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Exploring ethical leadership in four Zimbabwean high schools in the context of turbulence and multiple deprivation

Chibaya, Solomon

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ABSTRACT

Zimbabwe has experienced enormous political, economic and social challenges that have consequently produced turbulences and multiple deprivation which have had varying implications on ethical leadership. The main aim of this study was to explore ethical leadership in four Zimbabwean high schools in the context of turbulence and multiple deprivation as conceptualized, experienced and practiced by school heads, heads of department and teachers. Hence, this study presents the findings of a qualitative case study making use of social constructivism on ethical leadership in the four sampled schools. Data generated was analysed by utilizing thematic analysis as well as Multiple Ethical Paradigms, Turbulence Theory and African Philosophy of Ubuntu. Semi-structured interviews, document reviews and questionnaires were used to generate data. The findings of this study indicated that low and irregular salaries, poor school funding by government and parents, teacher migration, late coming and absenteeism, ethical dilemmas faced by school personnel, political and economic influences affected ethical school leadership. The participants also demonstrated a contextual conceptualisation of ethical leadership.

While the study recognizes the challenges faced by the school personnel in the midst of turbulence and multiple deprivation with regards to ethical leadership, it argues that leaders that care, are just and professional; who are knowledgeable of the different levels of turbulence; are ethically grounded and operate within the spirit of Ubuntu; acknowledge their agency should be able to behave ethically in the context in which they find themselves. Emphasis is also made of the importance of ethical leadership training and democratic leadership processes. In addition, if they are trained on and apply the ethics of care, critique, justice, the profession and the philosophy of Ubuntu, they can overcome the turbulence and multiple deprivation ethically and have sustainable leadership practices thus enabling their schools to flourish. Hence, this study postulates that, despite the various challenges faced by the school personnel, they have a professional responsibility to behave ethically.

Keywords: ethical leadership, multiple deprivation, Multiple Ethical Paradigms, Ubuntu philosophy, Turbulence Theory.