

LEADING ON THE GROUND:

*An Exploration of the Narratives of
Ethical Leadership Practices-in-Use of
Early Career Assistant Principals*

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DEDICATION

To my father and mother

whose virtues and values shape whom I am.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Thank you to the assistant principals who demonstrated to me that their “voice” is critical in developing a viable school leadership program.

I am grateful to the eight assistant principals---Amy, Jean, A-A-Ron, Kayla, Sandi, Sean, David and Linda who generously permitted me to share their stories so that we could experience leadership through their lens as early career school leaders.

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Keywords: Ethical leadership, moral reasoning, school leadership, assistant principal

ABSTRACT

School leaders live in a world of increased accountability, higher student and leadership standards, and increased expectations of student achievement. The leader is key in establishing the ethics and norms that govern the people in the school through their actions and words. Yet, moral and ethical leadership in schools have been given very little attention in scholarship and research.

This qualitative study generated a grounded theory of ethical leadership in action used by early career school leaders. Sixteen narratives of everyday situations written by eight assistant principals in public schools were analyzed from three perspectives:

1) leadership practices, 2) principles used to resolve the challenges and situations, and 3) dilemmas embedded in the situations.

Results showed that the assistant principals applied five moral concepts in resolving the situations and a single-loop theory-of-action. This study broadened the awareness and understanding of the assistant principals' a) application of the ethics standard in practice; b) their ethical decision-making as a critical leadership task of assistant principals; c) their complex role as leaders in the school; and d) their craft knowledge of school leadership through their own eyes and voices of early career leaders.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Hear the voices of a few early career school leaders share their stories of practice and the decisions they face in their everyday work.

Carol's story. At 7:15 in the morning, twenty very upset parents are waiting to talk to me. They are upset because we suspended their sons---all football players---for disorderly conduct. I spend the time listening to them...it's important to listen and let them vent. Then a couple of teachers approach me and request that I file a missing person report to the police. They say a teacher did not come to school and they were worried that something had happened because the teacher is always in school. I've never filed a missing person's report---I call the police and they tell me the procedures. If this happens again, I will know what to do, it's always easier the second time. I am then told that a student is sick and his parents are not home---they are away in another state. How do I find these parents so that we can get medical help for this student? At around lunch, one of our teachers has vertigo so I drive her home in my car. I end my day with a long IEP [individualized educational plan for a special education student]. Her parents are medical doctors and well-versed on the [special education] law. The IEP meeting continues for four hours. We finally end at 7:00 in the evening. I feel really bad for keeping our teachers so late...I didn't realize that I could have terminated the meeting and rescheduled the continuation of the meeting for another day. This case isn't going well...I think it will probably go to hearing.

Assistant principal LaVerne shares her story. *Early one morning I heard that one of our students is hit by a car while crossing the street about a block from the school. The principal tells me that the ambulance had been called and that I should not go to the scene; rather, I should stay and supervise the students on campus. I felt the seventh grader might be frightened with no one there to be with him as he lays on the road waiting for the ambulance. A dilemma---do I do as my principal directed and supervise the campus or abide by my values and feelings to go to the*

student? I decided to go to the scene and comfort the student as we waited for the ambulance. I accompanied the student to the hospital and returned to school around 10:30. The student was doing well when I left him.

Brian's story. I suspended a student late Friday afternoon...he's a really good kid so I regretted that I had to suspend him for a day. On Monday morning his mother calls me and tells me that her son will not be coming to school---he had committed suicide that morning. I am in shock and feel so guilty for suspending the student...after all, I was the last adult in school he saw on Friday...but there is no time to deal with my emotions. I have a meeting with a state senator and the military base commander in two minutes to talk about the construction of a new classroom building.

These are typical, yet compelling stories that new leaders share about their work in schools. Each of these lived stories illustrates the challenges and dilemmas beginning school leaders face as they make sense of their new role and begin to demonstrate their leadership as assistant principals. In the first scenario, Carol demonstrates the dynamic school day and the responsibility to resolve a range of situations, sometimes with little time to make the decision and take action---responding to parent complaints and mediating three major groups of people with diverse perspectives; assisting teachers with their concerns; providing care for a faculty member; serving as surrogate parent to a student, complying with federal and state laws. In LaVerne's situation, she was confronted with moral dilemmas of weighing and choosing between viable professional and personal values: do I listen to my supervisor or do I heed to my core value of caring for a child in trauma; and do I choose the welfare of an individual student over the welfare of a community of students. The consequence of an "incorrect" decision may result in putting one's career to be a school administrator in jeopardy. Brian demonstrates the emotion and sometimes regret for one's actions and the brevity of time to reflect on one's decision(s) and resolve the personal emotion attached to the decision. In all three situations, the novice leaders demonstrate an initial understanding of the complexities of leadership and illustrate that "each administrative decision carries with it a restructuring of human life" (Foster, 1986, p.33). Early on, they learn that decision-making is tough in a complicated context and that their character as well as

actions carry great influence and power that impact individuals and the school culture. It is, therefore, critical to include ethics instruction in the preparation of school leaders and support these leaders to gain the skills and dispositions to weigh choices and strive to balance personal values, past experiences, professional code of ethics, standards of the profession, ethics of the community, and the best interest of the student (Shapiro & Stefkovich, 2011) as they ethically and morally resolve day-to-day issues and situations. Greenfield (1995) cautions us that the alternative is not an option.

...failure to provide the opportunity for school administrators to develop such competence constitutes a failure to serve the children we are obligated to serve as public educators. As a profession, educational administration thus has a moral obligation to train prospective administrators to be able to apply the principles, rules, ideals, and virtues associated with the development of ethical schools (p.285).

The moral dimension is fundamental to school leadership.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to generate a grounded theory of ethical leadership in action used by early career assistant principals. This study acknowledges leadership work as an ethical and moral craft, and examines sixteen ethical leadership narratives of everyday situations in public schools.

Significance of the Study

The heart of leadership is ethics (Beck and Murphy, 1997; Beyer and Liston, 1992; Ciulla, 1998; Foster, 1986; Murphy, 1992; Pipkin, 1999/2000, Sergiovanni, 2001). School leaders are moral agents who model strong ethical behavior through words, attitudes, actions and decisions in moral institutions called schools. Not only are they expected to possess ethical character and practice ethical behavior, but they also are expected to build a culture of integrity (Bennis & Nanus, 1985) where ethical behavior is the organization's norm.

Schools are moral institutions. Unlike other organizations, the teaching-learning mission of schools shapes the actions of its leaders and produces a moral

dimension of the school. Youngsters are required to attend school by law. And, they are exposed to the influence of teachers, administrators and their instruction at a very early age. Teachers and school leaders have a moral duty to provide a quality curriculum in a safe, nurturing environment that will promote intellectual, emotional, social and physical growth of its students. This relationship of students attending an institution not of their own choosing and the moral duty of the adults to provide care and effective learning environment for its students put schools in a unique, moral situation, different from other institutions.

Moral and ethical leadership receives insufficient attention in research on school leaders despite its importance in the work of school leaders (Sergiovanni, 2001; Fullan, 2002; Ciulla, 1998) and its distinct recognition in the Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium (2008) Standard 5. Ethical leadership compels the need to answer the question, "What is a good leader?", normative rationality and to a lesser degree to "What is an effective leader?", technical rationality. Few research studies investigate both sides of leadership (Cuilla, 1998) at the same. Likewise, there also is sparse educational literature and research related to the assistant principal. Greenfield (2004) summarizes the condition as the need to go beyond the role and duties of assistant principals and study "the personal qualities of school administrators and their intentions, values, motives, expertise, needs, and capabilities as people".

This study, through the use of narrative ethics, will help broaden the awareness and understanding of a) the assistant principals' use of the ethics standard in practice; b) ethical decision-making as a critical leadership task of assistant principals; c) the complex work of school leaders and the dilemmas they face; and d) the craft knowledge of school leadership through the eyes and voices of early career leaders.

As a result, the researcher hopes the findings will encourage the inclusion of ethics instruction in school leadership preparation programs, and will persuade the use of narratives of problems of practice as a viable and relevant learning tool for novice and experienced school leaders to think deeply and critically of their own personal and professional code of ethics. The sharing and dialogue of ethical

narratives among leaders provides extraordinary possibilities to cultivate their understanding of the moral reasoning of and foster respect for the values of others.

Research Questions

This study examined early career assistant principals' leadership and their ethical practice-in-use. All eight leaders serve schools of a large public school system in the United States. The overarching question for this grounded theory research study is: What theory explains how early career public school assistant principals' actions and interactions on everyday situations in an educational system convey their view of ethical leadership? Three perspectives of these actions were explored with the sub-questions of the study:

1. What issues are framed in the narratives of everyday situations faced by early career public school assistant principals?
2. What does the resolution of situations reveal of the early career assistant principals' moral thinking?
3. What do early career administrators' narratives tell us of the moral tensions that challenge them in their practice?

Research Design Overview

The qualitative case study research (Patton, 2002; Denzin & Lincoln, 2000; Creswell, 2007) best suits this study of narrative ethics as it attempted to generate a grounded theory based on beginning school leaders' craft knowledge in action as they strive to transition into the "inclusionary boundaries" (Biddle, 1986, p.72) of their new role as an ethical school leader. By examining their written narratives, the new leaders' voices were captured and, ultimately revealed insights of the ethical practice and challenges faced by these leaders as they began to grapple to resolve the issues found in everyday situations and role conflicts while maintaining to balance the need to be "happy and the [demands of the] organization to prosper" (Biddle, 1986 p.72). This was accomplished with the use of narrative ethics.

This emic perspective is developed from four sources of data:

1. New practitioners' perceptions through first-person writing in the form of leadership stories;
2. Member checks to enhance internal validity;
3. Relevant literature; and
4. The researcher's experience as a principal/assistant principal for 28 years and twenty years mentoring early career principals and assistant principals. Seven of those years were spent overseeing the state's school leadership preparation program and developing the curriculum for the program.

Sixteen problems of practice stories, two from each of the eight assistant principals were analyzed to identify emerging themes and categories that were coded (Lincoln and Guba, 1985; Straus and Corbin, 1990). The codes represented labels for units of meaning to the descriptive information found in the leadership narratives. These codes were then clustered to support the various research questions and to identify how early career public school assistant principals' actions and interactions on everyday situations in an educational system conveyed their view of ethical leadership.

Limitations. By design, this qualitative study contained a number of limitations (Patton, 1998). First, there were limitations in the situations or events sampled. The situations used for this study were selected and framed by the individual school leaders and may have expressed "unrepresentative samples" (Merriam, 2001) of the breadth of situations faced by all school leaders. As first person accounts, there may have been "inevitable issues of memory loss, selective emphasis and biases, both hidden and deliberate" (English, 2008, p.179). How the beginning assistant principal perceived or judged the situation adds to the limitation of this study. For example, given the same situation at the same school, one school leader may have framed it as a personnel problem and another school leader may have seen it as an instructional problem. Second, there are limitations due to the time period in which the study takes place. This study is limited to the situations occurring during the first formal year of a leader's career in school administration. The narratives portrayed incidents occurring in late 2011. Third, this study was

limited to early career assistant principals who were enrolled in a university educational administration course and agreed to participate in the study. Fourth, there were limitations in the analysis procedure. "A story, once told, no longer belongs solely to the storyteller...It is an object accessible to others. Others may see in it what the storyteller does not" (Clandinin & Connelly, 1991, p.278). The procedures used in this study may have overlooked information that may have appeared if another procedure was used. And, fifth, there were limitations in the researcher's perspective. Her personal experiences and professional career as a teacher, school principal/assistant principal, district curriculum specialist and state educational specialist for the school leader preparation program shaped her values and beliefs about leadership and supporting early career leaders.

Theoretical Framework

School leadership is a social construct. It is a process that "occurs within the minds of individuals who live in a culture--- a process that entails the capacities to create stories, to understand and evaluate these stories, and to appreciate the struggle among stories" (Gardner, 1995, p.22). There is richness and complexity in the practice of beginning school leaders. Their voices, as expressed through their narratives and moral action on their craft are critical to developing ethics-centered leadership preparation programs.

The theoretical framework of this dissertation was shaped on research and literature related to craft knowledge, theory of practice and leadership narratives.

Craft Knowledge. Craft or practitioner knowledge in action informs and helps us grasp the novice school leaders' understanding of ethical leadership and their role in transforming schools and the lives of people. While traditional, scientific research is more readily accepted in the field of education and may at times be difficult to translate and use in schools (Coulter & Wiens, 2002; Elmore, 2000; Heibert, Gallimore & Singler, 2002), craft knowledge is utilized readily by school leaders everyday (Blumberg, 1989) and is linked with successful practice (Sergiovanni, 2001).

Heibert, Gallimore & Stigler (2002) identify three features that make practitioner knowledge useful and valued: 1) practitioner knowledge is developed in

response to specific problems of practice; 2) practitioner knowledge is detailed, concrete, and specific, rather than abstract and applicable to a wider variety of potential problems; and 3) practitioner knowledge is integrated (content knowledge, pedagogical knowledge, knowledge of students) and organized around problems of practice. There is “a growing awareness of the richness of this knowledge” (Blumberg, 1989; Elmore, 2000; Heibert, Gallimore & Stigler, 2002), particularly when shared and documented through narratives (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Cooper & Heck, 1995). This study of novice assistant principals deepened our understanding of school leaders’ practitioner knowledge and supported a shift of educational administration to embrace equally the craft of leadership.

Theory of Practice. Leaders make sense of their leadership as they interact with the school environment. They depend on their own “theory” of practice. This is captured through various perspectives or frames of action.

Weick (1979) refers to this interacting process as environmental enactment. Whether encountering a new idea, concept or relationship, leaders naturally makes sense of this new knowledge, either fitting it within their set of rules, referred to as assimilation; or creating a new set of rules, referred to as accommodation (Piaget, 1977).

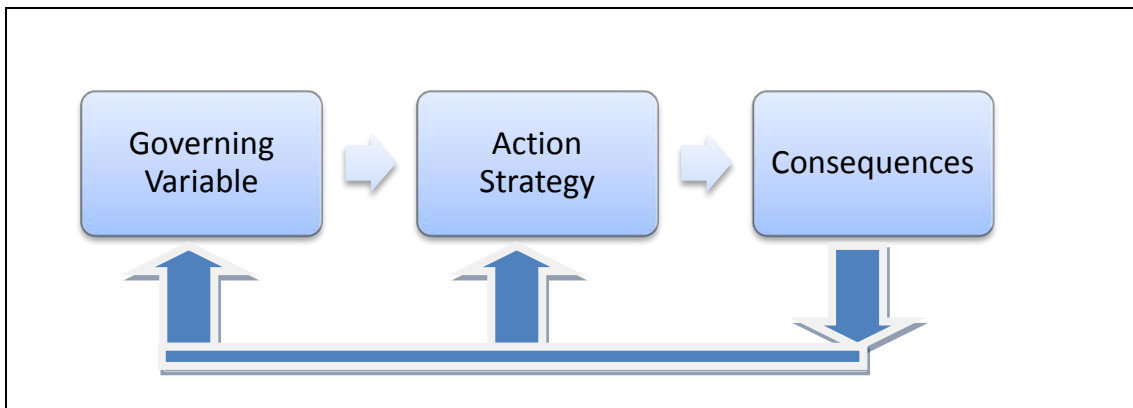


Figure 1.1 Theory of Action and Theory-in-Use (Argyris, 1993)

Argyris and Schon (1974) maintain that practitioners and managers have mental maps that guide their actions on situations. This theory-in-use involves the

way they plan, implement and review their actions. This is distinguished from the espoused theory that is explicit.

When someone is asked how he would behave under certain circumstances, the answer he usually gives is his espoused theory of action for that situation. This is the theory of action to which he gives allegiance, and which, upon request, he communicates to others. However, the theory that actually governs his actions is this theory in use. (Argyris and Schon, 1974, p.6-7)

Cognitive studies identify the processes that school leaders use to frame and act on problems. There are differences in the processes used by expert and novice in solving problems. In a review of studies other than school leadership, Leithwood Begley, and Cousins (1993) identified seven differences between the expert and novice. Experts are better able to regulate their own problem solving processes. They “reflect-in-action” and they “reflect-on-action”. The information they use to act on situations is organized and better accessible. Experts spend more time at the beginning of problem solving and are more flexible and able to use a greater variety of approaches to a solution. They have developed automatic responses to many recurring sequences of problem solving. In their actions, experts are more sensitive of the requirements of solving the problems and the social contexts within which they are to be solved (p. 55-56).

More specifically, in their research with school leaders, Hallinger, Leithwood, & Murphy (1993) were able to classify four levels of school leader expertise: Level 4 Systematic Problem Solver (High), Level 3 Program Manager, Level 2 Humanitarian, and Level 1 Building Manager (Low) and identify the differences among the four problem solving components of goals, factors, strategies and decision-making. At level 1, the school leaders’ goals are derived from personal needs and school administration rather than students. They see the pursuit of instructional goals as the responsibility of the faculty and not the principal’s. Rather than utilizing research and being student-centered, first level school leaders attempt to influence school appearance and day-to-day operations. The strategies they choose are based on the personal need to maintain control and remain uninvolved in the classroom. And,

their actions are primarily reactive and based on personal sources of information instead of the collective use of personal, professional and research sources (p. 60-61).

In their book, *Reframing Organizations* (1997), Bolman and Deal identify four distinct frames which people view situations and their leadership: 1) Structural frame emphasizes productivity and assumes that organizations work best when goals and roles are clear and effort of the people are well coordinated; 2) Human Resource frame highlights the importance of needs and motives; organizations work best when individual needs are met and the organization provides a caring, trusting work environment that provides opportunities for participation and shared decision-making; 3) Political frame points out the limits of authority and the scarcity of resources to fulfill demands; organizations are places where groups jockey for power and goals emerge from bargaining and compromise; and 4) Symbolic frame centers attention on symbols and meaning; the organization creates symbols to cultivate commitment, hope and loyalty; symbols govern behavior through informal agreements and understandings (p. 24-25).

Fairhurst and Sarr (1966) provide us with a metaphor of a photographer who frames a subject and chooses “the portion of the subject we will focus on and which we will exclude...Our framing adds color or accentuates the subject in unique ways” (p.4). Likewise, the leader frames situations, challenges, and issues showing the organization of their “view of their world” and what needs to be noticed and what should be left out as they act on situations.

Narrative Ethics. Leadership narrative has the potential of capturing the complexity of school leadership practice. It can serve a viable venue to explore one of the “basic human forms of experience of the world” (Clandinin & Connelly, 1991, p.259). They deliberately story and re-story life, thereby bringing meaning to educators’ lives and work. Stories provide the opportunity to “enter into” the practitioners’ actions and reap the richness of their knowledge (Cooper & Heck, 1995). They depict what the individuals consider important or essential in satisfying a particular need or goal and ultimately reflect their beliefs about their ultimate purpose in life (Carter, 1993). This perspective on ethics “focuses on the character

and virtues of the person who deliberates choice” and lesser on the “principles or goals in a moral choice” (Potter, 1994).

A relatively new discipline, narrative ethics or bioethics (Beauchamp & Childress, 1994) has surfaced in the medical field. Ethical and moral questions due to new technology and knowledge are being debated and the field is finding principlism, the four ethical principles –respect for autonomy, non-maleficence, beneficence and justice, as being too abstract and vague (Beauchamp & Childress, 1994; Dubiel, 2011) to be useful. This is especially true in resolving dilemmas of having two of the principles in conflict with each other. Bioethics is an attempt to provide an integrated approach to ethics based on the moral character of the bioethician making the decision. Likewise, social work has adopted this medical point of view of narrative approaches to ethics and views its application to the analysis of professional practice highlighting the relationship between narrative and values (Wilks, 2005). This thinking has yet to permeate the journals in the field of education.

Narrative ethics has the potential to be used in educational administration as a means to reveal personal perspectives of the leaders’ knowledge-in-practice. Davies (ND) notes that narrative ethics

“...rejects the picture of a perfectly rational decision maker operating under ideal conditions presented by the standard model. By accepting that we come to hold our values through action and interaction, narrative acknowledge that we do not regularly make decisions that force us to reflect heavily on past choices and future circumstances. This in turn, shows that the values we have and can articulate come from the acts of decision-making, unlike the standard model, which requires that we already have access to our values prior to making the decision at hand” (p.10).

When utilized as a reflective tool, these stories deepen the school leaders’ self-awareness. They gain a better understanding of their self and others’ perspectives

their beliefs about people and relationships, schools and leading; and their ethical actions' influence on the learning milieu.

CONCLUSION

Ethics is about story, community and character (Fasching, 1997). School leaders are expected to make ethical decisions on a daily basis as they uphold the duty to educate all students to be productive and contributing citizens of a democratic society. Exemplified by their behavior, they influence members of the learning community to act responsibly, as well as ensure equitable opportunities for students with the courage to address the inequities. The resulting decisions are evident in their practice, resolutions, policies and organizational structures. School leaders inspire and establish an ethical learning culture.

This qualitative case study attempted to broaden the educational leadership landscape by developing an understanding of early career school leaders and their ethical decision-making through an examination of their practice. Stories, when analyzed, have the power to reveal personal perspectives of their knowledge-in-practice. The stories deepen our understanding of the leaders' experiences in dealing with day-to-day situations; beliefs about people, schools and leading; their moral basis of the position; and the actions they take to influence the learning milieu.

Also, this study enriches our awareness and understanding of a) the school leaders ethics standard in practice; b) ethical decision making as a critical leadership task; c) the complex work of school leaders and the dilemmas they face; and d) the craft knowledge of school leadership through the eyes and voices of novice leaders.

It is hoped that the findings would encourage the inclusion of ethics instruction in school leadership preparation programs, and would persuade the use of problems of practice as a viable learning tool for early career and experienced school leaders to think deeply and critically of their own personal and professional code of ethics, as well as their impact on the school members and its organization.

Organization of the Study

This dissertation is organized into five chapters. Chapter 1 consists of an introduction to the study, including the purpose and significance of the study, the

research questions and design overview, and the theoretical framework . Chapter 2 details a review of literature pertinent to the study. Research and literature related to ethical leadership practices and the work of assistant principals in the schools are reviewed. In Chapter 3, the qualitative grounded methodology used in this study is presented.

Chapter 4 presents the analysis of data and results for each of the research questions. Chapter 5 consists of the conclusions and recommendations reached based a synthesis of findings from the study, as well as suggestions for further research.

Definitions

Assistant principal/vice principal – the formal leadership position that is considered often as an extension of the principal.

Craft knowledge – the information considered useful in the practice of educational administration but that is not the result of formal, empirical study. (English, 2008)

Ethics – standards of conduct that indicate how people ought to behave based on specific values and principles that define what is right.

Ethical reasoning – an attempt to state and test systematically and accurately the principles that underlie one's "gut" reactions (Strike, Haller & Soltis, 2005, p6)

Morals – individual's beliefs about what is right and wrong.

Normative ethics – the study of ethical action

Role transition – the process in which an individual changes from one set of expected role-related behaviors in a social system to another set (Letting Go, p44)

Situation – a complex of events occurring at any time; events are components of the situation

Values – core beliefs or desires that guide and motivate attitudes and actions; influences on the actions of individuals and on administrative practice

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

The literature review examines ethical leadership and the work of assistant principals. Ethics is viewed from two perspectives: ethics as informing one's values and beliefs and ethics as thinking and decision-making. Although there is limited literature and research on the work of the assistant principals, the responsibilities and challenges related to the position are discussed.

Ethical Framework for Leadership Practice

Ethics and values, in its formative years in educational leadership are grounded in religious beliefs of Judeo-Christian--- the "work of principals was linked with absolute, spiritual truth and values" (Murphy, 1992). By the early 1960s, however, "the empirical study of administrators has eluded their moral dimensions and virtually all that lends significance to what they do" (p.96). The focus on efficiency and effectiveness of schools had replaced ethics, values and purposing. During the 1970s and 1980s a number of studies on the curriculum of preparation programs revealed that ethics education was given very little attention. "Available literature provides almost no guidance on how to prepare educational administrators for ethical practice" (Murphy, 1992). In the late 1990s, Beck and Murphy (1997) observed a revival of interest in ethics education in preparation leadership programs. They reported 60% of institutions responding to giving "somewhat" or "a great deal" of attention to ethics and 40% giving "very little" or no attention to ethics education. The professors of educational administration who were surveyed viewed ethics in three ways: ethics as an aid to problem solving and decision making, ethics as a knowledge base of educational administration, and ethics as "fundamentally ethical endeavor".

Currently, schools face similar challenges of efficiency, effectiveness and accountability with the introduction of federal and state initiatives such as the Common Core State Standards, Race to the Top, national assessments, and performance contracts. This new context provides an opportunity for school leaders

DENVER PUBLIC SCHOOLS (Colorado)	HILLSBOROUGH COUNTY (Florida)	NEW YORK CITY (New York)	PRINCE GEORGE COUNTY (Maryland)
<p>LEADS EQUITY</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Publicly discusses the value of education, and believes that all students can and will achieve at high levels; holds staff accountable to these same attitudes and beliefs and regularly lets staff know that their work has the number-one impact on student achievement. -Is aware of, speaks openly about, and celebrates differences and diversity among students, families, and staff; and in society. -Publicly draws attention to all equity gaps that exist for diverse student populations, and make innovative and courageous plans to address the elimination of these gaps. 	<p>LEADING WITH INTEGRITY</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Establishes ethical and moral behavior in everyday business conduct. Earns trust of others by disclosing information and admitting mistakes. -Recognizes and resolves ethical questions. Ensures organizational ethics are widely understood. -Encourages open discussion of ethical issues. Creates an environment that rewards ethical behavior. <p>RELATIONSHIP BUILDING</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Establishes collaborative relationships to achieve objectives. -Displays empathy and embraces diverse viewpoints. 	<p>DECISION MAKING</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Evaluate the quality of school-level decisions, making adjustments as needed to increase the coherence of policies and practices across the school, with particular attention to the CCLS. <p>POSITIVE CULTURE</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Maintain a culture of mutual trust and positive attitudes that supports the academic and personal growth of students and adults. 	<p>LEADING CHANGE</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Ensures a collaborative culture that values innovation, creativity, and continuous improvement. -Models an inspired self-awareness, reflective practice, creative problem-solving and ethical behavior. -Analyzes organizational practices, including classroom instructional practices, makes changes informed by data on student and adult performance, and communicates these decisions to all stakeholders in the school community. <p>EQUITY</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Ensures an inclusive and celebratory school culture that promotes cultural competency and values diversity. -Ensures a school culture in which students' individual backgrounds are valued as a resource, and instruction and behavioral supports build on student strengths.

Table 2.1. Sample Ethics Standards of Various Public School Districts
(Wallace Foundation, 2013)

to work collaboratively with teachers to create “good” moral schools that integrate purpose and values with the tasks at hand. Many states have adopted school leadership standards that place ethics in a prominent place on their list of benchmarks and competencies. Table 2.1 provides a few examples of ethical expectations found in state leadership standards.

Two distinct but related perspectives critical to framing ethical leadership are 1) the school leaders’ character or personal ethics and 2) the school leaders’ ethical decision-making and proper cause of action. These two overarching themes are reciprocal components of ethical leadership; both are essential to ethical leadership.

Ethics as Informing One’s Values and Beliefs. Leadership is character. The leaders’ character or virtues ethic is integral to leadership. The values leaders hold is critical to “molding their character, shaping attitudes, and producing a virtuous thoughtful person” (Cuban, 1988, p. xvii). Dating back to Aristotle and Plato, the premise that “good” people who possess positive virtues make good moral choices, associated prudence, justice, courage and self-restraint as primary virtues.

Havard (2007) suggests magnanimity and humility are the pillar virtues. Leaders should have magnanimous dreams and visions and the humility to serve others. He further advocates prudence (practical wisdom), courage, self-control and justice as operational virtues of leadership.

Bennis (1989) is critical of leaders in his book, *Why Leaders Can’t Lead*. He sees virtues as the foundation of leadership and the leaders’ willingness to integrate them consistently in their work. The virtues he identifies are 1) integrity or moral and intellectual honesty; 2) dedication to believe in something so passionately that it brings intense and enduring commitment; 3) openness to try new things, listen to new ideas, and tolerate ambiguity and change; 4) creativity by breaking through preconceptions. Although difficult to quantify, Bennis believes these virtues, when practiced consistently, will distinguish the leader among leaders.

In his book *Good to Great*, Collins (2001) describes the “Level 5” leaders who embody a paradoxical mix of personal humility and professional will. He says they are ambitious first and foremost for the company, not to themselves (Table 2.2).

Professional Will	Personal Humility
Creates superb results, a clear catalyst in the transition from good to great.	Demonstrates a compelling modesty, shunning public adulation; never boastful.
Demonstrates an unwavering resolve to do whatever must be done to produce the best long-term results, no matter how difficult.	Acts with quiet, calm determination; relies principally on inspired standards, not inspiring charisma, to motivate.
Sets the standard of building an enduring great company; will settle for nothing less.	Channels ambition into the company, not the self; sets up successors for even greater success in the next generation.
Looks in the mirror, not out the window, to apportion responsibility for poor results, never blaming other people, external factors, or bad luck.	Looks out the window, not in the mirror, to apportion credit for the success of the company—to other people, external factors, and good luck.

Table 2.2 Two sides of Level 5 Leadership (Collins, 2001, p.36)

The dispositions in which leaders see and behave are determined by the virtues they value. Virtue ethics inspires and encourages followers to model their actions after their leaders and promotes school as the “moral community” (Sergiovanni, 2001) where people share common commitments, ideas and values.

Ethics as Thinking and Decision-Making. A review of the literature indicates three general considerations that guide school leaders in their actions and in making ethical decisions: ethical decision making process, ethical perspectives, and professional codes. Each view emphasizes the importance of a systematic and rational approach to ethical behavior; and serves to help school leaders avoid being impacted by their emotions and personal beliefs and interests.

Ethical Decision Making Process. Several researchers have explored ethical decision-making. Patton (2008) discusses six principles that school leaders must apply when making decisions:

1. Recognize when ethical issues exist and create possible solutions utilizing the inquiry approach. “Stop to think” is essential to “thoughtful discernment” and permits “calm analysis”. Documentation of “what is” guides the decision to fit the specific situation and discards the “cookie-cutter approach.”
2. Commit to a moral code of ethics. Virtues such as honesty, courage, compassion, integrity, fairness, and self-control enable leaders to “pursue the ideals”. Once moral standards are set, school leaders should reinforce ethical conduct and make decisions equitably and with honest, compassion, and empathy.
3. Understand and use ethics vocabulary to communicate with all stakeholders. Patton advocates using words about ethics: trustworthiness, honesty, integrity, reliability, loyalty, respect, fairness, caring and citizenship.
4. Create a visual representation of the process to aid in understanding esthetics. The use of visuals such as video clips, flowcharts and rubrics assist in helping people participate in the decision making and making the right decisions.
5. Share the responsibility of making ethical decisions by giving all stakeholders a voice. It is important to involve and empathize with the team.
6. Apply, monitor, equal and fair approaches. Consideration must be given to every aspect of the situation.

These are six ethical principles that are key to the quality of a successful leader. They help leaders make sound decisions.

James Rest’s (1994) Four Component Model identifies thought processes that lead to ethical action. Component 1 is moral sensitivity or recognizing an ethical problem exists; component 2 is moral judgment or reasoning to determine the right course of action; component 3 is moral motivation or the desire to choose moral considerations over competing values. Moral action and implementation is the fourth component of the model. When any one of the components is missing, ethical behavior breakdown occurs.

Kidder (1995, pp181-184) promotes a nine-step structure of decision-making for dealing with “confusing ethical issues”: 1) recognize that there is a moral issue; 2) determine who owns the issue; 3) gather the relevant facts; 4) test for right-versus-wrong issues; 5) test for right-versus-right paradigm; 6) apply the resolution principles; 7) investigate the “trilemma” options, that of considering a compromise of the irreconcilable values or developing a creative solution; 8) make the decision; and 9) revisit and reflect on the decision.

At times, when attempting to resolve a situation, leaders are faced with tough choices---a decision between two “right” choices. These choices are often called “ethical dilemmas” and “each side is firmly rooted in one of our basic, core values” (Kidder, 2009, p.6). Kidder offers four dilemma paradigms:

Truth versus loyalty---tension between facts/reality and allegiance to a person, a government, or a set of ideas to which one owes fidelity.

Individual versus community--tension between serving the interest of the individual and that of the community or group.

Short-term versus long-term---tension between satisfying immediate needs and distant outcomes.

Justice versus mercy---tension between love/compassion and justice/fairness.

Ethical dilemmas are often discussed in medical and business journals; this is not the case in educational leadership. There are few studies on dilemmas facing practicing school leaders. Green and Walker (2009) analyzed 24 case studies written by doctoral students in an educational leadership program. They found four categories of ethical dilemmas in the cases: Professional behavior, curriculum/policies, student issues (discipline, retention/promotion), and career decisions. Eleven, or nearly one half of the dilemmas analyzed involved conflict over what to do about another person’s professional performance (p.6).

Ethical Perspectives. Four normative ethical theories provide perspectives in helping school leaders respond to complex moral problems: rules-based, results-based, care-based and virtues-based.

Rules-based ethics. This ethic promotes what is right for one is right for all, no matter what the cost. For leaders, this perspective in applying a rule allows for

clarity that leads to consistency in implementation since it is less likely for leaders to compromise their personal ethical standards. However, using this ethic provides little flexibility and may result in the leader overlooking special or specific circumstances in the situation (Mahoney, 2006; Hitt, 1990).

Results-based ethics. This ethic holds two views 1) the “ends justify the means” and 2) “seek the common good”. In both cases the “right” is determined by the consequences of actions. In the first view, leaders focus on the outcomes to determine what is “right”. They think through the decision, weighing the consequences, thereby slowing down the thinking and avoiding rash choices. In the second view, sometimes called utilitarianism, “right” is doing the greatest good for the largest number of people. Leaders are encouraged by the profession (ISLLC Standards) to take a utilitarian approach to ethical decision-making. The disadvantage of both views is that it is difficult to identify and evaluate consequences, especially for early career leaders who are beginning to understand the “big picture” of school.

Care-based ethics. This ethic is based on relationships. It recognizes that people are interdependent and solutions are the result of considering both emotion and reason (Noddings, 1984). The Golden Rule: “Do to others as you would like them to do to you” is often associated with this ethic. The ethic expects one to put himself/herself in another’s shoes and how it would feel to be the recipient (Kidder, 1995). This ethic fits well with education which advocates students as the center of the educational process and need to be nurtured and encouraged” (Shapiro & Stefkovich, 2011, p. 16).

Virtues-based ethics. The virtues ethic is based on being rather than doing. It emphasizes a person’s identity or character and the virtues his/her character embodies. It is those traits that create a moral/good person capable of making the correct decisions of right and wrong (Hester, 2003, Maxcy, 2002).

Ethical Codes and Standards. In recent years with federal and state legislated guidelines (i.e. No Child Left Behind), the wealth of literature on standards-based education has provided school leaders with challenging, yet rich ethical codes. These standards hold school leaders accountable to their actions in the school. In addition to the *Educational Leadership Policy Standards: ISLLC 2008* (Interstate

School Leaders Licensure Consortium) that states “An educational leader promotes the success of every student by acting with integrity, with fairness, and in an ethical manner,” the National Policy Board for Educational Administration (NPBEA) identified their set of leadership preparation standards. Educational Leadership Standard 5.0 states:

A building-level education leader applies knowledge that promotes the success of every student by acting with integrity, fairness, and in an ethical manner to ensure a school system of accountability for every student’s academic and social success by modeling school principles of self-awareness, reflective practice, transparency, and ethical behavior as related to their roles within the school; safeguarding the values of democracy, equity, and diversity within the school; evaluating the potential moral and legal consequences of decision making in the school; and promoting social justice within the school to ensure that individual student needs inform all aspects of learning. (p. 18)

Under this standard, as with other state standards, the school leader is expected to demonstrate leadership skills which include formulating a platform grounded in ethical standards and practices; analyzing leadership decisions in terms of established ethical practices; developing, implementing, and evaluating school policies and procedures that support democratic values, equity, and diversity issues (p.19-20).

Professional codes provide additional guidance for ethical decision-makers. The American Association of School Administrators (2007) addresses the leaders’ conduct and ethical behavior in their “Statement of Ethics for Educational Leaders”:

An educational leader’s professional conduct must conform to an ethical code of behavior, and the code must set high standards for all educational leaders. The educational leader provides professional leadership across the district and also across the community. This responsibility requires the leader to maintain standards of exemplary professional conduct

while recognizing that his or her actions will be viewed and appraised by the community, professional associates and students.

Similarly, the National Association of Secondary School Principals (2001) share their ethics code in “Ethics for School Administrators”.

A school administrator's professional behavior must conform to an ethical code...The school administrator acknowledges that the schools belong to the public they serve for the purpose of providing educational opportunities to all...the school administrator assumes responsibility for providing professional leadership in the school and community. This responsibility requires the school administrator to maintain standards of exemplary professional conduct. It must be recognized that the school administrator's actions will be viewed and appraised by the community, professional associates, and students. To these ends, the school administrator subscribes to the following statements of standards.

The school administrator:

1. Makes the well-being of students the fundamental value in all decision making and actions.
2. Fulfills professional responsibilities with honesty and integrity.
3. Supports the principle of due process and protects the civil and human rights of all individuals.
4. Obeys local, state, and national laws.
5. Implements the governing board of education's policies and administrative rules and regulations.
6. Pursues appropriate measures to correct those laws, policies, and regulations that are not consistent with sound educational goals.
7. Avoids using positions for personal gain through political, social, religious, economic, or other influence.
8. Accepts academic degrees or professional certification only from duly accredited institutions.

9. Maintains the standards and seeks to improve the effectiveness of the profession through research and continuing professional development.
10. Honors all contracts until fulfillment, release, or dissolution mutually agreed upon by all parties to contract.

These codes and standards attempt to help the school leader answer the question “What is right?”

Assistant Principals and Their Work

The work of the assistant principal is viewed as invaluable to a school; however, there is scarcity of research and literature related to assistant principals role and function. Marshall and Hooley (2006) write “To this day, the ambiguity and the random nature of school need or perception of need seem to direct the evolution of the assistant more than any clear data or research” (p.2). When undertaken, studies of the assistant principal are limited to surveys of tasks, duties, effectiveness, and perceptions (Marshall & Hooley, 2006). Hartzell, Williams, and Nelson (1995) state:

...an undeniable gap remains in the school administration research and practitioner literature. This gap signals more than just a lack of understanding about the position and the people who hold it. It also represents a significant flaw in the knowledge base required for effective preparation of future [secondary] school administrators...APs are important not only in the current administration of schools but also in the future of schooling (p.23).

As vital leaders in the schools, there is a need to understand the work of assistant principals and to reveal deep insights and realities of their role and responsibilities.

Duties and Responsibilities. Historically, the work of the assistant principals grew out of the need for an assistant to the principal where enrollments at high schools were too large for one person to manage (Marshall, 1992; Mertz, 1999). Mertz and McNeely (1999) state that expediency rather than purposeful planning was the basis for creating the position. This shaky beginning may be imbedded in

the assistant principal position that continues to be “ill-defined, inconsistent, and at times incoherent responsibilities, roles and resources” (Marshall & Hooley, 2006, p. 7).

Although the actual work of assistant principals is varied, they do share similar tasks from school to school—discipline and attendance (Marshall & Hooley, 2006; Weller & Weller, 2002; Mertz, 2000). In 2000, Weller and Weller (2002) surveyed 100 assistant principals from urban, suburban, and rural schools and found that the primary responsibilities continue to be discipline and attendance. “Approximately 77% of the respondents identified discipline and attendance as their major job assignments, whereas 13% indicated discipline or attendance were secondary to their primary responsibilities of improving instruction or overseeing the vocational education program” (p11). In the same study, they report what assistant principals do in their “spare time” when they are not doing their primary responsibilities:

- Supervise students (98%)
 - Complete routine reports, enforce policy and write grant proposals (92%)
 - Participate in the selection of teachers, department heads, and assistant principals (87%)
 - Evaluate teacher and staff personnel performance and provide remedial assistance (78%)
 - Coordinate and/or conduct staff development programs and mentoring or peer tutoring programs (62%)
 - Develop the school’s master schedule (57%)
 - Coordinate and place student teachers and paraprofessionals (52%)
 - Prepare the school’s budget (7%)
 - Act as the school’s liaison to community and civic organizations (5%)
- (p.12)

Challenges of the Position. All professions have values and norms. Marshall and Mitchell (1991) identify the “unstated rules” or “assumptive worlds” of “fledgling” assistant principals that may challenge their behavior and values. Marshall (1992) interviewed 26 principals and assistant principals to explore their ways of

managing the job and the ethical dilemmas they faced. The leaders reported that the “dilemmas described had become dilemmas because there was no clear and sensible guidance from policy or a professional code” (p.373-6). She identifies the following rules which assistant principals entering the profession must be acutely sensitive:

Rule 1: Limit risk taking. Risks undertaken by assistant principals must be projects that improve the school without causing major changes or inviting strong opposition.

Rule 2: Remake policy quietly. Since schools are “loosely coupled”, assistant principals can take advantage of the flexibility to “overlook, evade, or loosely interpret policies that do not work well for their school”.

Rule 3: Avoid moral dilemmas. Assistants should keep tough issues private rather than open and publicly displayed.

Rule 4: Do not display divergent values. School leaders must avoid displaying conflicts with teachers, administrators and “power structure”.

Rule 5: Commitment is required. Assistants must show commitment to the work and loyalty to those in power.

Rule 6: Don’t get labeled as a troublemaker.

Rule 7: Keep disputes private. Leaders should keep disputes “private and low key”.

Rule 8: Cover all your bases. Assistants must ensure to complete every task and expectation held for them.

Rule 9: Build administrator team trust. Assistants must build a trusting partnership with their principals. Doing so, will result in support and commendations.

Rule 10: Align your turf. Assistants must “jockey” for tasks that are seen as prized.

Disregard for these unspoken rules may keep the assistant principals from entering the profession.

The introduction of leadership standards poses another challenge for assistant principals. A cursory review of states adopting state leadership standards or the Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium Standards for School Leaders (ISLLC) shows there is no delineation of standards or a set of standards

specific for the position of an assistant principal. The standards or expectations are usually the same for both principal and assistant principal. This puts the assistant principals in a compromising situation where their responsibilities are often considered managerial and the standards call for leaders who, as visionaries influence, involve and share responsibility with the teachers and school community to achieve the school's goals. Further, these expectations form the basis for their performance evaluation.

CONCLUSION

A review of the literature on school leadership reveals little research on ethical leadership related to the roles and responsibilities of assistant principals. The national agenda on school accountability to ensure high student achievement on the Common Core State Standards and high-stakes testing may be a factor for the limited exploration of moral or ethical leadership.

The literature review for this study examined two major areas: ethical leadership and the work of assistant principals. In the area of ethics, two interrelated perspectives were explored---ethics as informing one's values and beliefs and ethics as thinking and decision-making. The review also examined the role and responsibilities of assistant principals. Research on assistant principals and their work in the school were limited to surveys of tasks, duties, effectiveness, and perceptions.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH DESIGN

The qualitative grounded theory (Merriam, 2001; Denzin & Lincoln, 2000; Stake, 1995) was applied in this study of early career school leaders' moral action on everyday school tasks and situations. The purpose of this chapter explains the theoretical framework conceptualized for the study, as well as describes the method for data was collected and analyzed.

Mode of Inquiry

Grounded theory, a qualitative research design was used for this study. The purpose was to generate a theory grounded in rich descriptive data from primary documents that would inform us of early career leaders' ethical action on everyday situations. The methodology fits well with this study for several reasons (Merriam, 2001, pp6-8): it is concerned primarily with process, rather than outcomes or products; it is inductive and builds concepts, hypotheses or theories rather than tests existing theory; it is concerned with understanding meaning---how new school leaders make sense of their lives, experiences, and their structures of the world; and the product pursues a theory grounded in rich description from the process, meaning, and understanding. As the qualitative researcher, I was the primary instrument for data collection and analysis.

Selection of Participants

The participants were eight school leaders who were enrolled in an educational administration course during the first semester of the second year of their certification program. As part of the coursework, they submitted two descriptions of problems of practice with which they engaged in conversation with other participants in the class. Of the thirteen students enrolled in the course, eight leaders gave permission to use their stories for this study.

The participants were first-year assistant principals serving public schools throughout the state.

Context of the Study

The School System. At the time of the study, there were three major initiatives impacting the public schools: The Federal No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, State Act 238, and the state Department of Education Strategic Plan.

The No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB) mandated schools achieve schoolwide test-based targets. The State Act 238 expected each school to measure and report student attainment of content and performance standards and held the school accountable for that performance. In addition, it required monitoring the progress of student achievement, safety and well-being, and civic responsibility. The third initiative, the DOE Strategic Implementation Plan containing 91 strategic actions held schools accountable in providing standards-based education for every child. These three laws strived to ensure students were provided effective learning opportunities in effective schools, and held the schools accountable for results.

Leadership Certification Program. The assistant principals in this study participated in the State's two-year leadership certification program that is required of all principals and assistant principals serving the public schools. They completed a rigorous screening process that included an application portfolio, their current principal/supervisor's assessment of their leadership potential, an interview with a panel of the area superintendent and principals, and an intensive twelve-day summer institute. During the summer program, the candidates were provided presentations and information on the knowledge, skills, and attitudes of effective school leaders, They were observed and rated everyday on their participation in problem-based learning scenarios, their daily quizzes and written essays. The program screened for attitudes and competencies, and readiness to serve as a school leader. Upon satisfactory completion of the institute, the candidates were assigned a year of residency in a public school. Residency included fulfilling the duties and responsibilities as an "acting" assistant principal, as well as attending monthly seminars on school management, attending educational administration coursework, and completing a school improvement project. The seven required courses included Introduction to Educational Administration, School-Community Relations, School Law, Fiscal Management, Curriculum Administration, Principles of Leadership and

Management, and School Supervision. A course in ethical leadership was not required for leadership certification.

The second year of the certification program required the assistant principals to apply for and secure an assistant principal position at a public school. During the year, the leaders were expected to continue taking the required courses that they began during the first year, attend monthly seminars on instructional leadership and implement an action research project.

The assistant principals in this project were enrolled in the School Supervision course and in the first semester of the second year of their school leadership certification.

Ethics Learning. The ISLLC standards provided the foundation for the curriculum of the certification program. These leadership standards, including Standard 5, the “ethics standard” were woven throughout the new leaders’ learning. Prevalent in the assistant principals’ learning was the commitment to a strong moral purpose. The assistant principals participated in one six-hour seminar on ethics leadership based on the work of Rushworth Kidder’s, *How Good People Make Tough Choices*. During the session, they assessed their personal assumptions, values, beliefs, and practices; and applied ethical principles to their decision-making process.

The Assistant Principals. This study was based on the narratives written by eight school leaders, three males and five females. They represented the three levels of the state’s schools: elementary, middle, high. Five of the eight schools represented were identified as disadvantaged.

Table 3.1 summarized the background of the eight assistant principals with descriptors of their schools.

Data Sources

Four data sources were utilized in this grounded theory study: personal documents were used and analyzed, member checks were used to enhance internal validity (Merriam, 2001), literature and research related to the study, and my experience as a public school leader and administrator.

The first data source were stories written by the participants for an educational administration course, School Supervision. As an assignment for the course, the assistant principals were asked to describe two everyday school situations they had faced and resolved during the first semester. The purpose was to provide an opportunity for the participants to connect their work with concepts of leadership and to use a few of the stories as case studies for conversations on school supervision. Ethics was not addressed intentionally in analyzing the stories.

NAME	GENDER	ETHNICITY	SCHOOL LEVEL	DISADVANTAGED SCHOOL
Amy	Female	Asian	High Gr.9-12	No
Jean	Female	Asian	Elementary Grades K-5	Yes
David	Male	Mixed	High, Grades 9-12	Yes
A-A-Ron	Male	Asian	High Grades 9-12	Yes
Kayla	Female	Mixed	Elementary Grades K-6	Yes
Sandi	Female	Caucasian	High Grades 9-12	No
Sean	Male	Asian	Middle Grades 6-8	No
Linda	Female	Mixed	Elementary Grades K-6	Yes

Table 3.1 Demographics of eight assistant principals and their school

These self-reported data supported the examination of the thinking and actions of novice leaders. The stories “call us to consider what we know, how we know, and what and whom we care about” (Witherall & Noddings, 1991, p36). They generated meaning to their lives (Carter, 1993).

The narratives represented documents “concerned with a person’s attitudes, beliefs, and view of the world” (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992, p.132) of school administration. Although highly subjective (Clandinin & Connelly, 1991; Merriam, 2001), the documents were nonetheless, reflective of the early career school leader’s perspective.

The second data source, member checks, was used to enhance internal validity (Merriam, 2001). Tentative interpretations were shared with new school leaders and “asked if the results were plausible” (p.204).

The third source of data was the research and literature related to the study.

The fourth data source was my 30 years of experience as a principal, assistant principal and as the coordinator/collaborative developer of the state’s leadership preparation and certification program.

Researcher’s Perspective & Role

The researcher was the primary instrument for data collection and analysis (Merriam, 2001, p.8). In this section, I share my biases, values, and beliefs of school leadership.

Thoughts on School Leadership. As a principal for 15 years, three principles guide my actions:

- 1) Fulfill my primary duty providing for the education and well-being of every student on our campus and schooling a citizenry that the public has entrusted in me.
- 2) The school’s vision unifies the school and guides the school’s work.
- 3) My actions are based on values of ensuring equity and fairness for all learners and building relationships throughout the school community to further support student achievement and development.

Based on these beliefs and my practice, I considered the major leadership duties of principals/assistant principals were to:

Empower people in the school community to rally around and center their work on the school's vision, direction, and values. When everyone in the school community understands the vision and the direction of the school, people are able to focus their energy and feel empowered to initiate new ideas---they become the leaders.

Develop a culture of continuous learning (and improvement) through team learning and collaboration. Learning occurs in the classroom where adults (teachers, part-time teachers, educational assistants, skills trainers) work collaboratively in the classroom to provide for the range of educational needs of the students. Through professional learning communities, for example, teachers with educational assistants review student work, analyze student data, read research articles. They analyze student work and determine “next steps” for individual students as well as identify implications for schoolwide curriculum, assessment, and instruction. Grade level/department meetings, faculty meetings and leadership meetings provide the time to be challenged with issues and to hold difficult conversations such as “Should we be satisfied to ensure that 85 percent of our 2nd grade students will be able to read on grade level?” and “What changes in our instruction and/or curriculum needs to change so that the students are successful and feel confident as learners”. These dialogs help us reflect on our beliefs and values and keep us centered on our ideals and needs of all of our students. Workshops and seminars, whether conducted by the school, district, or special professional organizations are other ways to keep continuous learning at the forefront.

Embrace systems thinking. The various parts of the school are interrelated. School leaders help the school connect what they are doing to the “big picture”. At times the conceptual picture is related to initiatives within the school; some of the time “connecting the dots” relate to state initiatives; other times it connects at the global level. This is critical so that the school's efforts are not seen (especially by teachers) as individual, discrete efforts, but rather, interrelated parts that promote student achievement and growth. Another important part of systems-thinking is making decisions and actions transparent and consistent. Everyone participates in

understanding the problem/concern and those involved make the decisions. Minutes of all meetings should be available for all to see and review.

Thoughts on Leadership Preparation Programs. For nine years as coordinator of the state's preparation program, I strived to implement ideals based on research and experience that I thought comprised of a relevant and rigorous leadership preparation program.

1. A rigorous program with a fundamental base on professional ethics and values that serves as the centerpiece for character and decisions.
2. A strong emphasis on instructional leadership that compel new leaders to ensure the equity of learning for all students in their school, and to keep school improvement and innovation at the forefront.
3. A blend of professors of educational administration, practicing principals, and retired principals who nurture and support new leaders with knowledge, understanding and mentorship.
4. Active learning instructional strategies that honor adult learners and engage them in the complexity of school leadership: problem-based learning and ethical and social issues throughout coursework, seminars, workshops, and field experiences and internship.

Data Analysis

Each personal data source was analyzed and coded descriptively as a means to organize and manage the data. Categories and subcategories/properties across all data sources were determined through the constant comparative method of data analysis. Open coding and axial coding was applied to show relationships between concepts and subcategories. A few memos of "thoughts, musings, speculations, hunches" (Merriam, 2001, p.165) and "beliefs and perspectives of the data" (Strauss & Corbin, 1998, p.99) were kept throughout the process to help me to be conscious of my biases and its influence on my thinking about the data.

Upon completion of the analysis of the data sources, the data was shared with participants and other early career assistant principals to gain additional insight of the data (Merriam, 2001, p204). This enhanced the study's internal validity.

Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness was addressed using a number of strategies to enhance the validity, both internal and external, and reliability of this qualitative study.

Triangulation. There was corroborating evidence from different sources to confirm the findings. This study used the participants' stories of their everyday actions, research and journal articles, and the researcher's experiences of being an assistant principal, principal and coordinator of the state's leadership program.

Member checks. The analysis, data and tentative interpretation were shared with participants and other new assistant principals to further determine the plausibility of the results (Merriam, 2001).

Researcher's biases. Earlier I shared my experiences, beliefs, and values, and orientation of school leadership as well as a preparation program.

Limitations of the Study

By design, this qualitative study had limitations (Patton, 1998). The purpose of this study was to examine description-rich stories in depth and detail in an attempt to understand the actions of early career assistant principals rather than to generalize a sample to a broader population.

Limitations in the situations (critical events) that were sampled. The situations were selected and framed by the school leaders and may have been "unrepresentative samples" (Merriam, 2001) of the breadth of situations faced by most leaders.

Limitations from the time period in which the study took place. This study was limited to the situations that occurred during the assistant principals' first year of their school administrator career.

Limitations based on selectivity of the novice leaders who were sampled. This study was limited to the first year assistant principals attending a educational leadership course and who agreed to participate in the study.

Limitations in the analysis procedure. "A story, once told, no longer belongs solely to the storyteller...It is an object accessible to others. Others may see in it what the storyteller does not" (Clandinin & Connelly, 1991, p.278). The procedure

used in this study may have overlooked information that may have appeared if another procedure was used.

Limitations in the researcher's perspective. A major part of my profession was to design the curriculum and conduct professional development activities in school leadership.

CONCLUSION

The qualitative case study research best suited this study as it generated a grounded theory based on early career school leaders' craft knowledge in action.

This emic perspective was developed from four sources of data:

1. New practitioners' perceptions through first-person writing in the form of leadership stories;
2. Member checks to enhance internal validity;
3. Relevant literature; and
4. The researcher's experience as a principal/assistant principal and 25 years of mentoring novice principals and assistant principals.

CHAPTER FOUR

FINDINGS OF DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS

The purpose of this chapter is to present the findings from data collection and analysis in describing the early career school leaders' ethical action on everyday school tasks and situations.

This study was designed to broaden our awareness and understanding of school leaders' ethics in their thinking on situations, as revealed in their actions and decisions. The overarching question for this grounded theory research study was: What theory explains how early career public school assistant principals' actions and interactions on everyday situations in an educational system convey their view of ethical leadership? Three sub-questions framed the study:

1. What situations are framed in the narratives of early career public school assistant principals?
2. What does the resolution of situations reveal of the early career assistant principals' moral thinking?
3. What do early career administrators' narratives tell us of the tensions that challenge them in their practice?

Question 1: What ethical situations are framed in the narratives of early career public school assistant principals?

The researcher reviewed the sixteen narratives written by eight school leaders to understand the school leaders' ethical view of daily situations. Two perspectives were presented as a result of the analyses of these narratives: 1) the "problem" frame or interpretation of the everyday situations confronting early career leaders; and 2) the moral thinking underlying their problems of practice.

Leaders used frames to "enter and exit from hundreds of different situations every day" as a means to "define circumstances so that they know what to do and how to understand what others are doing" (Bolman and Deal, 1991, p23). The

language in which they defined or framed the situation guided the results or response.

To determine how early career leaders framed or interpreted a situation, the researcher analyzed each of their problems of practice holistically. For each narrative, an inquiry question was developed based on the words, thinking, actions, and resolution of the school leader. The use of questions facilitated the ease in identifying the themes and subthemes (Stake, 1995). Rich, thick descriptions and direct quotes from the narratives (Merriam, 1998) were used to support the themes.

Analysis of the problems of practice revealed two major leadership practices-- cultural practices and instructional practices (Figure 4.1). School cultural practices included three themes of 1) stewarding a moral purpose, 2) cultivating a school climate, and 3) connecting and working with people. The category of instructional practices included the two themes of 1) optimizing instruction and 2) developing leadership capacity, and to some extent stewarding moral purpose. Twelve subthemes further emerged from each of the five major themes.

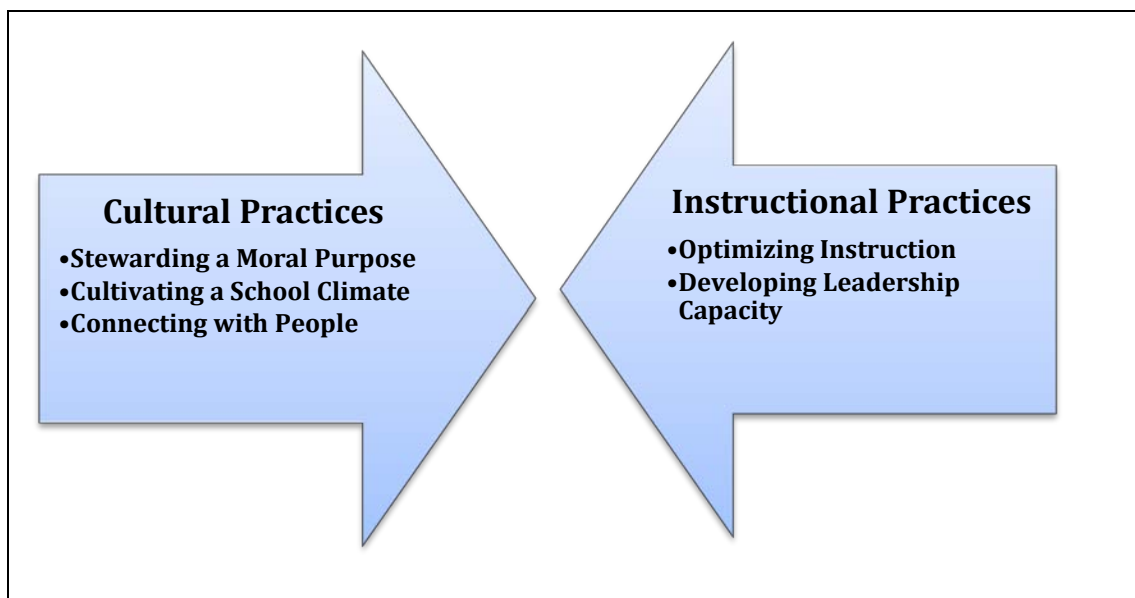


Figure 4.1 Two major categories of practices-in-use with corresponding themes applied by early career assistant principals

The subthemes that defined cultural practices included equity, culture, relationship, change process, moral purpose, communication, relationships with teachers, others,

and relationships between others. The subthemes for instructional practices included vision, supervision, support, and burnout. These subthemes are bracketed at the end of each question in Table 4.1.

Each problem theme with its corresponding inquiry question is identified. The leaders' everyday situations are described for each of the five major themes.

Stewarding Moral Purpose. Early career assistant principals viewed problems of practice as a means to dig deep into their commitment to a larger purpose. They viewed the challenge as posing more than simply resolving a situation. Rather, these leaders saw a situation as an opportunity to embrace a calling that enriched individual lives and advanced human condition.

Moral Purpose: *How do I ensure that all students are given equal access to learning opportunities?* David returned as the assistant principal of the high school he had worked for many years as a teacher. When he was assigned to supervise the English Language Learner (ELL) program, he suddenly regarded the program as "horrific". He "wondered how the program, instructor and students slipped under the radar" and "how many students, in those many years, were underserved". He wrote, "This totally contradicted my philosophy of giving all students the opportunity to attain the skills and knowledge necessary to succeed in post secondary education or chosen career." David's commitment to a moral purpose energized him to make serious changes from physically moving English Language Learners to a larger classroom, equipping it with technology and providing extensive professional development support to the ELL teacher. He vowed to always look at the "Big Picture" and be "guided by my personal vision and the vision of my school".

Moral Purpose: *How do I begin to influence the school's instructional culture?* Similarly, Amy had a specific vision of what a standards-based school "looks like" and said it was "frustrating that teachers [in high school] are still factoring in grades based on attendance, late work, and don't believe in giving make up tests". As a former elementary school curriculum coordinator, she questioned her "elementary" background when she asked to see "a binder with the course outline, standards, pacing charts, assessments, etc." and received push back from the teachers. She started to develop communication systems as a beginning resolution

to this “problem” and was driven to establishing instructional systems that “changed the culture of the school” and included collaborative work as a long-term solution.

Optimizing Instruction. Generally, the optimizing instruction situations fell in three areas 1) vision, 2) supervision, 3) support.

Vision: As an instructional leader, how do I eliminate barriers to productive learning environments for all students? David said as an instructional leader, he regarded teacher instructional effectiveness as a critical element to learning. In his work with a special education teacher, he stated the “classroom management was creating a barrier to student success”. The teacher “tries to be the students’ friend and when discipline is needed, the students do not see her as the authority in the classroom...her students make comments about fairness and inconsistency in the classroom”. He had several conversations with the teacher on managing the students, especially the importance of having rules and being consistent with consequences. David extended his commitment to the students by involving the teacher, the student, the student’s Behavior Health specialist, and the student’s family to develop individual student “behavior support plans that were structured and were specific to address behavior situations that occurred in the classroom” because “it is imperative” students are “provided proper support and boundaries”. David was driven to action based on his belief that he had “direct responsibility to create and establish positive learning environments to support and promote student success”.

Supervision: How do I work with the librarian who is not fulfilling the responsibilities to the teachers and students? Some teachers in Linda’s school said the librarian was “difficult to work with and her library lessons were a ‘waste of time’.” One teacher told Linda that she “could make better use of her library time and resources if she taught her own lesson rather than relying on the librarian to teach the lesson”. Linda described their librarian as lacking to integrate the Information Literacy Standards/Common Core State Standards into the curriculum or to provide rigorous and relevant lessons. Moreover, the librarian “questioned students with a stern voice rather than try to understand what the student was asking”; she lacked interpersonal skills.

Understanding her responsibility to supervise instruction, Linda immediately explained her expectations to the librarian, shared materials and suggestions for

improvement, as well as provided additional support from the school's curriculum team and the State Library specialist. However, when the librarian didn't make the expected changes or accept the assistance of the specialists, Linda moved to a more aggressive approach and "directed her to use the Common Core State Standards on research and literacy skills and work with the grade level teachers to support what students are learning in the classroom". Throughout her supervision, Linda continued to build her relationship with the librarian, often times dropped in and said "hi" or asked the teacher if everything was okay. Linda held high expectations for her instructional staff and persevered moving through a continuum of support to ensure the students receive rigorous and relevant lessons.

Table 4.1 Inquiry questions of the school leaders' narratives

Problem Theme	Inquiry Question
Stewarding a Purpose	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How do I ensure that all students are given equal access to learning opportunities? [Equity] • What is my responsibility to the students as a leader in my school? [Equity] • How do I begin to influence the school's instructional culture? [Culture]
Optimizing Instruction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • As an instructional leader, how do I eliminate barriers to ensure productive learning environments for the underserved students? [Vision] • How do I work with the librarian who is not fulfilling the responsibilities to the teachers and students? [Supervision] • How do I provide training and resources to teachers who are willing to change their instructional strategies when the budget is limited? [Support]

Table 4.1 Inquiry questions of the school leaders' narratives -Continued

Problem Theme	Inquiry Question
Cultivating a Responsive Climate/Culture for Learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How do I rebuild a leadership team that has lost trust with one another? [Relationship] • How do I involve teachers in a change process where they feel ownership for the plan as well as the implementation of the plan? [Change Process] • What do I do when a group of teachers do not believe they are responsible for their students' learning? [Moral Purpose] • What must I do to influence teachers to implement a school initiative with fidelity? [Moral Purpose] • How do I help unify the people in the school to move in the same direction? [Communications/ Systems Thinking] • How do I change a faculty's complacent mindset and ignite a sense of urgency to change? [Change process]
Connecting and Working with People	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How do I assist a teacher who avoids meeting with me? [Relationship with teacher] • How do I begin to work with a teacher who does not like me and whom I do not trust? [Relationship with teacher] • How do I change a strained relationship to a healthy working relationship between co-teachers? [Relationships between others] • How do I help co-teachers "resolve" their opposing working styles that impact a special group of students from learning in a positive environment? [Relationships between others]
Developing Leadership Capacity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How do I support a marginal teacher as well as those I ask to support that teacher? [Burnout]

Support: *How do I provide training and resources to teachers who are willing to change their instructional strategies when the budget is limited?* As an instructional leader, Sandi was “not seeing much student engagement or project-based learning in the science labs.” She “observed teachers demonstrating the experiments and not the students.” She wondered why “we were allowing our students the best chances to learn without providing them with the state of the art resources?” She remembered as an elementary teacher, she had used “science probes, digital microscopes, slates, and Promethean board and was alarmed to see the high school with inadequate supplies for student engagement.” After she spoke to the teachers separately, she learned that “having more equipment and cutting edge technology was important to them. Some of them had never heard of the technology and wanted to learn more.” She said, “I realized that I needed to get more training in the school and opportunities for the teachers to see how the different technology could help their classroom and student achievement”. However, she needed funding for the equipment and stipends for teachers attending the workshop. She asked her principal who provided some funding but was unable to cover all the equipment and training she thought was needed. So, Sandi wrote grants for the equipment; and as a result, the teachers willingly spent the summer developing lessons and practiced using the equipment. She “witnessed more experiments and student involvement in class projects with all abilities of students”. She “sensed excitement in the air and there was engagement in sharing ideas and designs”...“I was excited and thrilled.” In reflection, Sandi noted, “my job is to make sure that we can supply our students with the best and give our teachers the training and resources to engage them. I have to show an interest in what is going on in the classroom” and “give feedback and suggestions”. I need to “dig deep and ask the teachers and students what can help them learn”.

Cultivating a Responsive Climate. The assistant principals in this study felt compelled to bring people together and move in the same direction. When they sensed a schoolwide problem, they responded immediately to diminish a negative impact on the students.

Change Process: *How do I change a faculty’s complacent mindset and ignite a sense of urgency to change?* A-A-Ron viewed the teachers at his high school as

“complacent and possessed no sense of urgency...there was an attitude of no one cares what we do because we are in a rural area, so why change my practices”.

A-A-Ron was part of the new administration team and was “dealing with negative effects such as administrators operating in silos and caring only for their responsibilities; little oversight of instruction in the classroom; teachers were not provided feedback of their instruction; faculty conversations were not about student achievement but on operations and announcements”. A-A-Ron regarded these “symptoms as connected—things don’t happen in isolation but rather systems functioning together impacting the overall operation of the school”.

A-A-Ron realized he needed to identify steps to change the course of the school that were negatively impacting student achievement. He started “altering his own practices and conducted regular walkthroughs with feedback to the teachers”. In addition, he “set up a structure to have everyone actively involved in academy meetings and have groups, instead of the assistant principals, facilitating meetings”.

At one of the meetings, A-A-Ron shared longitudinal data of the graduation rates over the past eight years and reported, “It wasn’t a pretty sight as it seemed like it was the first time they [the teachers]” had looked at the data. Teachers questioned the accuracy of the low scores. In reflecting on the situation, A-A-Ron said he would “not have answered the questions because his strategy was for the teachers to be involved and own the data; he wanted them to “get out of their comfort zones and be accountable for their own questions”. He wanted to model for them that “teachers and administrators do not have all the answers; they need to allow the opportunities to think critically and problem solve as well as build capacity and leaders”.

Systems Thinking: *How do I help unify the people in the school so that we are moving in the same direction?* Amy was at a high school and noticed that “the transition from the former principal to the current one was leaving some people feeling lost and without direction”. She noticed a few things happening. The current leadership team, in the past semester, was “struggling to determine what data was needed to show student growth”. This “left the teachers thinking they’d done enough [for the students] and they didn’t need to work at reaching out and engaging students in the learning”. Moreover, the teachers said they “didn’t know the strategies needed

to make the classes more engaged and request professional development. They felt administration set expectation with little or no support of them or follow up”.

Amy also observed “no one [in the administration team] is taking responsibility for the advancement of school initiatives”. As a result, “instruction was impacted”. Students were “confused about which administrator handled what and the faculty/staff sometimes sent students from “here and there and sometimes dead ends when students needed answers”. As a result, Amy “scrounged up support for the various school programs but ended up taking on the responsibilities”. Amy was “concerned that she was overloading herself, yet at the same time she strongly believed students should have this kind of learning”. She assessed the “issue as a lack of communication and began to set up systems and structures as a means to keep everyone informed”.

Moral Purpose: *What do I do when a group of teachers do not believe they are responsible for their students’ learning?* Sean is at a middle school and worked with a group of teachers who viewed low achievement in their classes as “not connected to their teaching”. They expressed that “they were doing all they can by differentiating instruction and providing interventions”. They “link low performance to factors such as poor attendance, limited amount of time within their busy schedules and assignments not being completed...they believed failure was the students’ fault and not theirs”. Sean was driven to “getting the teachers to understand that if students weren’t learning from the way they taught, they needed to teach the students in the way they [could] learn”.

When Sean conducted walkthroughs, he “did not observe the teachers providing one-to-one or peer support” as the teachers said they did. Instead, in many of the classrooms, he observed “students were at desks in rows and not engaged in the lessons; and teachers were lecturing from their desks”.

As a result, Sean decided to “schedule regular walkthroughs and provide immediate feedback”. In addition, he “attended their weekly team planning sessions with the curriculum coordinator so that they all could work together to identify and support students who were receiving Ds and Fs across multiple content areas”.

In reflection, Sean found the situation had put a strain on his relationship with the group of teachers. The teachers were not used to being “monitored so closely”; however, he thought his actions were necessary to ensure student success.

Relationships: *How do I rebuild a leadership team that has lost trust with one another?* The dynamics of the newly formed leadership core team of the administrative team and the curriculum coaches was “not working well”. Kayla “dreaded” attending those “tense” leadership core team meetings. “Although the administrative team was cohesive and enjoyed a great relationship, the curriculum team was dysfunctional due to the tension caused from the lack of trust and competitiveness among the coaches”. Kayla realized the urgency and the consequences of no action to improve the situation, “as the problem would only trickle down and cause problems school-wide”. She suggested to her fellow administrators to work on team building and similar activities to help them learn more about each other at the beginning of their weekly leadership core meetings.

Kayla said “creating a workable team” that “worked together, laughed together and had fun together would allow us to collaboratively work towards meeting our students’ needs and raise achievement...we needed to work this out otherwise our school and especially our students would suffer.” Kayla showed an understanding of the importance of teamwork and worked to build relationships for the welfare of the school and its students.

Connecting People. The school leaders in this study placed relationships at the heart of their work. Every one of the sixteen accounts acknowledged the leaders’ regard for building relationships with others. They understood that the people in their school were their greatest resource in promoting the school’s vision and purpose and worked to providing a positive learning environment.

Relationship with teacher: *How do I assist a teacher who avoids meeting with me?* One of the biggest challenges Jean faced was “working with a teacher who liked to do things his way. Last year, he brushed off his evaluation responsibilities and did not complete the process” and was now back on the evaluation cycle this year. “Eventually after several attempts, the teacher made his initial meeting with me. After speaking with him, he shared that he avoided the meeting because the Multisensory Structured Language (MSL) Reading program

was so different and he was not sure if he was doing the right thing.” Jean explained to the teacher that she was not “looking to criticize but to help teachers improve”. She shared her observations of “his students responding very well to his teaching style and how they are engaged in their learning”. “After having the conversation, the teacher was willing to have the curriculum coaches assist him.”

In reflection, Jean thought “starting with his strengths in our discussion helped him to accept the support...If you communicate with respect and objectivity, you have a better chance of providing support. When someone feels attacked or threatened, their reaction to support may not be as favorable.” She further stated “trust is the key to collegial relationship since honest conversations and suggestions for improvement need to occur”.

Relationship between others: *What do I do to change a strained relationship between co-teachers to a healthy working relationship?* Inclusion is its first year of implementation at her school. Jean faced a problem with the general education and the special education teacher working together. “The general education teacher felt they were moving too slow, and the special education teacher felt the pace may be too fast....they were also finding they had differences when handling behavioral problems. One liked structure, and the other not so much. They found it hard to have difficult conversations with each other”...they made comments about the pacing and behavior management individually” to Jean, “but would not bring it up when the other person was around”. Both teachers acknowledged, the “students may not be progressing as they should because they are not on the same page”.

After conducting a several classroom observations and working with the teachers, Jean and the principal decided to “have the special education district resource teacher work with the teachers on inclusion. The district teacher had them identify their own teaching styles, and the strengths/needs of working as a team,” as well as develop a “plan with goals to work effectively with each other”.

Jean worked with the teachers to facilitate the relationship and “both teachers were willing to adapt to each other”. “We are making progress with baby steps, but we still have a long way to go”.

Developing Leadership Capacity. The assistant principals recognized formal teacher leaders such as curriculum coordinators and coaches can critically

influence the professional norms in a school and move it toward student learning. In most of the problems of practice, the beginning school leaders elicited (and often depended on) the help of these teacher leaders to help resolve instructional challenges and further promote the school's purpose. They learned early in their careers that leadership distributed among teachers led to success, and leadership capacity needed to be developed with others and within the system.

Burnout: How do I support the curriculum coordinator who is devoting extensive time and effort to help a marginal teachers? Kayla elicited the assistance of their curriculum coach to work with the kindergarten teacher who received a marginal rating on her evaluation last school year. She, and the administrative team asked the coach to work closely with the teacher on classroom management, establish rituals and routines and provide one-to-one support in delivering instruction to meet the student' needs. However, through the process, the coach "felt drained due to the amount of time that she had put to supporting this teacher and felt that she had neglected the others teachers she serviced". In resolving one challenge, Kayla was now presented with a new challenge---a teacher leader who was feeling burned out and who had her own moral purpose to uphold to the other teachers. How does she support the very person she asked to support the marginal teacher? "I should not and cannot only be focusing professional development support to teachers that are needy so that the students don't suffer and so that I have the documentation for the [teacher evaluation] process. Instead we need to support all teachers."

Conclusion for Question 1

When early career assistant principals are faced with situations, their inquiries fell in two areas of leadership practice: cultural practices and instructional practice. Their cultural concerns dealt with building a climate where working relationships were established and/or nurtured and respect for one another was fostered, regardless how difficult the situation may be. The early career assistant principals worked directly with teachers and support staff to ensure their students received the best instruction needed for their students to learn and achieve. Many of the situations called for the assistant principals to confront the "uncomfortable"

problem. They did not shy away from resolving the situation. Oftentimes, the assistant principals mentioned that it was their duty or purpose to ensure that the school environment was conducive to optimal learning. Diagram 4.3 displays the five areas early career assistant principals study framed the sixteen situations: cultivating a responsive climate/culture, connecting and working with people, optimizing instruction, developing leadership capacity, and stewarding a moral purpose.

Table 4.3 Secondary themes for each of five leadership practices

ETHICAL LEADERSHIP FRAME EMBEDDED IN EARLY CAREER ASSISTANT PRINCIPALS' ACTIONS ON PROBLEMS	
Cultivating a Responsive Climate/Culture Moral Purpose Communication/Systems Thinking Relationships Change Process	Connecting and Working with People Relationship with People Relationship between Others
Optimizing Instruction Vision Supervision Support	Developing Leadership Capacity Burnout
Stewarding a Moral Purpose Equity Culture	

Question 2: What does the resolution of situations reveal of the early career assistant principals' moral thinking?

The researcher reviewed and analyzed the 16 narratives from the perspective of the ethical resolution principles. Generally, the early career leaders used three principles to guide their practice:

- "Do whatever is best for the student(s)" Principle or Education Ethic.
- "Follow the rule and good outcomes will result" Principle or Rule Ethic.

- “Treat others as you would want them to treat you” Principle or Relationship Ethic.

Although all three principles were used, the education and relationship ethics were more prevalent in the assistant principals’ practice. Each of the two ethical principles was used in six of the 16 or 37.5% of the narratives. Together, they were applied to 70% of school problems/situations presented by the principals. The Rules Principle was used at a lesser degree---four of the 16 or 25% of the everyday situations.

Table 4.4 Three principles used by the assistant principals

“Do whatever is Best for the Student/s” Principle	“Follow the Rule and Good Outcomes Result” Principle	“Treat Others as You Want Others to Treat You” Principle
David		Amy
David	Linda	Linda
A-A-Ron	Amy	Linda
A-A-Ron	Kayla	Jean
Sandi	Sean	Jean
Sean		Sandi
37.5% of Situations	25% of Situations	37.5% of Situations

“Do whatever is best for the student(s)” Principle or the Education Ethic Principle. Six of the sixteen, or 37.5% of the narratives indicated that early career leaders resolved situations with this principle. Three categories described this principle: instruction, change and strategy.

The mantra “students first” was viewed by the assistant principals as their “duty”. This supported the beginning stem of all six Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium standards that state, “An education leader promotes the success of every student...” Statements found in the narratives such as “...my philosophy of giving all students the opportunity to attain the skills and knowledge necessary supports for this teacher and her students”; “...I must always remember that my obligation is to the students, and I must do what is best for them”; and

“...focus 90% of my time on student achievement and 10% on operational things” are prevalent.

The leaders who believed in this moral principle were concerned with the school’s culture as a means to better promote equitable education.

- **Instruction.** Assistant principals were concerned with “supporting what students were learning in the classrooms”. “If students aren’t learning from the way they teach, then they need to teach them in the way they learn”. They promoted “rigorous lessons that were relevant to students” and a “multi-prong approach of support was critical for the success of each student.”. Also, the assistant principals urged teachers to be consistent in “what was taught in each class and at each grade level” and “feared that students may not be progressing as they should because they are not on the same page”.
- **Change.** As a school, the assistant principals wanted to see change happening consistently. They attempted to create collegial environments where teachers could “come out of their comfort zones and be accountable for their own questions” and “overcome differences and work together towards raising achievement of our students schoolwide”. They saw a need for “time to bond and agree on consistent practices” and “share ideas of next steps”. They wanted the school as a community to “address the activities that would help increase student achievement”. The assistant principals understood change as urgent!
- **Strategies.** Assistant principals who applied the education ethic used varying strategies to keep the agenda of “students first” at the forefront. They used data and had teachers “involved in and own the data”. They “make it a priority to visit classrooms and conduct walkthroughs” and “collect data on instruction and provide feedback to teachers”. A-A-Ron “sent out weekly reflective questions about their (teachers) week and supported their needs. Amy “asked questions” to learn about the culture of the school and understand the teachers’ thinking.

“Treat others as you want others to treat you” Principle or the Relationship Ethic Principle. Equally applied to situations as the educational principle, was the “Treat others as you want others to treat you” Principle. Six of the 16, or 37.5% of the narratives indicated that early career school leaders used this principle. Two major categories described this principle: belief, and strategy.

This principle placed people and relationships at the heart of the school leaders’ ethical decision making. There was a strong belief “to work collaboratively with others and to empower them as much as I can so that we can help the school move forward to helping all students achieve academic success.” School leaders mentioned adapting “to all the different situations” as well as the “willingness to adapt to each other”. They highlighted the importance of dispositions related to communication such as “not making presumptions”, “being more patient when working with people”, and “correct misinterpretations and misunderstandings”.

An example of this was Amy. Amy faced a situation where the teachers were inconsistent with their grading and the make-up tests were not administered. There seemed to be little consistency from class to class and department to department. She was frustrated that the teachers were not taking standards based lessons seriously; there were few pacing charts and assessments. Her fervent feelings to pursue the goal of moving the school toward a standards-based curriculum were tempered with an even stronger value to build trust and relationships with the faculty through “questioning and letting the teachers know that she is still learning the how and whys about the school”. Amy concluded that the “best way to learn and change the culture [of a school] was through cultivating relationships and working slow”.

The leaders who believed in and implemented this relationship ethic principle were concerned with maintaining strong relationships and building trust as a means to create and sustain a positive school climate so students could achieve. The following were characteristic of leaders who used the relationship ethic to resolve their situation:

- **Trust.** Assistant principals built trust among the members of the school. They were “available for the faculty” and “walked around to show I care” and “provided support”. They “spend most of my time listening, clarifying, summarizing” and asking a “lot of questions” to

learn and understand the culture of the school. It was seen, by these leaders, as an opportunity to “hear viewpoints of different groups on campus”. They took the time to “explain [to teachers] they are not looking to criticize but to help teachers improve” and to “provide support” for their work.

- **Capacity-building.** Assistant principals built capacity in their teachers. A-A-Ron encouraged groups/teachers to “facilitate our academy meetings instead of having him/the vice principal standing and speaking the entire time...I’m trying to build capacity and leaders”. Other assistant principals talked about having “everyone actively involved in our meetings”. They wanted teachers and administrators to “be the risk taker and stick their neck out to make structured, well thought-out change.”
- **Collaboration and team building.** Assistant principals built teams that “work together, laugh together and have fun together that will allow us to collaboratively work towards meeting our students’ needs”. They worked on “team building to help the dynamics of the team” and “resolve issues”. “Team building is very important, in any situation or with any new group”... we will be able to overcome our differences and work together towards raising achievement”.

“Follow the rule and good outcomes will result” Principle or Rules

Ethic. Four of the 16, or 25% of the narratives indicated that early career leaders resolve situations with the rule principle. Three categories describe this principle: belief, data-driven decision and strategy.

Rules, protocols, and procedures were important to the leaders applying the Rules Principal. They made decisions based on “what data shows”.

“Communication is also key to learning and I have to communicate with all the stakeholders in the school”, “clarify what the expectations are” and set up “systems functioning effectively [which] impact[ed] the overall operation of the school”.

The school leaders who applied the rules ethic principle believed that “students were first” and ensured their decisions were based on evidence/data to produce consistency of results.

- **Belief.** Assistant principals “make sure that my expectations are clear” and provided support. They “enhanced professional practices” encouraged “teachers find their own goals and which we [administrators] can support them to reach”.
- **Data-driven decisions.** Assistant principals made decisions based on “what data shows” and documented support given to teachers. They “provided evidence to support decisions” and “considered second and third tier consequences”. They “learned that what gets monitored gets done”. “If [a teacher] does not show any improvement [after provided support], they looked into formally documenting lack of improvement” or “progress in a Summary of Conference”. They ensured that “students don’t suffer” due to poor instruction.
- **Strategies.** Assistant principals who applied the rules ethic used varying strategies to keep the agenda at the forefront. They “created momentum and clarity that will inspire teachers to work collaboratively” and “offered up new opportunities for the students”. They “collect data” and “analyze what to do next”. Providing “feedback to teachers” and “sharing what they [teachers] do so that they continued to stay motivated and so that others would also be motivated by their efforts” are viable strategies for the assistant principals. They “evaluate plans” to “improve and increase student achievement”.

Conclusion for Question 2

The second question of this study provided another glimpse of early career assistant principals’ view of every day situations. The assistants resolved problems using three ethical principles: “Do whatever is best for the student”, “Follow the rule and good outcomes will result”, and “Treat others as you would want them to treat you”. As with the first question of the study, the assistant principals’ duty to do what is best for students was prevalent. Also, as evident with the first question, the early career assistant principals placed respectful relationships as central in accomplishing tasks and providing a climate conducive to learning.

Table 4.5 Relationship of the inquiry question and the resolution ethics

Problem Theme	Inquiry Question	Resolution Ethic
Stewarding a Purpose	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How do I ensure that all students are given equal access to learning opportunities? [Equity] • What is my responsibility to the students as a leader in my school? [Equity] • How do I begin to influence the school's instructional culture? [Culture] 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Education • Education • Relationship
Optimizing Instruction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • As an instructional leader, how do I eliminate barriers to ensure productive learning environments for the underserved students? [Vision] • How do I work with the librarian who is not fulfilling the responsibilities to the teachers and students? [Supervision] • How do I provide training and resources to teachers who are willing to change their instructional strategies when the budget is limited? [Support] 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Education • Rule • Relationship
Cultivating a Climate/Culture for Learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How do I rebuild a leadership team that has lost trust with one another? [Relationship] • How do I involve teachers in a change process where they feel ownership for the school improvement plan as well as the implementation of the plan? [Change Process] • What do I do when a group of teachers do not believe they are responsible for their students' learning? [Moral Purpose] • What must I do to influence teachers to implement a school initiative with fidelity? [Moral Purpose] 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Relationship • Relationship • Education • Rule • Rule

**Table 4.5 Relationships of the Inquiry Question and the Resolution Ethics -
Continued**

Problem Theme	Inquiry Question	Resolution Ethic
Cultivating a Climate/Culture for Learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How do I help unify the people in the school to move in the same direction? [Communications/ Systems Thinking] • How do I change a faculty's complacent mindset and ignite a sense of urgency to change? [Change process] 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Education • Rule
Connecting and Working with People	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How do I assist a teacher who avoids meeting with me? [Relationship with teacher] • How do I begin to work with a teacher who does not like me and whom I do not trust? [Relationship with teacher] • How do I change a strained relationship to a healthy working relationship between co-teachers? [Relationships between others] • How do I help co-teachers "resolve" their opposing working styles that impact a special group of students from learning in a positive environment? [Relationships between others] 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Relationship • Education • Relationship • Relationship
Developing Leadership Capacity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How do I support a marginal teacher as well as those I ask to support that teacher? [Burnout] 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rule

Question 3: What do assistant principals' narratives tell us of the tensions that challenge them in their first two years of practice?

Ethical decision-making was complex and challenging for the new assistant principal. Right-wrong type decisions were "easier" to resolve but the novice school leaders were more inclined to frame problems that "pushed" them to deal with moral

dilemmas---they placed themselves in situations where they needed to consider more than facts and select one of two viable values to resolve the situation. They needed to determine issues such as fairness, justice and rights. Of the sixteen scenarios, twelve revealed eight different dilemmas: task versus relationship (4); personal values versus system (2); personal values versus student (1); student needs versus teacher practice (2); compliance versus relationship (1); direct work versus involve people (1); short term and long term (1) and individual versus community (1). Upon closer examination of the dilemmas, they exposed two types of moral tensions: tensions that compelled the assistant principals to pursue their moral purpose to address the needs of students and tensions that pressed assistant principals to build the assistant principals' relationships with and between adults in the school.

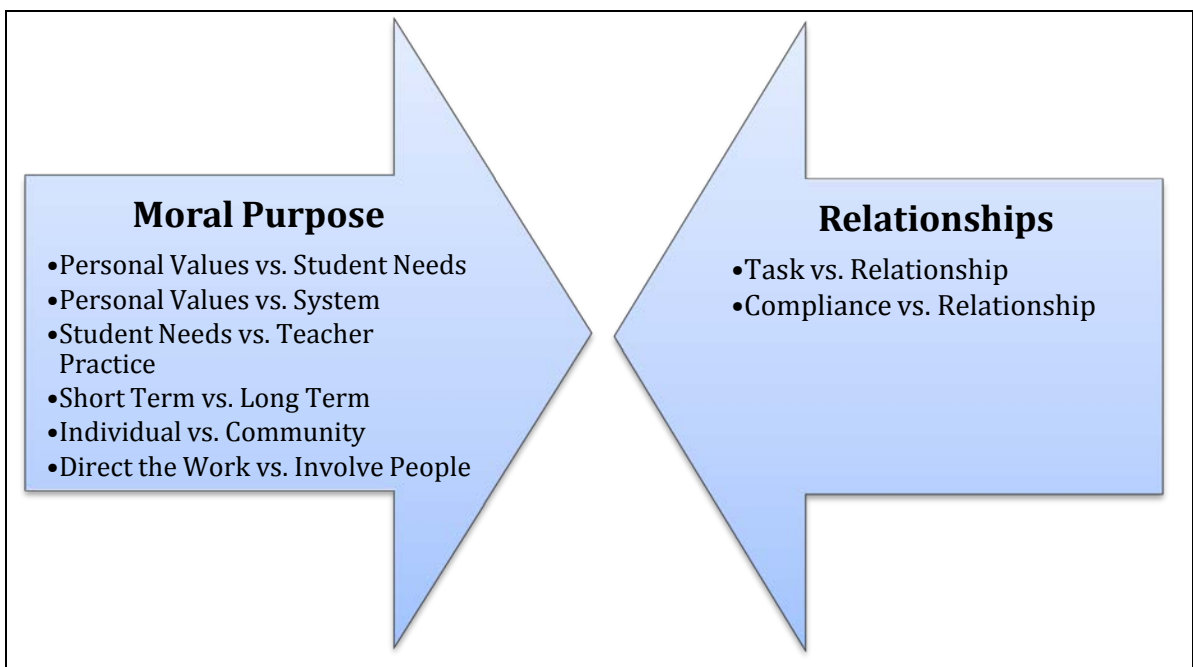


Figure 4.2 Dilemmas experienced by assistant principals

Tasks versus Relationships. Four of the twelve ethical dilemma situations involved the assistant principals choosing between getting the task done and building relationships with others. In two of the situations, Kayla and Jean chose “building

relationships” over “completing tasks”. Kayla described how the administration team “assumed that the teachers individually were strong classroom teachers” and “would work well together as a team”. However, she realized the team was “dysfunctional due to the tension caused from the lack of trust and competitiveness that our curriculum coaches have with one another”:

“After dealing with tense meetings for over two months, I began to dread meeting as a core team. I started to push the blame towards the two coaches and grumbled that the two needed to be adults and work out their problem. After reflecting, I realized that I needed to take action as an administrator. I suggested to my fellow administrators that we needed to work on our team building to help the dynamics of our leadership core team.

In reflection, Kayla said “I realize now I should have taken a slower approach and opened the year by working on our team building”.

Similarly, Jean was working with a teacher who refused to meet with her to discuss his teacher evaluation objectives last year. She tried to press him to comply with the system’s expectation but he “brushes off his responsibilities”. Rather than continue to push compliance this year, she decided to take the relationship-approach, especially since she recognized a greater goal of helping the teacher to improve his instruction. Jean finally met with the teacher and began to talk about his strengths. She concluded

One of the biggest lessons I learned is that most teachers who need support really want to do a good job. If you are able to communicate with respect and objectivity, you have a better chance of providing support. When someone feels attacked or threatened, their reaction to support may not be as favorable...

Trust is the key to collegial relationships since honest conversations and suggestions for improvement need to occur.

In another situation, Sean told of his dilemma and chose “task” over “relationship” when he tried to ensure that data teams were implemented with fidelity.

Students Needs versus Teacher Practice. Two school leaders faced ethical dilemmas of selecting “student need” over “teacher practice”. Sean said he

worked with a select group of teachers who ““felt strongly that low achievement in their classes was not connected to them and not a reflection on them” and “they believed that if their students failed, it was their students’ fault---not theirs”. Sean courageously worked to help teachers “understand that if student weren’t learning from the way they taught, then they needed to teach them in the way they learned”. He “followed-up” by “scheduling regular walkthroughs and providing immediate feedback. In addition, he “attended their weekly team planning session”. He went on to say, “This was not a comfortable situation for this group because they were not used to being monitored so closely, and it was putting a strain on the relationship that I am working to build with them. At the same time, it is something that must be done to ensure student success”.

A student approached Sandi and confided that his teacher “yells at him and puts him down in the classroom” and “he hated going to class because he didn’t feel comfortable”. Sandi was “concerned for the boy” and spoke with the department head to change the student’s class. When the switch was made, the classroom teacher was visibly upset and approached Sandi to say, “he was not happy with her decision”. Sandi reflected “My decisions are always student-centered and what fits the needs of those students...In changing the class for the one boy, I made a decision to help him succeed”.

Direct the Work versus Involve People. Linda witnessed several groups struggling to develop the annual Academic Plan and needed to decide if it is better to do the work with a small select group (as has been done in the past) or involve the entire faculty and staff to develop the Plan. “I had to spend time explaining what enabling activities were and what was involved. I had to steer people away from just requesting resources and reminded them to address the enabling activity that would help increase student achievement”. At one point she resigned, “the easy route would be to just tell them exactly what to do, write it all down and explain my rationale for including a particular activity”. However, she and the other administrators recognized that although “the process has been tedious and confusing,” they decided “it was important for them to be involved in the process so that they can understand it, as well as feel ownership in the plan and they would be more likely to follow through with the plan”. Although she knew it would take more

time and probably pose a “struggle” for the teachers, Linda decided it was more important to involve teachers in matters that impacted them as well as those that impacted the school and students.

Personal Values versus Student Needs. A-A-Ron examined his personal values when the idea of merging academies at his high school was discussed. He reflected on how this action would benefit the students’ education.

There has been talk of merging the upper academies into one large academy. For personal reasons I was reluctant to merge. My partner [another assistant principal who is ill] is unable to perform the job equally. I am in fear of the amount of work and responsibility associated with the merge since majority of the load will fall on me. I weighed the positives and negatives of the merge and when I put students and teachers first, my concern is immediately visible. Reflecting on this decision, it reinforces my belief of placing the students first. Initially, I was not thinking of how it would impact students. I only looked at how it would affect me and what I am trying to do. Through analyzing the situation, I came to the realization that it would be most beneficial to be most beneficial to the students for the upper academies to merge.

A-A-Ron’s deep reflection on the situation helped him decide to address student needs and put his initial reaction at rest.

Amy noticed that “everyone was trying to blame each other and nobody wanted to be the risk taker and stick their neck out to make structured, well thought out change”. Her vision of a “great” school prompted her to challenge the current culture and decided to “set up systems and structures” as a means to “keep everyone informed of meeting minutes and transparency”. She “worked with the tech department to put meeting minutes and a school calendar” on a schoolwide database. “I have changed by being very available for the faculty and listening a lot”. In this situation, Amy used her personal values to springboard a new communication systems in hopes to “create a sense of ownership in the faculty and staff and a

willingness to work together to create a learning environment that goes beyond the books and offers up new opportunities for the students”.

Short term versus Long term. Jean was challenged with two inclusion teachers who had very different styles of teaching, pacing instruction, different expectations, and structure. The teachers recognized their difficulty and “feel that the students may not be progressing as they should because they are not on the same page”. Understanding the students’ learning was at stake, Jean decided to address the short term needs and requests the special education district resource teacher assist the teachers in working effectively as a team. Together they created a “plan with goals on how to work more effectively with each other”. Jean realized that this support would need to suffice for now as they are “making progress with baby steps,” and “still have a long way to go”.

Individual versus Community. Kayla provided support to a tenured teacher who “lacks quality instructions” and is identified as a “marginal” teacher. One of the supports was to have “one of the curriculum coaches work with her closely on classroom management, establish set rituals and routines, and improve meeting students’ needs. Through the process, the curriculum coach was “feeling drained due to the amount of time” that she has “put into supporting the teacher and felt that she had neglected the other teachers she services”. Kayla wondered if she was over-supporting the individual teacher. “Based on this experience,” Kayla “realizes the importance of providing support for all teachers, not just the needy teachers...I should not and cannot only be focusing professional development support to teachers that are needy...we need to support all teachers”. Kayla struggled weighing the needs of the individual (needy teachers) and of the community (all teachers).

CONCLUSION

Early career assistant principals’ practices are values-driven. They have a strong desire to make a positive difference for the organization as well as for people. Their moral purpose drives their goal setting and their leadership practices. The leaders in the study wear their values on their sleeve, and model those values for others.

This was evidenced from three perspectives of assistant principals' actions emerged from the study to describe their concept of ethical leadership: they tend to frame problems with a culture-focus and an instructional-focus; they use three principles to resolve the challenges of their everyday problems of practice. "Do whatever is best for the student", "Follow the rule and good outcomes will result", and "Treat others as you would want them to treat you"; and they tend to frame situations in right-versus-right format that poses more challenging problems as they are forced to weigh two viable core values to resolve the problems.

Practice. The first perspective revealed the situations/problems confronting assistant principals fell in two major categories of leadership practices: school cultural practices and instructional practices. School cultural practices included three themes of 1) stewarding a moral purpose, 2) cultivating a school climate, and 3) connecting and working with people. The major category of instructional practices included the two themes: 1) optimizing instruction and 2) developing leadership capacity, and to some extent stewarding moral purpose. The frequent reference to their moral purpose demonstrated the assistant principals' commitment to "safeguarding the values of democracy, equity, and diversity" (Standard 5 of the ISLLC Standards). These leadership practices reflect current findings of effective

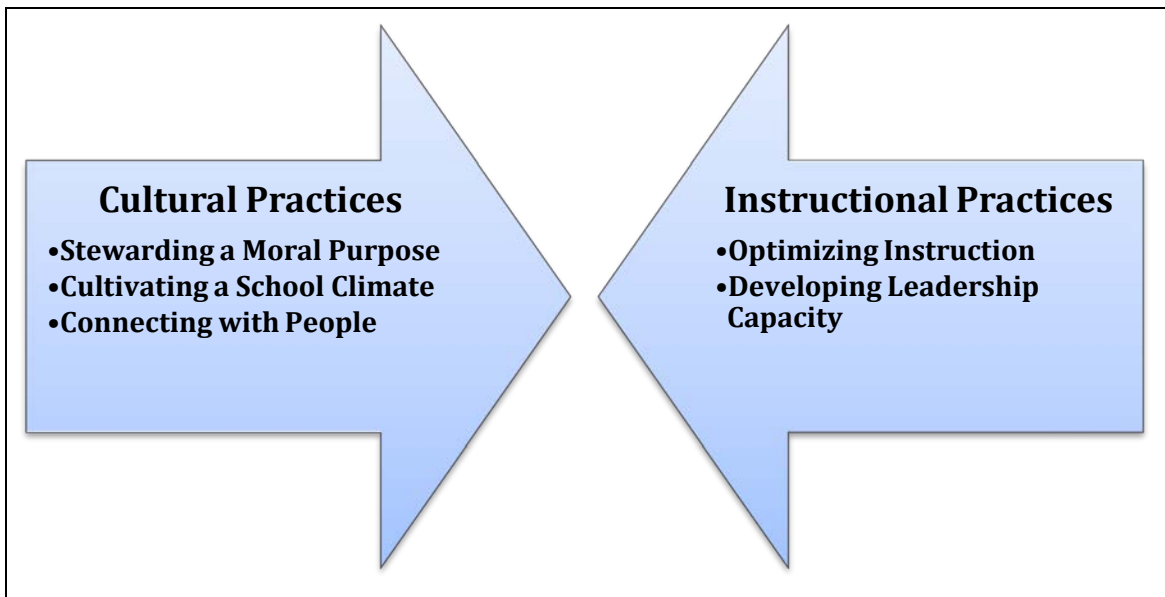


Figure 4.3 Leadership practices of early career assistant principals

work of principals and their impact on student achievement (Wallace, 2013; Leithwood, et al., 2010; Robinson, Lloyd, & Rowe, 2008). The cultural and instructional practices demonstrated by the assistant principals were indicative of Standard 2 of Educational Leadership Policy Standards (ISLLC, 2008, p.20): An educational leader promotes the success of every student by advocating, nurturing, and sustaining a school culture and instructional program conducive to student learning and staff professional growth.

Principles. The second perspective that emerged was the extensive use of three principles used by early career leaders to resolve the challenges of their everyday problems of practice. “Do whatever is best for the student”, “Follow the rule and good outcomes will result”, and “Treat others as you would want them to treat you”. The theme of “doing what was best for the student(s)” was prevalent in the thinking of the assistant principals and reflective of all six leadership standards of their professional code to “promote the success of every student”. In the study, this was referred to the education or professional ethic because of its foundation in the leadership standards and the codes of ethics. However, the study’s “do whatever is best for the student(s)” ethic often positioned the assistant principals to anticipate consequences of their decisions.

The assistant principals used the rule ethic when “supervising instruction” (ISLLC Standard 3) and were faced with documenting and evaluating teachers who were not demonstrating “quality instruction” (ISLLC Standard 2). This was a surprise to the researcher, as it did not reflect her experience in her years of working and conversing with assistant principals. She noticed that these leaders often checked laws, school system codes and regulations and rules before making decisions, especially when they were related to “ensuring management of the organization, operation and resources” and “protecting the welfare and safety of student and staff” (ISLLC Standard 3). Decisions, especially when related to instruction, proved otherwise.

The third ethic was the relationship ethic, “treat others as you would want them to treat you”. The early career assistant principals placed respectful

relationships and building relational trust as central in accomplishing tasks and providing a climate that was conducive to learning by both students and adults.

Tensions. The third perspective that emerged was the presence of tensions that challenged the assistant principals' practice as they resolved the everyday situations/problems. These tensions posed a conflict of core values for which the leaders' cared deeply. Analysis revealed eight distinct ethical dilemmas: task versus relationship; personal values versus system; personal values versus student needs; student needs versus teacher practice; compliance versus relationship; do the task versus involve people to do the task; short term and long term; and individual versus community. Upon closer examination, the ethical dilemmas fell generally into two themes: tensions that forced the assistant principals to pursue their moral purpose to address the needs of all students, and tensions that called for the assistant principals' to think about the relationships and trust with and between adults in the school.

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The assistant principals' voice as witnessed through their lived stories illustrates the challenges and dilemmas early career school leaders face as they make sense of their new role and begin to demonstrate their leadership in the schools. It is "their voice" that helps us to answer the question "What is a good leader?" and to some extent, "What is an effective leader?" Their stories demonstrate how moral values and principles are expressed in their actions, words, and decisions.

This grounded theory research of examining assistant principals' leadership and their moral practice-in-use explored the question: What theory explains how early career public school assistant principals' actions and interactions on everyday situations in an educational system convey their view of ethical leadership? Based on narratives of their problems of practice, the assistant principals shared everyday situations that revealed the use of moral concepts and a thought process in resolving the situations. A summary is displayed in Figure 5.1.

Moral Concepts. The assistant principals shared situations exposing moral concepts used to determine their sense of right and wrong. The assistant principals from this study used with consistency the following key moral concepts: moral purpose, respect and care for people, equal learning opportunities, benefit maximization, and collective responsibility and collaboration.

Moral purpose. A prevailing theme in the assistant principals communicating their everyday situations was strong sense of purpose. They kept at the forefront their duty to make a difference in the lives of their students and they strived to accomplish that purpose as part of the solution. Their moral purpose served as both a means and an end to handling situations. Equity and creating challenging and stimulating learning environments that promoted students' cognitive and emotional growth to becoming contributing citizens were common purposes shared by the

assistant principals. They possessed a passion to act to make a difference for people and the workplace.

Respect and care for people. People and positive relationships with adults and youngsters were critical to the assistant principals' leadership. They listened to better understand other's reasoning and choices and to learn about the culture of the school. Although they may not have always agreed with the teachers or fellow administrators, they showed appreciation and acceptance for their difference in opinion or perspective. They lived the Golden Rule.

Equal learning opportunities. The assistant principals viewed providing equal learning opportunities for students and adults as a principle that was promoted and defended. They were sensitive to conditions that signaled a specific group or individual being deprived of equal access to education and took steps to influence or "fix" the situation.

Benefit maximization. A critical factor in thought and decision-making of the assistant principals was defining what was the best interest of the students. This was especially prevalent when they found themselves in a dilemma and needed to demonstrate courage in communicating to others of their decision to favor the students over teachers, parents, and staff. They asked themselves constantly what was best for the students, and to some extent, their teachers and the school when taking action and making decisions.

Collective responsibility and collaborative work. The assistant principals regarded collaboration and collective responsibility as significant in resolving problems and influencing the culture. Although they were aware of the extensive time and effort required to change the mindset of teachers to become decision-makers and collaborators, they, nonetheless pursued the value of a team in building the norms of the community to face the work and challenges of the school. In a few schools, the assistant principals introduced collaborative work and struggled to "persuade" the teachers that this "new way" of doing the school's work was a better one. They believed passionately that together, as a team, they could move the school toward its mission.

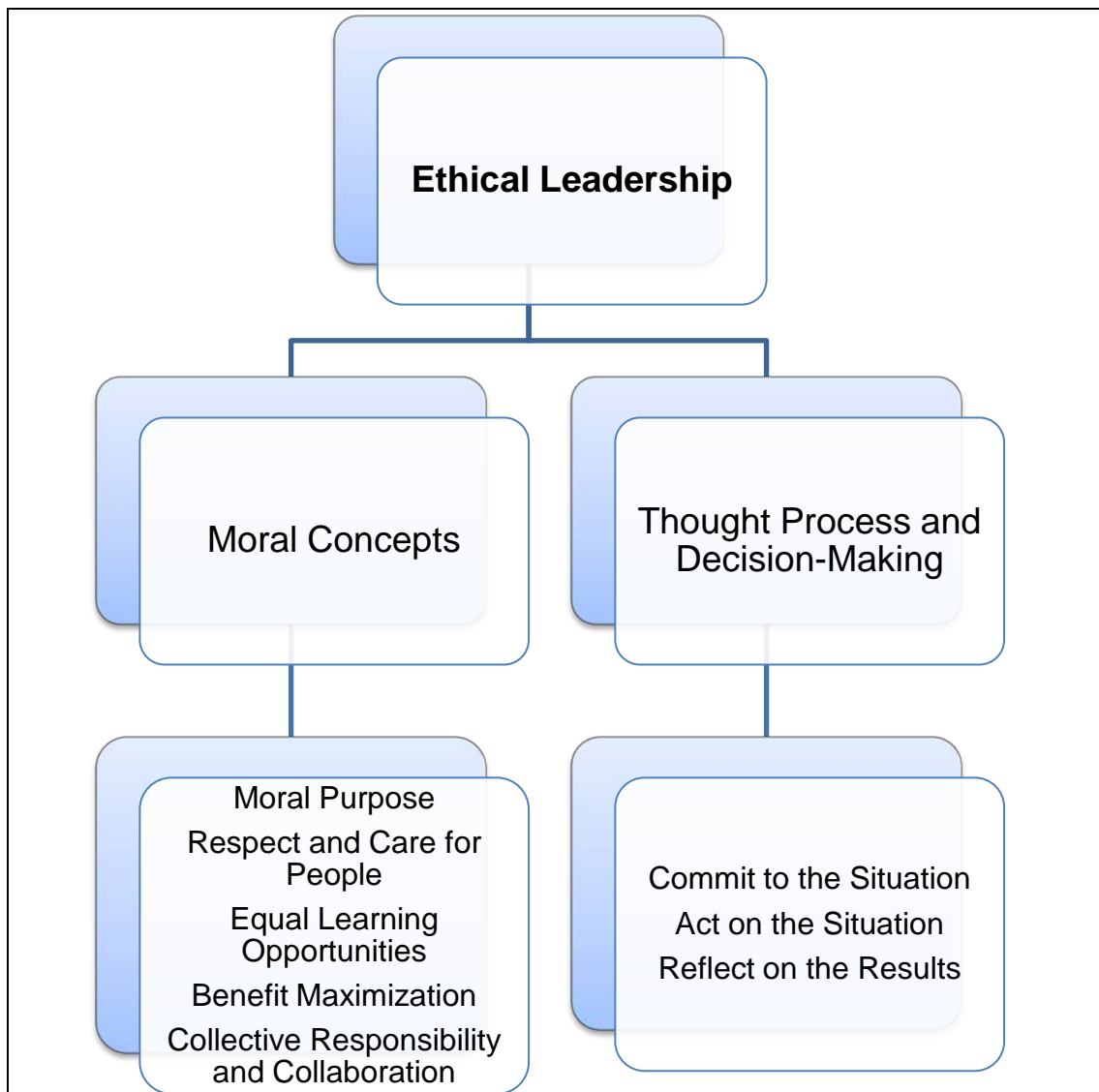


Figure 5.1 Framework used by the assistant principals in acting on everyday situations

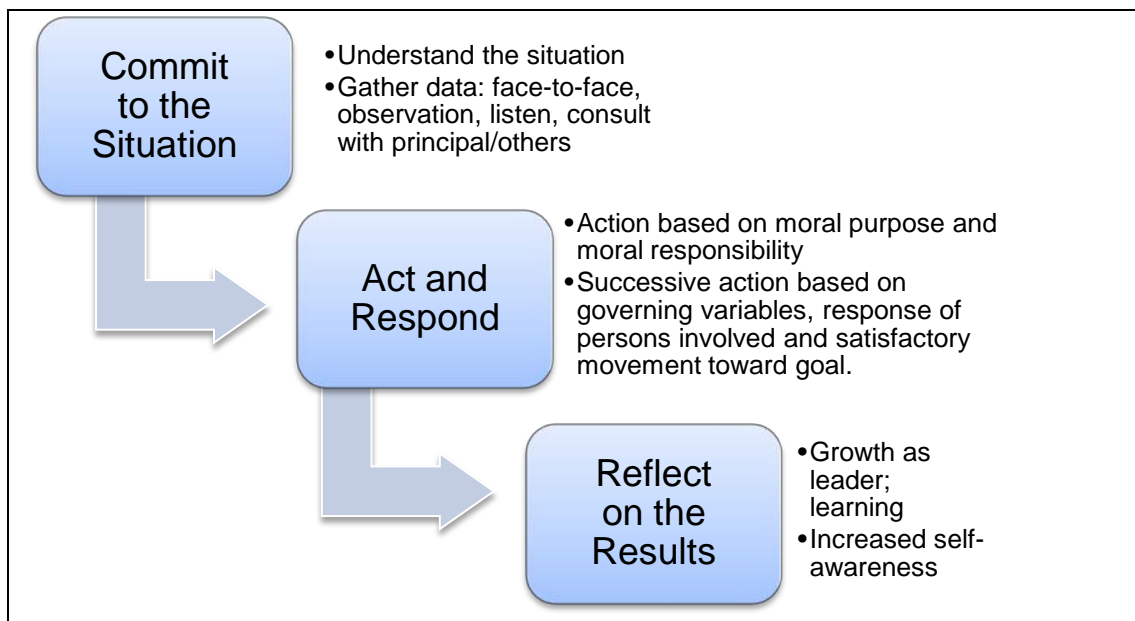
Thought Process. Generally, the process the assistant principals used in thinking through a situation included three phases of problem solving (Figure 5.2):

1. Commit to the situation. During this phase of the process, the leaders acknowledged their responsibility to respond to the challenge; they did not ignore or shy away from the situation. They understood the situation by gathering data in

various ways---talked to people, listened and observed, asked questions, consulted with their principal and informal leaders in the school.

2. Act on the situation and respond to the consequences. Based on their beliefs, values, and moral purpose, and the school's practices (culture), they responded to the situation. Their consequent actions were dependent on people's response of the situation and/or the satisfactory movement toward the goal.

3. Reflect on the results. In their reflection, the assistant principals focused on the results of the situation and determined whether their actions accomplished the purpose or goal of the situation and influenced individuals and the school culture. They often concluded with learning a lesson---a better understanding of working with people, making connections with the parts and their interrelationship to the school system, their influence on the school culture, and an "adjustment" to their leadership practice. If the results were not satisfactory according to their "measure", they reflected on the action(s) they should have taken or the manner in which they approached the situation. Their moral purpose continued to be a critical measure of their success in resolving the situation.



5.2 Thought process used by assistant principals

Recommendations

Early Career Leadership Growth

Ethical leaders touch the lives of individuals and impact the community and culture of the school. The situations shared by the assistant principals, revealed the critical role they play in the work of the school. They exposed the beliefs, values, concepts, thinking, and problem-solving processes used in their moral reasoning.

The following recommendations are related to supporting the early career school leader:

Increase ethics knowledge. Considerable time should be spent on understanding basic knowledge—ethical perspectives and frameworks, ethical principals of decision-making process, moral reasoning---and intentionally integrating the knowledge, skills, and dispositions of ethical thinking in practice. There should be many opportunities for meaningful discourse for the purpose of being sensitive to the moral issues embedded in the everyday work of school leaders.

Develop a personal and professional Code of Ethics. Ethical leaders start with the leaders' awareness and understanding of their values, beliefs and view of themselves. They should identify a set of core values about learning and leading that is a foundation for their behavior and actions. They then, should check regularly the alignment of their espoused theory of action with their actual practice; and reflect on inconsistencies, seek feedback and make adjustments. A code of ethics helps new leaders be intentional in their leadership.

Commit to a moral purpose. Ethical leaders strive to make a difference in the lives of students and adults. New leaders should be committed to this value prior to entering the field of school leadership. Throughout their preparation, they should be encouraged to live this value through their actions and decisions. A moral purpose guides the leaders' decisions, especially when faced with "tough" situations.

Engage in double-loop learning process to "test" moral and ethical reasoning. In telling their stories, the leaders mirrored Argyris' single-loop learning. They moved from governing variables, "why we do what we do" to action strategies, "what do we do" and then to results and consequences, "what did we attain", and looping back to "what do we do" and "what did we attain" when the first set of actions were not "on target". This way of thinking needs to be elevated to include double-

loop learning to advance intentional thought from moral reasoning to ethical reasoning. This would mean devoting time to moral reasoning, fostering systematic testing of the principles underlying their “gut” reactions (Strike, Haller & Soltis, 2005); and allowing the space and reflection time for assistant principals to reevaluate and reframe their goals, values, beliefs, and assumptions. When this is supported, the assistant principals learn to be more conscious in their choices and actions. This process is essential to the work assistant principals do.

Provide time for critical reflection. Ethical leaders are lifelong learners. They take time to think about new ideas and revisit current practices of their school and take steps to continue to improve their work as well as the work of the school. New assistant principals should be provided the time to develop a habit of self-assessing regularly their skills, assumptions and mindset, and seeking constructive feedback of their actions and work. “Being reflective and analytical about yourself and what you believe is essential to being at your personal or professional best” (Gupton, 2010).

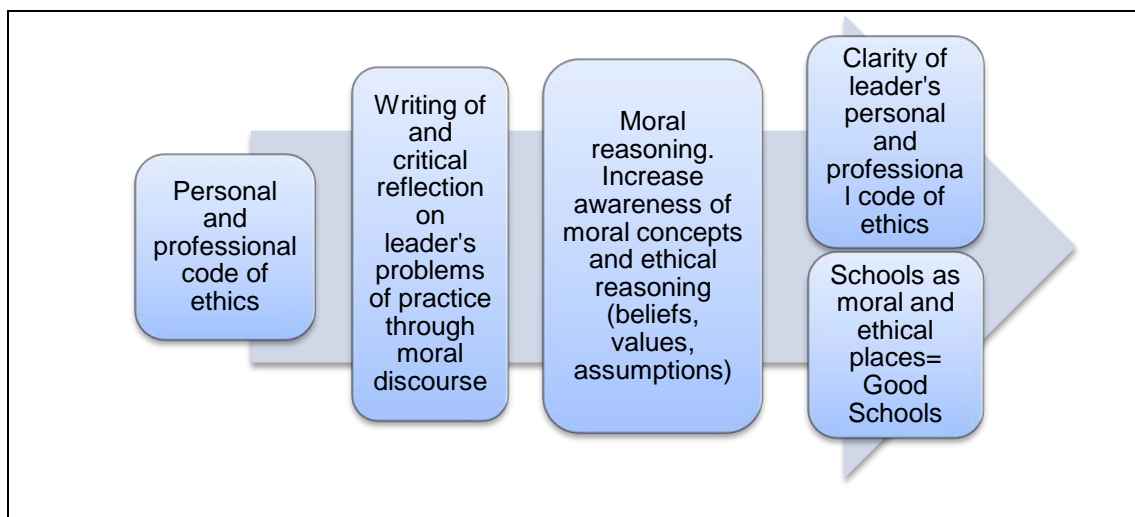


Figure 5.3 Framework for instruction on ethical leadership

Improve leadership practice using case studies and personal problems of practice. Use of narratives of problems of practice serve as a viable and relevant learning tool for early career and experienced school leaders to reflect and think deeply and critically of their own personal and professional codes of ethics. Using

stories specific to the assistant principals' experiences places the problem in a pertinent context and enriches the discourse. In addition, the sharing and dialogue of ethical narratives and dilemmas among leaders provides extraordinary possibilities to cultivate their understanding of the moral reasoning of and foster respect for the values of others.

Leadership Preparation Program

Develop a rigorous selection process. A strong, ethical character, the inner dimension of leadership, leads to ethical behavior and conduct, as well as high performing schools. Rigorous screening through the levels of selection, such as the application, interview, recommendation, and portfolio should provide a deeper learning of the virtues and traits of the prospective school leader.

Provide on-the-job support for early career leaders with mentoring.

There is a special relationship that grows between a veteran principal and a new comer to the profession. Early career assistant principals need the modeling, guidance, and feedback from principals who are virtuous in character and, especially from those who have the reputation of making tough ethical decisions. The influence of the principal mentor greatly impacts the new leaders' behavior and thinking.

Include veteran principals to share leadership stories throughout the preparation program. Veteran principals bring a special element of learning to the table. Through sharing their stories of practice, these leaders model the integration of values, beliefs, skills, and decision-making within the specific context of the school. Moreover, these individuals demonstrate different ways of managing tasks, as well as how they think through dilemmas.

Professional Development for School Leaders

Establish communities of professional learning. The work of school leaders is more complex and stressful compared to ten years ago (MetLife, 2012). The job has become very challenging and "messy". Establishing networks or communities of professional learning for school leaders has the potential of providing

a structure for leaders to connect with one another to share what they care about and value as professionals. It invites leaders to engage in dialogue, share knowledge and ideas, collaborate to solve challenges they are facing, and give/receive constructive feedback.

Future Research

“Good leaders lead not through knowledge and skills, but through responsibility and integrity” (Glanz, 2010, p.69). School leaders live in a world of increased accountability, higher student and leadership standards, and increased expectations of student achievement. The leader is key in establishing the ethics and norms that govern the people in the school through their actions and words. Yet, moral and ethical leadership in schools have been given very little attention. Research is needed to better inform theory, research and practice on the values, moral and ethics dimensions of school leaders and their impact on schools.

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