

Abstract

The purpose of this study is to explore how educational leaders engage in their decision-making processes and whether the expression, “the best interests of the student” serves as a guiding principle for them when they do. This study is a replication study of Dr. Frick’s *Practicing a Professional Ethic: Leading for Students’ Best Interests* (2011) and also considers whether Shapiro and Stefkovich’s (2011) *Ethic of Profession and Its Model for Students’ Best Interests* is a viable conceptual framework for ethical decision-making. The data collection consisted of two interviews, one based on a vignette and the second, based on a set of open-ended questions. Eleven secondary school principals and vice-principals within one school district volunteered to participate in this qualitative study. Participant responses suggested themes that not only reflected their use and perceptions of the expression, “the best interests of the student” in their decision-making processes but also revealed the complexity of being a school leader amid competing stakeholder interests. The study compared the original and replicating studies in two ways, one was a comparative analysis of the findings and the other was a cross cultural analysis. Relevant literature and participant responses were included to contextualize, interpret, understand, and answer the research questions. The findings of the study showed that “the best interests of the student” was challenging to conceptualize and had practical implications due to its lack of definition. The results also revealed divergent findings from the original study.