Values to Action: Utilizing a Value Informed Decision Matrix to "Jumpstart" Dialogue and Critical Self Reflection by School Leaders on Elements Influencing Their Decision-making Process

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Abstract*: This article considers the special function of values as an influence on school leaders decision-making. Because school leaders are required daily to make immediate decisions, personal values are generally acknowledged to be central to the field. Leaders must be informed by their values but how do they negotiate the troubled waters of value driven moral leadership in today's environment? Using a qualitative questionnaire, the authors explore the influencing values of school leaders attending an educational leadership doctoral program at a southern Ivy League university in the USA.*

Keywords: *Education, Leadership, Decision Matrix, Values*

1. Introduction

Current demands on education pull school leaders in several directions at once, as they attempt to fill instructional, managerial, and political roles while balancing

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competing demands from the school, district, state, and federal government (Cuban, 1988; Elmore, 2004). Such problems can take a number of forms...that involve(s) competing values (Willower, 1999, p.132). Every action and behavior by the school leader is the result of a whole array of moral choices and deliberative decisions. Unavoidably, school leaders cannot help but be informed by their values and guided by normative principles. Yet, to date, research has provided little to increase the clarity, coherence, and relevance of values to everyday administrative practice. Researchers have found values difficult to quantify in any objective sense, largely because they resist empirical verification (p.237). The level of discourse on values in educational administration is too often uninformed and merely polemical (p.123).

School leaders face daily dilemmas as they make hundreds of routine and not-so-routine decisions regularly pitting a wide range of values against each other. Dealing with the non-routine –the unexpected, the problematic, the new and the unfamiliar, the paradoxical is never straightforward, precisely because of the absence of close parallels on which to base responses. It is when choices are between closely competing goods or the lesser of two evils that moral valuation comes into play. Cranston, Ehrich and Kimber, 2003 define such a situation as an ethical dilemma. They also point out that "leaders resolve dilemmas everyday in the natural course of their work. In most cases, however, leaders make decisions with little or no knowledge of the theoretical approaches to ethics" (p.137).

2. Purpose of Study

The pilot study which is the narrow subject of this article employed the constant comparison method of grounded theory, developing a 'Value Informed Decision Matrix (VIDM)," (derived from our literature review) to focus conversation on critical self reflection and action, and to help school leaders' explain and understand their own value system. We ask school leaders to reflect on their decision making process and to explore the scaffolding that support their ethical position when making a decision.

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3. Definitions: Decision making, values and ethics for education

To facilitate understanding, key terms need definition. The first, decision-making, is the conscious selection of a course of action deemed appropriate for changing an extant condition or circumstance in a desired direction (Heald, 1991).

The second key term is value. A value is an enduring belief about the desirability of some means or action. Once internalized, a value also becomes a standard for guiding one's actions and thoughts, for influencing the actions and thoughts of others, and for morally judging oneself and others (Leithwood, Steinbach & Raun 1993). Conceptualized in this way values have a pervasive role in the decision-making process. Defining the third key term i.e. ethics, presents more of a problem as it is subject to much contestation (Cranston, Ehrich, & Kimber, 2003). Literally, ethics means character; being derived from the Greek "ethos" therefore an ethical person is one who has character. However, there is some debate surrounding this narrow definition. Freakley and Burgh (2000, p. 97) state that ethics can be understood as 'what we ought to do'. Thus it requires judgment and reasoning in decision making that raise questions regarding what is right, wrong, good or bad conduct, fair or just. Yet another way of viewing ethics is to see it as 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).

There appears to be general agreement in the literature that ethics is about human relationships and how we, as human beings, ought to act and relate to one another (Freakley & Burgh 2000). This particular perspective of ethics is called 'virtue ethics' and dates back to Plato and Aristotle (Freakley & Burgh 2000, p. 111).

4. Elements contributing to the decision making process

According to Spaedy, (1990 p.157) "persons wishing to impact society as school leaders must be motivated by a set of deep personal values and beliefs," they must "bring to

their enterprise a certain passion that affects others deeply" (Sergiovanni,1991b, p.334). School leaders, need to develop their capacity for critical self reflection on practice and promote self inquiry among other members of the school community. In developing democratic, professional communities, leaders must operate from moral authority based on ability, professional expertise and moral imperative rather than line authority (Fullan, 2003). Their behavior should model commitment to the values of the school (Sergiovanni, 1991b) and to serving the best interests of the children in their school (Greenfield, 1990, p.74).

An effective leader must firstly be aware of the "higher" values of liberty, justice and equality and apply these appropriately in the leadership situation (Burns, 1978) and secondly by an enhanced understanding of the sense of self. Leadership begins with the 'character' of leaders, expressed in terms of personal values, self-awareness, and emotional and moral capability (Greenfield and Ribbins, 1993).

Hodgkinson (1978) developed a hierarchy of values. His values typology incorporates four motivational bases that comprise the source of values, beliefs, attitudes, and actions for individuals. These four bases (in ascending order) are personal preference (grounded in individual self-interest, they are self justifying and primitive or sub rational), consensus (grounded in expert opinion, peer pressure or the will of the majority in a given group), consequences (where intentional action is focused by a desirable future state of affairs or analysis of future outcomes), and at the pinnacle of the hierarchy, transrational principles (grounded in the metaphysical, they take the form of ethical codes, injunctions or commandments. They are not scientifically verifiable and cannot be justified by logical argument).

Endeavoring to place values in hierarchical order is a complex process open to criticism particularly when applied to a variety of social roles. Begley and Leithwood (1990) propose that the values exhibited by school leaders, do not occur in patterns reflecting Hodgkinson's hierarchy. They suggest that values of consequence and consensus are more likely to dominate.

Turning to more recent research, a study by Day, Harris and Hadfield (2001) of twelve schools in England and Wales (where school leaders had been identified as effective

by the Office for Standards in Education (OFSTED) criteria), concluded that "good leaders are informed by and communicate clear sets of personal and educational values which represent their moral purposes for the school" (p.53). They acknowledge the importance of a school leader's core personal values:

> These concerned the modeling and promotion of respect (for individuals) fairness and equality, caring for the well being and whole development of students and staff, integrity and honesty.

The implication being that school leaders must be directed by a powerful set of beliefs and values and that these "values relate to leadership in two ways: as a guide to cognitive thinking and the basis for action" (Begley, 2004). West-Burnham (2002) also emphasized the importance of moral leadership grounded in strong ethical roots suggesting that they are translated into an individual's personal values which inform day-to-day decision-making

5. Ethical Codes

Irrespective of our position in life we all have to make decisions that impact those around us be it in the home, on the journey to work, or in the workplace, or in a host of other areas in which we find ourselves. Whether we seek guidance from an external code of ethics or whether we rely on our own internal compass is personal choice.

Our internal code of ethics (T. Greenfield, 1993) tends to be guided by personal experience which is grounded in a personal life ethic. Greenfield (1979) suggested that organizations are born out of the beliefs, emotions, thoughts, volitions, and experiences of individuals. He alleged that every task a member of an organization completes has a moral dimension and that we must "engage in a continuing process of discovery aimed at gaining an understanding of ourselves and others" (p. 109).

Sergiovanni (1980) developed and articulated a set of principles which could be used by school leaders when confronting complex problems as an additional guideline and support in the decision-making process. The first of which emphasized the value of "utility" in relation to organizational

standards of production and achievement. The second emphasized "transcendence" and refers to the need for leaders to help individuals move beyond the ordinary to achieve higher standards of operation that benefit all society. To do this leaders must always assess all possible decision outcomes rather than having tunneled vision. Thirdly, Sergiovanni emphasized "justice" as he believed that leaders must evaluate decision alternatives to assess the degree each provides for a just distribution of benefits. In conclusion, he drew the three principles together to formulate his final and most important principle i.e. Leaders, when evaluating decision alternatives based on utility, transcendence and justice must bear in mind the ethical questions which surface as a result. These principles must be an integral component of leadership preparation programs, says Sergiovanni, (2001) so prospective leaders can engage in ethical decision-making scenarios.

Starratt (1991) advocated that educational leaders should have a commitment to multiple ethical perspectives thereby promoting the development of an ethical consciousness. Hodgkinson (1991) and Sergiovanni (1992) both argued that ethical practice requires grappling with basic issues suggesting that school leaders need to consider not only their thoughts and actions but also who they actually are and from where their pivotal values and beliefs emanate.

For some school leaders the reliance on an external code of ethics that is frequently evaluated and revised by a professional body alleviates the pressure and personal responsibility currently placed on their shoulders as they make difficult decisions, frequently under pressure. An external code of ethics can be used not only to aid the decision-making process but to also justify the decision made, both to an external audience but more importantly to the individual, particularly if the decision outcome has been personally unpalatable and resulted in conflict with selective stakeholders.

The Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium (ISSLC) Standards, developed for USA school leaders (1996) is such a professional code. When introducing the standards the Council of Chief State School Officers note, "Indexes of physical, mental, and moral well-being are declining (p.6).

The competencies for each of the six[i] ISLLC Standards are gathered into three categories: Knowledge, Dispositions, and Performances. Dispositions are what**,** "the administrator believes in, values, and is committed to" (p.10). The Consortium stated that "while there was little debate about the importance of knowledge and performances in the framework, the inability to "assess" dispositions caused some of us a good deal of consternation at the outset of the project (p.11)." But as the Consortium worked on crafting the standards they discovered the centrality of the dispositions. They reference the work of Perkins, 1995 as guiding their thoughts, specifically in helping them to understand that the elements — knowledge, dispositions, and performances — belong together. Perkins states that "dispositions are the proclivities that lead us in one direction rather than another within the freedom of action that we have" (p. 275), in many fundamental ways they nourish and give meaning to performance. The Consortium also agreed with Perkins (p.11) that "dispositions are the soul of intelligence, without which the understanding and know-how do little good" (p. 278).

Standard 5 is known as the "integrity, ethics and moral standard- a school administrator is an educational leader who promotes the success of all students by acting with integrity, fairness, and in an ethical manner." Knowledge and understanding of various ethical frameworks, professional codes of ethics and an understanding of the values of a diverse school community are required. This Standard also requires the school leader to examine their personal and professional values, demonstrate a personal and professional code of ethics, demonstrate values, beliefs and attitudes that inspire others to a higher level of performance, serve as a role model, considers the impact of one's administrative practices on others, use the influence of the office to enhance the educational program rather than for personal gain, treat people fairly, equitably, and with dignity and respect, protect the rights and confidentiality of students and staff, demonstrate appreciation for and sensitivity to the diversity in the school community, recognize and respects the legitimate authority of others (p.20).

Principal preparation programs throughout the USA now tend to be tailored to the ISSLC Standards or to a state version of the standards. It is through these Standards that

an identifiable code of ethics is emerging as school leaders come together for training, discussion, and reflection at various leadership centers around the country.

6. Matrix Construction

In constructing the matrix we were influenced by Etzioni (1987) who whilst acknowledging that individual decision-making does exist believes that it typically reflects collective attributes and processes. He argues that an individual's connections are of prime importance, and the process of socialization that implicitly or explicitly takes place because of membership or identification with groups is the prime influencing dimension. Etzioni makes the notion of the independent, individual decision-maker redundant. He assumes that to a large extent moral obligation determines individual behavior and decision processes and outcomes.

Bommer, Gratto, Gravander & Tuttle (1987) conceptual model identified six key categories which appeared to influence decision making. These included (1) the work environment, (2) the legal and governmental environment, (3) the social environment, (4) the professional environment, (5) the family and peer group, and (6) individual attributes.

Ferrell and Gresham (1985) viewed decision making through the contingency lens. They identified individual elements such as knowledge and beliefs, significant others in the organization setting, opportunities for action affected by codes, policy or rewards/punishment (Fritzsche 1991, p841) as influential elements in the decision making process.

Based on the Ferrell and Gresham's model (1985), Fritzsche (1991) designed a comprehensive inter-actionist model that illustrates several interrelated components of ethical decisions with feedback loops at various points (Cranston et al., 2003, p.4). In the model, the decision maker brings to any situation values formed over many years of experience. These values are mediated by other forces inside the organization such as organizational goals, the organization's climate and stakeholders (all of which constitute the organizational culture). These, then, impact upon the problem, which has the effect of motivating the decision maker to search for solutions. Solutions are evaluated against a set of decision elements (including

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economic, political, technological, social and ethical issues). Selection of the decision will have an internal and external impact on the organization. Thus, the consequences of a decision may impact upon the organization's culture (internal impact) or impact upon decision options in the future (external) (Fritzsche 1991, p. 850).

Lewis' (1990) developed a rational six dimensional model identifying authority, deductive logic, sense experience, emotion, intuition, and science as the influencing elements for the development of an individual's value system. Sergiovanni proposed a more intuitive model arguing that experience, intuition, sacred authority, and emotion should be regarded as being as legitimate as secular authority.

Cranston et al., (2003) developed a "dynamic model" (p.141) to explain an individual's decision making process when faced by an ethical dilemma. The model consists of five main parts. The first component is the critical incident itself. Second, is the set of forces which illuminate the critical incident from a particular bias? Third are the values, beliefs and attributes of the individual decision maker. Fourth is the choice made and five is the action or non action taken. The model "conceptualizes the particular forces impacting upon and the processes characterizing the decision making dynamics" (p.145).The researchers applied their model to a scenario where it was found to have practical application. Specifically, assisting researchers to analyze categorize and better understand particular types of ethical dilemmas.

Bussey (2006) identified "the values and beliefs that are essential to effective instructional leadership" (p.7) and developed a measurement instrument to gauge change in an individual's value positions as a results of completing professional development in school leadership. Bussey proposed that the instrument could also be used by school leaders for self-assessment at regular intervals throughout their career. Prior to developing the measure Bussey conducted interviews with teacher, building administrator, or central office administrator (sample of ten). Bussey found that the primary theme pervading the interviews was that of orientation to work as a spiritual calling. "The spiritual nature of the calling is not necessarily religious, but it is tied to leaders' beliefs about larger purposes" (p.4).

7. Matrix of elements influencing decision making

The matrix presented in Figure 1 focuses on the individual (the school leader), the core of Cranston, Ehrich and Kimber's model and examines the competing *value elements* that impact on an individual's decision making. The matrix elaborates authority by distinguishing academic, political, professional, societal, and spiritual values. We argue that all of these elements constitute authority and are filters for the decision-making process. Our purpose is not to test the matrix against a scenario of practice (Cranston et al., 2003) or to further develop the matrix as an empirical measurement instrument (Bussey, 2006) but to identify the strength of influence of the varying value elements and to possibly fill in the box that is left untitled in Cranston et al., model for "a significant force not identified …could emerge in the future."

ELEMENTS INFLUENCING VALUES & INDIVIDUAL DECISION MAKING Authority Base				
ACADEMIC	**POLITICAL**	**PROFESSIONAL**	**SOCIETAL**	**SPIRITUAL**
teacher religious educaton subject major credentialing programs offered & programs taken extramural activities	philosophy finance resource context constituent interest	institutional culture courses colleagues prof. journals networks legislation codes regulations, policies	ethnic group, socio economic group friends relatives professional community local, national & international conrtext	religious experience congregation affiliation community peers

Figure 1. Matrix of Values Influencing the Decision Making of School Leaders' (VIDM)

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8. Methodology

8. 1 Developing the Protocol

Given the focus of the study on values and their influences on decision-making, a subjective state experienced by school leaders, we chose a qualitative approach, utilizing structured interview as the research strategy. A twenty item semi-structured interview protocol was developed to conduct a one-on-one interview study of school leaders. Crafting of the interview questions was underpinned by the value elements in the matrix. Participants were asked how they perceived the development of their value system and the impact that their value system had on decision making. Open ended questions were designed to allow the participants to apply the question to his/her own unique context.

When using the interview as the primary data source, there are always concerns about the reliability and validity of the interview findings. Given the focus of the study, we felt it would be difficult to find more reliable data than the school leaders' own words on what they were experiencing in their professional work lives. However, the criticism that the data is based on self reporting and is not verified is valid and we accept that reliability is a major issue of the study. Begley (1999a) warns us that there is an "important difference between values articulated and the values to which [pre-service leaders] are actually committed" (p. 4). We would contend that the participants had no motivation to lie or mislead. We did endeavor to embed consistency checks into the study. Structural corroboration was employed using multiple interview items, each worded differently so as not to be obviously redundant but substantially asking for similar information from participants. These multiple items were especially useful during stages of analysis. They allowed us to cross-check responses for consistency in how each school leader articulated their perception of the influencing elements when making immediate decisions in his/her school.

The overall purpose of the interviews was to validate the matrix as a dialogue facilitator for school leaders' critical

reflective practice, encourage school leaders to identify their value system and recognize the impact their values had on decision making and the choices they made. School leaders were asked to identify the major influencing elements of their value system when making decisions.

8.2 Site and Participant Selection

Our participants consisted of twenty two high school leaders currently enrolled in a graduate program in educational leadership, at a private, southern, Ivy League university, in the US. The program was run at the weekends and although students traveled in from as far a field as New York the voluntary participants were all from the state of Tennessee. Sixteen high school leaders' representing both the private (eight) and the public sector (eight) responded to our initial invitation to participate in the study[ii]. Interviews were conducted from March through August 2004. Participants possessed an advanced academic degree and are either a practicing school leader or have been in such a position in the last two years. There was a fortuitous (but unplanned) even split in gender.

8.3 Data Collection

Interviews lasting from sixty to ninety minutes were conducted. After each interview the researcher spent time recording additional information in the field notes and checking for accuracy of recorded responses. All available data were transcribed onto text files with responses recorded by item and by respondent. Thus the data set was amenable to various analytical strategies including cross-checking for consistency of responses within respondent sets, patternmaking across all response sets, iterative processes of theme identification, in relation to the VIDM.

8.4 Data Analysis

Scaffolded by the VIDM, we crafted three research questions to guide our investigation:

Research Question 1 (RQI): Are high school leaders' aware of their own values informed, decision-making process?

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Research Question 2 (RQ2): What are the elements which contribute to school leaders' values informed, decision-making process?

Research Question 3 (RQ3): Can school leaders identify the major elements which leverage their decisions when dealing with ethical dilemmas?

9. Initial Findings and Discussion

Interviews focused on school leaders and how they perceive the development of their value system and how they applied this value system to the immediate every day decisions needed to effectively manage a school. Our three research questions serve as an organizer for the presentation of findings.

9.1 Self awareness of a values based, decision-making process

All participants considered themselves school leaders with moral and ethical integrity, regarding exhibition of these characteristics as an essential requirement of their role. Explaining their conscious values and the elements that influenced the development of those values was for many of our school leaders a difficult and soul searching experience. Though immediate decision-making was a regular feature in their daily lives, they often were no longer conscious of the influencing elements. Interestingly, they seemed more comfortable talking about identifiable behavior than their internal decision processing which one participant referred to as being "my inner intuition and instinctiveness." Being able to focus on the matrix was an "ice-breaker" and engendered the required critical self reflection.

The matrix enabled participants to reflect on influential life events, to question long held assumptions regarding their own actions, and to make connections that had previously been unrecognized. Eighty per cent of the study's participants had a common goal, seeking to do what is just and right to the best of their knowledge, and deal with people in an equitable and honest fashion. Though stress and pressure is an everyday occurrence, integrity was identified as being at the core of their value system:

For me integrity is who I am about. It means ensuring that I listen to everyone as an individual to ensure that justice is seen to be done in an open manner and that I can justify every decision I take without redress.

Integrity is the willingness to accept blame, when blame is due-and then seek to make repairs or restitution.

Integrity involves balancing the purpose of the organization with the needs of the employees, since that relationship is fundamentally symbiotic. Good leaders care for both their people and their mission.

That the overwhelming majority of participants highlighted integrity was not surprising in the light of the recent media news regarding the conduct of leaders at Enron and the ensuing legal proceedings and prison sentences. However, integrity appears to have multiple meanings. In the first and second quote integrity really focuses on the ethics of justice and the profession while the third quote related to blame; deals with the ethics of critique and final quote relates to the ethic of care.

Amongst our participants the following behaviors were identified as illuminating integrity: the pursuit of excellence in all endeavors, ability to admit wrong-doing, treating teachers and students equitably, willingness to confront wrong doing, taking responsibility for actions, shared accountability, modeling of compassion, supportiveness of colleagues, knowledge of self and colleagues, listening skills, judge of character, commitment to diversity, forgiveness and achieving one's personal best, dedication to service of others, reverence for expressing kindness towards and acceptance of others. Participants also articulated valuing: compassion, decisiveness, empathy, evenhandedness, fairness, faithfulness, fidelity, focus, honesty, impartiality, inclusion, openness, respect, stability, trust. When asked if they exhibited their stated behaviors all participants said that they did or that they "aspire to these qualities and behaviors" and according to one respondent "practice a lot." As one respondent commented:

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> I think moral leaders make decisions as democratically as possible, keeping in mind and making decisions based upon the greatest good for the greatest number of group members.

9.2 Elements Contributing to Decision-making

The predominant theme emanating from all the interviews was the important role of moral and ethical behavior in decision-making. According to participants in this study the influences of faith, family and early education were predominant. Few referred to the influence of their academic training or professional code. Early acculturation in a spiritual code appeared to be an important influencing dimension. Seventy five per cent of participants stated that they were brought up in a particular religious tradition with its rules, ethos, and values influencing them even now.

Eighty per cent of our participants believed that morals and ethics could be taught, although there was less certainty over the method of delivery. Thirty per cent of participants indicated some formalized training in philosophy, ethics or morality in higher education. A number of participants referred to the benefits of "positive role modeling" or "mentoring" as opposed to formally enrolling in a specific class. This quote was among many that made the same point and was chosen because it illustrated the theme most clearly:

> I don't think that you can sit down in class and say here are some ethical guidelines and expect people to improve their ethical character. I think it's more a mentoring approach.

Interestingly, one participant who had rejected her early Christian experience, whilst acknowledging its influence, frequently referred to the importance of individuals in her life who instructed her in "the right way to go."

> Although I have put aside many of the teachings of Catholicism, I respect deeply the ability of individuals to act first by their consciences and only secondarily by political or temporal demands.

In contrast, another participant explained how formal religion had become increasingly important in adulthood:

> I would not call myself religious until my mid-twenties. Around then I became more religious and began to take a more conscious and conscientious approach to morality and ethics. I don't think I would attribute my morality and ethics to my religious background, but my current religious faith does certainly impact my ethics and morality.
>
> I think you can awaken the 'moral imagination'-the longing to be a person of moral and ethical behavior-through the influences of others. I mentioned people who shaped my life-but I think fictional and historical figures can influence us as well. Great stories have always had great impact on people. Stories infused with characters of high moral and Ethical behavior has historically served to cast that desire in the lives of readers.

The majority of participants stated that their early personal experiences rather than later professional experiences grounded their values system. Their decision-making was guided by their moral principles inculcated by church and family. For many participants the two were intertwined and difficult to separate. Despite the lack of reference to a professional code of ethics, or professional training, all participants believed that ethics and morality should be integral to any educational administrator preparation course. But, as previously mentioned, there was vagueness as to how this should be delivered. Less than half of our participants thought it should be addressed via a specific course. As one participant eloquently remarked:

> I question the ability of a course in a post-graduate program to alter or improve an individual's ethics. Individual ethics are usually very firm by the time most folks enter post-graduate education, and they are unlikely to be changed in a university setting here a genuine and challenging conversation of ethics, which cannot really be separated from philosophy and religious bedrock, is necessarily constrained by polite

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> manners, political correctness and the ability to drive away at the end of class.

> But we need help. I need guidance and support when making decisions. I must know that inherently what I am doing is right. I haven't got the time to meditate on every decision I make. Sometimes the consequences from a decision I make are immediate and I have to know that I was right when I attempt to deal with the consequences.

There was an acknowledgement of need by our participants for a formal process to guide their decision-making. A viewpoint requiring further investigation as it has implications for program planning and course selection.

9.3 Major Leveraging Elements

Fifteen per cent of participants referred to external contextual influences such as legal restrictions, state/school district regulations. Eighty five per cent focused on their personal ethical code.

> I arrived at my values by taking all I had seen and learned from formal classes and informal observation and modeling and examining it to determine what I deemed to be appropriate moral and ethical behavior. I have since begun to filter these values and beliefs through a secondary filter of a Christian faith and world view.

> I have a navigational system that has Christianity and the Ten Commandments at the core.

> I don't know what my core values are except to say that they are inevitably Christian based with the introduction of liberalism reflecting my professional education and the era   I grew up in.

> By my Christian upbringing but also influenced by my American upbringing. America has a whole set of values which are not Christian but they claim they are

> Christian. I think I was shaped by those as well and as I grow older, I try to figure out where those came from.

Thirty per cent of participants indicated conflict when their values were not consistent with the working environment.

> Sometimes my actions are not consistent with my ethics when I have to be guided by district policy rather than by my own beliefs. This usually comes into play when we are talking about student discipline and tracking. When you know what the criteria and the guidelines are but sometimes you want the flexibility to be guided by your own ethics and morality as you can see the wider picture than the people who made the policy.

> I always try to support the needs of both my students and my teachers. It is only at the end of the day when I have time to reflect that I sometimes realize that the decision I made did not support district policy and then I go hot with worry.

Despite many school leaders having developed a personal ethical code, participants recognized their desire for job security and contextual influences. The participant's quote below was unique:

> Yes, (I do encounter conflict) but I knew innately that I was right and I stuck to my beliefs irrespective of the self harm I was causing. I firmly believe in the principle and living my life according to the words I profess

The need to align personal values to those of the school, district, state and federal context is an area requiring further study particularly if the policy of moving school leaders from a successful school to a less successful school continues to be pursued.

10. Implications and Conclusions

The pilot study described in this article aimed to identify the values that influence school leaders when making decisions. The matrix developed from a review of literature was used to "jumpstart" school leaders in their

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critical reflection on every day school decisions making. Focus on the matrix which elaborates the authority bases of the personal values manifested by individuals and the professional values of administration with the collective values manifested by groups, societies, and organizations, created greater self awareness among participants of elements influencing their decision making. Recognizing authority bases added to individual critical self reflection. In addition, utilizing a matrix rather than a measurement instrument facilitated critical self reflection and was perceived as none threatening.

The emergent emphasis on spirituality has implication for the sustainability of professional development training for school leaders. Starratt and Guare (1995) suggest that "educational leaders should be more attuned to their own spirituality (p.196). "Spirituality is a way of living…Spiritual persons tend to bring that depth and sensitivity and reverence to all or most of what they do…respond[ing] to other people and to situations with openness, acceptance and reverence" (p.193). Certainly, while study participants were not necessarily "attuned to their own spirituality" they were able to acknowledge its strong influence. Frequent references to the influence of sacred authority, support the view (Sergiovanni, 1990)) that sacred authority and emotions enjoy wide currency in the world of practice but have virtually no standing within academic conceptions of management.

Though a pilot study, we tentatively argue that spirituality or sacred influence is the missing significant dimension from Cranston et al's., model. This research is very much in its initial, exploratory stage and we are only too aware of its shortcomings. The utilization of a single instrument approach impacts validity and reliability but at the very least the results facilitate dialogue focussed on the role of spirituality in the decision making of school leaders. The author's intentions are to extend the study to enable us to make stronger claims about our findings. The matrix also needs "testing out" in a broader cultural context in order to test the reliability of our current findings. Refining the matrix may enhance future research but in our study it served as a useful tool in fostering dialogue and encouraging individual critical reflection.

11. Policy Implications

The premise that spirituality is central to the practice of school leaders needs to be explored in any analysis of effective school leadership, collegial conflict and site based management. When adopting the policy of moving successful school leaders' from one school to another, it is essential that the value system of an individual is identified and considered in relation to best fit. Each school is unique in its combination of situational variables and it seems likely that as the context of leadership changes so the effectiveness of the leadership will also change depending on an individual's ability to adapt or align his/her values and moral code to the new organizational circumstances. As one of our participants pointed out:

> In order for a leader to be moral and ethical, then, it would follow that he/she would have to exhibit conduct that is in alignment with the social agreement of the group to which he/she belongs, and that, in addition, the conduct would have to be congruent with the belief system the person has.

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[i]

Standard 1: A school administrator is an educational leader who promotes the success of all students by facilitating the development, articulation, implementation, and stewardship of a vision of learning that is shared and supported by the school community.

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Standards 2: A school administrator is an educational leader who promotes the success of all students by advocating, nurturing, and sustaining a school culture and instructional program conducive to student learning and staff professional growth.
Standard 3: A school administrator is an educational leader who promotes the success of all students by ensuring management of the organization, operations, and resources for a safe, efficient, and effective learning environment.
Standard 4: A school administrator is an educational leader who promotes the success of all students by collaborating with families and community members, responding to diverse community interests and needs, and mobilizing community resources.
Standard 5: A school administrator is an educational leader who promotes the success of all students by acting with integrity, fairness, and in an ethical manner.
Standard 6: A school administrator is an educational leader who promotes the success of all students by understanding, responding to, and influencing the larger political, social, economic, legal, and cultural context.

[ii] The population of 22 from which the sample of 16 was drawn means that great caution has to be exercised regarding the applicability of the data. We accept the limitations of the research but feel that the data drives the dialogue of values-based leadership, be it in third gear and the need for an oil change.