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Reflections on an educational program on moral and civic virtues and values in secondary schools. A case study in Mexico.

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Title:

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1. Introduction

The research we present is part of the project *Researching and Promoting Character Education in Latin American Secondary Schools* funded by the *Templeton World Charity Foundation.*

The truth is that character formation is not the exclusive responsibility of families; schools also have a relevant role to play in the character development of our young people. In this sense schools have to tackle major challenges. One of the problems with Character Education has to do with the schools' capacity to implement educational programs focusing on improving the development of young people in this area. Therefore institutions like the *Jubilee Center* offer multiple resources intended to improve the values programs which are applied in schools.

Nevertheless, when it comes to introducing a project, there are always problems and unexpected obstacles which, a priori, may seem distant or incomprehensible. Introducing innovations into a school is not a minor issue, as the resistance of the staff may be a decisive factor when the time comes to implement a project (Hollingshead, 2009; James & Jones, 2008), together with, for example, staff cohesion and its capacity to confront internal problems (Johnson, 2005) and school leadership and its role in the promotion of school dynamics (M. Berkowitz & Bier, 2005; M. W. Berkowitz & Bier, 2005; Lickona & Davison, 2005), etc.

In this research work we present a case study, focusing on the values program implemented in a Mexican public school in the central area of the country. Our exploration of the capacity of the school when implementing the values program is based on the analysis of documents provided by the school which are related with the project, semi-structured interviews, in-depth interviews, images and the participatory observation carried out in the school over a period of three weeks. The wealth of informants (principals, teachers, pupils and parents) allowed us to gather a broader variety of information on the reality of the values program applied.

2. Methodology

In this instance we drew on a qualitative and descriptive case study (Flyvbjerg, 2011; Simons, 2011; Stake, 1998) to approach to reality of a values program carried out in a public secondary school in the centre of Mexico. This school is the only example of Secondary Education public

schools that is using a similar values program in the state to which it corresponds. For this reason we consider that the case study methodology is the most appropriate in order to draw conclusions on the values program of the school.

Access to the school was granted thanks to the earlier contacts made with the Mexican educational administration and with the school board. We must acknowledge the courtesy and collaboration offered by the administration and the school.

2.1. Information sources and data gathering techniques

The data-gathering was marked by the use of different sources of information and by the variety of data gathering techniques, all of which was directed towards achieving greater research credibility (Goetz & LeCompte, 1988) through the triangulation of data gathering techniques (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1994).

For this research we have used various information sources such as the official documents of the Secretaría de Educación Pública (SEP), and several internal documents from the secondary school referring to the school context, the values program and annual planning, among others.

Table 1. Documents reviewed

Documents	
Mexican government curriculum documents	Education model 2016. Pedagogical proposal for Educational Reform
	Curricular Proposal for Obligatory Education 2016
Secondary school internal documents	Values program
	Upgrade plan
	Reading club
	Sociocultural school document

Apart from document analysis, we interviewed various actors in the school community. To do so, we used in-depth, semi-structured and occasionally walking interviews (Carpiano, 2009) with students. Among the interviewees, we focused on the department responsible for the values program, in this case the Department of Spanish Language, the inspection group, the principal and vice-principals of the school together with other teachers who were indirectly involved in values education such as the Ethics teachers. Each of the interviews with the adults lasted over 90 minutes, in some cases up to three or four hours. In addition, to fulfil the ethical principles of the research, the anonymity and confidentiality of all participants in the study was guaranteed; for this reason all the names that appear have been changed. The interviews were mainly carried out through verbal agreements (Stake, 1998), although in some cases with minors they were also carried out with informed consent, despite the fact that the consent of the school, the administration and the parents had been granted. Sound recordings were made of all interviews.

Table 2. Profile of participants

Profile of participants		
Inspection	Inspector of Area	
Governors	School Board	Principal Head teacher

		Morning Head teacher
		Afternoon Head teacher
Teacher	Spanish teacher	2 Teachers Spanish *academia* (department)
	Ethics and Civic Education	3 Ethics and Civic Education teachers
Students	6 and 7 grade	3 students

Together with the official documents and the interviews, we observed the school areas and took photographs which are included in the long-standing Social Science tradition of images as a documentary source (Banks, 2010). The compilation of photographs was carried out all over the school, focusing our attention on the areas where evidence of the values program was most outstanding. For the observations, our role was either that of a complete observer or a participant observer (Angrosino, 2012).

This triangulation of actors and data-gathering techniques are intended to guarantee greater credibility, validity and veracity in our research.

2.2. Data analysis

Firstly we must point out that during the analysis a low or first level inference was applied (Goetz & LeCompte, 1988). To analyse the data from this case study, we decided to base it on an inductive and deductive reasoning which would allow us to approach the data in a simple way and would facilitate the work. During the data analysis we have applied a first cycle of descriptive coding method (Miles, Huberman, & Saldaña, 2014; Saldaña, 2009). This type of coding assisted us in identifying topics quickly and focusing our attention on large blocks of content, thus saving time and effort in dealing with raw data. Additionally, it helped us to concentrate on the most relevant pieces of information for our study as it allowed us to handle a considerable volume of data rapidly.

To complete the data analysis in a second coding phase and to verify that our strategies were sound, we used a collaborative coding (Saldaña, 2009), to contrast the categories and codes created in the first cycle with those given in *Character Education. Evaluation Handbook for Schools* (Harris, T; Arthur, J; & Burn, 2016, p 46-60) and to give greater external validity and credibility to our analysis and the research itself.
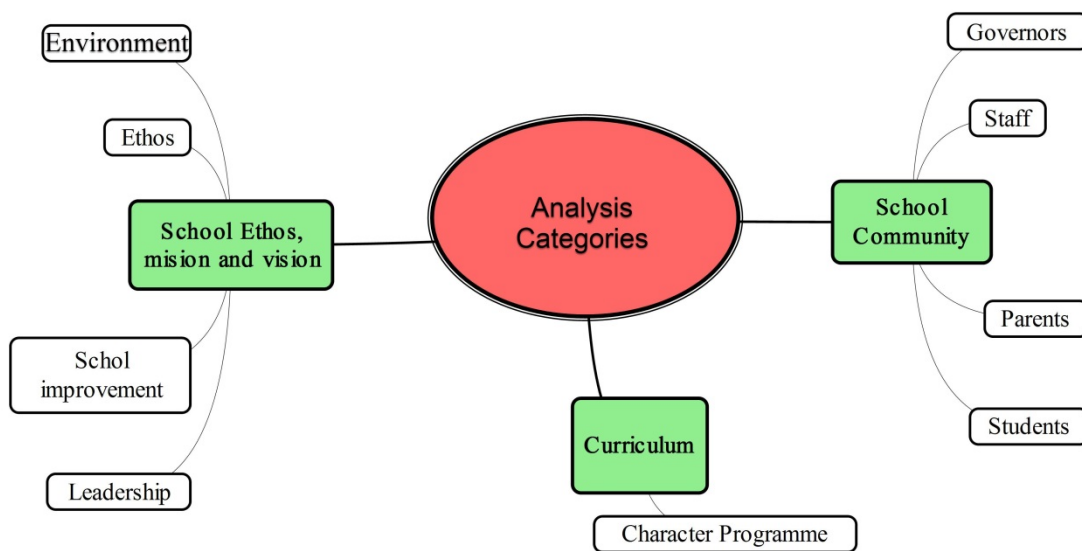
Figure 1. Analysis categories

3. Presentation of the findings

3.1 The school and its characteristics

In this case study we approach the reality of a Mexican urban public school in the centre of the country. The school, which was founded in 1974, is located in an area surrounded by economically depressed suburbs with serious social problems. Over 70% of the students who attend this school come from these areas, and so belong to a low and mid-to-low socioeconomic social stratum. Only in approximately 25% of the families is there anyone with vocational training (a trade) or with university studies; the remainder of the families have the equivalent of A levels (23%), O levels (34%) and Primary Studies (11%). There is a total of 1,598 children in two shifts, morning and afternoon; during our study, 857 pupils were registered in the morning shift and 741 in the afternoon group. Each of these shifts is divided into three academic years with six groups per year, from "A" to "L". Each group is made up of 48 students (on average) and each group has an assigned tutor. The morning shift begins at 7 a.m. and finishes at 1:30 p.m. and the afternoon group begins at 1:30 p.m. and ends at 7:30 p.m.

The staff of the school is made up of 80 people including the school board, teachers, administration, guidance, a psychologist, cleaners, etc. A teacher's working day is 40 teaching hours per week, the remaining hours they spend in the school are not considered working hours, therefore they are unpaid and the teachers themselves refer to them as "*horas ahorcadas*" (hung hours). Their working conditions are not ideal, and make for added difficulties when it comes to implementing school initiatives. The teaching staff is organized in different *academias* (departments): Mathematics, Spanish, Civics and Ethics, etc. In addition, there is a Vice Principal for each shift and a General Principal who is responsible for over-all school coordination.

Figure 2. Main entrance discipline banner

At an academic level, this school is among the best in the city and in the state to which it belongs. Its performance is above the mean for public schools with similar characteristics, and is one of the public schools which stand out at a countrywide level in the Planea tests[1]. During our fieldwork, we saw how some students from the school had reached the finals of the nationwide spelling competition and had also been outstanding in the State Maths Olympiad. The student profile varies depending on the school shift. The morning shift is attended by students who had the best results in the entrance tests, while the afternoon shift is attended by students with lower results in the entrance tests or who have come from other schools and geographical areas in the country.

3.2. The values project: "For Healthy Harmony"

3.2.1. Origins of the project

As Berkowitz & Bier (2005, p 10) state, the "grass-roots" of a program on character education usually begin on the initiative of a school, board, department or a teacher, and adapt the program to the needs of each school. The program *Por una sana convivencia* (For Healthy Harmony), began on the initiative of the Spanish department which is made up of Spanish Language teachers and one Ethics teacher. They had all been considering proposing it for the whole school, because at the classroom level they were doing similar work from their department. They were

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[1] Planea (http://planea.sep.gob.mx/ba_d/) is an assessment test for reading comprehension, writing, mathematical reasoning and another random subject. It is similar to PISA, but was created by the SEP.

inspired by the strikingly positive experience of one of the teachers at another school, which was associated with another values project.

> *"In a school where I worked in DF, in fact that is where the idea comes from and I think it's important to say so. […] They had a very simple project in which the principal, once a week, and the teachers on Mondays only, read out a sentence to the kids about a value, any value. Well, this little project stuck in my mind, because when I started to teach in that secondary the principal told they that she was very happy with the results of that little sentence. Because a boy who had been arrested by the police remembered the sentence, he was going to steal a wallet or something like that, but then he was arrested, and when he was arrested he told the police: "Yes, yes I was going to steal the wallet, but then I remembered a sentence that my school principal read to me talking about honesty, and then I didn't do it". So they released the boy because he was going to commit a crime and didn't do it. Precisely because of the sentence, one simple sentence. Then you realize how important words are". (Spanish teacher 2♀ # 24: 17: 8)*

Apart from these personal experiences, the project also has the support of the official curriculum. The teachers explained that the Mexican syllabus emphasizes the need for work on student values through key learning and social and personal development (SEP, 2016 p 63-64). Moreover, their day-to-day experience confirms the loss of values in the school dynamics generally. In view of this concern, and aware that harmony is a complex topic in the school because of the high numbers and diversity of the students, teaching staff and a complicated sociocultural environment, the Department of Spanish proposed the idea to the Technical Educational Council of the school even though they knew that earlier programs on recycling and graffiti had already failed in the school. In the words of one of the teachers:

> *We thought that one way of projecting this healthy harmony, working on it from the classroom and projecting it to the community is precisely with a values program, which we did not have before […]. I have worked here for many years and it did not exist. Perhaps also because there is a major values crisis nowadays, perhaps because our kids have also changed and we ourselves have changed. Then maybe we do not care so much about punctuality, honesty, justice and respect, so we, the Spanish academia which I represent in this case, in this school cycle, took on the task of designing, of creating a project in which we would all be involved and could all experience the values issue, that is, by experiencing it. (Teacher Spanish 1♀ #00:04:48-1#)*

Although none of the informants refers directly to the *ethos* of the school, it is still true that the program identifies with the school mission and vision, as these do allude to coexistence and the practice of values in the school.

Table 3. School: mission and vision.

School Ethos	
Mission	*To create educational experiences which allow us to achieve the proposed learning contained in the syllabi, based on the training areas*

	*(communication and language, mathematical thinking, exploration and comprehension of the natural and social world, **for harmony and personal and social development**) where the student is considered exhaustively.*
Vision	*To be a school which is committed to teaching-learning based on the **practice of values** with the objective of producing excellent graduates*

On this point, the program -if we are guided by the assessment guide *Character Education. Handbook for Schools* (Harris, T; Arthur, J; & Burn, 2016)-, is halfway between the stages of focalization and development, as a series of values have been taken which fit in with the school mission and vision. Besides, the language of values has begun to spread to some of the teaching staff and pupils, both in their classes and in academic or complementary activities, such as the reading program for which texts related with the values of the project have been chosen.

It must also be stressed that for the setup of the project, the language department had to overcome great resistance from part of the staff. Interpersonal problems and the beginning of new dynamics in the school are the fruit of great tension between the teachers, which is quite common when a new project is proposed (James & Jones, 2008). The department which proposes the project complains bitterly about all the problems they have with their colleagues to get the program off the ground.

> *"It has been very tiresome, I don't know if you have spoken to Francisca[2], but I imagine you have, she was almost in tears. Because it has been very tiresome to confront our own colleagues, people who in some cases we considered to be our friends. And we had thought: my friend will back me because I'm not there, because I'm creating a project which is not negative. And then your friends goes and says to you: here she comes with her lecture or her reflection which will make me waste 10 minutes class time" (Spanish teacher 2♀# 18:29:90)*

Moreover, the origin of the project was completely vocational and received no funding from the education administration or the school or the Parents' Guild. This highlights the courage of teachers who overcome all kinds of difficulties and emphasizes their commitment with their students and their school.

3.3.2. The "officialization" of the program

The Language Department proposed the values program to the Education Technique Council (ETC). This council is the decision-making body for the school and something that stands out among its responsibilities is that, together with parents and students, a framework for coexistence fostering "the cognitive and ethical self-regulation of the students, and a happy, respectful, integrated school ambient with empathy towards diversity, and conflict management" must be created in the schools. (SEP, 2016ª, p 24). Thus, once it has been proposed to this body, no one can openly oppose an initiative of this type, as it would go against what has been expressed by the federal government in the reform of education. Although this school body is a forum for

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[2] Name changed protect the anonymity of the teacher mentioned.

debate, the program was accepted with no kind of contribution or modification by the teaching staff.

> *"The Spanish academia already had the proposal, yes it could be changed in accordance with the, the interests and the participation of the subjects, but the proposal which Spanish gives, […] was considered acceptable and there were no modifications, so it was accepted just as it was proposed" (Head teacher 1 ♂ #00:18:27-1#).*

The approval of the program meant that it had to be published officially in the document *Ruta de mejora*. This document embodies all the actions intended to improve "coexistence in the school, fostering of reading and educational thinking, reduction of educational backwardness and a decrease in the school dropout rate" (Ruta de mejora, p 1), in the different areas like the classrooms, the school, among teachers, families, technical assessment, progress measurement and educational materials. In this way the *Por una sana convivencia* program is included in several sections of this document as follows:

Table 4. Presence on the School Improvement Plan

Presence of *Por una sana convivencia* in the Improvement Plan (*Ruta de mejora)*

Area	Section	Content
In the school	Improvement in learning outcomes	The Spanish academia will produce a values program and make it public to the ETC
Among teachers	Improvement in learning outcomes	The Spanish academia will produce a values program and make it public to the ETC
Technical assessment	Improvement in learning outcomes	The Spanish academia will produce a values program and make it public to the ETC
Materials	Improvement in learning outcomes	The Spanish academia will produce a values program and make it public to the ETC

What stands out is that the program is not included within the classroom area, nor in the section related to families or in the coexistence sections; it is only mentioned in the points regarding improvement in learning outcomes without connecting these with school coexistence or with the families.

In this case the project is in a state of focalization (Harris, T; Arthur, J; & Burn, 2016), as the type of program is not presented in a developed way. Besides, in spite of the fact that the project is authorized by the management, their participation is practically nil in its development and assessment.

> *"At least the head teacher mentions it at the Pledge of Allegiance, if at least he gives the word: "this month were going to talk about…" And if they listen to the teachers or the vice principals it give us time to talk on the audio system that reaches all the rooms, well then that is all the support we received from them (she is referring to the three members of the school management team)" (Spanish teacher 2 ♀ # 14:51: 43)*

3.2.3. Project actions

Healthy Harmony includes several actions intended to improve the habits of coexistence, attitudes and the learning of certain values. Among these actions are some of the following: written-mottos, reading, speeches or assessment of the project. The program is organized by different values which change monthly. The choices for the months are decided depending on the needs observed by the Language Department, together with some suggestions made by other teachers, but basically with a pragmatic focus attempting to contain the problems of school coexistence and to break with negative and even cultural dynamics, for example, impunctuality. The idea is to improve life in the school and to form the students to be people who are good for society.

> *"This little program was designed so that, based on the sentences or the reflections given, the children would realize that values are to be lived, not for the definitions to be learned. Above all, in the times we live in, we want to do something for our country, after all. At least in this space, outside school it is very unlikely that there will be a real impact on values" (Spanish teacher 2♀#11: 00: 08)*

Table 5. Months and values.

Project values	
Months	**Values**
October	*Punctuality*
November	*Respect*
December	*Honesty*
January	*Cleanliness*
February	*Responsibility*
March	*Discipline*
April	*Solidarity*
May	*Perseverance*
June	*Commitment*

Focusing on the values proposed and taking *Character Education. Evaluation Handbook for schools* (Harris, T; Arthur, J; & Burn, 2016, p 13-14) as a reference point, we can classify the proposed values into: moral, civic and action ones. What stands out is that most of the proposed values are divided into two categories: moral and action.
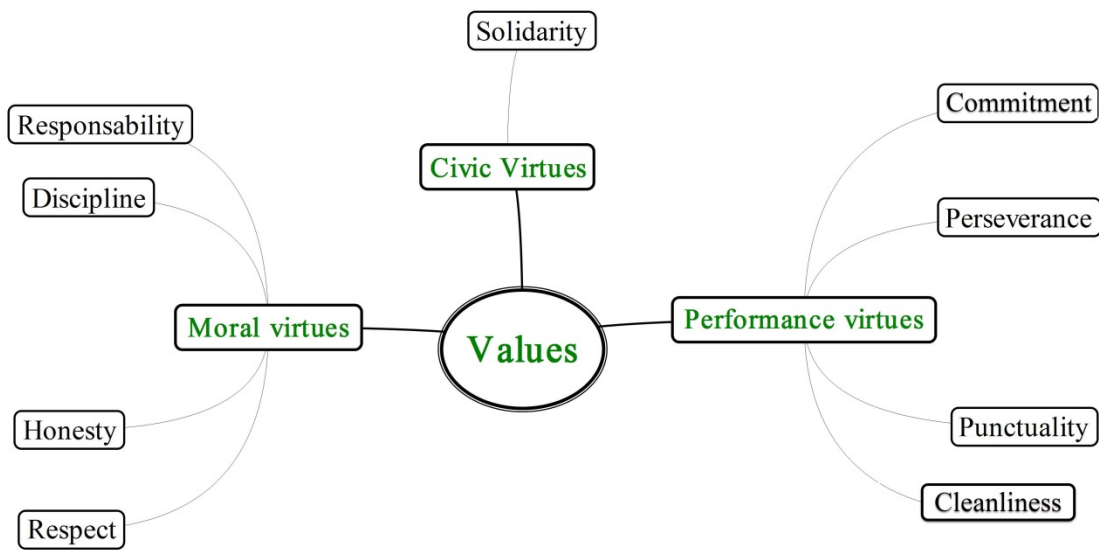
Figure 3. Classification of values

The program is composed of various actions for the spread of the values. These activities focus mainly on raising the awareness of the students on the subjects. And also on reminding the teaching staff that it is advisable to draw attention to a certain value during its corresponding month, apart from putting it into practice in their teaching work.

Within the project there are thought-provoking activities, such as the mottos on posters or banners which were placed all over the school. During our fieldwork, responsibility was the value which was being promoted, so the school was full of posters with quotes on the subject, apart from other values. Also of interest were the enormous wall-hangings, which were located in a strategic part of the school so as to be seen and read by the whole student body. In this case, the action was at stage of establishment, as the products of this action are visible in different parts of the school, both in the central area and in others, and moreover in some classrooms and on some student desks we also saw mottos.

Figure 4. Banners on cleanliness, punctuality, honesty, respect and responsability in the central area.

Another of the actions -in which the school administration does participate-, is the reading and awareness of the value of the month during the school Pledge of Allegiance. This gives a certain touch of solemnity to the project in view of the students and contributes an institutional importance which the project does not have in its other actions. The following photograph shows a scene in the Pledge of Allegiance assembly taken from a recording made during the field stay. Here the headmaster of the school referred to the value of cleanliness and the joint responsibility of everyone to keep the school clean. He also requested the students to be honest and not to lie to their families, particularly on the subject of school grades. He finished by urging the school to apply the values and not to treat them as a rhetorical device. The importance of example, of the hidden or caught curriculum (Díaz, 2006; Jackson, 1991) in the learning of values is clear to the whole school community as it is given an important place in the headmaster's speech.

> *"I beg students, teachers and other staff to try put the values into practice. Not only must we say that the school is promoting these values, we must also be seen to apply them" (principal head teacher # 16:26: 50).*

Figure 5. Principal head teacher speaking about cleanliness, honesty and encouraging the school to live the values proyect.

On another level, there are the activities related with the reading of reflections associated with the value of the month. At this level, there are two specific actions which are the reading on the school PA system and in the classrooms of a reflection on the subject of the month. The PA reading is carried out by the teachers responsible or the head teachers, on the first Monday of the month. In addition, on the following Mondays we saw how a group of students visit the classrooms to read some reflection connected with the value of the month. These actions are bolstered by the reading project and the book club, also headed by the Spanish Language department.

> *"Today's reading activity will be pages 64 to 75 and today's activity is: if there is someone in the school who bothers you, write about how and why. If you think you have done something that bothers someone, if you want to report it to the social worker, the prefects, your tutor or your art master, do it in writing"* (student talking on the school PA system # 21:40: 9)

In this case reading is carried out in all classrooms, for 10 minutes per day, on a text proposed by a teacher, in this case the book was called *Being a Happy Teen* (Matthews, 2003), in Spanish. On examining the text, we found that it dealt with subjects like drug prevention, virtues and school bullying, subjects which are relevant to character education. (M. W. Berkowitz & Bier, 2005). However, this link with the values project was accidental, not intentional, as this type of interconnection between the projects had not been proposed in advance. This coincidence was

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evidence of a lack of prior reflection when proposing both initiatives, despite the fact that the two projects spring from the same department.

Another point which must be stressed regarding the project is its assessment. The project does not have a real and effective system for qualitative or quantitative assessment on the implementation of the program. The only formal attempt at assessment was on the subject of punctuality using a small survey. It asked about the frequency of arrival at school on time, if classes begin on time, if homework and internal documents are given in on time, if the practice of this value is reinforced in the classrooms, etc. But beyond this attempt, there is nothing official which can show us which aspects of the project are working or failing. The lack of internal leadership by the staff to assume this responsibility prevents the school from being aware of specific aspects such as the improvement in punctuality of the school community, the return or recovery of missing objects, the improvement in the school ambient, etc. Moreover, this type of actions are seen by part of the teaching staff as a measure that coerces their activity in their relations with the school community.

> *"Exactly, then it has been difficult because, not with the students, but with colleagues it has been complicated because we don't like anybody to be supervising us. So many of our colleagues didn't want to respond to the survey, they refused, and then some administrative staff too, in spite of that, we made the assessment and it turned out well, that is, the first value works and so we continued afterwards with the other values. However right now there is no supervision because we, the Spanish teachers, were leading it, but the people who should be supervising are the heads, because in the end we are all colleagues"* (Spanish teacher 1 #00:09:11-9#).

We must underline that the teachers interviewed consider that qualitative assessment is fundamental to see the long-term progress of this type of projects. From their observations they see a slight improvement in punctuality and truancy in class, a certain increase in the return of objects and a decrease in the number of complaints about stolen or missing objects. But other aspects, like cleanliness in the classrooms and in the school or verbal violence, are not being checked despite being something which should be clearly dealt with.

3.2.4. The school community and "Healthy Harmony"

As we all know, for any project of this kind to work it is necessary for most of the school community, particularly the teachers, to be involved wholeheartedly. In this sense, the Civics and Ethics Training subject has a major role to play in backing the values project at a more curricular level and it also needs the involvement of part of the department. However, the support differs between the various Ethics teachers both in intensity and collaboration with the Spanish Language department. Only one of the Ethics teachers has a very proactive attitude with the values project. This teacher had attempted to motivate a cleanliness and recycling project in the school, but the lack of support and the resistance of part of the teaching staff made her give up. So now she is assisting with the project in three ways: by persuading her colleagues to participate, by buying the materials like the banners, at a curricular level in her subject and with the student association, by coordinating them in the values project so that they will go around the classrooms giving information about the value for each month.

At the level of teaching praxis, in the Civics and Ethics Training subject, the values project does receive support, through the content of the syllabus, classroom activities, the style used when giving class, the type of reading, etc. During our field stay we have seen how prominence was given to the values and their comprehension through various means, such as debate on moral dilemmas, political debates, group work, reflections, self-evaluation, games, etc.

We must stress that this department also offers constructive criticism of the project, as they consider that it is being carried out in a very superficial way. Their perception is that the actions carried out have little impact on the community and that the focus of the project should be examined in order to create a values project related with research-action. They wanted a more in-depth and elaborate project with development of the proposals and a follow-up to create a major impact on the school community, through a process which would demand greater reflection on the learning objectives.

Another section of the project is the participation of the students and their families. During our observations we have seen how the students prepared posters and place them all over the school, read about the value in the Pledge of Allegiance assembly, over the PA system and in the classrooms, apart from putting the values into practice while they are at school. But their participation in the organization of the project is nil, as they do not make any type of decisions when it comes to designing the activities. Beyond this, student participation in the project does not exist.

> *"We only make the posters and write the speeches, and that's the way it is with all the values. Because I don't know if they can find another way of saying it or if it is spend all the time reminding us: they pass information on punctuality to the bathroom, punctuality to the management. And it's like that in all the classrooms" (Student 1 #11:28:13#).*

The collaboration of the families with this initiative is non-existent, apart from some funding occasionally. Despite the fact that the parents are informed more or less officially and that some families are willing to work, they are not included at all in this project. Part of the management even admits that this point is not being dealt with correctly.

> *"Look, we haven't even have the courtesy of letting people know, so it hasn't gone any further than what we do ourselves, em, we comment on this with the parents at the Report Card meetings, so we do let them know that were working on this, but nothing more, the truth is it goes no further, maybe it is one of the questions which should be considered in the future, to involve the parents (Head teacher 2 #00:57:38-9#)*
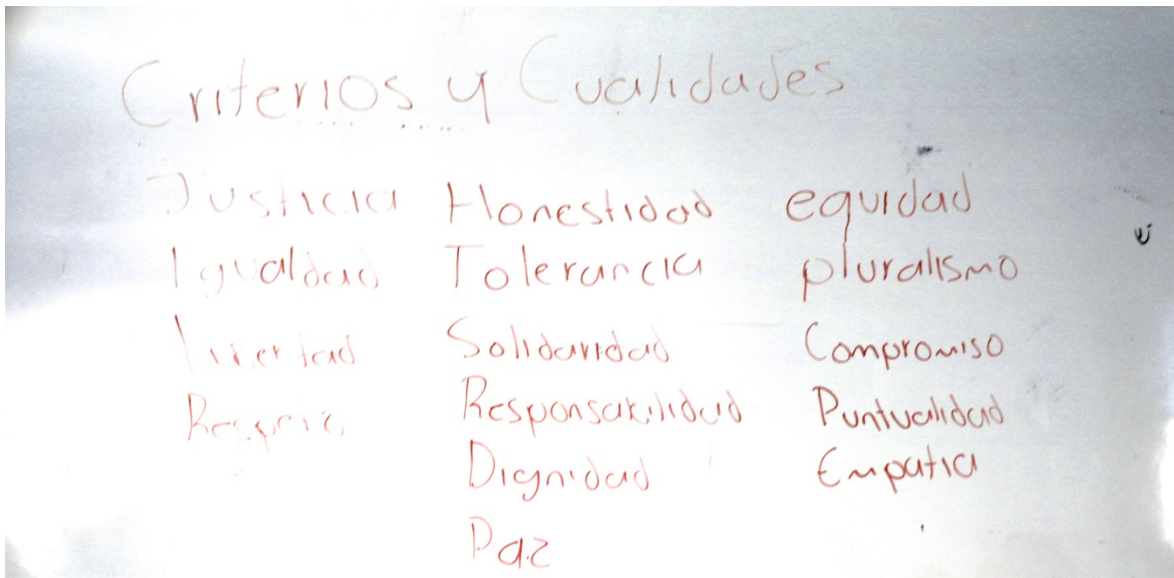
Figure 6. List of values taught during Civic and Ethics.

Another important factor to support this type of initiatives is the role played by the management teams and their capacity for leadership in the school (Berkowitz & Bier, 2004). In this case we must emphasize that the leadership team keeps a low profile regarding collaboration with this project. On this team we have two head teachers with a long career in the school and one new arrival; the latter is reluctant to talk as he still does not know the school or his colleagues well enough, but he is aware of the great efforts that are being made by the Department of Spanish Language. Something that is fundamental for the project to be successful is the need for support when implementing this type of initiative. Meanwhile, the other two Heads who have more experience of the school do not give their full support to the project, either with school or government funds, and moreover they have an expectant or laid-back attitude, as they do not offer clear leadership on the project nor do they firmly back their colleagues who could take the lead with the others.

In addition, the personal relationships between the teachers, the work overload, unsuitable workplace dynamics, jealousy of colleagues, the officialization of the project, etc., mean that it does not have enough support from the teachers. This situation is disastrous for the project and for the school ambient, as the lack of commitment makes this type of project fail in the school, as had already occurred with the cleanliness and recycling project and that of graffiti. If we take into account Hollingshead's classification, (2009, p 179-180), we could say that within the project dynamics we have the teachers and heads who are resistant to the project, together with the cooperative teachers who, on this issue, include part of the Ethics Department, the Spanish Department and the management, and on the other hand we have some idealistic implementers in the departments of Language and Ethics.

Listen, as regards the project itself, eh... I believe the problem to be more serious, or we could say that one of the, the weaknesses we have is that not all the teachers participate one hundred per cent, so we will have to find the way in which, there would be greater participation by the teaching staff, another point is that the project basically involves the teaching staff, although when you see the banners there, you would say that the school is involved, that is to say, the project has never been explained to the administrative staff for example (Head teacher 2 #00:52:07-6#)

The education inspection team who are aware of the difficulties there are with the project has even asked the Spanish Department to reduce their demands on their colleagues so that the atmosphere does not become more strained and the project be discontinued, although the inspection also has a constructively critical attitude towards the project as it believes that learning the values is clearly linked to everyday practice, to informal acquisition and the hidden and caught curriculum.

4. Conclusions

We must stress that, despite the lack of human and economic resources, this program began as an independent action by a group of teachers with a great vocation for teaching, out of love and desire to improve the education of the students and their most immediate social environment. The approach to the project is taken due to the need to contain the loss of values in the school and to reverse the situation. Therefore what is mainly emphasized is the performance and moral virtues so that the pupils can enjoy healthy harmony in the school and understand the importance of these values. This action is completely in solidarity with the school community.

Besides, we must point out that, on an inclusive level, the project is in a phase of initial or low-intensity development in the school. It is true that in some aspects such as the decoration with mottos and posters regarding the values, the relationship with curricular contents in some areas such as civics and ethics and Spanish-language, and with other schemes like reading, the project has reached a phase of greater development. However, other aspects such as student or family participation, support of the management team, the collaboration of other colleagues, teaching leadership, the assessment and contribution of improvements to the project, etc., mean that it is still in a focalization phase and is hard-pressed to permeate the full school community.

One of the key aspects in this project is the lack of cohesion among the workforce. The fact that the atmosphere is strained by the personal and labour relationships in the school together with certain very unprofessional types of conduct, clearly complicates the implantation and development of the program and even threatens its future. The resistance by part of the teaching staff and little commitment from most of the teachers mean that the project is in serious danger of disappearing. The lack of management leadership unmistakably supporting the project creates tense situations due to the lack of commitment to this type of initiatives by part of the teaching staff. In addition, part of the teaching staff show a certain lack of appreciation, as they do not see that this type of initiatives has an impact on their classes by improving academic results, or affect the ambient in the classroom, etc. To this we must add the great diversity of work and social conditions found amongst teachers in Mexico, which means that part of the teaching staff does

not want extra workloads or that they focus exclusively on the contents of the syllabus in order to obtain good results in the Planea tests.

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