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THEME 10: RELIGIOUS AND MORAL EDUCATION

EXPLORING STUDENTS UNDERSTANDING OF VALUES AND MORAL REASONING

Prof Jan Nieuwenhuis (Faculty of Education, University of Pretoria)
Email: jan.nieuwenhuis@up.ac.za
Mobile: +27827889637

ABSTRACT:

This paper discusses research conducted among distance education students of the University of Pretoria in 2009. The paper argues that being human means having the capacity to make choices and to act in accordance with the choices made. The choices people make are based on their own personal and socially constructed values, assumptions and beliefs. This personal set of values, assumptions and beliefs informs our understanding of what is morally right and morally wrong and of the type of conduct that would be just and ethical. Moral reasoning is thus an individual or collective reasoning about what, morally, one ought to do. Morality is, at the very least, the effort to guide one's conduct by reason - that is, to do what there are the best reasons for doing. In moral reasoning it is assumed that the person having to take a moral decision will give equal weight to the interests of each individual who will be affected by what one does. This line of reasoning suggests that there must be certain moral principles that should guide a decision. The aim of the research is to explore students' thinking and argumentation on moral dilemmas with a view of understanding how students, who are all practising teachers, take moral decisions. Although the study will run over a number of years, some preliminary findings of a survey undertaken in June 2009 are discussed indicating some of the initial trends emerging from the data.

INTRODUCTION

Why is it that, even though people know what is right, they continue to do what is wrong? Why is it that even though educators know that they should not have a sexual affair with learners, some still choose to have such relationships? This question has intrigued me for many years. In training school leaders I have learned two important lessons early on in my career: first, that theory and practice do not always agree and secondly, that moral right and moral wrong may not be as fixed

as what we often assume it to be. Let me illustrate this with an example.

In 2004, I conducted a research study using reflective journalling to analyse the daily work-life and decisions taken by school managers (Nieuwenhuis, 2008). The data collected revealed a diverse range of challenges faced by rural school principals and illustrated how often principals acted differently to what common management theory would describe as appropriate and secondly it revealed how moral right and moral wrong may differ depending on your own understanding of what people "*ought to do*".

In one case, the principal in his reflective journal entry on the Monday told the story of a learner of the school who passed away that morning. For many African people life and life beyond the grave dictates human behaviour (Mazrui, 1986). For a whole school week the major part of the reflective journal entries talked about how the principal devoted his time to arrange the memorial service and funeral for the deceased learner. This is not an isolated incident, but common practice in many of the more traditionally oriented rural schools in South Africa. According to custom it is believed that the parents should be given the opportunity to grief while the community or school step in to make the arrangements for the funeral. On the Friday the memorial service was held at the school. A big tent was put up on the school premises as the school had no school hall and all the chairs in the school were moved to the tent. On Friday the community came to the school to prepare food for the memorial service and for the funeral that was held on the Saturday. The result was that there was no schooling on the Friday and not on the Monday when everything had to be returned to the classes.

Apart from anything else, this story raises the question as to whether the conduct of the principal was morally right or whether we should judge his behaviour as wrong based on Western concepts of school management. From a management theory perspective what the principal and the school did does not adhere to notions of best practice "ought to do". Looking at the scenario from a traditional African perspective the actions of the principal and school meet the requirements of the traditional "ought to do". As stated earlier, for traditionally oriented African people life and life beyond the grave determine human behaviour. Mazrui (1986: 11) explains that for those who believe in African power of ancestors, not paying the necessary respect to those who departs from this world will bring the anger of the ancestors over us. This link between the living and ancestors is taken for granted in African communities, and it must be understood in terms of the notion of "*Ubuntu*" - "*I am human because you are human*". Associated with this is the idea that a child is the child of the community and that the school should therefore step in, not only to make its

facilities available, but to help with funding the cost of a funeral.

Although such line of argumentation may explain the example given, it does not present us with a finite answer. Does this line of reasoning, for example proposes that culture alone could act as the lens through which we could define what is morally right or morally wrong?

The film "*A reasonable man*" tells the story of a young man of eighteen that stood accused of murder in the first degree. He had pick-axed a toddler of three to death. In the film the advocate for the defence argued that the hut in which the murder took place was dark, and the accused did not knew that this little child was sleeping in the hut, and when he saw the rug moving he did not knew that the child had pulled the rug over her and was trying to free herself. All he thought was that it must be a *tokkeloshe* (an evil spirit) and he did the brave thing only a man could do and hit out at the spirit to kill it. Talking about the film the producer, Gavin Hood (as quoted in Daily Dispatch, 1999), said: "*One man's religion is another's superstition. It is easier to prove reasonable behaviour than reasonable belief, as it is such a personal concept.*" The film is based on the case R v Mbombela (1933 AD 269 at 272) which established the objective principle of a reasonable man. In this case the judge argued that "[a] *reasonable belief, in my opinion is such as would be formed by a reasonable man in the circumstances in which the accused was placed in a given case*". This principle has been followed repeatedly in numerous cases as was the case in the Constitution Court Case (S v Manamela and Mdlalose CCT 25/99). The Constitutional Court argued that in S v Van As, Rumpff CJ (1976 (2) SA 921 (A) at 928 C – E) the origin and application of the frequently-invoked standard of the "careful head of a family", the *diligens paterfamilias,* was also explained. Rumpff CJ stated:

> "*In our law since time immemorial we have used the diligens paterfamilias as someone who in specified circumstances would behave in a certain way. What he would do is regarded as reasonable. We do not use the diligentissimus [excessively careful] paterfamilias, and what the diligens paterfamilias would have done in a particular case must be determined by the judicial officer to the best of his ability. This diligens paterfamilias is of course a fiction and is also, all too often, not a pater [father]. In the application of the law he is viewed 'objectively', but in essence he must apparently be viewed both 'objectively' and 'subjectively' because he represents a particular group or type of persons who are in the same circumstances as he is, with the same ability and knowledge. If a person therefore does not foresee what the other people in his group in fact could and would have foreseen, then that element of culpa, that is failure to foresee, is present.*"

The court therefore argues that the test for reasonableness, of course, remains objective. But what is reasonable will be construed in the circumstances in which the accused in a particular case finds himself or herself. If this argument stands, then we could apply the same type of argument to social values and moral reasoning. Although it may offer some provisional acid test, it does not really fully resolve our dilemma in a diverse society where different cultural sets of morality operates. For this reason the research that I will discuss today, looked at the values that students reported are important to them and how they argue about a moral dilemma.

RESEARCH QUESTION

Contrary to international experience, very little empirical research has been conducted on values and moral education in the South African context. For most, it has remained more of a philosophical debate at a conceptual level often borrowing from research done abroad or based on anecdotal evidence. Given the emphasis placed on moral regeneration in South Africa and the urge for schools to assist in this regard, the Faculty of Education in 2003 has development an ACE in Values and Human Rights in Education in collaboration with the Department of Education and this later developed into the B Ed (Hons) module: Managing Values and Human Rights in Education. Much of the content of the ACE and the B Ed (Hons) module is based on the *Manifesto on Values, Human Rights and Democracy in Education* (2002) issued by the Department of Education as well as on international literature and empirical research data and trends. Although these did serve an invaluable purpose, it remained sterile in terms of locally produced research insights. For this reason it is essential to conduct research into the values of students and how they argue about moral dilemmas so as to enhance our own understanding of our student population. Such an understanding will enable us to align our training during contact sessions to the unique understandings and value frameworks of students.

The research is premised on the assumption that people are not born with a complete set of values or morals. We may be born with the genetic potential to attach greater importance to certain values than to others, but in the end we learn and develop a value system based on our interaction with the natural world, with people, with thoughts, feelings and ideas. We are not passive recipients of the values of our ancestors, but **active creators** of our own set of values that are related to that of our forbearers, yet our set of values is unique. As stated by McLean (1991: 91) a person's values reflect his/her culture and heritage as well as what he/she has done with the set of values handed down to him/her. Bull (1969: 15) explains this point thus: "*The child is not born with a built-in moral conscience. But he is born with those natural, biologically*

purposive capacities that make him potentially a moral being."

As we grow older and mature we begin to impart unique personal meaning to the values and principles that underpin the rules that we had learnt to obey. As we impart meaning to different things, rules and behaviour, we organise the values into a specific abstract internalised structure called our value system and begin to develop the ability to take decisions that are congruent with our value system. Straughan (1992: 19) argues that: "*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.*" This implies that in considering the actions of people we must make allowance for social cognition and moral reasoning. Knowing right from wrong is more than a simple process of being aware of specific social rules, and doing the right thing is not a simple matter of putting those rules into practice.

The research therefore sets out to answer the following key 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?

THEORETICAL UNDERSTANDINGS THAT UNDERPIN THE STUDY

Being human means having the capacity to make choices and to act in accordance with the choices made. The choices we make are based on our own personal and socially constructed values, assumptions and beliefs. This personal set of values, assumptions and beliefs informs our understanding of what is morally right and morally wrong and of the type of conduct that would be just and ethical. It should be obvious from our earlier discussion, that what is right and what is wrong are not absolute truths that are written into some convention or eternal declaration. Right and wrong is socially negotiated and mediated and therefore unstable and have to be re-discovered, re-invented and re-defined by each generation as they search for a way to make living together more just and equitable. This does not mean that there is no normative principles on which right or wrong are based, but that the specific content imparted into the normative principle is relative to a specific spatio-temporality of the person or group, and this makes any global notion of morally right or wrong highly problematic.

Secondly, I accept that all human beings are equally capable of doing what is right as they are in doing what is wrong. Nussbaum (1999: 57) asserts

> "...*that all, just by being human, are of equal dignity and worth, no matter where they are situated in society, and that the primary source of this worth is a power of moral choice within them, a power that consists in the ability to plan a life in accordance with one's own evaluations of ends.*"

Taking a decision is partly based on the education (enculturation) they had received at home, in school and in society, and partly based on their genetic propensity towards certain kinds of behaviour, but mostly based on their own personal experiences and the meanings that they have attached to notions of right or wrong. In other words, right or wrong are socially constructed ideas of the ought-to-do (the moral right), but acting in accordance with that idea is not pre-determined but actively chosen. Even the most morally corrupt person among us can at times do what is right and even the most moral person can at times choose to do what is wrong.

Lickona (1991) points out the need to distinguish between moral knowing, moral feeling, and moral behaviour, i.e. habits of the mind, habits of the heart, and habits of action. Lickona claims that all three are necessary for leading a moral life as all three make up moral maturity. Moral knowing is described as involving moral awareness, values, perspective taking, moral reasoning, and decision making. Moral feeling includes the conscience, self-esteem, empathy, and humility. Finally, moral action is founded on moral competence (the ability to turn moral judgement and feeling into action), moral will (the desire to do what is right), and moral habit (an unconscious inclination to do what is right). Lickona (1991) views moral action as an "outcome" of both moral knowing and moral feeling, and the moral environment in which individuals are situated as a key factor in whether people behave morally.

For Hale-Haniff and Pasztor (1999) values refers to the sense that something is or is not important (worth striving for or desirable). They contrast this to beliefs which they define as assumptions, convictions, rules or expectations about life, people and ideas. Hale-Haniff and Pasztor (1999) claim that we tend to hold beliefs only about things that *matter* to us, that is we formulate beliefs around what we value. Viewed from this perspective, beliefs include philosophical assumptions, convictions about whether or not one's life has an overall meaning or purpose, but also rules and expectations about life, people and ideas.

Accepting that a value is something worth living or striving for brings two fundamental aspects of a value to the fore: cognition (what I think or belief), and feeling (what I feel/emotion), but values are not restricted to these two aspects as they are mediated by a variety of other variables (place, circumstance, opportunity) so that the relation is not direct and certainly not isomorphic (Berkowitz, 1995). Certainly a value entails cognition (knowing), for a value is centrally a belief in the desirability or lack of desirability of the focus of the value, and it also include emotion (feeling) as it is by its very nature affectively-laden (Nieuwenhuis, 2005, 2007, Manual: 1994: 9). Hale-Haniff and Pasztor (1999) state that our emotional responses provide cues that one or more of our (conscious or unconscious) expectations are being violated. For example, when someone else has violated an important belief or expectation, feelings of disappointment, anger, or hurt often ensue. Because these emotions serve as signals of unmet expectations, they can serve as catalysts for identifying unconscious expectations or beliefs. In this regard Rokeach (1973) claims that values guide, but do not of necessity predict behaviour. It is easy to reject drugs in the safe environment of the classroom, but it becomes a much more complex decision in the club when my peers are doing it.

Against this background, the study draws its theoretical conceptualisation from Satir's Growth model and Csikszentmihaly's model of optimal experience as discussed by Hale-Haniff and Pasztor (1999) and infuse this with the ideas of Licona (1991).

Satir approaches the understanding of consciousness from a holistic perspective in which she translates the awareness of wholeness (which is largely a fixed, spatial metaphor) into temporal form, expressed through the infinite continuity or flowing movement of attention. Her concept of *congruence* (also see Kohlberg, 1975) refers to holistic patterns of consciousness in which attention flows freely and continuously (Hale-Haniff & Pasztor, 1999). When all bits of information in consciousness are congruent with each other, there is flow, and the quality of experience is optimal. When the bits of information conflict, the attention pattern becomes blocked or repetitive, and experience is painful. Satir attended to congruence or lack of congruence at multiple simultaneous levels: values, intention, attention, and behaviour.

Using the notion of flow and congruence we can apply it to the thinking of Csikszentimihaly. Csikszentimihaly (in Hale-Haniff and Pasztor, 1999) studied experience, or flow states, in hundreds of individuals as they engaged in many different activities. From the work of Satir and Csikszentimihaly an isomorphic relationship between the pattern and structure of flow states and Satir's description of congruence can be identified. Both reference the inter-relationships *among*

the sub-systems of values, goal setting or intention, attention, emotion, and behaviour. Diagram I summarizes the relationships among these sub-systems of subjective experience. The thinking underpinning Diagram 1 could also be linked to that of Licona's idea of moral knowing, moral feeling, and moral behaviour, i.e. habits of the mind, habits of the heart, and habits of action and to Kohlberg's idea of moral development.

Diagram I: Relationships among the Subsystems of Congruent Subjective Experience (Hale-Haniff & Pasztor, 1999)
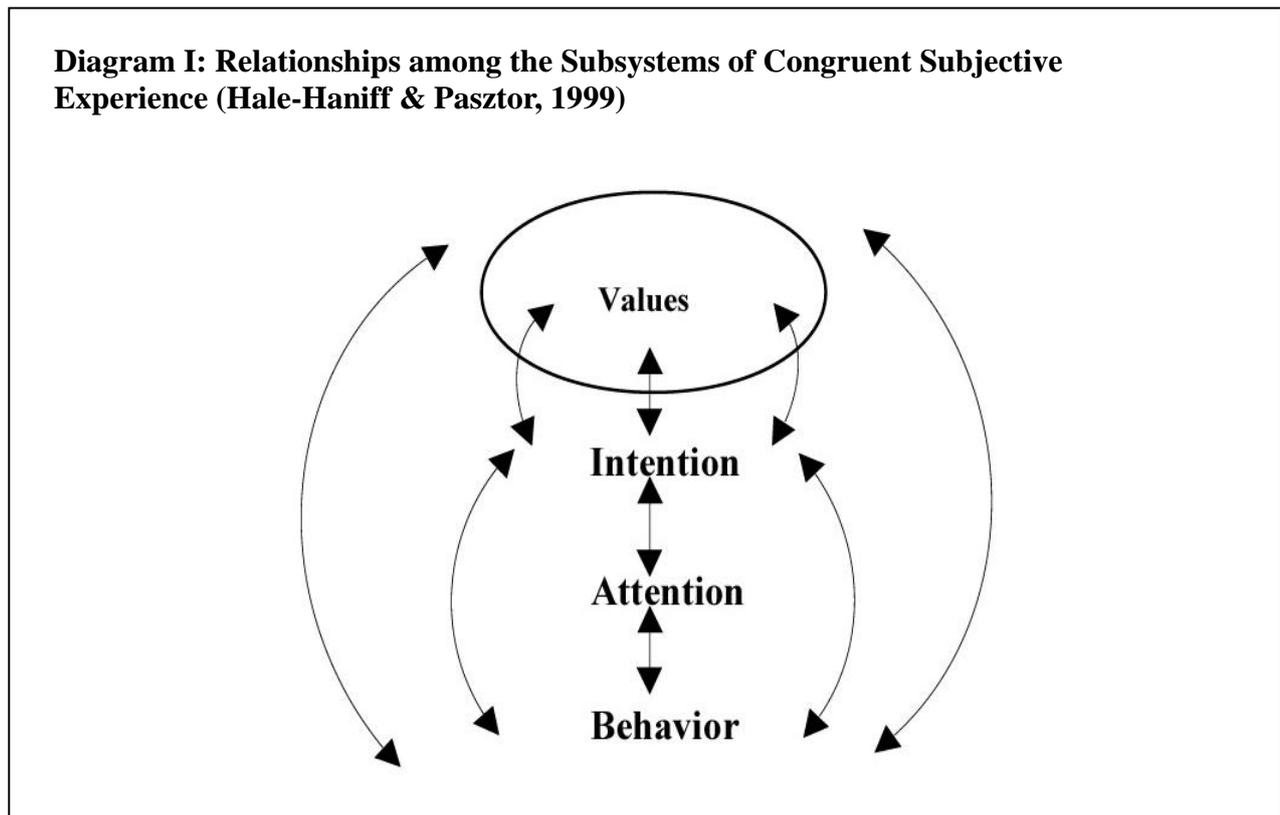
Csikszentmihaly provides clear and useful descriptions of the relationship between values, intention, attention, and emotion. **Values** are the major arbiter of choice. What we value is pervasively reflected across all aspects of consciousness: in our implicit and explicit choices, philosophical orientation and rules to live by, the nature of our expectations and assumptions, decision-making, means of motivation, prioritization of goals, choices in what we attend to, how we behave. **Intention** or goal-setting is the force which keeps experience ordered. Goals or intentions, which may be immediate, short, or long range, are assigned many levels of priority, ranging from trivial to vital. **Attention** refers to what will and will not appear in consciousness - what we notice internally and externally. At any given moment, we have at our disposition many individual units of attention, which may be usefully categorized as auditory, visual and kinaesthetic in nature. **Behaviour** is what we act (do, say, how we say it, and body language).

An unconflicted or unified intent presupposes clearly prioritized values supported by compatible or unconflicted assumptions, and in patterns of attention where people are pre-disposed to notice that which is congruent with their personal goals. This alignment of values, intention, and attention, supports those emotions and behaviours that are congruent with the personal goal. On the other hand, conflicted or split intentions presuppose unprioritized values and/or conflicting beliefs which result in patterns of attention that include both relevant and irrelevant stimuli, and are accompanied by mixed emotions, and inconsistent or dissonant behaviours.

According to Csikszentmihaly (1997) "*Flow helps to integrate the self because in that state of deep concentration consciousness is usually well ordered. Thoughts, intentions, feelings, and all the senses are focused on the same goal*" (Csikszentmihaly, 1990: 41). Negative emotions, like boredom, anxiety or fear, produce a state from which people are not able to use attention to effectively deal with external tasks. Instead, they must turn their attention inside to restore order.

Based on the ideas of Satir, Csikszentmihaly, and Hale-Haniff and Pasztor, it is assumed that when people are confronted with a moral dilemma the natural flow is interrupted and attention is focused on that which creates disequilibrium thus requiring that they must turn their attention inwardly to resolve the incongruence experienced. In order to do this, they need to reflect on their held values, assumptions and beliefs to be able to formulate a stance that will help them restore congruence and flow. It is this process of inward reasoning that this study sets out to investigate and explore to gain greater insight and understanding about students' moral reasoning.

RESEARCH DESIGN

Methodology

The theoretical framework presented is aimed at understanding the interplay between values and moral reasoning by focusing on flow states (see Satir, Csikszentmihaly, Hale-Haniff & Pasztor and Lickona). Based on this, a combination of quantitative and qualitative data gathering methods were used. A concurrent mixed method design is employed using a single data gathering instrument. The aim is to establish the possible value orientations and personal value structure of individual students and based on this, explore how they reason about moral dilemmas. To do this, students were required to complete a section containing multiple choice and ranking questions that should provide us with an individualised value structure per student. A separate section of the questionnaire required that students complete open-ended questions in which they were

9

confronted with a number of moral dilemmas. The purpose of the dilemmas is to create some form of incongruence in their flow state requiring some inward reflection and reasoning to restore flow. This reasoning process will be captured in text in the questionnaire and will be subjected to a empirical hermeneutic phenomenological analysis.

In order to verify the possible influence that group norming might have had, students were given the opportunity to discuss the moral dilemmas after they have completed the questionnaire. A moderator facilitated the flow of the discussion without pronouncing any moral judgement, but could ask questions for clarification and probing purposes. The moderator took fieldnotes capturing the main arguments raised and discussed. After discussion students were given the opportunity to add to or change any aspect pertaining to a specific moral dilemma if they so wish. A space was provided on the questionnaire where these after thoughts could be added.

Sampling

All students enrolled for the distance education Module OWB781 of the BEd (Hons.) in Education Management attending the July contact sessions were invited to participate. A total number of approximately 900 students from across all nine provinces normally attend these sessions increasing the possible generalisability of the findings. The existing contact teaching programme makes provision for a discussion of values and morals on the second day of the contact session and this study simply replaced that lecture. For the purpose of this presentation the responses of only one group attending the session in Pretoria will be discussed. The participants were from the Gauteng region and could be regarded as coming from mainly urbanised settings.

Data analysis.

Although the first Section of the questionnaire is designed in such a way that item analysis may be undertaken to develop measures of reliability and validity, and that inferential statistical methods may be employed to standardise each question, this advanced statistical procedures were not used in the preparation of the paper as this will only be done after all questionnaires have been returned. It is foreseen that, based on the findings of the study, the questionnaire will be refined and adjusted to allow for possible standardisation in future. Such a process will greatly enhance the validity and reliability of the instrument, but may detract from the focus of the study, vis-à-vis the moral reasoning of students. In terms of the data gathered in the quantitative section of the

questionnaire, a basic statistical analysis was undertaken to determine individual student value preferences from which a tentative value structure for the group could be inferred. This step in the research process is needed to establish a provisional framework of students' value orientations. The variables included in the biographical section of the questionnaire may be used in future for secondary data analysis to identify trends within sub-groupings in the data set.

The total number of questionnaires received from the first group was 51. With the exception of one, they all claimed to be Christian in religious orientation and, with the exception of two, they were all of African origin speaking one of the nine indigenous languages. Two-thirds of the participants were female and a third male (see Table 1) which is typical of the gender distribution in education. More matured students in general enrol for post-graduate studies and is reflected in the data that indicates that more than 80% of the participants were middle-aged (see Table 2).

TABLE 1: GENDER DISTRIBUTION

Gender	number
Male	17
Female	34

TABLE 2: AGE DISTRIBUTION

Age	number
<30	2
31-40	16
41-50	25
>50	8

FINDINGS

VALUE STRUCTURE

Section A explored the value orientations of the students. The section consisted of two parts. In the first multiple choice part, students were given a question with three possible choices from which they had to choose the one that corresponds best with their own preference. The three alternatives posed for each question represented a specific value. A values key index were developed that enable weighting of the twelve values measured. Three opposites were formulated to check for consistency the in response pattern. In the second part ten values were listed in alphabetical order which participants had to rank order in terms of personal preference. The results are reflected in Figure 1 and Diagram 2.

FIGURE 1: DISTRIBUTION OF PERTICIPANTS ACCORDING TO WEIGHTED VALUES
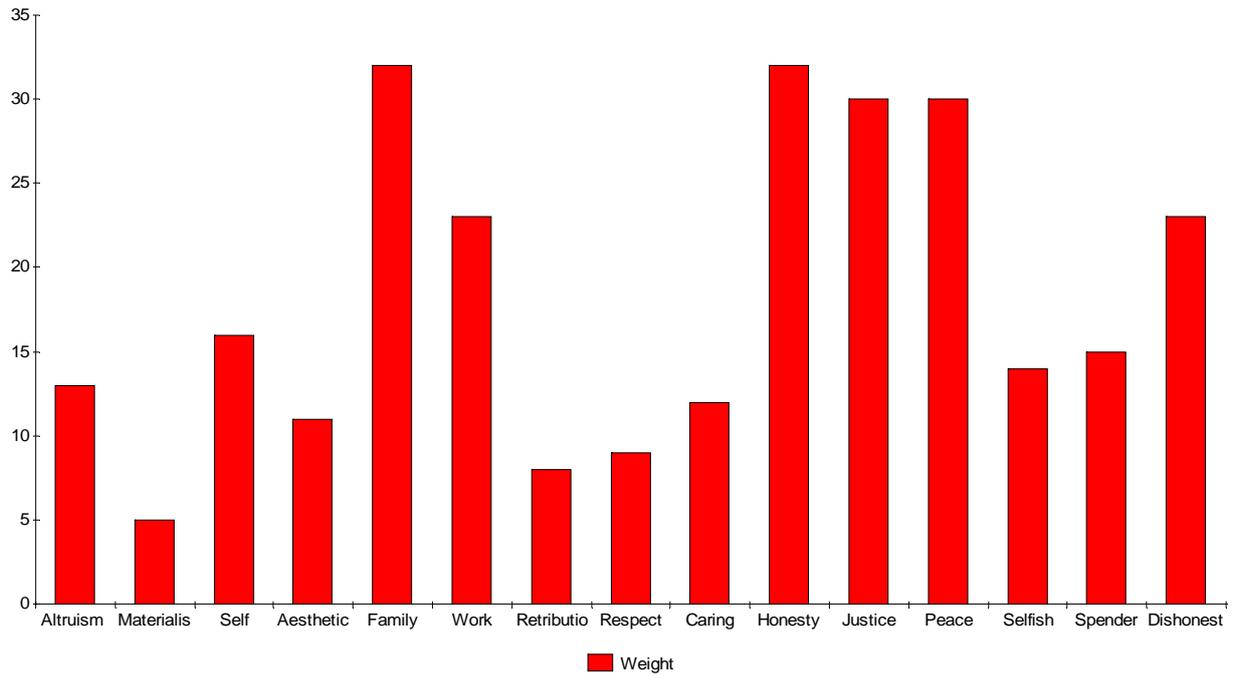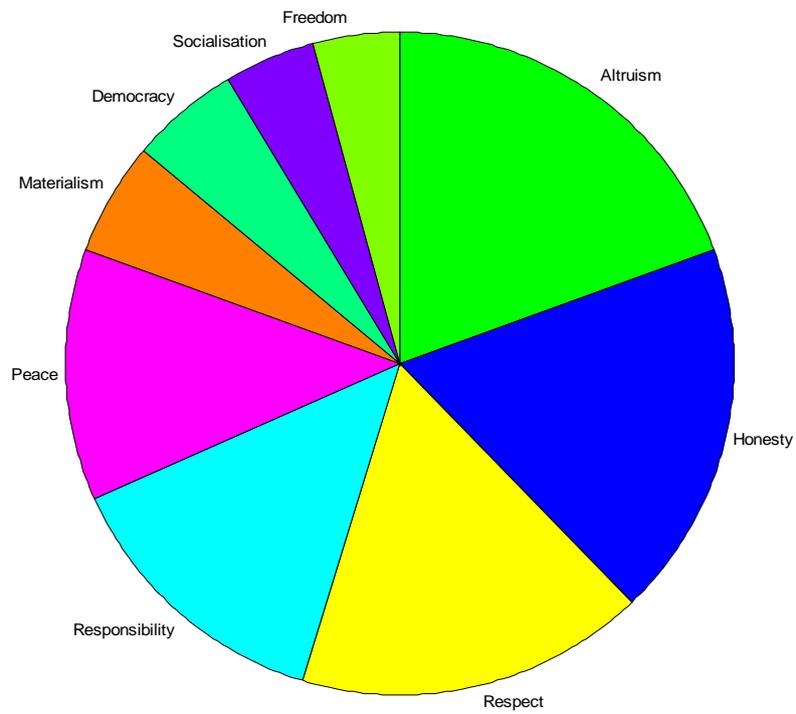

DIAGRAM 2: RANKORDER OF VALUES

According to the data obtained (see Figure 1), a clear pattern emerged. Values regarding family (communalism), honesty, social justice and peace were identified as important. At the same time dishonesty and self-interest were rejected. Communalism (altruism), honesty, respect, accountability and peace were also ranked high as values. This must be regarded as preliminary.

MORAL DILEMMAS

The main focus of the research is on the moral reasoning of students. This is contained in Section B of the questionnaire. Students were given five moral dilemmas in narrative form followed by a number of open ended questions. Only one of these dilemmas will be discussed in this paper.

A similar approach to that of Blatt and Kohlberg (1975) served as the basis for these moral dilemma discussions. The Blatt-Kohlberg method of inducing cognitive conflict uses Piaget's equilibration model as a basis, but could also be aligned with the idea of *flow* as discussed in Satir's Growth model and Csikszentmihaly's model of optimal experience (see Hale-Haniff and Pasztor, 1999). The basic argument is that a person takes one view, becomes confused by discrepant information, and then resolves the confusion by forming a more advanced and comprehensive position. Asking thoughtful questions plays an important role in inducing students' higher-level cognitive processes, such as self-reflection, revision, social negotiation, and conceptual change of misconceptions, all of which are integral to critical thinking and moral reasoning.

Before presenting the moral dilemma and the emerging pattern of responses, it is important to make a few observations regarding the importance of communalism in African culture (see Nieuwenhuis & Goolam, 2009) as a possible lens through which the moral dilemma could be analysed.

Communalism could be linked to the African idea of humanism or *ubuntu* and its essence is to ensure the welfare and interests of each individual member of society. *Ubuntu* has been translated to mean a feeling of common humanity, a spirit of humaneness, social justice and fairness. It refers to the art of being a human-being and includes a number of virtues such as tolerance, compassion and forgiveness. It emphasizes the value of human dignity and expresses the idea that a person's life is meaningful only if he/she lives with other people, nature, the divine spirits and the ancestors. *Ubuntu* advances the idea of individual human rights to include the concepts of community/communalism and the co-existence of rights and duties. Ubuntu should in addition, be understood in terms of African ontology. The hierarchical nature of African ontology places the

Supreme Being at the apex and the world of natural objects and phenomena at the bottom. African ontology is essentially spiritualistic, and in this regard ancestors and their influence over and connectedness to the living is accepted (Mazrui, 1986). Religion permeates all areas of life and it is not possible to isolate it. Morality is inextricably linked with religion, but the main determining force in morality is harmony. At a psychological level this finds expression in a sense of a "reciprocal we-ness" and emotional care for other and at a volitional level through and expression of helping others (Metz, 2008). The essential rationale of communalism is that it indicates the value of collective action, mutual aid and interdependence as necessary conditions for the successful achievement of even the most difficult undertakings. Communalism puts forward the idea that the good of all determines the good of each or that the welfare of each is dependent on the welfare of all.

The moral dilemma presented to participants and which forms the basis of the further discussion and analysis was as follow:

> *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.*

The moral dilemma confronted students with a situation where they had to decide on three moral issues:

- 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.

Eight open ended questions were posed to explore the three dimensions listed. From the responses, it was clear that students saw the scenario as a moral dilemma. The majority of responses (39/51) gave strong indications of communalist thinking. Even in cases where they felt

that the principal had no right to use the money, their sense of communalism was aroused. Typical responses include: "*Ubuntu must take its part*", school children had to "*sympathize with their principal and school mate,*" they had to "*…go to the funeral and show care and value for human life,*" and "*the important thing is to attend funeral,*" and "*I will remind learners of things that we do not have control over them.*"

Many felt that the funeral was a deserving cause and that even the unilateral decision of the principal to use the money for the funeral could be excused. Participants, for example, said: "*The principal has no right, only the situation made him do that,*" and "*[the] money is used for a good course and that they can raise another money, but the dead body cannot be kept for some more days;*" "*the life of a person is more important than personal or social things,*" "*what matters now is the fact that, since there will be a funeral of one of the pupils, the money for the funeral is available,*" and "*[they can] postpone the trip and donate their money for the funeral. Because it is a good thing to do,*"

It is, of course, possible that urbanised people may have lost their traditional values and beliefs and through their exposure to Western cultural influences have adopted a more individualistic or self-centred stance. If the latter is the case, then it was expected that participants would see the actions of the principal sketched in the scenario as wrong and unjust. Examples of self-centred thinking were found on 25 occasions in the responses of participants. In essence the argument was that "*The money was not for the funeral,*" "*[that] the school is not a burial society and the money was collected for the trip,*" that "*it is not their responsibility to bury that learner,*" and that "*the learners worked very hard to collect the money for that particular purpose (trip).*"

From the responses received, it became evident that the use of the money for the funeral was not seen as such a moral dilemma, but what did generate a lot of attention was that the principal used the money without consulting the grade 10 learners. This action of the principal challenged their sense of justice and democracy. Firstly, they viewed the money as belonging to the learners and secondly that the learners must have a voice and a choice in the matter. Participants said: "*…he should have asked the grade 10's opinion first before he made the final decision;*" and "*the principal have no right but need to explain situation and negotiate with learners and allow learners to take decision;*" while other participants explained: "*There must be a mutual understanding and equal sharing of ideas*" and "*the learners should make their choice about their money.*"

15

The fact that the principal used a money without consulting with the learners was seen as an act of disrespect. Ons participant explained: "*He doesn't have the right to use it without the permission of the learners. He shows that he doesn't respect them*" and that "*...their effort and commitment should be respected too.*" *Respect* emerged strongly as a common theme. Participants felt that the principal had to keep his promise since being true to your promise ensures that people will respect you. One participant claimed that: "*They* [the children] *will recognise that their rights are being respected and behave well,*" while another said that "*...[w]hen learners see that the principal respects them they will in return respect him.*" Linked with the theme of respect is *trust* and *fidelity*. Trust and fidelity was closely associated with the importance of keeping a promise. This is illustrated by the following statements of participants:

- "*A promise kept building a trust amongst people therefore important to share the same feeling*"

- "*Good relationship takes time to rebuild when it is broken*"

- "*The learners should trust the principal and respect his saying*"

- "*That the learners trust him and have faith in him and that he/she should treat them well and respect them.*"

- "*A promise is an obligation*".

- "*As a man in authority you cannot go back on your word due to unforeseen circumstances.*"

- "*It makes you to walk your talk and makes you trustworthy*"

The high premium attached to fidelity and the importance of keeping a promise, corresponds with the importance attached to honesty as a value (see Figure 1 and Diagram 2) and affirms the consistency of the response pattern in the respondent group.

CONCLUSION

South Africa is now in its second decade of democracy. For the generation now entering high schools, *apartheid* and the liberation struggle is supposed to be a history lesson, but what they see around them is a not yet transformed society. They see adults caught in a cultural discontinuity of not being able to fully identify with traditional culture anymore and not fully embracing a type of modernist or universalistic culture – in the words of the Afrikaans poet, WEG Louw, *a halfway up the hill stand*. This tendency is corroborated in the moral dilemma discussed. The traditional way expects them to honour and respect the dead and to act in a way that will harmonise the group

and ensure communalism. At the same time they want to embrace the more self-centred and individualistic stance of having a fun day. In arguing through the moral dilemma, we see many of the participants move between these two choices.

The Blatt-Kohlberg (1975) idea of inducing cognitive conflict or disturbing the flow (Hale-Haniff and Pasztor, 1999) was created through the moral dilemma posed. In arguing through the dilemma, it would appear as if Csikszentmihaly notion of the relationship between values, intention, attention, and emotion could serve as a basis for interpretation of the reasoning. If we accept that v**alues** are the major arbiter of choice, then it is insightful to note the dominance attached to trust, respect and honesty when the participants were considering the scenario sketched and how feelings of altruism (communalism) permeated their reasoning. It would thus appear the the theoretical framework developed for the study could be used to further explore and analyse the data obtained in the study.

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