

# Personal Values in Learning Approaches

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Personal values play a significant role when adopting learning approaches by individuals during their studies. Particularly in higher education, these values significantly influence the character that individuals play within their learning community and ultimately influence their academic achievements. The purpose of this paper is to investigate personal values in their choice of learning approaches and, subsequently, how it impacts one's academic achievements.

Keywords: personal values ; learning approaches ; student behaviours ; attitudes

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## 1. Introduction

As a consequence of the constant transformation of society in terms of culture, economics and politics, value and value systems have been unusually changed and distorted. In favour of the same idea, Daniela et al. <sup>[1]</sup> justify this by arguing, "with modernity it is normal that personal value systems support changes to harmonize itself to current requirements". Initially, some of the personal values may be determined by birth and later greatly influenced and molded by education, experiences, society, culture and many other factors. According to Matthews et al. <sup>[2]</sup>, an alteration in lifestyle, cultural environment and economic circumstances, individually or a combination of these factors, can cause values to change. Personal value systems can be viewed as a relatively permanent framework that exists within an individual which decides what is good or bad for himself or herself and his or her companions. In addition, it shapes and influences the general nature of an individual's behaviour. Researchers have found that personal values developed early in life may be resistant to change and may be derived from those of particular groups or systems, such as culture, religion and political party. However, personal values are not universal. Genetically inherited features and external factors including education may determine one's personal values. Essentially, the antecedents of values are culturally embedded in society and its institutions <sup>[2]</sup> and are socially determined <sup>[1]</sup>. Although a personal value is an internal phenomenon, the motivating force to adopt the value is seen as emanating from a diverse range of external sources <sup>[3]</sup>. As values directly influence one's entire lifestyle, a discussion of values and value systems, their place within changing socioeconomic contexts and how they affect individuals and society has universal relevance.

The value systems of a society always determine human activity in social life, education and professional life. Values are seen as a key component of organisational culture and are repeatedly defined as the principles accountable for the successful management of the organization <sup>[4]</sup>. Arambewela and Hall <sup>[5]</sup> support the same issue, stating <sup>[6]</sup>: personal values have long been considered an important variable in understanding consumer behaviour and decision making. As a result, the interest in knowing the drivers behind consumer attitudes and behaviour has encouraged marketing researchers to investigate human values <sup>[7]</sup> (Anana and Nique, 2014). Hence, many researchers have emphasised the need and advantage of studying the impact of personal values on the sustainable existence of an organisation.

Investigating the influence of values on assessments made by people on their career choices is another trending research area. In general, professions such as teaching, medicine and nursing are strongly attached and influenced by values. The results of a research study by Anana and Nique <sup>[7]</sup> has concluded that students choosing some careers are more typical, based on their values than others, and that some values are more typical of some careers than others. Thus, personal values have been taken as the main focus in the research in a variety of fields and academic disciplines (<sup>[2]</sup> cites Feather, 1975). In this regard, the need for identifying different scopes of human values is a timely requirement. Since professional values are also shaped and influenced by personal values, indeed a discussion on personal values can be regarded as an issue that unchanged over time.

The values occupy a pre-eminent position on the agenda of researchers in education and many other domains as they impact behaviour, attitudes, expectations and all the other personal characteristics and constructs. Hence, this paper seeks to contribute by reviewing the available literature on the role of personal values concerning learning approaches and student achievements. The review centres on the following given objectives. To investigate the role of students'

personal values in their choice of learning approaches; To investigate the impact of personal values on one's academic achievement; To investigate the importance of developing individual's personal values as a part of their academic life; To investigate how one's personal values shape the learning community around that person and vice versa.

## 2. Methodological Design

This research is based on a systematic review of the literature with a narrative summary that exclusively depended on online databases. The predetermined selection criteria, which are given in **Table 1**, were applied during the database search screening of the text titles, abstracts and whole texts.

**Table 1.** Inclusion and exclusion criteria.

| Type of Criterion    | Criteria            | Inclusion | Exclusion |
|----------------------|---------------------|-----------|-----------|
| Type of publication  | Journal articles    | *         |           |
|                      | Conference papers   | *         |           |
|                      | Reports             | *         |           |
|                      | Dissertations       |           | *         |
|                      | Books               |           | *         |
| Access               | Online              | *         |           |
|                      | Paper               |           | *         |
| Publication period   | 2000–2020           | *         |           |
| Place of publication | World wide          | *         |           |
| Types of study       | Empirical studies   | *         |           |
|                      | Theoretical studies | *         |           |
| Research methods     | Quantitative        | *         |           |
|                      | Qualitative         | *         |           |
|                      | Mixed               | *         |           |

Following the above-mentioned criteria, full texts that were reported within 20 years were purposely selected due to the availability of a limited number of accessible resources to retrieve the literature. In relation to the year of publication, the search action was conducted with the use of online databases. As the main sources of data, Google Scholar, JSTOR and Elsevier were used. The ResearchGate database was also used for the search of resources.

The comprehensive search resources were completed based on a wide range of key terms and phrases including “values”, “personal values”, “learning approaches”, “learning communities” and “learning approaches—academic achievement and value education”. However, similar terms that are often used interchangeably in the literature were also used. In particular, with regards to the concepts of personal values and value education, they have also been searched through the terms “humanistic values”, “soft skills”, “social skills” and “moral education”.

As the search action resulted in a limited number of appropriate and accessible sources, the reference section of the found texts were studied in the search for more relevant texts. After the exclusion of sources that did not satisfy the criteria in **Table 1**, 38 texts were selected for analysis. The content of the selected resources was studied and analysed in detail. Then, the required data were organized under four main themes following the study objectives.

## 3. Results

The most frequently referred research of Matthews <sup>[2]</sup> on sojourner students in Australia has found interesting relationships between values and learning approaches. From the three pairs of canonical variables that emerged out of the analysis the first pair of variables illustrated that students with clearly defined value structure had equally well-defined learning motivations and strategies. The second pair of variables showed that students who had low integrity values

showed a higher preference for surface or superficial learning. In contrast, the third pair of variables indicated that students who had a lesser emphasis on values associated with the Confucian ethos showed a strong preference for the deep strategy [2].

Accordingly, the reported literature provides insights that the personal values and learning approaches are two components that occur at the same time with parallel construction. In addition, it establishes the relationship regarding how personal values are linked with different learning approaches and how these interrelationships change over time.

There has been little research to study the effect of a school's disciplinary climate on improving students' learning and academic achievement. However, the available past and present research support the view that student learning is immediately affected by the nature of the school's disciplinary climate [3] as it controls students' conduct by restricting the engagement in misbehaviour during school time and, thus, enhance student learning.

As a whole, it proves that value education is an essential component in the general teaching-learning procedure since it highly encourages positive personal quality development and value gain which in turn benefit the whole community, society and the world.

## **4. Recommendations**

According to the analyses presented in this article, it is implied that the topic of personal values is very much important in the field of education to identify students' behaviours, life goals and expectations, learning styles and how these change over time. Furthermore, increased attention is given to value education since values are considered as essential social or soft skills that one must acquire and practice in the 21st century world. Therefore, education, regardless of the level of junior, secondary, tertiary or professional, should aim at making human life better not only through professional or economic enhancement but also through social, moral and spiritual strengthening. At present, schools and other educational providers have adopted several co-curricular programmes that uplift values in students, such as peer support systems, community service projects and student action teams. These interventions provide students with opportunities to develop a sense of responsibility, empathy, unity, appreciation of others and their views, lifestyles and cultures and work with others to resolve the problems. These programmes have been recorded with notable achievements. This is a common feature of almost all the educational contexts that ensure values are incorporated into teaching programmes across the key learning areas to develop students' civic and social skills. Thus, there is a need for a realistic and balanced curriculum in which the programs that inspire the value acquisition and internalisation of socially beneficial skills and behaviours are emphasized. In addition, the integration of such features into the disciplines in the curriculum is also important. Along with that, research studies to evaluate the strengths and weaknesses and the positive and negative aspects of such programmes need to be continued. According to the general and most practiced procedure, during or at the end of the academic experience, cognitive behaviours are always tested, but testing effective behaviours is always neglected. Hence, it is a noteworthy point to mention the importance of assessing processes for the progress of value development in students.

Finally, the current study based on the available literature has shown that students probably tend to adjust their approaches to a specific learning strategy due to several factors: learning environment, subject area, expectations, curriculum, teacher and teaching style, origin and cultural context, gender, religion, etc. Furthermore, there is no significant pattern of selecting learning approaches such as deep, surface or achieving, etc., at different levels of the context of learning. Therefore, deep study into how learning approaches are changed, on what basis and what the most influential motives for such alterations are will be beneficial to understanding students' learning behaviours. Hence, research studies further investigating such dimensions would probably useful and needed at present and in future.

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