African Culture and School Leadership: A Case Study of Secondary School Leader's Ethical Decision Making in Kenya

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Abstract

The need to have a deeper understanding of ethical practice in organizations across contexts has led to calls for an exploration of perspectives outside western derived notions prevalent in the literature. The response within education contexts has been slow with a few studies in the East and less in Africa. This single interpretive qualitative case study explored how African cultural values inform Kenya secondary school leaders ethical decision making. The study drew from the indigenous philosophy of ubuntu, which is the heart of African social and cultural values to analyse data. The case, ethical decision was examined across 5 schools in the western region of Kenya using focus group discussions, semi-structured interviews and documentary reviews. A thematic analysis revealed that African cultural values namely: African based care, communal care and justice, Afrocentric value of goodwill and considering the cultural perspectives of issues underpinned by the strong value for cohesion and harmony informed school leader's ethical decision making. The results indicate that cultural values define ethical leadership practice of secondary school leaders in Kenya. The findings highlight the need to recognize the multiple perspectives of ethical decision making. There is value in incorporating the indigenous ubuntu values in ethical frameworks that govern the conduct of secondary school leaders in Kenya because of their enduring presence in the ethical decision-making process. This description marks a divergent view from the mainstream research on ethical decision making.

Keywords: Ethical decision making, ethical practice , school leaders, Kenya, ubuntu, Africa

1.0 Introduction

Ethical decision making has received considerable attention across the globe in the last decade, following an upsurge of moral and ethical deficiencies in organizations. This has led to renewed emphasis on the importance of trust, values, ethics and integrity as essential components of leadership (Copeland, 2014). Educational leaders' tasks have an "ethical component" (Strike, 2005, p, 14) for they continually encounter situations that deal with questions of freedom, equity, and justice" (Murphy as cited in…. p.8). They make judgements amidst difficult and conflicting value choices which require that several considerations are made - policies, personal values consequences, contexts and others in order to meet the varied needs of stakeholders (Cranston, Ehrich &Kimber, 2006; Vitton & Wesonga, 2009). They also face temptations to manipulate decisions to their favour or just make decisions that are not desirable to their stakeholders.

Considerable research has examined the ethical values, principles or frameworks that school leaders draw from to navigate through the dilemma encounters (Begley & Johansson, 2008; Cranston et., 2006; Rosario, Catacutan & de Guzman, 2015; Starrat, 1994; Shapiro and Stefkovich, 2016**).** Most of these studies provide western contextual perspective-based experiences of education leaders Studies on ethical decision making of education leaders or school leaders in Africa and Kenya specifically are rare. It is not clear if leaders in these contexts draw from the western derived frameworks that govern their

school or social and cultural values within their contexts to arrive at ethical decisions when they encounter ethical dilemmas.

Secondary education in Kenya is regarded as a panacea for social, economic and political development and a source of the much-needed human capital for economic development Ethical leadership has been identified as key for meeting this objective and thus has become a mandatory societal, legal, organizational and moral expectation for school leaders because they are relied upon to define actions on behalf of others (Cooper, 2012). Kenya has stepped up efforts to ensure ethical practice through regulations which define the mandatory expectations for conduct of all public office holders in education contexts. The Constitution of Kenya, supported by ancillary acts such as the Leadership and Integrity Act, 2012, The public procurement and disposal of assets Act (2015), as well as the provisions of The Teachers Service Commission (TSC), professional code of ethics and Code of Regulations, define the conduct of school leaders. The frameworks are supposed to guide school leaders in discerning decisions with ethical implications so that they serve public interests and not self (TSC,2015) and require leaders to uphold the following principles ingrained as integrity standards– accountability, selflessness, openness, responsibility, honesty, integrity (Government of Kenya, 2010). It is however notable that these principles are not contextually derived but a replica of the Principles of Public life of the Nolan Committee of the UK (Hellsten & Larbi, 2006), indicating that Euro-western derived ethical frameworks are relied upon to define ethical conduct in schools in Kenya.

Communities have their own beliefs, values and norms of practice. culture is the "collective programming of the mind" (Hofstede,2001, p. 1) which is distinct for every group of persons. norms Several studies confirm the influence of cultural values on leadership in organizations (Hofstede, 2001; House et al.,2004) and schools in Asia (Dimmock & Walker, 2005; Hallinger, 2004; Trong, Hallinger & Kabini,, 2016). Trong et al's study revealed the strong influence of the predominant Confucian culture on decision making of school principals in Vietnam. A few studies in Africa indicate that the ubuntu philosophy and ethic prevalent among several bantu communities in East, central and South Africa articulates the cherished moral values or standards influences leaders and social conduct within organizations (Brubaker,2013; Mangaliso, 2001, Ncube, 2011) and schools (Msila, 2008; 2014). They also emphasize its potential and value for enhancing organization effectiveness. Others (Mungwini, 2009; Temple, 2011) however indicate that new definitions of social groupings in Africa following colonialism destroyed the basis of communal living that Africans have known and practiced within their context all along. Studies exploring the frameworks that school leaders use to arrive at ethical decision making in Africa and Kenya are not documented in the literature.

A few closely related studies pertaining to ethical matters in Kenyan schools are conceptual and focus on school leaders' contraventions of western derived ethical frameworks such as law, policies and ethics codes in school contexts (IPAR, 2008; TI, 2010; Wango & Gatere, 2011). These studies hardly refer to the negation of culturally derived ethical principles inherent in these contexts. Hence this study aims to explore the influence of African cultural values on Kenya secondary school leader's ethical decision making. Findings from this study aim to contribute to existing literature and provide useful insights on ethical decision making in non-western contexts. It is hoped that the findings of the study will raise awareness on the importance of drawing on contextual beliefs and practices in the design of ethical frameworks for effective ethical practice. This study was part of a larger study that examined the ethical leadership in secondary schools in Kenya. The current report is limited to ethical decision-making function of the school leaders. The main purpose was to deepen understanding of ethical decision making of school leaders in Kenya.

Objectives

The specific objective was

- To determine the influence of culture on Kenya's secondary school leaders' ethical decision making.

1. The research addressed the following question

- What cultural values inform your ethical decisions and why?

3.0 Literature review

3.1 Ethical decision making

Decision-making is embedded in leadership. Leaders play an important role in defining actions on behalf of others and influencing their behaviour towards given targets (Cooper, 2012). Education leadership is a moral calling and must be founded on "moral authority" bound by tenets of trust, responsibility and integrity (Nwikina, 2013). For this reason, "ethical decision making is integral to appropriate leadership behaviour" (Branson, 2010, p.1). A leader's responsibility in ethical decision-making process lies in demonstrating dedication, trust, fairness, acting in good faith and transparency (Lewis, 1991) and in ensuring that the decisions they arrive at are ethical, or legal and morally acceptable to the larger community (Mihelic, Lipicnick & Tekavcic, 2010). Studies (Begley, 2005, Shapiro & Stefkovich, 2016; Starrat, 1994) have shown that school leaders draw on ethics, values, morals, obligations or laws to reflect on their choices and to articulate issues they are confronted with. This is because they have a responsibility to prioritize people's rights, justice and care to ensure that expectations of the profession are met (Shapiro and Stefkovitch, 2016; Starrat, 1994). Effective leaders are able to make informed, well reasoned, and timely decisions (Brown &Treviño, 2006). This is because

The literature places a lot of expectations on school leaders' role because schools are "moral communities" (Sergiovanni, 1996, p. 57). School leaders must keep the honour and integrity of their office through acceptable conduct in public and private and, by diligently remaining ethical to win the confidence of those they govern and stakeholders (Donlevy & Walker, 2011). The leaders are encouraged be ethically sensitive, so that they can identify ethical issues and appropriate ethical principles needed to guide their decisions (Crocket, 2011). As professionals, school leaders ought to have a sense of self, knowledge of what is right and wrong, be alert to the motives and impacts of decisions they make and seek to refrain from acting in their own interest (Parthemore & Whitby, 2013). Further, they need to have a consciousness, a drive or instinct, and self-control to direct them to do right things even when rules do not exist because this is the mark of moral integrity (Branson, 2010). As ethical school leaders they must remain consistent and display "ethical commitments" in the roles they undertake. Their ethical core [should] permeate" everything they do (Donlevy & Walker, 2011,p. 19), because they enact ethical or moral behaviour through their acts or decisions.

3.2 Ethics frameworks

School leaders draw from given frameworks to arrive at ethical decisions in order to uphold ethical practice. These frameworks show how the principles underlying moral claims are made or defined and illustrate how moral standards are understood (Stewart, 1991). The predominant debates in the literature drawn from the modernist and postmodern schools of thought inform the understanding of ethical decision-making The modernist perspectives derived from the period of reason or enlightenment is associated with Immanuel Kant's (1785) and Mill, (1861) was characterised by an emphasis on grand theories, in this case insistence that philosophical theories of deontology, utilitarianism and virtue ethics which

form the foundations of professional ethics codes today defined ethical conduct and were. applicable to everyone regardless of context, because man is inherently rationale and can objectively define moral principles that influence good conduct (Hugman, 2005) without support of social groups. These theories were exclusive and had all the answers or truth on matters of ethics and ethical decision making.

To demonstrate this liberal view, Kohlberg's (1984) pioneer a study on ethical decision making of school leaders in Western education contexts tried to link individual moral reasoning with one's capacity to make moral judgements. Building on this, Rest (1986), emphasized that moral development was not just a product of moral judgements, but a process affected by several factors: having moral sensitivity or ability to recognize a moral issue, moral evaluation or ability to making judgements, consideration of the intention or moral motivation and lastly one's moral character or conviction or courage to do what is right. Gilligan's (1998) study challenged the process end outcome of Kohlberg's study which rated women low on the justice ethic. The author recognised gender differences in moral reasoning and concluded that morality was not limited to an ethic of justice, but care which called for consideration of others or relationship in ethical decision making. This view was later acknowledged by Noddings (2003) who emphasised that care or the concern for others as human persons and relationships was an important humanistic value that influenced agents' morals acts as an alternative to the principle of justice.

The communitarian school of thought added their voice to the debate but still within the liberal tradition and, emphasized that individuals cannot be relied upon to determine ethics, arguing that community was the voice that determines morality (MacIntyre, 1981), thus morality is co-constructed within social contexts and is not an individual's affair. Postmodernists (Bauman, 1993, Benhabib, 1992; Foucault, 1986; Levinas, 1979), have challenged the liberal or modernist universalist position especially the foundational ethical theories of Kantianism and utilitarianism. They argued that universalist reasoning e.g. reliance by agents on defined universal ethical principles is untenable, because other factors e.g. contexts, economic and social factors influence peoples moral reasoning and emphasize the need to consider what was left out. Others e.g. Levinas, Bauman and Foucault, are emphatic that man has an innate responsibility for morality and thus a capacity to determine ethical conduct and do not need codes to determine moral conduct.

These debates have attracted more interest in understanding how previously ignored factors especially cultural values influence school leader's decision making. This includes studies (Trong, Hallinger & Sanga, 2017) which explored Confucian values in Vietnam. Within Africa, the call an African renaissance (April & Peters, 2011) and the need to incorporate ubuntu's values as a measure to address the metaphysical conflicts resulting from competing beliefs from the two cultural perspectives [Western and African] following the institutionalisation of western beliefs and values, which are foreign to African understanding and culture (Temple, 2011) is evident. Others have rejected this call (Mungwini, 2009), because they have been overpowered by modern influence. Some call for more inclusive ethical decision-making approaches (Crocket, Agee, & Cornforth, 2011) to bridge the debates between the postmodern and modern ethics. An exploration of its influence on school leaders' ethical decision making is thus warranted. This paper contributes to the debates by examining the prevalence of African cultural values and their influence in the ethical decision making of school leaders in Kenya. Whilst it is not comprehensive, it provide an opportunity to draw on the experiences of secondary school leaders with ethical decision making while illuminating the dual ethics demands made upon leaders in post-colonial contexts.

3.3 Ubuntu ethic

African ethics are a product of reflections on the nature of human society, relationships, sociality and human objectives which led to the creation of a natural- humanistic ethic (Gyekye, 2010). The Ubuntu philosophy is the dominant worldview and maxim of ethics in Africa (Nussbaum, 2003, Mangaliso, 2001). The ethic is premised in the Nguni proverb 'umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu' (often translated as 'a person is a person through other persons', (Shutte, 2001, p.vi) similarly stated a by Mbiti (1990) "I am whom I am and because I am, so we are" (p.106). It propagates communalism, oneness, or solidarity which is essential for existence in African communities (Gyekye, 2010). Ubuntu privileges participatory or collective approaches/ collective decision making to allow democracy, which is evident in efforts of engaging elders in managing ethical challenges (Chimuka, 2013). These ethical principles are embedded in social norms that inform the belief system which call for responsibility for each other to ensure adherence. As custodians of ubuntu, leaders in Africa are expected enforce its provisions in the interest of the community (Bolden and Clarke, 2009) and thus must elicit the values of care for others, compassion, brotherhood, relationships, solidarity and sharing in the community. Like their followers, they are expected to be "kind generous, live in harmony, friendly, modest, helpful, humble" (Broodryk, 2006, p. 4) signalling that the interest is in the welfare of individual and in ensuring that social harmony and human dignity is upheld.

Moral principles in African contexts as Masolo (2010) avers, do not originate from an autonomous being with a mind capable of identifying principles of conduct applicable in every situation. The ubuntu ethic does not emphasize the freedom of the individual and capacity to reason on matters ethics. It is derived "from socially conditioned and located persons whose minds are the capacities of their bodily lives and experiences" (Masolo, 2010, p.89). This suggests that moral principles in African contexts, emerge when people are aware of their being, their duties, responsibilities towards others, signalling an emphasis on morality of conduct rather than of being (Mbiti, 1970) and thus creates moral order in the community.

This review has highlighted the ethical frameworks and social values that could potentially influence school leadership practice. It has shown that the ubuntu ethic prevalent in African contexts privileges communal and humanistic values, and participatory decision making, while western derived principled ethics approach lays emphasis on an agent's role in defining appropriate conduct based on defined principles within a code. The influence of western derived ethical frameworks on school leaders' ethical decision making are widely explored. Cultural values that inform school leaders ethical decision making. in non-western context need to be explored for a comprehensive understanding of ethical decision making.

4.0 Methodology

The study used an interpretive, qualitative case study informed by a social constructivist theoretical framework to allow for an exploration of the multiple constructions and social meanings that inform ethical decision making within the identified school contexts. The research was informed by an understanding that leaders' acts or experiences are not free from their social and cultural contexts and interpretations of their world. A qualitative approach enabled the researcher to have an in-depth engagement with the case, ethical decision making and to "gain insights, beliefs and experiences of the participants" (Patton, 2002, 96) within their context. A single case study design was used because of the researcher's interest in meaning and patterns of thought given towards the phenomenon of interest (Merriam, 1998), in this case, ethical decision making across multiple sites (five schools) in one province of Kenya.

The participants were identified through purposive sampling, criterion sampling and snowballing were used to identify the schools and participants. Kenya's secondary school heads association [KESSHA] was approached to identify 8 public secondary school principals from one province of Kenya for a focus group discussion on ethical issues faced in schools, based on a criterion sampling guide as follows: leaders with five years' experience in a provincial school with an approved school board of management, in schools with a student population of 250 or above, a mix of girls, boys only schools, day, boarding, urban and rural locations. The findings from this group were used to draw a questionnaire for the next engagement, with Four school principals (Principal A, B, C, D), who were encouraged to volunteer their schools and staff for further interrogation at the school level. A fifth district school (Principle E) was identified through snowballing because of its unique characteristics. The study population of 30 participants were engaged at the school level: principals (5), HODs (15), chairpersons of BOMs (5), and school bursars (5). The location of study was of interest because of its marked social -economic issues high poverty levels and effects of the HIV/Aids pandemic.

4.1 Data collection

Ethics approval and consent was obtained from the Victoria university of Wellington and National Commission for science and technology. The participants consent was sought, and confidentiality of research assured prior to the conduct of the research. Pseudonyms were used to ensure anonymity of schools and participants. Data was collected through focus group discussions, semi-structured interviews and documentary reviews because of their value in gathering participants' perspectives (Creswell, 2014). During the 45-minute interviews and focus discussions, the participants were invited to share their experiences in response to the question: what cultural values inform your ethical decisions? Purposively selected items e.g. policy documents, the Professional Code of Ethics, were reviewed to identify the defined ethical principles, values and frameworks that informed ethical decision making. This was done to corroborate the semi-structured interviews (Yin, 2009).

4.2 Data analysis

All the interviews were translated, transcribed and sent back to the participants for endorsement. They were reviewed and uploaded into the NVIVO 8 software for storage. The subjected to thematic analysis, "a process of identifying, analysing and reporting patterns "within data (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 79) began. The researcher used Braun and Clarke's four step process : data familiarisation; coding; searching for themes; reviewing themes and an in inductive process was used to arrive at codes, patterns/ themes and meaning from data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). All participants' statements and phrases were examined intensely for commonality and then extracted and attached to preliminary named codes. The codes were re-examined to identify patterns or themes across the interviews. The themes were reviewed constantly using an issues-based approach. The semantic themes or surface meanings stated by participants were then re-examined to identify "the underlying ideas, assumptions and conceptualisations- and ideologies" that shaped them (Braun & Braun, 2008, p.84). Broad themes depicting the social cultural values that inform ethical decision making of school leaders were thus identified as follows: African ethic of care, communal care and justice, Afrocentric value of goodwill; consideration of the cultural perspectives of an issue. Care was taken to ensure that rigour of the research was maintained to ensure credibility, dependability, transferability and confirmability to enhance validity of the study (Lincoln and Guba, 1985).

5.0 Results

This study sought to identify the African cultural values/ frameworks that inform the Kenya secondary school leader's ethical decision making in the face of ethical dilemmas. The theme of ubuntu was predominant in the participants constructions indicating that African cultural norms, beliefs, practices, cultural expectations were used to manage their ethical dilemmas depicting a conflict between care and justice. The four aspects of the African cultural values of ubuntu drawn from participant's excerpts which cut across all the 30 participants: African ethic of care, communal care and justice, Afrocentric value of goodwill; consideration of the cultural perspectives of an issue. are given to show how they influenced the school leaders' ethical decision making. It is useful to note that all these values are interrelated and even though they are categorised separately they represent several aspects of the communal ethic.

African based care
The participants identified an African-based care in their decision making

> Problem solving should not just be policy driven because some issues do not require policy, you must look for softer ways; traditional approaches looked for peace. If I used policy to sack an errant employee, the school's problem would have been solved, but the employee and family would have been in pain [Bursar, BRC]

Bursar BRC' selects to resolve their dilemma through the ubuntu ethic of care, of the belief and expectation that issues must be addressed with care. The African based care is preferred because of its value for enhancing relationship and harmony which the policy is unlikely to fulfil. This is equally corroborated by Principal PRB who shared a thorny incident
> I had a case involving a love affair between a student and female teacher. This was a sensitive matter given that the teacher's husband was a staff member too and so the matter was likely to have a negative effect on the family negatively. The student's studies were at also at stake. I cautioned the student against having a relationship with a married staff member but requested some senior female staff members to counsel the teacher and it worked well. I was able to secure both the family and the students' welfare. The ethics code would been detrimental to both. [Principal, PRB]

PRB's case demonstrates how that an ethics of African based care is prioritised even in the most difficult cases. The leader demonstrates that although justice is valued, the ethic demands that it be underpinned by care for accused persons. As much as the teacher and student erred, care is taken to avoid decisions that disrupt harmony and relationships e.g. marriage in the community. The policy is avoided because its outcome contradicts these cherished values and relates how it was resolved using an ethic of African-based care.

Communal care and justice
The participants' decisions elicited consideration of the values of communal care and justice by engaging in collective processes through consultation with the respected elderly members of the community.

> I believe that the African way of solving problems works better because it allows people to share their views, there is critique, discussion and often an amiable resolve is reached. When two staff members from two different clans disagreed at work; the issue became so serious that I got shaken because it became a clan affair. I had to invite the village elders and chief to keep the tempers cool. Matters between staff

can be very hard to resolve especially if they are related to you. [Bursar, BRC]

BRC demonstrates that where difficult conflicts ensued the leader sought for consensus with all the parties involved for their wise counsel. Conflicts and differences in African contexts are not an individual matter, but a communal affair. Consultations enhanced justice. Communal justice and care allowed for reconciliation and harmonious living.

Afrocentric value of goodwill

Another cultural perspective identified by the participants for the resolution of ethical dilemmas was the Afrocentric value of good will.

> Some very bright students report to school without any required provisions. I always solicit the support of staff members who respond positively; some offer to buy school items and others offer money. A student lost a mother and the relatives disinherited him, we made a follow up and allowed the student back in school. [Principal, PRB]

Goodwill is the African cultural value of generosity and care for all humanity regardless of who they are. In this dilemma - care for the student and justice (fulfilling the provisions of the school policy or laws), PRB focuse on the moral aspect of care tied to an African cultural belief of unity/ togetherness [brotherhood] which requires all community members to unite in the face of strife to care for the welfare of others. This humane response comes prior to the dictates of policy.

Understanding the cultural perspectives of an issue

The participants' ethical decisions focused on the cultural perspective of each dilemma as this enabled them to reflect on its complexity and to identify a suitable resolve.

> When handling issues, the cultural perspectives haves to be considered. For instance, it is understandable for a bereaved worker to be absent from work without permission. This is because in an African setting, this is an issue that must be attended to. [Bursar, BRE]

BRE's statement shows that knowledge of the assumed cultural perspectives and its moral implications was an important consideration in manging conflicts and ethical decision making. This corroborates PRA, experience, who shows how this applied when handling a conflict between the policies on the re-admission of students to school following pregnancy.

> We derive our perspectives from our roots and so my culture dictates what decisions I should take about every issue. One's conscience is also dictated by their beliefs. I was confronted with a dilemma, two options to keep pregnant student in school as per the policy or send them home. This is because pregnancy out of wedlock is outlawed culturally, a pregnant student should be secluded and confined at home where there is good care. I discussed this matter at length with the parent and the student and gave them the disadvantages and advantages of remaining in school until their due. I informed them of my willingness to admit them back to school. [Principal, PRA]

> Localism [the community ideals] forces you to hold back to reflect on each decision. [Bursar, BRC]

PRA's recourse to cultural values and beliefs was informed by the strong traditional cultural belief and practice of care for pregnant girls and customs linked to pregnancy out of wedlock which conflicted with the policy on keeping pregnant girls in schools. It is evident that PRA's decision is also influenced by their experience as an educationist and in consideration of the interest of the student. The decision is informed by consideration of the valued contextual beliefs, the consequences of the policy, their experience as professionals, the interest in the student's welfare, and of the school. BRC's statement does emphasize that communal beliefs must be considered as it informs what was culturally acceptable.

6.0 Discussion

The study has established that there is a strong influence of African cultural values of ubuntu ethic on the secondary school leaders' ethical decision making in Kenya which corroborates previous studies in Africa (Brubaker, 2013; Mangaliso, 2001, Msila, 2008, 2014; Muchiri, 2009; Ncube, 2011). This study reveals that school leaders consider African-based care, communal care and justice, Afrocentric value of good will and, cultural perspective of care to manage ethical dilemmas. This contradicts the outcome of studies on ethical decision-making in western countries which rely on western derived ethical principles or frameworks (Begley, 2005, Cranston et al. 2006; Langlois & Lappointe, 2014; Shapiro & Stefkovich, 2016).

The study lends support to postmodern theorists' views (Bauman, 1993, Benhabib, 1992) that there are many ways of reasoning morally. It confirms that ethical principles are particular to culture and context and are informed by social factors including care, emotions, value for relationships or a humanistic concern for others which are excluded from codes, laws and policies (Gilligan, 1982; Held, 2005; Noddings, 2003). The only contradiction is that the communal care emphasised in this study differs from liberalist individualist care previously thought of in these studies. Held's general view that context, culture, situations, interests and personal experiences determine ethical action relates to this study. Nodding's contention that rules can be a hindrance to doing good is in line with these study findings. Lastly, the findings are consistent with the communitarian view (MacIntyre, 1981; Mbiti, 1991; Nussbaum, 2003; Walzer's, 1990) that definitions of moral acts are consensually derived within social groups thus contradicts the expectations of the ethics frameworks which emphasize that leaders are autonomous individuals with a capacity to reason have the final recourse on ethical decisions.

It is important to note that the school leaders acknowledge the western derived values e.g. professional ethics codes, policy directives and even laws, but these are used to weigh against the its outcome in line with the ubuntu ethic confirming Bolden & Clarke's (2009) view that leaders in Africa care to enforce what is of interest to the community. It is very likely that the mandatory ethical frameworks provided for use in schools in Kenya are irrelevant or insufficient for managing school leaders' ethical dilemmas.

There is evidence to suggest that the context of ethical decision making in Kenya's secondary schools is complex. This is because these school leaders constantly navigate through dual expectations from the ethics of 'what ought I do' (principled or codified ethics) and ethics of 'what kind of person should I be' (Ubuntu ethic).This lends support to studies (Temple, 2012, xxx) which confirm that leaders in post-colonial contexts such as Africa, face competing definitions from the ethos of the community and ideals of the workplace and this creates challenges in ethical decision making.

The study highlights the potential of the ubuntu ethic for enhancing governance of secondary schools and thus a more inclusive ethics approach is needed. There is need for open discussions on ways in which African cultural decision-making approaches can be anchored in ethical frameworks to enhance ethical decision making in schools in Kenya.

School leaders need training on ethical and moral reasoning to navigate the demands from both the western and African ethics frameworks. Since culture is a strong force that influences how social leaders and institutions shape behaviour and attitudes that contribute to development, policy makers in education contexts need to review ethics frameworks from time to time to incorporate new constructions that emerge in the ever-dynamic contexts.

7.0 Conclusions

This paper has illuminated the cultural values that influence the ethical decision making of school leaders when dealing with ethical dilemmas in non-western contexts.. School leadership is a moral affair because leaders' decisions are grounded on ethical considerations. The case study has limitations. The participant's experiences are limited to their encounter with one ethical dilemma, justice versus care and thus the findings cannot be definitive. The conclusion are limited to their response to this dilemma. The study findings are limited to the small sample size, in one region in Kenya, which is typical of any qualitative research, and thus cannot be generalised. These results, however, provide a good glimpse of the influence of cultural values and contexts that are worth considering. The research can be further tested and enhanced by expanding it to other regions in Kenya, post-colonial and multi-cultural contexts to determine the influence of more contextualised practices that influence ethical decision making.

The study recommends that debates should be instituted by policy makers to discuss how   African cultural values can be engrained as a complimentary ethical decision-making paradigm for governing schools. The study expands previous research on ethical decisions making by proving insights into the ethical reasoning and perspectives drawn upon by secondary school leaders in Africa, a non-western context to prove that ethical decision making is not limited to abstract principles delinked from social contexts. It concludes that within post -colonial contexts, definitions of ethical conduct cannot be not be limited to western defined ethical constructs prevalent in the professional ethics frameworks derived from Euro western contexts.

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