An analysis of values literacy and internalisation in students commencing high school: A pilot study

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Abstract

This mixed methods pilot study investigated the impact of values education on Year Seven students in three Christian K-12 schools in Australia. Participants were surveyed to determine their knowledge, understanding, and internalisation of the *Nine Core Values for Australian Schooling*. Further, random selections of students from two schools participated in three focus groups that discussed scenarios describing value-laden interactions. The study found that Year Seven students had a varied knowledge and understanding of the *Nine Core Values for Australian Schooling* that appeared independent of background variables. The study also found that the participants generally had sound levels of internalisation of values, but that the levels of internalisation among girls exceeded that among boys. Further, the study found no relationship between the knowledge of values and the internalisation of values.

Introduction

Values may be viewed as a body of internalised beliefs, expectations and empathies to which individuals have emotional attachments and that can potentially guide their behaviours and judgements (Carr, 2011; Halstead & Taylor, 2000). Values education is one increasingly recognised component of education worldwide. All cultures subscribe to the importance of values, although core values of any given culture or society may vary somewhat from other cultures and be played out in ways that are unique to that culture (Rowan, 2007). Although the various approaches to values education generate vigorous discussion with some educators taking an explicit teaching approach (Lickona, 1996) and others opting for a more 'from the ground up strategy' (Fox, 2012), there is general agreement that schools are one place where values are transmitted and, far from being neutral, teachers facilitate this process (Passe, 1999). Therefore teachers are increasingly perceived to be moral guides (Bullnough, 2011; Carr, 2011; Claxton, 2008; Forster, 2012; Totterdell, 2010). In addition to this evidence that teachers play a role in the moral development of their students, there are external influences including family and other significant adults that impact this important area of a child's development (Arthur, 2011).

It is also widely recognised that there is a difference between knowledge and understanding of values (values literacy), and the internalisation of values (Hill, 2004; Lovat, Toomey, Clement & Crotty, 2009). This study aimed to gain an insight into the perceptions of children entering high school regarding their knowledge and understanding of values, and to ascertain the extent to which they had internalised those values in their own lives.

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Contextual understanding

The Australian government has affirmed the importance of values by officially stating that effective values education "is an explicit goal of schooling" that should enable students to understand and apply values (Australian Government, 2005, p. 5). Even more recently, the Australian Curriculum Assessment and Review Authority (ACARA) reaffirmed the importance of values in the Australian curriculum by listing 'Ethical Behaviour', inclusive of values, as one of their seven general capabilities (ACARA, 2010).

The National Framework for Values Education in Australian Schools defines values education as "any explicit and/or implicit school-based activity which promotes student understanding and knowledge of values, and which develops the skills and dispositions of students so they can enact particular values as individuals and as members of the wider community" (Australian Government, 2005, p. 8).

Within this framework, the *Nine Values for Australian Schooling* is a list of significant values that the Australian government has mandated for all Australian schools. These values are: "Care and compassion; Doing your best; Fair go; Freedom; Honesty and trustworthiness; Integrity; Respect; Responsibility; Understanding, tolerance and inclusion" (Australian Government, 2005, p. 4). This set of values was chosen as the basis for this investigation solely due to its commonality of use in Australian schools. Christian schools within Australia generally adhere to these values and while there is some evidence to support a link between biblical literacy and behavioural outcomes (Jeynes, 2009), the purpose of this research was not to prove or disprove links, or establish a comparison with government schools, but to determine the state of play in three schools with a similar ethos.

Current perspectives in values education

Values are the basis of a harmonious society. They determine how people relate to one another and how people behave in given situations. As such, they are more than idealistic beliefs; they are moral codes that inform and regulate collective and individual practice (Halstead & Taylor, 2000). Values may be defined as "the principles and fundamental convictions which act as general guides to behaviour, the standards by which particular actions are judged as good or desirable" (Halstead, & Taylor, 2000, p. 169). Values may also be described as "the priorities individuals and societies attach to certain beliefs, experiences, and objects, in deciding how they shall live and what they shall treasure" (Hill, 2004, p. 4). All these

> *values literacy without internalisation is of little benefit to individuals or society … "Moral principles mean something only when manifested in behaviour"*

definitions imply knowledge, understanding and internalisation.

The importance of transmitting values to the next generation has been recognised throughout history in many world cultures. For example, Huang (2001) posits that Confucius, an ancient Chinese philosopher, ethicist and teacher, saw his role to teach his students "how to be virtuous and authentic human beings" (p. 149). In western culture, classical education has included discourse on values, so although values education has historically been the responsibility of the family, the adage 'It takes a village to raise a child' recognises the wider responsibility that society, including schools, carries in values education (Clinton, 1996).

Schools have long participated in values transmission with Kohlberg and Hersh (1977) stating, "Whether we like it or not, school is a moral enterprise. Values issues abound in the context and process of teaching" (p.53). Narvaez and Lapsley (2008) agree, stating that values are imparted implicitly in everyday teaching and classroom interaction. It is widely recognised that values literacy without internalisation is of little benefit to individuals or society (Gleeson, 1991; Paul, 1988; Ryan, 2002). As Paul points out, "Moral principles mean something only when manifested in behaviour" (1998, p. 11).

The dilemma, then, for educators is that values education must take students on a journey beyond knowledge and understanding to internalisation of values. It is this difference between values literacy and internalisation that is the subject of conjecture and research in the area of values education. While there is agreement on the importance of internalising values, how this process occurs is still under discussion. Models for this process range from implicitly enculturating students through the school ethos, to explicitly including values education in the curriculum (Narvaez & Lapsley, 2008). A set of fifteen varied strategies for values education that have a strong research base have been identified by Berkowitz (2011). This list includes explicit strategies such as directly teaching values and peer interactive strategies, to more implicit ones including service to others, mentoring and modelling, high expectations and trust and trustworthiness. Lovat, Toomey, Clement, Crotty and Nielsen (2009) have identified three important components in their model of values education. The first is becoming 'values literate', or educating the 'head'. This involves the development of a common metalanguage as a central point from which students can discuss values and build 'values-related knowledge' (p. 111). The second component involves educating the heart. This involves becoming socially aware and the

development of affective or empathetic responses to life situations of self and others. Students may learn specific social skills, and the importance of body language and tone of voice that enable them to build more positive relationships with others (Lovat et al., 2009). It also involves 'prizing' those values that motivate changing personal behaviour (Paul, 1998). The final component relates to the concept that 'giving is receiving', or educating the 'hands'. Educating the 'hands' involves engaging students in "action based activities where students can apply their curriculum learning in direct service to others" (Lovat et al., 2009, p. 119). This process, also known as experiential learning essentially provides opportunities for students to enact their knowledge and understanding. Althorf and Berkowitz (2006) concur, highlighting the importance of facilitating opportunities for students "to take part in activities that can help put a 'real life' perspective on what is learned in class" (p. 505). In effect, the development of an emotional response to a set of values to the extent that behaviour alters to become consistent with those values, can be described as the internalisation of values. It amounts to a process of characterisation where the observed character of an individual is consistent with the values. Lovat et al. (2009) are not the only educators to posit a three pronged approach to teaching values. The notion of educating the 'head, heart and hands' is a recurring theme in values education literature (Gleeson, 1991; Paul, 1988; Ryan, 2002).

Not all the literature links these three components so strongly. Kang and Glassman (2010) posit that moral thought ('head') and moral actions ('hands'), although related, and sometimes even dependent on one another, are quite distinct and may at times function independently. They propose with others that additional factors may impact on the link between knowledge about values and personal behaviour. These factors may include: gender; temperament; personality; emotional state; family background; and social environment (Bronstein, Fox, Kamon & Knolls, 2007; Cohen & Cohen, 1996; Sokol, Hammond & Berkowitz, 2010).

Kohlberg's initial work involved developing stages of moral reasoning and behaviour, and was conducted with males only (Kohlberg, 1958). This work attracted criticism on both counts (Gilligan, 1982; Krebs & Denton, 2005); yet to date, the evidence for gender differences in values acquisition remains scant.

On the matter of how values are transmitted, the 'caught' or 'taught' debate continues with Arthur (2011), Carr (2011), French (2005), and Lovat (2010) all highlighting the importance of modelling values, both individually and in a whole school context.

Bargh, Chen and Burrows (1996) and Dijksterhuis, Chartrand and Aarts (2007) add to the discussion with their finding that individuals may be primed to act in a particular way without them being aware "of the influence or potential influence of the priming effect on their behaviour" (p. 239), lending credence to the idea that values are 'caught', while not discounting the importance of explicit teaching of values literacy.

The literature is clear on the importance of raising the values literacy of students. It offers suggestions of factors that may lead to internalisation of values and acknowledges the role of teachers in facilitating this process, pointing to their responsibility as moral guides. It is less clear about how long this process takes and what factors may impact on students' knowledge, understanding and internalisation of values at their point of entry into high school.

Rationale for the study

Within society are expectations that individuals will adhere to commonly held values in their behaviour towards others and that schooling will play a role in developing those values. The National Framework for Values Education in Australian Schools states that "Education is as much about building character as it is about equipping students with specific skills" (Australian Government, 2005, p. 5). This study explores the perceptions of children in Australia entering high school in regards to their knowledge and understanding and internalisation of values. As such, it elicits information at the junction between primary (elementary) and secondary education that may inform approaches to values education.

Research questions

The following questions guided the investigation. Within a system of Christian schools:

- What relationships exist between measures of students' values literacy and students' values internalisation and measures of gender, school size and years in the school?
- What correlation exists between measures of students' values literacy and students' values internalisation?

In laying the framework for answering these questions, this paper defines values literacy as the ability to: understand the nature of values; identify specific values in scenarios; be able to discuss the nature of values; and to provide examples of specific values. On the other hand the paper uses the term *internalisation of values* to mean a moderation of mind such that the values begin to characterise both the individual's thought processes and behaviours.

> *an emotional response to a set of values to the extent that behaviour alters to become consistent with those values, can be described as the internalisation of values*

Method

This study investigated both values literacy and values internalisation in children entering high school in three Australian Christian schools representing one denomination. While the Australian government has conducted extensive research on values education in the government school system, the independent education sector has been less studied. A mixed method was employed that involved the collection of data through a questionnaire given to 104 Year Seven students across three schools sharing a similar ethos and demographic characteristics. This was followed up with three mixed gender focus groups of six to nine students in two schools, based on availability and time constraints. Permission to conduct the study was obtained from relevant authorities and participants and their carers. The use of both quantitative and qualitative approaches provided research perspectives from two different data sets (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011).

The questionnaire was divided into two parts, the first of which employed multiple choice items to test knowledge and understanding of the *Nine Values for Australian Schooling*. The second part used a six point Likert scale to determine measures of the internalisation of values (Fraenkel & Warren, 2006). These items were directed toward the respondents' anticipation of their own behaviours in specific circumstances. Research over time has indicated that stability of beliefs, emotions and attitudes create a covert neural environment (often described as 'intention') that is conducive to consistency in behaviour (Armitage & Conner, 2010; Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975). This paper posits that consistency in the anticipation of future behaviour implies that the structuring of this internal neuronal environment is at least underway. That is, consistency in the degree to which values-dependent behaviours, in prescribed circumstances are anticipated by research participants, becomes a measure of their internalisation of those particular values. This assumption is consistent with the theories of researchers such as Paul (1988) and Lovat, Toomey, Clement, Crotty and Nielsen (2009).

Focus groups were used in this study as a form of triangulation to validate the results of the questionnaire and to provide deeper insight into the participants' 'values literacy' through their interactions with one another. Each focus group discussed three scenarios, each of which linked to three specific values. Sessions were audio-taped and transcribed before coding. Coding for the definition of values was based on whether a definition was attempted by the group, the number of synonyms used for the specific value, and the ability to generate specific examples.

> *the ability to identify values … was unrelated to school size, gender and the length of time … spent in the school*

Results

Quantitative results

A two part questionnaire was administered to 104 Year Seven students from the three schools belonging to the same Christian school system. Of these, 49 were females, 37 were males and 18 did not specify their gender.

Knowledge and Understanding

In the Knowledge and Understanding section of the questionnaire (values literacy), participants were given twelve scenarios and required to select the value that was being described in each scenario. Scenarios included statements such as "When the basketball team realise they are not playing as well as they could, they begin practising twice as hard as they had before" (doing your best), and "The Year Eight students pick up all of their rubbish and throw it in the bin after their class picnic at the beach" (responsibility). Identification of the values exhibited in these scenarios gave rise to a Knowledge and Undersatnding or 'values literacy' score for each participant. The participant 'values literacy' scores ranged from 2 to 11 with a median value of 7 and quartile values of 6 (25th percentile) and 8 (75th percentile) indicating a distribution approaching normality (see Figure 1).

Correlations between the 'values literacy' scores and background factors including 'school size' (r = -0.16), 'gender' (r = +0.05) and 'years in a Christian school' (r = +0.11) suggested that the ability to identify values in the scenarios was unrelated to school size, gender and the length of time the participants had spent in the school.

Figure 1: Box plot of knowledge and understanding / 'values literacy' scores
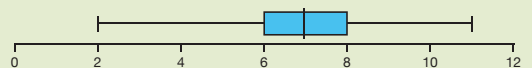
Values Internalisation

The second section of the questionnaire involved 15 items describing scenarios exemplifying values chosen from the *Nine Values for Australian Schooling*. Participants were asked to indicate the degree to which they felt the item described their own response to each scenario. The items included statements such as "If I found a fifty dollar note at school and nobody was looking, I would keep it for myself" (honesty and trustworthiness), and "I try to do the right thing, even if no one is around"

(integrity). Each item was set against a six-point Likert scale ranging from 'strongly disagree' through 'mildly disagree' and 'agree' to 'strongly agree' (see *Figure 2*).

Participants' responses to the 15 items were subjected to exploratory factor analysis involving an eigenvalue-factor graph (a scree plot). This graph indicated a single strong factor with item-loadings ranging from 0.77 to 0.19 (see Table 1). Items 3, 10 and 14 produced negative loadings and were reverse-coded to produce positive loading of the same magnitude. The resulting changes to implied meanings of the three statements are shown in brackets within the table. A Cronbach test of reliability was carried out and indicated that if the items with a loading of less than 0.50 (items 15, 6, 3, 10 and 14) were removed from the scale its reliability would rise from 0.78 to 0.82. This procedure is standard practice in the data reduction and scale production processes employed in exploratory factor analysis (Bruce, 2004).

A Values Internalisation Scale was created by averaging the Likert scores across the remaining ten items for each participant. A box plot (*Figure 2*) indicates that the resulting scores, ranged between 2.1 and 5.9, with a median score of 5.1 and quartile scores of 4.7 (25th percentile) and 5.5 (75th percentile). The distribution of this scale is obviously skewed (*Figure 2*) with more than 75% of the participants in general agreement with the internalisation statements.

A series of correlations were generated in order to determine possible relationships between Values Internalisation and other variables such as school size ($r = +0.14$), years in a Christian school ($r = +0.06$) and Knowledge and Understanding of values ($r = +0.01$). The result suggests that internalisation of values is independent of the size of the school attended, the years spent in Christian education and the participants' knowledge and understanding of values. However the correlation between the participants' gender and their internalisation of values ($r = +0.27$) was found to be significant at the 0.05 level.
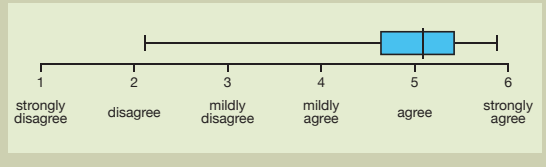
This relationship was further examined. The difference between the male mean score of 4.8 (SD

> *A Values Internal-isation Scale was created by averaging the Likert scores across … ten items for each participant*

Table 1:   Single factor indicating internalisation of values

item	value	Factor Item (coefficient α = 0.78)	loading
7	integrity	I treat my classmates and teachers the way that I would like to be treated	0.77
2	doing your best	I work hard on my school assignments	0.71
13	freedom	I invite people other than my best friends to join in games	0.69
4	integrity	I try to do the right things, even if no one is around	0.64
11	care and compassion	My health is important to me and I do my best to take care of it	0.63
1	understanding, T & I	I make friends with students who are different to me	0.59
12	respect	I am willing to let others share their beliefs and opinions, even if they are different to mine	0.56
9	care and compassion	If a classmate needs help with his schoolwork, I do my best to help	0.56
5	honesty and trust	I mean what I say when I give someone a compliment	0.53
8	fair go	I do not judge people before I get to know them	0.51
15	respect	If someone enters the classroom to speak to my teacher, I continue with my work or sit quietly and wait	0.44
6	freedom	If I see a younger child being bullied, I stand up for the child or notify an adult who will do so	0.37
3	responsibility	I (do not) blame others for my mistakes	0.34
10	honesty and trust	If I found a fifty dollar note at school and nobody was looking, I would (not) keep it for myself	0.29
14	doing your best	I do my best at something only if I (even if I don't) enjoy it	0.19

Figure 2: Box plot of values internalisation scores set against the Likert scale

> *The difference between the male mean score of 4.8 … and the female mean score of 5.2 … suggest[ed] that internal-isation … among girls was greater than that among boys*

= 0.74) and the female mean score of 5.2 (SD = 0.49) was greater than 50% of the higher standard deviation, suggesting that internalisation of values among girls was greater than that among boys. An analysis of variance between the two distributions of internalisation scores (F = 6.5; p < 0.05) indicated that these were not chance results (see Table 2). Further, Cohen's d coefficient (effect size) was found to be 0.63 suggesting that this difference in the internalisation scores between girls and boys was strong and meaningful.

Individual item analysis revealed that the greatest difference between male and female scoring occurred in item 10 ("If I found a fifty dollar note at school and nobody was looking, I would keep it for myself.") This is one of the items removed from the scale formation process. This fact that the 'Values Internalisation' scale returned a difference between male and female scores even though the item creating the strongest difference was absent, strengthens the sense of validity of these results.

Qualitative results

The qualitative data came from three student focus groups, the purpose of which was to elicit rich data concerning the respondents' values literacy that would augment the questionnaire results. Age appropriate scenarios were presented and each group asked how they could best demonstrate three specific values for each scenario.

Scenario One:
> *You thought you studied really hard for your maths test, but it seems that you didn't study hard enough. When you open the test paper, you don't know how to answer a number of the questions. Eric, the smartest student in the class, is sitting beside you. If you copy a few of his answers, you will be able to pass the test. No one else is looking.*

This scenario tested students' understanding of 'integrity', 'responsibility' and 'doing their best'. The discussion indicated a high level of 'values literacy' in relation to all three values. Students articulated definitions, including "even though no-one will know, you're still not going to do it" for integrity, and "taking ownership of your actions" for responsibility. Several synonyms were provided by the groups for integrity and responsibility. All groups gave a variety of practical examples for each value which were age appropriate to the scenario, and indicated a sound working knowledge of the values.

Scenario Two:
> *Your friend Sally asks you to keep secret that her mother has been diagnosed with cancer. She's very upset and she doesn't want other students to know yet. Later that week, your friend Michael tells you that he has heard a rumour about this and asks you directly if you know anything about it.*

This scenario tested understanding of 'honesty and trustworthiness', 'respect' and 'compassion'. It produced the most animated discussion in all three focus groups. It was apparent from the discussion that the students understood not only what each value meant, but the complexity of relationships between values. This became evident when trustworthiness was given as a synonym for respect, and respect emerged as a synonym for care and compassion. This scenario caused

Table 2: Results for the calculation of the F ratio and its significance for the difference in mean values on the scores measuring 'internalisation' between males and females

	sum of squares	df	mean square	F	significance
between groups	2.4	1	2.4	6.5	0.01
within groups	30.7	82	0.4		
total	33.1	83			

tension within all three focus groups as the students grappled with how to be honest to Michael while remaining trustworthy to Sally. As a result, Group 3 did not reach a consensus of opinion on how to demonstrate the values of honesty, trustworthiness and respect in this scenario and Group 2 failed to reach a consensus of opinion as to how care and compassion may be demonstrated.

Scenario Three:

> *Dan is a new student in your class. His family has recently migrated to Australia from a non-English speaking country, so he has difficulty speaking English. Dan wants to take part in your class drama, but several of your classmates feel frustrated with his poor English.*

This scenario tested understanding of 'freedom'; 'understanding, tolerance and inclusion'; and a 'fair go'. An evolution of the definition of freedom from "being able to do what you want" to "being able to do certain things up to an extent" was observed in the discussion of one group.This demonstrated both an awareness and understanding of the implications of certain values and recognition of social interdependence.Although no focus groups offered synonyms for the values in this dilemma, ample practical examples were provided and all groups arrived at a consensus of opinion for all three values.

Overall, the data obtained from the focus groups revealed that Year Seven students in this investigation were able to define individual values that, for the most part, coincided with the definitions provided by the Australian Government in The National Framework for Values Education in Australian Schools. Furthermore, the students were able to apply the values to given scenarios by providing a variety of practical examples. The combination of shared perspectives and verbalisation while grappling with the nuances of difficult dilemmas revealed a sound level of 'values literacy'. It also confirmed results from the questionnaire items that were designed to test knowledge and understanding. What it did not reveal, was whether the values discussed were internalised by the groups, or if this was merely a theoretical discussion which may play out differently in real life.

Discussion
Values literacy
Responses to the questionnaire revealed that 75% of Year Seven students understood the *Nine Values for Australian Schooling* to a degree that enabled them to identify specific values in applied situations

at least 50% of the time. Discussions within the focus groups revealed a sound collective working knowledge of values that permitted participants to propose practical examples of how to enact these values in life-situations, and allowed them to negotiate the dilemmas that arose. The implications are twofold. Firstly, it reinforces the Lovat team's suggestion that values education should continue into the years of secondary education (Lovat et al., 2009). Secondly, the teaching strategy of group discussions (Berkowitz, 2011) has the potential to enrich the learning environment and reinforce individual perceptions of the importance of values.

It was not possible to determine how or where the students had gained their knowledge and understanding of the *Nine Values for Australian Schooling* from the data gathered. Measures of knowledge and understanding were not significantly linked to any of the background demographics examined on the questionnaire, including gender, school and years at the school. Transcripts from the focus groups indicated that, in general, both boys and girls had developed sufficient knowledge of values to be able to discuss general implications of values-related behaviour and to articulate their own reasons for the importance of values education. This was consistent with the correlation arising from the quantitative results that indicated no gender difference in scores of understanding and knowledge. While these findings do not discount the importance of schools in transmitting values, it does suggest that the development of values literacy is likely to be a complex process that involves other influences including sociocultural factors and personal characteristics. This finding aligns with The National Framework for Values Education in Australian Schools which states: "parents, caregivers and families are the primary source of values education for their children, although they expect support from their school" (Australian Government, 2005, p. 2).

Values internalisation
The second research question dealt with the internalisation of values. Data raised by the questionnaires revealed that more than 75% of the participants averaged scores on the 'values internalisation' scale that lay on, or stronger than 'mild agreement' with the intent of the 10-item scale describing personal behaviours relating to particular values (see Figure 1 b). Correlations demonstrated that student internalisation was not significantly affected by such background factors as school size and the number of years in the school. The exception was gender, where boys were found to have significantly lower internalisation scores

75% of Year Seven students understood the Nine Values for Australian Schooling to a degree that enabled them to identify specific values in applied situations … 50% of the time

than girls and further analysis showed that this difference was both statistically significant and meaningful. Whatever the reason for this disparity, these results suggest that it is important to continue values education in the teen years, especially for boys. Although the literature alluded to gender differences in moral behaviour (Cohen & Cohen, 1996; Gilligan, 1982), there is less evidence that supports gender differences in the rate of values internalisation. This is an area that deserves further study.

The finding that measures of 'knowledge and understanding' bore no relation to measures obtained by the 'values internalisation' scale (there was virtually no common variance) was unexpected. This finding implies that, for the participants of this study, comprehension of values (values literacy) was not a predictor of values internalisation. This result links back to the literature findings where a three-pronged approach is advocated (Gleeson, 1991; Hill, 1991; Lovat et al., 2009; Paul, 1988). While the findings of this pilot study do not negate the importance of classroom lessons focused upon learning about values, they suggest that, alone, these lessons are insufficient to fully promote the internalisation of values.

> *the results … suggest the absence of strong links between values literacy (knowledge and under-standing) and the internal-isation of values*

The importance of significant others

The results of this pilot study suggest that factors outside the school environment also impact on both values literacy and internalisation. The findings of the Bargh team and others (Bargh, Chen & Burrows, 1996; Dijksterhuis, Chartrand & Aarts, 2007) that a significant component of human behaviour is non-consciously driven by the social milieu that surrounds the individual, may have a bearing on the process of internalisation of values. In this investigation, where school size and the number of years in school were proven to be non-contributors to values literacy or internalisation, it is likely that significant others in a child's life such as family members, friends and teachers do play a role. They create the setting in which the child absorbs and responds to an array of implicit influences that could prime both thought and behaviour in relation to values, an idea supported by Narvaez and Lapsley (2008), Arthur (2011), and the Australian Government (2005). As far as the school environment is concerned, it is possible that the classroom ethos, the manner of the teacher and the relationship created between the teacher and the student could have a greater influence on the internalisation of values than explicit teaching of any set of values.

The importance of varied approaches

The disconnect in this study between values literacy and values internalisation in students at their point of entry into high school supports the notion that values education should be an ongoing process throughout a child's schooling. In this sense, values education should be an integrated process in which the 'doing' enriches the 'knowing'. Using a range of implicit and explicit strategies emerging from the literature (Berkowitz, 2011), with an emphasis on experiential learning especially for boys, may prove beneficial in assisting the internalisation process. The use of various approaches is supported by the final report of the Values in Action Schools Project (Australian Government, 2010) which states, "Evidence gathered from all clusters indicates that this increased awareness of values and values education was developed through various forms of reflection, dialogue and communication, and personal story" (p. 40). It is through involvement in acting out values in practical ways that students may form the kind of emotional attachment that extends beyond knowledge of values and gives rise to commitment and characterisation.

Conclusions and recommendations

This paper describes two findings that deserve further consideration. Firstly, the results suggest that there is a gender difference in the internalisation of values at the entry point to high school – girls have higher internalisation scores than boys. Secondly, the results also suggest the absence of strong links between values literacy (knowledge and understanding) and the internalisation of values. On the basis of these findings two recommendations have been drawn. Firstly, that intentional values education should extend into adolescence with enhanced benefit when school, society and home model and espouse positive values. Secondly, that the integration of a wide range of explicit and implicit strategies with an emphasis on experiential learning expressing the values taught in class could positively influence the internalisation of values, especially for boys. Despite the obvious limitations of this pilot study, it raises important questions and provides suggestions that should be subjected to further and more rigorous research.

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