"I" at the Centre of Ethics and Ethical Dilemmas in Educational Leadership

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Abstract: The notion of ethics has been the focus of attention in educational leadership over time. This happens by no surprise given that values and ethics lie at the heart of leading learning and ethical dilemmas are 'the bread and butter' of educational leaders' lives. However, what is actually ethics? What makes educational leadership ethical? What are the ethical dilemmas in it? And how could educational leaders respond to ethical dilemmas? By reviewing relevant literature and research in educational leadership from the last three decades, this paper seeks to find answers to these questions. It is found that although ethics is highly contested, there appears to be an agreement that it is about relationships. In addition, as both a profession and a moral activity, educational leadership is by itself an essentially ethical activity. The most troublesome ethical tensions emerge when leaders are faced with 'right versus right' dilemmas. By critically examining the key elements of various models and approaches to confront ethical dilemmas, it is suggested there is a strong emphasis on the importance of being self-critical for educational leaders to be able to (re)solve ethical dilemmas.

1 INTRODUCTION

It is widely recognised that effective educational leadership is an important factor to bring about positive changes to schools and student outcomes. Although 'leadership is second only to classroom teaching in its impact on student learning' (Leithwood et al., p.4), Leithwood (2007, p.46) claims that 'leadership serves as a catalyst for unleashing potential capacities of school organisation,' including pupil learning (p.46). In line with it, Leithwood (2007) argues that people with a leadership role have a great responsibility to 'get things right'. However, Notman (2014) believes that educational leadership is not simply a matter of technical capabilities and skills (getting things right), but it also relates to 'ethics at the heart of its complexity. In other words, in order to be responsible and effective, educational leaders must also be ethical leaders (Tuana, 2014).

The call for ethics to be taken into account as an important feature in educational leadership, however, has long been a topic of discussion. Foster

(1989), for example, states that, 'leadership must be ethical [because] it carries a responsibility not just to be personally moral, but to be a cause of "civic moral education" which leads to both self-knowledge and community awareness' (p. 284). From this perspective, Hightower and Klinker (2012) state that, 'Foster himself understood that the concept of educational leadership was moving toward doing ethics, not merely talking about morality…leadership should fall back into the understanding generated by competing moral philosophies…' (p. 110). Why is it moving more toward doing ethics? According to Branson and Gross (2014, p.1), it is because leadership is like a 'double-edged sword': it can be an opportunity for doing something good, while at the same time become a temptation for fulfilling one's self-interest and needs. Therefore, ethics in educational leadership is important as it portrays how a leader is using the opportunity (s)he has.

Nowadays, ethics in educational leadership is needed more than ever. Shapiro and Gross (2013) echo this point of view by arguing that, 'in the beginning of the 21st Century, in an era of wars,

terrorism, hurricanes, volcanoes, tornados, financial uncertainty, and high-stakes testing, educational leaders are faced with even more daunting decision-making difficulties than in more tranquil period' (p.3). Similarly, Kristinsson (2014, p.11) argues that, 'today educational leaders are [not only] responsible for the effective functioning of an institution or division, [but also] accountable to a variety of stakeholders with different interests and priorities, including staff, students, parents, community, and government.' Thus, in order to be effective, educational leaders have to base their decisions and practices not only on technical skills (getting things right), but also on ethical values and principles (getting right things) (Tuana, 2014).

With increasing responsibilities and challenges faced by educational leaders, it is safe to say that educational leaders face challenges not only in 'getting things right', but also 'getting right things.' When there are issues dealing with 'what is right', Shields (2014, p.25) argues that, 'educational leaders are often confronted with questions about how to ensure that their leadership practice is ethical'. Therefore, educational leaders today are challenged with a view stressing that 'ethics is at the heart of good leadership' (Shields, 2014, p.24).

By referring to the assumptions emphasising the importance of ethics in educational leadership above, this paper aims to find answers to the following questions: (i) what is meant by ethics? ;(ii) what makes educational leadership ethical? (iii) what are the ethical dilemmas in educational leadership? and, (iv) what should educational leaders do to respond to the ethical dilemmas? The paper will review and draw from relevant literature and research in educational leadership from the last three decades. Each part will provide answers to a question outlined earlier.

2 ETHICS: A CONTESTED DISCOURSE

The term 'ethics has been a subject of debate from time to time. From the linguistic perspective, the word 'ethics' roots from the Greek word ethos, which means 'customs' or 'usages' of a particular a group that is distinctive from another (Shapiro and Gross, 2013; Cranston, Ehrich, and Kimber, 2014). By time, it comes to mean as 'character, customs, and approved ways of acting' (Shapiro and Gross, 2013; Cranston, et al, 2014). However, as character

is a 'slippery' concept, by no surprise, ethics is also difficult to define.

The early attempt to define ethics dates back to some thousands of years ago in the era of Plato (427-347 B.C.). Plato is attributed to say that 'ethics is what we ought to do or how we ought to live our lives' (Ehrich et al., 2011; Cranston, et al, 2014). Similarly, Dewey (1902, cited in Shapiro and Stefkovich, 2016, p.10) defines ethics as 'the science that deals with conduct … considered to be right or wrong, good or bad.' In the same way, Hosmer (1987, p.91) defines ethics as 'the study of proper thought and conduct.' Although these early definitions provide helpful foundations to understand what ethics is, they might raise some critical questions, such as: Approved ways of acting by whom? Proper according to whose standards? Or, right or wrong according to whom?

Over time, the term 'ethics has been further defined and developed. Some practitioners describe ethics in terms of what it is not (Singer, 1994; Ehrich et al., 2011b; Cranston, et al, 2014). For example, misconduct, corruption, fraud, abuse of power, and deception are considered to be unethical behaviours (Ehrich et al., 2004). In contrast, several notions such as care, honesty, dignity, integrity, justice, professionalism, and trust are perceived as the characteristics of ethical behaviour (Francis and Armstrong, 2003; Kuther, 2003; Ehrich, et al, 2005; Kristinsson, 2014, Shapiro and Stefkovich, 2016). However, understanding ethics in terms of what it is not could cause a potential danger of prescription in what people ought (not) to do in life as well as professionally (Ehrich et al, 2011).

Singer (1994) provides a succinct explanation of the meaning of ethics from the perspective of what it is not. First, ethics is not a set of prohibitions, particularly concerned with sex. When an ethical judgment, such as sex before marriage, does not work in practice, it must have a theoretical defect as well. Then, ethics is not an ideal system that is noble in theory but no good in practice. When an ethical judgment does not work in practice, it must have a theoretical defect as well. Finally, ethics is not something intelligible only in the context of religion, because religion is only one out of many reasons for doing what is right and being who is virtuous. This third point of view is supported by Donlevy and Walker (2011) who mention that there are a number of sources for ethical values that guide people to decide if an action is right or wrong, namely religion, society, organisations, and family. In line with Singer's (1994) argument, Boss (1998, cited in Donlevy and Walker, 2011, p.1) concludes that,

'ethics is like air, all around but only noticed in its absence'.

Nonetheless, despite being contested in its definition by various practitioners, there appears to be a common agreement that ethics is all about relationships (Cranston, Ehrich, and Kimber, 2006, p.107). It is a 'set of rules, principles or ways of thinking that guide, or claim authority to guide, the actions of a particular group' (Singer, 1994, p.4). It is also concerned with how people ought to live and behave in life with others based on some guiding moral principles (Freakley and Burgh, 2000; Wellington, 2000). Since it is concerned with ought and ought not in relation to ways of life and behaving, Mahony (2009, p. 983) then views ethics as a 'philosophy of morality'. Building from these definitions, Donlevy and Walker (2011) argue that living ethically means being the kind of person we want others to think we are when we are at our best.

3 EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP: AN ETHICAL DOMAIN

Educational leadership has recently become an 'industry' (Leithwood, 2007). Denig and Quinn (2001) speak as one voice with the argument by pointing out that there is a significant increase in the study of educational leadership encompassing a number of technical skills, such as supervision, curriculum development, budgets, negotiations, school law, and research. However, in practice, educational leaders are to have more than a strong foundation of these technical aspects (Denig and Quinn 2001; Cranston, et al 2006; Notman, 2014; Starrat, 2014). Since leaders are to base their decisions and actions on 'values, beliefs and ethics' (Bush and Glover, 2003; 2014), leadership covers moral and ethical dimensions (Campbell, 1997; Starratt, 1996). Hodgkinson (1991) supports this viewpoint by stating that, 'values, morals and ethics are the very stuff of leadership and administrative life' (p.11).

The moral and ethical dimensions of leadership have actually been at the centre of discussion from time to time. For instance, Foster (1986, p.33) states that, 'each administrative decision carries with it a restructuring of human life: that is why administration at its heart is the resolution of moral dilemmas.' Sergiovanni (1991, p.329) argues that 'in the principalship, the challenge of leadership is to make peace between … the managerial and the moral. The two imperatives are unavoidable and the

neglect of either creates problems.' In a similar manner, Fullan (2001, p.2) also explains how educational leaders are constantly confronted with the demand to provide 'once-and-for-all answers' to problems that are 'complex, rife with paradoxes and dilemmas'. In addition, Seldon (2009, p.26) claims that, 'as role models, leaders across society must meet two key criteria of trustworthiness; behave ethically and be technically proficient.' Meanwhile, Day (2012, p.1) explains that school leaders sustain their success if they have strong moral and ethical purposes. Therefore, given that there are moral and ethical dimensions in leadership, it is safe to argue that educational leaders are expected to make just and right decisions in which ethics is at its heart (Ciulla, 2006; Notman, 2014; Shields, 2014).

As ethics is realised to be at the heart of leadership, Cranston et al (2014) argue that there has been a wider understanding and appreciation of leadership complexity, particularly in how leaders are to make ethical decisions. Ethics has become an important focus in educational leadership (Ciulla, 2006; Cranston et al., 2006; Cranston, Ehrich, Kimber & Starr, 2012; Shapiro and Stefkovich, 2016). According to Cranston et al (2014), there are two main reasons for the emergence of ethics in educational leadership.

First, the media and public have higher awareness of corruption and fraud as well as other unethical behaviours among organisational leaders (Trevino, 1986). As a result, as explained by Kimber, Carrington, Mercer and Bland (2011), there is a stronger demand for accountability and transparency which is characterised by: (i) the establishment of applied ethics programmes in universities; (ii) the use and development of professional codes of conduct in private and public sectors; and, (iii) the establishment of anti-corruption agencies. Second, it turns out that educational leadership extends beyond daily managerial affairs. Today, leaders often face ethical dilemmas in their work as they have to make decisions that meet the best interests of the people they lead (Shapiro and Gross, 2013). Furthermore, just like any other profession, Kristinson (2014) argues that educational leadership is a professional activity that is essentially ethical. Therefore, Kristinson (2014, p.13) concludes that, 'educational leadership is an essentially ethical activity'.

Kristinson's (2014) argument, however, leads to another a question: What is meant by 'profession' and 'professionalism'? Evans (2008, p.13) provides a helpful explanation to understand the two concepts by defining professionalism as:

"…[work] practice that is consistent with commonly-held consensual delineations of a specific profession or occupation and that both contributes to and reflects perceptions of the profession's or occupation's purpose and status and the specific nature, range and levels of service provided by, and expertise prevalent within, the profession or occupation, as well as the general ethical code underpinning this practice."

On the basis of this definition, it could be seen that ethics exists in the complexity of all kinds of professions. As a profession, thus, educational leadership cannot be described or understood independently of moral purposes and concepts (Kristinson, 2014), because at the heart of its complexity lies values and ethics (Duignan and Collins, 2003, p.2; Bush and Glover, 2014, p.559). However, for the purpose of this paper, educational leadership is defined broadly to incorporate not only school principals but also those in positions and titles who have decision-making functions through distributed leadership practice, including teachers, administrators, psychologists, parents, etc.

4 ETHICAL DILEMMAS IN EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP

By borrowing Cranston et al's (2006) language, ethical dilemmas are the 'bread and butter' of educational leaders' lives. Supporting this argument, Denig and Quinn (2001) claim that, 'ethical dilemmas are commonplace in today's world of hurried decision making'. However, what is meant by a dilemma and an ethical dilemma? What is the difference? Cranston et al (2012) provide a helpful distinction between the two by explaining that the former is associated with a choice between two options, while the latter relates to conflicts that involve 'personal values and the values of others in the organisations' (Trevino, 1986, p.604) or 'conflicting moral principles' (Kirby, Paradise, & Protti, 1992, p.1). Furthermore, another question is: when do people, especially educational leaders, face ethical dilemmas? According to Cranston et al (2006; 2012), ethical dilemmas emerge 'when people find themselves in perplexing situations that necessitate their choosing among competing sets of principles, values, beliefs or ideals.' In addition, leaders face ethical dilemmas 'when these competing sets of principles pull in different directions' (Badaracco, 1992, p.66).

Meanwhile, by referring to some definitions of ethics discussed earlier, it could be argued that ethical dilemmas might probably be concerned with the issues of 'right versus wrong'. However, with the increasingly broad and complex contexts in education, the ethical dilemmas faced by educational leaders are rarely 'right versus wrong 'issues, because they are rather easy to manage (Stevenson, 2007). In accordance with it, Kidder (1995, p.16) argues that, 'right versus right … is at the heart of our toughest choices.' In other words, the options available for leaders to choose are all 'right' (Duignan and Collins, 2003). In this context, Stevenson (2007, p.380) explains that, 'right versus right dilemmas can be characterised as "either/or" situations where there exists a clear opportunity cost resulting from whatever action is not pursued.' Furthermore, there are even 'wrong versus wrong' issues that leaders have to cope with and manage, particularly in making decisions (Hitt, 1990, p.35). In line with these ethical dilemmas, Day, Harris and Hadfield (1999, p.15) suggest that, 'a key part of being a leader was not only being able to deal with tensions but also having to make the tough decisions.'

What are the ethical dilemmas that educational leaders have to confront and manage? It is beyond the coverage of this paper to present an extensive discussion of the kinds of ethical dilemmas faced by educational leaders. Yet, below are some key findings of research from different settings, highlighting ethical dilemmas and tensions in educational leadership.

Lyons (1990) conducted a study to explore the dilemmas that 46 teachers in the U.S.A encounter in their classrooms in a two-year period. One of the study's key findings is that, regardless of their professional subject matter, teachers face ethical dilemmas when they attempt to respond to and interpret their students' needs, which knowledge to teach, and the ways to deliver it. In line with this, Lyons (1990, p.162) claims that, 'any ethical dilemma is likely to emerge in its particularity because of who the teacher is', and has to be managed to realise effective teaching and learning process. However, it is unfortunate that Lyons' (1990) study does not explain how principals as the leaders with formal authority at school level could help teachers manage the ethical dilemmas in teaching and learning practices.

Day et al (1999) carried out a study about the practice of effective leadership in British schools. The study revealed that ethical dilemmas emerged when the principals were confronted with 'develop

or dismiss' situations. The principals felt an ethical tension when they had to develop or dismiss failing staff (Day et al, 1999). However, it is important to note that the study was conducted in British schools with a 'devolved' education system where the principals have the authority to dismiss a teacher. Therefore, similar ethical tensions may not be faced by principals in other countries with a different education system.

Ehrich (2000) conducted a case study on how principals in Australia were increasingly held accountable due to the ever-changing policy climate, such as school-based management systems and high-stakes standardised tests. The study found that there are competing accountabilities in relation to administrative, financial, market and political aspects that urge school principals to be morally accountable leaders. However, the study fails to identify that accountability is not only 'vertical', either to the local government or the Ministry, but it is also 'horizontal' to the community and parents (Gove, 2012, cited in Gilbert, 2012, p.8). Therefore, to some extent, the study overlooks some other ethical tensions that school principals might confront in relation to holding accountability to the community or parents.

Dempster and Berry (2003) conducted a study on the ethical decision-making dilemmas faced by 552 government school principals in Queensland, Australia. The study found that the principals confronted ethical dilemmas in four different aspects, namely: students, staff, finance and resources, and external relations. First, the most difficult ethical decision-making that involves students are harassment, bullying, bad language, conflicts of values (home versus school), negative behaviour, and suspension. Then, monitoring staff performance and assigning teachers to classes are circumstances that cause most ethical tension. Third, the most difficult ethical issues in relation to finance are concerned with deciding funding allocations for senior staff, curriculum, and income generating activities. Finally, the most troublesome ethical dilemmas dealing with external relations encompass: 'dealing with cultural diversity in the school community, addressing community values different from those of the school, dealing with policy directives from central office and managing overly demanding parents' (Dempster and Berry, 2003, p.465). This study provides more comprehensive examples of ethical dilemmas faced by school principals compared to the three former studies above.

Helton and Ray (2006) conducted a qualitative study on the strategies used by 271 US-American school practitioners (psychologists and special education teachers) in resisting pressures to practice unethically. The study found that the sources for ethical dilemmas might come from policy, administrative pressures, students and colleague actions, and professional codes of ethics. These findings overlap with what Ehrich (2000) found earlier. However, Helton and Ray's (2006) study provides complementary insights because it is one of only a few studies scrutinising ethical dilemmas faced by psychologists and special education teachers.

In the English context, Stevenson (2007) undertook a study in five local authorities by employing a social justice perspective. The study found that, 'school principals are faced with the difficulty of creating caring and inclusive learning environments in a context of high stakes testing and the publication of school performance data' (Stevenson, 2007, p.380). In this context, the ethical dilemmas faced by school principals are concerned with a collision between the leaders' moral principles and market demands in their multi-ethnic schools. However, it is necessary to point out that inclusiveness in Stevenson's (2007) study is confined to creating sensitive and inclusive learning for minority ethnic people. Thus, to some extent, there are ethical dilemmas faced by school principals in creating an inclusive learning environment for those with disability and other learning needs.

Through a study in Scandinavian countries, Norberg and Johansson (2010) found that curriculum is an ethical document. Norberg and Johansson (2010, p.327) argue that, 'it [curriculum] mirrors the society's notion of what is valuable, useful and necessary from a societal and individual perspective.' As a result, the ethical dilemmas emerge when teachers and principals are confronted with individual awareness and curriculum content. Norberg and Johansson (2010) suggest that it is important for school leaders to have an 'ethical perspective' on decision-making, especially related to curriculum, although the term 'ethical perspective' is not clarified.

In Asia, educational leaders also inevitably face ethical tensions. A study by Ho (2006), for example, found that school leaders in Japan and South Korea face ethical dilemmas when attempting to be innovative in their leadership practice, or compliant to implement the government policies in the centralised and hierarchical education system. Chen and Ke's (2014) study in China found that ethical

tensions emerged when the school principals were trying to make visible and durable school changes in an institutionally and culturally constrained environment like China (Chen and Ke, 2014).

In Malaysia, a study by Chek, Yahya and Norwani (2013) found that ethics and corruption in the country is a national issue. Chek et al (2013) recommend that ethics education for young people, teachers, school principals and others working in education, is necessary to prevent corruption. However, the suggestion lacks further elaboration on how ethics education can be carried out, and who is eligible to deliver it? Meanwhile, three case studies from Indonesia, by Raihani and Gurr (2006), Raihani (2007), and Raihani, Gurr and Drysdale (2013), come to the same conclusion in relation to the ethical tensions faced by school principals in two provinces: Yogyakarta and Central Kalimantan. All these studies conclude that trust is an important feature of school leadership due to concerns in Indonesia about corruption. In other words, the ethical dilemmas that the principals confront relate to 'ethical versus unethical' conduct, particularly corruption, in the view of Indonesian society. Unfortunately, since the focus of the studies is on the effectiveness of the principals in transforming their school, corruption as an ethical issue in school leadership is given less explanation.

A study by Arar, Haj, Abramovitz and Oplatka (2016) explored ethical dilemmas faced by 150 educational leaders in the Arab educational context. The study found that, in general, there are three leadership dimensions (care, justice and critique), and three aspects of leadership: the ability to identify, to solve and to make decisions, that could be the sources of ethical dilemmas for educational leaders. Although the study enriches the findings of previous studies elaborated in advance, its limitation lies on the fact that it uses three elements of leadership dimensions as a lens to discover the ethical dilemmas in diverse Arabian countries. Therefore, the study somewhat lacks consideration on different contexts and settings that might contribute to the sources of ethical dilemmas.

Donlevy and Walker (2011) categorise ethical dilemmas into five types. They are: (i) ethical agnosticism: the ethical conduct is blurred; (ii) ethical cynicism: there is a question whether or not doing ethical action and decision would make any difference; (iii) the doctrine of 'relative filth': this happens when there is a policy or decision that might be wrong but justified because people do worse; (iv) the jam of 'false necessity': this emerges when there is no other possible choice to escape

from a dilemma; and, (v) statistical morality: an action is legitimated because most people are doing it, although it might be unethical. Indeed, these categorisations provide a helpful summary of ethical dilemmas in education. However, when understood sceptically, it is also highly possible that they would be used as a formula rather than a lens to identify and solve existing ethical dilemmas.

5 RESPONDING TO ETHICAL DILEMMAS IN EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP

There have been several models and approaches developed over the last three decades to help leaders cope with, and manage, ethical tensions. Some of these models are based on literature and practice in business and management. However, all of them do provide useful tools for identifying, resolving or solving ethical dilemmas as well as making ethical decisions.

A number of early models to solve ethical dilemmas put the emphasis on internal and external factors affecting leaders in making an ethical decision (e.g., Ferrell and Gresham, 1985; Trevino, 1986; Bommer, Gratto, Gravander, and Tuttle, 1987). The model proposed by Bommer et al (1987), for example, focuses on various factors contributing to ethical decision-making. It categorises six factors that influence a manager in making decisions, namely: (i) work environment; (ii) governmental/legal environment; (iii) social environment; (iv) professional environment; (v) family and peer group; and (vi) individual attributes (Bommer et al, 1987, p.266). Bommer et al (1987) believe that the model could increase the leaders' understanding of intervening internal and external factors that may result in ethical and unethical decisions. However, the model has a minor limitation in the sense that it is a conceptual model, and hence, further evidence based on research is needed to prove its effectiveness.

Also based on empirical literature, Fritzsche (1991) developed a model that emphasises various components affecting ethical decision-making. The model shows that the decision-maker's personal values will be mediated by the organisational values (e.g., the organisation's culture and goals) to lead to an ethical decision. What makes this model different to the one developed by Bommer et al (1987) is 'the inclusion of the leader's personal values', and 'the discussion of ethical decision-making process', to

yield many alternative decisions to finally come to the decision considered most ethical (Fritzsche, 1991, p.841). However, there is a tendency that Fritzsche's (1991) ethical decision-making model relies heavily on the selection of alternative decisions. Thus, there might be a possibility that a decision will be taken depending on the situation.

In the field of educational leadership, a model formulated by Shapiro and Stefkovich (2005) is widely recognised to provide a comprehensive guide to help educational leaders resolve or solve ethical dilemmas, especially in the era that Shapiro and Gross (2013) regard as 'turbulent times'. This model is developed on the basis of the earlier work by Starratt (1994) who brings together three paradigms of justice, critique, and care in his approach to schools. To these three ethics, Shapiro and Stefkovich (2005) add a fourth lens or paradigm, the ethic of the profession. Taken together, the ethics of justice, critique, care, and profession are well recognised under the umbrella of Multiple Ethical Paradigms. Largely informed by the work of Shapiro and Gross (2013) and Shapiro and Stefkovich (2016), these four ethics are described as follows.

The ethic of justice puts emphasis on rights, law, and policies. This lens deals with concepts that include fairness, equality, and individual freedom. It is a perspective that leads to a number of critical questions, such as: Is there a law, right, or policy that would be appropriate for resolving a particular ethical dilemma? Why is this law, right, or policy the correct one for this particular case? How should the law, right, or policy be implemented?

The ethic of critique asks people, especially educational leaders, to rethink and redefine important concepts such as democracy, privilege, power, culture, language, and in particular, social justice. This ethic encourages leaders to reflect on hard questions in relation to class, race, gender, and other areas of difference, including: Who makes the laws, rules, or policies? Who benefits from these laws, rules, or policies? Who has the power? And who are the silenced voices?

The ethic of care aims to challenge the dominant and/or patriarchal ethic of justice in society. It seeks to make education a 'human enterprise' (Starratt, 1991, p.195) – a place that addresses concerns and needs as expressed by many people (Beck, 1994, p.3). Central to this ethic is the discussion of concepts such as loyalty, trust, and empowerment. This ethic asks individuals to consider the consequences of their decisions and actions. It asks them to take into account questions, such as: Who will benefit from what I decide? Who will be hurt by

my actions? What are the long-term effects of a decision I make today? And if I am helped by someone now, what should I do in the future about giving back to this individual or to society in general?

The ethic of the profession places the student at the centre of decision-making process. It also takes into account not only the standards of the profession, but also the ethics of the community, the personal and professional codes of an educational leader, and the professional codes of a number of educational organisations (Shapiro and Stefkovich, 2005). This lens could resolve or solve an ethical dilemma when educational leaders use it by raising questions such as: What is in the best interests of the student? What are the personal and professional codes of an educational leader? What professional organisations' codes of ethics should be considered? What does the local community think about this issue? And what is the appropriate way for a professional to act in this particular situation, based on the standards of the profession?

In addition to these four paradigms, Branson (2007) adds a fifth perspective based on research, that is the ethic of personal moral integrity. This ethic acknowledges the application of the previous four ethical perspectives in helping leaders resolve or solve ethical dilemmas, and at the same time guiding them to come to a number of alternative actions rather than a single solution to an ethical dilemma (Branson, 2010). However, Branson (2007; 2010) argues that, in order to ensure that the process in resolving or solving a certain ethical dilemma results in an ethical decision, it is important for leaders to be well informed by their moral integrity. In this context, moral integrity is defined as leaders' instinctive and consistent actions in doing what is right for the good of others even without incentives or sanctions (Branson, 2007; 2010). From this perspective, it is safe to argue that moral integrity is also about making decisions that meet the best interests of others (e.g. students), rather than self-interests.

When applied to the educational context, however, the literature show that the definition of 'the best interests of the student' is disputed (Stefkovich, O'Brien, and Moore, 2002; Stefkovich and Begley, 2007). Walker (1998), for example, argues that there is a possibility for school leaders to claim something as in the student's best interests, while it is simply another way to justify adults' interests. In explaining the contested notion, Stefkovich (2006), and Stefkovich and Begley (2007), mention that decisions in relation to a

student's best interests are those incorporating individual rights to teach students about the importance of three "Rs" – rights, responsibility, and respect. These three "Rs" are key to solving or resolving ethical dilemmas, as well as making ethical decisions that are in a student's best interests and, in turn, to fulfilling educational leaders' professional obligations (Stefkovich, 2006; Stefkovich and Begley, 2007).

The fifth lens of ethic, as argued by Branson (2007) (see above), can play a significant role in ensuring one's leadership actions that portray moral integrity. In solving or resolving an ethical dilemma, Branson (2010, p.3) explains that the lens raises questions such as: How am I going to be affected by the possible outcome driven by the multiple ethical paradigms of justice, critique, care and profession? What is my driving motivation? What feelings, beliefs, and biases that I have? What benefits will I get? Will I be the person most-benefited? What strengths and weaknesses do I bring? How are my strengths and weaknesses going to affect the situation? How have my personal views affected and influenced my analysis on each of the other ethics? How are my personal preferences different from the knowledge learned from the other ethical paradigms? How do my personal preferences interfere with the assigning of priority to the knowledge provided by each of the other ethical perspectives?

All five paradigms of ethics above provide broad and comprehensive guidance for educational leaders in resolving or solving ethical dilemmas. However, it is important to bear in mind that each of them functions as a lens (Shapiro and Stefkovich, 2005; Shapiro and Gross, 2013), rather than a prescriptive tool. This finding is in line with the fact that leadership itself is a contested field (Yukl, 2002; Bush and Glover, 2003), and there is no single formula in successful educational leadership (Day, 2003; Hargreaves, 2003; Day, Gu, and Sammons, 2016). Drawing from these claims, it is logical to argue that there is no single prescription to resolve or solve ethical issues in educational leadership as well.

Educational leaders also need to consider various contextual factors when confronting ethical dilemmas. Socio-cultural context, for example, is shown to be an important factor in facing ethical dilemmas. Recent studies by Dimmock and Walker (2000), Bottery, Ngai, Wong and Wong (2013), Walker (2015), and Haiyan, Walker and Xiaowei (2017), found that culture at the organisational level, politics, economics and religion, including teaching and learning culture, are significant forces in realising effective educational leadership in general, and resolving or solving ethical tensions confronted by school leaders in particular.

Another important point to highlight is that all models and approaches to resolve or solve ethical dilemmas presented above stress the importance of being self-critical. Many questions raised in each ethical perspective put "I" at the centre of resolving or solving ethical dilemmas. Poulson and Wallace (2003) explain well what being critical is about. For Poulson and Wallace (2003, p.6), being critical means: (i) adopting an attitude of scepticism; (ii) questioning the quality of our own and others' knowledge; (iii) scrutinising claims; (iv) respecting others; (v) being open-minded; and, (vi) being constructive. To a certain extent, these qualities of being a critical "I" reflect the overall questions following the five ethical perspectives in resolving or solving ethical dilemmas, explained earlier. This finding relates back to a study carried out by Kohlberg (1981) more than three decades ago. This longitudinal study found that, from a moral and ethical point of view, resolving or solving ethical dilemmas depends on how individuals understand complex moral and ethical issues regardless of their age and situation (1981, cited in Ryan, 2011), and reflecting the issues to themselves. Therefore, in the context of educational leadership, Begley (2007) argues that, when being critical, educational leaders will be 'authentic leaders'. It is a notion used to describe 'professionally effective, ethically sound and consciously reflective' educational leaders (Begley, 2007, p.163).

6 CONCLUSION

Educational leadership is widely believed to function as a catalytic element for unleashing the potential of educational organisations, including pupil learning. It has become an 'industry' that offers a wide range of technical skills, such as supervision, curriculum development, budget planning, research, etc. to educational leaders. All of these skills are aimed at 'getting things right' through the role and function that educational leaders have. However, as the passing of time, it is proven that educational leadership extends beyond the boundary of 'getting things right'. Values and ethics lie at the heart of leadership, and hence, leading is also a matter of 'getting right things'. For this reason, educational leaders are often confronted

with ethical dilemmas in the course of their daily practice.

The whole field of 'ethics' is contested. Defining it as customs, proper thoughts, right or wrong, and good or bad conduct, as well as approved ways of life, is not enough for it invites an array of complex and critical questions, such as: Who decides what is proper, right, wrong, good, or bad? To what degree? And why? Therefore, the term 'ethics' is often understood from what it is not. Corruption, fraud, and deception are some examples of behaviours considered to be unethical. In contrast, there are notions considered to be ethical characteristics, such as care, honesty, dignity, integrity, justice, professionalism, and trust. Nonetheless, there appears to be a general agreement that ethics is all about relationships. Ethics is concerned with moral principles which guide, and are held by, a group or a profession in behaving and leading life.

Educational leaders are expected to be ethical in order to be successful. The practice of unethical behaviours, such as corruption and fraud, has increased media and public awareness on the importance of ethics in leadership. In accordance with it, just like any other professions, it is necessary for educational leadership to be seen as an essentially ethical activity. Evidence supporting educational leadership as an ethical domain is found in literature and research that reveal ethical dilemmas and tensions faced by educational leaders in many different settings and times. Research shows that the most troublesome ethical dilemmas in educational leadership deal with 'right versus right' issues.

A number of models and approaches have been developed over the last three decades to help leaders resolve or solve ethical dilemmas. However, some of them are drawn from the literature and field of business and management. In education, Shapiro and Stefkovich (2005) develop a comprehensive guide that is widely recognised to function as a lens in helping educational leaders resolve or solve ethical dilemmas. The model focuses on four paradigms of ethics, namely: justice, critique, care and profession. Branson (2007) adds a fifth paradigm, that is the ethic of personal moral integrity. All these paradigms emphasise the significance of being self-critical, since they put "I" at the centre of resolving or solving ethical dilemmas. Thus, in order to be able to resolve or solve an ethical dilemma, as well as achieve an ethical decision, an educational leader has to be self-critical and adopt an attitude of scepticism, question the quality of own and others' knowledge, scrutinise claims, respect others, be

open-minded, and be constructive. The effectiveness in resolving or solving ethical dilemmas depends on the leaders as individuals critically learning and understanding complex moral and ethical issues, and reflecting on these issues.

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