unethical conduct in South African schools that has brought about the outcry for ethical leadership in schools, hence the section on unethical conduct below.

Unethical conduct manifests itself when moral norms are transgressed. It has a huge impact on South African education (Singh & Twalo, 2015). Corruption, theft, fraud, the selling of examination question papers in exchange for money or sexual favours, sexual violence, ghost teacher salaries, bidding chains for school supplies and fictitious learner marks are common practices in schools, and sadly some of these acts of misconduct are perpetrated by school principals (Brooks-Spector, 2014; Corruption Watch, 2016; Cronje, 2016; Dalasile, 2020; Davids & Waghid, 2016; Mthembu, 2018; Mthiyane & Mudadigwa, 2021; Naidoo, 2015; Netshitangani, 2014). These kinds of behaviour impact negatively on individuals and the organization's performance. Often, these kinds of conduct have a negative bearing on learner performance, the performance of the school, the image of the school and even the school leader's reputation. In the Western Cape Education Department, 61 allegations of sexual misconduct were reported from April 2017 to June 2018. Of these cases, 31 were cases of sexual harassment and 30 of sexual assault by teachers and other staff against learners (Mthiyane & Mudadigwa, 2021).

Mthiyane and Mudadigwa (2021) conducted a study on causes of ethical turpitude in schools in Gauteng of South Africa. Non-adherence to the code of ethics, the lack of efficacy of the South African Council for Educators (SACE), and little research on understanding of ethical leadership by school leaders were found to be among the causes. Greed; negligence; poor policy implementation; lack of boundaries in teacher-learner relationships; unethical leadership and pressure on teachers were cited in earlier studies as causes of unethical conduct (Dalasile, 2020; George, 2017; Grigoropoulos, 2019).

Unethical conduct has ruined social and working relationships in schools. It hinders school effectiveness, stifles growth and leads to poor productivity (Dalasile, 2020; Singh & Twalo, 2015). South Africa has seen a decline in loyalty among school principals and stakeholders in most schools, as trust has been broken. Once that happens, it is not easy to restore the image and reputation. The Sub-Saharan region of the African continent has been ranked as the most corrupt region in the world (Hosea, 2014), and the stigma still remains. Unethical leaders avoid responsibility and always blame others for their actions to justify their own. They despise accountability, they are insincere and untrustworthy, they show no compassion and

all of this leads to possible deviant behaviour among followers (Crews, 2011). It is such conduct that could lead to the high teacher attrition that has brought about instability in the education sector (Meyiwa, 2011).

South Africa is rich in robust policy frameworks in education, but it still faces the pandemic of unethical conduct. The Public Service Act, 103 of 1994 encourages ethical conduct among public officials and provides structured measures for managing incompetent and unethical officials. Chapter V of this Act specifically classifies the offering and receipt of any undue gratification or facilitation of such offering or receipt as misconduct. Chapter 2 of the South African Constitution, Act 108 of 1996, outlines basic human rights, including the right to education and the right to be protected from any harm. Chapter 2 Section 10 states categorically that everyone has an inherent right to dignity and the right to have their dignity respected and protected. When people behave unethically and infringe upon other people's rights, this section is contravened. These basic human rights must be taken into account when formulating any policies in education. Section 195 (a) of the Constitution states, "*public administration must be accountable and a high standard of professional ethics must be promoted.*" This should also be the case in education.

The Employment of Educators Act, 76 of 1998 speaks to educators' ethical behaviour, clearly outlining the different forms of possible misconduct and relevant disciplinary procedures, as well as due process. Section 18(1) of this Act defines educator misconduct as any act by an employee, which results in insufferable and impracticable work relations in the employer-employee. It is a violation of the South African Council for Educators (SACE)' Code of Professional Ethics. If found guilty, the educator could be suspended or even dismissed and have their name struck off the Council's register depending on the severity of the matter.

The foregoing, however, has not deterred some school principals from behaving unbecomingly. It is for this reason that I felt it was imperative that, through this study, a platform be provided for selected school principals who are considered ethical leaders to share their lived experiences and provide us with a deep insight into what has worked for them. Through this inquiry I sought to learn from the lived experiences of their ethical leadership in South African schools. I hoped to achieve this by uncovering the strategies that these school principals use to uphold ethical conduct in their schools. The school principals were asked to share their accounts of how they dealt with this kind of conduct as ethical

leaders. Bergman, Bergman & Gravett (2011) believe that school principals either bring positive change in their schools or are the core of the problem themselves. I concur with this view because a school principal's position in a school is very powerful and influential, given the authority it comes with. It is up to an individual to decide on how they intend utilizing this power. An ethical leader would use that power and position to influence others in a positive manner and work towards the advancement of the school's mission and vision. On the other hand, an unscrupulous school principal could use the same power to enrich themselves and instil fear by victimising potential opponents.

1.3 Statement of the problem

Existing literature on ethical conduct directs much focus on the unethical practices that take place in education, and many studies have been conducted on teacher misconduct across the globe. In the United States (US), the most common incidents reported are those of student sexual harassment by teachers (Shakeshaft, 2004). Oziambo (2013) conducted a study in Tanzania about the nature of teacher misconduct and found that teacher misconduct included that of school principals who were expected to lead by example. According to Corruption Watch (2016), in South Africa at least 259 school principals were implicated in financial mismanagement, 152 in theft of school funds, 78 in tender corruption, 36 in employment corruption and 19 of theft of goods, including theft of food provided for as part of the government learner feeding schemes. In South Africa, studies have revealed a litany of forms of teacher misconduct and the factors influencing them (Mthembu, 2018; Mthiyane, 2018; Netshitangani, 2014 & Naidoo, 2015). This suggests that the education system is indeed contaminated and tarnished by unethical conduct.

This level of unethical conduct brought about my curiosity as to whether there was something to learn from school principals who continue to conduct themselves as ethical leaders. There is a paucity of literature on how these managers achieve this sound and ethical conduct. Thus, this study sought to find out what it is that these school principals were doing differently, how they tried to prevent unethical conduct in their schools and also how they managed cases thereof. I believe there is potential for others to learn from their best practice. The study hoped to give voice and deepen communication with people who have already walked this path of preserving ethical practices by being ethical leaders.

In addition, the existing literature on ethical conduct is predominantly from the medical, legal, business, engineering, military and even marketing fields, but very seldom in education. To illustrate, a study in the aviation industry in Turkey examined a mediated model of ethical leadership on ethical climate, turnover intention and affective commitment (Demirtas & Akdogan, 2015). Chenweli (2015) conducted a study in semi-conductor companies in China seeking to examine moral emotions as the antecedents of ethical leadership and employee creativity as the consequence thereof. The sense I get is that, in these fields, there has been movement, from what causes or influences unethical conduct to what can be done to prevent or reduce it and subsequently sustain ethical conduct. This study attempts to relate such literature to education by bringing questions of ethical leadership into the school context. It also hopes, through its findings, to make a contribution to the body of knowledge on ethical leadership strategies that could work in South African schools.

The study intended to find out what the participants' experience of ethical leadership was and how they managed to stand the test of time and emerge as ethical leaders, even in times when their decisions were least popular and conditions were not as conducive as now. The study further sought to uncover the influence ethical leadership has in education and how it has helped shape them as ethical leaders and what has influenced them to be the exemplary leaders they have become.

1.4 Research questions

The study was guided by the following research questions:

- 1) What are the selected school principals' understanding and experiences of ethical leadership in South African schools?
- 2) How do the principals explain what informs their experiences and practices as ethical leaders?
- 3) What can be learnt from their experiences and practices regarding possibilities for ethical leadership in South African schools?

1.5 Rationale and significance of the study

In my teaching experience I have observed a lot of unethical behaviour in schools. For example, when township schools were still charging school fees, I witnessed teachers

collecting monies from learners and keeping it. I have worked in a school where some teachers would be absent on Mondays and Fridays in a certain pattern. In other instances they skipped school after break and often stayed away on paydays to run their errands. The same group of teachers would drink alcohol inside the school premises and bunk classes. I have seen teachers submit fictitious learner marks at the end of the year, passing even learners who had left school in the first term. I also was privileged to serve in the school governing body as a teacher representative. There I witnessed a lot of unethical conduct. There would be instances where blank cheques were signed. Family members would be given first preferences as service providers, instead of inviting three quotations as stipulated in the Schools Act. In some instances I have also been offered incentives to turn a blind eye to unethical conduct. Research studies conducted so far have tended to confirm what is already known. In a recent study conducted in Gauteng province, Mthiyane and Mudadigwa (2021) found that the Department of Education employed some unregistered teachers. This is a clear violation of the SACE's constitution which states categorically that every educator should be registered with the Council. These researchers list maladministration, cash in exchange for jobs, embezzlement of funds and nepotism among other forms of unethical conduct. Despite there being well-constructed policies and regulations, the application of these policies seems to be problematic and inefficient, given the rise in incidents of unethical conduct.

I thus began to develop interest in school principals who were doing everything in their power to practise what is morally acceptable and ethical. I had a strong conviction that perhaps if they shared their understanding and experiences of ethical leadership in schools, something could be learnt. Instead of relying on the code of conduct, perhaps people could learn to direct their behaviour and be motivated to model good behaviour. It is then that, one hopes, there would be hope for others to be motivated to emulate such practice. The main motivation for this study was hope that, from the findings, others would learn something positive and shift the focus to what the ethical leaders say works for them.

Another factor that motivated this study was that there is scant literature on ethical leadership in education, as mentioned earlier, since there are few studies conducted in this regard. This made me hope that the findings of this study would make a specific contribution to the education sphere and, that way, stakeholders in education would find it practical and applicable.

The study sought to learn directly from the selected school principals' experiences and practices of ethical leadership in schools. The knowledge gained from the narratives offer the reader a deeper understanding of ethical leadership in South African schools. There is a good chance that this affords another leader an extra insight to apply the stories to their own context. There is also potential for learning from the participants' experiences and practices. There is an opportunity to learn from participants about positive means to reinforce and restore ethics in those schools that are overwhelmed by unethical conduct. Dalasile (2020) views ethical leadership through Bandura's Social Learning Theory. According to the theory, individuals model behaviour through observation and emulation of the role model's appropriate behaviour. If school principals act as role models, other school principals would learn something from them. The code of conduct outlines the expected behaviour that employees are expected to comply with, but this has not ensured that school principals, for whom this study was intended, desisted from unethical conduct. On the contrary, they have been found to be the main perpetrators in schools (Mthiyane, 2018). It was therefore imperative to provide a brief general understanding of what ethical leadership is about, in an attempt to highlight the significance of the study.

Ethical leadership is about influencing others through a set of values, beliefs and principles based on accepted norms and values (Bubble, 2012). In ethical leadership, ethical behaviour starts with the leader and filters down to followers (Wallace & Tomlinson, 2012). Ethical leaders have internalized a moral identity that makes them people with good moral traits (Chuang & Chui, 2018; Skubinn & Hertzog, 2016). This moral development reduces self-interest and instead enhances altruism and empathy (Mason & Mudrack, 2019). This gave hope that perhaps school principals and other leaders who read or learn about this work would be inspired to practise what they have learnt. This study also hoped to bring hope to those school principals who are willing to do the right thing but may be feeling helpless and alone. They would know that there were others out there who have made it happen or are trying against all odds and thus gain confidence and courage not to give up. With a bit of luck, this study may tap into the conscience of some of those school principals embroiled in unethical conduct and see them change their ways. It could be that some of them give in to unethical conduct because they do not believe there is an alternative option. Some teachers, including school principals, exit the profession earlier than anticipated, not because they have found greener pastures but because of teacher stress. They feel it is too much for them and

they leave; sadly that has financial ramifications for them (Meyiwa, 2011). The study attempted to afford school principals a chance to support one another on this journey of practising ethical leadership in schools, which is still an emerging concept. There are positive outcomes of ethical leadership that could benefit schools and that also contribute to the significance of the study.

Ethical leadership increases organizational identity and commitment and employee job satisfaction, minimises teacher burnout and teacher turnover and promotes positive behaviour (Bedi, Alpaslan & Green, 2016). The study hoped to make available knowledge that would have already proven effective with regards to ethical leadership in schools. This was because knowledge was derived from the participants' lived experiences and proven to work for them. There is currently no evidence that there are enough exemplary school principals who display ethical behaviour in South African schools, hence the need for ethical leadership. It became apparent from the literature that stakeholders in education were not much familiar with the concept of ethical leadership (Mthembu 2018; Naidoo, 2012) and this partially responsible for the unethical behaviour we witness in schools today. The findings of the study could thus provide relief for the Department of Education. There would be greater hope for sound financial management, proper use of school resources to benefit the schools, increased accountability among stakeholders, responsibility and transparency. All of these could save the department a lot of money in reducing the resources and time used for investigations and disciplinary hearings and lawsuits. But most importantly is that, with ethical leadership in schools, the people involved would be doing all of the aforementioned willingly, with an understanding that it is the right thing to do, not just to avoid contravening the law. The study also managed to learn from the selected school principals' understanding and experience of ethical leadership. It also uncovered how some of their experiences resonated with existing literature and revealed new knowledge. This is all reported as the study unfolds. The study attempted to highlight the contribution that the participants' experiences make to the body of knowledge.

1.6 Definition of key concepts

There are key concepts that form the basis for this study. They are clarified hereunder:

- Leadership

Leadership is a key concept in this study, because the study itself focuses on school principals as ethical leaders. Drawing from leadership *gurus*, there is no definite definition of leadership (Leithwood, Jantzi & Steinbach, 1999). However, these authors assert that leadership is a process of influencing the behaviours of individuals or groups towards the achievement of organizational goals (Leithwood *et al.*, 1999; Sim, 2011). Wasserberg (1999) argues that leaders use personal and professional values to influence their followers. In the workplace, people have diverse skills and abilities but they work together voluntarily as they are enthusiastic and persistent in achieving organizational goals (Gill, 2011; Werner, 2011). Bhatti, Maitlo, Shaikh, Hashmi and Shaikh (2012) and Dei, Osei-Bonsu and Dawuna (2016) share a similar sentiment, defining leadership as a process whereby a leader seeks subordinates' voluntary participation with the aim of reaching organizational goals. Dei *et al.* (2016) perceive leadership as the ability to get others to keenly move to a new direction in which they are not naturally prone to move to on their own. According to Dalasile (2020), leadership is about equipping and influencing employees to align themselves with the mission and objectives of the organization. In this study I define leadership as a process whereby leaders and followers influence each other in a positive manner, with leaders leading them by example by being proactive, caring, consistent, transparent and accountable.

▪ Management

Management is a way of maintaining present operations in the organization to in a bid to ensure efficiency (Dimmock, 1999). According to Bush (2007), management entails policy implementation. It has to do with the effective functioning of the school and achievement of its vision. Management is about ensuring that the school runs smoothly and overseeing controlling of processes (Davidoff & Lazarus, 2007; Spillane, Diamond, Sherer & Coldren 2005). According to Coleman & Glover (2010), management refers to the everyday running of the school where the focus is on policy implementation. I believe that management entails seeing to it that policies are implemented, teaching and learning are monitored and the staff and learners are provided support for a school to function. Bolman and Deal (1997) state that there ought to be a balance between leadership and management for an institution to function. In a South African school setting, leadership and management are intertwined in the sense that, while school principals as managers are expected to ensure that schools are functional, as leaders they should also ensure that they develop and implement vision and outline clear

aims for the school. Leithwood *et al.* (1999) maintain that school principals cannot really distinguish whether they are managing or leading as both these are embedded in their daily practice, and I agree. “Leadership and management need to be given equal prominence if schools are to operate effectively and achieve their objective” (Bush, 2007, p. 392). Schools need the objective perspective of a manager and the vision and commitment from leadership (Bush, 2007). It takes sound management with stability, consistency, certainty and security to execute this task but, unfortunately, in some South African schools this does not happen. Management is one of the key concepts in this study, because school principals who are participants in this study are also responsible for managing schools, both tasks being inseparable.

- Ethics

Ethics and values are closely related, with ethics as a means of transforming values into action (Monahan, 2012). Bonde and Firenze (2013) contend that ethics provide us with guidelines on the standards of behaviour since they are moral principles governing a person’s behaviour. They are standards of what is right and wrong and propose what ought to be done (Aiyengar, 2013). Manyaka and Sebola (2013) describe ethics as a framework of socially acceptable norms, morals and values that control an individual’s actions. A person’s morals and values have an influence on their ethical behaviour. In this research report, I would define ethics as guardrails that stem from our personal values and channel our behaviour, helping us separate right from wrong. They are meant to teach us to do the right thing whenever we have to make decisions or are faced with difficult situations. Ethics is a key term in this study, as the study’s focus is ethical leadership. It is a foreground for ethical leadership.

- Ethical leadership

Rabinowitz (2016) defines ethical leadership as leadership that is about knowing and doing what is right. The significance of values in ethical leadership cannot be over-emphasized hence Rabinowitz (2016) associates it with positive influence on employees. According to Smith (2014), ethical leadership measures the level at which leaders are motivated by ethical values as they influence their followers. Ruiz-Palomino and Martinez-Canas (2013) posit that, if followers perceived top managers’ good moral image, ethics may be viewed as an important issue within the organization. Employees within an organization may translate this

perception into a strong appreciation of top management. Shukurat (2012) adds that an ethical leader withstands any temptation that may occur along the way, thus setting an example for others. Mthiyane (2018) concurs, emphasizing that leaders' moral conduct influences subordinates as leaders should promote respect, fairness, integrity and honesty, equity and care. School principals who are participants in this study fit this description. This study sought to learn how they do it in South African schools, where unethical conduct is rife.

De Klerk (2005) advocates that when leaders are accountable then power can be exercised in a responsible manner. This sets a standard for how education leaders should be. In ethical leadership, one has a moral responsibility to do what is right over what is wrong. It goes beyond duty and obligation (Smith, 2014). Thus, in this study I concur and believe that ethical leadership in education entails addressing the everyday life of ethical dilemmas, whether intrapersonal or interpersonal, and the process of decision-making where the outcome should be ethical and its consequences benefit more people. This forces the leader to consider their moral and ethical values whilst suspending personal interest. I thus believed there was a lot to be learnt from the selected school principals.

1.7 Organization of the research report

The research report has six chapters.

Chapter 1 serves as an introduction to the study. It consists of the background to the study, statement of the problem, rationale and the significance of the study. Key concepts that form basis of the study are defined in this chapter. Also, how the work is organized is revealed in this chapter as it nears the end.

Chapter 2 is the review of literature, provides an overview of ethical leadership; ethical principles and characteristics of ethical leadership; leadership styles related to ethical leadership; factors influencing ethical leadership and benefits associated with ethical leadership.

Chapter 3 discusses the theoretical framework underpinning the study. The study has two theories forming the framework namely Greenleaf's Servant Leadership Theory (1977) and the 4Vs Ethical Leadership Model.

Chapter 4 unpacks the research design and methodology. The study is underpinned by the interpretivist paradigm, using narrative inquiry as a research design. Narrative interviews are used to generate data. All the research methodology aspects for this study are covered in this chapter.

Chapter 5 addresses data presentation and discussion. After presenting and discussing it, it discusses the emerging themes. It is in this chapter that the selected school principals' understanding and experiences of ethical leadership in schools are revealed. Over and above that, it further reveals what informed these principals' understanding and experience.

Chapter 6 concludes the research report. It reflects upon the research journey travelled and reveals lessons learnt along the journey. It touches on the limitations of the study before the final word.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

2.1 Introduction

Literature on ethical leadership is still nascent in the field of education. In this terrain, most research studies tend to focus on other leadership approaches like transformational leadership, instructional leadership, authentic leadership, etc., and seem to be neglecting ethical leadership. The literature reveals that most studies on ethical leadership are conducted in other sectors like medicine (Humphries & Woods, 2016), aviation (Demirtas & Akdogan, 2015), the army, business (Arnaud & Schminke, 2012; Chenweli, 2015; Oncer & Yildiz, 2012) etc. These sectors have and continue to conduct studies on ethical leadership. This, however, does not suggest in any way that there have not been any studies on ethical leadership in education, rather, they are scarce. In recent years, more such research has developed. Arar, Abramovitz & Oplatka (2016) conducted a study with an aim to investigate ethical leadership in the context of the Arab educational system in Israel. They questioned the relations of ethical leadership dimensions with decision-making, as well as background characteristics of the educational leaders. Masina (2015) explored the importance of ethical leadership in Swaziland schools. In her detailed South African study, Mthembu (2018) explored ethical leadership in schools. Derr (2012) claims that leadership without ethics could be detrimental in any organization. Van Zyl (2017) also believes that leadership ought to step up from an ethical perception. The same applies in education and it is the similar thinking that prompted this study, which hopes to learn from the experiences and practices of proactive ethical school principals.

Accountability, fairness, integrity, responsibility, receptiveness and transparency are attributes of good leadership (Mangena, 2011). Othman and Rachman (2014) concur and take the argument further, as they posit that this good leadership is informed by ethical leadership where the leader displays a strong moral code, not compromising on ethics. In this study, I use the terms 'morality' and 'ethics' interchangeably for I am of the strong view that ethics are accepted as good morals and inversely, good morals as ethical. Van Wart (2003) defines morality as the ability to distinguish between right and wrong conduct at individual level. Ethics, on the other hand, are principles and values that guide right behaviour (Menzel, 2007). While the first is the ability to distinguish between right and wrong, ethics then

channel the person into doing what is right. In this study, constant reference is made to leaders, managers and chief executive officers (CEO's); in the context of this study they all refer to the school principal. Though most schools and particularly South African schools do not refer to school principals as CEO's, some of the literature utilized in this study is borrowed from outside the education sphere as mentioned and justified in the previous chapter. However, attempts are made to link it to the education or school context. Again, for a similar reason, the terms followers, subordinates and employees in this study all refer to the staff members in a school setting, including learners, whilst the terms organization, institution and workplace refer to schools. I have decided to bring in empirical evidence throughout the study as I find it relevant to a particular subtopic instead of having it as a stand-alone topic. I find this works better in strengthening my argument.

This chapter seeks to review literature on ethical leadership by firstly explaining concepts that are relevant and related to ethical leadership. Although I touched on the concepts in the preceding chapter, I felt the need to discuss them further in this chapter as they form the foundation for this study. I did this by looking into what other scholars have to say regarding these concepts. The chapter then gives an overview of what ethical leadership entails and what it can possibly provide. Next, it unpacks the different types of ethical principles as informed by literature. The section covering ethical principles is interwoven with management styles, which I found when compared, highlight these principles. In addition, I included this section on the management styles to highlight the responsibility of proactive school principals, who are participants in the study, as compared to their counterparts who only employ reactive and crisis management styles. Characteristics of ethical leadership form part of the section under the principles as they prove difficult to separate.

A section on leadership styles associated with ethical leadership follows. Then factors influencing ethical leadership form a section thereafter. This section is divided into two sub sections: namely, individual factors and organizational factors. Individual factors are those that are contributed by an individual, whereas organizational factors are contributed by the organization, according to the literature. The final section covered in this chapter dwells on what literature claims to be the benefits associated with ethical leadership. In conclusion, the chapter analyses and ties together emerging issues with an aim to highlight the gaps in knowledge that this study seeks to pursue.

2.2 Definition of concepts

2.2.1 Leadership

Leadership is about a leader influencing followers guiding and directing them towards common goal. A leader has a vision and shares it among followers to a point where they internalize it (Thaba, Kanjere, Malatji, & Wadesango, 2016). Perhaps this is what leaders ought to do but whether this is the case or not, is influenced by the kind of leadership the leader adopts. Ethical leaders are expected to behave in this manner. Hashikutwa (2011) identifies both good leadership and management as crucial ingredients for effective education. However, he fails to elaborate on what he sees good leadership, nor does he give an insight on what effective education means for him. Scholars like Mangena (2011) and Sebudubudu and Bothlomiwe (2012) echo what literature has generally provided as the definition of leadership, namely that leadership involves the ability to influence others. Clearly without the ability to influence others, a leader cannot succeed, but maybe the question to ask would be " *how do they influence others?*" I would define leadership as a process whereby leaders and followers influence each other in a positive manner, with leaders leading them by example by being proactive, caring, consistent, transparent; accountable and serving them. Leaders can also learn from their followers and this will not only be conducive to individual growth but to that of an organization. School principals who lead ethically have a story to tell but often lack the platform, as their good work is often overshadowed by the unethical behaviour of some school principals. Their effort remains uncelebrated, hence this study.

2.2.2 Management

Literature distinguishes between leadership and management; however, in South African schools, leading and managing interconnect. Both the responsibility of leading the school and that of managing it rest squarely upon the shoulders of the school principal. Van der Westhuizen and Maree (2009) are of the view that management involves planning, organizing and monitoring. In schools, school principals are responsible for overseeing the

planning of the teaching and learning programme for the following year so as to ensure that, when schools reopen in the first term, there is minimal hindrance, if any. Without thorough planning, take off is virtually impossible. They also have to organize and monitor the planned programme. This is how proactive school principals foresee possible challenges and act promptly to avert disruption of the programme. Alshamaari, Amutairi and Thuwaini (2015) share similar sentiments, adding coordinating, commanding and controlling as other aspects of management. Bush (2007) defines it as an executive function for carrying out agreed policy. In schools, this is exactly what is expected of school principals as it is one of the core responsibilities for school principals in South Africa. Nonetheless, the reality is that this is not always the case. It takes a special kind of manager to achieve this. The kind of management discussed above should be provided by managers who understand that management is bedrock that supports the fertile conditions where leadership and learning can be cultivated (George, 2000). I would define management in education as a process of overseeing the implementation of policies; monitoring teaching and learning; enforcement of ethics; provision of support to the staff and constant interaction between the manager and all the stakeholders in education. Proactive school principals who are ethical leaders fit the criteria above. It is stated, that ideally, management provides schools with stability, consistency, certainty and security.

2.2.3 Ethics

Campbell (2000) defines ethics and ethical leadership as means to advance the state of professionalism. Cranston, Ehrich and Kimber (2003) argue that ethics are often defined as what they are not, making reference to corruption, misconduct, fraud and other kinds of illegal behaviour. They further argue that ethics have drawn on notions of integrity, honesty and personal values, as Aiyengar (2013) agrees. The latter part seems to carry even more substance as it is supported by various authors (Clifford, 2014; Karnnair, 2014; Mulder, 2017; Northouse, 2013; Rabinowitz, 2016). Undoubtedly, ethics play a fundamental role in any institution, and it is imperative that they are instilled in individuals in order to distinguish between what is right and wrong in that particular institution. They are moral principles that govern and drive human behaviour (Robbins & Trubichet, 2009). Interestingly, Manyaka and Sebola (2013) define ethics as a framework of socially acceptable norms, morals and values that control an individual's actions. Accepting this definition would imply that one accepts that ethics are subjective because what is morally acceptable in one community may not be

acceptable in another. For these authors (Manyaka & Sebola, 2013), to act ethically means to respect the customs in civil society. Mthembu (2018), in her contribution, concludes that ethics encourage pursuit of internal goods such as virtue. Ethics can be defined as decisions by individuals who tap into their morals and values and guide their moral behaviour. The focus of this study is on learning from the experiences and practices of selected proactive school principals as ethical leaders. It was hoped to uncover and understand what ethics and ethical leadership means for the participants themselves.

2.2.4 Ethical leadership

Ethical leadership is leadership that is based on good character and good values where the leader uses inner virtues to influence others (Hosea, 2014). If a school principal displays good morals, then it is likely that teachers will gradually learn from them. They may begin to assimilate what they see. However, with the latter part of this statement, one ought to be cautious of portraying ethical leaders as superhumans who can withstand any temptation. They are also human; they too face challenges and at times struggle to find the ethical decisions to ethical dilemmas. But what makes ethical leaders stand out is how they eventually reach such decisions, in times when they do, and the impact that their decisions have on their personalities and on their organizations as well. I believe that ethical leadership entails the everyday life of ethical dilemmas and the process of decision-making where the outcome should be ethical and its consequences benefitting more people. This forces the leader to consider their moral and ethical values whilst avoiding putting personal interest ahead. All this should result in the advancement of organizational goals. Every leader goes through this process at some point and for this study I was eager to find out from the school principals in the study how they managed dilemmas and whether there could be any lessons to be learnt from them.

2.2.5 Learning

Hein (1992) defines learning as a way of constructing meaning. He further postulates that it is a social activity that happens with others. This study hoped to construct meaning from the experiences and practices of ethical school principals. Wenger (1998), on the other hand, perceives it as an ability to negotiate new meaning that can be explained through one's own perspectives and experiences. This explanation does not seem to deviate much from the

previous one, in that in both of them, meaning is either constructed or negotiated. I define learning as a way of acquiring knowledge through others' experience or personal experience, thus resulting in one seeing things in a different light. It can either bring new knowledge or build upon existing knowledge. Through this study I hoped to learn from the experiences and practices of selected school principals as ethical leaders. The purpose was to acquire new knowledge, to learn.

2.2.6 Proactive school principals

In South African education, school principals are also referred to as school managers. It is for that reason that section finds its relevance in this study. This study focuses on school principals, the proactive ones in particular, hence this paragraph. According to literature, there are certain traits that make proactive managers stand out from all other managers. Bateman and Crant (1999) and Crant (2000) have made an immense contribution to research on proactive management and proactive members. According to Bateman and Crant (1999), proactive managers take charge and launch new initiatives. They generate constructive change and swing things towards a desirable direction, which is achievement of the school's vision. They are flexible and adaptable towards an uncertain future (Kim, 2016). They take a plunge despite uncertainties and do not stop at the ideas stage. I wondered if the selected school principals would share the same sentiments or would they have experiences unique only to the South African context. Crant (2000) is of the view that proactive managers scan for opportunities and find ways to grow. They empower their followers and find ways to do things differently for better results. They anticipate and prevent problems and not just hope for the best. They persevere, do not back down but persist in their efforts and take a new direction when others see a dead end. They make it happen, one way or another. Eventually they achieve the results intended and have an impact on people and the organization. This is an ideal situation in any institution.

Bateman and Crant (1999) have their own description of proactive managers. They view them as managers who focus on controlling or managing known risks. These school principals, they add, increase the chances of success by decreasing the chances and impact of hazards. It is interesting to note that a proactive manager takes charge, is in control and handles situations better because he or she is prepared (Bateman & Crant, 1999). Searle and

Barbuto (2011) explain that a proactive manager can pick up cues from the environment and recognize the implications of their actions before they are even taken. They do not wait for problems to occur but pro-act by making preventative measures. This makes them more productive, since they spend more time on important tasks instead of putting out fires. Similarly, Bateman & Crant (1999) stress that proactive managers anticipate and prevent problems and not merely hope for the best. Pro-active school principals fit this description. But how do they do it in South African schools where unethical conduct is rife? This study intended to cease the speculation and provide answers.

2.3 Overview of ethical leadership

In ethical leadership, leaders allow their ethical considerations to inform their choices and decision making and this helps them make principled and fair choices from which others can learn (Dalasile, 2020; Dane & Sonenshein, 2015; Du Toit, 2015). I hoped to learn from selected school principals as ethical leaders. In South Africa school principals are tasked with a role to manage and lead schools, hence they are referred to as both school managers and leaders. Glanz (2006) alludes to this, adding that in ethical leadership, the leaders or the managers base their leadership on morals and values. They tend to delve deeper into their conscience and strive for morality in their practice. He adds that they seek to do what benefits the majority even if it means sacrificing their own happiness. I wondered how far the school principals went to achieve this. Researchers such as Bubble (2012); Brown, Trevino & Harrison (2005); Crews, 2011; Dalasile, 2020; Kim, 2016; Mayer, Kuenzi & Greenbaum 2010; Nerves and Story (2013); Rabinowitz (2016); Ruiz-Palomino & Martinez-Canas (2011); Shukurat (2012); and Smith (2014) have written extensively on ethical leadership in the workplace, however not in education particularly. They have researched on what it is, its antecedents and benefits. It is only recently that Mthiyane (2018); Mthiyane and Mudadigwa (2021); Mthembu (2018); and Naidoo (2015) have written on South African schools though their focus has been on unethical leadership, examples thereof, causes and effects. On a positive note, it is their studies that have highlighted the need for ethical leadership in schools, hence this study.

Ethical leadership has always proven to produce desirable results for the organization (Rabinowitz, 2016). Stouten, van Dijke and De Cremer (2012) state that systems with ethical

leadership tend to provide a higher quality of life for all individuals involved. Whether the same can be said for schools in South Africa or not was yet to be uncovered as the study unfolded. Nerves and Story (2013) also write along those lines, declaring that employees' affective commitment is directly related to ethical leadership.

Ethical leaders are honest, caring, principled individuals who are just and fair in the decision making (Heyns & Rothmann, 2015; Kar, 2014; Landy & Conte, 2010). They practise ethical leadership, not just talk about it. Ethical leaders do not wait for things to happen by chance; instead they make things happen by being proactive (Alshamaari *et al.*, 2015; Searle & Barbuto (2011). I intended finding such school principals with a purpose to gather their narratives on what made them to stand out from the rest. In a workplace, employees ought to care about targets of their behaviour (Arnaud & Schminke, 2012), and in a school setting, the target would be the learners, the staff, the School Governing Body (SGB), the departmental officials even the community surrounding the school. They are all directly affected by the actions of the school principal as a manager and a leader.

2.3.1 Proactive management

In a proactive management style, the possibility of problems is examined. The manager thinks ahead, initiates action and takes the lead in averting problems, creating possibilities and projecting the interest and needs of his/ her staff and his/ her areas of accountability and responsibility (Fombrun & Fos, 2004). They are visionary in their leadership, pay attention to long term goals thus avoiding threats or face them head-on (Hosea, 2014). A pro-active leader is receptive to new ideas resulting in open flow of information. The leader keeps other managers and staff aware of priorities and plans. There is a higher level of staff satisfaction (Blair, 2002; Walker, 2004). An ethical school principal and also a proactive manager shares ideas, plans and priorities firstly with the members of the School Management Team (SMT) and then ultimately, with the entire staff. There is transparency which eliminates unnecessary doubt and uncertainty. Proactive managers act to influence and control events rather than just being passive (Mthembu, 2018). A proactive school principal is hands-on, even when duties are delegated to staff members the principal still makes a follow-up and provides guidance and support where necessary.

The proactive management style is opposed to the reactive management style. In the reactive management style, managers wait for a problem to occur and then make decisions only in response or reaction to a problem or opportunity. No preventative measures are put in place to prevent problems or create opportunities, and rarely anything is planned or initiated by the manager (Svennson & Wood, 2004). The manager is suspicious of new ideas, there is competition among managers. The flow of information is restricted. The leader is threatened and suspicious of people who show initiative (Searle & Barbuto, 2011) thinking they after his or her position. Decisions are often unilateral, and consultation is kept minimal. This is what is playing out in most South African schools, according to research (Mthembu, 2018; Naidoo, 2012; Walker, 2004). Communication is selective and limited. Consequently, there is lower level of staff job satisfaction and employee retention. In education, teachers under such poor leadership and management suffer from teacher burnout (Meyiwa, 2011).

Another management style which, when compared with proactive management style, highlights the great positive impact of proactive management style is the crisis management style. Svennson and Wood (2004) define crisis management style as a management style where nothing new or different is considered unless and until there is a crisis. Otherwise, the status quo remains. Problems or opportunities are ignored or bypassed until a crisis is reached, emotions exposed, and war is declared. This can prove to be quite stressful for members of the organization. The leader is not open to new ideas and intolerant of people who show initiative to a point of despising them. Decision-making is closed. Only a select few is privileged to access information. There is distrust among managers. The staff is given attention only when it is convenient. Plans become the manager's secret and only revealed to other managers and the staff when formally requested or forced to do so. Again, like in the reactive management style, the level of job satisfaction is low.

However, because a crisis cannot be totally avoided as it can strike at any time (Harwati, 2013), not even ethical leaders are immune to a crisis. Given that a crisis has a potential to interfere with the functioning of an organization, ethical leaders who are proactive as managers view it as an opportunity rather than a threat (Harwati, 2013). A proactive school principal does not panic in a crisis but remains calm and strategic. The reason behind touching on the reactive management and the crisis management styles is to draw special

attention to the special attributes of proactive management, which is often adopted by ethical leaders. I found this section to be more relevant incorporated under the overview of ethical leadership. There are other special characteristics of ethical leaders which distinguish them from other ordinary leaders. There are studies which were conducted on ethical leadership.

A study conducted by Chenweli (2015) examined moral emotions as the antecedents of ethical leadership in the workplace and employee creativity as the consequence. Findings revealed that leader empathy and gratitude were associated with ethical leadership. This correctly indicates that a leader who puts himself or herself in the shoes of his followers, stands a better chance of winning them over. A school principal who tries to put him or herself in a staff member's shoes stands a better chance of understanding how a member feels and therefore can be empathic and consequently win them over. This is better than standing aloof and demanding explanation and answers using one's authority.

A similar study by Engelbretcht, Heine and Mahembe (2014), investigated the relationship between ethical leadership and trust in the leader and the effect these constructs have on the work engagement of employees. They found that there existed a positive relationship between trust in the leader and work engagement of employees. The study also revealed that there exists a strong relationship between ethical leadership and trust in the leader. Qualities of an ethical leader play a leading role in influencing followers to strive towards achieving the mission of an organization. The prominence of ethical leadership may influence the attitudes and attachments of organizational members resulting in thriving individuals (Demirtas & Akdogan, 2015). Clearly, if a school principal is proactive, most unpleasant situations are often averted. If, by any chance, the situation arises or catches the principal off guard, the principal ought to quickly find a solution before the situation escalates. Such school principals stand out from those of their counterparts who wait until the fire starts before they think about ways of putting it out. These principals are usually delayed in their action and by the time they act, it may be too late, then irreparable damage is done.

2.3.2 Ethical principles and characteristics of ethical leadership

Josephson (2002) posits that our values are what we prize, and our values system is the order in which we prize them. Interestingly, he avers that the ones we rank higher than others are our core values, which define character and personality. Values then translate into principles

that guide and motivate ethical conduct. Ethical principles are the rules of conduct that derive from ethical values (Crews, 2011; Simola, 2003; Velasquez, 1998). There are four main ethical principles: namely, the ethic of justice, ethics of critique, ethic of care and the ethic of profession (Shapiro & Stefkovich, 2011). These principles do not form a stand-alone section, as I have found that they interlink with the characteristics of ethical leadership. I intended looking into these principles in depth in this study to find out if they had any bearing on the participants' experiences or practices. However, it became clear these principles cannot be discussed in isolation as they have share some of the characteristics of ethical leadership.

Hosea (2014) avers that ethical leaders have strong characters and that this is portrayed in their decisions and actions. Calabrese and Roberts (2001) once asserted that, if leaders have ethical conduct, their followers will also have ethical conduct. However, this could be disputed for it would be dangerous to assume that if a leader is ethical, the followers are ethical too and vice versa. Kalshoven, Den Hartog & De Hoogh (2011) espouse the notion that ethical leaders think carefully before they act, observe their moral obligation, do the right things not only for themselves and treat their fellow co-workers in a consistent manner. Consistent leaders are perceived as credible and therefore gain respect from their followers (Leadership Toolbox, 2016). They remain focused, keep to their word and this creates accountability and builds the leader's reputation (Kim, 2016). Ethical leaders are known to be consistent in their action and decision-making.

There are specific characteristics that distinguish ethical leaders from other leaders, making them stand out. These characteristics speak to their personalities as individuals and as leaders in their organizations. Kar (2013) defines ethical leaders as honest and principled individuals who make fair and balanced decisions. He further states that they practise what they preach and are proactive role models for ethical conduct. Clifford (2014) advocates that each decision-making attitude towards moral and ethical decision-making establishes a school leader's character and generates their respect, integrity and reputation among all stakeholders in the community. Karnnair (2007) states that it is not enough to espouse high standards; to live up to them and help others to do the same requires an ethical cast of mind that lets you practise your principles consistently. This study intended to focus on learning from such leaders.

Ethical leaders are fair and balanced when making decisions (Shapiro & Stefkovich, 2011). They frequently communicate with their followers about ethics, modelling ethical conduct. They base their actions and decisions on their values and morals (Chuang & Chui, 2018; Riaz & uZaman, 2018; Skubinn & Herzog, 2016). This is imperative especially when a manager has to make justified and yet unpleasant decisions (Rabinowitz, 2016). A school principal may end up not so popular among staff members because of the decisions he or she takes, and such decisions have to be made. Ethical leaders are patient when faced with hurdles from internal and external environment such as lack of commitment from followers. This is common in South African schools, for various reasons. Rabinowitz (2016) further mentions that ethical leaders are persistent in striving to achieve goals even when they require sacrifice and personal risk. Ethical leaders are prudent and exercise sound judgment in practical affairs even when things do not go according to plan (Cottone, 2001; Lawton, Rayner & Lasthuizen (2013); Rabinowitz, 2016). They do not abuse power, they are honest, caring, tactful, genuine, competent, accessible, adaptable, anticipate trends and principled (Moorhouse, 2002). Dalasile (2020) concurs, adding trust, integrity, and benevolence as philosophies for ethical leaders. The study hoped to learn from the school principals what their experiences of ethical leadership were, and by 'their experiences' I mean what they saw as the results of their exercising ethical leadership.

Trevino, Brown and Hartman (2003) conducted an exploratory study on personal traits relating to ethical leadership. The study found that a number of personal characteristics were related to ethical leadership. The study also revealed what the authors like Hosea (2014) term the moral manager dimension. These authors claim that moral managers make ethics an uncompromising part of their leadership agenda by communicating an ethics and values message and by role modelling ethical behaviour. They further state that such managers use the reward system to hold followers accountable for their ethical conduct. It would seem most South African school principals still have a lot to learn.

Upadhyay and Singh (2010) maintain that the CEO of the organization must be the chief of ethics and make everyone understand that organization's future is dependent on its reputation. In education, the CEO would be the school principal. In instances where dilemmas arise, they resort to ethical decision-making. Ouma (2017) posits that ethical

leaders understand their purpose, practise solid values, lead with the heart and demonstrate self-discipline. With self-discipline comes accountability. Dalasile (2020) argues that South African schools need ethical leaders who are honest, accountable, fair and just. As stated earlier, the characteristics of ethical leadership are infused with ethical principles, as these seem to be inseparable from the former and are sometimes seen to be their outcome.

2.3.2.1 The ethic of justice

According to Simola (2003), the ethic of justice is a set of principles to ensure fairness. Fairness is an important aspect of ethical leadership and it informs decision-making. These decisions are transparent and principled (Metwally, Ruiz-Palomino, Metwally & Gartzia, 2019). Such principles emerge when leaders forget who they are, their own status and privilege in society and put the interests of their followers first. Ethical leaders do this when they invert the power pyramid and serve their followers (Barburto & Wheeler, 2006). Typically, in a power pyramid, the leader would be at the apex and followers at the bottom. Greenfield (2004) draws our attention to the universal principles that, he insists, moral leaders should base their decisions upon. He argues that these universal principles should be fair and not benefit or burden any group or class within the organization. In a school, the school principal should consider the welfare and interests of all who stand to be affected by their action or decision. They should take moral obligation seriously and not abuse their power. This is crucial because, according to Karim & Nadeem (2019), followers acquire practical and moral instruction from leaders. The sad reality is that this does not seem to be the case in most schools as leaders seem to lack morals themselves. However, this study sought to understand the selected school principals' experiences and practices of ethical leadership and what informed them. This was with the hope that some lessons could be learnt.

The ethic of justice has its roots on the principles of law, fairness and equity (Faircloth, Ritter & Wilson, 2007; Starrat, 2011). Shapiro and Stefkovich (2011) concur, adding that an individual transcends some rights for the good of the whole or for social justice. They further point out that integrity, fairness, transparency, trust, collaboration, perseverance, learning and continuous improvement are regarded as professional norms according to which such managers act and which they promote. Proactive school principals who display these qualities

tend to treat their staff members fairly and equally. Ethical managers reject favouritism and discrimination; for these are both unjust and wrong. Studies have shown that school leaders and managers who show favouritism and discriminate against other staff members are viewed as unethical (Naidoo, 2015; Mthembu, 2018). I found this intriguing as I began to wonder how school principals achieve this in the widespread midst of unethical conduct in South African schools and how school principals in the study made it work. The ethic of justice questions whether exceptions can be made to rules and under what circumstances (Shapiro & Stefkovich, 2011). Leaders search for a course of action that treats everyone equally; except in instances where it is morally justifiable not to do so (Chin, 2013). I was curious to know how school principals make such decisions; what informs their decision-making on when to make exceptions and what exceptions to make were some of the questions that kept bugging me. Justice and fairness, being characteristics of ethical leadership, are directly linked to the ethic of justice.

2.3.2.1.1 Justice and fairness

Fairness entails playing by the rules, being open-minded, listening to others, not taking advantage of others and not blaming carelessly (Josephson Institute, 2009). Treating others with fairness and justice tends to breed respect, compliance and commitment from personnel (Dobel, 2011). Advancing his argument, Dobel (2011), states that fairness demands a commitment to treating situations and actions consistently. In a school, if the staff do not have trust in the fairness of the school principal, they tend to shun accountability and honest communication. Instead of voicing their opinions openly, they resort to gossip. Fairness requires a leader to use the same standards in evaluating individuals and these standards should be transparent, so judgements can be appealed. This echoes what is advocated by Greenfield (2004) in the previous section. If a school principal does not treat everybody with fairness, shows favouritism and victimizes some people, there is likelihood that the staff will be divided. An ethical leader ensures that everyone is treated justly and fairly. This means that no one receives special treatment unless their situation warrants such. That way, Rabinowitz (2016) claims, no one feels oppressed or prejudiced in any way. Justice and fairness can only prevail if the leader leads with honesty and integrity. Another characteristic of ethical leadership that echoes the ethic of justice is accountability.

2.3.2.1.2 Accountability

A school principal is a chief accounting officer in the school, accountable to all stakeholders. School principals are accountable for the curriculum, for maintaining good order in school, for their own behaviour and for that of teacher and learners. This means they are not only accountable for their own actions but also for the actions of those who report to them. School principals have a responsibility of ensuring a good rapport with the community and to participate in community development projects (Ferrell & Ferrell, 2011; Ntini, 2006). It is not only the school principal who is accountable in the school; Hosea (2014) clearly states that every individual in the workplace has a responsibility to account for any responsibility given but, for the purposes of this study, the focus was on school principals since they were the participants.

Perry and McWilliam (2007) define accountability as being answerable to someone for the activities that go on in an organization and in this particular study, the school. These authors further argue that for every choice, decision and action that managers take, they have to account. The same applies to school principals as leaders and managers in the school. Managers also safeguard values and principles articulated in mission statements and make certain that strategic plans are rolled out, otherwise they are just mere symbolism and not meant to be implemented. Ssonko (2010) perceives accountability to be a commitment required of an individual to accept public responsibility for their own action and inaction. In schools, being accountable also for inaction means that school principals also have to answer each time they do not take action when they are supposed to. This is common when they are faced with an ethical dilemma and they are not sure which action to take. But then again, one might argue that at times not taking action is an action on its own. Ssonko (2010) further calls accountability an ethical virtue, in that ethics concern principles and rules that govern the moral value of people's behaviour. It calls for leaders to act in the public interest and according to their conscience. Improving ethics is crucial to enhancing accountability and vice versa. Leaders ought to be as open as possible about all decisions and action they take (Ssonko, 2010). This study hoped to learn from school principals on how they conducted themselves in carrying out their duties, especially those that which made them to stand out from the rest.

In trying to conceptualise accountability, Maphosa, Mutekwe, Machingambi, Wadesango and Ndofirepi (2012) divide it into three sections, namely moral accountability, professional accountability and social accountability in their attempt to conceptualise it. They regard teaching as the most ethically demanding job and I agree. Moral accountability accounts for what is morally good as dictated by ethical consideration deriving from one's conscience of doing what is morally right without external push, not merely adhering to rules and regulations. These scholars perceive professional accountability as accountability towards the profession and colleagues. If school principals do not execute their duties professionally, it puts their profession into disrepute and affects colleagues as well. Leaders act with a high sense of responsibility to avoid scrutiny. Social accountability identifies the critical roles of school leaders in society. Social accountability involves observing human rights and leaders should be fully aware of such rights and their place in the school life.

Christensen and Laegreid (2014) came up with their own theory of what accountability is. They split accountability into administrative accountability and managerial accountability. The former is related to a person's position in a hierarchy where a superior calls a subordinate to account for his or her performance of delegated duties. The latter focuses on monitoring outcomes and holding those with delegated authority answerable for tasks handed down to them. Managers are granted additional autonomy but on the other hand made more directly accountable for their ability to produce measurable effects (Christensen & Laegreid, 2014). School principals are faced with both administrative as well as the managerial accountability, which is a mammoth task. Transparency, on the other hand refers to openness, communication and accountability. Followers should always be kept informed about whatever affects them directly or indirectly in the workplace (Dei *et al.*, 2016). Ethical leaders do not need supervision to be accountable since they understand that it is part of their responsibility. A school principal who is accountable sets an example for his or her followers.

2.3.2.2 The ethic of critique

The ethic of critique affords a leader an opportunity to critically analyse potential adverse effects of their decision (Faircloth *et al.*, 2007). School principals ought to consider the possible outcomes of their decisions before taking action to avoid the feeling of regret when

it all backfires. The ethic of critique probes us to revisit and reframe other concepts like privilege, power, culture, language and even justice (Shapiro & Stefkovich, 2011). For ethical school principals, this relates to being in charge and having followers not do as they say, but instead allowing them to have a say in decision-making. The principal safeguards and promotes values of democracy, individual freedom and responsibility, equity, social justice, community and diversity. This study intended to understand if school principals in the study considered this ethic in their practice and if it helped them in any way to make ethically sound decisions. This gave me a conviction that perhaps whatever that could be learnt here could enhance ethical leadership in schools.

In a study exploring the tensions and possibilities relating to ethical leadership in linguistic minority contexts in Canada, Langlois and Lapointe (2007) found how the presence of the ethic of critique is strongly rooted in a context of struggle for the protection of a French-speaking identity as well as linguistic and cultural survival. The study also revealed that participants' years of experience influenced their ethical posture. New principals chose the ethic of justice, whilst the seasoned ones used a consolidated ethical framework which included critique, justice, care, life experience and deontology. Even though this context differs greatly from ours, I hoped to learn if the school principals in the study considered any of these in their experience.

2.3.2.3 The ethic of care

The ethic of care urges members to continuously ask themselves what the most caring way is, in which to approach the resolution of the case or dilemma (Faircloth *et al.*, 2007). It requires the leader to consider multiple voices and views in the decision-making process (Hoover & Pepper, 2015). A school principal ought to approach a dilemma in a caring and objective manner in order not to come across as insensitive and inconsiderate. This ethic values collaborative effort between staff and students so that all voices are heard and valued (Shapiro & Gross, 2013). The ethic of care supports the conception that education is mainly about relationships and human interdependence (Quick, 2014; Thaba *et al.*, 2016). Quick (2014) states that ethically responsible leaders focus on the primacy of relationships and the understanding of the interrelatedness of all stakeholders within the community, whilst creating an environment that is free from oppression and in which everyone treated with equality. According to Simola (2003), leaders who refer to the ethic of care consider the

situational and interpersonal aspects of the moral dilemma in question. This ethic means being authentically open and receptive to the reality of others, rather than assuming that things are what they seem at face value. It involves a response tailored to the particular needs of individuals. Leaders informed by this ethic care for others instead of caring about others (Moorhouse, 2002). An ethical leader is kind, compassionate, expresses gratitude, forgives others and helps those that in need (Thaba *et al.*, 2016). Kalshoven *et al.* (2011) refer to this as agreeableness, which reflects the leader's tendencies of being kind, trusting and taking the needs of the other human beings into account. Such leaders are selfless, responsible and cooperative (Babalola, Bligh, Ogunfowora, Guo & Garba, 2019). These characteristics strengthen human relations within an organization. A school principal who possesses these traits leads by example, thus affording staff members an opportunity to learn.

School principals ought to lead with interpersonal and communication skills and with social-emotional insight, taking into account staff members' backgrounds and cultures. The question then becomes: how does one make this possible in South African schools? This study hoped to find out from its participants. Simola, Barling and Turner (2010) conducted a study to establish if the ethic of care would be more consistent with the nature of transformational leadership than would be the ethic of justice. Their findings revealed that leaders' inclination towards using an ethic of care was significantly, positively related to followers' perceptions of transformational leadership. On the other hand, it found that leaders' inclination towards an ethic of justice was significantly positively related to the followers' perceptions of transactional leadership. This gives the impression that the type of leadership style that a school principal adopts will have an influence on the kind of ethical principle the leader leans towards when making decisions.

In a related study in China, Chenweli (2015) found that a leader's empathy and gratitude were found to be important and related to ethical leadership. The study also revealed that ethical leadership was found to have a direct positive effect on employee creativity. Thus in the present study I sought, among other things, to investigate the impact school principals felt their leadership has on their followers. Pellicer (2003) advocates that school leaders should aspire to care for teachers as he believes that lack thereof leads to decline in levels of

effectiveness and lack of commitment. This is in line with his thinking that higher levels of job satisfaction result in decreased levels of stress and teacher burnout.

In their impressive study, Van der Vyver, Van der Westhuizen and Meyer (2014) aimed to develop the Caring School Leadership Questionnaire (CSLQ) as a valid and reliable tool measure the extent of care given by school leaders to teachers. Results found that caring manifests itself in sympathy, empathy and commitment towards teachers by the school principal. This ethic is closely related to servant leadership, which is discussed in detail in the next chapter.

Harms and Crede (2010) identified emotional intelligence as a psychological determinant of caring leadership. They claim that emotional intelligence dictates that a leader shows empathy, becomes optimistic, builds morale and motivates followers. They further refer to emotional intelligence as a key caring element that takes into consideration the well-being of others and qualifies as a characteristic of care. Leaders ought to show interest in what goes on in the personal lives of employees (Harms & Crede, 2010). The same applies to education; school principals ought to care about the personal lives of the staff members but without prying, since this strengthens personal interest in followers and improves workmanship in the school. From the narratives of the participants, one hopes to find out if in their experience, this is the case. Van der Vyver, Van der Westhuizen and Meyer (2014) contend that caring enhances feelings of safety and security among employees, thus boosting teacher morale and efficacy. I relied on the narratives of the school principals to determine if they exercised the ethic of care with their staff members or not.

2.3.2.4 The ethic of profession

This ethic means that individual actors often find themselves in conflict when their individual ethical principles are at odds with the ethical principles of the field in which they work (Faircloth *et al.*, 2007). Leaders act ethically and professionally in personal conduct and relationships with others. They provide moral direction for their school and promote ethical and professional behaviour in the organization (Murphy, 2017), where managers are always alert and able to read situations from a distance. Proactive school principals who are ethical leaders ought to behave as such and this makes them to be different from others. However,

I felt it was best to hear and to learn from individuals' personal interests, hence this study. According to literature, such managers are honest and have integrity (Crews, 2011; Landy & Conte, 2010; Li, Wu, Johnson & Avey, 2017).

2.3.3 Honesty and integrity

People judge you according to what you do and say as a result, if you behave unethically, your credibility and reliability are compromised (Freakley & Burgh, 2000). A leader should desist from unethical conduct and be reliable, for him or her to be trustworthy and maintain a good reputation (Hosea, 2014; Josephson, 2002; Kouzes & Posner, 2015; Mthiyane & Mudadigwa, 2021). Moorhouse (2002) identifies integrity as another virtue essential to ethical leadership and adds that consistency increases a leader's credibility. Ethical leaders are thought to be receptive and open, and should possess traditional leadership traits such as integrity, honesty and trustworthiness (Trevino *et al.*, 2003). For Brown *et al.* (2005), integrity is perceived as the fundamental characteristic of the individual leader. School principals who are ethical leaders contribute to the integrity of their organizations by being consistent in their choices, decision-making and action. They reject what is morally and ethically wrong and acknowledge and embrace what is morally and ethically acceptable, regardless of who is responsible. Monahan (2012) maintains that personal integrity thrives when one delves into one's character and character blossoms from personal experience, both good and bad. This is reiterated by Northouse's (2013) statement that an ethical leader shows respect, justice and honesty towards others and by Smith (2014), who identifies honesty, integrity, fairness, role clarification and power sharing as characteristics of ethical leadership.

Ssonko (2010) contends that integrity is a perceived consistency of actions, values, methods, measures, principles, expectations and outcomes. It taps into the quality of the person's character, requiring accountability and moral responsibility, hence it is viewed as a virtue. Integrity improves organizational culture and reduces incidents of conflict which, in a school, are often caused by the school principal's inconsistency. From personal experience, this inconsistency is often influenced by favouritism and poor leadership. Integrity exhibits in a pledge to act upon our values, promises and obligations (Dobel, 2011). Leaders with integrity are honest with themselves and others, they learn from mistakes and are constantly in the process of self-improvement (Northouse, 2013). Literature on unethical conduct in South

African education (Dubazane, 2015; Naidoo, 2012; Mthembu, 2018) is evidence enough that integrity is rather uncommon among some school principals.

According to Kar (2013), ethical leaders are characterized as honest, caring and principled individuals who make fair and balanced decisions. They practise what they preach and are proactive role models for ethical conduct. Integrity is about having strong internal guiding principles that one does not compromise. It is basically treating others as you wish to be treated (Dobel, 2011). It is based on one's guiding beliefs and values and essential as a leadership quality. It is reflected in thinking, attitudes and actions. For a leader, to act with integrity is not enough, what is even more important is for him or her to promote it among the subordinates (Mulder, 2017). It takes a school principal with honesty and integrity to be perceived as an ethical leader. It is not every school principal who displays these characteristics, which explains the unethical conduct which is rife in our schools. Among the characteristics of ethical leadership related to the ethic of profession is respect.

2.3.4 Respect

As people we have a duty to treat others with respect and respect their sovereignty and should not be treated as means to another's personal goal (Beauchamp & Bowie, 1998). They further argue that we should treat other people's decisions and values with respect otherwise it would mean that we are treating them as means to our own ends. Leaders who have respect for their followers allow them to be themselves, give credit to their ideas and listen to their views even when they are in opposition with that of the leader. An ethical leader is tolerant of differences, has good manners, considerate of the feelings of others, he or she knows how to manage difficult situations amicably (Crews, 2011; Josephson, 2002). Politeness, helpfulness, affection and forgiveness are characteristics of ethical leadership cited by Hood (2003).

According to Gentile (2010), at times there is conflict between doing what is right and being loyal to the leaders and co-workers. An ethical leader does not put his or her followers under such situations. School principals who are ethical leaders do not put their subordinates in situations where they have to choose between doing the right thing and being loyal to them. They treat them with justice and fairness as a symbol of respect. For school principals, refraining from unethical conduct is a sign of respect, self-respect, respect for the law and

respect for others. Not coercing others, like staff members, members of the SGB, into unethical practices is also a sign of respect.

Ethical leadership is not a completely independent leadership style; there are others which relate to it. I therefore turn to other leadership styles related to it next.

2.4 Leadership styles related to ethical leadership

Though ethical leadership cannot be divorced from aspects of other leadership styles. They are related in a sense that they are also based on morals and values and share some common characteristics. I have decided to briefly touch on them as they lay a foundation for ethical leadership. Literature reveals that there are leadership styles that are related to ethical leadership in that they also focus on values, morals and ethics. Various scholars have written extensively on these theories, an example being values-based leadership (Avolio & Gardner, 2005; Hannah, Avolio & Walumbwa, 2011; Morrell & Clark, 2010; Van Wart, 2014). Van Wart (2014) and other authors have divided values-based leadership into three, namely: leadership for proper intent (Van Wart, 2014), for proper means (Brown & Trevino, 2005; Sergiovanni, 2006) and for proper ends (Bass & Steidlmeier, 1999; Burns, 1978; Fry, 2003; Newman, Guy & Mastracci, 2009).

2.4.1 Values-based leadership

Values-based leadership is the kind of leadership that is based on values, doing the right thing for the right reason and not compromising core principles (Crews, 2011; Van Wart, 2014). It is leadership whereby a leader leads by example. Ciulla (2004) theorizes that the character of individuals affects their ability to be a moral force in the organization. In this leadership, leaders adhere to sound business practices and embrace ethical and moral behaviour (Dean, 2008; Koteinikov, 2008). In this leadership everyone has a set of values he/she lives by. Rabinowitz (2016) suggests that it is only when a person's behaviour matches with his or her ethics that that person may be said to be behaving ethically.

Values-based leadership has three historical perspectives based on three concerns. The first concern is the intent of individuals. The second concern is the proper means for doing good, which refers to how the leader behaves when faced with competing and conflicting values. I

yearned to find out how school principals managed dilemmas, whether administrative or ethical. The final concern is that of selecting the proper ends. Who is going to benefit from the action taken? Is it just the school principal alone, the principal and his or her friends, the chosen few or the majority? Decisions taken by the leader have to be based on the common good. In their narratives, the school principals shared what informed their decision-making.

- Proper intent

Proper intent refers to the intent of an individual or members of the organization to become ethical beings (Van Wart, 2014). Whether intent is based on being honourable or it requires other traits for one to show strong ethical character, is another debate and this study hoped to learn from school principals what their intent is based on, through their narratives. Virtuous leadership together with authentic and positive leadership are examples of leadership under proper intent.

- Virtuous leadership

“Virtue ethics has at its heart the habits and character of key actors – who become virtuous through carrying out right actions, acting in a manner that communicates the importance of considering the means by which outcomes are achieved” (Morrell & Clark, 2010, p. 257). This kind of leadership is aligned with the personal integrity model. Its primary concern is for integrity, concern for doing a good job and wisdom. The emphasis is on honesty, trustworthiness, fairness, conscientiousness and prudence (Van Wart, 2014). These are also characteristics that literature claims to be some of the characteristics of ethical leaders (Mulder, 2017; Northouse, 2013; Rabinowitz, 2016).

- Authentic and positive leadership

Authentic leaders draw from deep personal values and convictions to build credibility and win the respect and trust of followers (Avolio & Gardner, 2005). Ethical leaders draw from their values, morals and principles, which make them credible individuals. There is concern for self-regulation. This value emphasises self-awareness, self-improvement, and transparency and is non-defensive and open to feedback (Avolio & Gardner, 2005). In ethical leadership, this is referred to as voice behaviour, which is also discussed at a later stage.

Authentic leadership is about self-awareness which translates to understanding one's strengths and weaknesses and their impact on others (Gill & Caza, 2015). School principals ought to identify their own strengths as well as weaknesses. They can capitalise on their strengths and seek support where they lack. It takes a special kind of school principal to understand that, and perhaps that on its own is a strength.

George (2000) defines authentic leadership as leadership where individuals portray their true selves in their leadership. He adds that there are five distinguishing characteristics of these leaders. These are: understanding their purpose; practising solid values; leading with the heart; establishing connected relationships and demonstrating self-discipline. According to Quick (2014), authentic leaders are those leaders who are trusted because they keep to their promises, they are trustworthy. Trustworthiness is another aspect of ethical leadership.

Hannah, Avolio and Walumbwa (2011) conducted a study in the military context in the United States of America (USA) on the antecedents and consequences of moral courage. The study revealed that authentic leadership was positively related to followers' display of moral courage. Moral courage refers to the ability to use inner principles to do what is good for others regardless of threat to self, as a matter of practice (Sekerka & Bagozzi, 2007). Brown and Mitchell (2010) concur, adding that authentic leadership influences ethical behaviours. It places a strong emphasis on the ethical dimension of leaders. A leader acknowledges his/ her personal limitations and shortcomings. This calls for leaders to be true to themselves. As Starrat (2011) presumes, authenticity is not just about perfection but owning and accepting one's strengths and weaknesses. Authentic leaders, like ethical leaders, are less likely to be defensive about organizational problems (Bishop, 2013).

2.4.1.1 Proper means

Proper means relates to knowing what is good and doing what is good by following social customs from laws and rules. This raised a question of, when faced with ethical dilemmas, how school principals find a way forward? What informed their decision-making? Moral management leadership and professionally grounded leadership both fall under proper intent, as elaborated below.

- Moral management leadership

Moral management leadership is associated with ethics training, with its major concern being the legal and organizational rules. The emphasis here is on strict ethical compliance with legal mandates or organizational rules like the code of conduct (Brown, Trevino, & Harrison, 2006). This slightly differs from ethical leadership, whose emphasis goes beyond organizational rules and regulations to focus on values and morals rather than legal mandates and codes of conduct. Ethical school principals do not do what is right only because the law stipulates but because they know it's the right thing to do.

- Professionally grounded leadership

This leadership style focuses on ethics education, the high road approach. It raises concern for legal and organizational principles. It places emphasis on the knowledge of original authority, the ability to interpret competing sources of authority and code of ethics (Sergiovanni, 2007). Ethical leaders share knowledge with their followers. They empower the followers when the followers know and understand the organizational principles. It is easier for them to embrace them. In our context, teachers often do not know the vision and mission of their schools, some not even their own code of ethics enshrined in the South African Council for Educators (SACE) document. A principal has a duty to ensure they are well-versed to curb unethical conduct and promote ethical leadership.

2.4.1.2 Proper ends

Proper ends are more concerned with the beneficiary of an action. When the school principal acts, does he act for him or herself or for the staff members and the other stakeholders? This is important as it clarifies who stands to benefit from the action or decision.

- Social responsibility leadership

This is the exemplar of sound affective leadership. Its concern is for others, righteousness, concern for the community and concern for the environment. It places its emphasis on care and compassion, hope, sustainability, faith and spiritual well-being. Work is perceived as a calling; emotional labour, courage and sacrifice (Newman *et al.*, 2009). Again, ethical leaders put the needs and interest for others. What is it that participants did to ensure that they incorporated this type of leadership in their practice? If not, then what was it that they relied upon? Was this even practical for them, if not, then what was?

- Transformational leadership

Transformational leadership is about the leader motivating members and promoting morality (Kim, 2016). It has four pillars: namely, idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation and individualized consideration. As much as transformational leadership shares some traits with ethical leadership, it is not for the purposes of this study to discuss all these pillars in detail, as the focus of the study is ethical leadership. A qualitative study by Bedi, Alpasan and Green (2016) explored how ethical leadership relates to and is different from other leadership styles like transformational leadership and the contingent reward dimension of transactional leadership. Results revealed that ethical leadership is positively associated with transactional leadership and the contingent dimension of transactional leadership. Transformational leadership was crafted by Burns (1978) and later developed by Bass (1985) and Bass and Steidlmeier (1999). This leadership style is adaptive and focuses on making wholesome change and wholesome change processes. It highlights shared organizational or community vision and adaptation as well as intellectual stimulation to improve organization or community (Van Wart, 2014). It is closely related to ethical leadership, as stated earlier. Leaders appeal to higher ideals and moral values, thus motivating followers (Hood, 2003). Like ethical leaders, transformational leaders are able to define and articulate a vision for the organization and then inspire followers to carry it out (Van Wart, 2014). This also resonates with the 4Vs Model discussed in detail in Chapter 3.

Transformational leaders hold deep value systems that include justice and integrity, which are also characteristics of ethical leadership. Just as in ethical leadership, the leader is guided by values such as respect for human dignity and equality. According to Downe, Cowell and Morgan (2016), leaders are in a position to set an example and influence the behaviour of people around them, as people learn by observing and emulating attractive and credible models. This is related to role modelling which, literature reports, is one of the factors influencing ethical leadership (Mihelik, Lipicnik, & Tekavcic, 2010; Mthembu, 2018; Waddock, 2012).

The leader's responsibility is to raise the followers' level of consciousness about the importance and value of desired outcomes and methods of reaching those outcomes. A leader convinces followers to surpass their self-interest for the organization's sake (Burns, 1978). In this transformational leadership, leaders gain respect, trust and admiration from their

followers. This study hoped to find out from the narratives of selected school principals if this was also the case in their experience and practise. That way, other leaders could learn from what these leaders did to gain them respect, trust and respect from their followers. The purpose of this study was to understand the school principals' experiences of ethical leaders, to learn from their practices and what informed them. Transformational leadership is not the only leadership style that gels well with ethical leadership. Other styles are further discussed in the next chapter on the theoretical framework. The next section discusses these factors in an attempt to relate them to the context of education.

2.5 Factors influencing ethical leadership

Ethical leadership is not incidental; there are factors that influence ethical leadership in the workplace. These can be individual factors that emanate from the leaders personally or can be organizational factors. According to Bottery (2019), a leader's leadership ought to be critical, transformative, visionary, educative, empowering, liberating, personally and organizationally ethical and responsible. Smith (2014) conducted a study, using a literature review and empirical investigation, to explore perceptions regarding ethical leadership in selected organizations within the Nelson Mandela Bay region of South Africa. The study identified honesty, integrity, fairness, role clarification and power sharing as factors influencing ethical leadership. An ethical leader promotes personal growth among the followers and is not threatened by it. Individual factors discussed in this study include the leader's religious beliefs, social norms, personal values and personality, life experiences, professional ethics and decision-making, as well as responsibility. Organizational factors discussed in this study are those that impact directly on the members of the organization as well for instance, role modelling, communication and voice behaviour, decision-making and community involvement. All these factors, both individual and organizational, are all discussed hereunder. The present study hoped to uncover which factors, according to the school principals' experiences of ethical leadership, influenced ethical leadership.

2.5.1 Individual factors

Ethical positioning of the manager is pivotal in promoting ethical behaviour in an organization and to creating an ethical organizational culture and their actions ought to

embody the group's values ahead of their own (Dei *et al.*, 2016; Hood, 2003). A study by Hood (2003) analysed the relationship between CEO values, leadership style and ethical practices in organizations. It was prompted by business scandals which highlighted the need to understand how the values of CEO impact ethical policies and behaviours in the workplace. Results showed that it is crucial to understand the ethical orientation of the CEO in order to understand ethical practices in organizations. In schools, the school principals play the role of a CEO. I intended to find out if the school principals' personal values had any impact on their organizations.

In another study by Ressick, Martin, Keating, Dickson, Kwan, & Peng (2011), the purpose was to examine the meaning of ethical and unethical leadership held by managers in six societies with the aim of identifying areas of convergence and divergence across cultures. The six countries were China, Hong-Kong, Taiwan, United States of America (USA), Ireland and Germany. Findings showed that the managers held the following as themes for convergence: accountability, consideration and respect for others, fairness and non-discriminatory treatment, character (integrity, honesty, trustworthiness, having moral code and self-discipline), collective orientation (both organizational and social). Collective orientation incorporates putting organizational interests ahead of personal interests, sustainability and long-term impact of decisions, acting responsibly and not just profitably. Another theme was openness and flexibility. Openness here refers to openness to different opinions and diversity; being a good communicator and listener. It is worth noting that the managers did not have the same rankings for themes. I decided to use a table to illustrate how managers from different countries in the study prioritized the themes. Managers from the six countries ranked these as follows:

Table 2.1 Tabular representation of the results of the study by Ressick *et al.* (2011)

Country	Ranking of themes
China	Consideration and respect for others; character; fairness and non-discriminatory treatment.
Hong Kong	Character; collective orientation; consideration and respect for others.

Taiwan	Character; accountability.
USA	Character; accountability; consideration and respect for others.
Ireland	Character and accountability.
Germany	Consideration and respect for others; collective orientation.

Table 2.1 shows that different managers prioritised themes differently. Each manager's choice reflected what their country considered to be most valuable over others. The conclusion that can be drawn is that four countries (Hong Kong, Taiwan, USA and Ireland) rank character as what they understand ethical leadership to be. One can then deduce that for these four countries, the leader's character, proper intent, has a great input in the ethical practices in the workplace. For China and Germany, consideration and respect for others ranks highest on what they perceive ethical leadership to be. I thought it would be fascinating to find out from the participants' narratives what their understanding of ethical leadership was and I believed there would be potential to learn from that. A study by Tain (2013) aimed to examine the difference in perceptions among college students on ethical leadership. This was an online survey. Participants were European and non-European, Latin and non-Latin students. Findings revealed that students of European heritage differed in their viewpoints on character, integrity and encouragement from non-European students. Latin students did not differ significantly from non-Latin students on collective motivation. This study above shows that there are indeed factors that contribute to how managers perceive and experience ethical leadership.

According to Ouma (2017), there are several factors that influence ethical leadership such as social norms and life experiences; personal values and personality; life experiences; professional ethics and decision-making. In addition, responsibility; self-respect; broadmindedness; courage and emotional intelligence are also contributing factors to ethical leadership (Hood, 2003; Josephson Institute, 2009). As stated earlier, the factors influencing ethical leadership tackled in this study are social norms and life experiences of school principals, personal values and personality, professional ethics, responsibility and emotional

intelligence as individual factors. Role modelling, communication and voice behaviour, decision-making and community involvement are discussed as organizational factors.

2.5.1.1 Social norms and life experiences of school principals

Social norms define the ethical behaviour of those living within that culture. The social background of a leader has an influence on decision-making and actions. This means that a leader goes back to what culture considers being the best decision in that point in time. A school principal's social background digs into his social norms and past life experience to make informed decisions (Du Toit, 2015; Robbins & Trabichet, 2009). Dean (2008) posits that our upbringing, social environment and academic influences have a bearing on us. This is evident in the correlation that exists between the manner in which a leader leads and his other principles. Robbins and Trabichet (2009) state that an individual's socialization impacts on their actions. This coincides with the claim by the Josephson Institute (2009) that ethical actions can fit in with upbringing or training. What is significant about the claims by the two authors is that they both do not put in certain terms but they allow for a possibility that this may not always be the case, as literature indicates that there are other factors that have an influence on one's ethical actions. For instance, Souba (2011) states that ethical leaders use their beliefs and convictions to lead others and that ethical leadership goes beyond doing what is right to whom the person is. Who the person is, is their character.

There is a differing view by Ward (2007), that it is actually spirituality that influences one into being who they are. King (2008) concurs, adding that principles of honesty, loyalty, benevolence, social justice, humility, strength of character are learnt from faith. King (2008) advances his argument further in stating that ethical leaders integrate faith into their workplace. Our socialization often shapes who we are and how we think. The positive and negative key events affect the lives of individuals and determine their ethical beliefs and behaviours (Ouma, 2017). A person's social background and life experiences will always be part of who they are and how they do things. From the narratives of the participants, one hoped to learn if this was the case in their own experience.

Professional socialization is another way in which school principals may be socialized. A study conducted by Brody, Vissa & Weathers (2010), found that professional socialization

involves acquiring knowledge, skills and behaviours through which values and norms of the profession are internalized and a professional identity is established. School leaders' professional socialization has an influence on their decision-making, argues Shafa (2003). Khan (2015) concurs, adding he found there to be a correlation between the experiences of a leader and their professional experience. An experienced leader may draw from past experience as he performs his duties and this influences how the leader leads and manages in a school. A school principal presented with a situation may think back and recall a similar situation in the past and how it was resolved, thus resorting to similar action. The kind of mentor the principal looks up to will have a major influence on who school principal becomes (Aiken, Clarke, Sloane, & Silber, 2002). This study intended to learn from the experiences and practices of selected school principals as ethical leaders to ascertain if this is also applicable to them. I hoped to find out if their socialization had an influence on the way they lead. Ouma (2017) adds an angle of religious beliefs, stating that religious beliefs form the basis of our morals, value systems and ethical behaviour. They inform the thinking that good deeds will be rewarded and bad deeds will be punished. The question was how the social norms and religious beliefs of the participants in this study influenced their ethical leadership?

2.5.1.2 Personal values and personality

There is a notion that an individual's morals and values influence his or her ethical standards. Personal characteristics are a result of a leader's personality and upbringing (De Hoogh & Den Hartog, 2008). Personal values fused with the company's work ethic may result in the development of greater employee loyalty and respect for the organization (Dalasile, 2020; Smith, 2014). In a study by Jones (2015), the aim was to determine the way in which ten African American women leaders in organizations in Western Kentucky made difficult decisions based on their ethical values. Findings showed that they were professing Christians and based their decisions on their faith, and ethical foundations from their parents, grandparents as well as their mentors. I imagined how stimulating it would be to find out if personal values and personal qualities had any influence on the school principals who were participants in this study.

2.5.1.3 Professional ethics

Induction and the kind of mentor one has have a bearing on the kind of leader they become (Jones, 2015; Ouma, 2017). Professional values include respect, caring for others, participation associated with inclusion, equity, dependability, persistence, carefulness, constructive and critical criticism (Greenfield, 2004). Audeoud (2013) conducted a study with the purpose to describe and analyse perceptions on moral leadership education in a small university in Abijan. University students were used as participants. The study found that students believed that honesty, integrity, respect, humility, responsibility and critical thinking are attributes of a moral leader. According to the study, participants also stated that a moral leader is values-driven, fair and just, bases decisions on morality; has a moral courage to move against the tide, inspires followers, increases capacity for learning, serves followers and is a role model. This depicts a picture of an ethical leader in a workplace. However, there is a slight possibility that the results may not be the same with in-service participants. Professional ethics dictate that leaders should be responsible. But can these professional ethics alone really ensure that leaders are responsible? Not according to literature, which is replete with studies of unethical conduct in schools, particularly South African schools (Dubazane, 2015; Mthembu, 2018; Naidoo, 2015).

2.5.1.4 Responsibility

Responsibility obliges a leader to do what they are supposed to do, persevere and keep trying, use self-control and to think before they act (Josephson Institute, 2009; Thaba *et al.*, 2016). Ethical leaders are responsible as leaders and are always willing to acknowledge their contributions to actions instead of always looking to blaming others (Dobel, 2011). This made me curious to find out how the principals in the study responded in times when things went wrong. Did they find ways to handle the situation or they would find a scapegoat? An ethical school principal would take full responsibility for their actions and learn from their mistakes rather than use their power and authority to blame it on subordinates. Nor will they allow emotions to control their behaviour because they possess what is called emotional intelligence.

2.5.1.5 Emotional intelligence

Schlaerth, Ensari and Christian (2013) explain the concept of emotional intelligence as an ability to control feelings, utterances or impulsive behaviour in a peaceful way in the face of challenging situations, thereby influencing other's emotion positively. Emotional intelligence is considered one of the attributes of ethical leadership in education as it deals with the leader's emotions and how they influence the followers' mood in an organization (Ashkanasy & Doris, 2017). It is the ability to recognize, evaluate, and manage one's emotions and feelings (Johnson, 2016). I believe it is the ability to motivate, speak to oneself and maintain an emotional balance and cool during emotional situations. Ethical leaders do this with the interest of the organization at heart. It stimulates good rapport between principals and all stakeholders in the school. Mthembu (2018) declares that ethical leaders who are emotionally intelligent are less prone to moodiness, irritability and anger outbursts, and I concur. This improves the ethical climate as employees feel happier and unleash their full potential under minimal supervision. In this section I have reviewed the individual factors, however, there are organizational factors as well.

2.5.2 Organizational factors

Schools, like other organizations, have their own culture, an organizational culture. Vanourek and Vanourek (2012) views organizational culture as the way in which things get done; it also influences the way people think and behave within that particular organization. An organizational culture refers to a set of basic traditions, expressed through values and resulting in accepted ways of working in an organization (Lawton, Rayner & Lasthuizen, 2013). Members ought to care about the targets of their behaviour (Arnaud & Schminke, 2012) and that means considering others when making decisions (Metwally *et al.*, 2019). They further advocate that members of the organization ought to have the capacity to carry out desired actions in order for ethical behaviour to occur. They refer to this as collective ethical efficacy. Strong ethics and ethical organizational culture are the ingredients of successful companies (Ouma, 2017), and the same ought to apply in schools. A school principal who is also proactive will ensure that every staff member is kept abreast with what the culture of the school entails as this can help avert unpleasant confrontations that might transpire from misunderstandings even before they occur. I wanted to find out from the school principals themselves, apart from just reading in the literature.

2.5.2.1 Role modelling

When a leader demonstrates ethical behaviour, employees will show the desired behaviour through imitation (Brown, Trevino &, 2005). Moral managers actively demonstrate ethical behaviour and set example on both a professional and a private level by exhibiting honesty and compassion (Ferrell & Ferrell, 2011; Smith, 2014; Trevino, Brown, & Harrison 2005; Weaver, Trevino & Agle, 2005). This exhibition of ethical behaviour has an influence on followers and they become likely to follow suit (Thaba *et al.*, 2016). They set an example for their followers by making ethical decisions and by rewarding the desirable outcomes (Brown, Trevino & Harrison, 2005). It is therefore important that leaders themselves are indeed moral persons and demonstrate and model ethical behaviours to their followers. They are dependable and firm in what they say and follow up on by that they do (Brown, Trevino & Harrison, 2005; Mthembu, 2018). If the leader constantly changes his or her behaviour, followers deem him or her as unpredictable, unreliable and unworthy of trusting (Mihelik *et al.*, 2010). A school principal who says one thing and does the opposite is not taken seriously by his followers. Quick (2014) posits that educational leaders must be constantly wary of their actions as these speak volumes about the values that the leader supports.

Role modelling allows for the ability to learn appropriate behaviour through observing the behaviour of others (Mayer, 2014). Role modelling is about the visible actions of leaders in how they behave within an organization, and it is key component of ethical leadership (De Hoogh & Den Hartog, 2008; Hassan, Wright & Yukl, 2014). Maxwell (2014) contends that people buy into the leader first before they buy into the leader's vision. This tells us that a school principal is like an actor on stage under a spotlight, with his subordinates as spectators watching his every move and ready to emulate him or her. Scholl, Mederer & Scholl (2016) echo this adding that, in role-modelling, a leader demonstrates certain behaviours with the intention of simulation. People look up at the leader's history and observe them in the present (Mthembu, 2018). School principals ought to be weary of how they carry themselves at all times as they are always under the spotlight.

A leader has to be a moral manager in ethical leadership. Being a moral manager demands that a leader or manager serves as a role model for others in all his or her duties. He or she

sends a clear message about which behaviours are acceptable in an organization and which ones are not (Dei *et al.*, 2016). Lester, Vogelgesang, Hannah, and Kimmey (2010) propose that leaders, if seen as exemplary, can provide particularly effective role models in the development of courage in followers through their observations of and social learning from the leader. Through their own actions and decisions, moral managers demonstrate what the leadership views as ethical, clarifying any uncertainty employees may have (Dei *et al.*, 2016). Role modelling is about the visible actions of leaders in how they behave within an organization (Downe, Cowell & Morgan, 2016; Metwally *et al.*, 2019; Scholl, *et al.*, 2016). Among things that an ethical leader can model in an organization is communication. A school principal who models good conduct is likely to be respected and emulated by the staff.

2.5.2.2 Communication

Ethical codes are useful but cannot exist in isolation, therefore ethical expectations should be communicated clearly among members of an organization (Stevens, 1999). A moral manager communicates openly, unequivocally and frequently about ethics and values (Trevino, Hartman & Brown, 2000) and is transparent and engages in open communication (Khoza, 2011). Communicating ethical values is a serious issue for organizations. Managers ought to be proactive when communicating about ethics to employees. They allow for dual communication about both the positive and the negative aspects of ethics and integrity (Brown *et al.*, 2005) and about ethical standards and values (van den Akker, Heres, Lasthuizen & Six, 2009). Lack of communication and inappropriate use thereof are common challenges in organizations (Blanchard, 2016).

Stevens (1999) conducted a study designed to learn how employees come to their understanding of what it means to be ethical in an organization. The study also aimed to determine sources and channels for communicating ethical messages and to learn how managers can best communicate ethical standards and values to employees. The channels of communication were either oral or written. Oral and written channels included face to face communication, telephone, letters, memos, E-mail, faxes or messengers. Results showed that training and orientation programmes were affirmed as sources of learning along with teaching others. Codes and workbooks were also identified as ways employees learned about their ethics in their organization. Unfortunately, such communication is rare in South African

schools. This study aimed to reveal through the participants' narratives the means of communicating ethics in schools from which we can learn.

Ethical organizations foster open communication and value the sharing of ideas and values (Dobel, 2011). Mintrop (2012) postulates that open communication is another critical strategic dimension of ethical management. Ethical school principals listen to their staff members as a sign of respect. This is how they get the staff members to listen to them as they tend to emulate them. Listening is also a way of showing respect to the other person. It shows that you value their input even if you do not agree with them. A proactive leader strives to ensure that it is safe for individuals to express themselves without fear of being victimized (Dobel, 2011), as this builds trust and commitment among employees. Communication goes beyond a leader communicating ethics to the followers but also allows for what is called voice behaviour. A wise school principal opens channels of communication with the staff members and stakeholders. This allows members a chance to make their contributions to the growth of an organization, the school. This also aids in implementation of decisions taken collectively, thus minimizing resistance from members as they feel a sense of belonging and ownership.

Morrison (2011) defines voice as follows: 1. a message forwarded from sender to receiver, an act of verbal expression. 2. Develops positive change. 3. It is meant to be constructive. 4. It is a collaborative and society-based concept. 5. It is a conscious and deliberate sharing of employee's thoughts, ideas and information in order to improve their work. 6. It offers innovative proposals for change. 7. It is linked to openness and leadership behaviour. Ethical leaders listen to their followers and provide conditions for voice by ensuring a high level of confidence.

Voice behaviour is a form of communication in which the leader fosters rationality that is tolerant of criticism and actually sees criticism as an essential part of school and society (Bottery, 2019). Brown *et al.* (2005) state that ethical leaders allow subordinates a say in decision-making and listen to their ideas and concerns and provide followers with voice (De Hoog & Den Hartog, 2008). Voice behaviour refers to the leader allowing employees to express their dissatisfaction in the workplace and suggest improvements without him or her

taking any offence or feeling threatened (Chin, 2013). The followers are encouraged to deliver constructive opinions and ideas to advance workplace effectiveness and to avoid potential crisis (Chin, 2013). A school principal who does this in a school qualifies as a proactive leader, pro-acting against potential crisis. These are the principals I intended learning from.

Yin (2013) conducted a study to examine how ethical leadership encourages employees to engage in voice behaviour via increasing organizational harmony. Findings revealed that ethical leadership is positively related to employee-perceived harmony and employee voice. It also found that ethical leadership enhances voice behaviour through promoting organizational harmony in the Chinese workplace. I needed to find out if this also happened in South African schools. According to Rabinowitz (2016), ethics should be discussed frequently and openly by all concerned. All assumptions, including the leader's, should be open to questioning and everyone should be willing to hear that questioning without defensiveness and to consider it seriously to develop ethical understanding. Leaders who engage in ethical leadership identify issues for discussion and resolution and give permission to others to challenge and provide feedback (Ehrich, Harris, Klenowski, Smeed & Ainscow, 2015). Mitonga-Monga, Flotman & Cilliers (2016) refer to this as discussability. This is the extent to which employees perceive that the organisation affords them opportunities to openly discuss ethical and unethical behaviours and issues. I believe it takes an ethical and psychologically mature leader to practise voice behaviour, otherwise the outcomes could be adverse and disastrous. Sagnak (2017) places emphasis on constructive criticism as opposed to mere criticism. It is an organizational citizenship behaviour trait. It is meant to improve organizational functioning through the communication of ideas, suggestions and opinions. It encourages individuals to speak out and to also suggest possible solutions.

2.5.2.3 Decision-making

Managing and leading are both ethics-laden tasks as every managerial decision affects either people or the natural environment in some way and those effects need to be taken into consideration as decisions are made (Waddock, 2012). This is quite profound in that studies on unethical conduct in education (Dubazane, 2015; Manyaka & Sebola, 2013; Naidoo, 2015; Netshitangani, 2014) have shown that leading without ethics leads to unethical conduct with

disastrous consequences. School principals are often faced with challenges where they have to make decisions that have no clear-cut resolution and are highly likely to be problematic. Oliveira (2007) defines a decision as a response to a situation and comprehends judgement, expectations and evaluation. Olcum and Titrek (2015) define a decision as a set of factors that begin with the identification of a stimulus for action and end with a specific commitment to action. Decision-making is a process resulting in conscious selection between several alternative possibilities in order to achieve own desired state in a given environment (Shaked & Schechter, 2019). It is regarded as the essential part of education and very complex.

At times, decisions are not easy to make. School principals, like other leaders, find themselves faced with ethical dilemmas. An ethical dilemma arises from a situation where there is a conflicting set of principles, values and perspectives (Freakley & Burgh, 2000). Since there is no clear-cut method of managing the dilemmas, leaders make decisions based on their life experience and personal values (Crews, 2011). It takes CEOs of companies to observe not only business and legal bounds but also ethical parameters to make decisions (Moorhouse, 2002). Laws and policies are there in schools but they have not deterred some school principals and other employees from behaving unethically. Duffield and McCuen (2000) believe that it takes ethical maturity for a leader to make ethical decisions when faced with ethical dilemmas. They claim that ethical maturity is achieved when a leader is able to deal with complex dilemmas without being influenced by their bias. Unfortunately, this is what is playing out in most South African schools, hence the chaos and uncertainty. Josephson (2002) shares similar sentiments, adding that it entails more than a belief in the importance of ethics but also ethical sensitivity to implications of choices, the ability to evaluate complex, ambiguous and incomplete facts and the skill to implement ethical decisions effectively. This sounds mammoth and ethically demanding and cannot be easy for school principals to execute. An ethically orientated organization is the one that has the capacity to reflect on values in the decision-making process and establish how managers can use observations in managing the organization (Hood, 2003). The CEO is often seen as the individual primarily responsible for creation of the ethical orientation and school principals also have this responsibility. Ethical leadership is a blend of being a moral person and amoral manager. Being a moral person is allied with traits such as honesty, integrity and trustworthiness (Hosea, 2014; Trevino, Brown, & Harrison, 2005). It also involves doing the

right thing, concern for people, being open and standards of personal integrity. They add that a moral person sticks to her or his core values, tries to be objective and fair, exhibits concern for society and the welfare of those in society and follows ethical decision-making rules.

Basing decisions on values aligns the decisions with the future one wants to experience, as values surpass both contexts and experiences. Values provide a more flexible mode of decision-making compared to beliefs (Dean, 2008; Thaba *et al.*, 2016). Ethical decision-making refers to having an understanding of the moral elements of the decision and the likely consequences of decisions on others (Lawton, Rayner & Lasthuizen, 2013). This is what develops the leader's character and generates their respect, integrity and standing among all stakeholders (Clifford, 2014). Ethical leaders can think relatively calmly in crisis situations and communicate that calmness and confidence to others. This requires the emotional intelligence discussed earlier on.

Olcum and Titrek (2015) define decision-making as a set of actions and dynamic factors that begin with the identification of a spur for action and end with the specific commitment to action. I find this statement intriguing indeed because making a decision and not putting it into action can be a futile exercise. Ouma (2017) posits that ethics is the study of how decisions affect people, hence decision-making forms part of the factors that influence ethical leadership.

Because a school is a public entity, it cannot operate in isolation and some of the decisions to be made involve or impact on the community. This dictates that the community has to be involved in the happenings in the school.

2.5.2.4 Community involvement

Ethical leaders have concern for common goals in their organizations, therefore they do not impose their own will on others (Bass & Steidlmeier, 1999; Josephson, 2002). They search for goals which are compatible with everyone. An ethical leader collaborates with others inside and outside the organization (Rabinowitz, 2016). In this context, the community is not limited only to the community where the school is but includes also all those sectors that make a positive contribution in a school, like the businesspeople, the churches, the various

governmental departments (sport, social development, home affairs, South African Social Security Agency etc.). They communicate and cooperate with stakeholders showing them respect, observing human rights and acknowledging their interdependence (Ferrell & Ferrell, 2011; Hosea, 2014). An ethical school principal ensures that all stakeholders are involved in the activities of the school. The principal is not threatened by their involvement as there is nothing to hide. Such principals are open to suggestions and are willing to try new ideas, as long as they stand to benefit the school. There are benefits that are associated with ethical leadership in the workplace.

2.6 Benefits associated with ethical leadership

Ethical leadership leads to prevention and reduction of unethical conduct in any workplace. It can also result in employee retention (Kar, 2013). In a school setting, ethical leadership has benefits not only for the school principal as an individual but also for the entire staff and the school as an organization. These benefits include improved public image of the organization, restoration or enhancement of investor confidence (the community, sponsors, Department), prevention and reduction of criminal penalties, preventing conflict that may arise among the stakeholders, improved employee retention and job satisfaction (Kar, 2014).

Ethical leadership has amazing outcomes when practised in a workplace (Alshamaari *et al.* 2015). Studies have revealed that ethical leadership has some beneficial outcomes that include willingness to use voice to improve their organization, greater employee job satisfaction and a sense of wellbeing and increased trust in organization leaders, both from employees and the public (Bedi, Alpaslan & Green, 2015; Hassan, 2015). According to literature (Chenweli, 2015; Grobler & Holtzhausen, 2017; Jones, 2015; Rabinowitz, 2016), there are many benefits associated with ethical leadership in organizations. Ethical leadership models behaviour to the organization and the community. It helps bring trust, credibility and respect both for the leader and the organization. It creates a good climate within the organization (Dubazane, 2015) and can lead to partnerships with the community and other stakeholders. Employees occupy the moral high ground as it cultivates an ethical climate and offers organizational citizenship where employees enjoy a sense of belonging (Mo & Shi, 2017).

According to Mulder (2017), safety, trust, personal growth, friendships are all associated with ethical leadership. Ethical leaders influence ethics-related conduct such as employee decision-making and either pro-social or counterproductive behaviours (Brown, Trevino & Harrison, 2005). Being ethical has its own inner benefit which is virtue, a personal advantage which is prudence and a boost in self-esteem (Josephson Institute, 2009). Whether the school principals in the study shared similar experiences or if their experiences were different brought some level of intrigue in this study. Job satisfaction, trust and organizational citizenship behaviour are some of the benefits discussed in the following sections.

2.6.1 Job satisfaction

Job satisfaction is likely to be achieved when leader and follower levels of moral reasoning are compatible. In any workplace, people have differing personalities that makes it difficult for leaders to cope, and schools are no different. There are higher levels of gratification and commitment with lower turnover intentions (Schminke, Ambrose & Neubaum, 2005). Research studies (Ponnu & Tennakoon, 2009; Upadhyay & Singh, 2010) have confirmed that indeed high levels of perceived ethical leadership behaviour are associated with higher levels of employee's organizational commitment. In a school where ethical leadership prevails, teachers are generally happy despite the professional challenges they may be facing from the department. They have the will to withstand and overcome whatever challenges they may encounter as a united force. It is unlikely that they may want to take a transfer from that school or an early retirement or resign. They would want to stick around for as long as they possibly can.

Chenweli (2015) conducted a study with an aim to further knowledge of ethical leadership by examining moral emotions as the antecedents and employee creativity as the consequence. The study involved semiconductor companies in China. Leaders' empathy and gratitude were found to be important and positively related to ethical leadership. Ethical leadership was found to have a direct positive effect on employee creativity. Employees indeed responded positively towards ethical leaders and engaged more creatively in the workplace. This is part of job satisfaction.

Workers who are satisfied in their workplace regard their workplace as their own. They commit themselves fully to the organization. Commitment is simply defined as loyalty and attachment of an individual or group to the organization according to Agha, Nwekpa & Eze (2017). They further state that commitment has been used by organizations to predict desired employee behaviour in the areas of performance, absenteeism and emotional attachment. Organizational commitment is defined as a state in which an employee identifies with a particular organization and its goals and wishes to maintain membership in the organization (Agha, Nwekpa & Eze, 2017). This clearly shows that job satisfaction is a benefit associated with ethical leadership.

In a study by Yang (2014) in Taiwan, the aim was to explore the influence of ethical leadership on employees by examining job satisfaction, subjective wellbeing at work and life satisfaction. The study found that ethical leadership indirectly influences both employee wellbeing and life satisfaction. It also found that it has a strong influence on job satisfaction. Peter (2015) investigated the effects of ethical leadership on employee performance in the public sector in Uganda. A target population of 160 employees was surveyed. A structured questionnaire was self-administered to the employees to collect the data. Regression analysis and Pearson correlation coefficient were used to explain the nature of the relationship between ethical leadership and employee performance and the effects thereof. Results of the study revealed that employee performance is greatly influenced by ethical leadership. These have both policy and managerial implications that are discussed here. This study is limited by being cross-sectional in nature and considered only one sector in one country and therefore cannot be generalized to other sectors and countries. One practical implication is that ethical leadership in public sector needs to be promoted at a top level and leaders have to behave ethically. This is the first study of this nature conducted in Uganda focusing on the effects of ethical leadership on employee performance.

Bedi, Alpaslan and Green (2016) conducted a study in North America and Europe. The purpose was to test the relationship between ethical leadership and follower work outcomes using the social learning and social exchange theories. They also wanted to explore how ethical leadership relates to and is different from other styles of leadership styles like transformational leadership and the contingent reward dimension of transactional leadership. Findings indicated that ethical leadership is related positively to numerous follower outcomes

such as perceptions of leader's interactional fairness and follower ethical behaviour. It also revealed that ethical leadership is positively associated with transformational leadership and the contingent reward dimension of transactional leadership. All the studies discussed above show that ethical leadership has positive results associated with it in the workplace. There can never be good working relations if there is no trust between the leader and the followers.

2.6.2 Trust

Trust is often considered the outcome of integrity or ethical behaviour (Bubble, 2012; Van den Akker, Heres & Lasthuizen, 2009). Waggoner (2010) perceives trust to be a glue of leadership and promotes long-term success. Trust between employees and managers is crucial for employees to become more engaged at work. When employees perceive that their immediate manager can be trusted to reward them fairly for their effort, they are likely to become engaged (Coleman, 2018). A study conducted in South Africa revealed that positive relationships exist between trust in the leader and work engagement, demonstrating the link between trust in the leader and ethical leadership. An ethical leader is able to admit his or her mistakes to the follower, making a follower to trust them more (Ng & Feldman, 2015). The authors add that ethical leaders inspire trust, which inspires good work on the job. Ethical leaders trust and believe in their followers, believing that they add value to the school (Mthembu, 2018).

Organizations benefit from either training managers to display ethical leadership or hiring ethical leaders from the start. According to Dean (2008), when an organization and its team members share a set of values, they become more flexible, less hierarchical, less bureaucratic and develop an enhanced capacity for collective action. Mthembu (2018) maintains that acknowledging followers' opinions builds trust among them and a culture of shared vision; it indicates how much the leader cares and respects them. Trust and respect build up social resources with staff that ease enforcement and makes accountability accurate and gives managers the benefit of doubt in difficult times (Dobel, 2011). Engelbrecht *et al.* (2014) conducted a study to investigate the relationship between ethical leadership and trust in the leader and the effect these have on the work engagement of employees. Employees who perceive leaders as acting ethically and displaying and reinforcing normative appropriate

conduct, were more likely to be work engaged, as demonstrated by positive attitudes in their work roles (Mitonga-Monga & Cilliers, 2015).

2.6.3 Organizational Citizenship

The climate of a school is the moral feeling of the place; it is derived from the values that the principal promotes and makes attainable (Quick, 2014). Citizenship requires a leader to do his or her share to make the institution or organization better, to cooperate, stay informed and protect the environment (Josephson Institute, 2009). Citizenship behaviour refers to when employees go beyond formal job description to achieve the goals of an organization (Ng & Feldman, 2015). This comes naturally under ethical leadership. This is linked to decrease in unethical conduct, increased motivation and commitment, increased organizational identification and lowered turnover (Ng & Feldman, 2015). Nerves and Story (2013) studied the relationship between ethical leadership and organizational deviance via affective commitment to the organization. The study used a survey of employees and their supervisors from eighteen organizations. Its report showed that ethical leadership was positively related to employees' affective commitment to the organization. A supervisor's reputation for high performance was associated with decreased organizational defiance. In education, this would mean that the school principal, through his or her good reputation is proactive and leading by example. This in turn, ought to prevent unethical conduct and boost followers' morale.

In another study, Mo and Shi (2017) examined the proposition that ethical leadership is related to employee's organizational citizenship behaviour through social learning mechanism and social exchange mechanism. The study was conducted in the pharmaceutical retail chain company in South China. Findings showed that it is critical for organizations to identify, select and promote people who always present ethical values and commitments become leaders in the organization. It also found that finding ways to activate or enhance supervisor's and employees' concerns for the organization would enhance employee organizational citizenship behaviour. Provided a manager is perceived as consistently fair and acting with integrity in all actions, such ethical leadership promotes an effective working relationship between immediate managers and their employees and should promote increased engagement (Coleman, 2018).

2.7 Summary

This chapter has seven sections that are discussed at length. In the chapter, I have attempted to paint a picture of what ethical leadership entails in a workplace. I discussed the ethical principles and characteristics of ethical leadership. I further discussed leadership styles related to ethical leadership and those influencing ethical leadership and concluded with benefits associated with ethical leadership. The studies already conducted in other settings highlight what is currently lacking in education. Evidently, literature on ethical leadership in education is still minimal and a lot of research still needs to be undertaken so that the findings can speak directly to education practitioners. The next chapter tackles the theories used as a framework for the study.

CHAPTER 3

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

3.1 Introduction

The previous chapter addressed the review of literature on ethical leadership. This chapter identifies and explains the study's theoretical lens. The chapter is divided into four main sections. The first section provides an insight into what a theory is and gives a brief explanation of what a theoretical framework is, drawing from literature. The second section gives a historical background on the behavioural theories related to ethical leadership. Though these theories are not directly found in the framework for this study, they form the basis for the theories in the framework in that both of them have their origins there. Again, I found that these ethical leadership theories resonate with the theories used in this study as they share most of their characteristics and history. This is revealed as the study unravels. The reasoning behind this was that this study sought to understand and learn from the experiences and practices of selected school principals who were deemed to be ethical leaders by those they work closely with. Following this section is the third section of the chapter, the servant leadership theory. Servant leadership theory is one of the two theories of the framework that the study employs. Another theory in this study is the 4-V's model of ethical leadership which makes up the fourth section. I then concluded by giving a critique of each theory and a justification for adopting them as my choice.

3.2 What is a theory?

A theory in simple terms is a conjecture about phenomenon or research but for scientists it is something that is testable and can be proven (Dillow, 2009). Social sciences associate theory with paradigm and perspectives. However, in the research context, theory translates to a mission the researcher adopts to plan, carry out and discuss the research study. It is not only indispensable in research, but also inevitable. It is not something that the researcher has to design from scratch but can stem from existing formal theories. This creates a relationship between the researcher and the work. It is also crucial to bear in mind that the theory grows with the project. It is meant to ensure that the entire study has coherence by aligning the study to the research question. It is also crucial during analysis as it provides light in which to understand findings. This is achievable when the theory is appropriate and logically interpreted (Lovitt, 2015).

Since it is not always easy to find a theory that fits perfectly into a study, we have to make adjustments. Theory describes, explains and accounts for our ontological leanings. Ellis and Bochner (2006) posit that it is not easy to produce an objective neutral view of a lived experience, therefore we cannot aim for distant theorizing. I did not aim for objectivity or a neutral observer's voice or bracketing, as this is not possible in a narrative study. This is because every word emanates from somewhere. We draw upon theory, clutch at it and weave it into our study. The theoretical framework helped me transform collected narratives of lived experiences that aimed to show how lives are lived, understood and experienced. Theory helps us bring life to certain contexts to build subjective and situated knowledge (Lovitt, 2015). This study borrowed from the servant leadership theory crafted by Greenleaf (1977) as well as from the 4Vs model by Bill Grace (1999) that are discussed in detail in this chapter to form a theoretical framework for the study. I used the framework during analysis and it helped me understand the findings that are detailed in Chapter 5 and the lessons learnt in Chapter 6.

3.3 Historical background of ethical leadership theories

Ethics are about whom a person is, which is their character including their actions and behaviours. The discussion of ethics dates back to Plato and Aristotle (Bunker, Hall & Kram, 2010; Jones, 2015). Whilst teleology and deontology focus on the actions of leaders, virtue-based approaches are concerned with their character (Bunker, Hall & Kram, 2010). Ethical egoism, utilitarianism and altruism all assess the outcomes of actions, referred to as teleology. Deontology, on the other hand, rejects the notion that the goodness or badness of an action is determined by its consequence; it is rather but the act itself. These ethical theories are later discussed in detail as the chapter progresses as in this study they were perceived as forming a basis for the theoretical framework. This study focused on both the character and actions of ethical leaders.

3.3.1 Normative ethical theories

Normative ethical theories refer to a philosophical aspect, which informs us how we ought to act (Hoover & Pepper, 2015) thus providing reasoning as to why some decisions are right or wrong. When the 'why' is answered, it is then that we gain a deeper understanding to the motivation of these ethic statements. This study hoped to understand why school principals acted and behaved in the manner they did.

Velasquez (1998) defines the concept ethics by stating what it is not, emphasizing that ethics is not the same as feelings because some people will do something wrong and still feel well. It is not religion as some people are secular and ethics apply to everyone. Ethics is not following the law as the law can be ethically corrupt. Law at times has difficulty in enforcing standards in some areas, as it unfolds in South African education. Ethics is not following culturally accepted norms as not all cultures are quite ethical. Ethics is not science. Though both social and natural sciences may provide important data to help us make better ethical choices but they do not tell us what to do. What is technologically or scientifically possible may not be ethical to do. Finding out what practices the school principals in the study followed provides us with a deeper insight as to what ethical leadership entails, thus providing lessons for others to learn.

3.3.1.1 Teleological approach

Teleological theories are derived from the Greek word ‘telos’ which means ends, goals and purpose. Teleological theories are also known as consequential theories underpinned by the principle of utilitarianism (Fischer & Lovell, 2009). Aristotle believed that everything in life has a specific goal (Northouse, 2004). Teleology believes that the rightness of an action is determined by its consequences (Crews, 2011; Fischer & Lovell, 2009). An action is good if its results are good. Achievement of the end goal is what matters not how it is achieved. The consequences must benefit everyone not just an individual. Utilitarianism, ethical egoism and altruism are all aspects of teleological ethics as they all assess the outcomes of actions (Bunker, Hall & Kram, 2010).

Utilitarianism is an element of teleological ethics based on the greatest good for the greatest number of people. The act is moral if the outcome is the greatest good for the greatest number of people (Tae Wan & Strudler, 2012) [this is correct and it is the same as in the list]. According to Sing (2016), it is not the action itself that matters but only the goodness or badness of the consequence. The positive outcomes of an action have to outweigh the negative outcomes for it to be accepted as morally and ethically admissible (Dellaportes, Gibson, Alagiah, Hutchinson & Leung, 2005). The focus is not on the action itself, it could be unethical, but on the consequence itself (Jones & Felps, 2013). What may seem to benefit the majority may turn out to be unethical or illegal (Casali, 2011; Hartman, 2011).

There may be harm for the minority and utilitarianism, an aspect of teleology, does not object to that (Pitesa & Thau, 2013). This means that rightness or badness is not inherent to that action but can only be judged, assessed and evaluated by its consequences. They claim that it is of no use having good intentions if they do not yield positive outcomes.

3.3.1.1.1 Utilitarianism

Utilitarianism was first coined by English philosophers Jeremy Bentham (1748-1832) and John Stuart Mill (1806-1873). It is based on the premise that our ethical choices should have their consequences as the base and that means that consequences should inform action, assuming that consequences are known in advance. They believed that best decisions comprise of more benefits than disadvantages (Hoover & Pepper, 2005). These decisions should benefit most people and not just the chosen few. It is a widespread approach to moral reasoning. It attempts to do the greatest good for the greatest number of people (Gustafson, 2013; Tae Wan & Strudler, 2012). It asks the question “What is best in this situation?” They contend that what may seem wrong in general, like lying, may be good in another situation to save a life or protect a company secret. A school principal may keep information from the staff members and decide to act unilaterally in order to protect them from certain situations. Utility can be defined as what is best in a specific case. This coincides with the ethic of care discussed in detail in the preceding chapter. The utilitarian decision maker keeps her or his own interests in mind but gives them no more weight than anyone else’s. If the immediate benefits of a decision do not outweigh its possible future costs, it is overruled (Crews, 2011; Hoover & Pepper, 2005). The outcome should bear little or no harm.

Decision-making involves identifying all possible courses of action; the weighing of all costs and benefits for each action and choosing the option that bears greatest good at less cost. However, utilitarian decision-makers sometimes reach different conclusions when faced with the same dilemma. It is not always easy to tell prior if the decision is going to be beneficial or not. Sometimes it is difficult to identify possible outcomes. Evaluating the merits of the consequences may also be impossible, especially when they are not clear. Therefore, different conclusions may be reached, even when faced with similar dilemmas. There was no evidence that suggested school principals in the study would have responded in the same way if faced with similar dilemmas. In utilitarianism the leaders transcend their interests and do not give

themselves greater advantage, there is no room for self-interest or greed unlike in ethical egoism (Crews, 2011; Jones, 2015).

3.3.1.1.2 Ethical egoism

The term ‘ego’ means ‘one’s self’. Egoism refers to pursuit of one’s own welfare or self-interest as a primary concern (Jones, 2015). According to Wolcshyn (2011), action or decision is morally and ethically acceptable if it fulfils the wishes and aspirations of an individual (Crews, 2011). The first belief in egoism is that every individual should act in a way that benefits them individually. In egoism, pursuit of self-interest is justified provided it also serves the benefits of others (Crews, 2011; Stanwick & Stanwick, 2009). At times, some school principals sacrifice their time and resources as their personal contribution to their schools. As in utilitarianism, the results of an action determine whether the action is moral or not. But the difference with ethical egoism is that the outcome benefits an individual (Jones, 2015; Northouse, 2004). At times, the act may be moral but motivated by self-interest of a leader as results bring pleasure only to the individual (Jones, 2015). In education, school leaders ought to refrain from actions that only benefit them individually at the expense of an organization. There is no room for such conduct, not only is such conduct frowned upon because it is unlawful, but also because it is unethical as well.

3.3.1.1.3 Altruism

Altruism seeks to benefit the other person, not the self. Action taken in altruism promotes interest of others as opposed to egoism (Crews, 2011). By making caring for others the ethical standard, one can encourage practices that build trust and increase productivity like empowering, mentoring, teambuilding, organizational citizenship behaviour. It benefits the other and not the self; caring for others becomes an ethical standard that promotes practices that build trust and increase productivity (Sing, 2016). It is through altruism that a leader’s actions demonstrate concern for others’ interest even if they contradict that of a leader’s self-interest (Bunker, Hall & Kram, 2010). An ethical school principal suspends self-interest and prioritizes what stands to benefit others and, that way, there is a good chance that others learn from them.

3.3.1.2 Deontological approach

Deontology is derived from the Greek word ‘Deon’ which means obligation. Deontological ethics was founded by Immanuel Kant in the 18th century. He was a German philosopher. It

is based on the premise that one's actions ought to be consistent with the actions of another person under similar situations and become universal laws (Tae Wan & Strudler, 2012).

Deontological theories are not goal-oriented; duty is not based on the outcomes or consequences of an action, but on the good or the bad of the action itself, thus dismissing the teleological theories (Jones, 2015). They are non-consequential, meaning that it is the outcome of an action that ought to be moral more than the action itself (Dijk, Engen & Paauwe, 2012; Sing, 2016). According to Crews (2011), the consequences of actions are not the criteria to determine whether they are good or bad but rather the leader's actions and their moral responsibility and how it affects the rights of others. It is logical to take moral principles into account when making a decision instead of just the outcome of the action (Mansell, 2013). Reason and moral principles ought to be upheld for the action to be accepted as ethical (Jones, 2015).

According to deontological ethics, leaders should refrain from doing whatever it takes to achieve desired results (Micewiski & Troy, 2007). In some schools, teachers allow students to cheat during examination in order to achieve higher percentage in the pass rate. Often, this occurs under the principal's watch. An ethical school principal would never condone such conduct as much as they would like for their school to produce the best results. What is morally good is good will, which is the highest principle. Deontologist approaches are more aligned with an ethic of duty or ethic of profession (Fischer & Lovell, 2009). This ethic is also discussed at length under the review of literature. Under non consequentialist theories, one ought to do what is morally right, no matter what the consequences. For Fischer and Lovell (2009), a decision-maker is influenced by the moral choices for which he or she is accountable.

3.3.1.3 Virtue-based approach

In this approach, who commits the act actually determines the rightness or wrongness of behaviour. The emphasis is on the character or virtue of an individual and moral excellence (Northouse, 2004). The character of virtue of an individual is of primacy, as virtue defines a person as a good moral character (Crews, 2011). Eudemonia, which is a Greek term associated with virtue-based theories, encompasses the notion of both behaving well and faring well (Crews, 2011; Singh, 2016). Virtues are a set of personal characteristics. The focus is more on the processes than on the consequences. The emphasis is on character,

which may be observed in the practices and outcomes in the organization (Bell, Dyk & Neuman, 2014). These personal characteristics assist individuals to make the right choices during ethical dilemmas. This is evident in ethical dilemmas. Sing (2016) defines virtues as personal traits or characteristics. These traits impact on how individuals practise virtues which allow them to make right choices and decisions when faced with ethical and moral dilemmas. Practices based on virtue theory impact on members of the organization (Dyk & Wong, 2016). This approach promotes a deep sense of human flourishing and happiness by focusing on the wellbeing of the larger community and enacting the virtues in the community (Sinnick, 2014). Virtuous characteristics are not features that are optional. A leader cannot decide whether to have them or not, they ought to possess them. For Aristotle, virtues are prerequisites of human life (Rossouw, 2002). The focus ought to be on nurturing individuals to become virtuous. Fischer and Lovell (2004) claim that it is imperative to learn how to deal with ethical and moral issues rather than learning pre-packed solutions. In a school situation, there might be two teachers who are often absent from work. It would be unwise for the school principal to have a prescribed manner of handling the two matters at hand, for the reasons for this behaviour may vary. One reason could be just pure non-professionalism and another could be medical reasons or domestic challenges. Therefore ethical leaders ask themselves what a virtuous person would do in a similar dilemma.

Individuals are encouraged to decide individually to act ethically and morally (Fischer & Lovell, 2009). Northouse (2004) cites courage, perseverance, temperance, sociability, forgiveness, benevolence, public spiritedness and affection as virtues of an ethical or moral person. People need to be trained and developed in ethical and moral values. Aristotle's belief is that virtue development is a slow process that cannot be rushed but be sustained throughout a person's lifetime. People should not be told what to do but what to be, and that is a virtuous individual (Northouse, 2004). One's virtues emanate from one's actions and actions manifest one's virtues. Courage, devotion, compassion and honesty are noble qualities and not practised in public for approval. Learning in values-based leadership involves individual and group knowledge discovery, skills acquisition, reflection, assessment and experience (Jones, 2015). The common good is at the centre where individual interests are suspended. Dyk and Wang (2016) maintain that a person's past has a bearing on how they are judged, however one might argue that sometimes a person for the better changes.

The history of ethical theories is the foundation for both servant leadership and the 4Vs model which frame the study. Ethical school principals aim to act morally and ethically, make fair decisions, taking into account the greater good for the majority by tapping into their ethics and moral principles, and suspending personal interest by putting others first. They serve and then lead. Both theories in the framework revolve around prioritizing others and influencing them to do the same and incorporating values in everyday practice.

The study adopts both the servant leadership theory and the 4Vs model in seeking to understand ethical leadership in the workplace. In tackling both the servant leadership theory and the 4Vs model, I began by giving the historical background of each, which included the gurus of each theory. The unpacking of the theory itself and showing how it has been used in the past are done concurrently. The framework helped me to understand and explain the school principals' understanding and experience of ethical leadership. The next section presents both theories, first individually and eventually in relation to one another.

3.4 The servant leadership theory

3.4.1 History and development of servant leadership theory

As a background, a servant is a person who serves others but, unlike a slave, who subjects themselves voluntarily to whomever they serve (Kim, 2016). Servant leadership involves altruistic and ethical connotations and requires leaders to be caring, empathetic and ensuring that followers aspire to be like them. The phrase 'servant leadership' was coined by Robert K. Greenleaf in *The Servant as Leader* (1977). He claimed that a servant-leader is a servant first who has a natural feeling to want to serve and then later aspire to lead. Greenleaf was inspired by Herman Hesse's *Journey to the East* (Sendjaya, Saros & Santora, 2008). This was a group's spiritual journey. In this group, Leo, a servant, kept the group captivated with songs and talks. When he disappeared one day, the group disbanded and only one person remained. The person discovered that Leo, though being a servant, had an inspiration to serve but was actually a natural leader. Then Greenfield deduced that a servant leader prioritizes serving others and this supersedes occupying a formal leadership position. A leader does not have to demean themselves or their image in the process. They offer the highest form of service whilst assuming a lower form of position. "Servant leadership holds the promise of an ethical and socially responsible management and leadership as an antidote to corporate scandals" (Wong and Page, 2003, p. 1). Communication, credibility, competence, stewardship,

visibility, influence, persuasion, listening, encouragement, delegation are other accompanying attributes of servant leadership (Crews, 2011). Since its inception, the concept of servant leadership has grown and developed over decades. There are researchers and scholars who have developed what Greenleaf had started. Among them are Spears (1995); Laub (1999); Wong and Davey (2002); Patterson (2004); Dennis and Borcanea (2005); Barbuto and Wheeler (2006); Liden, Wayne, Zhao and Handerson (2008); Sendjaya *et al.*, 2008; Van Dierendonck (2011); Ambali, Eissa, Bakar, Hashim and Tariq (2011); Crews, 2011; Steyn (2012); Albert and Spears (2014); Mahembe and Engelbrecht (2014); Focht (2015); Bhengu and Mkhize (2017); Heyler and Martin (2018).

In their development, each researcher came up with their own measures or features of servant leadership. What is notable about them is that they tend to confirm what the previous researchers had found and more, without contradicting earlier work. Ethical school principals tend to serve their followers instead of flaunting their authority, demanding respect and dishing out instructions (Heyler & Martin. 2018). Such behaviour is often met with resistance and defiance. Resistance and defiance in a school are like a plague that damages interpersonal relations and organizational efficacy. Servant leadership theory has a philosophical basis upon which it is balanced.

Servant leadership theory has been used in various contexts by various researchers and authors. Some have used it in virtues frameworks (Lancot & Irving, 2010); to highlight the conceptual disunity of servant leadership (Suddaby, 2010); to bring attention to its role in organizational effectiveness (Savage-Austin, 2011); to present servant leadership as an alternative to transformational leadership (Pache & Santos, 2011); to link servant leadership and ethical decision-making (Crossan, Mazutis & Seitjs, 2012); to test the theory of servant leadership theory (Brown & Bryant, 2016). I intended to understand if servant leadership could be used to contribute to the empirical knowledge that has been found to be lacking in such research. Again, I attempted to uncover if servant leadership and the 4Vs model could be used together to highlight the role of ethical leadership in education. I hoped to achieve this through drawing from the narratives of proactive school principals who are esteemed as ethical leaders.

Conceptual disunity in servant leadership, servant leadership as an alternative to transformational leadership, servant leadership and ethical decision-making, and servant

leadership and construct clarity are included in this chapter as sub-sections, simply to draw specific attention to how scholars have used servant leadership as a theory in the past. Research into conceptual disunity in servant leadership seeks to ascertain whether servant leadership is a leadership style, a philosophy, a set of principles or even just a set of characteristics (Brown & Bryant, 2015; Suddaby, 2010). This was crucial for this study which used Greenleaf's theory as part of its framework. In another instance, servant leadership is used as an alternative to transformational leadership. The latter is perceived as prioritising organizational objectives over service, which is promoted by the former (Covey, 2006; Pache & Santos, 2011; Patterson, 2003). Crossan, Mazutis & Seijts (2012) studied servant leadership and decision-making. Servant leaders, just like ethical leader, are said to believe in shared decision-making. Suddaby (2010) draws attention to servant leadership and construct clarity with the aim of reaching a conceptual consensus. Although the aim of this study is not conceptual consensus, reading in depth about what servant leadership is has been a valuable background to the research.

3.4.1.1 Conceptual disunity in servant leadership

Brown and Bryant (2015) claim there is conceptual disunity in servant leadership. They argue that there seems to be a challenge in conceptualising servant leadership, whether servant leadership is a leadership process, a leadership style, a philosophy or a set of practices. Is it a set of characteristics or set of behaviours (Suddaby, 2010)? For Heyler and Martins (2018), servant leadership helps to explain individual, group and organizational outcomes. Leaders avoid self-interest, which is viewed as a catalyst for unethical behaviour. This was highlighted in the background section (see section 1.2). Servant leadership theory is well established in literature but there are opportunities to test it in theoretical environments by integrating with other theories (Suddaby, 2010). This study attempted to integrate servant leadership with the 4Vs model and tested it empirically. This would hopefully help practitioners understand how to increase organization's performance. Heyler and Martins (2018) compared servant leadership to Agency Theory; Stewardship Theory; Upper Echelons Theory, Institutional theory; Transaction Cost Theory; Resource-based Theory which are all management theories and the impact it has on organizational performance. However, for the purposes of this study, these theories are not discussed in detail.

Greenleaf's work (1977) forms the basis for scholars and practitioners. Scholars continue to present conceptualisations, thus generating further conceptual confusion (Van Dierendonck, 2011). Whilst conceptualisations provide insight, they have also cluttered the field. What constitute servant leadership are thus far mere personal opinions of researchers. In trying to conceptualise servant leadership, each scholar identifies some aspects of the phenomenon whilst ignoring others. As far as Sudday (2010) is concerned, lack of broadly accepted measures of servant leadership results in theoretical disunity. There is no agreed upon taxonomy of characteristics, hence this disunity. On a positive note, this disunity provides for scholars to develop highly original and useful research (Corley & Gioia, 2011). In this study I sought to learn from part of the narratives on what school principals believed to be their own characteristics. This was their experiential truth and therefore original empirical knowledge.

3.4.1.2 Servant leadership as an alternative to transformational leadership

Transformational leadership is egoistic, whilst servant leadership is perceived as more altruistic. The former focuses mainly on organizational objectives over service (Kim, 2016). Transformational leadership may compromise morals and ethics to achieve organizational goals but servant leaders are more principled and put personal values forth (Covey, 2006). Transformational leadership proponents claim that it is a morally grounded organizational culture (Crews, 2011; Patterson, 2003) that originates from the leader's values and vision. Pache and Santos (2011) claim that transformational leadership uses servant leadership's concept of altruistic forms to empower followers to move from personal interest towards the shared values and goals of an organization. However, servant leadership, which is centred on principles and moral authority, does not manipulate achievement of common goals as followers are free to choose their own course of action as the autonomy is respected. Servant leadership is perceived as appropriate, given the growth of organizational complexity and increase in conflicting stakeholder demand (Pache & Santos, 2011). What is also important to note is that not all servant leaders are ethical leaders (Crews, 2011).

3.4.1.3 Servant leadership and ethical decision-making

Crossan *et al.* (2012) present a broad model integrating virtues, values, character strength and Ethical Decision Making (EDM). They suggest reintroducing a 'virtue ethical perspective' to existing EDM. They have a strong conviction that character strengths and motivational values

can serve as natural bridges to link a virtue framework to EDM. This study identified deficiency of virtues, values, vision and voice to existing servant leadership theory for it to make an impeccable impact on ethical leadership in education. The feeling was that if these, or, if not, some of their aspects, were to be merged, could form an ethical leadership model, that would have a balance of servant leadership and the 4Vs described below.

3.4.1.4 Servant leadership and construct clarity

The challenge of servant leadership within organizations lies in construct clarity (Suddaby, 2010). Construct clarity refers to definition, scope conditions, relationships with other constructs and coherency (Suddaby, 2010). There is a need to state what servant leadership is and what it is not. Construct confusion and conceptual disunity necessitate greater construct clarity. Therefore, there is a greater need to compare and contrast definitions until conceptual consensus is achieved, as stated earlier on. This author used servant leadership to try and bring about the need for construct clarity. In other words, what constitutes servant leadership, and what does not? I found it important for this study to ascertain what it was that the study intended to use as a theory. Servant leadership is needed at multiple-level analysis to increase construct clarity. This was essential in providing an insight into the relationship of servant leadership to other constructs.

The above sections assist in ascertaining what the school principals' understanding of ethical leadership was. This is because ethical leaders are servant leaders who incorporate virtues and values in their practice. It also assisted with the emerging themes during analysis. The themes informed me whether their understanding was that of conceptual disunity, servant leadership as an alternative to transformational leadership, construct clarity, decision-making or something else. It was therefore vital to understand the philosophical basis of the theory to better understand how it fitted in the study and that was covered hereunder.

3.4.2 Philosophical basis of the theory

The motivation for this theory was to serve first and then lead (Barnabas & Clifford, 2012; Fotch, 2015; Mahembe & Engelbrecht, 2014; Russell & Stone, 2002). The two terms "lead" and "serve" are the foundation for servant leadership (Van der Vyver, Van der Westhuizen & Meyer, 2014). Servant leaders identify their followers' needs and use them to persuade them to move to a particular direction. Leaders serve what followers need and lead them, thus

making serving and leading exchangeable. They do not lead without serving. This gave an indication that ethical leaders would serve ethics to their followers. What made servant leadership to stand out from other leadership theories for me was that its primary concern for the leader is to ensure follower growth and personal wellbeing (Barbuto & Wheeler, 2006; Fotch, 2015; Page & Wong, 2000; Patterson, 2003). This is what the stability and evolution of an organization is based on. This takes time to establish but that is not a factor for servant leaders. What matters most for them is the sustainability and stability of an organization. When followers display elements of growth and maturity, servant leadership has achieved its goal.

The self-concept of servant leaders means they perceive themselves to be stewards (Beck, 2014; Reinke, 2004; Sendjaya *et al.*, 2008; Van Dierendonck, 2011) and the leader is humble (Dennis & Borcanea, 2006; Covey, 2006; Patterson, 2003; Wong & Page, 2003). Another philosophical basis is that of selflessness and transcending self-interest. Decision-making is mutual, derived from good understanding among parties involved, and I found all of these crucial in ethical leadership. Servant leadership has specific characteristics that best define the character of servant leaders.

3.4.2.1 Greenleaf' servant leadership theory

Greenleaf's servant leadership model is an aspect of servant leadership; the two are not detached. The approach focuses on just the characteristics of servant leaders but this does not suggest that servant leadership is limited to these. Greenleaf (1977) crafted a model comprising ten key characteristics of servant leaders. These are listening; empathy; healing; awareness; persuasion; conceptualisation; foresight; stewardship; commitment to growth of people and building community. Servant leaders reinforce listening by listening intently to their followers. This means giving followers a chance to voice their opinions without subjecting them to any form of inferiority. They listen to their inner voice (Spears, 2010). Servant leaders empathise the role of co-workers (Beck, 2014; Barbuto & Wheeler, 2006; Kim, 2016), understanding, recognizing and accepting them for who they are even when rejecting their behaviour. They recognize and accept others' uniqueness (Spears, 2010). They employ the ethic of care discussed in the previous chapter (see section 2.3.2.3).

Leaders strive to heal themselves and also their followers from whatever unsettling situation that might arise in the workplace, as conflict is inevitable. They bring about awareness of the

potential healing power buried in both the servant leader and the led (Kim, 2016; Liden, Wayne Zhao & Handerson, 2008; Yancer, 2012). Servant leaders offer support to their staff just as school principals can show support to staff members by referring those with personal issues to the Educator Assistance Programme (EAP), designed to assist South African educators. Servant leaders have their inner security and are strengthened by self-awareness. They have enough of their own values, and awareness helps leaders to view situations not as individual incidents but to adopt a more integrated approach (Spears, 2010; Quick, 2014).

They persuade followers rather than use their authority to coerce compliance (Kim, 2016). They are eager to build consensus as opposed to being authoritative. Servant leaders believe in persuasion over coercion, based on the root belief of Greenleaf's denominational body, the Religious Society of Friends (Lanctot & Irving, 2010). Servant leaders nurture their abilities to perform to their greatest potential, striking a balance between conceptualisation and day-to-day focus. They provide a visionary concept of the organization (Farling, Stone & Winston, 1999; Russell & Stone, 2002; Spears, 2010; Whetstone, 2002). Leaders reflect on the past, understand realities of the present and potential outcomes of their decisions in the future. They have intuitive minds and are proactive (Spears, 2010; Quick, 2014). They are conscious of their implications of their decisions and actions (Quick, 2014). All stakeholders hold their organization in trust for greater good of the society. They demonstrate integrity and practise authenticity (Quick, 2014). They prioritize serving others' needs (Spears, 2010). Like persuasion, stewardship emphasizes openness as opposed to control. Servant leaders commit themselves to ensuring holistic growth of every individual within the organization. They nurture both personal and professional development and growth of employees (Albert & Spears, 2013; Laub, 1999; Smith, Montagno & Kuzmenko, 2004; Van Dierendonck, 2011). Some school principals do this by showing interest in everyone's ideas and suggestions, recognising even those individuals often deemed as insignificant in the workplace. Quick (2014) adds that they are personal, professional and spiritual. They build community among people who work in an institution recognising the need to rebuild human history and finding ways to restore interpersonal relations.

This section addresses what a servant leader did or what was it that servant leaders do. According to Winston and Fields (2012), servant leaders practise what they preach; serve people without discrimination of any sort; regard serving others as means of showing

responsibility towards others; have genuine interest in their followers; understand the significance of serving others; are willing to make sacrifices to assist others; strives to instil trust instead of terror; is honest; regards his/ her job as a higher vocation and promotes values that surpass self-interest and materialism (Rachmawati & Lantu, 2014).

For Greenleaf (1977), the key characteristics of servant leadership are developing and empowering people (Dennis & Borcanea, 2006; Liden *et al.*, 2008; Russell & Stone, 2002); humility (Dennis & Borcanea, 2006; Covey, 2006; Patterson, 2003; Wong & Page, 2003); authenticity (Barnabas & Clifford, 2012; Doriaswamy, 2012; Smith *et al.*, 2004; Steyn, 2012); interpersonal acceptance; providing direction and stewardship (Beck, 2014; Reinke, 2004; Sendjaya *et al.*, 2008; Van Dierendonck, 2011). Spears (1995) came up with ten attributes of servant leadership, listening with an aim of identifying peoples' needs and communicating with them; empathy; healing; awareness; persuasion; conceptualisation; foresight; stewardship; commitment to growth of people and building community. Laub(1999) perceived it mainly as being about developing people; shared leadership; displaying authenticity; valuing people; providing leadership and building community. Laub (1999) further purports that organizations can create a healthy servant-minded culture to maximize skills of both their workforce and leadership.

Russell and Stone (2002) categorized attributes into two, referring to one category as the primary attributes and the other functional attributes. Vision, honesty, integrity, trust, service, modelling, pioneering and appreciation of others fall under primary attributes. Then communication, credibility, competence, stewardship, visibility, influence, persuasion, listening, encouragement, teaching and delegation make up the functional attributes. They attest that servant leaders trust followers to act in the best interests of the organization and focus on those followers rather than on the organizational objectives.

Patterson (2003) came up with seven attributes: agape love, acting with humility, altruism, vision for followers, trusting, serving and empowering followers. According to Wang and Davey (2007), servant leadership is about serving and developing others, consulting and involving others, humility and selflessness, modelling integrity and authenticity, inspiring and influencing others and finally, organizational and stewardship wisdom. Dennis and Borcanea (2005) claim that servant leadership is about empowerment and trust, humility, agape love, vision, creating value for community as well as behaving ethically. Barbuto and

Wheeler (2006) viewed servant leadership to be an altruistic calling, involving emotional healing and persuasive mapping. Liden *et al.* (2008) found servant leadership to be about emotional healing, which is displayed through sensitivity towards personal concerns. It is empowering and encouraging followers, creating value for community by putting it first and also willingness to assist the community; leader providing support to followers influencing them to grow and develop. It is also about servanthood, serving to lead, serving other first and taking charge of all tasks in order to assist followers. The leader is ethical in his or her actions, understands and supports others aiming to secure long-term friendships and relationships. Sendjaya *et al.* (2008) advocate that servant leadership is about transforming influence; voluntary subordination; authentic self-transcendental spirituality and conventional relationship. Van Dierendonck (2011), in his contribution, posits that servant leadership is about empowerment; humility; authenticity; forgiveness; courage; accountability and stewardship. For Yasir and Mohamad (2015), servant leaders balance and integrate diverse interests of multiple stakeholders. They develop vision based on follower input about their needs, values and ideas and espouse values determine leader behaviour. Leaders take personal risks and actions to accomplish mission or achieve their vision. They share material about events, problems and actions timeously.

Looking into Greenleaf's (1977) characteristics, I find that they overlap with what most literature depicts as characteristics of ethical leadership. *Listening, empathy, healing and persuasion* also define the character of an ethical leader (Merriam-Webster, 2016; Kim, 2016; Monarth, 2014). *Conceptualisation, awareness, stewardship and foresight* have to do with a leader being proactive and being alert of the activities taking place within the organization, using the past and the present to anticipate the future consequences of the action during decision-making (Anderson, 2014; Kim, 2016). *Commitment to the growth of people and building community* tap into having faith in people's abilities and working to build the community that has a vested interest in the organization (Kouzes & Posner, 2015; Kim, 2016). Characteristics of servant leadership such as empowering people, authenticity, honesty, integrity, trust, humility and ethical behaviour also feature as characteristics and benefits of ethical leadership (Mulder, 2017, Nerves & Story, 2013; Ouma, 2017, Rabinowitz, 2016; Shapiro & Stefkovich, 2011).

In a study by Steyn (2012), the aim was to explore how a school principal exhibited the aspects of the servant leadership model. The study used Laub's (1999) six characteristics of servant leadership. This study uses Greenleaf's (1977) characteristics, from which Laub's model was developed in 1999. The findings revealed six characteristics. They were *valuing people* where the participant narrated how they showed love for people; *developing people*, focusing on their strength and weaknesses; *building the community* by showing trust in people and using them to form collaborative that would benefits the school. *Displaying authenticity* meant showing compassion towards people; *providing leadership* by finding what is missing about the child and *sharing leadership* through ownership, which the participant described as the secret for success.

In addition to using this theory as an analytical tool, I used it in generating data to address the first research question, which sought to understand the experiences and practices of proactive school principals as ethical leaders. I achieved this by engaging the participating school principals in discussing their own experiences of ethical leadership as well as their practices thereof. The study used narrative inquiry to inquire into participants' stories of their experience and practices of ethical leadership. The idea was to use the Greenleaf's (1977) ten characteristics of servant leadership through the narratives to examine the findings. How has servant leadership influenced such practices? As I went through the narratives, I checked if there were any of the characteristics coming up and used them as sub-themes. For example, I looked for emerging characteristics in the narratives, wherever this was possible. The rest of the data was grouped into themes as they emerged. The purpose was to highlight contextual factors of the participants in relation to their experience and the ways in which their leadership modelled ethical leadership. and the role played by servant leadership in practising ethical leadership. There is a necessity to highlight that his theory was not the only theory that formed the framework for this study. Details of how the other theory was used follow in the section tackling that particular theory. After the analysis of data, I hoped to establish from the findings which aspects from both theories could be merged to form a new framework based on the participants' narratives. This would be a new framework based on empirical evidence of what has been tried and tested in terms of ethical leadership in education.

3.4.2.2 Outcomes of servant leadership

The outcomes of servant leadership emerge when those served grow as persons, become healthier, wiser, freer, and more autonomous and therefore more likely to become servants themselves. Servant leaders aspire to influence their followers such that they too become servant leaders (Crews, 2011; Hamilton & Bean, 2005). In a servant leadership model, the context and culture of the leader influence a leader's behaviour. The kind of person a leader is, together with the followers' receptivity, are preceding factors that influence outcomes. These outcomes are follower performance, organizational performance and societal impact. Helping followers grow and succeed, behaving ethically, empowering and creating value for the community, are among the pillars of servant leadership. According to Bhengu and Mkhize (2017), servant leadership shifts leadership from mere compliance with government policy to real service to the community. It affords the followers an opportunity to provide feedback to leaders on areas that require improvement (Heyler & Martin, 2018). This does not play out well if the school principal feels threatened by the input of the staff members. It can be a total disaster. The leader chooses to serve first and as an outpouring of that desire comes an inspiration to lead others whilst preparing others to serve as well. A school principal who practises servant leadership has an urge to serve their staff members, despite the power and authority vested in them by their position. This also speaks to the ethic of critique as the notion of 'power' is redefined. Power no longer lies in leading but in serving the followers first. The leader builds leadership capacity among staff by empowering them (Bhengu & Mkhize, 2017; George, 2007; Van Dierendonck, 2011). Ethical leaders ought to possess these attributes in order to achieve desired outcomes. From the narratives of the research participants, I hoped to learn if they incorporated servant leadership in their practise as ethical leaders.

Such leaders yearn to develop followers to become servant leaders themselves (Barbuto & Wheeler, 2006). They avoid self-interest and display selflessness, which is often seen as an antidote to unethical behaviour. The leader listens (Kim, 2016; Spears, 2010). This is important because quite often leaders tend to communicate their vision to the followers to such an extent that they fail to listen to them. Listening helps the leader to understand the will of the followers (Fotch, 2015; Patterson, 2003; Spears, 1995). School principals who fail to listen to the staff members should not expect the members to listen to them. Teachers or

followers often tend to emulate the leader's actions. Imagination allows the leader to connect their ideas with those of the followers' own experience. This drives followers to be more involved and committed to the effort (George, 2000). Servant leaders are empathetic and committed towards those in their sphere of influence. Servant leaders balance accountability and care. Their foresight allows servant leaders to look at the current situation and effectively envision possible future outcomes in an area where a leader needs to be effective (Anderson, 2014; Barbuto & Wheeler, 2006; Blanchard & Miller, 2007; Farling *et al.*, 1999; Kim, 2016). They are proactive. They convince followers rather than coercing them, making followers believe that changes made in an organization are their own, thus ensuring changes last or are sustained. They have an ability to see a vision for the future and be able to share it with others to the extent where they understand it and are excited about it.

Servant leaders have humility, integrity, trust, pioneering abilities, appreciation for others and empowerment (Crews, 2011; Van Dierendonck, 2011). They do what is promised and honest (Russell & Stone, 2002). The leaders' behaviour is contagious and eventually spreads throughout an organization and improves it over a period of time. Employees become more satisfied in their roles and perform better and are more productive. They focus on empowering employees and facilitating their development. They can pick up cues from the environment and recognise implications of their actions before they are even taken, again being proactive (Searle & Barbuto, 2011). They make subordinates feel as though their individual needs are being met and that the organization cares about their well-being (Luthans & Avolio, 2003).

According to Bhengu and Mkhize (2017), servant leadership shifts from mere compliance with government policy to real service to the community. It seems South Africa is yet to embrace the notion of servant leadership in the education sector. However, there are schools that have demonstrated values that suggest strong focus on clients they serve despite multiple deprivations in their communities (Bhengu & Mkhize, 2017). This takes us back to the characteristics of servant leaders where they are said to be community builders. Servant leaders inspire commitment to the school vision. They are themselves visionary, as discussed earlier (Heathfield, 2015). They build a positive self-concept among the others. They nurture beliefs and values system that support the wellbeing of others, they care. Focus is on building leadership capacity among staff. There is promotion of stakeholders to participate in school

matters are not intimidated by followers' empowerment. This echoes voice behaviour (Chin, 2013) which falls under communication. Communication being one of the organizational factors which influence ethical leadership discussed in the previous chapter.

3.4.3 Critique of servant leadership

Servant leadership is not 'new', cultures throughout history have practised it (Nyabadza, 2003). Greenleaf (1977) crafted it for leadership purposes in organizations. Whilst putting others first maybe detrimental in some instances, other researchers believe servant leadership is an answer to today's complex organizational needs, and I agree partially. There is a discrepancy between servant leadership theory and practice (Brown & Bryant, 2015), as there seems to be a lack in empirical support from the field of education. Literature tends to ignore the mediating role of follower characteristics and organizational context. I believed this was quite important in a school setting. Picture a school where the principal possesses most of the characteristics of a servant leader, yet the follower characteristics are mostly contradictory and the organizational context is not so conducive. Studies reveal or portray servant leadership as having positive outcomes for both the organization and employees, but evidence on how this is achieved is quite scanty. It was not very clear how it is conceptualised by leaders and managers. As mentioned earlier in the thesis, leading and managing schools are both the responsibility of the school principal. Though popular, servant leadership still needs to be included into management practices, making it a way of life (Greenleaf, 1977).

Brown and Bryant (2015) aim to advance servant leadership, both as a field of academic study and as a management practice. They also aim to create a better understanding of servant leadership as a philosophy and as a leadership process. They profess that theorising servant leadership is a futile practice if not based on evidence. Servant leadership is not just leadership that is about influencing others in an organization to achieving specific goals. It commences with the leader seeking to serve before leading. Servant leadership supports ethical leadership, the promotion of self-reflective, morally centred leadership, as compared to other leadership styles. Servant leadership is only effective when followers grow as persons, become wiser, more sovereign and more likely to become servants.

Sendjaya *et al.* (2008) state that qualitative and quantitative research studies are required to transform concepts into a comprehensible whole as studies that are deemed to provide insight into potential characteristics of servant leaders are inadequate (Sendjaya *et al.*, 2008). Melchar and Bosco (2010) concur, adding that the focus needs to shift from just analysing the characteristics to the impact of servant leadership on organizational practice. Melchar and Bosco (2010) feel that servant leadership lacks support from published, well-designed, empirical research. It relies mostly on examples that are anecdotal in nature. However, authors are working to address this point. They further argue that studies need to move beyond further theoretical development to adequate measurement. Also, in this study, I intended moving beyond theoretical development to empirical research where people (school principals) share their own personal experiences of ethical leadership and practices from which to learn.

3.5 The 4V Model of Ethical Leadership

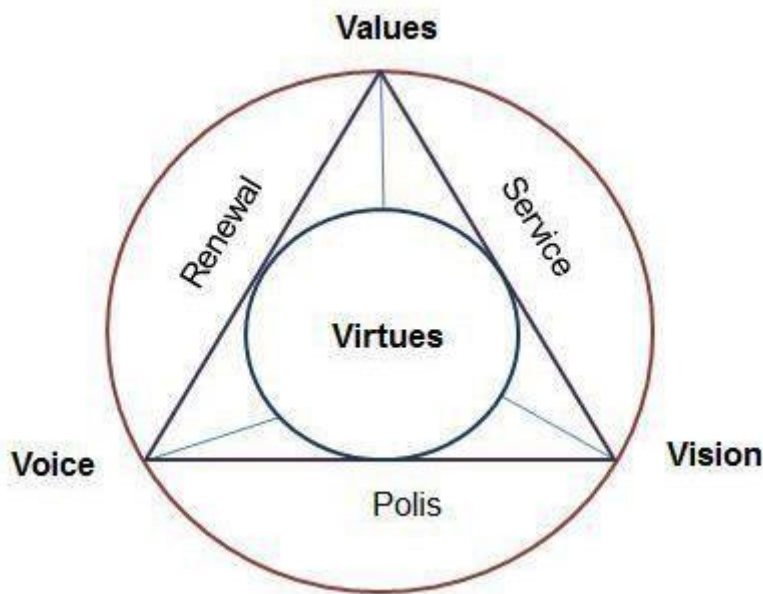
3.5.1 Background to the 4 V Model

Bill Grace is the *guru* of this model, having developed it in 1991. He was a founder of the Center for Ethical Leadership in 1991 whose aim was to create a just society (Quick, 2014). From this base, leaders who were willing to serve their followers were prepared. This model resonates with servant leadership. Grace (1999) imagines a generation of leaders keen on understanding how they practise this kind of leadership. In this study I yearned to learn from the narratives of school principals how they put ethical leadership into practice. Since the ethic of justice is one of the principles of ethical leadership, this model corresponded with my concerns. This also highlighted the relationship between this model and servant leadership as they both intertwine with ethical leadership.

3.5.2 The model

The model (Grace, 1999) includes four sides of ethical leadership. These are values, vision, voice and virtue. This is why it is called the 4Vs model. The model aligns internal belief with values and actions for the common good.

Figure 3.1 The 4-Vs Model of ethical leadership



(Source: Center for Ethical Leadership, 2014)

Values are primacy; without understanding one's own values, vision, voice and virtue, a leader cannot lead effectively (Riaz & uZaman, 2018; Center for Ethical Leadership, 2014). Vision refers to a leader's ability to see what has not been actualised. The leader asserts voice to articulate the vision to others, so that they can be motivated to act (Grace, 1999; Center for Ethical Leadership, 2014). This is significant to note because, if the school principal does not share the vision and keeps it to him or herself, it cannot materialize and it is therefore meaningless.

Virtue, in this model, refers to the common good. Leaders foster virtue by practising virtuous behaviour and striving to do the right thing (Grace, 1999). A school principal ought to have integrity and commitment to make a difference. Leaders commence by clarifying their values and then identify the vision that could bring a difference to the organization. At this stage, seeking personal voice and living in ways that support common good is crucial. The objective is to shape the world into being visionary and inclusive. In this model, everyone is allowed to meet their needs and promise. Service connects vision to values. This means that values are tested, through service, the vision is often revealed. Polis stands for politics, the art of politics. This is when voice is given to vision in the public context. This happens when the vision of an organization has to be communicated to the public groups that have an interest in

the organization (Riaz & uZaman, 2018; Center for Ethical Leadership, 2014). Renewal reconnects the voice to values (Grace, 1999; Center for Ethical Leadership, 2014; Mulder, 2017). Renewal involves constantly checking whether actions are in accordance with values and vision (Mulder, 2017). Whatever the school principal does, the actions ought to be consistent with values and the vision. A proactive school principal regularly considers whether actions are in accordance with values and vision (Mulder, 2017). Thus, the study's objective was to learn from the practices and experiences of selected school leaders. It required establishing what their experience of ethical leadership had been and if it included any of the 4Vs; if yes, how so? I used the 4Vs in the model to craft my interview questions for the participant school principals.

To summarize, according to this model, the leader makes the difference by first discovering his or her core values. Ethical school principals firstly look into their own values, what they believe in and stand for. Secondly, they have a vision of what their school ought to be like. Then, thirdly, they claim a voice to articulate their vision to others through management and leadership, so as to motivate them into action. If they do not motivate their followers to act, then their vision will never come alive. Lastly, ethical leaders become role models because of their virtuous behaviour and strive to do things and act appropriately (Grace, 1999). Thus, the 4Vs are values, vision, voice and virtuous behaviour. Ethical school principals live and behave in a way that serves the common good.

Ethical leadership is about knowing your core values and having the courage to live them in all parts of your life, in service for the common good. Therefore, being an ethical leader involves knowing what is good (leader character) and doing what is good (leader conduct) for the greatest good for the greatest number (Northouse, 2013). According to Grace (1999), people reflect upon their decisions once made, to ensure that the decision is in line with their values and morals, and also consistent with their vision to serve other people. Therefore, ethical leaders ought to be honest and just people (Kouzes & Posner, 2015). These leaders serve others whilst upholding their virtues and these ought to be preferred by society. Thus integrity plays a crucial role in their journey. They should make an outer commitment to the common good. Once individuals discover and claim their core values, they develop a vision for how the world could be different. They then find their personal voice for expressing their vision. The leadership development approach then rests on an outer commitment of living

and performing in ways that serve the community and advance the common good. The purpose of leadership is to shape a future that is visionary, inclusive and enables all members of the organization to accomplish their desires, dreams and potentials (Riaz & uZaman, 2018). In the section hereunder, I took each of the 4Vs and tried to unpack what it actually entailed.

3.5.2.1.1 Values

Values focus on who we are and how we behave irrespective of positional power. Values determine behaviour and influence the culture of an organization (Crews, 2011; Dean, 2008; Gumbus, 2010; Holmes, 2015). Good values such as integrity, humility, compassion, self-discipline and gratitude together shape the culture of an organization. This culture yields positive results through accountability, motivated employees, organization efficiency and innovation. These are also found in the previous chapter as benefits of ethical leadership. Values-driven leaders earn authority through leading by example, rather than forcing their will upon their followers (Crews, 2011). Such leaders bring value to the organization and are selfless in the process. The school's mission takes precedence and, once it is fulfilled, the leader is gratified.

Leaders ought to understand and articulate their own values to help them in decision making (Dean, 2008). When there is alignment between the values of a leader and those of an organization, conditions for efficiency are heightened. Loyalty and respect, a history of fair dealing, building trust, basing decisions on values rather than beliefs, gaining employees' commitment and stimulating vision and inspiring others all equate to values that embrace diversity. Values define action, informs decisions and how a leader treats subordinates. There is, however, temptation to compromise but ethical leaders stand their ground.

According to Crossan *et al.* (2013), values-based leaders act in a manner that displays character strengths. It is not enough to have strong character. Aristotle claims that good character is displayed through not just possession of virtues but its practice. Therefore, leaders ought to make a habit of practising virtues over time and continuous repetition of the right actions.

3.5.2.1.2 The role of values

Taylor (2019) defines values as elements of individual behaviour and choice. Values become our guiding principles in our lives. Values are espoused by one's actions. Self-transcendence is perceived as ethical and socially responsible behaviour. This is in contrast to self-enhancement, which focuses on benefiting an individual. According to Taylor (2019), virtues and character strengths are not sufficient enough on their own neither are values. But values, virtues and character strengths all ought to be integrated to accomplish ethical leadership. The next section exposes how leaders who based their leadership on values behaved.

3.5.2.1.3 Values-based leaders

Leaders in both public and private sectors are plagued with immoral or unethical conduct (Avolio & Gardner, 2005). The same applies to education in South Africa and throughout the world, as literature in the previous chapter bears testimony. Moral and ethical deficiencies among leaders noted in the beginning of the 21st century gave rise to the values-based leadership (Copeland, 2014). According to this author, theorists have placed increasing emphasis on the importance of morality and ethics among exemplary leaders, and values-based theories emerged. Copeland (2014) further reports that theories emerged as researchers, leaders and practitioners argued that leaders must be moral and possess inner ethical qualities and values. Values-based leaders are exemplary and have integrity. They are selfless and genuinely humble, not pretentious. They are compassionate, caring and invest in human capital. They are focused and ensure they align their values with those of an organization. They are courageous and work tirelessly and consistently to do what is right. They invest in self-discipline and highly accountable. They also ensure that their followers are also held accountable. Because they are ethical leaders, they rely mainly on ethics to ensure professional standards are met. They acknowledge and appreciate efforts by others and show gratitude. Such leaders are open as well as approachable and are agents of change. Their success is entrenched in awareness, alignment and accountability. Awareness entails self-assessment and assessment of an organization to maximize effectiveness between leadership and interpersonal relations. Alignment ensures resonance of leadership values and actions. Such resonance of unity of purpose thus ensures achievement of set goals and the vision of the organization. On the other hand, accountability oversees the reinforcement of personal and organizational values. It also allows for continuous healthy and robust debate on what can advance the goals of the organization.

3.5.2.2 Vision

“Vision is an essential component of effective leadership and articulation of a clear vision has the potential to develop schools” (Moodley, 2013, p. 40). It helps people to understand the purpose, objectives and priorities of the organization. Vision lays the foundation for values (Crews, 2011). A leader’s vision illustrates what the leader desires to be the state of an organization in the future. An organization’s vision, on the other hand, illustrates an organization’s own future state. Leaders with vision hunt for commitment of the staff and stakeholders. People in an organization need convincing that the vision is feasible for them to be motivated to work and visionary leaders ensure this through articulating a vision. If the staff members are not convinced of the school principal’s vision, they will not be interested. That would mean that that vision has failed to create a spark in the organization, leaving the organization in mundane (Crews, 2011). It was inevitable to discuss visionary leadership as it portrayed how a leader with a vision behaves.

3.5.2.2.1 Visionary leadership

Visionary leadership associates both organizational leadership and employees’ outcomes. A leader crafts a stimulating vision that works for the betterment of an organization and communicates it among those led (Dhammika, 2016). Leaders establish goals and objectives that define what followers seek to do, resulting in high trust and performance among followers and overall organizational performance. Visionary leaders have insight into followers’ needs or values and develop a vision statement reflecting those needs or values. Visionary leaders strengthen relationships with their subordinates by striving through collective workout and collective commitment of the team.

There are behavioural attributes of visionary leadership. These include empowerment, image building, risk taking, support, adaptation, intellectual stimulating and developing the organization (Kirkpatrick, 2004). Empowerment deals with the leaders’ confidence in followers as he or she empowers them to work towards a vision. Leaders trust followers to work towards the common vision rather than their personal agendas. Image building is whereby visionary leaders build positive image of themselves for followers. They reflect on vision in their work lives, personal lives and attitude. They rehearse their speeches in advance to avoid monotony. Visionary leaders are risk takers who calculate risk and evaluate options. Risk taking promotes change and innovation and challenges existing assumptions.

Visionary leaders are very supportive; they give individualized consideration to their followers by providing emotional support during trying times (Haung, Yun & Gong, 2010; Valenzuela, 2007). This also resonates with the ethic of care, which is an ethical principle. These leaders also coach and mentor followers to facilitate their development. Visionary leaders are adaptive because they display flexible/versatile problem-solving styles. By gathering, processing and distributing information to their organizations, they ensure proper responses can be carried out. They fuel followers intellectually, training them to challenge assumption and question existing stereotypes or generalisations. They are influential. Visionary leaders develop organizations by creating organizational conditions that allow followers to pursue a vision. They eradicate unnecessary establishment by structuring organizations such that followers are able to function efficiently (Kirkpatrick, 2004). The followers who display willingness and ability to work towards a vision are selected, trained and accommodated. They develop reward and punishment systems to motivate followers towards the pursuit of the vision. Having crafted their values and created their vision, there is a need for the voice to communicate these. Ethical leaders are known to be visionary leaders.

3.5.2.2.2 Voice

Action plans ought to be voiced out to colleagues (Riaz & uZaman, 2018). A leader involves colleagues in creating a feasible action plan. Without the voice to communicate your values and vision as a leader, one is in a predicament. In fact, it may prove futile and time wasting. It is just like planning with no intention to implement. The leader treads beyond what is and what ought to be and experiments with what might be.

As stated earlier, the leader uses voice to articulate his or her vision to the followers. This is accomplished this by giving voice to the values, for it is the values that shape the vision that is communicated. Giving voice to values empowers leaders to act on their values when making decisions. Knowing what is right and doing what is right are two different issues. It takes a leader who is better grounded in ethical leadership to understand and master this (Edward & Kirkham, 2013). When a leader knows what to do in a dilemma, he focuses on how to get it done. Giving voice to values prevents misconduct (Gentile, 2010, Gumbus, 2010). It is a way of expressing one's values within an organization's value system through communication. It addresses the lapse in organizational ethics. However effective, giving voice cannot be considered comprehensive or holistic on its own. According to this approach,

organizational culture influences are important to how individual voice their values. Gonzalez-Pardon, Ferrell, Ferrell, & Smith (2012), list seven pillars of giving voice. The first pillar is values. Values are used to tap into people's goals and motivations. Shared values allow for ethical conversations. The second one is choice, where there is emphasis on one's capacity for choice in under all circumstances. One chooses when to act and when not to act. Then there is normality, a pillar where conflicts are seen as normal and people develop skills to manage such. The next pillar is purpose. This is where personal, professional and organizational and ethical purposes speak to the core goals and values act as guides. Purpose maximizes awareness of responsibility. Self-knowledge and self-image are both the fifth pillars. Self-knowledge aligned with one's vision enhances one's ability to respond constructively to ethical conflicts. Voice is actually a sixth pillar. Everyone has their own voice any the way they handle challenges. Suppressing the voice suppresses one from taking ethical action. The last pillar is rationalizations. When core values are unexpressed and voices silenced, rationalisations empower leaders to speak and act with skill thus enhancing their leadership (Gonzalez -Pardon *et al.*, 2012).

3.5.2.2.3 Virtue

Leaders are responsible and have independent views and competency. They are neutral, firm and honest and hold to religion, according to Norozamina, Azizah, Marha, & Suraya (2018). The authors claim that leaders are accountable, customer-focused, apply teamwork and good governance, are confidential, transparent and have integrity. They are ethical and are against immoral activities. In trying to explain what a virtue is, Mpekansambo (2013) looked into what the nature of virtue is. He used Aristotle's teaching to ascertain this. Aristotle (1976) asserts that virtue is a character trait. Virtue is cultivated through practice and manifests in one's actions. There are two types of virtues, moral and intellectual values. Moral values are dispositions of character acquired through practice and habituation. Intellectual virtues, on the other hand, are capabilities of intellect acquired through learning and experience. Unlike Socrates, who claims that if you know, you cannot err, Aristotle asserts that having knowledge does not necessarily make one morally virtuous. This, he argues, is because knowledge can be overcome by passion. Knowing what constitutes courage does not necessarily make one capable of performing courageous actions. Some school principals who behave in an unethical manner know what is right but the passion for misconduct overcomes this knowledge, hence their unethical behaviour. Aristotle refutes virtue as being a mere state

in conformity with the right principle. If that were the case, then every individual school principal would abide by the rules and regulations in the execution of their duties. Instead, according to Aristotle, a virtue is the right principle (Mpekansambo, 2013). Human actions are a product of desire, advances Mpekansambo (2013). Therefore, desire ought to be educated to obey reason. Desire that does not obey reason can prove to be harmful. A school principal who just follows desire, desire that does not obey reason, may end up facing disciplinary action or even lawsuit. Moral values involve choice, a good choice, true reasoning and desire and the action will be moral. A school principal has a choice to behave either ethically or unethically, morally or immorally. Moral virtue is agent-focused, just like the characteristics of servant leadership. Servant leadership focuses on the servant leader as an agent, serving the followers. A school principal's actions determine who they become, for what one does determine who they become. School principals who act ethically behave morally. It is then that they become ethical and moral leaders. Their behaviour determines who they are (Mpekansambo, 2013).

3.5.2.2.4 Ethical leadership and virtuous planning, organizing and leading

The reasoning for this section is to show how ethical leadership and virtue complement each other. Ethical leaders exercise wisdom to set, align and seek to achieve goals that aim to ensure wellbeing of stakeholders. Leadership is shared to maximise organizational citizenship (Neubert & Dyk, 2016). When organizing, the leader uses courage to challenge the status quo where structures and systems only serve the interests of those in power, at the expense of those who are powerless (Neubert & Dyk, 2016). The leader also uses courage to empower those 'othered' with opportunity and voice. He understands the dynamics embedded in the interdependence among the organization and stakeholders. Instead of flexing their powers, leaders listen and empower followers (Bell & David, 2015). Leaders exercise temperance to curb temptation to utilize incentives to lure followers to ethical behaviour but rely on nurturing intrinsic motivation, which proves to have long term benefits (Neubert *et al*, 2008). The leader uses justice to facilitate controlling. This includes respect and inclusivity in all decision-making and the processes involved (Colquitt, Scott, Rodell, Long, Zupata, Conlon & Wesson, 2013). Consequently, members of the organization know what is expected of them and also understand that they are accountable. This reiterates the role of virtues in the 4V model.

I used this model to gather from their narratives how selected school principals explained what informed their experiences and practises as ethical leaders. I wanted to understand if the 4Vs in the model featured anywhere in their narratives, if not, then what did and ultimately what could be learnt from their experiences and practices of ethical leadership.

Evidently, there is a connection between servant leadership and the 4Vs model. Virtues like empathy and care, empowerment, leading by example, decision-making, pro-acting, emotional intelligence and others are common features found in servant leadership. Leadership qualities that are virtues like honesty and integrity, patience and tolerance, respect, kindness, openness and transparency, listening are common in both servant leadership and the 4Vs model and all of them are features of ethical leadership. Servant leadership, virtues and values, having a vision and using voice to communicate it all form part of ethical leadership. However, much as ethical leaders are known to serve their followers, it is not all servant leaders who are ethical. I used characteristics from both these to form a framework for a model for ethical leadership.

3.6 Summary

This chapter aimed to identify and explain the study's theoretical framework for this study. I attempted to do this by following what I had set out to in the introduction. Servant leadership theory and the 4Vs Model of Ethical Leadership are the two frameworks that were found to be most relevant for this study. I visualized a servant leader who was conscious of their values, had a vision and used voice to communicate it to the followers. These values are superseded by virtues. The servant leader who possesses these 4Vs serves the followers before leading them. This leader could very well qualify as an ethical leader. Through this study, I hoped to learn from the experiences and practices of selected school principals who were perceived to be ethical leaders. The next chapter covers the methodology I intend to employ in this study.

CHAPTER 4

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

4.1 Introduction

The previous chapter provided insight into the theoretical framework of the study. This chapter takes the study further through discussing the research paradigm, research design and methodology. The chapter consists of six sections. First, I describe and explain the research paradigm. Next, I move on to discuss the research design and discuss all the components of methodology and conclude with data analysis, trustworthiness and ethical considerations.

The study is located in township schools. Most of these township schools are confronted with numerous challenges, such as lack of resources, poor infrastructure, drug abuse, bullying, impoverished communities etc. and that is where most cases of unethical conduct are reported. School principals in these schools are faced with ethical dilemmas and very few of them manage to withstand the pressure, as most tend to give in to unethical behaviour (Dalasile, 2020; Mthiyane, 2018; Mthiyane & Mudadigwa, 2021; Naidoo, 2015). This, however, does not in any way suggest that it is only township schools that face some of the dilemmas but for the purposes of this study, the context is township schools. It is imperative that participants be given priority when considering context of the study since they should be free to express themselves and interact with the researcher (Khuzwayo, 2019).

4.2 Research paradigm

4.2.1 What is a paradigm?

A paradigm is a patterning of thinking of a person (Groenewald, 2004). Mertens (2009) defines it as an approach at viewing the world. It involves in-depth examination of a phenomenon (Khuzwayo, 2019). Paradigms have philosophical foundations guiding and directing thinking, actions as well as what new knowledge is developed (Creswell, 2009; Mertens, 2009). A paradigm is a framework encompassing theories; the framework influences one's perception of the world, determines their perspective and shapes their understanding of how things connect (Scotland, 2012). It is a set of values, attitudes, beliefs, techniques and procedures that inform theoretical stance in research (Trochim & Donnelly, 2006). Durrheim (2009) concurs, adding that what is to be studied and how it is going to be studied is influenced by the paradigm and this is fundamental to research design. It precedes

methodology (McKenzie & Knipe, 2006). Du Plooy-Cilliers (2014) advocates that a paradigm is a research tradition that channels the researcher into knowing what questions to ask and methods for getting those questions answered in an acceptable manner. This is significant because how questions are answered has an impact on the validity of the findings (Ngidi, 2019). Thanh and Thanh (2015) further define a paradigm as what constitutes knowledge. It has different components namely ontology, epistemology and methodology (Scotland, 2012). Each paradigm consists of its own ontology, epistemology and methodology peculiar to it. The four major paradigms are positivism, interpretivism (post-positivism), critical (emancipatory) and pragmatism (Mthiyane, 2013). This study is underpinned by the interpretivist paradigm, which is discussed further in the section below.

4.2.2 Interpretivism

According to Aliyu (2015), the critique of positivism in the social science gave rise to interpretivism. The ontological stance of interpretivist theorists is that knowledge is socially constructed and is bounded by the time, culture and context in which it is found. Interpretivists further argue that there is no one truth, but multiple realities, and people's actions are underpinned by their experiences. The ontological position of the study is that when school principals narrated their experiences in this study, each of them shared their very own experiential truth (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2018). When they reported on what informed their experiences and practices, they were socially constructing their own knowledge.

Epistemology deals with the nature and forms of knowledge (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2018). How can knowledge be created, acquired and communicated? What does it mean to know? What is the nature of the relationship between the would-be knower and what can be known (Aliyu, 2015; Hatch, 2002; Guba & Lincoln, 1994)? Reality is subjective and subjectivity of reality means it differs from person to person, thus researchers and participants cannot be expected to arrive at the same interpretations, and transferability is limited. The epistemological position of this study is therefore that knowledge about the school principals' understanding and experiences can only come from them. Selected school principals experienced the world of ethical leadership by participating in it, constructing meaning. I found nothing amiss in their understanding the same phenomenon differently (Scotland, 2012). What they narrated was how they experienced the world of ethical leadership.

According to Guba and Lincoln (1994), individual constructs are elicited and understood through the interaction between researchers and participants, with participants being relied on as much as possible. This study relied heavily on the narratives of the participants to generate data.

The methodological premise of the interpretive paradigm is that studies should give a thick description of the phenomenon, providing a deeper understanding. It provides an understanding of behaviour explaining actions from the participant's viewpoint (Scotland, 2012). I used the narrative inquiry through open-ended semi-structured interviews to achieve this. Methodology is an action plan. It lies behind choice and use of particular methods. It questions why, what, from where, when and how data is generated and analysed? It is about how the inquirer can go about discovering what they believe can be known (Scotland, 2012). Methods refer to the procedures used to generate and analyse data. These were clearly outlined and discussed under relevant sections. Interpretivists advocate that the social world can only be understood from the standpoint of individuals as well as historical and cultural contexts in which people exist (Crotty, 1998). In this study, I hoped to learn from the selected school principals' experiences and practices of ethical leadership in South African schools.

The researcher and participant interact and rich contextual data is generated (Ngidi, 2019). For interpretivist researchers, the researcher cannot detach themselves from the study as they become part of what is being researched. Research is subjective, therefore the researcher ought to report their values and biases (Dudovskiy, 2018). It is for this reason that my positionality as a researcher is clarified in the first chapter of the study. Data generated is qualitative (Cohen *et al.* 2007).

This paradigm is not without challenges (Scotland, 2012). There are a few highlighted. Policy makers tend to shun away from funding interpretive studies as compared to scientific research, however this seems to be getting better with time. There are now funders interested in interpretivist studies, unlike in the past. Privacy and autonomy of participants can be compromised by open-endedness nature of this research (Howe & Moses, 1999) which is why I ensured to de-identify my participants by giving them pseudonyms. This is further explained under the ethics section. Researchers may impose their own subjective interpretations upon participants as they have limited control. The ownership of data, its

usage and the amount of control participants have over their accounts raises concern. I took caution and restored participants' voices in the narratives. The researcher gets to decide which information is made public (Scotland, 2012). The above concerns are further addressed under the ethics section.

4.3 Research design

4.3.1 Narrative inquiry

Perhaps it is wise to quickly investigate what a narrative is, even before moving onto the narrative inquiry. Narrative is a way for us to produce knowledge, which helps us to get a deeper understanding of people's experiences through narrative interviews (Glover, 2003). Narrative moves us from a single truth to multiple truths, which are experiential for the participants. This experience differs from human to human. It takes us away from facts towards meaning as we begin to understand experience as shared (Coffey & Atkinson, 1996). According to Polkinghorne (1995), humans are allowed to make meaning out of their experiences. Clandinin (2013) shares a similar view, highlighting that people live experiences before telling them. They have their own way of organizing their experiences into a meaningful story. Sometimes it seems like respondents are evading questions, when they are actually trying to construct a response which they believe to be relevant to the question asked (Glover, 2003). In a narrative, participants' stories are not deconstructed into distinguishable themes. Participants are at liberty to choose which stories they want to tell (Blöse, 2018). Narrative inquiry has been welcomed by other disciplines like anthropology, medicine, psychology and sociology, education and social work (Glover, 2003).

In qualitative research, meaning is interpreted as embedded in the social context and in the people who live in that context. Participants in qualitative research are valued and regarded as people who are informed about their context (insiders) (Babbie, 2007). The narratives in this study are those of selected school principals who are already leading ethically in their schools. They told their own stories and talked from experience as insiders to the phenomenon.

This is a narrative inquiry. A narrative inquiry was first used by Clandinin and Connelly (2000) as a methodology to describe the personal stories of teachers. Narrative researchers look for ways to understand and then present real-life experiences through the stories of participants (Blose, 2018; Clandinin, 2013). This study uses the stories of school principals who have experienced ethical leadership and are practising it. They tell what makes them to stand out and the strategies they use to advance ethical leadership in their schools. This method helped in answering the research questions by allowing the participants to narrate their experiences. Narrative inquiry is a way of understanding lived experiences (Clandinin and Connelly, 2000; Clandinin, 2013). It is open and vast (Blose, 2019). This is the reason why I decided to use the narrative approach to allow the participants an opportunity to share their experiences and give us a more in-depth understanding of the phenomenon. They were free to narrate uninterrupted, speaking from the heart as opposed to other forms of data generation where the researcher keeps asking questions and the participant responds to those questions specifically. Narrative inquiry has three common *places* to better understand an individual's experiences.

4.3.1.1 Common places in narrative inquiry

Narrative inquiry is a way of understanding and inquiring into experience through “collaboration between researcher and participants over time, in a place or series of places and in social interaction with milieus” (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 20). Common places in narrative inquiry are temporality, sociality and place. They serve as a conceptual framework (Blose, 2018; Clandinin & Hurber, 2010). They ought to be explored simultaneously. This is what distinguishes it from other methodologies.

- **Temporality**

Temporality directs the inquirer towards the past, present and future of people, places, things and events under study (Blose, 2019; Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). When analysing a story, the researcher considers the past and present actions of a storyteller as those actions are likely to occur in the future (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). In this study, the aim was to understand the experiences of selected school principals (past) and their practices (present) with regards to ethical leadership in education. Therefore, narrative inquiry is viewed as the most appropriate research design, as it acknowledges the temporality of experience. As the

participants told their stories, I listened to how they reflected upon their past experiences, linking those experiences to the impact they have on their present practices and their influence on their future. In this instance, the participants continue to live their stories as they tell them over time; it is on-going.

- Sociality

In narrative inquiry, the researcher attends to both personal and social conditions simultaneously (Blose, 2018; Clandinin, 2013; Connelly & Clandinin, 1990). They posit that personal conditions are feelings, hopes, desires, aesthetic reactions and moral dispositions. I asked questions which sought to help me explore the school principals' lived experiences, what constituted their experiences as school leaders and managers, their practices and what informed those practices. I listened and observed the emotions, aesthetic reactions and moral dispositions with which participants told their stories. These were picked up in the stories by participants and further discussed in the analysis chapter, as I infused their feelings and emotions in the extracts and the discussion itself. There were instances where they expressed excitement, joy, hurt, disappointment, stress and frustration, pain, anger etc. through words and body language where they would smile, laugh, chuckle, shrug their shoulders, sigh, frown, sit up, sit back, clap hands, etc. These were all captured and discussed in detail through thick description in the next chapter. On the other hand, social conditions refer to the social context, the conditions under which people's experiences and events are unfolding. Sociality directs attention to the inquiry relationship between the researcher's and participants' lives, as researchers cannot subtract themselves from the inquiry relationship. Bracketing, where researchers separate themselves from the research, is not possible. The conditions under which people's experiences and events unfold, are the social conditions. These social conditions are understood as being made up of two sections, the first involving cultural, social, institutional and linguistic narratives (Blose, 2018); the second focusing on the relationship between researcher's and participants' lives.

- Spatiality or place

Spatiality refers to the specific concrete, physical and topological boundaries of place where the inquiry or event takes place (Blose, 2019; Connelly & Clandinin, 1990; Sader & Gabela, 2017). All interviews, except for one, were conducted in the principals' offices. This was the most appropriate space because their offices are their most private and comfortable space for

them in the school. This is discussed further in the data generation section. Through this study I managed to understand how the participants' physical location and activities taking place in specific locations affected their experiences. I was afforded an opportunity to understand how the activities that take place in the schools affect their experience. I got to understand the participants' intentions, purposes, assumptions and points of view with regards to ethical leadership in education.

Connelly and Clandinin (1990), advocate that it is important to think narratively about the phenomenon throughout the narrative inquiry. In this study, I thought narratively about the selected school principals' experiences and practices of ethical leadership in an educational setting. I attended to their institutional narratives in which their stories unfold. I paid particular attention to the particularities of the places where interactions and relationships take place and how the participants respond aesthetically, emotionally and morally. This kind of thinking brought attention to the shifting, changing personal and social nature of the phenomenon of the study (Sader & Gabela, 2017).

4.4 Research methodology

Research methodology is the plan and procedures for conducting the research. It details methods of data generation and analysis (Babbie & Moutton, 2009; Fouche, 2010; Rule & John, 2011). Creswell (2009) defines it as a detailed step-by-step plan. Burns and Grove (2003) posit that research methodology is the outline of the study. It has to do with how you acquire, organize and analyse data (Mthembu, 2018). It gives meaning to the experience (Bodgan & Biklen, 2003). It is a way of obtaining, organizing and analysing data (Polit & Hungler, 2004). Data generation methods include document analysis, observations and interviews (Atkins & Wallace, 2012). This section outlines how I generated data, organized and analysed it. I used narrative interviews as stated in the narrative inquiry.

4.4.1 Research participants and participants' selection

4.4.1.1 Participants

The study involved five school principals as participants. I did not have any gender or age preferences as these could have potentially stalled the sampling process (see section 4.4.1.2 below) and there is no specific role that these would have played in this study. This section is further discussed in detail in the following chapter.

4.4.1.2 Snowballing sampling

Sampling is the selection of the most appropriate participants for the study (Dudovskiy, 2018; Naderifar, Goli & Ghaljaie, 2017). I used snowball sampling to select participants. This form of sampling is used to obtain knowledge of potential cases from people, who know those who meet research interests (Glesne, 2006). This selection is deliberate so that the theoretical needs of the study are met. According to Ellert (2011), it is vital to have criteria in place so that an understanding of the specifics of the characteristics of participants would be understood. I was guided by the characteristics of ethical leaders, as outlined under the literature review, when selecting participants (see Section 2.3.2). These were school principals whom the circuit manager saw as fair, just, consistent in their decision-making and judgment. I was looking for school principals who are proactive, ethical in their decision-making, those who inspire and motivate their members, school principals who abandon their comfort zones and lead by example. Comfort zones in this instance would include the authority that comes with the position of being a school principal. These were school principals who are willing to serve as they lead (Beck, 2014; Van Dierendonck, 2011; Wong & Page, 2003). The circuit manager would have observed how the school principals are consistent in what they do, displaying openness and transparency in their practise. They ought to be known for their honesty and integrity (Dladla, 2020; Masote, 2016). This does not in any way suggest that they are perfect beings; these are risk takers who are not afraid to admit to mistakes and their shortcomings, but instead they learn from them. They were identified by people who work with them and felt they fit the description. Schools have principals but it is not all of them that fitted these criteria. The principals in the study have not had it easy, but they have stood the test of time. They stand out in that there is something that they do differently from which others can learn. I had a strong conviction that perhaps something could be learnt from their experiences of ethical leadership and practices.

I approached the circuit manager to give me referrals of school principals who seemed to possess the characteristics discussed above. It is important to clarify that the circuit manager was not part of the sample since the study targeted school principals with special characteristics. The reason for approaching the circuit manager was because she works closely with the school principals and she has an overall idea of what is happening in each school under her supervision and also to kick-start the process. She also knew better what the school principals were enacting in schools. The circuit manager referred me to two school

principals. I managed to get hold of both of them but unfortunately one of them declined taking part in the study, citing a tight schedule since she is also studying. The other one agreed to meeting with me and also to partaking in the study. From him I got contacts for the second participant and it went on and on until the last one. I was fortunate enough that each participant to whom I was referred agreed to be part of the study and gave me a referral.

This sampling method is not without disadvantages. Oversampling a particular network of peers can lead to bias. In cases where data required is sensitive, respondents may be hesitant to provide contacts of peers. Noy (2008) argues that power is relinquished to informants during snowball sampling, as information about the informants comes from the informants themselves to the researcher. Also, further access to the sample is controlled by informants themselves and they have a right to refuse giving referral. It was fortunate in this study that informants did not object to giving referral; they all cooperated.

4.4.2 Data generation strategies

Data generation is a construction between researcher and participant (McAlpine, 2016). In narrative inquiry, data generation could be in the form of journal records, field notes of the stories of the shared experience, other's observations, storytelling, interview transcripts, letter writing, documents like newsletters, autobiographies, etc. (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990). Fieldwork involves on-going conversations with participants, settling into the temporal unfolding of lives. In this study, I adopted narrative interviews as data generation approaches. The interviews were recorded and later transcribed from an audiotape. Before the interviews, I spent time developing relationships with the participants and this continued as stories are constructed (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990; Clandinin, 2013). Practitioners sometimes feel voiceless and not having been afforded an opportunity of sharing their stories. According to Connelly and Clandinin (1990), researchers insert themselves in the narrators' stories as a way of coming to know their stories whilst giving the narrators a voice. As I inserted myself in the research, I learnt what can be known through listening to their narratives and thus gave the school principals voice.

4.4.2.1 Narrative interviews

Narrative interviews are flexible and open-ended; there are no pre-determined questions (Alshenqeeti, 2014; Strydom & Bezuidenhout, 2014). In a narrative interview, the narrator

tells a story about their life experience in a social context. This provides a direct reconstruction of social events from the perspective of the narrator (Jovchelovitch & Bauer, 2000). Narrative interviews are unstructured and in-depth. The researcher ought to develop a good rapport with the participant; narrative inquiry is a study of people in relation by people in relation (Clandinin, 2013). The interview should be conducted in a non-threatening environment where the narrator feels free and comfortable to tell their story. When people feel free, they tend to tell more (Masinga, 2013). Interviews were conducted in the principals' offices except for Mrs Dube. She requested to have the interviews conducted in the comfort of her home since her school was undergoing renovations and there was too much noise and commotion. This made the participants feel very comfortable and free to share openly on their experiences and practices of ethical leadership.

The interviews were conducted in English, a language that the participants felt were comfortable in, enabling them to spontaneously express themselves. Wheeden (2015) advises that the researcher does not interfere with the narrative and the interviewer should ensure that their influence is minimal during the interview and the setting has an impact on this. This schema is what sets narrative interview apart from other types of interviews. I followed this advice and ensured that participants were not disturbed in any way. However, in two instances, teachers would barge in during the interview and one principal signalled for the teacher not to utter a word; luckily the teacher caught on quickly. In the other instance, I had to pause the recording as the teacher really needed to speak to the principal as he was taking early leave. The interview continued immediately thereafter. I got to pay attention to the narrator, observe non-verbal cues and maintain eye contact (Thabede, 2017) without staring. The interviews were audio recorded and this may come with some advantages, according to Thabede (2017). The narrator may feel honoured and consequently feel more comfortable to participate in the interview and tell more. Through audio tapes, the narratives were captured verbatim, later transcribed and reflected upon (Thabede, 2017). It would be a mistake to assume that a narrative interview has no structure, it does.

Table 1 exhibits the basis phases of the narrative interview:

<u>Phases</u>	<u>Rules</u>
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1. Preparation	Exploring the field Formulating exmanent questions
2. Initiation	Formulating initial topic for narration Using visual aids
3. Main narration	No interruptions Only non-verbal encouragement to continue storytelling Wait for the coda
4. Questioning phase	Only 'What happened then?' No opinion and attitude questions No arguing on contradictions No why-questions Exmanent into immanent questions
5. Concluding talk	Stop recording Why-questions allowed Memory protocol immediately after interview

[Adapted from LSE Research online (Jovchelovich & Bauer, 2000)]

Table 4.1 Phases and rules for narrative interviews

Basically, the interview started with the first phase, which is initiation. Initiation was preceded by preparation for the interview which entailed exploring the field and formulation of exmanent questions. Exmanent questions are those questions which arise from the researcher's approach to the topic of the study. These are the questions that I had formulated for the interview. Initiation involved formulation of the topic for the interview. I ensured the topic was relevant to the participants, since they had experience in the topic, so they would be in a position to give a rich narrative. The topic was also of significance to them to avoid their losing interest. A broad topic allows for long story telling covering the past right through to the present. The second phase was the main narration where interruption is not advisable. I listened and only used non-verbal encouragement to persuade the narrator to continue. In that phase, I was making brief notes for purposes of seeking clarity at a later stage. I had already explained to the participants the reason for taking notes prior to the commencement of the interviews. Whilst taking notes, I tried by all means not to lose eye contact or make the

participants feel somehow neglected. I was also cautious not to let the note taking interfere with the participant's narration. I let the interviews continue until the narrator signalled the end of the story by pausing. This is called the coda, which must be natural. I would then ask if there is anything else the narrator would like to add. The third phase comprised of the questioning phase. Here is when I could ask questions but only to find out more on what has already been narrated. I avoided putting forward any opinions or attitudes as these have potential to offend the narrator. The purpose was to listen to them tell their stories and not to judge or interrogate them. I did not ask any 'why-questions' during this phase, since neither probing nor raising any contradictions from the narrative is allowed at this stage of the interview process. All questions asked used the language of the narrator and were based on the narrative, nothing outside of it. The final phase was the concluding talk. During this final stage, I stopped the recording and it is only then that I could ask the 'why-questions' as the mood was more relaxed. The notes I took at that point summarized the interviews. Transcription followed as soon as possible after each interview whilst my memory was still fresh, to capture and record those non-verbal moments during the interview so as to interpret the narrative in its context (King, Horrocks & Brooks, 2018).

The narrative interviews were the best data generation tool for this study. Their semi-structured open-ended nature was precisely what I needed to solicit the participants' stories. The interviews gave them a rare opportunity to freely share their experiences and practices of ethical leadership in education. Most important was my gaining a deeper understanding of what they thought informed their practices. This was the gist of the study given that such data provides knowledge from which others can learn. This provided new knowledge, thus contributing empirical data to the body of knowledge.

Thabede (2017) highlights a few limitations of narrative interviews, stating that they are time-consuming. Audio recording may be intimidating for the participant. Fortunately enough, none of the participants objected to audio-recording and they had given consent prior to the interviews. A challenge I encountered was that the participants had busy schedules. Sometimes I would schedule an appointment only to find that the school principal is attending an impromptu meeting or something else unplanned needed immediate attention. In such situations I would reschedule. Though it was indeed a major effort, the experience was

invaluable. I managed to build upon the participants' responses and thus got a richer and thicker description (Wheeden, 2015).

4.5 Data analysis

Analysis is the meaning-making process of a study, whereby the researcher consolidates data keeping in mind the research questions (Ngidi, 2019). De Vos (2010) asserts that analysis is the transformation of data into findings, further stating that it brings order, structure and meaning to generated data. It should be based on the researcher's purpose and the research questions (Buting, 2015). Analysis is an attempt by the researcher to organize, account for and provide explanations of data to make sense of participants' stories in this instance, of the phenomenon. It entails noting patterns, themes and categories (Mthiyane, 2013). Researchers become narrators as they interpret told stories and decide how to re-present them for others (Dickingson, 2012). Analysis emanates from participants' perspectives, to avoid overwriting their voices. Data analysis includes non-verbal cues that the researcher picks up during the interviews (Thabede, 2017).

The study used a thematic analysis model by Braun and Clarke (2006). They define thematic analysis as a method of analysing and reporting patterns or themes within data. They propose six phases for thematic analysis. They are as follows:

Phase 1: Familiarizing yourself with your data

After the interviews I left the field and began the analysis and interpretation without participants nearby. I began this process by listening to the recordings and transcribing them verbatim immediately after the interviews. McAlpine (2016) posits that the texts then change from interim texts to research texts. These research texts become researcher constructed narratives that undergo narrative interpretation. Texts were a portion of overall data and the researcher is advised also to pay attention to physical gestures and body language (McGowan, 2010). This process allowed me to start familiarizing myself with the data. I then read and re-read the data, getting immersed in the data (De Vos, 2010) and forming a bedrock for the rest of the analysis. This was a time-consuming process and one might be tempted to skip over but Braun and Clarke (2006) warn against this. Transcripts allow researchers to continue engaging with participants in relational ways. I continued to think narratively in

terms of common places as I was reading the transcripts. At this stage the researcher and the participant can still further co-compose the storied interpretations allowing for negotiation of a multiplicity of possible meaning. This allows for follow-up interviews to further clarify or compose a complex account of the participant's experience (Braun & Clarke, 2006). It is at this stage that I conducted the second interviews and later merged the transcripts of each participant into a single text to allow for generation of codes.

Phase 2: Generating initial codes

As I commenced with the second phase, I began coding the data. Coding assists the researcher in identifying underlying data (Smith & Davis, 2010). Codes identify a feature of the data that appears interesting to the researcher, as this forms part of organizing data into meaningful groups (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Coding assists the researcher in identifying underlying data (Smith & Davis, 2010). Buting (2015) defines it as a process of sorting and defining and defining and sorting scraps of generated data applicable to research. It involves generation of categories and themes (Mthiyane, 2013). I used the key research questions to guide me when identifying themes and sub themes (Khuzwayo, 2019). Coding was conducted manually. I used color pens to highlight the excerpts from the data and later put them into themes.

Phase 3: Searching for themes

This phase involves sorting the different codes into potential themes. According to Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2011), this is where the researcher groups together items into themes and patterns. Whilst this phase may be said to be the most difficult and complex, it is also creative and fun (Creswell, 2009). Tension and uncertainty feature at this stage (McAlpine, 2016). I gathered all codes together and arranged them into themes. A theme captures something important about the data in relation to the research question, representing some level of patterned response within data set (Braun & Clarke, 2006). I checked if any of the codes could be combined to form overarching themes or remain sub-themes. For all the codes that seemed not to fit under any theme were not eliminated but put under a special theme which I named 'miscellaneous'. In this stage, data was broken down and much more organized.

Phase 4: Reviewing themes

I reviewed the coded data extracts. I achieved this by reading all collated data extracts for each theme trying to establish whether they appeared to form any coherent patterns. As soon as I established consistency, I formed a thematic map. I also checked if the thematic map reflected the meaning evident in the data set as a whole. Braun and Clarke (2006) advocate the need for re-coding as coding is an on-going organic process. I kept re-coding until the thematic map was satisfactory as same themes kept emerging. This meant data was saturated.

Phase 5: Defining and naming themes

At this phase, I defined and renamed themes according to what each theme was about. I did this by determining what each theme is about and what aspect of data each theme captures. I had hoped to achieve this by going back to collated data extracts for each theme and organizing them into a coherent and internally consistent account with accompanying narratives. This was supposed to help me identify the 'story' each theme tells. Voices strengthen findings emerging from data (Creswell, 2007). The voice of the participant should not be overwritten by that of a researcher in the research text; the originality of data should be maintained (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). When reporting findings, the researcher should ensure that the focus is on the individual. At this point, the researcher is re-representing and re-constructing narratives whilst shared patterns of experience are evident (McAlpine, 2016). Analysis is thematic; transcripts are summarized and accompanied by interview excerpts to preserve the narrator's voice (McAlpine, 2016).

Phase 6: Producing the report

This entailed the final analysis and write-up of the report. This phase allowed me to draw conclusions by establishing correlations between data, literature and the theoretical framework of my study (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Literature could suggest categories that can code data for ensuing analysis (Mthiyane, 2013). Khuzwayo (2019) concurs, adding that research questions and literature offer strategies for analysis. Key research questions guide the researcher when identifying themes and sub themes (Khuzwayo, 2019). I started writing my report, ensuring that I included data extracts to provide concise, coherent, logical, non-repetitive and interesting accounts of the story within and across the themes. I made it a point that my story goes beyond description but also makes an argument in relation to my research questions. These steps are evident in the data analysis chapter.

4.6 Trustworthiness

Narratives are not open to proof and cannot be judged as true or false as they express the truth of a point of view of a specific location in space and time (Jovchelovitch & Bauer, 2000). They are the narrator's experiential truth. I intended to understand the phenomenon and had no intention of controlling or predicting the narratives (Pinnegar & Dayner, 2007). Participants do not reflect a reality but construct it in the telling of the narrative and they shape reality (Spector-Mersel, 2010). According to Barbie and Moutton (2009), trustworthiness can be likened to the neutrality of findings. Nieuwenhuis (2010) adds that trustworthiness is of paramount importance in qualitative research and researchers should always bear this in mind. Credibility, transferability, dependability and conformability ensure trustworthiness in a qualitative study (Creswell, 1998).

4.6.1 Credibility

Interviews were audio recorded to enhance credibility (Bertram & Christiansen, 2014). Also to ensure credibility, as I re-told the narratives, I ensured that they resembled the stories of participants as much as possible, as credibility can be measured by reporting the perspectives of the participants as clearly as possible (Yilmaz, 2013). Depth is the ability of the research text to penetrate down and express the best of the intentions of the participant. To achieve this, I gave the narratives to the participants, for them to read and to ensure authenticity of there-told stories.

4.6.2 Transferability

To ensure transferability, I ensured a high level of transparency throughout the study. I clearly defined the research questions. I gave a thick description of the setting, context, people and events studied. I also made transparent the methodology, data generation tools and analysis procedures used. The processes followed may be used by other researchers wishing to replicate study. Transferability in a qualitative study is achieved if the findings are transferable to other similar settings (Yilmaz, 2013). The study however involved only five school principals from a circuit with more than ten schools and this could have a slight bearing on transferability.

4.6.3 Dependability

Dependability refers to the consistency of observing the same findings under similar circumstances (Merriam, 2009). I gave a detailed description of the processes involved in the research to allow other researchers to decide on the extent of generalization of the findings in different situations (Koonin, 2014). I believe they would give similar narratives in similar settings. I believe this is possible since the participants spoke from the heart basing their stories on experience and practice. Jovchelovich and Bauer (2007) advocate that narratives are not open to proof and therefore cannot be judged as true or false. They express the truth from a point of view, of a specific location in space and time. Since this is a narrative study, I treated the participants' narratives as their experiential truth. From the submission date, data will be stored in a safe for five years and thereafter destroyed to ensure that participants are protected from any harm.

4.6.4 Confirmability

Confirmability measures how well the findings of the inquiry are supported by the data generated (Nowell, Norris, White & Moules, 2016). To ensure this, the first step was maintaining consistency in the interview questions. I posed the same question to all participants. I then made it a point that the findings of the study were a true reflection of the experiences of the participants and not my preferences and characteristics (Koonin, 2014). I gave draft report to the participants for them to read and they confirmed that it was indeed a true depiction of their shared narratives. I declared my positionality as a researcher in the introductory chapter.

4.7 Ethical considerations

Ethical approval should be sought and obtained as a priority. Consent should be informed and voluntary (Dudovskiy, 2018). I applied and obtained ethical clearance from the university's research ethics office (Appendix A). This was followed by an application seeking permission to conduct research from KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education (KZNDoE). The permission was granted (Appendix B). I then wrote to the SGB's seeking consent to interview the school principals (Appendix C). Each SGB signed a consent form granting me permission (Appendix D). I then wrote letter to the participant with the consent form attached

(Appendix E). I did this to fulfil the responsibility of ensuring that participants are clear and fully aware of what is asked of them. Respondents should sign the consent forms to prove that they agreed to participate and again sign another form giving consent to being audio-taped (Dudovskiy, 2018). The letter clearly stated what data is required of the participants and how that data would be generated. In the letter I informed the participant of their right to withdraw at any point (Aliyu, 2015). I was sure to avoid academic jargon to avoid any confusion or uncertainty about the study's intention. Participants were informed of their right to withdraw at any point and also the right to withdraw data already provided. Again, I asked for their consent to audio-tape the interviews (Appendix F).

Anonymity and confidentiality should be ensured to prevent potential harm. Dudovskiy (2018) maintains anonymity can be ensured if the researcher does not know the participant and confidentiality means the researcher knows the participant's identity but de-identifies them and identity is kept confidential. The research should ensure anonymity by removing personal details which may reveal identity (McAlpine, 2016). I observed confidentiality by using pseudonyms to de-identify participants as they were eventually known to me through the one-on-one interviews. I sent a copy to the participant to check if there is anything that might reveal their identity.

Who owns the data should be made clear, as raw data belongs to the participant but, after analysis, data belongs to the researcher. I provided participants with the information for the complaint process, that is, contact details of the supervisor, coordinator of the ethics committee. Fictionalization in the texts protects participants from any harm (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). I used pseudonyms to protect their identity. McAlpine (2015) shares similar sentiments and further avers that self-identifying statements and information should be avoided at all costs. I avoided forcing or coercing participants into taking part in the study. I informed participants of what would happen to the recorded data after analysis (Dudovskiy, 2018). I also informed them of their right to withdraw even during the recording (Aliyu 2015), that the recordings will be erased after transcription and that transcripts will be kept in a safe after analysis.

4.8 Summary

This chapter commenced with the discussion of the research paradigm, research design and research methodology; it then went on to give a detailed account of data analysis, trustworthiness and ethical considerations. Also in the introductory section, I gave a description of the context. The next chapter covers the presentation of the findings and discussion thereof.

CHAPTER 5

DATA PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION

5.1 Introduction

In the previous chapter I discussed the research methodology of the study. In this chapter I present and discuss the findings. The study sought to understand participants' understanding and experiences of ethical leadership. For what I presented as the meaning of the term 'ethical leadership', I refer the reader to Chapter 2, section 2.3. Lack of morals could be detrimental to an organization (Derr, 2012). To recap on ethical leadership, therein the leader does not compromise on ethics but displays strong morals (Tracy, 2014). Ethics draw on notions of integrity, honesty and personal values (Aiyegar, 2013). Ethical leaders pursue internal good; they do good because they want to and because they believe it is the right thing to do (Mthembu, 2018). For Rabinowitz (2016), ethical leadership is about knowing and doing what is good. Ethical leaders are exemplary, transparent, accountable, responsible, caring, fair and just (Boydak, Yavuz & Yirci, 2017; Monahan, 2012; Stewart, 2017). They take their values into account in executing their duties. What I found fascinating was that servant leaders also share similar characteristics.

According to Nienaber (2014), servant leaders are ethical, moral and centred around concern for followers and their needs. They are empathetic, compassionate, morally grounded and principled (Russell & Stone, 2002; Stewart, 2017). They take their values into account in executing their duties. What I found fascinating was that servant leaders also share similar characteristics. According to Nienaber (2014), servant leaders are ethical, moral and centred around concern for followers and their needs. They are empathetic, compassionate, morally grounded and principled (Russell & Stone, 2002; Stewart, 2017). Virtues and values build a person's character and virtues like fairness, honesty, prudence, trustworthiness are all attributes of an ethical leader's character (Mulder, 2017; Northouse, 2013; Van Wart, 2014).

This chapter unfolds through four sections. First, I present participants' biographical information. Second, I move on to present and discuss findings on the participants' understanding and experiences of ethical leadership. Third, I present and discuss what participants said informed understanding and experiences of ethical leadership. Finally, I close the chapter with a short section on emerging issues. Therein I highlight some of the issues which emerge from the participants' stories. The sample arose out of snowballing and I

allowed that process to unfold naturally. Participants' responses to the first and second questions provided insight to the last one: what can be learnt from their experiences? Focus, as stated above, was on these research questions:

1. What are the selected proactive school principals' understanding and experiences of ethical leadership in South African schools?
2. How do school principals explain what informs their experiences and practises?
3. What can be learnt from their experiences and practises as ethical leaders?

5.2 Participants' biographical information

Five school principals participated in the study. I present them through pseudonyms. All five participants were from township schools in the one selected district. The table 5.1 shows participants' biographical information.

Table 5.1 Participants' biographical information

Pseudonyms	Age	Years' experience as principal	Qualifications	School enrolment	Staff size
Ms Tshabalala	54	9	BEd	1255	31
Mr Dladla	48	4	BEd (Hons)	980	25
Mrs Dube	55	11	BEd (Hons)	1128	28
Mrs Philibane	45	5	BEd (Hons)	1520	38
Mr Sncume	58	14	MEd	1375	34

The participants were Ms Tshabalala, Mr Dladla, Mrs Dube, Mrs Philibane and Mr Sncume.

Ms Tshabalala

Ms Tshabalala was in her early 50s and had been a principal for nine years. She had been in the school for 20 years. Ms Tshabalala's school started from grade R to 7. This means that the school has the Foundation Phase (grades R-3), the Intermediate Phase (grades 4-6) and a portion of the Senior Phase (grade 7). The school is located in a township. The buildings were modern and the school is quite big. It is a feeder school to two high schools that are within one and two and half kilometer radius respectively. It competed with another primary school which is just half a kilometer across it, though that has only up to grade four.

Mr Dladla

Mr Dladla was in his late 40s; he had been a principal for four years and was promoted from a rural school. Mr Dladla's school has grades five to nine, was then a senior primary school that has since included the senior phase. It is also a township school which recently had new RDP houses to its west, which used to be an open space.

Mrs Dube

Mrs Dube was in her mid-50s; she had been in the principal position for eleven years. Mrs Dube's school used to run from grades R to four until two years ago when, it included grades five and six in the respective years.

Mrs Philibane

Mrs Philibane had been a school principal for five years and was in her mid-40s. She was a high school principal; the school starts from grade eight to twelve. The school is located within an RDP township.

Mr Sncume

Mr Sncume was in his late 50s. He had 14 years' experience as a school principal. Mr Sncume was also a high school principal; the school has grades eight to twelve. The school is in a developing township that still has informal dwellings among modern homes.

All schools, except for Mr Dladla's, had an enrolment of more than 1 000 learners, and staff sizes ranged between 25 and 30. Each participant gave a brief background as to how and when they assumed duty as school principals. This is the summary of Ms Tshabalala's story:

I was appointed in this position in 2010. Before that I was a deputy principal. In fact, there were two deputy principals in our school. So, when the principal left, the other deputy was appointed the acting principal until such time when the post was advertised. Some colleagues encouraged me to also apply and contest the position. I thought "why not". But it was not like I was fighting the other deputy, no...it was nothing like what it is now. To tell you the truth (clears throat) ...colleagues felt that I should also apply to increase the chances of the post being retained in the school. To cut the matter short, I got the position (smiles).

Mr Dladla also shared his story:

I joined this school in 2015, in fact I was supposed to start in 2014 but there were problems in the school. The school had no principal and had no deputy principal due to the infighting and there was a delay.

Mrs Dube began her story thus:

I started off in this school as an HOD (Head of Department) and there was no deputy principal. So when the principal left, I started acting (as a principal). Remember, there was no deputy, so I was an HOD, deputy and principal all at once, you see.... that's my story...that's my story until the principal's post was advertised and I applied.

I was intrigued by Mrs Philibane's background as it involved her descending to a lower-level position before becoming a school principal:

Well, I started here ...I won't mention the name of the school (laughs) as a school principal in 2015. Before that I was in the same school as a post level 1 educator. I first came here in...I think it was in 2010, yes! Before 2010 I was a deputy principal in one of the schools in ...district (mentions the district). I had some problems there then and I moved to this district. I couldn't move horizontally (as a deputy principal) because they could not find me a matching post. So, I came here and became PL1 but I was applying for a senior position and fortunately in 2015 I got this position as a principal of this school.

This is how Mr Sncume's story began:

...the journey as the school principal...I started in here at (mentions the name of the school) in 2009, March 5. Er... before that I had been a post level 1 educator er...in 1986 when I left college (mentions the name of the college of education). So, for a long time I worked in a farm school. Thereafter, I was transferred after 15 years or so... I was transferred to (mentions the name of a primary school) under er...er...R and R processes (redeployment). I had been in a union, teacher union, and I was elected the secretary of the (names the region). I became a fulltime shop steward and then in 2009 I stayed in the union for two terms. On the third term...before the end of the second term...I had applied for principalship at the school. I remember the bulletin was...the closing date was September 3 if I am not mistaken in 2007. So, I had applied

and nothing happened until 2008 where I was invited to an interview, and I was only appointed the following year, 2009 in March. The interview was around April in 2008. So, I am just giving you the background.

Some of the participants were seasoned professionals who had moved through the ranks. The above extracts give background to each participant, providing a brief insight into their practices. The school principals were significantly experienced to have grown in their ethical practices. The schools were large; this suggested that principals were likely to experience various ethical dilemmas. Also, it seemed as though they were sufficiently qualified academically to be able to cope with school challenges. I then began with the first research question.

5.3 What were the participants' understanding and experiences of ethical leadership?

This first research question sought to explore the participants' experiences of ethical leadership as well as their practices as school principals. I noted that participants were not really familiar with the term 'ethical leadership' itself, even though it was evident that they were indeed practicing it. This was evident in the way they answered the first research question. In answering this question, the participants narrated what they did in their everyday life as school principals and it was from those stories that I gained an understanding of how they understood and experienced ethical leadership. I allowed each participant to speak freely without much interruption. This explains the various aspects that each participant touched on in a single account, though answering the same question. I explained in the research methodology chapter (see section 4.4.2.1) that participants should not be unduly interrupted when they tell their stories. I noticed that participants would talk about their experiences as well as their understanding of ethical leadership as their stories unfolded in a single account. It is for that reason that both the participants' understanding and experiences of ethical leadership are presented together. Ms Tshabalala was the first participant and began by mentioning how showing interest in others helped her as an ethical leader to improve working relations. According to her, it helps to know what is going on in the staff members' lives as this affects their work performance. She did this by developing rapport with the staff. This was her take:

I normally have chats with my staff members... you know...nothing formal. I will just ask about how their families are doing. They like it if you ask about their children, especially ladies (laughs). I do this to make each of them feel important and that I am interested in their lives not just work.

This suggested to me that she was a sociable and warm leader who made an effort to get to know the staff members better and shows care, which is an ethical principle (see section 2.3.2.3). She went on to give an example of how this had worked in her favour in the past:

I get all the information from the private chats I told you about. There was this lady; she is no longer in the school. She used to be absent from work quite often. I used to think that she did not take her work seriously but I found out that her husband was abusing her. She sometimes stayed away from school because she was embarrassed by the blue eye or bruises. I only found out after we spoke. It was so sad. I referred her to a friend who is a social worker. It turned out the husband was suffering from stress because he lost his job. They went for counselling. They are happy now; even have another son (smiles). So, you see, it helps to know each one of them as a person...an individual. But you know people are not the same, others try not to reveal everything, I guess they feel embarrassed but the truth is life is not perfect, we all have problems.

This taught me that a school principal should not look at the problem at face value and be judgmental but should take time to look into the problem deeply to gain an understanding of what is actually happening. That would enable them to treat each case on merit and whenever possible, find a solution or a way to manage the situation. This ensures that each case is treated with fairness and justice (see section 2.3.2.1.1).

Ms Tshabalala went on to talk about the importance of keeping people's secret by not sharing things told to you in confidence; a school principal must be trustworthy. For her, that was part of respect (see section 2.3.3):

When they (staff members) have personal problems, they know they can come and talk to me behind closed doors. They know that what we discuss in my office stays in the office. When you are a leader, you must know how to keep a secret. You cannot be going around

sharing peoples' problems. They will never trust you again and they will sue you. It's just not right. A principal who gossips divides the staff and causes unnecessary problems.

She then went on to talk about the role of justice and fairness (see section 2.3.2.1.1) in a school. She warned against favouritism which she declared kills the school:

It's just like having favourites. If you do not treat everyone fairly, you must know you have killed that school. Even children...the learners...I always stress this in our staff meetings: "Do not show favouritism to your learners because you will not be able to manage them. Favourites get out of hand because they think they are better than others. Then you find that the other group hates you (adjusting glasses).

Continuing with her account, she mentioned that leading by example (see section 2.5.2.1) was another way she understood ethical leadership. A leader ought to practise what they preached:

You cannot tell people one thing and do the other, like a mother crab telling her kids to walk straight (laughs). I tell you; I am always here at 7:00 am and I am the last one to leave unless maybe I have a meeting or another commitment. I come to school every day and I make sure I am presentable. It's the little things.

She spoke fondly of her former principal from whom she claimed to have learnt a lot. She proudly said that her practice was mostly influenced by the lady's mentoring. It was no surprise that she saw her as her mentor and role model:

Before I came here as a DP (Deputy Principal), I was teaching in a primary school under Umlazi (district). The school had a female principal. I'm telling you, most of the things I learnt from her. That woman was something else. Every single teacher thought they were her favourite (laughs). She's retired now. She knew how to treat people young and old. You know she respected everyone, even children. She knew how to handle parents even the rude ones. If a parent came to school to attack a teacher, you (the teacher) would find out later that there was an angry parent looking for you (her face beams again). I hope one day I will be like her (sits back).

What was apparent here was that from her mentor she learnt how to treat people fairly and with respect. She learnt how to handle people of varying attitudes and manage volatile

situations. Moving on with her story, Ms Tshabalala touched on the issue of accountability which falls under the ethic of justice (see section 2.3.2.1.2). From the stern look on her face, I could tell that she meant business. She told of corrupt stakeholders who lured school principals into shady activities. It was clear that she understood her role as an accounting officer in the school:

They (corrupt stakeholders) do not understand that the buck stops with you (straight face). At the end of the day, I am the one who has to answer all the questions. I have to explain why this is like that.

From there, Ms Tshabalala spoke about how she managed conflict, citing an example where teachers were involved:

If there's a problem that needs my attention, like maybe teachers have a misunderstanding, we close the door in my office and talk like adults. If they are still very emotional, I allow them to cool down first and discuss it later. It really works for me. You know the confrontation makes things worse, so I avoid it. When people are calm, then we focus on the matter and not the person otherwise...ey...you can end up with a police van in the school or even worse a mortuary van (laughs).

From this I learnt how things we often do not pay attention to like avoiding confrontation, could save us from explosive situations. I found this to be quite prudent because often we take it for granted that confrontations are part of life, when they could be avoided. This showed emotional intelligence which is one of the factors influencing ethical leadership (see section 2.5.1.4). Elaborating on what she did differently, Ms Tshabalala explained that she believes in delegation of duties claiming it made everyone feel like an important part of the school:

So, what I do is, I delegate duties to the SMT members and I encourage them to also delegate in their departments. I feel it works out better if teachers feel they are part of whatever is happening.

Delegation of duties is a form of encouraging the growth of others which is encouraged in servant leadership (see section 3.4.1). When people are given a chance to showcase their abilities, they develop positive self-esteem, gain self-confidence and they grow

professionally. I listened as Ms Tshabalala candidly took me through their process of ensuring they got feedback from the staff on their performance as the SMT:

We even have a suggestion box; you must have seen it outside the secretary's office. We open the box every Monday with the SMT. It's like a reflection of the week. They (the staff members) tell us what they thought of the week and what we can improve on. Sometimes you will laugh at the comments and suggestions, but others are genuine, and we take them seriously. They tell us when we are wrong. But we agreed that every comment must come with a suggestion of what can be done to correct and improve the situation. You cannot just fire in the air (laughs).

It takes a special kind of leader to afford subordinates an opportunity to give feedback on the leader's leadership or performance. She later explained the use of a suggestion box stating that their main interest was on the ideas and suggestions to help them advance the school's vision. They took into account the different personalities among staff members and using the suggestion box enabled even the shy and timid staff members to freely express themselves. They perceived this as another way of communication, which is vital in ethical leadership (see section 2.5.2.2). It was another way of listening to the staff members' feedback and also to give them a chance to make an input in the running of the school as they were allowed to make suggestions. This was remarkable about her and her SMT.

In sharing his understanding and experience of ethical leadership in education, Mr Dladla began by giving his own conceptualisation of the teaching profession:

You know teaching is not just a job, it is a calling. We are called by God to do this job because He trusts us. When we do the funny things that you see today in schools, do you think He's happy? (frowning) No, He's disappointed. We have to do the right thing.

Mr Dladla, looking serious, sat up and emphasized how crucial teaching was for him:

As teachers we work with people, young minds. You know in a timber factory or furniture factory, if you cut the timber incorrectly, they do not throw it away. They call it a reject and sell it cheaper and still make money. Your mistake is not a complete loss. With us, you cannot afford mistakes...no...no rejects when it comes to

young minds. Any mistake, the damage is permanent and costs the society even the country. I don't know if you get me. So, you see, it's no ordinary job.

Moving on with his story, he touched on how challenging being a school principal was:

It is not easy being the principal, you know. There are times when you feel like the wind is against you. If you do not adjust your sails, you will be blown away (laughs).

Mr Dladla clarified that by 'adjusting the sails' he meant being flexible and revisiting your stance in any given situation. That suggested to me that as a school principal it was wise to do so as things do not always go as planned. It is not every school principal who may display such an attitude in tough times, it takes a special kind.

He later elaborated on the challenges he encountered as he executed his duties. This is revealed in one of the upcoming sections (see section 5.5.2), where participants shed light on ethical issues they encountered.

Like Ms Tshabala, he also believed in justice and fairness in the workplace:

You have to do unto others as you would have them do unto you. Even when a person irritates you, you have to persevere and pray for them too.

His perspective was no surprise given that he was also a pastor, not to suggest that all pastors are forthright. He coupled this with showing respect for everyone and leading by example. He strongly believed that treating people with respect helped him avoid divisions among the staff and averted unnecessary tensions, thus displaying proactive management (see section 2.3.1):

You know something I have realized; people look at you, what you do...like how you handle yourself. If you are rude, don't show respect and you are corrupt, don't think you can run the school. You will have groups among the staff. When you have groups, going forward is not easy. There is always fruitless debates and tension. Nobody wants to be responsible for anything. They pull towards different directions, and where are you as the principal (shrugs shoulders).

He then told how transparency, teamwork, collaboration and delegation of duties, always worked for him:

You need to work as a team and be transparent. You know if I die today, my deputy can take over and run the school smoothly. Most of the things I delegate to the SMT and teachers. You have to involve others in everything you do, you cannot decide on your own. I try by all means to involve everyone in everything that happens in the school, especially the teachers. First you must consult and also think deeply you can't just take everything because it all comes back to you in the end. You would be amazed; some teachers are so talented and resourceful.

He concluded by advising that it helps to listen when you are a leader, claiming it helped him to grow:

It helps to also to listen. You know when they talk, I listen. Even the troublesome teacher can talk sense sometimes (straight face), I just take only what is positive and forget the rest (chuckles). That's how you learn and grow.

Mrs Dube, another participant, acknowledged that taking over as a school principal was no easy task. For her, what made things difficult was the fact that some staff members were used to doing things in ways that she as a school principal felt needed to be rectified. She clarified that in the past teachers would openly discuss learners and their problems in the staffroom, no matter how sensitive the matter was; teachers would absent themselves from school frequently and refuse to hand in leave forms. She said that absenteeism was rife, especially on paydays and days after payday. When she tried to change that, some of the staff members did not take kindly to change:

As I took over, I had to correct the mistakes of the past which people thought were correct when they are actually wrong, it's just that they had been done for a long time. That was the first challenge I encountered.

She added:

...you have to be strong and firm, if you believe that thing is right, persevere and fight for it.

According to Mrs Dube, an ethical leader ought to have compassion for others and show care:

Also, you show that you care. There is a teacher who is seeing a psychologist because she has domestic problems. I had to advise her to take some time off so that she can sort out her problems.

Mrs Philibane followed in Mr Dladla's footsteps as she too began by conceptualising teaching as parenthood, where teachers ought to nurture and support their students.

You see, teaching involves parenthood. You need to be prepared to be a parent even before you enrol for teaching.

It was interesting to note that she too tried to practise justice and fairness:

...sometimes there is favouritism that is there, don't do that as a principal. All staff members treat them fairly. It is not right, it's not fair on others.

She explained how she balanced out her act when it came to teacher unions in the school:

If you have more than one (teacher) union among your staff, I think it's even better you just have to balance your act with the site stewards. Don't allow one union to dominate or make it seem like you (are) siding with them.

She emphasized the importance of being firm and yet friendly, to avoid being taken advantage of as a school principal:

Even staff members, there are things that they know they are not supposed to do but they are going to test you and if they see that you are weak, they will definitely take advantage of that. But with that, you just need to be cool and calm with them and just stick to the department policy. As a school principal you need to be firm and not just as a principal but also as a human being.

It dawned on me that the experience she had as a teacher and as a manager (see section 5.2) played a pivotal role in her practice. Not to deviate, but I later learnt that she had initially experienced challenges when she assumed duty as a school principal, being a female leader in a high school, which was clarified when she spoke about the dilemmas she encountered. Advancing her account, Mrs Philibane told how persuasion yielded positive results for her:

In our school we have afternoon classes for matric. They finish at 16:30 every day. I also stay until everyone goes home except for rare instances where I have a meeting

to attend or be somewhere else. Teachers are not forced to have the classes, it started with one teacher and I supported her and then others joined in on their own. They have not stopped ever since.

Servant leaders persuade followers rather than coerce them into compliance (see section 3.4.2.1).

For Mrs Philibane, collaboration with stakeholders proved to be fruitful instead of feeling threatened by them:

I try by all means to involve everyone in everything that happens in the school, especially the teachers. You have to consult with them, don't feel threatened. Also get the governing body on board, work closely with the chairperson. Once you have their buy-in, you have nothing to worry about.

She added:

Also, you must try not to control your staff, empower them instead and just oversee what they are doing. They hate being treated like children though sometimes they behave like them (laughs).

Concluding on her understanding and experiences of ethical leadership in education, she made these two points, one on leading by example and the other on learning from other people:

Every morning I am the first one to arrive. You cannot tell teachers about keeping time when you don't do it yourself and also you must be a learner and learn from other people, take what can work for you and the school.

Mr Sncume explained that as a school principal he did everything in his power to provide an environment that was conducive for people to freely express themselves:

...if the environment is free within the rules, people get the opportunity to express themselves through their actions.

He felt the need to defend the marginalized minority, making sure they too were treated fairly:

Like in a meeting I would make sure that everyone is free to express themselves you see. And if they made a good point, they needed to be defended. There are people who would be shot down for no reason at all. They (previously marginalized individuals) like that I listen to them as well.

Before concluding, he had one more experience to share:

Another important thing is to think carefully before making any decision, don't be rash. You must take time to look at all angles, ask yourself if there's another better way of doing this. You know why...because it will come back to haunt you. Sometimes you don't have the luxury of time but you still have to think (laughs).

This suggested to me that he was a critical thinker and perhaps his level of qualification together with his experience (see section 5.2) contributed to this quality. This was how he wrapped up his account of his understanding and experience of ethical leadership in his practice:

You have people who look up to you even your family. You can't disappoint them. You have to do the right thing.

This seemed to show that he did not carry himself the way he did only at work, but even at home. It was part of who he was.

As the first participant shared her understanding and experience of ethical leadership, I noted that there were dilemmas that kept cropping up in her account and I decided to find out more by posing a question on dilemmas she experienced in her practices. I then decided to apply the same with the rest of the participants. I present their responses under this section because I believe it formed part of their experiences of ethical leadership. Each participant had a story to tell. Ms Tshabalala remarked that the journey of being a school principal was not an easy one:

Being a school principal is not easy. Where do I even begin (chuckles)...cultural diversity...you won't believe that most of our learners come from Sotho and Xhosa backgrounds [the community where the school is, is known to be predominantly Zulu speaking]. Their parents are renting in the area, and then we have a language barrier especially at the beginning of the year. Some of them are good but the home language

is a challenge. According to policy, a learner has to get a level four pass in a home language. Now, this child is doing well in all other subjects except in this home language. It's not fair on them, at the same time we cannot chase them away when they come for enrolment. That is not the only issue; you get staff members who behave inappropriately. They do things knowing very well that they are not supposed to do, well not all but some. They are not children; they know what is good and what is not. At the end of the day, you must account. How can I forget the monster called Covid 19! I am sure every school principal can tell you about Covid and its challenges. The worst part was when we had a case, a staff member tested positive and we had to close the school until decontamination was complete. It was the toughest time and everyone was scared including myself (laughs). But things have since improved with the support from our district. But what makes me sad is that some of our learners have not come back until now. That bothers me a lot.

Her response resonates with the ethic of care, one of the ethical principles (see section 2.3.2.3). It was evident that she cared about the wellbeing of the learners and that of the staff. It also showed how concerned she was about the injustice that the non-IsiZulu speaking learners were subjected to in her school.

When I asked if there was any example of an ethical dilemma she could recall, her response was:

Don't mention it (claps hands). There is one incident that is still fresh in my mind. It happened in 2018. We (the school) entered a soccer competition and there were a lot of incentives. Our team played well until we reached the semi-final. Then one evening...the final was on the following day. It was on Friday night because the final was on a Saturday. I got a call from this principal; his school is also in our zone. He said they were aware of what we were doing. I was lost. I asked him to explain himself further. He said they knew that we were fielding older boys in our under thirteen squad. I told him I had no idea what he was on about. I then called the teacher who is also our soccer coach; he assured me there was nothing to worry about. The final came and I got a call that our team had won. I was so excited and I congratulated the coach and his team for a job well done. Then came Monday morning; as usual the team was called to the front during assembly to formally

congratulate them and to celebrate with them as a school, take photos and all that. I was so shocked to see two boys whom I knew were above thirteen years of age. One of them had been crowned the top goal scorer. He got a trophy, a medal and a certificate. After assembly I called the coach to my office and asked him for an explanation. You won't believe what he said...he told me that it was common practice even other schools did it, it was no big deal and he was not fazed at all. I reminded him about the call I received a night before the final. He just brushed it off and said that principal was just jealous and he had called me because I was a woman and I knew nothing about what was going on in soccer in our zone. What do you do as a principal? I thought about the children who were over the moon about their victory, I thought about the school's reputation. I didn't know what to do. I decided to wait and see if there would be any formal complaint. Nothing until now but still it does not make it right; believe me when I tell you that it's still eating me up on the inside each time I look at this trophy (pointing at the trophy). I told the coach that such can never happen again, it's just not right.

I asked her whether she felt she handled the situation well or if she felt she could have handled things differently she said:

Well...considering that it still bugs me...maybe I should have but at the same time I could not take away that joy from those kids. You know that boy who was crowned the highest goal scorer, he struggles in the classroom. I know this because I taught him in grade 3. For him to be able to excel at something...I just couldn't (sad face).

Mr Dladla was adamant that political interference, not being the only challenge he faced, was a persistent challenge in his experience:

Political interference! There is nothing more frustrating than politicians who want to run schools. They are not interested in how things are done in the school; they simply want to impose. If you do not stand up to them, they take over I swear. Another challenge is absenteeism, for various reasons of course. But the reality is that with the teachers, when a teacher is not at school on a particular day, for whatever reason, things are not normal on that day. You know there was a time when we had teachers on leave and those who were not on leave would be absent for days because they had

been in contact with someone who tested positive for the pandemic. Some of the learners did not come back and they are going to repeat the grades and we can't even help them. This virus is a curse, we are still praying for a cure.

He went on to cite learner lack of safety as another dilemma:

Learner safety [lack thereof] is another challenge. When a learner is sick, we call the parent or guardian to fetch them. But sometimes the person does not have the phone...yes some don't. It's either it is lost, stolen or for some reason off...basically they are unreachable. Then a class teacher takes the child home. This poses some serious challenges as some parents see it as favouritism, they don't want to understand the underlying circumstances. Then there is a possibility of a good gesture turning into a lawsuit in case of an accident where the child's safety is compromised. What do you as the school principal? Do you let the child suffer in pain because you cannot reach the parent then what if child situation worsens? Alternatively do you take a risk and take the child home? It's complicated.

Reflecting on the ethical dilemmas he had experienced he picked on this particular incident:

There is an incident that took place in this school it was even on social media. We had governing body elections and everything seemed fine until it was discovered that he chairperson of the newly elected governing body was neither a parent nor a legal guardian of the child. He was just an uncle and the school had the child's biological mother's details. The department (of education) wrote him a letter informing him that his appointment was illegitimate and had to step down. He approached me and offered me a lump sum if I instructed the secretary to replace his sister's details with his. He promised that we would both have 50% share in whatever service providers were willing to pay extra. When I turned him down on his offer, all hell broke loose. He accused me of plotting against him; mind you he had support from some parents and even some teachers in the school. I would even get some members of the community barging into my office and threatening me. One morning we came to school only to find a second padlock on the gate. The chairperson and a group of his supporters were singing and chanting that I must go. Staff members and learners were all locked outside. The SMT pleaded with them to open so we could talk but they

would not hear it. We had to refer the matter to the police and the department. Eventually the gate was opened and there was an impromptu meeting where department officials tried to explain why he was illegitimate. An urgent meeting was called the following day with all stakeholders, including parents, that could make it. Again, it was explained why he could not be in the governing body and there was a question-and-answer session which finally put the matter to rest.

On whether he was content with his decision, he exclaimed:

I can say I am proud of my decision because today I would be counted among the corrupt school principals! I have worked so hard for reputation there was no way I was going to ruin it just like that. Those people had their own agendas and everything is slowly coming out in the open, they are now turning against each other. I am glad I stood my ground!

Mrs Dube felt that lack of knowledge and interference by teacher unions topped her list of ethical dilemmas:

I would say it is the lack of knowledge. What I have learnt in my years as the principal is that when people lack knowledge even simple things seem complicated. When they get exposed to the reality, they begin to resist and think you are being difficult when that is not that case. You risk being unpopular but some eventually come around, others still resist. You have to be patient. A greater challenge is the teacher unions. To put it bluntly, they do not know where to draw the line! You find a site steward who wants to run the school (chuckles). It cannot be the principal is the chief accounting officer. I so wish the department could find a way of keeping unions in check because sometimes they really interfere. They can be a real challenge, if you do not give in; they make your life difficult.

The following was the dilemma which she claimed still troubled her:

Our school is a Section 14 school. It is a public school but the buildings belong to a church. The agreement is that the department runs the school but in return the school has to observe the ethos of the church. The church has a representative in the governing body and everything I mean every decision taken by the SGB has to go via

the church. It is not easy. Since our school started from grade R to grade four, two years ago we decided to grow the school and take grade five as well and eventually grade six. The aim was to start from grade R to seven. Both the church and the department gave us a go ahead and we had our first intake of grade five. Then trouble began! Our neighbouring school has grade five to seven. They began complaining that their enrolment has dropped and there is so much tension even now. The local politicians and unions have also intervened, demanding that grade five goes back to the other school. On the other hand parents are happy and they want grade seven next year. We were lucky to have our school renovated and getting more classrooms. Until now there is no solution, it is such a mess, but as the school we are considering letting grades five and six go for peace' sake but parents are adamant. This should be a great achievement for us as a school but... (shrugs shoulders). Talks still continue, I have been threatened and intimidated but I have put my trust in God.

On whether given another chance, she would do things differently she claimed:

I believe I did nothing wrong, personally I had the growth of the school in mind. I did not mean to offend anyone and besides, with the new housing development in the area I did not foresee any problems in terms of competing for enrolment. I really thought there would be more than enough learners for both schools. You cannot tell parents to which school to send their children to, it is up to them to choose. You just have to up your game as a school (laughs). We don't know what the outcome is going to be.

I found it strange that she did not mention anything about the coronavirus and decided to probe. She mentioned that she had been on leave because she had co-morbidities and applauded her deputy who, she reported, did a sterling job during her absence:

Covid has affected all of us. I was on leave because I am on chronic medication. My deputy did a fantastic job running the school of course he was not alone, but he was at the fore front. I don't know how I would have coped at that time. We are still trying to cope with the new normal but it is not as bad. I was so scared...fearing for my life...even now I am still sceptical, we are high risk you know (chuckles). This thing (the virus) has left us with so much uncertainty. It has affected even the planning for the school. Hopefully next year will be a better year.

Mrs Philibane first remarked that things were not always smooth in the school:

...you know being in authority, having to lead a team of people... things will not always be ok. Sometimes things will be so smooth and one enjoys being the school principal and whatever you say to the people they will listen and they will respond (positively) but there are bad experiences also.

In her experience, the corona virus, limited resources and lack of support for public education were dilemmas that stood out:

I would say the first one is the corona virus. It has turned our world upside down (placing both hands across her face). Can you imagine having six teachers on leave all one time because of comorbidities (eyes widening). But I must be honest; our circuit manager was very supportive this time. He made it a point that whatever we needed we got.

Another challenge that I have always complained about is the limited resources and lack of support for public education. I don't know if you have been to our oldquarters. Things are now a lot better now that we have these new buildings that you see but we have been through hell. Procurement takes forever to get things done and people look at you as a principal and think that you are doing nothing. It is so stressful. We would have classrooms full to the brim; we could not turn students away. Things got worse when people were allocated housing in the new RDP houses. We even used marquees as classrooms. I really wish the department would act swiftly in growing communities because it really puts the management and the SGB on the spot.

She told a story where she felt she was left in limbo:

There was a case about three weeks ago; I received a call from one of the parents, who wished to remain anonymous, informing me that some of my staff members were out drinking in public with students. I tried calling the teachers concerned and all three of them did not pick my calls. I just wanted to find out from them what was happening because the caller named them. Because it was a Saturday, I thought I should wait for Monday. I called them to my office on Monday and asked them to give

me their own version of what happened. The teachers were not too happy, arguing that what they do in their own time in their own private space was nobody's concern including the school. They swore that they did not invite any students to join them, they were just having a quiet afternoon in their cottage and if students joined them, it was their decision. They continued to argue that students are their parents' responsibility during the weekend and not theirs. Much as what some of the things they said were justified but still it did not make it right. They put themselves and the school's name into disrepute. Even on weekends they are still professionals and should have chased the students away. They refused to take responsibility, claiming they were adults and could do whatever they want to do with their lives in their own time. They even threatened to bring in their union in the matter claiming their privacy was being invaded. You see it's difficult sometimes (sitting back).

I asked whether she felt her decision was good or could have been handled differently, she responded:

I don't know...part of me thinks I handled it well but another part feels I should have called in the parents of the concerned learners. My colleagues thought I was being biased but the fact is they are adults and students are minors...I still feel they should have known better. We agreed to bring in someone from outside to address students about underage drinking and substance abuse. So, maybe I handled it well.

The last participant to make a contribution on this matter was Mr Sncume. I asked the same question on the dilemmas he faced in his practice; his main focus was on poverty in the community. For him, poverty was a source of many other problems:

Funny you asked that question, because such situations (dilemmas) are common. There are so many dilemmas that one faces, one of them is poverty. How do you enforce the wearing of proper school uniform when more than half of the student population depends on social grant and most families rely on that child support grant? Then there are clashes among staff members, among staff and parents, among teachers and students and among students themselves. They are teenagers; it takes a petty issue like looking at someone in a certain way, then there is a war. Most of them have anger from social issues, so it's deep. Whilst on the issue of poverty, do you

know that until now we still have community members who come to line up for food during the break? This started when schools reopened after the lockdown. Now imagine having them come to the school when the virus was peaking and everyone scared. But how could we turn them away when we knew they really need the food. I guess it's the least we can do as a school but you can imagine the risk. We had five (corona virus) cases on different occasions; there was a time when the staff suggested we write to the department to close the school indefinitely. Much as I fully understood their position but the department would not allow that. You see, I was caught in the middle so to speak but I was with the staff on this one (laughs).

I learnt poverty could bring about ethical issues in a school. It turned out it could actually interfere with fairness and justice (see section 2.3.2.1.1). What does a school principal do when a child from a poor household does not wear proper school uniform? Does he enforce the code of conduct or sympathise with the child and show compassion? It seemed like a battle between justice and mercy.

Upon reflection on one of the dilemmas he had once experienced, Mr Sncume had this to share:

You see there is a lot going on in schools; being a teacher yourself I am sure you are aware. Some situations give you a headache if you are a school principal, if it's not the teachers themselves; it's the students; if it's not the students it's the parents or even the governing body itself. I am reminded of an incident that happened early last year, around February. There is a teacher in school; sorry I can't tell you the name (chuckles), a very sweet guy, always happy. He likes touching when he talks to you like patting, grabbing your arm, giving you a high five, hugging sometimes. He has always been like that. Then one day one female colleague came into my office not just angry, she was fuming! She told me she has had enough of so and so...remember this was the first time to hear this. I asked her to calm down and tell me what happened. She told me she was tired of him touching her, she called it sexual harassment. I was shocked. She warned me that if I don't put a stop to it, she would! Believe me I was so shocked because I could not think of him hurting anyone, like I told you he is just a free spirit, always jolly. I promised the female teacher that I was going to look into the matter but deep down I was confused. I had no idea how to

handle this because in my heart I believed it was harmless, but hey I wasn't there and I am the principal of the school, I had to do something (shrugging shoulders). To cut the matter short, I called the teacher concerned and explained to him what had happened. He was so disappointed and hurt, he assured me that it was innocent, he intended no harm. You know what, I believed him but I had to remind him that he must act professionally at all times. But what I was actually saying was that he must change who he is. He apologized to that female teacher and even to me but he has not been the same ever since. He is now another person and you know teachers...they wanted to know why he is no longer the same person they know. How could I tell them...I couldn't?

Thinking back on how he managed the situation, this is what he said:

Sometimes I wonder if I did the right thing or maybe there was another way of dealing with this matter, I don't know (shrugs shoulders). To be honest...I am not too sure. Sometimes I feel I could have handled the situation differently but what...I don't know.

School principals face ethical dilemmas every day when they are expected to choose between two ideas which both seem right, for example, loyalty versus honesty or fairness versus care (Cranston, Ehrich & Kimber, 2006; Crews, 2011). What I noted was that these dilemmas were social, professional, economic and political, but they all had an ethical impact in schools. Social dilemmas included social backgrounds and the Covid 19 pandemic; lack of knowledge, absenteeism, lack of learner safety, conflict of interest and limited resources all presented professional dilemmas. Poverty was both a social and economic dilemma. Political interference and teacher union interference were the political dilemmas the participants cited. The impact of teacher unionism in South African education has been distressing, according to some authors (Bhengu, Naicker & Mthiyane, 2014). Some provincial departments of education including KZN were found to be under siege, captured by teacher unions (Kahn, 2016) and this exacerbated instability in education. Besides practically taking over the appointment and promotion of teachers in the department, the unions interfered with the day-to-day running of schools. This posed dilemmas for ethical school principals who have a responsibility to promote ethical environments (Mthiyane, 2018). These were leaders who based their decisions on morals and ethics.

Evidence from the participants' stories thus revealed that there were stressful situations and ethical dilemmas that they encountered in their practice. Listening to them sharing their experiences, I began to wonder how they navigated through such situations. I enquired from them how they managed those with an aim of finding out what worked for them and hopefully learn from their experiences.

Ms Tshabalala claimed that knowing who you were and not taking things personally always worked for her:

I believe in self-awareness...know who are, that way you will know that there are certain things that you do not do no matter what. What I do is I remove myself from the situation and deal with the problem; I do not take anything personally. Another thing that I do, I reflect to check if I said or did anything wrong. If I did, I go back and apologize or rectify my mistake.

Answering the question how she managed ethical dilemmas, her response was brief:

I try to be fair and avoid doing any harm.

For Mr Dladla, stressful situations were unavoidable when one was a school principal; you just had to find a way of managing them:

Ey, such situations you cannot avoid unfortunately. It depends what kind of situation it is. Sometimes it happens with colleagues, SGB, parents...it can be anyone. If it is with a colleague, I like handling matters in private in my office. With the SGB, most of the stressful situations are caused by misunderstanding on how things should be done. They would disregard policy and want to do things their own way...it can't be...then I pull out policy and refer to it. Yeah...otherwise, each time I am confronted with a situation that I find stressful, I like to ask for time to look into the matter and have time to look at it from all angles. I avoid making rash decisions without thinking long and hard.

On how he managed ethical dilemmas he had this to say:

I consult whenever the decision is going to affect other people. Sometimes I hesitate to make decisions because of my Christian beliefs...really it depends.

Another participant who attested to being confronted by stressful situations was Mrs Dube. She too had found what worked for her when confronted with such circumstances:

I constantly experience situations like that because of the grade five and six issue I mentioned earlier. To tell the truth, I pray about it all the time...just for it to be resolved so that we can move on with our lives. Sometimes the union members just barge into my office anytime and demand to have a meeting without any notice. They fail to understand that I have things to do, a school to run. It is often difficult to reason with them. I try by all means to avoid anger. I listen most of the time and take time to speak. That helps me to cope with the situation. Then I just ask questions like can you help me understand why you feel the way you do? Trust me that question works like magic, it always helps me put out the fire because they believe they are in charge and calm down whilst I think of a way forward.

In her response to the question on how she managed ethical dilemmas, she said:

Like I said, I make a short prayer by heart and try to stay calm. Then I follow procedures and rules though rules sometimes don't help, you end up not knowing what to do exactly. Then I consult, you can't handle everything yourself.

Mrs Philibane mentioned how difficult it was to be a female principal in a high school as some people seemed determined to make your life miserable. She claimed that talking to her inner self helps her to stay calm and she no longer cried as she once did:

I tell myself to stay calm. I say to myself "be calm, be calm...be calm". Then I try to identify the root of the problem because it is no use treating the symptoms (laughs). After that, I ask myself if I can handle the situation on my own or I need help. If I can do it on my own, I tackle it, if I need help, I consult. You know situations can be bigger than you as a person. In the past I used to cry at times (laughs). It is not easy when you are a female principal in a high school. Some people would just be on a mission to discredit you; they deliberately undermine your authority. It took a lot of hard-work, courage and resilience to be where I am today. You find that now stressful situations emanate from the side of the department when they introduce policies which need implementation within a short space of time or problems with students and parents. Otherwise, working relations with the staff have improved a lot.

She also added:

I try to be fair when making decisions; it helps to involve everyone concerned so that no one complains in the end.

Mr Sncume cited values (see section 3.6.2.1) as his coping mechanism in challenging times. He stated that his self-composure and humour were a winning combination, as was humility.

Self-composure has seen me through a lot. I make sure I do not lose myself in any situation. I know who I am and what I am about, I do not let anyone or any situation to change me in a bad way. I refuse to let emotions to control me. Throwing in some humour also helps, of course depending on the situation. I have learnt to be solution orientated. You need to approach a situation with an aim of reaching a consensus or finding some understanding...common ground. Another weapon I use to deal with stressful situations is humility... helps me deal with some situations. I humble myself and allow the other party to provide a way forward, let them provide a solution.

Like Mr Dladla, he too believed in letting go of the hurtful past:

Another thing for me is that I don't hold grudges. After everything I have been through in this school. I have left it all in the past and started on a new page.

He had this to say when asked about how he managed ethical dilemmas:

I avoid degrading anyone, people must be treated with dignity at all times and that's what is expected of all of us. I check what legislation says about the situation and it helps to investigate so as to find out what the real problem is and take it from there.

Finding ways of managing stressful situations and ethical dilemmas reported above were what participants said kept them going. It was not just theory but experiential evidence instead, as participants told of their own personal experiences. This study used the narrative inquiry as a research design which is a way of producing knowledge which helps one to get a deeper understanding of people's experiences (see section 4.3.1). The methods of managing dilemmas that participants reported on had been tried and tested by them as they did their work in the schools and a lot can be learnt from them. It takes emotional intelligence to be able to control your emotions under stressful situations and in ethical dilemmas. Emotional

intelligence, an ability to control emotions (Schlaerth *et al.*, 2013), is one of the factors influencing ethical leadership (see section 2.5.1.4). The ethic of justice (see section 2.3.2.1) and the ethic of care (see section 2.3.2.3) seemed to dominate the participants' accounts on how they managed dilemmas. It was also evident that it was unjust to treat everyone and every situation the same way; a school principal has to look into the merit of each case and give it the attention it deserves and act accordingly. This is what the ethic of critique promotes (see section 2.3.2.2). Another point that I noted from their responses on how they managed dilemmas was that participants reported that they also relied on their personal values and personality (see section 2.5.1.2) and the ethic of profession. The participants then shed light on what informed their understanding and experience of ethical leadership.

5.4 What informed participants' understanding and experiences of ethical leadership?

The responses to this question were where they got a chance to report on what their sources of strength were. Although there may seem to be an overlap in the content already presented in the preceding section, I felt the need to probe more to gain deeper insights into what informed their understanding and experience of ethical leadership with the hope of learning from them. Again here, each participant got to unpack all that they felt informed their practice in a single account uninterrupted. Below are the extracts from their stories:

Ms Tshabalala attributed her practices to her good relations with the community which was an added bonus for her. She told about how the involvement of the community health care workers eased the burden on them as a school. She said this was because learners no longer had to stress about sick family members or take time off to care for them or collect their medication every month. She was referring to those learners who were on chronic medication. The paragraph below this extract explains how this relates to the study.

Her face beamed as she spoke about the caregivers in their community:

We are lucky to work in a community that has active (home-based) caregivers (as one passes by the window outside). We have a welfare committee which refers children with sick family members. Caregivers can help care for the sick and children come to school. It takes the burden off the kids. Even children who take pills from the clinic (lowers her voice), they have them delivered at home. Imagine, they used to be absent

from school each time they collected them. Some of them have serious problems and now they only go (to the clinic) if they have to do the tests. These people (caregivers) are a real blessing I'm telling you (sighs).

This seemed to suggest that she believed in collaboration and building relationships with the community. The school being a public entity, it is important that the school principal forges good working relations as discussed in chapter 2 (see section 2.5.2.4). This was one of the strengths of ethical leaders. Then she moved onto something which I found quite profound, avoiding unethical conduct. She did not deny that it was not easy as the temptation was great, but refraining from such had earned her a good reputation:

Then you get those who think they own you (chuckles). Lately you get members (SGB) who want to use their positions to make money. They want to do everything (providing service) and claim from the Norms [This refers to the government subsidy allocated to schools per child. It is called Norms and Standards and schools this allocation to pay service providers and to sustain them unless they get sponsors to supplement these]. It does not work that way. The law does not allow them to do that. You even make enemies with some (widens eyes) because they see you as a threat. It's not easy nowadays; there is a lot of corruption.

Mr Dladla shared that his experience and practice were informed by many factors including the support he got from his colleagues:

It's a good thing I have the support of the SMT. We deliberate thoroughly before we go to the staff. You know the mistake we principals make; we think you can run the school alone. That's suicidal (laughs).

He said he also drew his strength from his religious and social background and he reported he believed strongly in prayer:

Luckily for me, I am also a pastor in my church. Prayer is where I draw my strength from. I always ask God to help me cope (smiles). Otherwise you can lose your job because some people can just provoke you.

Among the things he said informed his practice was having a vision and focus. He posited that a vision helped guide and regulated his actions. He shared these with his colleagues and thus ensuring they all pulled towards the same direction:

...it is important to have a vision and share it with your colleagues. It takes hard work and prayer to get them to accept it.

He then elaborated:

If you are a leader and you do not have a vision, then where are you leading the school to? It's like walking and you do not know where you are going. You can walk for days and not reach your destination because there is no destination. And whether you are going to the east or to the west it makes no difference you will never get lost. A vision helps to keep you on track. Whatever you do must lead you to your vision. If it doesn't, then you know you must strategize again. Now, this vision cannot be yours alone, you must share it with your colleagues otherwise you will "walk alone" (laughs, signalling inverted commas). Let me tell you this (sits up) having a vision helps you to see any obstacles ahead and then you can do something about it before things get out of hand otherwise you will be caught napping (laughs).

The importance of having a vision as a school principal is discussed at length in chapter 3 under the 4Vs model of ethical leadership (see chapter 3 section 3.6). This model forms part of the theoretical framework that underpinned this study. It was refreshing for me to hear some of the participants report on how it worked for them in their stories. Mr Dladla also stated that he based his actions on his values and also avoided unethical conduct which he insisted compromised one's reputation:

You can't compromise your principles just because you want people to like you. Some people just hate the truth. If you tell them straight, they don't like you but at least you your conscience is clear.

He went on:

You are a teacher yourself, I'm sure you see what is happening in some schools nowadays. Some school principals use their positions to further their own agendas. They help themselves to the Norms and Standards (government subsidy allocated to

schools). They run schools like spaza shops. They do not care about the school itself; they just enjoy the position and the money. Whatever happens to the school, they are just not interested. You can't do that, besides getting you into trouble with the law, it's just not right (straight face).

Mrs Dube spoke of how she looked up to her former circuit manager. She mentioned how she admired his management style from which she learnt a lot and applied it in her own personal context:

That man really helped me; his tough management style really helped me. He pushed me to do the best that I could. I still respect him.

As she continued, she was adamant that relying on policy kept her in line with nothing much to be concerned about. According to her, implementing policy could pose some challenges with the staff at times but as a school principal she remained unshaken:

Every decision I took, I based it on the education laws and policies.

Mrs Dube claimed that her mom's words of wisdom contributed a lot in her way of doing things and helped to keep her hands clean:

You know my mom; I can say she is my pillar. She is not educated but very wise (smiles). Do you know what she always tells me...stay away from shame...don't do anything that will bring shame to you and our family. Now, when temptation comes because I won't lie to you, it's there (crossing fingers), but I always remember those words.

I noted with intrigue how her social background and personality (see section 2.5.1.2) contributed to the person she had become. Social background was highlighted in the literature chapter under factors influencing ethical leadership.

She then mentioned something I found quite insightful, stating that paying attention to her mental health was one of the factors which informed her understanding and practices of ethical leadership in education. It helped her manage the mental erosion that came with ethical dilemmas:

I am also seeing a psychologist...yes...it's good for my mental health (smiles). I also need somewhere where I can offload as a principal. You can claim to be strong and hide but... (shrugs shoulders) you need help.

To me, this sounded powerful and wise because psychologists are qualified professionals better trained to understand and help us cope with matters that affect us psychologically. Making use of them could be much better than trying to cope on your own and only to end up with burnout, emotional breakdown or even worse, depression.

According to Mrs Philibane's narrative, policy was an important guiding tool in how she conducted her business:

As a school principal you just need to stick to (the) policy. The Department (of Education) has given us guidelines through policies we have. As a principal you need to understand the department. Once you understand the department and policies, it should make your work much easier. You are not going to succumb to anything; you just stick to the policy.

Like Mr Dladla, her religious and social background had an immense contribution in her understanding and experience of ethical leadership. She had this to say:

As a Christian, every day before I go to work, I pray that God be with me, guide and protect me in everything that happens during the day. You won't believe this, every time I go to a meeting, be it with the staff, be it with the department...any meeting I pray to God. This is because I believe He has been with me all these years.

She worked closely with the community which also helped her address vandalism in the school, collaboration was one of the qualities of ethical leadership:

They would be less than 50% parents who attend a parents' meeting because of the socio-economic status of the community. Most of them work even on weekends and cannot take time off because they might lose their jobs. Then after the day of the meeting, they would be coming in as individuals showing you support and giving you support as much as they can.

She then made her concluding statement in this aspect with these wise words:

Don't claim to know everything, listen to people and learn from them. You must know (that) you may be a principal but there are teachers who have more experience than you and those who are wiser than you (smiles).

Mr Sncume lovingly narrated how support from his colleagues helped him settle in quickly upon his return from suspension:

One of the SMT members, an experienced and long-serving teacher was prepared to help me. The person who was supposed to orientate me took leave for a week or so, so I was radar less. The lady offered to help me. She has been my pillar for many years at the school. She was not the only one, I wouldn't have survived but through the people who are here at school, they were able to guide me.

His previous experience as a teacher union leader exposed him to invaluable experience which he still found to be indispensable:

I had never been a principal before but somehow, I had exposure to the system because I would come to contact with err...all levels of personnel in the education system while working with employee relations. You see with the union my major tasks were around dispute resolution and disciplinary hearings and ELRC (Education Labour Relations Council) negotiations. I would say its welfare matters as well as leadership matters in the organization. That is where I got insight as to how things were operating and it helps me manage conflict within the school.

Willingness to learn and having a vision channelled his planning and performance as a school principal. Like Mr Dladla, he followed the idea that not having a vision is very dangerous for any school leader in that there would be no destination, no dream to realize.

Participants revealed that collaboration with the community, trying your level best to avoid unethical conduct, drawing on policy, listening, support from colleagues, willingness to learn, having a vision and focus, tending to one's mental health, religious and social background and personal values as what informed their practice. This resonates with the characteristics of servant leaders as outlined by Greenleaf (see section 3.4.2.1) as well as factors that influence ethical leadership (see section 2.5). Participants used voice to communicate their vision and ethics to the participants (Gonzalez-Pardon *et al.*, 2012). One of the participants, Mr Dladla,

highlighted the role of having a vision in helping school principals in pro-acting against potential challenges. This was what Greenleaf (1977) referred to as foresight. Foresight is one of the characteristics of servant leadership in Greenleaf's model, which is part of my theoretical framework. Foresight is about the leader foreseeing the potential outcome of a situation (Nienaber, 2014; Rahayani, 2010 & Stewart, 2017). Awareness, another characteristic, is developed through reflection and listening to what others have to say about ourselves (Nienaber, 2014; Stewart, 2017). Again, vision is an important aspect of the 4Vs ethical model, also part of the theoretical framework that underpins this study (see section 3.6.2.2).

The following section presents values that participants upheld in their practice. It is a mere extension on the responses to the second question, which sought to understand what participants said informed their understanding and experience of ethical leadership in education. Participants were asked to share on the values which they upheld and how those values impacted on them and their practice. Ms Tshabalala cited consistency, treating people with dignity and patience as her core values:

The main one is consistency; consistency brings about stability in a school. When people know that as a principal you are consistent in what you do, they tend to relax because they know that there are no unpleasant surprises. Sometimes people will not be happy about a certain situation or let me say policy but if they know that there is consistency, they know that it is never personal. A quick example is the late arrival and early departure register. Teachers hate it but we all have to sign it, it is policy you see (laughs). Another one is trustworthiness. People know that they can trust you and whatever you discuss in private remains private. There is nothing worse than a principal who shares secrets told in confidence. It's the worst thing you can do as a principal. In fact I find it disgusting if I may say so. Then another value important to me is treating people with dignity, young and old, it shows that you respect them and they also respect you. I have witnessed principals shouting at staff members, even worse, in front of the kids. How are the kids going to respect them? There are things you do not do no matter what...unacceptable!

She went on to offer advice:

I have learned to be patient with people. Take the case of the SGB, some members do not really understand their role. So, you have to be patient because at the end of the day you need them. It helps to be patient and tolerant with people in the workplace if you are a leader. This avoids unnecessary confrontations and creates a conducive atmosphere for teaching and learning.

Honesty, fairness and forgiveness were Mr Dladla's main values. He explained thus:

Honesty...honesty is key. You have to be honest all the time, for me it's a sign of respect. When a person is not honest with you, that person is wasting your time, it means they have no respect for you, they treat you like a fool. I don't like someone who is dishonest. Just be honest, it frees your conscience. Be genuine and not pretentious! (sitting back). I think fairness is also important when you are a leader. Give each situation the attention it deserves. As a pastor also, I believe also very strongly in forgiveness. Do not hold grudges...forgive and let go. Don't even wait for the apology because sometimes you will wait forever (laughs).

He added:

Another thing that works for me is showing everyone respect, you know if I can tell you...if you respect people, you make hard for them to disrespect you. It works for me all the time (claps hands and laughs).

Mrs Dube made her contribution, sharing her own values that work for her:

My number one value is persistence. As a principal...as a leader you must be persistent, keep fighting, keep going until you achieve what you want. Even when it seems risky, take that risk! If you are afraid to take risks, you do not grow and if you are not growing you are dying, as Dr Molapo states in his book (smiles).

When she mentioned pride as a value, I must admit, I was taken aback until she clarified her statement:

I also have pride, not vanity (smiles)...healthy pride. It helps to have pride and know who you are. When you know who you are, then you know that there things you just do not do. You cannot afford to taint your image. Sometimes they (unethical

stakeholders) offer you things...beautiful things...tempting stuff. Things like lump sums of money, business deals and pieces of land...but if you have pride, you know you can never stoop to that level. That is how you make enemies because some of them do not take no for an answer. Self-control is very important, especially when things get tough, you must not lose it, it is not right.

She touched on integrity as a value, admitting to not being perfect but trying her level best to preserve integrity:

You know I am not perfect, nobody is perfect, but I try to do what I believe is right all the time. I could be wrong sometimes, but I mean well. I try to be considerate because circumstances are different (shrugs shoulders). It's not easy but you just have to keep trying you can't give up.

Mrs Philibane listed honesty, generosity, courage as values she upheld in her practice:

The values I uphold are honesty, generosity; you must have a big heart, the more you give, the more you get...give love. Courage keeps me going as a leader. If you are hopeless and give up easily, nothing good happens. Integrity keeps me away from questionable activities. Mind you when you are a principal, especially a female principal in a high school, all eyes are on you. I am not perfect, don't get me wrong (laughs) but I try to do good. I also try to humble myself especially in trying times so that I don't say or do something I later regret. Another thing, as a school principal I try by all means to be approachable. If you are a high horse who claims to know everything or you are always too serious, people never come to you when they need to. That can be very dangerous because it means things, they should be sharing with you, they share with other people instead and you are always in the dark. Then things get out of hand, things you could have managed.

Mr Sncume took time to explain the values which he valued and upheld in his practice. He mentioned patience, consistency, integrity, honesty and respect. This was his take:

You've got to be honest to yourself (pause)...honest to yourself because you can't lie to yourself. I can tell you I am right when I am not right. I will be fooling myself of course. Another characteristic I have cultivated as a school principal is that of

patience coupled with tolerance. You must never say: “hey you can’t do that to me!”
No.

He continued:

Consistency is also very important. Difficult as it is because what I have observed with other people and myself, we tend to get different standards. Be consistent even if it means you’ve got to be soft to be consistent. Stand your ground without having to raise your voice or change your tone. Say something firmly and expect that it may not work then don’t break yourself being firm. When you may have said firmly as it may be but don’t expect results tomorrow. That’s why I say you must be patient and tolerant. Tolerant enough to make a person realise that they are wrong, you see.

Like Mrs Dube, Mr Sncume also cited integrity among the values he upheld:

Integrity is very important; it is very useful. You see you can’t see such things in you but if you watch somebody, then you can learn from them. Of course, we are human beings, we fail at times. But integrity is very important.

For Mr Sncume it was showing respect for others that stood out as a quality that an ethical leader should possess:

You know... respect everyone. Even a person who is generally rude, the worst of scoundrels will tell you about respect (laughs). But respect...ey ey...it’s very important.

The participants’ responses on values highlight the role they played in ethical leadership (see section 3.6.2.1). It was evident that the values which the participants said they upheld shaped who they were and impacted on their practice. According to Mthiyane (2018), the significance of values in a workplace cannot be over-emphasized. This was because the leader’s moral conduct impacts on subordinates. Participants were bound to influence them, as that was what ethical leadership was about. So what mattered most was what it was passed onto to the subordinates. The kind of values school principals possessed and communicated through voice, would somehow impact on the organizational climate, whether positive or negative. Monahan (2012) avers that ethical leaders ought to communicate ethics and ethical standards to colleagues and practise sound ethical values; Ouma (2017) shares similar

sentiments. Honesty and integrity; justice and fairness; respect; patience; treating others with dignity are among the characteristics of ethical leaders (Boydak, Yavuz & Yirci, 2017; Kar, 2013; Rabinowitz, 2016; Schroeder, 2016). Interestingly, these characteristics are shared with characteristics of servant leaders. Servant leadership was part of the theories forming part of the study's theoretical framework.

Certain key themes emerged from the narratives.

5.5 Emerging issues

This section presents and discusses themes emerging from the findings of the study. The two main themes were the participants' understanding and experience of ethical leadership in education and what informed their understanding and experience of ethical leadership in education. Both themes have sub-themes discussed hereunder:

5.5.1 Understanding and experiences of ethical leadership in education

- Conceptualisation of the profession

God-fearing school principals' perception of the teaching profession as a calling meant that, whatever they did, they made it a point that it was appealing to God. They tried by all means to do good, to keep their conscience clear. They constantly cited prayer as their source of strength. This seemed to emerge from their personal values and personalities (see section 2.5.1.2). Two of the participants made it clear that their religion formed bases for their character and practice. This resonated with what Souba (2011) argues, that ethical leaders utilize their beliefs and convictions to lead others. This seems not common in South African schools, where unethical conduct is rife. Therefore, this point made the school principals to stand out.

- Empathy and care

Being a school principal was not just about monitoring the implementation of policies and ensuring that the culture of teaching and learning was inculcated. It included extending an ethic of care (see section 2.3.2.3) and empathy towards their staff members especially (Merriam-Webster, 2016). This showed interest beyond duty. To better understand how staff members felt, school principals had to put themselves in their shoes (Chenweli, 2015). It was evident that each participant had their own way of showing care and empathy towards their

colleagues. But what I found interesting to note was that they believed that it was important to show that they cared, it was not something they just theorised; they practised it. Ethical leaders are compassionate and aware of challenges their subordinates encounter in the execution of their duties (Kanov, Powley & Walshe, 2017; Thaba *et al.*, 2016). These authors further state that ethical leaders show courage towards the suffering of others; they do not ignore them. According to Dodd, Achen and Lumpkin (2018), servant leaders are people centred, putting the needs of others first. Just like ethical leaders, servant leaders care about the wellbeing of others (Dodd, *et al.*, 2018).

There were so many teachers with personal problems in schools. For some of these teachers, these problems negatively affected even their character and performance. But if a school principal did not possess the ethic of care, problems could escalate to the point where a teacher behaved in an unbecoming manner and risked the safety of others and their work. Showing interest in employees' personal lives is another way of showing care (Harms & Crede, 2010), though I also believe that leaders should set limits, otherwise they could be accused of prying.

- Shared decision-making

As part of their execution of duty, school principals have to make decisions. This proved to be a challenge at times, especially when faced with ethical dilemmas. Hoover and Pepper (2015) postulate that leaders ought to consider multiple voices before making decisions. It is important for ethical leaders to incorporate moral values when making decisions (see section 2.5.2.3). These moral values include integrity, responsibility, respect, justice, fairness, equality and beneficence (Crews, 2011; De Sensi, 2014; Metwally *et al.*, 2019). Participants expressed that decision-making should not be unilateral; it should involve others and some level of strategic thinking. Leaders who practise ethical leadership are prudent and think thoroughly before acting, considering the ramifications of their actions and ensuring no harm comes the way of their followers (Amintojjar, Shekari & Zabihi, 2015; Rabinowitz, 2016). It became apparent that decision-making was made a shared effort even though the repercussions of those decisions lay squarely on the school principals' shoulders. Both servant and ethical leaders acknowledge this.

- Fairness and justice

All principals believed that showing favouritism among staff members or even learners was a recipe for disaster. They all advocated fairness and justice (see section 2.3.2.1.1) when dealing with staff members. It came up in some of the stories that treating everyone fairly and with equity bears such fruits as trust among employees, job satisfaction, and reduction in teacher turnover. This suggests a strong correlation between ethical climate and turnover intentions (Demirtas & Akdogan, 2015). According to Ajala (2016), administering justice evenly creates organizational citizenship. Syaebani and Sobi (2011) warn that favouritism in an organization can lead to defiance. Giving everyone a chance to express themselves was another way of ensuring fairness, as Mr Sncume indicated.

- Accountability and responsibility

It was apparent from the school principals' stories that accountability (see section 2.3.2.1.2) and responsibility (see section 2.5.1.3) should come naturally. Accountability is an ethical virtue (Ssonko, 2010). A school principal cannot afford to be caught snoozing, one has to be alert and vigilant at all times. Accountability, responsibility, fairness, integrity and transparency were perceived as features of ethical leadership (Mangena, 2011).

- Leading by example

Leaders ought to lead by example and school principals have that responsibility too, according to the participants' stories. Ethical leaders lead by example and followers observe and emulate (see section 2.5.2.1). Leaders shape moral dispositions of followers (Odeneye, Hoon & Phlypo, 2018). Leading by example was not exclusive to ethical leaders only; servant leaders are also known to practise what they preach (Dalasile, 2020; Smith, 2014; Winston & Fields, 2015).

5.5.2 Ethical dilemmas experienced by participants

School principals encounter dilemmas in their practice as part of their daily lives (Rogers & Sizer, 2010). Ethical dilemmas were divided into three components from which they emanated: namely the professional, socio-economic and political dilemmas. Teachers sometimes behaved inappropriately, thus compromising their principles and giving rise to professional ethical dilemmas. Frequent absenteeism without valid reason, limited resources, lack of learner safety and conflict of interest were also revealed as presenting professional ethical dilemmas. Socio-economic ethical dilemmas were dominated by the Covid 19

pandemic, which left school principals with a lot of confusion and uncertainty, poverty in the community, fraud, anger management issues among the youth and school violence. Lastly were the politically motivated ethical dilemmas like political interference in schools, as well as teacher unionism, which proved to be a nightmare for some of the selected school principals.

There were many ways of managing stressful situations and ethical dilemmas. Findings revealed that prayer, forgiveness, self-awareness, emotional intelligence, self-composure, humility and even humour could assist in managing stressful situations.

5.5.2.1 How participants managed ethical dilemmas they experienced

- Vision and pro-acting

I listened to how research participants reiterated the importance of pro-acting. Pro-acting helps in averting potentially explosive situations and in swiftly addressing situations before they escalate (see section 2.3.1). A school principal should not wait until things got out of hand in the school, but should act promptly to deter disruptions (Alshamaari, 2013). Participants reported that having a vision (see section 3.6.2.2) helped them to plan ahead and foresee potential danger. This told me that ethical leaders refrained from being caught napping. They make it a point to be a step ahead and should challenges come up, they act swiftly to address them as the literature suggests (Bateman & Crant, 1999; Crant, 1999; Harwati, 2013). It was eye opening listening to participants talking about how having a clear focus influenced their experiences and practises. According to Taylor (2010), vision lays foundation for values.

- Communication in the workplace

What was ostensible from the participants' stories was that communication (see section 2.5.2.2) in the workplace was not just about the school principal cascading information to others, but it was actually interaction among the stakeholders. Communication eliminates confusion (Niculescu, 2015). Listening, which is an aspect of the Greenleaf's servant leadership theory (see section 3.4.2.1), was another form of communication that contributed to ethical leadership. Listening went beyond merely listening to others but extended to listening to the inner voice (Nienaber, 2014), which entails tapping into one's virtues and personal values. Nienaber (2014) further posits that listening includes listening also to that

which is unsaid. Ethical leaders, like servant leaders, reinforce listening by listening to their followers (Kim, 2016; Spears, 2010). Members of the organization should feel free to voice their opinions without any fear of victimization. Leaders ought to practise emotional intelligence (see section 2.5.1.5), to be able to control their emotions when being challenged or criticized (Schlaerth *et al.*, 2013). When people work together, there is bound to be conflict due to varying personalities and ideologies. How a leader manages conflict is what set them apart from other leaders. I got the impression that a leader's conflict management ability comes with experience (see section 5.2). Mihelic *et al.* (2010) posit that ethical leaders manage conflict by listening effectively and giving constructive criticism. According to evidence from this study, listening included leaders taking constructive criticism from their followers.

- Learning from others

Learning from others came up in the stories as one of the practices by the participants in this study. This, they claimed, was important, because being a school principal did not mean one knows everything. School principals could learn from fellow colleagues, other stakeholders inside and outside the school and even from learners. There was a lot that a principal could learn from others. Learning is a way of constructing meaning, ethical leaders learn from followers (Hein, 1992). A principal should not feel threatened by the growth of others (Smith, 2014), but instead they should show commitment to their growth and encourage them. This is what servant leaders do (see section 3.4.2.1). Having faith in others was said to go a long way in encouraging followers to be the best they can be, according to the school principals and this also forms part of the servant leadership model. A servant leader builds capacity among staff through empowerment (Bhengu & Mkhize, 2017).

- Values

Values were determined by doing the right thing for the right reasons, standing your ground and sticking to your principles (Riaz & uZaman, 2018; Van Wart, 2014). Findings revealed that this could get one into trouble if they were a school principal in South African schools engulfed by unethical conduct. This much I gathered from the stories of participants in the study. However, participants in the study were adamant that doing the right thing for the right

reasons was perhaps what set them apart from other school principals. They mentioned some of the values they upheld in their practice, as discussed hereunder.

5.5.3 Values upheld by selected school principals

- **Respect**

Respect played an important role in ethical leadership (see section 2.3.3) and it was coupled with being approachable, according to the findings of this study. Ethical leaders have manners, are affectionate and helpful (Hood, 2003, Rabinowitz, 2016). Participants in the study knew that respect is earned and should be reciprocated. Respect takes many shapes and form; from the way you talk to the other person, your tone, to how you treat them and maintaining confidentiality.

- **Honesty and integrity**

It was evident from the participants' stories that honesty to one and others was crucial in ethical leadership. Kouzes and Posner (2015) refer to it as a virtue. Sing (2016) refers to these virtues as personal traits that assist leaders to make moral and ethical decisions. Consistency, treating others with respect, persistence, generosity, courage, fairness, patience and tolerance were all revealed as values that had been tried and tested.

- **Avoiding unethical conduct**

Moral decay and an alarming rise in unethical conduct in South African schools have tainted most school principals, as they are perceived as the main perpetrators (Mthiyane, 2018). According to the participants, with the incentives that come with corruption and fraud in education, it was not easy for school principals to stick to their principles. It took special character, ethics, morals and a great deal of self-discipline to resist such. Fighting off corrupt colleagues and stakeholders could be daunting, but the selected school principals shared how working tirelessly and consistently to avoid unethical conduct informed their understanding and experience of ethical leadership in education.

From the emerging themes, one learnt a lot about the selected school principals' understanding and experience of ethical leadership in education. All these findings were lived experiences of the participants in told stories. Participants told their stories in relation to their past, what they had experienced and done; the present, what they were doing and

experiencing at that point of the narration and the future, what they aspired to practise. The meaning they made of ethical leadership in education told something about themselves, what they believed in and the type of leaders they were. The focus was on their understanding and experiences of ethical leadership in education, on what had worked and continued to work for them in their respective schools with an aim of learning from them.

5.6 Summary

The chapter presented and discussed the findings of the study. These were presented, drawing verbatim on the stories narrated by the participants and then discussed, taking the study's research questions as the point of reference. The chapter commenced with participants' information and background. The following section covered the responses relevant to the first research question, and next the participants' stories relating to the second research question, in a similar sequence. Emerging themes with their sub-themes were discussed as the final section of chapter 5. The next chapter is a concluding chapter and gives a summary of the study and lessons learnt.

CHAPTER 6

LEARNING FROM THE JOURNEY

6.1 Introduction

This study was motivated by my observation of unethical conduct that is apparently prevalent in many South African township schools. A lot has been written about unethical conduct in schools and also about school principals being major culprits in this regard (Mthembu, 2018; Mthiyane, 2018; Naidoo, 2015; Netshitangani, 2014, Plinio, Young & Lavery, 2010). I began to wonder if there were any school principals out there who were doing things differently from whom we could learn. Therefore I embarked on this study. This chapter is about the lessons learnt from the study. I begin the chapter by describing the research journey travelled. As I do this, I give a brief summary of what I did in each chapter. Secondly, I highlight findings regarding the school principals' understanding and experiences of ethical leadership in schools, what they do in their practice, how they manage dilemmas; as well as what informs their practices. This is then followed by what lessons I learn therefrom. Thirdly, I highlight the limitations of the study and the last section concludes the research report.

6.2 Research journey travelled

As I indicated earlier, this study was motivated by both my observation and the alarming incidents of unethical conduct reported in South African schools (see section 1.2). This prompted me to ponder on whether there were any school principals out there who were doing things differently, distancing themselves from this unethical conduct. If there were, then what was their understanding and experience of ethical leadership; what was it that they were doing differently and what could be learnt from their conduct regarding ethical leadership? I therefore engaged them on how they managed the dilemmas which they experienced and what informed their conduct. This was achieved by gathering and analysing the school principals' narratives.

This research report consists of six chapters. In Chapter 1 I explained the research problem and its setting. I argued that unethical conduct was seemingly rife in South African township schools. There seemed to be a lack of ethical practice during decision-making, especially on the part of school principals. Some school principals were even charged with misconduct, which brought shame not only to them individually but to the schools and the Department of

Education as a whole (see section 1.3). Practitioners, including teachers and school principals, lacked morals and ethics. In motivating for the study, I reported that most literature about ethics in education focused mainly on unethical conduct (Naidoo, 2015; Netshitangani, 2014; Oziambo, 2013; Serfontein & de Waal, 2015; Shakeshaft, 2013). The dearth of literature on sound ethical conduct or practices prompted this study. One hoped that if ethical leadership was prominent in South African schools, it might influence school principals in particular in a positive manner. It could provide them with something to learn from. When leaders behave ethically, there is a great possibility that their followers will emulate them (Demirtas & Akdogan, 2015). Ethical leaders show empathy towards their followers, thus making them feel welcome and encouraging to perform to the best of their ability, knowing that the leader cares (Chenweli, 2015). The positive impact this has on organizations, including schools is immense. According to Engelbrecht, Heine and Mahembe (2014), trust tends to flourish between the leader and the followers within a context of ethical leadership. In ethical leadership, employees are encouraged to voice their opinions without fear of being victimized and this needs leaders who exercise emotional intelligence (Chin, 2013) and avoid taking things personally.

The study sought answers to the following critical questions:

Main research question

What are the school principals' understanding and experiences of ethical leadership in South African schools?

Sub-questions

- a. What are the school principals' understanding and experience of ethical leadership in schools?
- b. How do the principals explain what informs their practices as ethical leaders?
- c. What can be learnt from their experiences and practices regarding ethical leadership in South African schools?

The first critical question was crafted with the aim to ascertain the school principals' take on practices of ethical leadership in schools. This was necessary in order to grasp what it is that they understood to be ethical leadership in schools. What was their understanding of ethical leadership? What had been their experience of ethical leadership? The second question

sought to understand how the participants explained what informed the way they conducted themselves as leaders. Their responses in this regard would be useful in helping us understand why they conducted themselves the way they did. An analysis of evidence from the first two sub-questions would collectively provide us lessons regarding ethical leadership.

In Chapter 2, I reviewed literature on ethical leadership. I established that ethical leadership is characterized by qualities such as accountability, fairness, justice, care, integrity, humility, strong values and morals on the part of the leader. What also emerged was that ethical leadership was not incidental; there are factors that influence it. Some of such factors are life experiences; personal values and personality; professional ethics; responsibility and emotional intelligence. Ethical leadership also involves organizational factors such as role modelling, communication and community involvement. What was of note is that, whether personal or organizational, all these factors contributed to the quality of ethical leadership in schools. The chapter revealed also that benefits like job satisfaction, teacher retention; organizational commitment and organizational citizenship on the part of teachers were associated with ethical leadership. These were put across as outputs of ethical leadership. Personally, I found these benefits to be motivation for school principals to practise ethical leadership in schools if they are to model ethics and morals.

I also noted that research on ethical leadership particularly in education was still in its infancy. Much less has been written on it than on unethical conduct in South African schools. Perhaps it is time the focus shifted from unethical conduct to ethical practices, with the aim to provide lessons from those who are already practising it, since there is an outcry for ethics in schools. The concepts clarified in this chapter, such as leadership, management, ethics and learning, are of paramount importance to the study, as they are the building blocks of ethical leadership.

I moved on to the theoretical framework (Chapter 3) which is the lens through which I sought to understand the study's evidence. Servant leadership theory and the 4Vs ethical leadership model were the two frameworks that underpinned the study. Servant leadership evolves around the idea of a leader aspiring to serve the followers first and then lead them. Servant leaders serve before they lead. A servant leader prioritizes serving others and this supersedes occupying a formal leadership position. It does not end there, but the leader does this with an

intention to inspire the followers to do the same. This means the process is on-going. Aspects of Greenleaf's model, such as empathy, persuasion, foresight, commitment to growth of others and community building came up in the participants' stories as part of their practices and how they experience ethical leadership. According to Bill Grace's 4Vs model, virtues, values, voice and vision are of paramount importance in this model. School principals in the study reported some values as part of what informed their practices. The said values influenced who they were, how they conducted themselves as leaders and guided them on how they managed difficult situations. School principals also used voice to communicate their vision to the stakeholders. Thus, the theories helped me to understand the school principals' understanding of ethical leadership as well as their practices thereof.

I then proceeded to Chapter 4, namely the research design and methodology. I located the study within the interpretive paradigm. The ontological stance of interpretivist theorists is that knowledge is socially constructed and is bounded by time, culture and the context in which it is created. There is no one truth, but multiple realities and people's actions are underpinned by their experiences. I relied on the participants' told stories of their very own experiences.

I further reported on the epistemological stance that knowledge about the school principals' understanding and experiences can only be derived from them. As the school principals experienced the world of ethical leadership by participating in it, they constructed meaning. I explained how I used narrative inquiry as the research design. This way of doing things allowed me to access the participants' experiential knowledge. I further explained how I used open-ended interviews to gather and record participants' experiences. These allowed them to speak openly. Participants described the phenomenon as they experienced it. I reported that my accessing the research sites involved applying and obtaining ethical clearance from the university's Ethics Committee and applying and gaining permission from the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education to conduct research in schools. It further involved seeking and gaining permission from the SGBs to interview school principals and seeking and gaining informed consent from the school principals to participate in the study, as well as audio recording of interviews. I also explained how I selected the participants using snowball sampling. I reported also the step-by-step thematic analysis procedure through which I analysed the data I had generated.

In the chapter preceding this (Chapter 6, I presented and discussed the data. The data is organized through two main themes namely: (a) school principals' understanding and experiences of ethical leadership and (b) what informed their understanding and experience. Sub-themes emerging from the principals' understanding of ethical leadership included conceptualisation of the profession; empathy and care; shared decision– making; fairness and justice; accountability and responsibility and leading by example. On what informed the participants' practices, the following sub-themes emerged: vision and pro-acting; communication in the workplace; learning from others; values and avoiding unethical conduct. These themes and sub-themes were discussed with reference to the evidence, including verbatim extracts from the participants' stories. In the next section, I highlight the study's findings and draw lessons therefrom. The lessons make up my humble contribution to knowledge about ethical leadership in schools.

6.3 Lessons learnt from the research journey

In this section I seek to address the last research question of the study namely, what can be learnt from the participants' understanding and practices of ethical leadership in schools regarding ethical leadership? In order to do so, I draw evidence from the other two research questions and my interpretation thereof. I discovered that the findings and the lessons I could learn from them were inseparable as they overlap, therefore I discuss them concurrently. I discuss these in relation to both the study's research questions and the theoretical framework. According to the 4Vs ethical model (Grace, 1999), values, virtues and character strength all ought to be integrated for ethical leadership to be accomplished. The theoretical framework of the study indicated that servant leaders and ethical leaders share a lot of characteristics. Virtues, values, voice and vision play a significant role in ethical leadership, with virtues and values moulding the character of a leader, the kind of person they are. They then use voice to communicate vision to their followers. Vision serves as a compass showing direction towards the organisation's goals. Most of what participants said of their understanding and experience resonated with the literature on servant leadership (see section 3.4) and the 4Vs ethical model (see section 3.6).

School principals in the study vouched that what informed their practices was what ethically worked for them and what helped them achieve desired outcomes. This gave an understanding that, if it was working for them, it could work for others as well. This study

focused on the positive, shifting the light away from unethical conduct in schools that has been much researched and written about already, to what could be learnt from the few school principals coming across as ethical leaders. The study revealed that servant leadership, vision, virtues and values shaped the participants' understanding and experience of ethical leadership in schools.

Findings show that being a school principal in the context studied, and trying to do things in an ethical manner, was not an easy undertaking, to a point where it was risky at times. This is because, at times, the unethical stakeholders did not take kindly to having their offers of bribes turned down. School principals generally experienced dilemmas in schools. Such dilemmas include some teachers behaving unethically and the pressure to give in to unethical conduct, including bribery, fraud, political interference in schools and truancy, especially among teachers etc. Poverty and socio-economic dilemmas posed ethical dilemmas for school principals. For example, where a child does not wear proper school uniform as required by the code of conduct because they do not have it, should the child be sent home or should the school be considerate and risk being seen as compromising the code of conduct? Some children come from child-headed households because parents are deceased or have abandoned them. Such learners have to prepare their younger siblings for school every morning; should they be locked outside of the school gate when they arrive at school late or should their case be treated with mercy and compassion?

In some cases, interference by teacher unions and local politicians in South African schools leaves school principals in ethical dilemma in that they are pressured into giving in to unethical conduct such as accepting bribes, committing fraud and mismanaging school funds. Teachers belong to unions that are ready to defend them no matter what. The participating school principals reported that it took departmental policies, personal values and personality to help them cope with these dilemmas; however, they did not hide that at times they remained uncertain about the impact of their decisions. What was distinct was that ethical dilemmas often left the school principals in limbo because they knew the right thing to do but also knew that doing that would pose other challenges (see section 5.5.2). Sometimes they were unable to take action in case they did not make a proper choice because both options seemed right. In some instances where they took action, they kept wondering if it was a wise move and that bothered them even further. But what made things seem even more

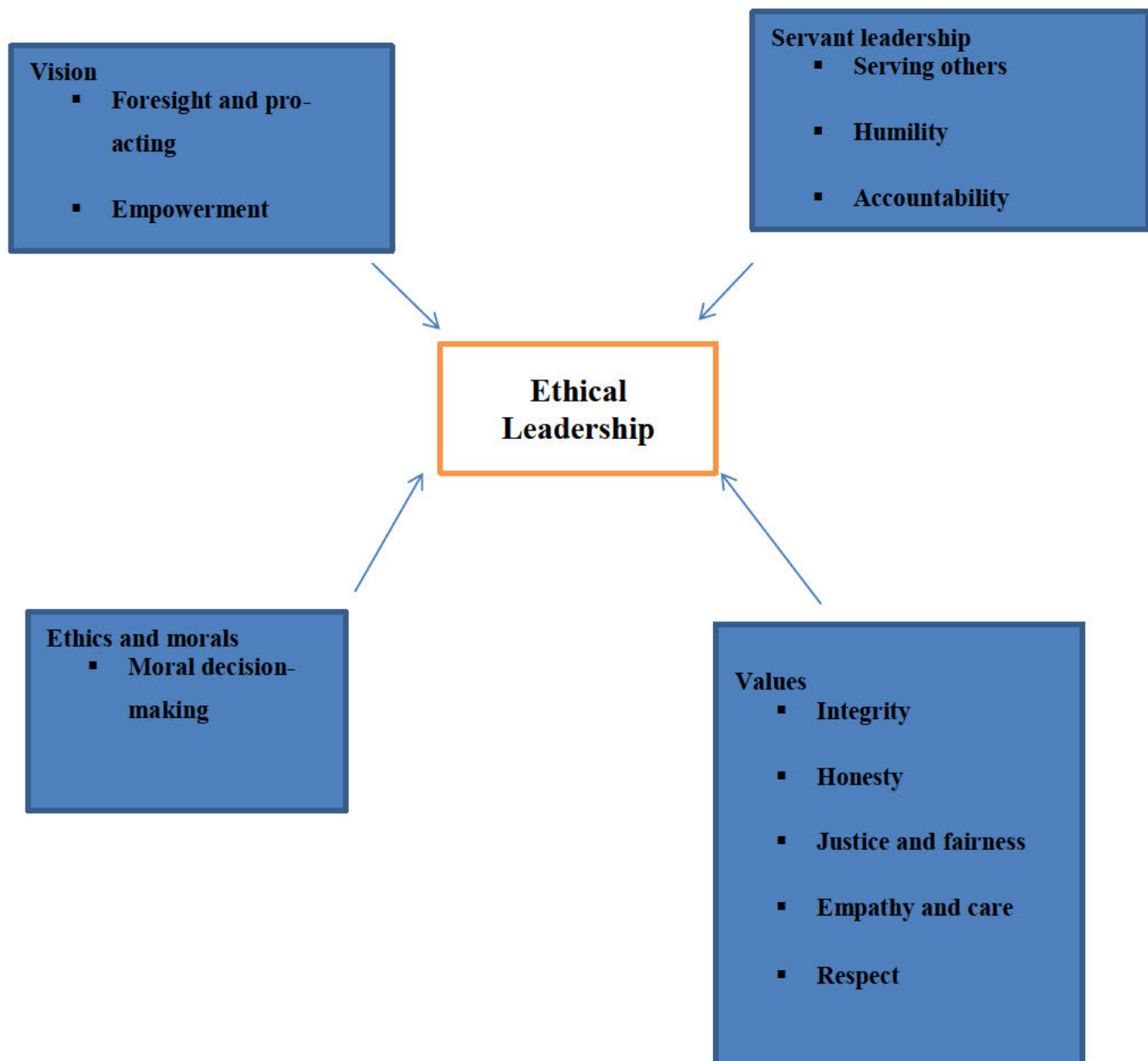
challenging for the school principals was that they remained committed to managing the dilemmas ethically. There is no prescribed method of managing ethical dilemmas and evidence from the participants showed that each leader has their own ways of managing these. They managed this by tapping into their morals and ethics before making decisions. I must highlight that this does not suggest that they found a solution to every problem or reached a decision in every dilemma. What stood out was that school principals do not seem to have platforms where they can share their experiences of the ethical dilemmas they face. It became apparent that this is due to ethics and ethical leadership not receiving the attention they deserve from the Education Department. This indicated a need for such platforms that would afford school principals an opportunity to learn from one another and support each other.

What matters most is that they would do everything in their power to avoid harm, in the spirit of utilitarianism, considering the consequences of their actions before acting (see section 3.3.1.1.1). They did what they thought was best for the school. Clearly, research evidence shows that there is need for more ethical behaviour in schools (Brooks-Spector, 2014; Naidoo, 2015, Mthembu, 2018; Mthiyane, 2018). This strong ethical behaviour would help leaders to manage the dilemmas in schools. This would be because people would strive to do good, instead of finding ways to beat the system or avoiding accountability and responsibility. For example, a school principal would be honest and not mismanage funds or pay someone to “cook” the books for him or her, as they would know that it is unethical to do so. Teachers would not stay away from school just because they had had too much to drink the previous day; they would know that as much as they are entitled to have fun in their spare time it should not interfere with their responsibilities as teachers. A lesson learnt from the participants’ stories was their upbringing; social and religious backgrounds; personal values and personalities which impacted positively on how they managed the dilemmas. However, this does not in any way suggest that this is predetermined; it depends on the person.

I have developed a model through which to present the main lessons learnt. I have called this the Servant Values-based Ethical Leadership model (SVBEL) (see Figure 6.1). The model illustrates how a school principal can develop and become an ethical leader, following the evidence from the participants in the study. In the model, ‘leaders’ refer to school principals and ‘organization’ refers to the school. I have organized the lessons into four boxes and each

box makes a direct contribution to ethical leadership, with all of them collectively representing ethical leadership in schools. The boxes consist of ethics and morals; servant leadership; vision and values; all illustrating what has been learnt from the participants' practices of ethical leadership. These are discussed below.

Figure 0.1 The Servant Values-based Ethical Leadership Model



I have named this the Servant-Values based Ethical Leadership Model, because it consists of building blocks of servant leadership whilst presenting values and ethics as what ethical leaders

ought to serve, especially in a school context, in order for ethical leadership to flourish. It also shows interdependence between each box and ethical leadership. Again there is a relationship among the boxes themselves. The vision of an ethical school leader must be necessarily informed by the desire to exercise integrity, honesty etc. With values such as empathy, respect, honesty, justice and fairness etc., one is equipped to be a servant leader. One can only be a servant leader if you are morally and ethically upright in their decision making. I discuss each box in some detail hereunder.

6.3.1 Vision

Having a vision for the school and using voice to share it with colleagues, and inspiring them to visualize it, is a lesson learnt from the participants' stories in the study. This is crucial, for a vision cannot remain with the school principal but has to be shared and owned by all as suggested by Grace (1999). It serves as a compass guiding and directing them towards the school's goals. The focus is always on the school's vision and mission. If all stakeholders are clear about the vision, it enables them to detect any deviation and to rectify it as quickly as possible. Visionary leadership empowers people in a bid to reach desired goals; this does not threaten them in anyway. This is another special character of the school principals in the study.

To implement a vision, a leader has to be able to see what others have not yet seen and apply it such that it enables the attainment of organizational goals. To ensure that the goals are attainable, one ought to empower others, encourage them to contribute as individuals and collectively put the plan in motion by allowing them to shine in whatever they are good at. In doing this, they would be showing sensitivity to the values of others and their ethical suppositions and it is here that ethical conduct is measured in the doing. This is largely influenced by foresight.

6.3.1.1 Foresight and pro-acting

Foresight affords leaders a chance to be vigilant and pro-active against activities that might hinder the actualization of the vision. This allows them a chance to strategize as visionary leaders. As visionary leaders they rely on self-reflection and, they review goals in pursuit of greater good (see section 3.6.2.2.1). Self-reflection helps leaders to acknowledge mistakes and to avoid repeating them and it takes an ethical leader to do this. They reflect on the past, learn from it, they are conscious of the present realities and acknowledge consequences of present decisions on the future (Kim, 2016). Thus, they need to display desirable and proper behavior,

setting the tone for others to follow suit. They ought to foster good relations with subordinates by showing interest even in their personal lives to get to know them better. That way, they would know when to jump in and assist them or even refer them accordingly. This would help avert stressful situations, which pose a potential threat on the functioning of an organization. In a school, a teacher with personal problems affecting his or her work performance feels comforted and special and eventually feels lightening of their burden. This is consistent with pro-acting, a characteristic of ethical leaders.

6.3.1.2 Empowerment

To empower followers, leaders need to ensure they are free to display their own creativity and make their own judgements when handling smaller tasks, because the leader trusts them to do so. Leaders ought not to be in any way threatened by this, instead they should encourage it. Leaders ought to trust followers to make their own decisions, trusting them to be accountable and responsible for their action. Interestingly so, this enhances performance, and gives birth to a sense of ownership and citizenship among employees whilst ensuring job satisfaction. Ethical leaders do not feel threatened by empowered followers.

6.3.2 Servant leadership

School leaders as servant leaders encourage teachers to retain and observe positive values – such as self-composure, especially when faced with dilemmas and trying times, integrity in times of temptation and generosity in sacrificing their time and resources to make up for the shortages the schools face. Servant leaders do not allow personal interest to supersede the organization's interest (see section 3.4.1.1.2). This creates learning opportunities for teachers to learn from them and hopefully pass them on to their students. This in turn could prevent or reduce unethical conduct in education. This is how teachers begin to have positive perspectives resulting in job satisfaction (Sultan & Van de Bunt-Kokhuis, 2014). This shows that ethical conduct can be learnt from others and such learning can continue to have a positive knock-on effect on others.

6.3.2.1 Serving others

Serving others forms a fundamental basis of servant leadership and entails listening to others, accepting criticism and leading by heart (Thaba *et al.* (2016). To further attain this, leaders ought to be humble, selfless, put the school's interest ahead of their own and develop others

to serve. It takes an ethical leader to do this because, without ethics, pride and vanity tend to take over and defeat the purpose with adverse outcomes.

6.3.2.2 Humility

Humility is about being human and humble and humbleness is an attribute of ethical leadership. To express humility, leaders display signs of sincerity towards their subordinates by being open and honest with them and being open to their opinions, showing that they take them seriously. Also, forgiveness is part of humbleness, showing gratitude, admitting to your own mistakes, sharing power, taking into cognisance others' inputs and engaging them by extending invitation to feedback. All of this contributes to ethical leadership, since humility is one of the characteristics of ethical leaders.

6.3.2.3 Accountability

Besides showing humility, leaders ought to display a high level of accountability. This is attainable when they clearly understand their role as chief accounting officers in the organization and this is not just limited to financial management, but accountability as a whole. They fully understand that they could not say they did not know if anything unbecoming happened within the premises, as they have a responsibility to account even for others' actions. School principals oversee every activity in the school with the help of the SMT, work together and closely with the SGB and other stakeholders without compromising their principles. This keeps them on alert so as not to risk having unethical conduct taking place from right under their noses. Accountability and emotional intelligence are attributes of ethical leadership rooted in servant leadership.

6.3.2.4 Listening to others

Leaders, who are good listeners, show a deep sense of emotional intelligence especially when faced with challenging times. They are not quick to react; they listen with an open mind even to opposing views. This means listening even to that which is not said and this is a skill ethical leaders ought to possess (Kim, 2016). Emotional intelligence helps them decide when to act, how to act and when not to act. A lesson learnt here is that not taking action is another way of acting and knowing when not to act was a special skill possessed by the school principals in the study. Also listening to your followers is an aspect of both servant leadership and ethical leadership.

6.3.3 Ethics and morals

Ethical behaviour helps leaders to effectively manage and lead schools. School leaders who are ethical are resilient and resist corruption by avoiding actions that would jeopardize their integrity. To achieve this, they ought to have consideration for morals, values and ethics in their practice (Brown, Trevino & Harrison, 2005; Manyaka & Sebola, 2013; Mthembu, 2018; Rabinowitz, 2016). Schools should be moral spaces where intellectual, emotional and social growth takes place (Mthiyane, 2018).

6.3.4 Values

It was evident that the participants had internalized the values that they upheld in their practice. These values informed their actions. This was where other school principals who engaged in unethical conduct failed and ended up giving in to temptation. What was exceptional with the ethical school principals was that it did not end with them but they persuaded their staff members to conduct themselves in the same way. If that were to be the case everywhere, then each school would be an ethical institution where ethical and moral behaviour prevailed. This helped them manage situations that would otherwise prove to be tricky. The school principals in the study communicated values to their followers mainly through their character and actions. Instilling values entails educating the head, the heart and the hand. Educating the head can be achieved by developing content and contexts where discussions on values could be held. This would address the question of what the value of values could be. Educating the heart would entail answering why values are important, by improving awareness on how values affect others. This could address conflict management and the use of body and tone to build positive relationships with others. Lastly, educating the hand would address the question of how values could be used in the workplace (see section 5.4). It speaks to doing activities to serve others and teaches the importance of giving and selflessness (Masote, 2016).

Ethical leaders need to have virtues and values as the foundation of their leadership. Virtues are habits that form our character. Values play a crucial role in ethical leadership in schools (see section 3.6.2.1). This is because values in education develop moral behaviour (Masote, 2016). Leaders enact selflessness by putting the needs of the teachers, learners and the organization ahead of their own. This is not simple; it takes a lot of character and values since they have their own personal interests which they suspend to benefit others. Dladla (2020)

contends that values can be used to align organization and employee behaviour. Values such as consistency, fairness, integrity, treating others with dignity, persistence, healthy pride, generosity, honesty, humility, courage, perseverance, respect, patience and tolerance all featured in the participants' narratives. To illustrate, the school principals exercised tolerance by lending an ear in times when followers need to be heard. They showed courage in times when they faced dilemmas.

6.3.4.1 Integrity

Integrity is another value which informs the practices of ethical leaders. It is a set of principles and values which are coherent with a moral filter (Dalasile, 2020). Ethical leaders model ethics, maintain integrity and are accountable for their actions (Mthiyane, 2018). They need to show strong moral principles by taking the ethics into consideration in their decision-making and being consistent in their action. Ethical leaders show this by committing to ethics and resisting temptations posed to them as incentives in exchange for unethical conduct, even if it relates to close friends or family (Dalasile, 2020). The lesson is that good character and good will lead to trust in the workplace and trust is a benefit associated with ethical leadership.

6.3.4.2 Honesty

Honest leaders are trustworthy and dependable, and honesty is the nucleus of ethical leadership (Landy & Conte, 2010). To show their honesty, ethical leaders need to keep everyone informed of what is happening in the organization, good or bad. They ought to be transparent in their action, ensuring that no one is left in the dark. They need to avoid acting in secret, causing unnecessary uncertainty and distrust. To demonstrate sincerity, they ought to avoid lies, theft, cheating, conspiracies and other acts that cause rifts among members. Honesty builds trust between leaders and followers as they give support to the leader. Honesty is one of the building blocks of ethical leadership.

6.3.4.3 Justice and fairness

Justice and fairness help school principals make informed and just decisions whilst avoiding favouritism. Both Naidoo (2015) and Mthembu (2018) frown upon favouritism and discrimination as they regard both to be unethical. To demonstrate justice and fairness, leaders ought to listen to both sides and give voice to all parties affected when managing

conflict, treating every matter as fairly as possible. This earns them respect from their followers. Even more important is the leader knowing when it is appropriate and professional to involve others in decision-making and when it is not. A good lesson is that in some instances leaders have to make exceptions to rules and regulations to accommodate individual circumstances, as conditions dictate since laws and regulations do not provide clear-cut solutions all the time. This teaches us that justice and fairness are not about treating everyone the same but applying equity and treating each case on merit.

Ethical leadership dictates that fairness and justice should reign in organizations. Literature in Chapter 2 reveals that, in exhibiting the ethic of justice, the leader should be fair and not benefit nor burden any group (Greenfield, 2004). This gives an indication that school leaders require this ethical principle to make decisions and to restore good working relations in the school. The school principals ought to rely on virtues and values in promoting justice and fairness. This is another way through which they can understand ethical leadership.

6.3.4.4 Empathy and care

Empathy and care are ethical principles essential in schools (see section 2.3.2.3). Leaders with empathy are more understanding to other people's emotions. They put others' needs ahead of their own (Kim, 2016; Merriam-Webster, 2016). Showing compassion towards staff members makes them feel important and valued. Leaders ought to show interest in staff members by getting to know them better at a personal level without being rude. This tends to heighten trust amongst them, as members find it easy to open up and talk about what is troubling them in the organization. Followers are made to feel free to air their views. In school, a school principal treats teachers and other stakeholders with care and compassion, thus bringing hope that others would learn from them. This is what ethical leaders do.

6.3.4.5 Respect

Respect is another value that plays a role in ethical leadership. Leaders show respect by showing their followers that they value their inputs and contributions in the school. They do this by giving credit where it is due, being honest with themselves first and with stakeholders. Leaders ought to admit to their weaknesses instead of bluffing others and pretending to know it all or claiming to be right at all times. Where they lack, they ought to ask their colleagues for help, which is also a sign of humility. They need to show respect for the human dignity,

rights and privacy of staff members, irrespective of their views, beliefs and opinions. Respect, which interrelates with foresight, is a virtue associated with ethical leadership.

6.4 Limitations of the study

The study was cast as seeking to research ethical leadership for school principals in township contexts of SA. There is no evidence as to whether or not these school principals would behave differently if they were leading schools in different contexts. The snowball sampling adopted in the study works in as far as the potential participants know each other. There may have been other ethical leaders outside the circles of those consulted. Also, the study was conducted within a relatively short period of time. It is not clear whether or not these same participants would remain ethical leaders had the study stretched for a longer time.

6.5 Final word

Evidence in the study shows that applying the ethic of care, empathy and respect; by being servant leaders, serving through humility, and nurturing their followers' feelings and emotions were all attributes of what the school principals understood ethical leadership to mean. The study also produced knowledge from which others can learn, that ethical leadership should not just be about preventing unethical conduct but rather about encouraging people to willingly do the right thing. If values such as honesty, compassion, justice, treating others with respect, willingness to serve others and being humble could be cultivated in schools, South African schools would be ethical spaces.

Ethical leadership has the potential to revive morals and ethics among school leaders, thus nipping unethical conduct in the bud. It would provide light for those school principals who really feel helpless and see no way out except to give in to unethical conduct. Instead of them trying to find ways of fighting unethical conduct head-on, they can just focus on the positive, instilling ethics and good morals. Rather than merely complying with the laws and regulations for the sake of complying, they will learn to do the right thing because it is the right thing to do. Once they achieve this, there is a greater chance that they pass this onto their followers.

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APPENDIX A: ETHICAL CLEARANCE CERTIFICATE FROM UKZN



**UNIVERSITY OF
KWAZULU-NATAL**
**INYUVESI
YAKWAZULU-NATALI**

19 June 2019

Ms Nompumelelo P Meyiwa 210551385
School of Education
Edgewood Campus

Dear Ms Meyiwa

Protocol reference number: HSS/0112/019D
Project Title: Ethical leadership in South African schools: Learning from the experiences and practises of selected proactive school principals.

Full Approval – Expedited Application

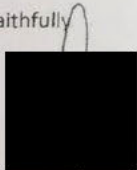
Your application dated 11 February 2019, the Humanities & Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee has considered the abovementioned application and the protocol has been granted **FULL APPROVAL**.

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.

The ethical clearance certificate is only valid for a period of 1 year from the date of issue. Thereafter Recertification must be applied for on an annual basis.

I take this opportunity of wishing you everything of the best with your study.

Yours faithfully

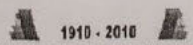


.....
Dr Rosemary Sibanda (Chair)

/px

cc Supervisor: Prof V Chikoko
cc. Academic Leader Research: Dr A Pillay
cc. School Administrator: Ms S Jeenarain, Ms M Ngcobo, Ms N Dlamini and Mr SN Mthembu

Humanities & Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee
Dr Rosemary Sibanda (Chair)
Westville Campus, Govan Mbeki Building
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**APPENDIX B: PERMISSION LETTER FROM KZN DEPARTMENT OF
EDUCATION**



education

Department:
Education
PROVINCE OF KWAZULU-NATAL

Enquiries: Phindile Duma

Tel: 033 392 1443

Ref: EAC/1044

Ms NP Meyiwa
33 Blackberry Place
Mulberry Park
Queensburgh
4093

Dear Ms Meyiwa

PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH IN THE KZN DOE INSTITUTIONS

Your application to conduct research entitled: "ETHICAL LEADERSHIP IN SOUTH AFRICAN SCHOOLS: LEARNING FROM THE EXPERIENCES AND PRACTICES OF SELECTED PROACTIVE SCHOOL PRINCIPALS", 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 Education 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 22 April 2019 to 01 September 2021.
7. Your research and interviews will be limited to the schools you have proposed and approved by the Head of Department. Please note that Principals, Educators, Departmental Officials and Learners are under no obligation to participate or assist you in your investigation.
8. Should you wish to extend the period of your survey at the school(s), please contact Miss Phindile Duma at the contact numbers below.
9. Upon completion of the research, a brief summary of the findings, recommendations or a full report/dissertation/thesis must be submitted to the research office of the Department. Please address it to The Office of the HOD, Private Bag 39 187, Pietermaritzburg, 3200.
10. Please note that your research and interviews will be limited to schools and institutions in KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education.

Pietermaritzburg District

Dr. E. Nkomo
Head of Department: Education
Date: 23 April 2019

KWAZULU-NATAL DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

Postal Address: Private Bag 30117 - Pietermaritzburg - 3206 - Republic of South Africa

Physical Address: 21 Dargatzis Street - Grace Luthuli Building - Pietermaritzburg - 3201

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APPENDIX C: PERMISSION LETTER TO THE SCHOOL GOVERNING BODY

33 Blackberry Place
Mulberry Park
Queensburgh
4093

16 October 2019

The Chairperson
School Governing Body
Durban

Sir/ Madam

RE: REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT A RESEARCH STUDY

I am Nompumelelo P. Meyiwa, a student presently enrolled for a PhD in Education Leadership, Management and Policy at the University of KwaZulu-Natal (Edgewood Campus). I am required to write a thesis as part of my studies. The title of the study is: Ethical leadership in South African schools: Learning from the experiences and practices of selected proactive school principals. The purpose of the study is to uncover and gather the experiences and practices of the school principals through their narratives. I also seek to understand what informs their experiences and practices.

I would like to conduct a research study in your school. I wish to interview the school principal. This research will provide insights of what is it that these school principals are doing differently that causes them to emerge as ethical leaders. The information gathered will be used with confidentiality for this study only and anonymity of your school as well as that of the school principal will be ensured. Participation is voluntary and the school principal could withdraw at any point should he or she wishes to do so. There are neither foreseeable direct benefits nor direct risks associated with participation in this study.

If you have any questions about this study, you may contact me at [REDACTED] or at meyiwanp@gmail.com. You may also contact my supervisor Prof V. Chikoko at [REDACTED] or (031) 260 2639 or at chikokov@ukzn.ac.za.

You may also contact the University of KwaZulu-Natal Human and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee on 031 260 4557 or at HssrecHumanities@ukzn.ac.za

I look forward to your response.

Yours faithfully

N.P. Meyiwa

(Student no. 210551385)

APPENDIX D: Declaration of consent by School Governing Body

I.....(Full names) the -----
-(designation of the School Governing Body member) hereby confirm that I understand the contents of this letter fully and have been informed about the nature, purpose and procedures for the study by N.P.Meyiwa entitled **Ethical leadership in South African school: Learning from the experiences and practices of selected proactive school principals**. I hereby confirm that the above letter was received and discussed at the governing body meeting on
(Date of the meeting). It was agreed that the school be part of the research project and the principal may participate if he or she wishes to do so. I am aware that there are no direct benefits nor risks associated with the school's participation in the study. I am also fully aware that the school principal has a right to withdraw from the study at any point should he or she wishes to do so.

Signature & designation

Date

.....

.....

APPENDIX E: PERMISSION LETTER TO THE PARTICIPANTS (SCHOOL PRINCIPALS)

33 Blackberry Place
Mulberry Park
Queensburgh
4093

26 October 2019

Sir/ Madam

RE: REQUEST FOR YOUR PARTICIPATION IN MY RESEARCH PROJECT

I am Nompumelelo P. Meyiwa, a student presently enrolled for a PhD in Education Leadership, Management and Policy at the University of KwaZulu-Natal (Edgewood Campus). I am required to write a thesis as part of my studies. The title of the study is Ethical leadership in South African schools: Learning from the experiences and practices of selected proactive school principals. The purpose of the study is to uncover and gather the experiences and practises of the school principals through their narratives. I also seek to understand what informs their experiences and practices.

This research will provide insights of what is it that these school principals are doing differently that causes them to emerge as ethical leaders. You are hereby requested to participate in this research project. I also seek your permission to interview you and tape record our discussion. This will help me to analyse data later on. The information gathered will be used with confidentiality for this study only and your anonymity will be ensured. Participation is voluntary and you could withdraw at any point should you wish to do so. There are neither foreseeable direct benefits nor direct risks associated with your participation in this study.

If you have any questions about this study, you may contact me at [REDACTED] or at meyiwanp@gmail.com. You may also contact my supervisor Prof V. Chikoko at [REDACTED] or (031) 260 2639 or at chikokov@ukzn.ac.za.

I look forward to your response.

Yours faithfully

N.P. Meyiwa (Student no. 210551385)

APPENDIX F: DECLARATION BY PARTICIPANTS

Declaration of consent

IFull names of participant) hereby confirm that I understand the contents of this letter fully and have been informed about the nature, purpose and procedures for the study by N.P. Meyiwa entitled **Ethical leadership in South African school: Learning from the experiences and practises of selected proactive school principals**. I do / do not consent to participate in the study. I do/ do not give consent to the **audio-recording** of the interview. I am aware that there are no direct benefits or risks associated with my participation in the study. I am also fully aware that I have a right to withdraw from the study at any point should I wish to do so.

Signature of participant

Date

.....

.....

APPENDIX G: CONSENT FOR AUDIO-RECORDING

Consent to audio-recording

Ihereby do/ do not give my consent to have the interview audio-recorded for the study by N. P. Meyiwa entitled **Ethical leadership in South African schools: Learning from the experiences and practices of selected proactive school principals.**

Signature of participant

Date

.....

.....

APPENDIX H: TURNITIN REPORT



APPENDIX I: LANGUAGE EDITING CERTIFICATE

Crispin Hemson
15 Morris Place
Glenwood
Durban
South Africa 4001

hemsonc@gmail.com
08222266999

This is to confirm that I have undertaken language editing of a doctoral thesis by Nompumelelo Meyiwa, entitled **Ethical leadership in South African schools: Learning from the experiences and practices of selected proactive school principals**



18th October 2021

APPENDIX J: INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

1. What is your understanding and experience of ethical leadership in education?
2. What ethical dilemmas do you come across in your practice, if any?

Could you please cite at least one specific example?

3. How do you manage stressful situations and ethical dilemmas?
4. What informs your practice, your understanding and experience of ethical leadership?
5. Which values do you uphold in your practice?

