EXPLORING STUDENTS UNDERSTANDING OF VALUES AND MORAL REASONING

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SOCRATES And what shall be their education? Can we find a better than the traditional sort? – and this has two divisions, gymnastic for the body, and music for the soul.

ADEIMANTUS By all means.

SOCRATES And when you speak of music, do you include literature or not?

ADEIMANTUS I do,

SOCRATES And literature may be either true or false?

ADEIMANTUS Yes.

SOCRATES And the young should be trained in both kinds, and we begin with the false?

ADEIMANTUS I do not understand your meaning.

SOCRATES You know that we begin by telling children stories which, though not wholly destitute of truth, are in the main fictitious; and these stories are told them when they are not of an age to learn gymnastics.

OVERVIEW

- Introductory comments
- Research questions
- Research design
- Conceptual framework
- Findings
- Conclusion

Introductory notes

- What is moral? – The "ought to do"
- Reasonable man test
- In the school manager's office – cultural reality
- Straughan (1992: 19): "*What determines the level of moral development a person is at is not the particular action he judges to be right or wrong, but his reasons for so judging.*"

Research questions

- **What are the important values in the lives of our students?**

- **What content and understanding is given to these values?**

- **How do these values impact on their moral understanding and reasoning?**

- **What factors do they consider in solving moral dilemmas?**

- **To what extent are they willing to negotiate and/or sacrifice their moral standpoints?**

Research design

- A concurrent mixed method design is employed using a single data gathering instrument

- Section A – multiple choice values questionnaire

- Section B – open-ended questions on moral dilemmas
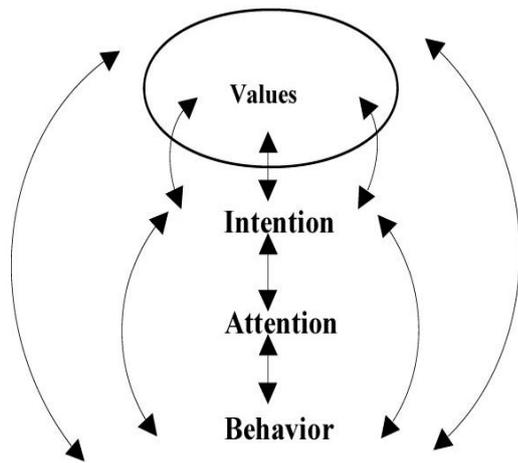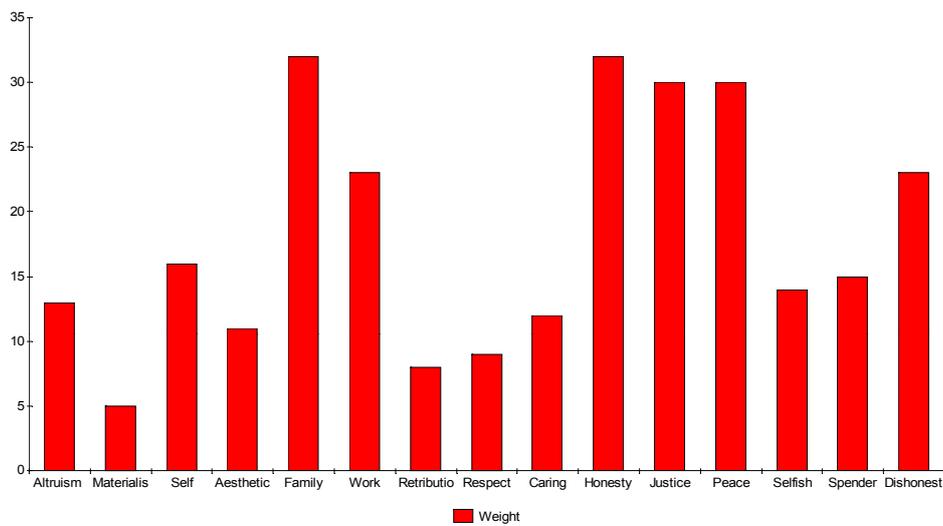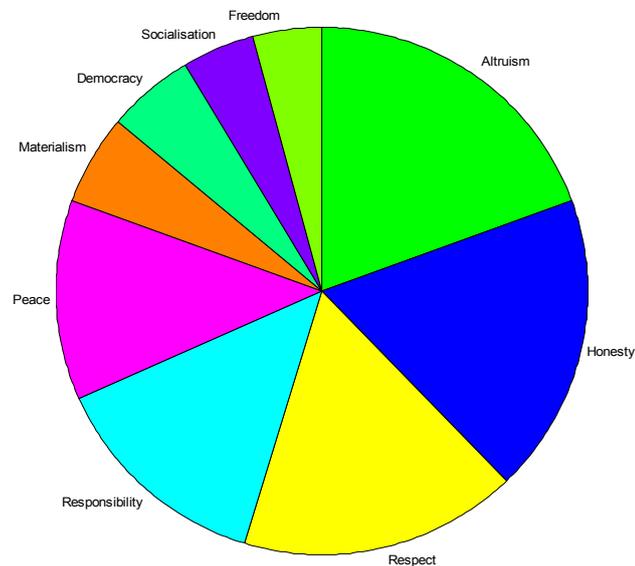
Theoretical framework

Diagram I: Relationships among the Subsystems of Congruent Subjective Experience (Hale-Haniff & Pasztor, 1999)

Findings

Values

Pie chart segments labeled: Freedom, Socialisation, Democracy, Materialism, Peace, Responsibility, Respect, Honesty, Altruism

Moral dilemma

The Grade 10 class at your school wanted to go to Maropeng (Cradle of Humankind). The school principal promised them that they could go if they collected enough money to pay for the trip. The class worked very hard selling sweets and food at the school and collecting money from the community. In the end they collected R4000 which would pay for the trip, and a little more besides. But a few days before the planned trip, one of the Grade 12 learners passed away. The school principal started to arrange the funeral and decided to use the money collected by the Grade 10's for the funeral. So he told the Grade 10's that he will use the money for the funeral and that they will not be going to Maropeng anymore. The Grade 10's was very disappointed, thinking of how hard they had to work to get the money.

Moral reasoning – emerging pattern

- whether a sense of communalism should take precedence over their sense of social justice (communalism ↔ individualism) ;
- whether a person in authority may use his/her power to take a decision; (authoritarianism ↔ democracy) and
- the moral principles of the relationship between the principal and learners (the value dimension).

Emerging pattern

- Sense of communalism (ubuntu) strong
- Awakening sense of democracy (ask permission)
- The importance of keeping a promise (honesty)

Conclusion

- Consistency in data
- Moral dilemma effectively created
- Theoretical framework seems to work in analyzing this type of data

Thank you!

In times of change,

those who are ready to learn

will inherit the world,

while those who believe they know

will be marvelously unprepared

to deal with a world that has ceased to exist.

Eric Hoffer