Author(s): Hanhimäki, Eija

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Chapter 10
Moral Professionalism in the Context of Educational Leadership

Eija Hanhimäki

Abstract This chapter aims to investigate moral professionalism in the context of educational leadership. Many researchers have investigated school administration ethics and ethical educational leadership based on case studies. However, the moral, ethical and nonrational aspects have been omitted from the discussion, even if they are present in school policies and practices. This chapter includes an analysis of data gathered as narratives in a study of educational leaders and teachers ($N = 82$) who participated in two educational leadership training programmes from 2019 to 2021 at one Finnish university. Based on the results, the kinds of ethical dilemmas the educational leaders encountered and how they worked as moral professionals were identified. The results showed that the main parties, in both ethically easy and ethically difficult dilemmas, were staff members. In the ethically easy dilemmas, the main theme concerning staff was interactions and conflicts; in the ethically difficult dilemmas, it was work arrangements. The most frequently mentioned principles and values in the ethical dilemmas were fairness, justice, equality, the child's interest and well-being.

Keywords Moral professionalism · Educational leadership · Ethical leadership · Narratives · Ethical dilemmas

Introduction

Previous research on educational leadership has emphasised practical and rational points of view, while the moral, ethical and nonrational aspects have been omitted from the discussion. However, ethical values are present in all aspects of school

E. Hanhimäki (✉)
Department of Education, University of Jyväskylä, Jyväskylä, Finland
e-mail: eija.h.hanhimaki@jyu.fi

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policies and practices (Day & Johansson, 2008). Moral professionalism is also at risk when educational leaders and teachers encounter ethical and value conflicts in their work, even if they do not recognise the ethical dimension in these situations (e.g. Campbell, 2008).

Many researchers have considered school administration ethics and ethical educational leadership based on case studies (e.g. Hanhimäki, 2011; Hanhimäki & Risku, 2021; Shapiro & Stefkowich, 2005; Strike et al., 2005). Ethical leadership creates an ethical and educational community in which people 'live well together and in which children learn how to live well together in the larger community' (Strike, 2007, p. 146). In the present study, the concept of moral leadership is used in addition to ethical leadership because the primary focus is on the practice of leadership. Moral professionalism can be defined as the quality of educators' professional practices (Sockett, 1993), which are judged by professional standards and codes of ethics and which become evident in the moral practices and roles of educators in the everyday life of schools (Hanhimäki, 2011).

Moral leadership is a broad phenomenon that includes personal characteristics, ways of leading and their effects on the community (e.g. Fullan, 2003; Strike, 2007). Hanhimäki (2011) investigated the moral professionalism of educators, such as principals and teachers, working in challenging urban Finnish schools in which pupils came from economically and socially deprived backgrounds and exhibited attendance and behaviour problems. The main results emphasised that the loudest moral voices heard and repeated in the educators' narration were caring, cooperation, respect, commitment and professionalism (Hanhimäki, 2011). Moreover, the moral profiles of the principals involved in the study differed, even if they were all moral professionals: these profiles included the gentle mediator, the just leader, the effective professional and the caring communicator. However, these principals shared the same key values, which were trust, cooperation, equality and caring (Hanhimäki, 2008; Hanhimäki & Tirri, 2008).

This chapter aims to investigate moral professionalism in the context of educational leadership. This study's data were gathered as narratives (N = 82) from educational leaders and teachers participating in two educational leadership training programmes between 2019 and 2021 at one Finnish university. In these narratives, the educational leaders and teachers described the easy and difficult ethical situations they encountered in their work. The results reveal what kinds of ethical dilemmas the educational leaders encountered and how they worked as moral professionals in their educational contexts. The research questions were as follows:

1. What kinds of ethical dilemmas do educational leaders and teachers encounter in their work?
2. How do they work as moral professionals in their educational contexts?

Moral Professionalism in Educational Leadership

According to previous research, teaching is a moral activity (e.g. Hansen, 2001), and educators' professional morality and ethical conduct have been actively investigated (e.g. Campbell, 2003; Hanhimäki, 2011; Tirri, 2003; Tirri & Husu, 2002). Furthermore, good instruction can be defined as teaching that seeks at best to promote learners' moral, psychological and physical well-being (Carr, 2000). However, teachers do not always recognise the moral dimension of their work (e.g. Campbell, 2008; Sockett, 1993; Tirri, 1999). In addition to teaching, the moral dimension is widely present in educational contexts because education can be seen as a moral endeavour (Zubay & Soltis, 2005).

Ethical and moral standards also guide educational leaders' work in terms of their relationships and practices (Day, 2005; Fullan, 2003). In the Finnish context, ethical educational leadership is guided by contemporary education policy documents, including legislation and other regulations, curricula and trade unions' ethical recommendations for educational leaders and teachers. Finnish educational governance comprises four main lines: the state, local authorities, labour organisations and civic organisations at the local, regional, national and transnational levels. Although legislation and other regulations mandate education providers, teachers have the autonomy to organise their education provision. This means that educational leaders and teachers serve the education providers, who are mainly local authorities. When we look at the legislation (e.g. Administrative Procedure Act, 2003; Basic Education Act, 1998), it says, for example, that every school must have sufficient staff and a principal who is responsible for everything in the school. In practice, this is determined by local steering documents, such as annual work plans. Furthermore, the key principles of good administration include serving in an appropriate manner, providing services and cooperating (Hanhimäki & Risku, 2021).

The Finnish curriculum system includes national, local and school tiers, which enable education providers to interpret and enact education. Basic values are also included in these curricula. For example, in the National Core Curriculum for Basic Education 2014, the main values are that every pupil is unique and has the right to high-quality education. Furthermore, humanity, civilisation, equality, democracy, cultural diversity and a sustainable way of life are the values that guided the making of the national curriculum (Finnish National Agency for Education, 2022a). The fundamental values of the National Core Curriculum for Early Childhood Education and Care 2018 have much in common with those for comprehensive education, emphasising the intrinsic value of childhood, growing as a human being, a child's rights, equality, diversity and a healthy and sustainable way of life (Finnish National Agency for Education, 2022b).

During previous decades, many professions and trade unions in the education field established their own values and ethical principles to support and guide their members in ethical matters. For example, the Trade Union of Education (1998, 2014) published the Code of Ethics for Finnish Teachers. The main emphasis is that educational professionals must have good professional skills and ethical principles.

The main values in these codes are human worth, honesty, justice, responsibility and freedom (Trade Union of Education, 1998; 2014). In the Principal's Ethical Code, the Finnish Association of Principals (2018) emphasises caring in the principal's profession both as communication between the school community and society and as taking care of one's school community. Other main values in this code are equality, respect, encouragement and hope.

The Code of Ethics for Finnish Municipal Directors of Education by the Finnish Association of Educational Experts (2019) states the municipal directors' ethical duties, such as promoting and securing the fulfilment of citizens' cultural rights. Equality, respect, encouragement, trust, professional and sustainable development and hope are the main values in this code. The Ethical Principles for Professionals in Early Childhood Education by the Trade Union for the Public and Welfare Sectors (2020) underline children's rights, respect for people and the environment and support for staff. The main values in these principles are respect, equality, cooperation, encounter, professional development, responsibility, trust and well-being.

Hanhimäki and Risku (2021) investigated the cultural and social foundations of ethical educational leadership in the Finnish context. They mapped ethical educational leadership from curricula, legislation, ethical principles and empirical results, including, for example, how educational leaders define moral professionalism as part of their educational leadership competences. Consequently, it is possible to see specific main values and ethical principles throughout the educational system. First, striving for equality forms the fundamental ethical principle at all levels of the Finnish educational and societal system and is based on the Nordic welfare state ideology. Second, taking care of all individuals is a fundamental characteristic of the Finnish educational system. Third, multiprofessional collaboration is traditional for our system in terms of how to support people's well-being and development (Hanhimäki & Risku, 2021).

In the Finnish educational system, educational leaders and teachers have a significant amount of autonomy, agency and responsibility, for example, in developing curricula for their schools together with educational providers, stakeholders and special interest groups. The growing role of value-based leadership, complexity, unexpected changes, diversity and different individual needs challenge every educational professional's ability to address ethical considerations and moral practices. In teacher education and education in educational leadership, it is also challenging to determine how to respond to these professional development needs. There have been promising results when educational leadership students have engaged in reflective ethical assignments that are closely connected with their moral practices in their professional development (Hanhimäki & Risku, 2021). Reflexivity should be supported by these kinds of professional development programmes for leaders. For example, a new vision of education that is more sensitive to moral and ethical issues is being developed in the United States (Normand et al., 2021).

Encountering Ethical Dilemmas in the Everyday Work of Educators and Leaders

The educators of school communities encounter various ethical dilemmas in their everyday school life, including diversity and conflicts between community members. At their core, ethical dilemmas are concerned about solutions and determining the right thing to do (Hanhimäki, 2011). According to previous research, teachers are not always aware of the moral impact of their actions (Jackson et al., 1993). Teachers have also felt that they are ill-prepared to deal with ethical dilemmas in their work (Hanhimäki & Tirri, 2009; Lyons, 1990; Tirri, 1999). Ethical sensitivity, ethical judgement skills, ethical focus and competence in ethical actions are the main skills of moral experts (Narvaez, 2005, 2006). When Finnish principals and teachers were investigated in a case study, ethical sensitivity, especially reading and expressing emotions, was present in the critical incidents at challenging urban schools, and this created opportunities for cooperation and caring relationships with the students and their families (Hanhimäki & Tirri, 2009).

Ethical challenges and ethical dilemmas have been investigated in various leadership sectors and contexts other than education. For example, Feldt et al. (2013) studied ethical dilemmas in leaders' work in different sectors of society. There are two types of decision-making situations: when the leader does not know the right thing to do or knows it but does not follow it for some reason (Nash, 1993, as cited in Feldt et al., 2013). Normally, ethical dilemmas concern everyday work, but this is not often the case for big and strategic decisions. However, these situations can be very difficult because they are related to human beings and, for example, their further possibilities of finding employment. Feldt et al. (2013) also analysed the connection between ethical dilemmas and psychological stress and the meaning of the ethical organisational culture in this context. They found that leaders are meaningful role models in their communities, and ethical leadership is like the backbone of the organisational culture (Feldt et al., 2013).

Moral conflicts can also be used to investigate business leaders' moral identities and how to support them in their development by increasing discussions and using different individual approaches to resolve moral conflicts (Huhtala et al., 2020). Collin et al. (2020) investigated human resource development practices that support creativity in Finnish growth organisations. Their results showed that everyday fair leadership is one of the main factors that supports creativity in the workplace so that, for example, employees can trust in problematic situations where help and support are available and no one is left to navigate this on their own. One interesting question is what is special in leadership in educational contexts compared with leadership in other sectors.

Sustainability is a topical point of view that is closely related to ethical leadership and encountering ethical dilemmas. Leaders play a significant role in terms of how they promote an ethical culture and facilitate training and discussion on ethical

questions and principles concerning ethical dilemmas. This role also supports an ethically sustainable way of working (Pihlajasaari et al., 2013). Sustainable work promotes the development of personal resources, which leads to sustainable work ability. One way to create sustainable work is work crafting, 'in which existing personal resources are benefited from, developed further through learning, or translated into novel resources' (Kira et al., 2010, p. 616); moreover, 'at its best, work crafting is a collaborative activity between employees, supervisors and other stakeholders' (Kira et al., 2010, p. 628).

Self-determination theory is closely related to sustainable work and ethical leadership. When three innate psychological needs—competence, autonomy and relatedness—are satisfied, self-motivation and mental health are enhanced. This theory is significant in many ways, and in the context of educational leadership, it strengthens the idea of how to motivate and bind members of educational communities (Ryan & Deci, 2000). According to Hargreaves and Fink (2004), sustainable leadership must be supported by the system. This means that sustainable leadership cannot be the responsibility of one individual; it should be created by distributing leadership and responsibility. Sustainable leadership is also socially just and promotes diversity (Hargreaves & Fink, 2004). When we consider moral professionalism in ethical dilemmas, the meaning of sustainable leadership is important in terms of how moral practices can follow sustainable principles.

When people encounter ethical dilemmas, they can use different moral orientations. Justice and care are perhaps the best known moral orientations: a justice orientation can be described as equal respect and an ideal of reciprocity, and a care orientation emphasises the ideals of attention and response to need. Oser (1991) investigated teachers' professional morality and presented a model that describes teachers' professional decision-making: in addition to justice and care, claims concerning truthfulness are critical, and how a teacher coordinates these moral dimensions to solve conflicts is influenced by professional morality. Both female and male educators can have different moral orientations, not just emphasising, for example, care as a female orientation (Hanhimäki, 2011).

Data and Methods

The data for this study were gathered from educational leaders and teachers in three training programmes between 2019 and 2021 (N = 82) at one Finnish university. These training programmes concentrated on educational leadership, one on intermediate studies in educational leadership (N = 24) and two on good practices in educational leadership (N = 58). The participants were mainly educational leaders, including principals, municipal directors of education and leaders in early childhood education and care centres, and they had different levels of education. Moreover, there were teachers from various educational contexts. For example, all but one of the participants from intermediate studies were principals; one was a teacher. The data were gathered as written case descriptions, either as course

assignments or separate electronic surveys. Most of these case descriptions were written anonymously, but the writers' leadership or teaching status was described in the cases. Permission to conduct the research was sought before the participants wrote and sent their texts. In these case descriptions, the educational leaders and teachers were asked to describe easy and difficult ethical situations, the persons who were involved in these situations and the principles and values that guided the solutions to these situations.

The final analysis included 43 narratives of ethically easy situations and 39 narratives of ethically difficult situations. The narratives' length varied from a few sentences to two pages. Data-driven content analysis was used to answer the first research question about the kinds of ethical dilemmas educational leaders and teachers encounter in their work. The analysis started with reading the narratives many times. Then, the narratives were coded with letters and numbers (E = easy, D = difficult; e.g. the narrative of the first easy situation was coded as E1) and labelled according to the codes, the parties in the situations, the situations' themes and the guiding ethical principles and values in the solutions of the situations. In particular, the focus was on the parties and themes of the situations when the first research question was investigated. Theory-guided content analysis was used to investigate the data in relation to the second research question of how the educational leaders and teachers work as moral professionals in their educational contexts. Furthermore, quotations from the most descriptive narratives were added to the results.

In addition to qualitative analysis, quantification of the qualitative data was possible because of the large number of narratives (Tuomi & Sarajärvi, 2003). The number of times the various parties, themes, principles and values appeared in the narratives was counted.

Results

The first research question was what kinds of ethical dilemmas educational leaders and teachers encountered. In the results, the ethically easy and ethically difficult situations refer to the characteristics of these situations in which ethical dilemmas denote the consideration of the right thing to do (Hanhimäki, 2011). When the narratives were tabulated according to the codes, it was possible to recognise how the educational leaders and teachers responded to the ethically easy and ethically difficult dilemmas. The parties refer to who or what the people or things in the dilemma were when the educational leaders or teachers described the situation in their narratives.

Table 10.1 shows the names and numbers of the mentioned parties, the themes and the principles and values in the narrative. However, the aim of the quantification was not general applicability of the results because the study was qualitative. Regarding the parties mentioned in the educational leaders and teachers' ethically easy dilemmas, most of them were staff, followed by students, students and families,

Table 10.1 Parties, themes, principles and values in the ethically easy and ethically difficult dilemmas

Dilemmas	Ethically easy dilemmas (43)	Ethically difficult dilemmas (39)
Parties	Staff (17), students (10), students and families (7), staff and students (6), resources (3)	Staff (20), students and families (7), students (6), staff and students (4), resources (2)
Themes	Staff: interaction and conflicts (5/17), working hours (3/17), work arrangements (4/17), rules of operation (4/17), school premises (1/17) Students: behaviour (6/10), support and rights (4/10) Students and families: study arrangements (3/7), behaviour (3/7), interactions and conflicts (1/7) Staff and students: study arrangements (5/6), rules of operation (1/6) Resources: division of resources (3/3)	Staff: work arrangements (10/20), rules of operation (6/20), interaction and conflicts (4/20) Students and families: study arrangements (4/7), interactions and conflicts (3/7) Students: behaviour (5/6), study arrangements (1/6) Staff and students: study arrangements (2/4), support and rights (2/4) Resources: division of resources (2/2)
Principles and values (number of mentions in the narratives)	Staff: fairness (5), well-being (3), justice (3), the child's interest (3), responsibility (2), equality (2), common rules (2) Students: justice (4), fairness (4), common rules (3), law (2), optimism (2) Students and families: ethical values (2), justice (2), respect (2) Staff and students: justice (2) Resources: fairness (2)	Staff: justice (4), fairness (4), equality (3), common rules (3), realism (2), professional ethics (2), law (2), humanity (2), well-being (2) Students and families: the child's interest (3), fairness (3), humanity (2), respect (2) Students: equality (2), justice (2) Staff and students: the child's interest (2) Resources: justice, responsibility, honesty, ethical reflection, striving for good, early influencing, equality

staff and students and resources. As for the ethically difficult dilemmas, half the parties in the dilemmas were staff; students and families, students, staff and students and resources were less often mentioned.

The main themes of the ethically easy dilemmas concerning staff were interactions and conflicts, working hours, work arrangements, rules of operation and school premises. For the ethically easy dilemmas concerning students, the main themes were behaviour and support and rights. The main themes concerning students and families were study arrangements, behaviour and interactions and conflicts. The main themes concerning staff and students were study arrangements and rules of operation. The main theme concerning resources was the division of resources.

For the ethically difficult dilemmas, the main themes concerning staff were work arrangements, rules of operation and interaction and conflicts. The main themes

concerning students and families were study arrangements and interactions and conflicts. For the dilemmas concerning students, the main themes were behaviour and study arrangements. The main themes concerning staff and students were study arrangements and support and rights. For the dilemmas concerning resources, the main theme was the division of resources.

In summary, the main parties in both the ethically easy (17/43) and the ethically difficult dilemmas (20/39) were staff. In the ethically easy dilemmas, the main theme concerning staff was interactions and conflicts (5/17); the main theme concerning staff in the ethically difficult dilemmas was work arrangements (10/20). These results emphasise the significance of human resource management in ethical educational leadership.

The second research question was how educational leaders and teachers work as moral professionals in their educational contexts. The following definition of moral professionalism was used in the theory-guided analysis: the quality of the educators' professional practices (Sockett, 1993), which are judged by professional standards and codes of ethics and which become evident in educators' moral practices and roles in the everyday lives of schools (Hanhimäki, 2011). The coding of the data showed the principles and values that guided educational leaders and teachers in ethically easy and ethically difficult dilemmas with different parties, in other words, when they worked as moral professionals.

In the ethically easy dilemmas concerning staff, the most frequently mentioned principles and values were fairness (5), well-being (3), justice (3) and the child's interest (3). For example, one educational leader described a dilemma concerning a conflict between three employees, which the leader solved according to the principles of fairness, justice and respect:

> One employee told another colleague how a third colleague had been curt with her and did not talk with her. Another colleague told me, and after that, I asked the first and third colleagues to speak with me, first separately and then together. The discussion ended so that they reached an understanding and realised that they were heard and understood. The situation was easy because I did not take sides in this dispute, but I saw that it was just that they did not understand each other's way of thinking and interacting. I remember that I thought about how important it is to give space for feelings, but understand deeply and show respect to everyone [with] the principles of fairness, justice and respect. (E5)

The most frequently mentioned principles and values in the ethically easy dilemmas with students were justice (4), fairness (4) and common rules (3). In the ethically easy dilemmas with students and families, the main principles and values were ethical values (2), justice (2) and respect (2). The main principles and values in the ethically easy dilemmas with staff and students were justice (2) and resource fairness (2).

For the ethically difficult dilemmas with staff, the most frequently mentioned principles and values were fairness (4), justice (4), equality (3) and common rules (3). For example, one educational leader wrote about the situation of an employee's misconduct that was solved according to the principles of fairness, justice and honesty:

> During the last school year, I had a project employee from outside the school. I received feedback that his working methods and working hours were not in order. I solved the situation by listening to him, and it went well. This person admitted his mistakes and corrected his working methods. This situation was challenging because it was difficult, and his attitude towards an employer was already very negative when he started his job. In addition, I considered the right way to react—suitable but strict. The principles of justice, fairness and honesty guided [me]. Lying and misconduct are mainly wrong, as well as self-interest at the expense of others. (D14)

In the ethically difficult dilemmas with students and families, the main principles and values were the child's interest (3) and fairness (3). The main principles and values in the ethically difficult dilemmas with students were equality (2) and justice (2); with staff and students, it was the child's interest. With resources, many individual principles or values were mentioned once, such as justice, responsibility and ethical reflection. In both the ethically easy and ethically difficult dilemmas, the educational leaders and teachers mentioned other principles and values, but these were only mentioned once under the themes of the dilemmas, so they are not listed in Table 10.1. However, most of these were mentioned under other themes, such as the principles and values of equality, justice and well-being.

In summary, the most frequently mentioned principles and values in the ethically easy dilemmas were fairness, justice, common rules, equality, well-being and the child's interest. For the ethically difficult dilemmas, the most frequently mentioned principles and values were fairness, justice, equality, the child's interest and humanity. The child's interest was the principle most often mentioned in the ethically difficult dilemmas in comparison to the ethically easy dilemmas. This is seen, for example, in the case when the educator solved a situation in which the dilemma was a pupil's grade repetition, and the child's interest was one of the main principles in this decision:

> It was difficult to watch a pupil's mother's crushing reaction. It was very justified to repeat the grade, but the mother's story reawakened my own motherhood. I understood the mother's pain and worries, but also a child's future pain when learning will not improve. It was difficult to decide between these things. (D3)

When all the mentioned principles and values in encountering ethical dilemmas were summarised, the most frequently mentioned principles and values were fairness and justice followed by equality, the child's interest and well-being.

After the narratives were coded, these principles and values were compared with the professional standards and codes of ethics that guide the educators' work in the Finnish context. These were the contemporary education policy documents, including legislation and other regulations, curricula and trade union ethical recommendations for educational leaders and teachers. These documents emphasise the main principles and values of, for example, human dignity, equality, diversity, sustainability, honesty, justice, freedom, caring, respect, encouragement, hope, trust, cooperation, professional development, responsibility and well-being.

When the principles and values in the policy documents were compared with this study's results, they were in line, as fairness, justice, equality, the child's interest and well-being are also emphasised in the policy documents. Human dignity and

how the educational leaders and teachers encounter people were described through the principles and values of fairness, justice and equality. The principles and values of the child's interest and well-being also reflect a caring attitude. However, one value in the policy documents that was rarely mentioned by name in these data was sustainability, but it was included, for example, when the educational leaders and teachers described the sustainable results of their solutions.

Discussion

The aim of this chapter was to investigate moral professionalism in the context of educational leadership and add another dimension to studies on ethics in school administration and ethical educational leadership. Although many researchers have published investigations into the ethics of school administration and ethical educational leadership (e.g. Hanhimäki, 2011; Hanhimäki & Risku, 2021; Shapiro & Stefkowich, 2005; Strike et al., 2005), the moral, ethical and nonrational aspects have been omitted from the discussion, even if they are present in all aspects of school policies and practices (Day & Johansson, 2008).

Previous research has reported that educational leaders and teachers do not always recognise the ethical dimension in their work (e.g. Campbell, 2008). In the present study, the narratives collected from educational leaders and teachers described the easy and difficult ethical situations they encountered in their work and illustrated the kinds of ethical dilemmas they faced and how they worked as moral professionals in their educational contexts.

The findings were that the main parties in both the ethically easy and the ethically difficult dilemmas were staff, concerning interactions and conflicts in the easy dilemmas and work arrangements in the difficult dilemmas. The most frequently mentioned principles and values in the ethically easy dilemmas were fairness, justice, common rules, equality, well-being and the child's interest. For the ethically difficult dilemmas, the most frequently mentioned principles and values were fairness, justice, equality, the child's interest and humanity. The child's interest was more frequently mentioned in the ethically difficult dilemmas than in the ethically easy dilemmas. When the policy documents' principles and values were compared with the results of this study, they were very much in line as fairness, justice, equality, the child's interest and well-being are also emphasised in the policy documents. One value in the policy documents that was rarely mentioned by name in these data was sustainability.

If we compare these results with previous research results on ethical educational leadership in the Finnish context, the same main values and ethical principles were found and seen throughout the educational system. Equality, caring and multiprofessional collaboration (Hanhimäki & Risku, 2021) were also among the oft-mentioned principles and values in these data. However, the results emphasised fairness, justice, equality, the child's interest and well-being more than previous studies because the context of the present study was ethical dilemmas. The

decision-making point of view was strong in these narratives, which could explain the amount of justice orientation in these results. However, a caring orientation was also present, especially through the principles and values of the child's interest and well-being.

In Northern European countries, there is a clear connection between development of educational leadership and socio-historical changes that has also affected values and ethical principles. For example, the weight of tradition and a political consensus to fight inequalities have established a lasting climate of cooperation in Nordic schools. The common good of the local community can also be found, for example, as social solidarity between community members in the United States and New Zealand, while there is an expectation for the educational leaders to sustain local discussion. The Chinese educational leaders try to ensure social stability and harmony against the market and hierarchy. This international comparison emphasises the meaning of community trust and how it drives innovation, solidarity and social justice in Finland (Normand et al., 2021).

Based on the results of this study, it can be stated that the educational leaders and teachers recognised the principles and values that guide them in both ethically easy and ethically difficult dilemmas. In only one narrative, the narrator did not know the guiding principle or value in the dilemma. This conclusion creates hope, in contrast with the previous research that raised concerns that educational leaders and teachers do not always recognise their work's ethical dimension and are ill-prepared to deal with ethical dilemmas (e.g. Campbell, 2008; Day & Johansson, 2008; Hanhimäki & Tirri, 2009; Lyons, 1990; Tirri, 1999).

Furthermore, it is significant how research on moral professionalism and education in educational leadership can create both the theoretical and empirical basis for educational leaders' and teachers' work as moral professionals. Reflective ethical study has been used in educational leadership education with promising results. When studies on educational leaders and teachers are closely connected with their moral practices, the professional development process naturally combines theoretical and empirical points of view with the help of reflexivity (Hanhimäki & Risku, 2021; Normand et al., 2021). Using case studies has also been a very efficient and evocative pedagogical method in educational leadership education (Hanhimäki & Risku, 2021). It is possible to use written case stories, or the participants can write their own. The case stories can be handled using drama methods or discussions on the dilemmas and different ethical orientations to solve the dilemmas. The main point is to have a person reflect individually and with peers, become aware of his/her ethical thinking and develop his/her ability to work as a moral professional. Moreover, case studies can be used in both pre- and in-service teacher education (Hanhimäki, 2011; Hanhimäki & Risku, 2021; Hanhimäki & Tirri, 2009).

Fairness and justice were the most frequently mentioned principles and values in the ethical dilemmas of this study. Fair leadership notably affects creativity and trust in the workplace (Collin et al., 2020). While sustainability was mentioned in the educational policy documents, it was rarely mentioned by the participants in this study. However, one of the main results of this study was that the main parties, in

both the ethically easy and the ethically difficult dilemmas, were staff, which underlines the significance of human resource management in educational leadership. The easy dilemmas with staff concerned interactions and conflicts; the difficult dilemmas focused on work arrangements. Previous studies have investigated sustainable leadership and work in different sectors. The findings indicate the important role of leaders as promoters of an ethical organisational culture, who, in doing so, support an ethically sustainable way of working (e.g. Kira et al., 2010; Pihlajasaari et al., 2013).

In conclusion, if we consider what is special in moral professionalism in the context of educational leadership in comparison to leadership in different sectors, one answer can be the relationships with many people of different ages and from various backgrounds. Relationships also play a central role in the ethical principles and values for educational professionals, for example, in the Code of Ethics for Finnish Teachers (Trade Union of Education in Finland, 1998, 2014) and the Principals' Ethical Code (Finnish Association of Principals, 2018). In practice, educational leaders and teachers are directly or indirectly connected with other people, including their colleagues, students and children, families or other cooperation partners. Thus, how the system supports educational leaders and teachers in their moral professional work is essential to ensure that their efforts can be sustainable and they can be sensitive towards themselves and other people.

What educational leadership can learn from leadership in other sectors is, for example, how to utilise theories and practices of sustainability in human resource management. In the long term, ethical and sustainable educational leadership increases the motivation and commitment of the members of educational communities and strengthens well-being. A future challenge for research and education in educational leadership is to provide support and education for educational leaders and teachers on how to develop their moral professionalism skills, for example, with the help of reflective ethical studies.

The data of this study were gathered in one university, but with three separate datasets from different training programmes, which increases the credibility of the findings. Furthermore, the participants were educational leaders and teachers from various educational contexts, ranging from early childhood education and care to higher education; this triangulation of the data strengthens the credibility of the study (Patton, 1999; Tuomi & Sarajärvi, 2003). In addition to the qualitative analysis, quantification of the qualitative data was also used in this study, even if the aim was not a general applicability of the qualitative results. However, the large number of narratives facilitated the counting of the responses (Tuomi & Sarajärvi, 2003). The nature of the case assignment was to describe both easy and difficult ethical situations; this affected the results of this study, which emphasised some values, such as fairness, justice and equality, more than other values. Even if this is a limitation of the study, the results are in line with the previous research results from the Finnish context (e.g. Hanhimäki & Risku, 2021) and internationally (e.g. Normand et al., 2021).

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