A Study of Ethical Decision-Making in Hypothetical Scenarios by Secondary School Principals

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Abstract

The purpose of the study was to investigate the ways in which secondary school principals make decisions that have an ethical dimension, and the reasons they use to justify their choices. The ethical principles and concepts, as well as the scenarios, were adapted from *The Ethics of School Administration* by Strike, Haller, and Soltis (1998).

In this study, 32 secondary principals from a school board in Ontario were asked to complete a descriptive survey which was designed to have principals make administrative decisions in response to 5 hypothetical scenarios. The open-ended questions were expected to elicit responses that were reflective of the principals’ actual decision-making strategies. The survey also required them to justify and explain their reasons for each decision. The data were analyzed and 4 major categories of justifications emerged: pedagogy, legalism, moral code, and democracy. The results indicate that the decisions made by principals are grounded in various perspectives. While the data did not indicate any explicit knowledge of ethical principles and concepts, the principals’ responses suggest sound and valid reasoning for their decision making, addressing the principles and concepts from a variety of viewpoints and using diverse justifications.
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CHAPTER ONE: BACKGROUND AND STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Background of the Problem

This is a study of how secondary school principals make and justify ethical decisions. This study is worthwhile because the day-to-day administration of a school involves the principal in making countless decisions, and although many are merely clerical, many others are complex and demand careful deliberation and application of ethical principles. Society assumes that principals are equipped to make such ethical decisions. The position of secondary school principal includes various duties and responsibilities. The principal, for example, may act in the capacity of a public relations officer, community representative and liaison, visionary, school leader, disciplinarian, policymaker, and accountant. These various roles require the principal to take into account several stakeholders such as the Ministry of Education, the school board, the Ontario College of Teachers, parents, police, teachers’ unions, students, teachers, and the community. The interests of these groups are sometimes in conflict, and situations often arise for which there is no standard protocol. In the absence of a formal system or method with which to approach ethical problems, principals rely on experience, judgment, and familiarity with diverse situations to make and justify their decisions.

All aspects of principals’ administrative duties involve making decisions. The scope of principals’ decision making encompasses a wide range of issues, including the discipline of students, assessment and evaluation of teacher performance, school programming, and policy. Principals decide who to hire and appoint to positions of authority. The principal oversees the selection and scheduling of courses offered in the
school. The allocation of funds for programming, textbooks, and supplies is also the responsibility of the principal.

In the day-to-day running of a school, the principal's authority is virtually absolute. Principals apply their discretion to routine situations as well as to situations that require deeper ethical decisions. Principals' decision making can be based on factors such as personal values, bias, focus, professional ambition, experience, and goals. In some areas there are built-in checks and balances, but often teachers, students, and parents accept a principal's directions and assume that there is an underlying ethos that has their best interests in mind. If we take into account not only the myriad interests in an educational situation but also that these interests are often in opposition, then the principal's decision-making process and rationale can often be questioned. Some decisions are straightforward while others are more complex and may require extensive deliberations. Other situations may require the principal to examine the ethical basis of a decision. It is the complex nature of the principal's role and responsibilities that creates a need to examine the application of ethics in school administration.

**Statement of the Problem**

In many cases, principals have no specific training or systematic basis by which they can approach and make decisions that involve ethical considerations. For example, two mandatory courses for people aspiring to be school principals (Principals' Course Part 1 and Part 2), which are typically offered by universities, are designed to prepare candidates for administrative duties but offer no specific preparation in the area of ethical decision making. Decision making is briefly touched upon in these courses as part of a
managerial role but there is no focus on ethical decision-making. In light of the increased accountability and complexity of their role, it may be that principals are not prepared for the decision making required in the operation of a school.

The lack of preparation for decision making was evident in one school board in Ontario. Individuals at the board discovered that recently appointed principals were not adequately prepared for the type of decision making required in a principal’s position. This discovery was made after various complaints about principals to the board resulted in some principals being removed from their role. Consequently, in 1998, members at the board created a mandatory course for principal candidates. The course, led by superintendents, is designed to train candidates in the skills required to be an administrator. This course does not have a section on ethics in decision making but focuses on the principal’s role and administrative duties in the school. In general, courses designed to prepare principals for decision making focus on legal, practical, or administrative issues, but they do not address ethics in decision making. There seems to be a need to establish a program where principals can examine the ethical principles and concepts that are part of the decision-making process and strive to develop and improve their own coherent system of values and ethical administrative style.

Before establishing such a program, there is a prior need to establish some sort of standardized system or guideline that principals can apply in order to make ethical decisions. Strike et al. (1998) state that principals “must be equipped to take individual responsibility for thinking through defensible positions on difficult ethical questions” (p. xi).
They summarize the importance of ethical decision making in schools when they state:

Human beings are moral agents. They are responsible for their choices, and they have a duty to make choices in a morally responsible way. Thus it is crucial that people be able to reflect ethically on their choices and their actions. This is especially important when individuals have power and influence over the lives of others. We can think of few areas where it is more important than in the administration of schools. (p. 6)

A principal who does not visibly or consistently apply ethical principles can be perceived as unjust or unpredictable and such a perception can affect the morale of teachers and students. A principal who is consistent in his/her application of principles and makes staff and students aware of his/her ethical framework, creates an atmosphere of justice even in cases of disagreement. What is not known, however, is the extent to which practicing administrators actually rely on a consistent ethical framework when making decisions with ethical considerations. Consequently, a compilation and analysis of data regarding the justifications that school principals use when making ethical decisions can contribute to academic literature about the frameworks that underlie administrative decision making and the ethics possessed and avowed by high school principals.

**Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study was to investigate the ways in which secondary school principals make decisions having ethical considerations and the principles or reasons they
use to justify their choices. The first aspect of this investigation was to determine the extent to which principals consciously apply ethical principles or processes. The second aspect was to examine the decisions made by principals who do not apply ethical principles in a formal way and the reasons they use to justify their decisions. Their responses can be analyzed to determine the basis and framework of their decisions. A compilation of these data can allow the inference of a values hierarchy among principals and establish what priorities principals typically assign to certain values. This will help to establish a framework for ethical decision making.

**Scope of the Study**

This is a study of secondary school principals' decision making in practical administrative scenarios that incorporate ethical principles and concepts as defined by Strike et al. (1998). The secondary school principals were chosen as representatives of a specific population because the scenarios used in the study survey considered more applicable to principals who work in an urban environment, where they deal with teachers, parents and students from diverse ethnic backgrounds and varied educational and socioeconomic levels.

This survey is secular and delimited to the principles and concepts of Strike et al. (1998). This framework should allow for many different philosophical orientations. The participant pool was originally intended to include both Catholic and public secondary school principals but access to the public secondary school principals was not available. Access was available to principals in the Catholic board. Responses from principals working for a Catholic school board were used in this study as a sample of convenience.
In order to examine the secondary principals' ethical decision making, the secondary principals were given five scenarios, and after they had read each scenario they were asked to make a decision and to justify it. This study used the concepts and principles cited by Strike et al. as the underlying moral private and public principles by which the responses were analyzed.

The first scenario, which dealt with the allocation of funds, was designed to have principals choose between the principle of benefit maximization and the concept of equality (Strike et al., 1998, p. 51). The second scenario, which dealt with teacher-student relations, was designed to have principals choose between professional versus private life (Strike et al., p. 44). The third scenario, implementing change, was designed to focus on the concept of democracy by having principals choose between the arguments presented by teachers and parents (Strike et al., p. 92). The fourth scenario, which dealt with teacher conduct, asked principals to choose between the concepts of personal and intellectual liberty and freedom of expression (Strike et al., p. 19). The fifth scenario, implementing superintendent directives, was designed to have principals examine human rights issues in relation to individual freedom versus public interests (Strike et al., p. 47).

In this study academic literature was reviewed in relation to the study of decision making and ethics. It was not within the scope of this study to contemplate the philosophy of ethics but rather, to study secondary school principals' decision making in hypothetical ethical scenarios, that have a practical character, as they relate to the ethical principles and concepts as defined by Strike et al. (1998). It is not my intention in this
study to draw conclusions or make judgments as to correct or incorrect decisions or courses of action made by principals.

Glossary of Key Terms

This is a study of secondary school principals' decision making in practical ethical scenarios, based on ethical principles and concepts defined by Strike, Haller, and Soltis (1998). The following principles and concepts based on Strike et al. will be used in this study.

*Concept of democracy:* This concept requires that in terms of decision making, the interest of each individual is fairly considered, and each individual has a fair influence on the decision (Strike et al., 1998, p. 99).

*Concept of due process:* This concept refers to the necessity of having a fair process to reach a decision, that is, the kinds of rationally required procedures that will yield reasonable and justified decisions (Strike et al., 1998, p. 76).

*Principle of equal treatment:* This concept stipulates that in any given circumstances people who are the same in those respects relevant to how they are treated in those circumstances should receive the same treatment (Strike et al., 1998, p. 54).

*Concept of freedom of expression:* This concept refers to the rights of individuals to be the authors of their own beliefs and the right to freely discuss ideas with others (Strike et al., 1998, p. 54).

*Concept of personal liberty:* According to this concept, the actions and feelings of an individual is a matter of weighing the importance of privacy against the public interest that is threatened (Strike et al., 1998, p. 36).
Ethical principles of relationships, community, and character development: These principles are factors that contribute to the development of the individual as a free moral agent, and help to develop rational problem-solving and decision-making skills through the interaction with others (Strike et al., 1998, p. 148).

Principle of benefit maximization: This principle states that whenever individuals are faced with a choice, the best and most just decision is one that results in the most good or the greatest benefit for the most people (Strike et al., 1998, p. 16).

Principle of equal respect: Equal respect is the treatment of people as an end rather than as a means, that is, people should not be treated as if they are mere objects who are valued insofar as they can contribute to someone else’s welfare (Strike et al., 1998, p. 17).

Radical diversity: Radical diversity is the respect given for multiculturalism, religion, and personhood (Strike et al., 1998, p. 126).

Values and ethics are defined for the purpose of this study as follows.

Values: These are the moral principles or accepted standards of a person or group (Collins Concise Dictionary, 1989).

Ethics: This is the philosophical study of moral values of human conduct and of the rules and principles that ought to govern it, the moral fitness of a decision or course of action (Collins Concise Dictionary, 1989).

Importance of the Study

This study collected data on the application of principles and concepts used by secondary school principals as they made decisions in response to practical ethical
...
scenarios. The analysis of data gathered through this study's questionnaire lends insight into the justifications underlying the decision-making practice of secondary school principals. It allows for insight into the decisions made by this group of principals in situations that require deliberation and consideration of specific ethical principles and concepts, which provides an indication of the basis of ethical decisions made daily by principals in secondary schools.

This study is significant not only because it provides information on the foundations, principles, and processes that principals use when making decisions, but also because it gives one group of school principals some practice in thinking through ethical situations. Such practice has been deemed essential by Strike et al., (1998) who state, "we believe ethical reasoning is a skill and that its acquisition requires practice" (p. xi). Possibly, through the process of completing the scenarios, this group of principals might approach decision making with a higher level of awareness or perhaps begin to develop a systematic approach to the application of ethical principles. Furthermore, their experiences, as documented in this study, can serve as exemplars for other school principals who face similar situations.

Outline of the Remainder of the Document

Chapter 2 presents a review of literature on ethics and decision-making. First, literature on problem-solving and decision-making skills of principals is examined and analyzed. Next, decision-making models are presented and critiqued. Finally, the ethical bases and concepts from which this study is based are examined.
Chapter 3 describes the research method and procedures. The participants are described and the instrumentation procedure outlined. The five scenarios for the study are described and compared to the scenarios, ethical principles, and concepts outlined in Strike et al. (1998). The data collection and analysis procedures are described and examined. Finally, strategies to deal with methodological limitations are stated.

In chapter 4 the findings of the study are presented. The major themes and concepts are discussed in detail and a summary of results is given.

In chapter 5, a summary of the study is presented, followed by a discussion and interpretation of the results. A discussion of the limitations of the study, conclusion, and implications for further research conclude this chapter.
CHAPTER TWO: REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

The goal of this chapter is to review the literature related to ethics and decision making among principals from a variety of perspectives. A comprehensive overview of the academic literature surrounding administrative decision and the ethics employed encompasses several topics that are included in this review. The first topic, public and private ethics, entails an examination of societal influences on decision making. Next, literature dealing with ethics in administration is examined and analyzed with particular emphasis on principals’ decision making and problem solving. The central topics include an examination of ethics, the need for principal training in decision making, and the employment of ethical standards to all decisions. Finally, the review presents ethical principles and concepts that served as the basis for the study described in this document. The presented literature thereby offers some knowledge about the use of ethics in administration and decision making.

Public and Private Ethics

This section deals with the relationship between personal and societal aspects of administrative decision making in a social context. The main topics dealt with in this area include: public and private ethics, social responsibility, changing societal values, and legal aspects. The focus of this section is to develop an understanding of the interplay between the values in society in general and those held by an individual.

Public values can be defined as the values that society deems to be moral and private values as those that individuals deem to be moral. Bull and McCarthy (1995) hold that public and private values are intertwined. They argue that educational leaders must
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"engage in public moral deliberation in the process of developing their decisions" (p. 627). They feel that it is important for principals to be open-minded and reflective of their decisions, and that effective administrators will include staff, parents, and members of the community in the decision-making process. This kind of consultation with stakeholders in the school community allows principals to examine and incorporate public values. In short, an administrator who seeks to make an informed decision will actively seek information and examine all aspects and possible effects of a decision, and will allow time for reflection.

The connections between societal interests and the school system is also emphasized by Starratt (1991). He argues that an educational administrator has a social responsibility "not simply to the individuals in the school or school system, not simply to the education professions, but [to] the society of whom, and for whom, he or she is an agent" (p. 191). Starratt echoes Bull and McCarthy's (1995) view that society must be considered a stakeholder in the decision-making process. These authors clearly indicate that an administrator should not act alone in making decisions that may affect the whole community because of myriad interests in any educational situation.

These arguments imply that, in order to take into account the interests of all stakeholders, it is important and necessary for school principals to examine public values of society and their own private values before making a decision or implementing a policy. The decisions a principal makes will affect the students and in turn will affect society. For example, a principal's application of justice has far-reaching repercussions in that the treatment of students becomes the basis for their own moral code and
expectations of how they and others should be treated. School is an important socializing agent where students begin to form values and develop a sense of justice.

It should be noted that public values change over time and are reflective of changes in society. This phenomenon has been observed by both Harrison (1994) and Kaminsky (1986). Harrison, for example, argues that "since there are no fixed meanings in this world we must rely on values, remembering that these, too, are only provisional and are always in flux" (p. 182). Similarly, Kaminsky emphasizes the mutability of ethical codes and standards: "moral rules and legal rules are continuously evolving, developing, unfolding and being supplanted, changed and discarded. Both respond to the demand of time and history, and must come to have new meanings" (p. 26). These arguments clearly demonstrate the necessity for an administrator to be flexible and to evaluate public values in context.

In principals' decision making, opposing views often emanate from different stakeholders. In order to address these decision-making challenges, Harrison (1994) discusses the use of critical ethics, which encompasses values, viewpoints, and the use of "a conception framework" (p. 176) with which administrators should make decisions. He urges administrators, through direct dealings with people, to examine the gap between their principles and their practice. In other words, since there is no universal standard or hierarchy for values implementation, and since each decision must be made in context, administrators have to rely to some extent on their private ethics in making decisions, and the notion of critical ethics encourages them to be mindful and careful of the nature and effects of their personal values.
The societal context of values and judgment has been explored in detail by Kaminsky (1986). In society, he says, value judgments never occur alone, but rather they "occur within a complex matrix of social [and] antisocial, moral and immoral relations" (p. 22). He suggests there will be disagreement over what critical values pertain to value judgments. He states, "even in cases where there is some agreement on the values that pertain (values in question), the rank and order of values inherent in that policy is hardly a matter of universal agreement, even among the policy's authors" (p. 22). Kaminsky points to an important aspect of ethical judgments and decisions; that they are inevitably products of a particular society at a particular time and thus subject to change. His position is clear: There are no values and mores that are relatively, universal regardless of time and place. Instead, he takes for granted that discord and differences in value systems will prevail and that people are not likely to achieve universal agreement.

One aspect of societal values that warrants particular consideration with respect to administrative decision making is the legal aspect. Bull and McCarthy (1995) argue that "law and ethics interweave with the activities and responsibilities of school leaders. School administrators do not just follow the law: they also make and interpret it" (p. 627). It is evident that school policies and rules are reflective of societal laws and ethics. For example, administrators might examine a situation from a legal perspective and may then examine the situation from a personal ethical viewpoint. Then, they must decide how to interpret and apply the law to the situation. An example of this might be a fight between students. The principal must examine the mitigating circumstances surrounding
the fight and then determine blame and mete out punishment according to what is admissible by law.

There may, however, be instances where principals must use their judgment in order to interpret gray areas if they are called upon to deal with situations that are not specifically covered by laws or regulations. They may, for example, be asked to decide what constitutes racial slurs or where boundaries to personal liberty are in question. For instance, at what point does a teacher’s private life become public? Would going to a bar or a strip club be considered questionable behavior or behavior in conflict with public values even if it is not illegal? If a teacher does engage in questionable behavior, then his/her private values may not be reflective of public values. The question for administrators, of course, is whether or not (or how and to what extent) they should intervene if a teacher exhibits questionable behavior outside of the school context. This is an issue where the administrator would need to be aware of the legal protections and limits afforded to teachers.

This example points out rather clearly that administrative awareness of the relationship between public and private values is not something that can be left to chance but should be part of training programs for aspiring and practicing administrators. Bull and McCarthy (1995) discuss this point:

Preparation programs need to guide educators so that they become aware of ethical and legal concerns and give more critical thought to legal and moral responsibilities in their professional roles. Throughout their preparation programs,
prospective school leaders should be challenged to raise ethical and legal questions. (p. 629)

It seems evident that because of the vast scope of their role, school administrators must be trained to think about ethical and legal questions. As some of the values and ethics of society change with time, it is important to have principals’ ethical decision-making skills finely tuned and current, to reflect the concerns of all stakeholders and to align with legal restrictions and requirements.

**Ethical Leadership**

It is expected that administrators make decisions of an ethical nature, because they are generally assumed to be ethical people, but this raises the question of how to define an ethical person. Josephson (1992) describes an ethical person as “one who displays and carries principles of honesty, integrity, trustworthiness, fidelity, fairness, care, respect, responsibility, excellence, accountability and protection of public interest” (p. 9). If we presume that an administrator is an ethical person, then we can also assume that his/her decisions will be informed by ethical concepts. Josephson’s concept is applicable in a general sense, but he does not consider that principals may be ethical only part of the time or only in certain situations. There is, of course, the further complication that some principals may be inherently unethical, in which case the importance of administrative training and preparation becomes even more compelling.

In order to be an ethical administrator, one of the central positions a principal should take is to acknowledge stakeholders as moral agents. Heslep (1997) emphasizes the role of principals as “moral agents” and feels they must appreciate the knowledge,
freedom, purposefulness, deliberativeness, and so on of all affected moral agents, respect the rights of such agents to these matters, and be cognizant of the duties of all concerned to foster freedom and knowledge in leadership of that kind. These requirements are obvious in leadership situations where agents operate collegially, but they hold also in leader-follower situations. What Heslep considers “obvious requirements” (p. 78), seem to reflect a marked humanistic perspective, which may or may not be espoused by individual principals. For instance, if the principal’s primary motivation concerns the operation of the school as a whole, then the rights of individual moral agents may be less important. Heslep would be more accurate if he stated that there are certain qualities that administrators should possess, such as the caring ethic. He could suggest some systematic way to ensure that principals get exposure to and practice in applying ethics in order to be educated moral agents.

The concern for ethics in administration is evident in literature about administrative decision making that considers a hierarchy of values for administrators. In most literature, the hierarchy is presented in dichotomous terms, with predominance given either to an ethics of justice or an ethics of caring (Watkinson, 1992). Beck (1992) gives the advantage to the caring ethic because she sees it as offering “an ideal complement and foundation, for it is concerned with anything that affects people’s attitudes and actions toward themselves, others and their shared communities” (p. 486). She stresses the need for a caring ethic in many aspects of administration. She states, “I place caring at the top of the values hierarchy. I propose that a number of ethics have a
place in educational leadership but that each needs to be informed and guided by caring” (p. 488).

Beck’s (1992) stress on caring is somewhat simplistic if not naïve. It goes without saying that a fundamental characteristic of an administrator is that he/she is caring. However, there may be conflicting interests involved in a decision making situation. The principal may be seen as “caring” for the interests of one group and not another. Weighing the competing interests of different stakeholders is a more complex process than simply “caring.”

Principals need to be trained to take into account how a decision will affect all stakeholders and perhaps care in a larger sense than suggested by Beck (1992). Unfortunately, administrators are not usually well prepared to deal with ethical decision situations. The lack of attention to ethics in administration is recognized by McKerrow (1997), who focuses on the application of ethical standards. She argues:

educational administration is informed by the construct [of] leadership, which has guided the beliefs and values of those engaged in administrative theory and practice. More importantly, this focus on leadership and the power that accrues to it has excluded, by default, serious consideration of ethics in a profession whose mission is fundamentally moral but whose practice is not. (p. 210)

She further argues that “leadership and power, as currently conceived in educational administration theory and practice, inhibit ethical decision-making in educational organizations. If this is the case, then educational administration needs to change to reflect ethics at its core, not at its periphery” (p. 211). McKerrow’s position is
somewhat biased in that she does not acknowledge the possibility for some administrators to employ methods of ethical leadership. Her position, however, does highlight the value of examining and analyzing the leadership offered by administrators to learn if, how, to what extent, and why some individuals employ ethics. This type of study would allow for insight into McKerrow’s notion that all decision making is primarily about leadership and power and that, “in the end, the one who holds or is given authority determines what is ethical – a sort of ‘might makes right’ approach to ethics” (p. 218). Unfortunately, she offers no constructive definition of ethics nor does she suggest how an administrator may go about making ethical decisions.

From an ethical standpoint, decision making must be relative to the situation and sensitive to those individuals being affected by the outcome. McKerrow (1997) acknowledges this condition in the following statement:

undominated discourse and sustained dialogue are important prerequisites for ethical decisions in all situations....Until both prerequisites are a fundamental part of how decisions are made in educational institutions, there may never be a constructive examination of efficiency and accountability in an ethical, educational context. Rather, education will continue to be limited by the context of organizations. It may also remain amoral. (p. 220)

Her comments about the “accountability” of principals’ decision making suggest that there is some type of scale by which to measure the “ethicalness” of a decision. Unfortunately, there is no such scale, guideline, or ethical handbook. Instead, administrators typically make decisions involving ethics based on their own ethical
framework. For this reason, it is important to ensure that administrators are trained in how to make ethical decisions. Part of this training could involve having principals examine scenarios where an ethical decision must be made, followed by a collegial discussion.

Training could also include peer learning. McKerrow (1997), for example, sees the need for administrators to “dialogue with other members of the organization in order to facilitate ethical decision-making” (p. 217). Consultation with colleagues about decision-making is sound leadership. It enables the principal to reflect on and to examine viewpoints he/she may not have otherwise examined.

There are numerous approaches to dealing with the practice of administrative decision making. For example, some principals examine the overall effects a decision will have, while others are concerned with values and ethics. Some principals address the decision in a manner that resolves the conflicting values of stakeholders. In Enns’s (1981) examination of organizational ethics in various contexts, such as ethics in governments and politics, ethics in the marketplace, and ethical dilemmas in education, he discovered some interesting strategies in how administrators considered values. He states, “when the question of values was addressed, it was usually in the sense of mediating value conflicts of others, rather than coming to grips with value questions inherent in administrative situations and behaviors themselves” (p. 1). In other words, he rarely found that administrators practiced what Harrison (1994) calls “critical ethics.” The evidence of this gap led him to suggest that principals need training that prepares them to become
comfortable and familiar with their own moral and value context before they will be able to address ethical decision-making situations appropriately.

In at least some cases, principals will have an ulterior motive when they make administrative decisions, and one question of research interest has been the extent to which ethics and values have been part of the influencing factors behind their reasoning. This was the question that Campbell-Evans (1991) addressed in her interviews with school principals. Her research was intended to "pursue the meaning behind (the) action and come to an understanding of the principal’s decision-making in terms of the nature and influence of values inherent in the process" (p. 170). She found that the values and ethics espoused by principals did not appear to be important causes of actions but that the consequences of a decision were more typically used as their guiding principles. In her words, "the decision-making themes that emerge from the data exemplify principals’ concern for consequences. Principals consider the consequences of the decision-making prior to the action" (p. 176). Her research led her to conclude that reflecting upon the circumstances surrounding a decision was an important part of the process and that reflection from an ethical standpoint could help principals feel confident that the decision was suitable for all those involved.

Guidelines for Decision Making

Principals are faced with many decisions in the course of their day. Some decisions do not require much thought while others may be the source of much contemplation. For the decisions that cause principals distress, a number of models could be followed to help ensure that all aspects of a decision have been considered. An
examination of models, guidelines, steps, and procedures of how to go about making decisions is the focus for this section.

In the problem-solving model, decisions are made after components surrounding a decision are examined. Ethical problem solving usually entails examining circumstances surrounding a decision situation and then choosing the best decision based on the individual’s personal values. An example of this model emerged from a study by Leithwood and Stager (1989) on principals’ expertise in problem solving, in which five components for solving unstructured problems were identified. First, the problem must be interpreted and a basis for priority must be established. This is done by examining the perceived difficulty of the problem and ways to understand it, with one examination strategy being the use of anecdotes. In the second component, the goals for problem solving are examined. The next two components consist of examining the underlying principles and constraints. Finally, the solution process is analyzed (pp. 137-150).

The five components of Leithwood and Stager’s (1989) problem-solving process can be applied to ethical decision making by principals. Principals should interpret the ethical problem, identify priorities, and examine the ramifications surrounding their decision. Components 2 to 5 bring into play the ethical aspects of the goals, principles, and constraints surrounding the decision. Applying the five components to an ethical decision can lead principals to use Harrison’s (1994) critical ethics in their decision-making process and thereby take into account the myriad interests and ethical consequences surrounding their decision.
Leithwood and Stager (1989) argue that highly effective, expert principals approach decision making differently than do less effective or non-expert principals. In their study, they found that expert principals demonstrated careful consideration of the solution process and planning, and reflected on a problem during interpretation. Also, expert principals saw multiple alternatives for interpreting the same event or outcome. The results indicate that expert principals knew how to solve problems as if by instinct whereas non-experts were more concerned about consequences for themselves. Furthermore, the experts differed from non-experts in their ability to arrive at a clear, comprehensive interpretation of a problem, one that would enable them to get on with the actual solution of the problem. Experts did not appear to become involved in irrelevant issues and did not become overly preoccupied with the feelings of others associated with the problem (p. 142). These results indicate that administrators should be trained in interpreting a situation before making an ethical decision.

Another model for consideration, the decision-making model, does not usually include an explicit consideration of ethics. However, many decision-making models can be applied to ethical decision making because they allow the decision maker, in this case the school administrator, to have a systematic approach to the complex task of decision making. Drucker’s (1974) steps in decision making are practical, not ethical, steps that require the decision maker to examine various aspects of a situation in an efficient and systematic manner. First, the problem must be defined and, in step 2, carefully analyzed. Step 3 deals with the development of the solution set. In step 4, the decision maker decides on the best solution to the problem. Finally, the decisions are converted into
effective actions. One of the shortcomings of this model is that it does not examine the effects of a decision. However, the steps could allow for a comprehensive examination of ethical decision making if they were modified to take into account the interests and value systems of all stakeholders, as well as the ramifications of each decision. Application of Drucker’s modified steps to an ethical scenario would ask principals to examine the ramifications of their decisions.

The third model for ethical decision making consists of a series of questions that offers a comprehensive way of examining all aspects of a decision situation. Questions to be answered include: What are the facts? What are the ethical issues and principles? Who are the stakeholders? What are the alternatives? What are the ethical implications? What are the practical constraints? What action should be taken? (Adapted from lecture notes from Mitchell, 1999). Employing this model ensures that the principals go through a systematic process of examining ethical considerations before arriving at a decision.

Another way to effectively make an ethical decision, as stated by Mitchell (personal communication, July, 1999), is to “apply different screens” or to examine the effects of a decision from various standpoints. When applying the Virtue Screen, the decision maker examines the circumstances and decides on the most virtuous act. The Duty Screen involves figuring out what obligation is owed and to whom. The effects of different acts are examined under the Consequences Screen. Examination of laws and what is allowed or prohibited is undertaken when the Legal Screen is applied. The Authority Screen requires the decision maker to contemplate what an authority figure would say about the decision. This screen model requires principals to involve
themselves in a comprehensive detailed examination of circumstances surrounding decisions and the various impacts a decision may have. This model requires them to address issues and to construct a hierarchy of values in scenarios where two ethical principles or concepts may be in conflict. If principals applied the "screens" when confronting an ethical decision, then they would necessarily engage in reflection about and justification for the decision that is to be made.

The foregoing guidelines and models provide some strategies with which principals can gain some comfort with decisions that entail an ethical component. An awareness of and familiarity with these various models can enable principals to find a model that is suitable for their particular situation or decision. By routinely and systematically applying one of the models, principals will be helped in making informed, well considered, and just decisions.

**Ethical Principles and Concepts**

Administrative decision making in ethical situations can also be examined from a theoretical standpoint, which is the topic of this section. A particularly useful theoretical framework has been outlined by Strike, Haller, and Soltis (1998) in their text, *The Ethics of School Administration*, which introduces ethical principles through an analysis of case studies on administrative decision making. Strike et al. define the following ethical principles and concepts: the concept of freedom of expression; the principles of benefit maximization and equal respect; the concepts of personal liberty, equal treatment, and due process; the concepts of democracy and radical diversity; and the principles of relationships, community, and character development. In their analyses, they provide
clear descriptions of ethical concepts and principles that educational administrators should understand and consider before making a decision. The descriptions and definitions of these principles and concepts are discussed in the remainder of this section.

*Freedom of Expression*

The concept of freedom of expression refers to people having a right to be the authors of their own beliefs and the right to freely discuss ideas with others. Other principles such as free speech, free press, and freedom of information are also aspects of freedom of expression. Strike et al. (1998) argue that the right of free expression should be carefully preserved and protected because criticism and debate are conditions of rationality itself and, through free speech, the public store of tested ideas is enlarged and rational public decision making is improved (p. 12). They state that freedom of expression thus contributes to the refining of ideas, to competent decision making, and to personal growth (p. 12).

*Benefit Maximization*

The principle of benefit maximization assumes that the best and most just decision has been made if it results in the most good or the greatest benefit for the most people (Strike et al., 1998, p. 16). This principle judges the morality of actions by the resulting consequences in an attempt to make a decision with the best overall outcome. An example may be choosing resources that offer benefit for the most number of students rather than for a small number of special or targeted students.
Equal Respect

The principle of equal respect includes the treatment of people as ends in themselves rather than as means to some other end. That is to say, people should not be treated as if they are merely objects that are valued insofar as they can contribute to some specific outcome or to the welfare of someone else. Instead, people are treated as free and rational moral agents whose freedom of choice is valued, respected, and protected (Strike et al., 1998 p. 17). In other words, no matter how much or to what extent people differ, they are still of equal value as moral agents. Each person is entitled to the same basic rights as everyone else, and all persons’ interests are of equal value. Examples of equal respect include respecting choice of religion, dress, music, and opinion.

Personal Liberty

The concept of personal liberty can be defined as the right of an individual to one’s own actions and feelings. For example, religion and politics are considered to be private matters. From an administrative standpoint, the concern with this concept is that certain actions and expressions may be in conflict with the rules and regulations of an organization. That is, a teacher may engage in what the board deems to be questionable behavior, but the point at which a teacher’s private life becomes public is unclear. For instance, how should a principal deal with a teacher, in a multicultural school, who belongs to an organization promoting white supremacy? According to Strike et al. (1998, p. 36), personal liberty is a matter of weighing the importance of the kind of privacy that is involved against the public interest that is threatened.
Equal Treatment

The concept of equal treatment includes the fair treatment of people who are in similar situations and circumstances (Strike et al., 1998, p. 54). For example, two teachers applying for a department head position who are equally qualified for the position should be asked the same interview questions. They should each have the same access to the position, regardless of their sex, religion, race, or class. One of the candidates should not have an implicit advantage because he or she has made friends with the “right” people, has sat on the “right” committees, or uses the “right” language.

Due Process

The concept of due process refers to the fairness of the process used to reach a decision (Strike et al., 1998, p. 76). For instance, in filling a teacher position the principal should follow the guidelines written in union or other contractual documents. If guidelines are not followed and a person is not given their right to due process, then a grievance against that principal can be filed. Following due process is particularly important in cases where disciplinary measures are taken against a teacher or a student.

Democracy

The concept of democracy can be defined with two central ideas. First, the interest of each individual must be fairly considered and, second, each individual has a fair influence on the decision (Strike et al., 1998, p. 95). Each person or group that has an interest in the outcome of a decision has the right to be heard before a decision is made. An example of this may be a parent group having a voice, before a decision is made about a uniform policy.
Radical Diversity

Radical diversity refers to multiculturalism and difference in personal choice such as religion and lifestyle. Respect for diversity is important because failure to do so is to reject who people are. It denies their worth and is an insidious kind of violence against them (Strike et al., 1998, p. 123). From a nonconsequentialist viewpoint, the most important fact about people is not their ethnic identity or their religion, but their personhood. It is their status as moral agents that is the basis of equal rights and respect (p. 126). Every student and teacher has a right to belong to the school community and should not be treated differently because of culture or religion. The celebration of cultural diversity helps to create acceptance and respect for people's differences.

Relationships, Community, and Character Developments

The ethical principles of relationships, community, and character development are grouped because they all contribute to the development of the individual as a free moral agent. They help develop rational problem-solving and decision-making skills because ethical reasoning involves such activities as striking a balance or discovering a compromise and it requires virtues such as wisdom (Strike et al., 1998 p. 147).

Summary

When the practical and theoretical literature bases are juxtaposed, the definitions of ethical principles and concepts provided by Strike et al. (1998) could be used as a guide for ethical decision making. It is however, unlikely that most school principals would be able to name and to define the principles and concepts, nor are they likely to be able to identify a systematic model with which they approach ethical decision making.
This circumstance suggests that, as Campbell (1997) has advocated, ethical training should be a requirement for all administrators. Campbell contends that principals arrive at a position of authority and are expected to make ethical decisions with little or no specific training in the area. She argues for an emphasis in principals’ courses on developing ethics in administration through strategies such as “case study methods which present students with realistic scenarios depicting ethical complexities of practice in education [and which] engage students in a level of critical reflection that should inform their decision making as future school leaders” (p. 294).

Campbell (1997) further contends that administrators need to communicate with others about ethical decision-making because, in the absence of discourse, “individual and subjective reflection becomes the primary justifiable moral base, and students gain little direction for future decision making beyond the confirmation of their own convictions” (p. 295). In other words, a course or seminar that focuses on ethics in administration should expect present and future administrators to discuss ethical decisions with colleagues and to develop the skills and values necessary to make ethical decisions.

The concerns expressed by Campbell (1997) and others (e.g., McKerrow, 1997) over the readiness of school principals to administer their schools from an ethical standpoint served as the starting point for the study reported in this document. The study used the ethical scenarios provided by Strike et al. (1998) to examine the extent to which high school principals made decisions on the basis of ethical principles and concepts. The research design for the study is presented in the next chapter.
CHAPTER THREE: METHOD AND PROCEDURES

The purpose of this study was to examine the decisions high school principals make when responding to practical ethical scenarios. This chapter delineates the methods and procedures used in conducting the study. The chapter begins with a description of the research design and the participants. Next, the five scenarios used for data collection and the data collection process are described. This leads to a detailed description of the data analysis. Finally, the limitations of the study are outlined.

Research Design

In order to gather data for this thesis, a descriptive survey study was designed. All the high school principals in an urban board were targeted as participants in the study. Using this elite group requires the inclusion of special data collection strategies because, as Neuman (1997) points out, “surveying elites requires special techniques. Powerful leaders in business, government, and so on are difficult to reach” (p. 253). Neuman also contends that the nature of the questions and the professional position of the respondents will require special attention to confidentiality and anonymity: “Confidentiality is a crucial issue and should be guaranteed, since elites have information that few others do” (p. 253). These issues related to the use of elite participants have been taken into consideration in the design of this study.

The descriptive survey was chosen because it allowed me, as researcher, to learn about the decision-making processes of many principals by asking “descriptive questions to explore the setting and learn about members” (Neuman, 1997, p. 374). The survey method was used in order to obtain responses from all the secondary school principals in
the board, which reflects Neuman’s position that “survey researchers sample many respondents who answer the same questions” (p. 231). By administering the survey during one of the regular principals’ meetings, all principals could participate, which would increase the return rate for the sample. This strategy aligns with Neuman’s suggestion that “response rates for self-administered questionnaires (e.g., those distributed to a class) are close to 100 percent and present little problem” (p. 247).

A design using open-ended questions was chosen to allow the principals to use their own words rather than forcing them to check off processes and justification from a predesigned and consequently limited list. Open-ended questions were expected to elicit responses that were reflective of the principals’ actual decision-making strategies. Although participants were not interviewed, but rather were asked to complete a descriptive survey, the design is sufficiently compatible with the interview procedure to be subject to Neuman’s observation that “personal interviews with a high percentage of open-ended questions are usually more successful than all closed-ended questions” (1997, p. 253).

This procedure relied on qualitative data that offered insights into the mindset of principals rather than having them adhere to the researcher’s mindset. Because a quantitative survey would produce data that would not allow the principals to express themselves, it was not considered an appropriate methodology for this study. For the purpose of this thesis, it was necessary to allow the principals to have opportunity to write down the thought processes surrounding their decision making when faced with ethical situations. Open-ended questions also allowed for a wide range of responses and
strategies that principals employed when making decisions. This produced data that were more reflective of the principals’ decision making. The data collection strategy was based on the use of five scenarios that would illustrate specific decision-making principles.

**Participants**

The participants in the study included all 35 secondary school principals in a Catholic School Board in Ontario. All principals in the board were included in order to obtain comprehensive data that would reflect the diversity of decision-making approaches that existed across the school board in the day-to-day operation of the high schools. Participation was solicited by first contacting the chief superintendent who chaired the monthly principals’ meeting for the board. After I discussed the purpose and method of obtaining data, the superintendent granted permission for me to obtain data during a principals’ meeting in March 2002. At the meeting, I was introduced by one of the principals in attendance and solicited participation by explaining the survey and the purpose of the study as a thesis requirement. No other solicitation was required because the chief superintendent endorsed the survey and allotted time during the meeting for principals to complete it. Consequently, most principals participated in the study.

Of the 35 secondary school principals employed by the board, 34 were in attendance, and 32 completed surveys were received. One principal chose not to participate and one principal asked to mail in the survey to allow for more time to complete it. I agreed to the mail-in procedure and provided a self-addressed stamped envelope, but received no mailed survey. There was a fairly equal mix of men and
women, with 17 males and 14 females responding. One principal did not fill out the personal data. The age of the principals ranged from 39 years to 56 years of age. One male was in the age range from 35-39 years. Six principals, 3 males and 3 females, were in the age range from 40-44 years. Eight principals, 5 males and 3 females, were in the age range from 45-49 years. Of the 10 principals in the age range from 50-54, 7 were males and 3 were females. In the age range from 55-59 years, there were 2 principals, 1 female and 1 male. Five principals had been on the job for 1 year or less, 13 principals had 3-5 years of experience, and 14 principals had 8-15 years of experience.

Instrumentation

Qualitative data were collected through principals’ responses to five scenarios that were constructed to require decisions that have an ethical aspect. The scenarios for this study were based on similar scenarios found in Strike et al. (1998), who used hypothetical situations that illustrated conflicting ethical principles and concepts, and included a discussion of the ethical bases of typical decisions. The five scenarios chosen for the study encompassed the following topics: financial management, human sexuality/professional life versus private life, democracy, freedom of expression, and human rights (see Appendix A).

The first scenario dealt with the allocation of funds. In Strike et al. (1998, p. 51), the scenario outlines a principal’s decision regarding a new program for either the Gifted or the Hispanic students. Strike et al. used the scenario to illustrate the conflicting ethical principles of benefit maximization and equality. The scenario used for this study was slightly modified by asking principals to choose whether to allocate money to programs
for the ESL students or for the Enrichment students and to justify their choice. As in Strike et al., the choice to allocate money to the ESL (Hispanic) students suggests the use of equality as the governing ethical principle, since ESL students are at an educational disadvantage, which the new program was intended to address. The choice to allocate funds to the Enrichment students suggests the use of the principle of benefit maximization, which assumes that the resources will be best used by those students who already have advanced skills and knowledge. Furthermore, it is these students who will go on to raise the academic status and profile of the school, perhaps even benefit the larger society (Strike et al., p. 58).

The second scenario dealt with a teacher-student relationship. In Strike et al. (1998, p. 44), the scenario dealt the romantic involvement of a staff psychologist and a patient. Strike et al. used this scenario to examine how the concept of personal liberty relates to the notion of public and private actions. The scenario as modified for this study asked principals to explain how they would respond to the apparent involvement of a teacher and an 18-year-old student, and to justify their response. This question was designed to direct principals to weigh the individual’s right to privacy against professional standards and decorum. The choice to explicitly address the issue suggests the point of view that the responsibility of a teacher extends beyond the classroom, and includes acting as a role model in private life. This point of view holds that an individual’s right to personal privacy must be weighed against how the teacher’s behavior affects the students and the school community. If the behavior of a teacher has an adverse effect on students, then it is no longer a private matter. The teacher’s right to privacy
outside the school setting is secondary to avoiding the dangers of a breach of implicit standards. The choice not to address the issue suggests a belief that the right to personal privacy is paramount, and thus the relationship is a private matter because it only affects the welfare of those who engage in it (Strike et al., p. 33). This assumes, of course, that both parties involved are of the age of consent. Since those involved in the relationship are willing participants and free moral agents, there are no grounds to interfere with their actions.

The third scenario dealt with implementing change in the school. In Strike et al. (1998, p. 92), the scenario dealt with a principal’s decision either to support teachers in their efforts to implement a new program or to support the parents who were opposed to the program. Strike et al. used the scenario to illustrate the concept of democracy. The scenario for this study was modified so that principals were asked to support either the teachers’ plan to change the school start time or the parents’ desire to retain the current school hours. The choice to support the teachers assumes that, to run a school democratically, teachers must be involved in the decision-making process, but that teachers are not merely equal stakeholders. Instead, their opinions in matters of a pedagogic nature hold considerably more weight than the lay community. By virtue of their collective professional knowledge, experience, and foresight, the opinion of teachers outweighs that of parents, regardless of numbers. By contrast, the choice to support the parents indicates the view that the community should be central to the decision-making process. It also suggests the notion that teachers have the same but no more rights than any other stakeholder. If the principals reserve judgment and support neither party or
suggest compromise or further study, this position implies a broader, more complex view of democracy that takes into consideration other stakeholders such as students and support staff. The instructions in the scenario remind principals that their response should not related to the issue of school start and end times but should specify which group, the teachers or the parents, the principals would identify with and choose as the basis of their decision.

The fourth scenario dealt with teacher conduct. In Strike et al. (1998, p. 19), the scenario outlines the superintendent’s support for raising taxes for school improvements while being asked by the taxpayers’ association to print a brochure that opposed the tax increases. Strike et al. use the scenario to illustrate the concept of freedom of expression and its limits, especially when in conflict with other ethical principles. The scenario as modified for this study asked principals if they would address a situation where a teacher made disparaging remarks about the school board, with reference to working conditions, competency of administration, and teacher salaries. In the scenario, the comments were made to both staff and students. The choice to confront the teacher suggests that the right to freedom of expression is not absolute and may be in conflict with other rights or interests. In this perspective, personal expression can be regulated when it infringes on the rights of others. In this case, the perceived injury caused by slanderous comments about the school board limits an individual’s right to freedom of expression. The choice not to address the issue suggests the belief that people should be free to express their opinions. This view sees the teacher’s right to express an opinion as being more important than the potential defamation to the board that those opinions might cause.
The fifth scenario dealt with implementing superintendent directives. In Strike et al. (1998, p. 47), the scenario dealt with a pregnant teacher who was discouraged from returning to work for only a few months before her maternity leave because it would be difficult to find a replacement mid-term. Strike et al. used the scenario to illustrate the conflicting ethical principles of public actions and private actions and the concept of personal liberty.

The scenario for this study asked principals to explain how they would respond to a controversial request by the board. In an effort to create culturally representative staffing models, the superintendent in the scenario suggested that teachers should transfer schools if their ethnicity did not reflect the student population of their school. The choice to relay the message that teachers should transfer suggests the view that the professional and personal liberty of the teacher should not be held as important as a board-wide initiative intended to benefit students. Principals who chose either to ignore the superintendent’s directive or to relay it, with the qualifier that it was the superintendent’s but not the principal’s position, were seen to be expressing the notion that the rights of the individual cannot be bargained away even in favor of possible benefits to the community.

**Data Collection**

Although the five scenarios presented in the study were hypothetical, they reflect ethical dilemmas and decisions that principals realistically face in the normal course of their administration. Principals were asked to read the scenarios and make an
administrative decision for each. The scenarios required the administrator to make a
decision on scenarios where the repercussions or consequences were dependent upon the
ethical principles applied. Each scenario allowed for many strategies, and responses
required principals to deliberate on their decision and to carefully weigh the opposing
principles. The length of the survey and clarity of the questions were examined by
administering a pilot survey to two vice-principals, one male and one female. The test respondents took 30 minutes to complete the survey. They reported that the task was not
tedious or too lengthy and that they were able to provide well considered answers in that
length of time. Consequently, I asked the superintendent for 30 minutes out of the
principals’ meeting.

At the beginning of the data collection meeting, I explained that the survey was
anonymous, that participation was completely voluntary, and that the data would be used
for thesis requirements (see Appendix B for ethics documents). The surveys were
distributed by myself and one principal who offered to help. Once all the principals had received the survey and introduction letter, I asked them to read the letter and to complete the survey by providing a detailed written response for each of the five scenarios that included their decision and the reasons for making that decision. As the principals responded to the scenarios, I remained in the room so as to be available to answer any questions. The superintendent monitored the time and, at the end of a half hour, I asked the principals to conclude their responses and to return the survey. Those principals who had not finished the study submitted them incomplete. The surveys were collected, and the principals were thanked for their participation in the study.
Data Analysis

The surveys were numbered for anonymity purposes and were read through once, in order to get a sense of the type of responses the principals gave. They were read a second time to highlight characteristic phrases for each response. For each scenario, the highlighted passage was summarized in one word or concept that expressed a central issue appearing in the response. This word or descriptive code was recorded in the margin. Examples of the descriptive codes are advocate, professional boundaries, moral concern, stakeholders, consensus, research, discontent, and insubordination, among others. The descriptive codes were sorted according to the scenario in which they appeared and were subsequently grouped into concepts by determining the essential principle or concept to which they referred. Approximately four concepts or minor themes emerged for each scenario with some concepts repeated across the scenarios, yielding 12 concepts in total (see Table 1).
Table 1

Concepts within Scenarios

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scenario 1</th>
<th>Scenario 2</th>
<th>Scenario 3</th>
<th>Scenario 4</th>
<th>Scenario 5</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Academic Performance</td>
<td>Board power</td>
<td>Implementing change</td>
<td>Morale</td>
<td>Board power</td>
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<tr>
<td>Disadvantage</td>
<td>Professional standards</td>
<td>Representation</td>
<td>Implementing change</td>
<td>Moral code</td>
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<tr>
<td>Catholicity</td>
<td>Union issues</td>
<td>Consensus</td>
<td>Freedom of speech</td>
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<td>Catholicaity</td>
<td>Ethical standards</td>
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The 12 concepts were further examined for similarities and differences and sorted into four interpretive themes that captured the essence of the reasons the principals used to justify their decisions. The major themes of the decision-making justifications were pedagogy, legalism, moral code, and democracy (see Table 2). The concepts within the four major themes were reassessed in terms of their relationship to the major theme and to one another. This process led to some of the concepts being collapsed within other concepts, some of the concepts being renamed, and others remaining as they had originally been labeled. This process resulted in the emergence of the following 12 concepts: academic performance, morale, and implementing change that fell under the theme of pedagogy; board power, professional standards, freedom of speech, and union issues under the theme of legalism; disadvantage, Catholicity, and ethical standards under the theme of moral code; and representation and consensus under the theme of democracy. In the following paragraphs, the rationale and process for arriving at each major theme is described.

Pedagogy was determined to be a major theme, encompassing the concepts of academic excellence, morale, and implementing change because at their core, each of the concepts dealt with education, the philosophy of education, or change in education. These concepts were used by the principals to justify decisions in relation to their potential for improving the educational experience of the student.

Legalism was the major theme that encompassed the concepts of board power, professional standards, freedom of speech, and union issues. The concept of legalism was chosen to describe these concepts because they all referred to legal obligations, duties,
### Table 2

*Concepts within Themes*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pedagogy</th>
<th>Legalism</th>
<th>Moral Code</th>
<th>Democracy</th>
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<tr>
<td>Academic performance</td>
<td>Board power</td>
<td>Disadvantage</td>
<td>Representation</td>
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and contracts. The principals used these concepts to consider how their decisions could be aligned with legal expectations and requirements.

Moral code was the major theme that included the concepts of disadvantage, Catholicity, and ethical standards. Moral code was considered an appropriate concept to cover these concepts because they represented the moral, ethical, and religious standards and values that the principals relied on to consider the extent to which their decisions matched their own moral system.

The major theme of democracy encompassed the concepts of representation and consensus. These concepts represented aspects of equality and inclusion, which were foundational to the principals' desire to make the best decision for most people. Representation and consensus were used to generate a decision-making process where all members had a voice or were appropriately represented and where stakeholders could arrive at agreement through clarification of issues.

Limitations

There are several limitations to the study. Perhaps most notably is that the principals' responses may not be an accurate indication of their actual decision-making process. One aspect of this is that the data are limited by the honesty and candor of the principals who completed the survey. Furthermore, there may be a contradiction between espoused theory and theory in practice. That is, principals may provide normative responses in terms of what they think they should say, but the actual decisions made in the daily operation of a school may be different from their written responses. Additionally, principals with knowledge or background in ethics or philosophy may seek
to provide an ethically correct answer instead of describing what they would actually do. To offset this concern, the questions were designed in two parts, with the principals first being asked to choose what they would do, and second being asked to state their reasons. I stressed to the participants that the survey was anonymous, so there would be no reason for principals not to respond honestly. It was further stressed that there were no correct answers and that principals should describe what they would actually do. The second part of the survey question asked principals to give a detailed account of their actions and to give them an opportunity to reflect on what they would actually do and to analyze their own decision-making process instead of a normative process. It was the findings of this reflective, analytic reasoning process, rather than the decision itself, that served as the primary database for the study. Consequently, the gap between espoused practice and actual practice does not diminish the value of the justifications behind the practice.

Another limitation involves the design of the study. The survey was designed to have principals consider certain specific ethical principles in their responses to each scenario. However, there was no guarantee that the principals would use the ethical principles that each scenario was designed to elicit. Thus, the survey may measure other principles or aspects of decision making, or even an emotional reaction. For this reason, the questions were designed and worded in such a way as to focus participants' attention on the intended concepts and to minimize opportunity for alternate reasoning. It became evident, however, that despite the design, the responses encompassed a wide range of decision-making strategies, not all of which could be categorized under the
predetermined ethical principles. Consequently, a deductive analysis was not sufficient, and through the inductive process, all responses and justifications were given equal consideration in the analysis.

Another limitation was that the questions could have been interpreted incorrectly by respondents, who might then focus on an irrelevant aspect of the scenario. The scenarios were worded as succinctly and clearly as possible, and they followed as closely as possible the wording of the scenarios provided by Strike et al. (1998). Furthermore, I was available for clarification throughout the period during which the principals completed the survey.

A further limitation related to the possibility of data sharing among the participants. In their regular meetings, principals are typically seated at tables of four or five, and there was danger that they might discuss the questions or ask each other for clarification, thereby tainting individual responses. To address this concern, it was emphasized in the introduction that surveys were to be completed individually and without discussion. I circulated throughout the meeting room to provide assistance or explanation so that there would be no need for principals to consult with colleagues. Because there was very little talk between participants during the time when responses were being written, the data seem not to be severely compromised by this issue.

The study was limited to Ontario high school principals in a large urban Catholic School Board. Catholicity as a confounding variable could skew the results. This population would be expected to reflect a certain ethos that may not be representative of principals in general. Gender, age, and levels of experience were not used as variables around which to
analyze the data. Such an analysis is likely to have added interesting insight into ethical decision making by secondary school principals, but the concern was that a concentration on demographic variables might have taken the focus off the principals’ justifications. The questions in the survey were designed to indicate what type of ethical principles are used, but are in and of themselves neutral and do not appeal to religious or cultural bias.

Some principals did not provide a written response, and some incomplete answers could not be used. Principals were reminded that if the responses were not explicit, they could not be used. They were also reminded of the time restraints of 30 minutes. Some principals did not finish all the questions. Once again these incomplete answers could not be used.

It is difficult to quantify the underlying philosophy possessed by principals and its effect on survey responses. For this reason, principals were asked to be detailed about their rationale in the explanation portion of the response. The study is designed with the latitude of interpretation to encompass a wide array of answers and reasoning.

There was no opportunity to conduct follow-up or complementary studies to corroborate the findings of this study. This can be seen as a limitation because further studies could support or refute the findings.

Restatement of the Problem

There is currently no systematic instruction for principals in terms of the processes and standards they might use to improve the ethical basis of their decisions. In the absence of such a process, one can only assume that a decision may be made
according to economic, pragmatic, traditional, legal, or personal reasons. A compilation and analysis of data regarding the application of ethical principles to making administrative decisions will contribute to the academic literature about the ethics possessed and avowed by high school principals.
CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS, ANALYSIS, AND EVALUATION

Introduction

This chapter presents the results of a study that was undertaken to examine the decision-making principles employed by high school principals in their responses to practical ethical scenarios. In the study, 32 principals responded to five ethical scenarios by making and justifying a decision related to various administrative situations. From an analysis of the data, four major categories of justification emerged: Pedagogy, Legalism, Moral Code, and Democracy. These themes serve as the organizing framework for the presentation of results in the remainder of the chapter.

Pedagogy

Issues related to pedagogy, which refers to the practice or profession of teaching, were detected in three of the five scenarios. One issue that emerged was the principals' desire to facilitate students' academic performance by creating an optimal learning environment. A second related concern was the principals' desire to raise teacher and student morale by ensuring that the school atmosphere was both encouraging and supportive. As a strategy to improve teacher morale, principals indicated that they would counsel teachers on educational and personal issues in order to help them be more content and productive in their work. Their teaching should in turn lead to more positive school morale. Change, the third concern, was noted by principals in their effort to effect change that would have some benefit within the school community and that would be grounded in valid data derived from good research. These three concerns were seen to be part of
pedagogy because they dealt with improving the school environment for teachers and students, which was expected to improve both teaching and learning. The three concerns are explored in detail in the following paragraphs.

The pedagogical concern of academic performance first emerged in the scenario dealing with the allocation of funds, where principals were asked to decide whether to allocate funds for ESL students or Enrichment students. Of the 32 principals’ responses, 25 principals chose to allocate funds for ESL students, 5 principals for Enrichment students, and 2 principals did not respond. Principals’ responses indicated that, regardless of the direction of their decision, their focus was on creating an optimal learning environment for all students, while recognizing the academic needs of various groups within the school community. This emphasis on academic performance is evident in the following response: “Principals have to be open to cultivating the best possible learning environment for all, within a school, and have to strive to create such -- whatever the issue at hand may be” (S3, R5).1 The concern of academic performance was linked to their concern for the reputation of the school. Principals who chose to allocate funds for the Enrichment program did so with the expectation that, by offering a successful specialized program for the academic elite, they would gain recognition in the community as a school that provided programming for high academic achievers. That recognition was expected to yield a good reputation for the school because of the ability to attract students whose main focus was on academics and who would increase overall

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1 This citation reads as Scenario 3, Respondent 5. All references to research data follow this pattern.
academic achievement scores. This kind of justification is evident in the following statement: “Student achievement and academic excellence are goals for any school. The school will gain a reputation for same. The school culture will promote academic excellence and achievement. All members of the school will benefit” (S1, R2).

Interestingly, when most of the principals discussed the goal of academic performance they did not refer to peak performance for some or most students, but rather to assuring minimal standards for all students. They stressed the importance of providing educational opportunity so that all students would be able to graduate with basic English and mathematical skills required in everyday life. This reference to achievement levels can be seen in this principal’s comment: “As principal I would rather ensure the achievement of minimal standards for all students. This is not lower expectations: this is a higher expectation that all, 100% of students at my school, graduate literate and numerate” (S1, R17).

The scenario dealing with teacher conduct yielded evidence of the second pedagogical concern, morale. Principals were asked to decide if they would address the issue of a disgruntled teacher who was making disparaging remarks about the administration, working conditions, salary inequity, and board policies. Of the 32 responses, 28 principals stated that they would address the issue, 2 principals would not, and 2 principals did not respond. Findings indicate that the decision to address the issue was grounded in a belief that morale was a fundamental part of producing a positive learning environment. This justification is alluded to in the following statement: “We must work on staff and student morale and cannot ignore a negative influence” (S4, R8).
Another principal also expressed a similar concern for the effect the discontented teacher would have on morale in the school community. This principal used the strategy of counsel to help ensure a positive morale: “I would have a conversation regarding why he is unhappy in the present situation. What can I do to make a difference?” (S4, R32). Other principals also referred to the strategy of counsel as a means of addressing and attempting to raise teacher morale related to work anxiety and personal difficulties, with the ultimate goal being an improvement of educational conditions.

The third pedagogical concern, implementing change, was at the center of responses to a scenario in which principals were asked to choose whether to support the desires of the parents or the teachers concerning the school start time. The results indicate that 26 principals supported the parents by choosing not to change the start time, 2 principals supported the teachers by choosing to change the start time, and 4 principals did not respond. Findings indicate that the principals saw themselves as agents of change but that their role in the change process was to ensure that the change brought improvement to the school. As one principal stated: “I can support the status quo more easily than a controversial change. The principal’s job is to lead change; however, if the cost is too great then it may outweigh the benefits. You lead controversial change if you’re certain of the benefits and can swing momentum towards support” (S3, R8). The principals tended to consider the overall effects of a decision, to weigh potential benefits against negative consequences, and to avoid a decision that would be beneficial to some if it was also proved to be detrimental to others. For example, one principal wanted to be sure that the potential benefits of having a later start time did not bring with it many
negative repercussions, such as students not being able to fulfill their responsibilities at home. He noted: “benefits [for some] do not outweigh negative consequences” (S3, R15).

In the principals’ justifications, research emerged as a strategy for dealing with and implementing change. Principals indicated that they required data and the time to examine it in order to gain a comprehensive understanding of a situation before they would make any decisions. However, at least one principal expressed some concern as to the evidence, motives, and inherent prejudices within data: “Often people conduct surveys based upon their own bias” (S3, R20). Another principal was equally cautious as to the methods and process of obtaining research in order to substantiate its validity: “Conducting a survey without obtaining input and describing the process is a major mistake” (S3, R30). These responses indicated that the participants were well aware that change could be problematic but that it should be implemented if it brought overall improvements.

Principals merged their concern for implementing change with their concern for improving morale when dealing with teacher conduct. One principal, for example, dealt with the disgruntled teacher by inviting the teacher to be part of the process of initiating change and in doing so, attempted to avoid the negative effect the teacher might have on the school community: “I would ask him, ‘How do we improve the current situation?’ and encourage him in trying to spearhead change at the school” (S4, R30). This example implies that the principals’ justifications were more complex and multi-layered than the reporting of the results might appear to be on the surface.
Legalism

The second major justification that emerged from the data was that of legalism, which refers to the adherence to law and which could be detected in three of the five scenarios. Analysis of responses yielded four concerns in relation to this theme. One concern that emerged was board power and the relationship between the definition of their role as principal and their burden of responsibility when dealing with board issues. A second concern, professional standards, was evident in the principals’ desire to ensure that teachers conducted themselves in a professional manner. Freedom of speech emerged as a third concern in the principals’ desire to ensure that teachers and students had a right to voice their opinion. Finally, union issues were seen in principals’ concern about following union policies and guidelines in the daily operation of the school. These four concerns were placed into the category of legalism because they all dealt with justifications in relation to legal issues and legal boundaries that surround and affect the teaching profession.

Board power, as a legalistic concern, emerged in a scenario dealing with a teacher-student relationship, where principals were asked to decide if they would address a possible romantic relationship between a married teacher and a student. From the 32 principals’ responses, 29 principals stated they would address the issue and 3 principals would not. Data in relation to the principals’ duty included ensuring that board policy was being followed. Many principals responded to the issue by directing any questions and queries to their board supervisor, as demonstrated in the following statement:

“Contact the superintendent and check board policy in order to give direction” (S2, R27).
Other principals used a religious component as an approach to addressing the teacher-student relationship. They recognized that the Catholic board’s contract includes a Catholicity clause in which individuals agree to maintain a Catholic lifestyle. The emphasis on this aspect of the board’s power is evident in the following response: “This would be a serious situation because they would be breaking with their Catholicity clause in their contract” (S2, R12).

The scenario dealing with implementing superintendent directives also yielded evidence of board power when principals were asked if they would relay a message requesting teacher transfers grounded in their ethnicity. Responses indicated that 16 principals would relay the superintendent’s message, 13 would not, and 3 did not respond. Some principals referred to board power as a means of dealing with the directive and not relaying the message. Other principals discussed their concern for human rights, which they felt took precedence over board power. In both cases, these principals decided that relaying the message was outside the scope of their role as principal and, since the message was board directed, it could be delivered by the superintendent: “This should be addressed by the board not an individual principal” (S5, R5). Principals who took issue with the superintendent’s directive indicated their inability or unwillingness to relay the message: “I’d disagree with the superintendent on the phone. I’d also refuse to inform staff. If the superintendent supports this idea, he/she can inform the staff” (S5, R11).

Some principals merged their concern for board power with their concern for job subordination. This issue emerged when principals indicated concern regarding the content of the message and their reluctance toward relaying the message: “I would make
it because I was requested to do so, but I would clearly not advocate it: teachers
deserve the information” (S5, R20). The emphasis on subordination is also evident in this
statement: “the word ‘instructed to’ makes a refusal to do so insubordination, which is
grounds for dismissal” (S5, R23). Data demonstrated that many principals had difficulty
with the superintendent’s directive. Some principals took a stand for their belief in human
rights and would not relay the message, while others would relay the message because of
board power and insubordination issues, which are grounds for dismissal.

The second legalistic concern, *professional standards*, was at the center of
responses to a scenario dealing with teacher-student relations, in which principals
demonstrated a concern for professional conduct and freedom of association. Principals
referred to professional standards in their desire to ensure that teachers maintained these
standards when they dealt with others. They considered teachers to be role models and
compared them to judicious parents. The teacher engaging in a romantic relationship was
not perceived to be acting as a judicious parent nor looking out for the best interest of the
student. Because teachers are in a position of authority over students by the nature and
context of the job, the College of Teachers outlines a code of behavior that requires
teacher not to use their authority for personal gain. This code of conduct was the basis of
the principals’ belief that adherence to professional standards was more important than
the individual teacher’s freedom of association. This point of view is evident in the
following response: “it challenges professional standards, regardless of the age of the
student who is in an inferior position of power. It also challenges the notion of
professional boundaries” (S2, R17). The scenario dealing with teacher conduct also
indicated principals' concern for professional standards. Principals expected the teachers on their staffs to conduct themselves in a manner that they deemed to be professional. They expressed concern about the disgruntled teacher making disparaging remarks throughout the school and did not feel that he was conducting himself in a professional manner. One principal who felt compelled to address the teacher's behavior, pointed out that society tends to "call the teacher to a higher standard of behavior" (S4, R2). Professional standards were referred to by principals as justifications for calling teachers to the standard of professionalism outlined by the Ontario College of Teachers, (1996).

The third legalistic concern, freedom of speech, emerged in the scenario involving teacher conduct where the teacher made negative comments in the school community. Principals referred to freedom of speech after they examined the details of the situation and decided whether or not to address the teacher's disparaging remarks. They recognized that teachers have a right to express their personal opinions and that those opinions cannot be censored. Their desire to uphold the personal right of expression is evident in the following statement: "We cannot censor a person's right to converse, except if there is professional criticism leveled against other staff members" (S4, R28). While upholding the freedom of expression, principals made the distinction between expressing personal opinions with teachers versus expressing them with students. They saw the teacher's conversations with teachers as professional conversation, but they were concerned that the teacher conversing with students ran the risk of politicizing the students through the expression of personal opinions about controversial matters. It was
made clear that students should not be exposed to teacher opinion and bias, especially if it does not have to do with topics being covered by curriculum. As one principal remarked, “it is acceptable to speak critically to staff but not to students” (S4, R9). In reference to expression of personal opinions, another principal stated, “This is a personal opinion and people are entitled to freedom of speech” (S4, R27). Responses from the principals indicated that their desire to protect rights in the form of freedom of speech bumped up against the need to protect students from points of view that may be inappropriate.

The fourth legalistic concern, union issues, was raised in responses to a scenario dealing with teacher-student relations, in which principals expressed interest in the union guidelines. Principals wanted to ensure that union regulations were being followed when they invited the teacher into their office to discuss the alleged relationship. One principal observed that “I would address the issue with the teacher and his union representative” (S2, R12). Attention to union issues also emerged in the principals’ desire to adhere to the union code stating that the teacher member must be informed of a negative report within 48 hours: “report staff member to follow OECTA code about the negative report” (S2, R4). These data indicate that the principals considered the collective agreement in their administrative duties of running a school.

**Moral Code**

The third category of justification, moral code, refers to the system of values by which society governs and judges behavior. This theme could be detected in three of the five scenarios and through three concerns. The first moral concern, disadvantage, was
evident in the principals' desire to ensure that students from families of low socioeconomic status were afforded equal opportunities for education. The second moral concern, Catholicity and the teachings of the Catholic Church, was embedded throughout their decision-making process. The third concern, ethical standards, emerged in principals’ responses as they called teachers to a higher standard of behavior.

The issue of disadvantaged students emerged in a scenario dealing with the allocation of funds. Principals frequently referred to disadvantage as they discussed their concerns that these students had fewer opportunities and resources. Principals saw, as part of their duty, the need to take care of those less fortunate. They responded to this need by allocating increased funds for the ESL students: “We have an obligation to provide the disadvantaged group with the opportunity” (S1, R30). Principals wanted to ensure that students from families of low socioeconomic status were able to have access to educational resources that would enable them to achieve academic success and that would give them similar future opportunities as other students. In reference to allocating funds to the ESL students, one principal stated: “Hopefully bring them up to par with the rest of the student population and therefore create for them a more level playing field in future opportunities” (S1, R30). Some principals acknowledged that the community is responsible for its members and that attention must be given to those members who require help. The reliance on disadvantage as a justification for allocating funds is evident in this statement: “The mark of an evolved society is how we care for the neediest amongst us” (S1, R18). Principals’ references to unequal distribution of wealth and disadvantage indicate a focus on social justice.
Some principals approached the allocation of funds and the disadvantaged from a religious standpoint. *Catholicity* was at the center of responses to the scenario where principals discussed the need for advocating for the less fortunate in the school community. In being Catholic and working for a Catholic board, principals felt that it was part of their duty to care for the poor. This is evident in the statement: “The preferential option for the poor is a part of the commitment to social justice that we must uphold as a Catholic system” (S1, R26). The adherence to religious beliefs was evident by this principal’s response: “The mandate of our gospel values is that we serve the neediest in the community” (S1, R13). The next response, which came from the scenario dealing with teacher-student relations, also yielded concern for Catholicity: “Catholic teachers are role models in the community as well as in the school” (S2, R11). With reference to addressing the situation with the teacher, one principal stated that he would cite Catholic doctrine in the discussion and “refer to the teachings of the Catholic Church” (S2, R28). These quotations demonstrate that the principals of this Catholic board examined the scenarios and made their decisions in the light of the teachings of the Catholic Church.

The third moral concern, *ethical standards*, emerged in the scenario dealing with the teacher-student relationship. Principals referred to ethical standards as they discussed the teacher’s questionable behavior: “Teachers are held to a higher ethical standard than the average person” (S2, R30). Some principals addressed the issue by discussing the moral implications of the relationship: “[I would] speak to the teacher about the moral and ethical issues of this situation” (S2, R7). Principals used their concern for ethical standards as a basis for their decision to address the situation: “There is a moral and
ethical responsibility as a principal/teacher” (S2, R3). The emphasis on ethical standards also emerged in the following response: “I would also see this as amoral behavior” (S2, R12). These data indicate that a general rather than a specific use of ethical standards was an aspect of the decision-making process employed by the principals.

Democracy

The final category of justification was democracy, which refers to the process of decision making where there is representation of all people. Two concerns related to this theme could be detected in two of the five scenarios. The concern for representation was seen in the principals’ desire to ensure all voices in the school were heard and to take into account the community’s demographics in their decision-making process. The concern for consensus was evident in the principals’ desire to have parties reach a compromise.

The first concern, representation, emerged in the scenario dealing with implementing change. In responses to the issue of changing the school start time, principals displayed a desire to ensure that all members of the school community had a chance to express their views and to make a decision that served the whole community. This is evident by one principal’s response: “You also need to survey the students then, with consultation of all stakeholders including the administrative team, which has not been considered in the mix, [and you] have to make a decision which best serves all” (S3, R5). Principals saw a need to inform themselves as to the opinions of all stakeholders: “I would go back to the parents for further discussion. I would ensure there was an advisory forum where all voices were represented and heard” (S3, R14). In their concern for
representation, principals wanted to ensure that students from all socioeconomic levels were considered. For example, they observed that changing the school start times could pose difficulties for the students from families of lower socioeconomic status, as illustrated in the following statement: “It is important to consider demographics” (S3, R9). This observation grew out of the principals’ awareness that some students had to work after school, out of necessity. One principal stated his concern for representation of all stakeholders in the following manner: “I think it is important to weigh the importance of family life and economic needs of the families and students, with the amount of significant educational benefit of start and finish times” (S3, R12). The emphasis on representation and demographics is also apparent in the following response: “Parents have brought out issues of responsibility and economics. They are survival issues for low income family members” (S3, R27). Data related to demographics were evident as principals expressed consideration for the particular needs and characteristics of the school community.

The concern for consensus, as part of democracy, was evident in the scenario dealing with changing the school start time, where parents and teachers had opposing views on changing the start time. Principals saw their role as that of a mediator, in that they wanted both sides to continue discussions until there was a resolution. The reference to consensus is apparent in the following response: “Keep talking until a solution emerges … status quo until both sides are closer together or proposing compromises” (S3, R2). It also emerged in another principal’s statement: “Without more consensus, I would probably go for the status quo” (S3, R4). Data indicated that principals were
looking for the teachers and parents to reach an agreement about the start times rather than impose a decision.

Summary of Results

In this chapter, the results of the principals’ decision making with regards to hypothetical scenarios with ethical implications have been presented according to the major thematic justifications that emerged by melding the responses to the different scenarios. However, it is also interesting to consider the justifications that principals made in individual scenarios. This summary, therefore, will present the results as they emerged in each scenario.

In the first scenario, which dealt with the allocation of funds, principals used academic performance, disadvantage, and Catholicity as justifications for their decision making. Responses indicate that, although principals used different justifications for their decisions, most were concerned with ensuring that all students received equal opportunity to succeed academically. Since principals perceived that ESL students had greater needs, both financially and academically, they wanted to ensure that resources were focused on meeting their needs. This constellation of justifications can be designated as falling within the principle of equality.

In scenario two, which dealt with a teacher-student relationship, principals cited board power, professional standards, union issues, Catholicity, and ethical standards as justifications for their decision making. This scenario showed the greatest consistency among the principals, with 29 of the 32 principals stating they would address the issue. The core of the principals’ responses indicated a desire to ensure that teacher behavior
met the guidelines by which professional conduct is typically measured, regardless of whether the guidelines were set by the board, the union, the profession, the church, or society. This pattern of responses positions the principle of public responsibility well ahead of private liberty in the justifications of the participants.

In the third scenario, which dealt with changing the school start time, principals demonstrated a desire to implement change properly and to use research to inform their decision making. They also wanted to ensure that their decision-making was informed by adequate representation from the community. Some principals used demographics as a strategy for informing their decision, and others relied on consensus. The data indicated that the principals were concerned with the ramifications of change and that they took steps to ensure that all stakeholders were represented in the decision-making process. This justification is an example of the principle of democratic inclusion.

In the fourth scenario, which dealt with a disgruntled teacher, principals used morale, change, and freedom of speech as justifications for their decision making. Many participants expressed concern over the effects of the teacher’s negative comments on the school community but recognized the teacher’s right to express an opinion. Some principals directed their energy on working with the disgruntled teacher in order to improve the situation. In this scenario, the principle of personal liberty tended to outweigh public responsibility.

The fifth scenario dealt with implementing superintendent directives. This scenario yielded the most diversity in responses, with 16 principals relaying the superintendent’s message and 13 not. Some principals referred to board power as a
justification for their decision making while others used their own moral code and expressed concern for human rights. Still others questioned the extent of their professional responsibilities and referred to job subordination as the basis for their decision. This scenario demonstrated a desire to uphold the *principle of ethical values* but that the effects of bureaucratic power could overshadow this desire.
CHAPTER FIVE: SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND IMPLICATIONS

Introduction

The study reported in this document examined how secondary school principals from a Catholic board make and justify decisions that have ethical considerations. The study was undertaken because the day-to-day administration of a school involves countless decisions, and while many are merely clerical, many others are complex and demand careful deliberation and application of ethical principles. It is taken for granted that principals are equipped to make such ethical decisions, but that assumption is not necessarily correct. A principal must take into account several stakeholders, whose interests are sometimes in conflict, and situations often arise for which there is no standard protocol. In the absence of a formal system or method through which to approach problems with an ethical dimension, principals use experience, judgment, and familiarity with diverse situations to provide a framework to inform their decisions, but the framework may or may not be ethical at its core.

In light of the increased accountability and complexity of their role, it may be that principals are not prepared for the decision making required in the operation of a school, especially when the decisions involve an ethical situation. There seems to be a need to establish a program where principals can examine the ethical principles and concepts that are part of the decision-making process and strive to develop and improve their own coherent system of values and ethical administrative style. It is the complex
nature of the principal’s role and responsibilities that creates a need to examine the application of ethics in school administration. What is not known, however, is the extent to which practicing administrators actually rely on consistent ethical frameworks when making decisions that have ethical considerations. Consequently, the purpose of this study was to investigate the ways in which secondary school principals made decisions that had ethical considerations and to analyze the principles or reasons they used to justify their choices. The results of this study contribute to academic literature about the frameworks that underlie administrative decision making and the possessed and avowed ethical values of high school principals.

In this concluding chapter, the findings from the study are summarized, discussed, and analyzed. The findings from the principals’ responses are compared to the literature and conclusions are drawn. The chapter ends with an examination of the implications for the theory and practice of decision making by principals, as well as the implications for further research.

Summary of the Study

In this study, 32 secondary school principals from a Catholic school board in Ontario were asked to respond to five hypothetical ethical scenarios. In their responses, principals were asked to make and justify decisions related to various administrative situations that had an ethical consideration. The scenarios were based on Strike, Haller, and Soltis (1998) but were adapted to present realistic scenarios that the participating principals might encounter in the daily running of the school. An inductive analysis that synthesized the responses across the scenarios yielded four major categories of
justification. Pedagogy was one of the major justifications as principals expressed concern for academic excellence, staff morale, and positive educational change. The second justification that emerged was legalism in the expressed concerns for board power, professional standards, freedom of speech, and union issues. The third major justification is referred to as moral code because the principals’ personal moral code was clearly evident when they expressed concern for disadvantaged students, Catholicity, and ethical standards. The last major justification, democracy, was seen in principals’ concern for representation and demographics. These four justifications were noted throughout the five scenarios.

The data were also analyzed deductively to identify responses specific to each scenario in terms of their connection with the ethical principles embedded by Strike et al. (1998) in each scenario. In the first scenario, which dealt with the allocation of funds, most of the principals’ justifications fell within the principle of equal treatment. In scenario two, which dealt with a personal relationship between a teacher and a student, the principals’ pattern of responses positioned the principle of community and public responsibility well ahead of private liberty. In the third scenario, which dealt with changing the school start time, the majority of justifications fell within the concept of democracy and democratic inclusion. In the fourth scenario, which dealt with a disgruntled teacher, the principle of personal liberty tended to outweigh public responsibility. The fifth scenario dealt with implementing controversial superintendent directives. Although the principals’ justifications were diverse, there was a clear desire to
uphold the principle of ethical values, but the pattern of responses illustrated that the effects of bureaucratic power could overshadow this desire.

**Discussion**

The five scenarios of this study were designed in such a way as to elicit responses from principals based on ethical principles and concepts outlined in Strike, Haller, and Soltis (1998). According to Strike et al., each scenario was expected to present participants with conflicting ethical principles, and examining their justification processes should demonstrate the ethical principles and concepts underlying the decisions they made. Results indicate that the principals did not appear to consciously use ethical principles or concepts to make their decisions. Instead, they addressed the ethical issue and justified their decisions on the basis of personal judgments or educational consequences. The failure of the respondents to explicitly use ethical principles does not, however, imply a lack of implicit principles. For example, the first scenario, which dealt with the allocation of funds for a gifted program or an ESL program, was designed to have respondents choose between the conflicting principles of benefit maximization and equality. Strike et al. argue that the choice to allocate money to Hispanic (ESL) students suggests that the concept of equality is the governing ethical principle underlying the decision, regardless of the justifications used by the respondents. With 25 out of 32 principals choosing to allocate funds to ESL students, and with the majority of these respondents expressing a duty to ensure that each student receive the best education possible, the concept of equality is clearly evident. Therefore, perhaps without being consciously aware of the principles underlying their decisions, these participants appear
to have used the concept of equality as the ethical basis of their decision making. For those 5 principals who chose to allocate money to the enriched students, their responses did not explicitly indicate that they had applied the principle of benefit maximization nor did they overtly state an ethical basis for their decision. They did, however, express concern for school reputation, academic excellence, and student achievement. These reasons seemed to have a political basis, since the prestige of having a reputation for academic excellence would attract a greater number and caliber of students, which, according to Strike et al., is a defining characteristic of the principle of benefit maximization.

Scenario two, which dealt with a teacher-student relationship, was designed to have principals examine the ethical concept of personal liberty as it relates to the notion of public and private actions. Here principals were asked if they would address the apparent involvement of a married teacher and an 18-year-old student. The individual's right to privacy was weighed against professional standards and public decorum. Responses indicated that 29 of the 32 principals would address the issue. Many of these responses reflected a concern to ensure that the College of Teachers regulations were being met and that no legal issues would arise from failing to address the situation. They also indicated a desire to clarify union regulations and board policy on such matters. However, their responses did not indicate that many of the principals were aware of their obligations toward the student or of the standard protocol when dealing with issues of a sexual nature of an 18-year-old student. This situation was even more evident in the responses of the 3 principals who stated that they would not address the issue because
they felt that it was “none of their business,” which indicated a concern for the teacher’s right to privacy. This result is problematic because, although principals have no legal obligation to intervene when a student is 18 years of age, regulations from the Ontario College of Teachers suggest that any affair between a teacher and a student should be investigated because, according to the College, principals have a duty to protect all students in the school community, regardless of age. Consequently, this scenario should have alerted the participants to the possibility that charges of sexual abuse could be laid under the Professional Misconduct Regulation, section 1, number 7, which encompasses abusing a student physically, sexually, verbally, psychologically, or emotionally. This regulation was never cited in any of the responses, and the principals did not indicate a concern for the welfare or protection of the student. These results seem alarming because it is expected that the primary concern and duty of all principals would be to ensure that the well-being of all students is protected. Furthermore, principals should be held to an even higher standard because they are viewed as moral leaders in their community.

One outcome of the study is interesting because it brings to mind some early breakthrough work on the power of the informal organization. That is, the effects of teacher morale on learning was noted in scenario four, which dealt with a disgruntled teacher’s disparaging comments to staff and students about the administration. In that scenario, the principals expressed concern for the negative impact on teacher morale and in turn on the learning environment. The impact of morale was studied early in the 20th century by Mayo (1949/1990), who, in his investigations with electrical workers, found
that individuals are more productive when they feel that they are part of a team and
that members of the administrative cadre value them. His work is considered
foundational because it was one of the first times that investigators analyzed
organizational activity from the perspective of the workers. The principals’ justifications
in scenario four indicate that Mayo’s findings can be applied to the educational
profession and to the concerns of principals. In essence, if the morale in a school is high,
then teachers are happier and more productive. Teachers’ productivity is seen in the
interest, enthusiasm, imagination, and vigor expressed in their teaching. This then
translates to the classroom setting and to students who will be more interested in the
subject matter and learn more. Mayo’s study also implies that it is important to ensure
that all staff members in a school feel they are part of the team. Teachers who have an
effective working relationship with the administration already possess a strong basis from
which to deal with and make changes in their work environment.

Scenario three, which dealt with changing the school start time, was designed to
have principals examine the concept of democracy but which yielded responses that
focused on the process of implementing change. The pattern of responses indicate that the
principals seemed to be well educated in the process of change, since their justifications
aligned well with Fullan’s (1991) contention that change involves a careful consideration
of local characteristics such as district, community, teacher, and principal, and of specific
characteristics such as need, clarity, complexity, and practicality. Many of Fullan’s
concepts were evident in responses where the principals saw themselves as agents of
change but were concerned about the mechanism and consequences of change and with
issues of research, morale, representation, and consensus. That is, the principals felt it was important to ensure that there is consensus and that teachers support the notion of change in order for change to take place smoothly and effectively.

The principals’ responses to scenario three also call to mind Tannebaum and Schmidt’s (1958) strategies for promoting effective change, which are: tell, sell, consult, and join. From the principals’ responses, Tannebaum and Schmidt’s “tell” aspect is evident in the principals’ concerns for ensuring that all stakeholders were aware of the impending decision. “Sell” could be seen in their concern that the change would be beneficial for all involved. The “consult” aspect is apparent in the principals’ effort to have all stakeholders reach consensus through consultation. The “join” aspect is illustrated in the principals’ concern to have all stakeholders actively involved in the change. The manner in which principals deal with change has far-reaching implications. In the constantly changing climate of Ontario education and with Ministry of Education initiatives such as the Grade 10 literacy test, curriculum changes, and the elimination of OAC, principals will be considered more effective and credible if they can show that they are comfortable with and capable of leading, organizing, and initiating change in the school community.

One of the most noteworthy results of this study was that, although literature surrounding administration and decision making is often concerned with ethics and how they are applied, the data revealed that most principals were focused on the effects the decisions would have on the learning environment rather than on the application of ethical principles. Across the scenarios, the principals were concerned with offering the
students the best possible learning environment and with ensuring that their decisions would not adversely affect the various members of the school community. They expressed concern for the learning environment from various viewpoints, such as how the morale of teachers would affect the learning of students, how learning would be affected by changes in the school environment, and how teaching and learning would be affected by negative comments.

Furthermore, most of the principals appeared to approach decision making from a democratic viewpoint in which they wanted to ensure that all stakeholders' voices were heard before a final decision was made. This approach to decision making reflects the type advocated by Bull and McCarthy (1995), who suggest that educational leaders must "engage in public and moral deliberation in the process of developing their decisions" (p. 627). The principals' responses indicated that they wanted input from parents, students, and teachers in the change process and in decision making.

Thus, in the literature relating to administrative decision making that is primarily concerned with the philosophy of ethics and with the ethical basis of decisions, it appears that the actual decision making process by which principals make decisions might have been overlooked. The participants in this study indicate that principals did not approach ethical scenarios with ethics in mind. Rather, they approached the scenarios with practicality in mind and with a concern for optimizing the students' learning environment in order to provide the best education possible. This result was unexpected because most of the literature reviewed for the study did not specifically cite a concern with pedagogy as a decision-making justification. One exception was Campbell-Evans (1991), who
alluded to this issue in the discussion of her study of school principals. In her conclusions, she states, “Principals consider the consequences of the decision-making prior to the action” (p. 176).

A limitation of this study is that it did not allow for principals to discuss their responses to ethical scenario with others, so no conclusions can be drawn as to whether or not the principals would discuss ethical situations in their school setting. The failure of principals to discuss ethical decisions has been cited as an issue of concern in some literature on ethical decision making, such as the work conducted by McKerrow (1997). She contends that principals should “dialogue with other members of the organization in order to facilitate ethical decision-making” (p. 210). She further suggests that there is lack of ethical leadership in administration and that “there must be serious consideration of ethics in a profession whose mission is fundamentally ethical but whose practice is not” (p. 210). Her concern went unanswered in the data from this study, which indicated an overreliance on practicality in decision making and the possibility that the resulting school leadership might be pragmatic rather than humanistic.

Because this study surveyed principals from a Catholic board, it was interesting to note that Catholicity, a moral code, and ethical standards were used together as justifications. For example, principals who referred to their moral duty to address a teacher-student relationship cited Catholicity and a moral code as the basis for that duty. Principals referred to Catholicity as they discussed their duty to ensure that the less fortunate students were taken care of and provided with the resources best suited to their needs. The Catholic tenets referred to by these principals seek to ensure that all members
of the community are cared for and have their basic needs met. This reference to Catholicity and the actions involved in carrying out this aspect of Catholicity is similar to what Beck (1992) refers to as the caring ethic. In this sense, ethical principles emerged as principals relied on Catholicity, moral code, and ethical standards as bases for their decision making.

In scenario five, implementing superintendent directives, principals were asked if they would relay the superintendent’s message requesting teacher transfers based on their ethnicity. It was interesting to note the sharp division in responses, with 16 principals reporting that they would relay the superintendent’s message and 13 would not. It is apparent from the pattern of responses that some principals held their personal values and morals higher than the duty to follow the superintendents’ directives whereas others were compelled by duty. Principals who would relay the message felt uncomfortable about doing so but felt compelled by their duty as an officer of the board and a subordinate to the superintendent. These principals indicated that their duty as an officer of the board superseded their personal moral code. Of course, another interpretation could be that the principals took the path of least resistance by relaying the message. They did not have to engage in personal moral deliberations about the issue, rationalizing that they were off the hook because they just passed the message on and let the board take responsibility for the actions.

It is interesting to note that this scenario resulted in almost half of the principals setting aside their Catholic values. These principals, in working for a Catholic School Board, are supposed to be leaders of the faith. Nonetheless, by relaying the message, they
would ignore their moral compass that would require them to consider the individuals who would be affected by their decision. Also, these principals did not seem concerned about the impact of the superintendent’s message on the social context in which contemporary schools are situated. Starratt (1991) states that an educational administrator has a social responsibility, “not simply to the individuals in the school or school system, not simply to the educational professions, but (to) the society of whom, and for whom, he or she is an agent” (p. 191). Since the violation of human rights is not confined to the walls of the school, principals should consider the impact of any decision on society. That is, if principals who are moral exemplars and agents relay such a message, then what stops students from similarly ignoring ethical requirements and justice, both in the present and when they become leaders in the future?

Principals who chose not to relay the message acknowledged their position as an officer of the board but saw themselves as having a prior duty to the members of the school community and to society by upholding basic human rights. This is an instance where the principals’ private views and personal moral code emerged. The division among principals in scenario five illustrates Kaminsky’s (1986) statement that

moral rules are not made once and for all, they are made and remade endlessly.

Moral rules are aspects of social life that are ceaselessly debated. It is a rough and tumble debate, in which all elements of society have some say. (p. 28)

It is expected that principals in a Catholic school system follow a moral code and are ethical in their actions and their decision making. One might assume that the principals would be nearly unanimous in their decision not to relay the message, since they all have
the same religious base and are employed by a board that considers its Catholic orientation as an essential part of its mission. Of course, another interpretation is that the principals who chose not to relay the message might have been concerned with potential union, legal, and human rights issues and were not considering the ethical aspect at all. As Bull and McCarthy (1995, p. 627) point out, school leaders face many situations that require them not just to apply the law but also to interpret and to make it. Faced with the two legal issues of human rights and insubordination, the principals may have chosen the course of action that they deemed would be least problematic from a legal standpoint.

One final point to be made about the data collected in this study is that, although the principals might not have been aware of the ethical principles and concepts outlined in Strike et al. (1998), they used their experience and training to address the issues in the scenarios and through their reasoning arrived at ethical decisions. The rationale for their decisions might not have been based explicitly on the ethical principles, but the manner in which they addressed the scenarios corresponds with the ethical principles and concepts. Considering the focus in the literature on the lack of ethics in administration and decision making, these findings are significant because they illustrate that principals approach ethical scenarios from various perspectives, but that they generally arrive at just and fair decisions nonetheless. Therefore, their lack of knowledge or training in ethics does not necessarily mean that they are ill-equipped to deal with ethical decisions. Furthermore, the results imply that the training they are receiving, while it may not examine ethics explicitly, provides some tools with which these Catholic principals were able to make ethical decisions. The data imply that various decision making approaches
can yield ethical outcomes and that the private views and personal moral code of principals are therefore important factors in the way they approach ethical decision making. In essence, the general character and experience of the principal are important factors in determining the ethical quality of their decisions.

**Implications for Theory**

Literature that surrounds administrative decision making often focuses on ethics, the lack of ethical training for principals, and the unjust decisions that administrators make in their position of power. The findings of this study seem to refute the literature suggesting a lack of ethics in administrative decision making. By contrast, the findings of this study indicate that principals do in fact make ethical decisions even though their reasoning might not be explicitly informed by formal ethical schema, such as the ethical principles and concepts outlined by Strike et al. (1998). This suggests that principals can arrive at fair and just resolutions to ethical situations when all aspects and ramifications of a decision are considered. It seems that the theoretical base of administrative decision-making might be improved by placing more emphasis on the process through which decisions are made, rather than assessing the ethicality of the explicit justifications for a decision. Of course, this further implies that the theoretical base should be constructed from research that is conducted with practicing administrators in their actual work contexts. Unfortunately, most of the literature reviewed in this study was not based on research conducted with administrators. This might account for the apparent focus in the literature on how a principal *should* administer a school rather than on how school principals go through the actual process of decision making.
Implications for Practice

Principals' responses indicated a lack of overt knowledge about ethical principles and concepts. The data showed that principals were not explicitly concerned with ethics but had the learning of the students as their foremost concern. Furthermore, although the principals' reasoning was at times diverse, they generally arrived at the same conclusion regarding the ethical situations in the scenarios. This implies that, for the most part, the principals' personal moral code, coupled with their administrative training in the area of decision making, was adequate to produce just and fair decisions. However, in spite of this capacity, the data also illustrated that the principals were not aware of their duties and responsibilities in certain areas. For example, some of the principals were unsure of board policy, union issues, and the Ontario College of Teachers regulations and guidelines. Therefore, it seems that principals need to be trained in terms of policies and regulations in order to be administer a school. Also, a seminar focused on ethical principles, concepts, and guidelines could increase the principals' capacity for dealing effectively and ethically with sensitive situations in a wide variety of contexts. In other words, in spite of their ability to make ethically defensible decisions, the principals' lack of explicit knowledge of specific ethical principles and concepts is apparent from their responses. Professional development examining ethical decision making would enable principals to approach ethical situations with greater ease and increased confidence. Furthermore, school boards should be screening principal candidates for their ability to approach decisions from a variety of perspectives. In doing so they would help to ensure that decisions made by their principals would be just and fair.
Implications for Research

This study was conducted in survey format so it is limited to principals' written responses. In an interview, a researcher could clarify the responses and probe for underlying justifications. In this way, the limitations of unclear responses and incomplete surveys would be reduced. Further studies could explicitly interview principals about their knowledge of ethical principles and concepts and about their experience and training in the area of ethics and decision making. Another study could examine the responses of principals to determine how they establish priorities among the values that emerged in this study. It would be interesting to conduct a survey of elementary school principals and examine how they make ethical decisions to track similarities and differences between the justifications used by elementary versus secondary school principals.

It is unfortunate that access to public school principals was not available for this study because the results indicate a clear need to compare the data given by Catholic principals to that provided by principals from public school systems. Data from this study were collected exclusively from Catholic secondary school principles but did not reflect a dominant Catholic character. These results might have emerged as a consequence of the construction of the scenarios, which was generic and non-Catholic in nature. In spite of the data collection instrument, however, the results raise the question of whether there is in fact anything distinctive about administrative ethical decision making in a Catholic secondary school. The ability to compare the results of this study to data from secondary principals in a public school board could help to tease out the effects of working in a
Catholic or a secular environment on the decision-making process and the justifications for administrative decisions.

**Conclusion**

The results of this study indicate that the decisions made by secondary school principals in a Catholic board are grounded in various perspectives. Data did not indicate any explicit knowledge of ethical principles and concepts as outlined in Strike, Haller and Soltis (1998), but that lack did not stop the principals from using other guidelines as the basis for their decision making. In other words, principals’ responses indicate sound and valid reasoning for their decision making, which addressed the ethical principles and concepts from a variety of viewpoints and with many diverse justifications.
- References


Ontario College of Teachers. (1996). Professional misconduct regulations. Toronto, ON: Ontario College of Teachers


Appendix A

Questionnaire for High School Principal

Years of teaching experience: _____ Years of experience as a principal: _____
(include present year)

Circle gender: Male Female Age ______

The following five scenarios are presented to you as a principal in a high school. Please answer the following questions, not from an ideal standpoint, but as honestly and completely as possible. You may elaborate but please try to avoid equivocal or vague answers.

Scenario number one

You have a $5000.00 allotment for a computer program. The school is in an area under transition, into which there has been an influx of affluent families. Previously, the school clientele was mainly from immigrant families of middle to lower socioeconomic status. There is a small ESL population in the school. There is also a handful of new enrichment students.

Which computer program should be purchased, one for ESL students or one for enriched students, given that only one can be purchased due to budget constraints. A committee has decided that the computer programs are of equal pedagogical value and would each be utilized to the maximum benefit of the students.

1) Circle one of the following.

ESL computer program Enrichment computer program

Explain why you chose the above response.

_______________________________________________________________________________
_______________________________________________________________________________
_______________________________________________________________________________
_______________________________________________________________________________
_______________________________________________________________________________
_______________________________________________________________________________
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_______________________________________________________________________________
_______________________________________________________________________________
_______________________________________________________________________________
_______________________________________________________________________________
2) What would your response be if the enrichment computer program was $5000.00 and the ESL program was $2500.00?

Circle one of the following.

ESL computer program  Enrichment computer program

Why?

________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________

3) What would your response be if the money was being spent on textbooks instead of computer programs, where both groups required textbooks?(one for extra resources the other for an ESL course)

Circle one of the following

ESL textbooks  Enrichment textbooks

Why?

________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________
4) What would your response be if there were more ESL students than enrichment students?

Circle one of the following

ESL computer program

Enrichment Computer Program

Why?


Scenario number two

You have been informed from one of the teachers on staff that last weekend he saw a young male teacher on staff with an eighteen year old female student at a bar in the downtown area. The teacher and student were seen kissing and caressing each other while consuming alcohol. They were seen leaving the premises arm in arm.

1) Circle one of the following

Do you address this issue? Yes No

Why or Why Not?


What is your course of action if you do address the issue?


2) What is your course of action if the teacher was seen with a former student who has since graduated?

Why?


3) What is your course of action if the young teacher was female and the student she was seen with was an eighteen year old male student?

Why?


4) What is your course of action if the young teacher is married and seen with a former student?

Why?
Scenario number three

The teachers have conducted a survey and provided data and a strong argument to you in support of changing the school start and end times. They have cited several studies and experiments that show convincingly that having an 8:30 a.m. start is not conducive to a positive learning environment for teenagers. They have conducted a staff survey and a large majority of the teachers surveyed support a later school day start. The teachers argue that the high rate of absenteeism and lateness during period one can be addressed by changing the start time.

The Parent Council heard about the survey and they are strongly opposed to such a change. They also conducted a survey among parents and the majority of parents do not want any changes to the start and end times. They argue that home life and sibling responsibility will be negatively affected. They also make a strong point that many of the students have part-time jobs that start half an hour after the end of the school day. Lengthening the school day will affect the students’ jobs.

You are left to make the final decision about changing the start and end time of the school day.
(The issue itself is moot, the choice you must make is which point of view to support.)

1) Circle one of the following:

Do not change start time  
Change the start time

Why did you make the above decision?

__________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________
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__________________________________________________________
2) What would your response be if the 100% of the parents did not want a change and 50% of the teachers did?

Circle one of the following

Do not change start time

Change the start time

Why did you make the above decision?

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

3) What would your response be if 50% of the parents and 100% of the teachers supported change?

Circle one of the following

Do not change start time

Change the start time

Why did you make the above decision?

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________
null
4) What would your response be if 80% of the parents and 80% of the teachers supported a change in start time but you were convinced it is not beneficial.

Circle one of the following

Do not change start time  Change the start time

Why did you make the above decision?

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Scenario number five

You have received a phone call from the superintendent instructing you to tell the teachers at the next staff meeting that the transfer deadline is approaching and this is an opportunity for creative shifting and rebalancing of staffs to reflect student populations. The “complexion of the teachers should be reflective of the student population, if it doesn’t then teachers should consider transferring to a school where he/she fits in better.” The superintendent’s rationale is that there has been tremendous pressure from the parents to the board requesting teachers that could better relate to their children on a cultural level.

1) Circle one of the following.

Do you make the announcement at the next staff meeting? Yes No

Why or Why Not?
______________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________
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Would you be willing to be contacted for further research, perhaps an interview? Circle one of the following. Yes No

If Yes, please state your name and where you can be contacted.
Name____________________________________________________________
Phone number or e mail address______________________________________
FROM: David Butz, Chair
Senate Research Ethics Board (REB)

TO: Michael Manley-Casimir, Education
Yvonne Kingswell

FILE: 01-097, Kingswell

DATE: January 22, 2002

The Brock University Research Ethics Board has reviewed the research proposal:

An Examination of Ethical Decision Making in Practical Ethical Scenarios
by Secondary School Principals

The Subcommittee finds that your proposal conforms to the Brock University guidelines set out for ethical research. Your research proposal has been approved through the expedited review process for the period of January 22, 2002 to August 5, 2002.

** Accepted as clarified.

Expedited Review of a research proposal (by 2 members of the Research Ethics Board and review by the Chair of the REB) is equivalent to approval provided by the full REB (i.e., it does not mean conditional approval). However, the Chair of the REB must report to the full REB on a monthly basis about any expedited reviews that they have conducted. At such meetings, the full REB could ask for additional changes to the research protocols being used in a particular study. If this were to occur, the decision of the full REB will always over-ride the earlier decision of the two REB members and the Chair.
Please note:
Changes or Modifications to this approved research must be reviewed and approved by the committee. Please complete form REB-03(2001) Request for Clearance of a Revision or Modification to an Ongoing Application to Conduct Research with Human Participants and submit it to the Chair of the Research Ethics Board.

The Tri-Council. Policy Statement requires that ongoing research be monitored. Researchers with projects lasting more than one year are required to submit REB-02(2001) Continuing Review/Final Report annually and at the completion of the project. The Office of Research Services will contact you when this is required. All projects, with the exception of undergraduate projects, will require this form to be submitted to the Research Ethics Board upon completion of the project.

These forms are available from the Office of Research Services web site: www.BrockU.CA/researchservices/forms.html

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