The influence of role-players on the character-development and character-building of South African college students

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The present world is in a moral crisis and it seems as though educational institutions experience both challenges and enormous behavioural problems. Statistics prove that there is a drastic decline in morals, values, standards, ethics, character and behaviour and schools, where colleges and even universities seem to indulge in crisis after crisis. It is perceived that behavioural problems such as substance and drug abuse, violence, theft, vandalism, bullying, aggression, immorality, examination fraud, amongst others, are increasing among students. The goal of this article is to determine how college students' lives are influenced by involved role-players in character-development and in character-building. Value and character education provides the building blocks for the inherent preservation of a healthy society. It is the art of life that keeps the environment friendly, free and safe, allowing earth's inhabitants to work, live and play together in peace. The influence of relevant role-players and institutions with regard to values and character-developmentare likely to be able to ensure the provision of a successful life and future for South African college students. The conclusions arrived at in this research indicate parents, lecturers and other specific individuals to be important role-players when it comes to character-development and character-building.

Keywords: character-building; character-development; college students; influence; institutions; involved role-players; South African

Introduction

The values debate has a long history, which seems to arise whenever educationists and decision-makers struggle with dilemmas associated with human rights violations, moral decay in society, and a lack of discipline in schools (Nieuwenhuis, Beckmann & Prinsloo, 2007; Van der Merwe, 2011; Van der Walt, JL 2010). Common questions that underscore the complexity of this longstanding debate still arise within the field, namely: what values, whose values, which values, and who determines these values? (Notman, 2012). These perennial questions continue to confront us (cf. Notman, 2012; Rens, 2005; Tyree, Vance & Mcjunkin, 1997). People differ continuously regarding which values are essential for them, and values education and character education should, therefore, be emphasised. Programmes were even developed worldwide for schools (also colleges), because of the concern of peoples' values (Lickona, 1991; Rens, 2005). Khanam's (2008) studies pointed out years ago that education is a moral enterprise, where the character-building of students is the pivotal goal of education all over the world. Character education is, however, as popular as it is controversial (Lapsley & Narvaez, 2006).

Moral education has an uneven history, despite efforts aimed at its improvement (Carr, 2010). Irrespective of this uneven history and the above-mentioned questions about whose and which values ought to guide it, human ethics and values are still a way of revealing the inner or genuine life of a person (cf. Khanam, 2008). Education with regards to values is the most important element of moral education (Sayin, 2014). Character-building and learning of ethical and moral values have been regarded as the first and foremost goal of education, and many educationists have emphasised it (Khanam, 2008). The idea of education involving values and character has elicited a great deal of interest in recent years and countries such as the United Kingdom, the United States of America (USA), New Zealand, the Netherlands and Australia have held conferences on values education in the shape of character-building programmes with well-defined policies (Arthur, 2011). Values and education have been inseparable since ancient times, because the concept education has been defined to be much more than the mere transferring of knowledge (Rens, 2005). However, most of the countries have therefore decided to rather implement character-building programmes that promote so-called universal values (De Waal, Mawdsley & Cumming, 2010). Certain researchers, authors and scientists (Berkowitz, 2011; Notman, 2012; Rens, 2005) have expressed the opinion that the youth of today do not have the ability to make good value judgments, and that they ought therefore to receive instructions and mentorship in these areas. However, values are unique to mankind, and it is only human beings that partake in meaning ascribed to objects, the self, others, the Creator and the world, as well as ideas, feelings and thoughts. Therefore mankind is essentially a creature of values (Nieuwenhuis et al., 2007; Tirri, 2011; Van der Walt, JL 2010).

Defining Key Terms
Values and values education
The English language word 'value' comes from the Latin word *valere* and shares this root with the French word *valior*, meaning "that which is truly valuable, worthy to be striven after, that makes life worth living" (De Klerk,

2004; Jenney, 2010). Values and education have been inseparable since ancient times, and are inseparably bound to one another, and the school (or college) as an educational institution has the task of providing values education (Rens, 2005). Thus, education cannot be seen separately from values.

Character

The definition of character has been the focus of philosophical discourses for milennia, where one question of ethics has been: who is the good person? (Lepholletse, 2008). This kind of question draws the attention to the ethics of being, to those elements in the moral life that reside within a person (Woodbridge, 1990). That is why the term character is derived from a Greek word that means to mark, for example, in the case of an engraving (cf. Lapsley & Narvaez, 2006), and it is described as the moral and mental qualities distinctive to the individual (Pearsall, 1998).

Character development

Defining character seems to be no straightforward matter, however, character-development is none-theless considered a traditional goal of formal education. Character development cannot be acc-omplished without developing students' capacity to think critically and thoughtfully (Helterbran & Strahler, 2013).

Character-building

Character-building involves the development of habits and practices that are mostly needed to "live" and function well in a world of difference and it promotes the development of student charac-ter (Berkowitz, 2011; Helterbran & Strahler, 2013). Character-building and character education have the same meaning (cf. Freeks, 2007), that is, make a student a better member of society by instilling values, and by way of mentoring (Lickona, 1996; Rens, 2005).

Role-players

The relevant role-players in character-development and character-building (education) with regard to students include parents, brothers, sisters, lecturers, teachers, friends, pastors, institutions and God (Freeks, 2007).

Institutions

Institutions can include diverse areas of social activity, from the family, to basic aspects of politi-cal life, and are one of the central concerns of the functionalist tradition (Calhoun, 2002). The influ-ence of institutions in terms of character-development and character-building with students is derived from the home, the church, primary school, high school and college (cf. Freeks, 2007).

College students

College students are those registered and enrolled persons, who study and participate at the different colleges in South Africa, in terms of fields of study and programmes, for example Business Studies and Engineering Studies (Freeks, 2007).

Literature Survey

Theories about values, education and character education as well as programmes already develop-ed in countries abroad have been studied by the researcher (cf. Freeks, 2007). Values education and character education are forms of education that aim to surface the humanitarian and universal values and human behaviour (Sayin, 2014). The researcher is therefore in line with Lapsley and Narvaez (2006), who state that character education must be compatible with our best insights about psycho-logical functioning, teaching and learning. Character education has been cited by many scholars as an efficient and effective tool for teaching and learning, but academic achievement means nothing if character education is not integrated with it (Lickona, 1991).

Why study social issues in these studies? First of all it is to raise students' awareness of main issues in their society; secondly to provide students with a means to analyse and evaluate problems in their lives; thirdly to assist students to understand and appreciate the world around them, and fourthly to create in students a deep and abiding passion for how they live their lives (Totten, 1992). Students expect teachers (lecturers and other relevant role-players) to engage in character development and values education, because they believe that the teacher (lecturer and other relevant role-players) can make a difference to their personal moral development. Students see them as their mentors and role models (Arthur, 2011). The moral forma-tion of children is one important goal of socialisa-tion (Lapsley & Narvaez, 2006). It is therefore important that moral formation is studied, because of its implication on society and relevance to social change (cf. Galloway, 2007).

The results already achieved with such programmes have been investigated. The erstwhile model of Hattingh (1991), with her classification of values, is called the twenty life values, as opposed to those of Joubert (1986), who catalogue seven values, which the author characterised as the values guiding mankind. According to Hattingh (1991), education is a comprehensive process, designed to embrace and draw together all twenty life values. Hattingh (1991) also argues that the values of man are the point of departure for character-development and character-building. Heenan (2009) disagrees, writing of the eight cornerstone values, which include two objectives, namely to build character, and to develop the ability to

distinguish between what is right and what is wrong, what is good and what is bad, and what is appropriate and inappropriate. In his early writings on values and education, Heenan (2009) wrote that education had two main important aims: firstly, to help students to master the skills of literacy and numeral arts; and secondly, to build good character. Consequently, it is not surprising that Heenan (2009:3) made the following statement some years ago: "while we New Zealanders can be justly proud of many of our achievements, the reality is that over recent decades, we have not been teaching and replenishing those attributes of character that are essential for social cohesion, the maintenance of a civil society and the preservation of a liberal dem-ocracy." Notably, with regards to New Zealand's curriculum, irrespective of the lack of research into the nature and effect of values, values are one of the three pillars of the reformed New Zealand Curriculum. Values play a key role at the level of school governance as well as the school's edu-cational philosophy and foundation for the school charter (Notman, 2012). Furthermore, there is an intensive report on how New Zealand's changing social values are impacting student behaviour, and how schools can meet the new challenges contributing toward the character-building of students (Galloway, 2007).

Lickona and Davidson (2005) note character strengths as the combination of eight promising practices. In this programme, the focus is on ethical behaviour, and it is thought that character education will promote ethical behaviour among students, such as respect and obedience. There were numerous attempts in the past to define character more precisely. One's character is an indelible mark, because it points to something deeply rooted in the personality, which integrates behaviour, attitudes and values (Lapsley & Narvaez, 2006). However, character matters immensely for Lickona (2013) and in one of his latest writings and contributions, he aimed to help children develop good judgment, integrity and essential virtues, and he offered suggestions in the form of 12 points of gratitude towards parents for nurturing gratefulness in children. Values, morals and education are often explained by means of the theory of Kohlberg's (1978) stages model, one of the significant theories on moral reasoning in history (cf. Rens, 2005). Kohlberg (1978) believes that moral development occurs through social interaction, and he demonstrates that people progress in their moral reasoning through a series of stages. In short, his six stages of moral development are: (a) obedience and punishment orientation; (b) individualism and exchange orientation; (c) interpersonal relation-ships orientation; (d) law and order orientation; (e) social contract orientation; and (f) universal princi-ples orientation (Ellison, 2011; cf. also Rens, 2005). Criticism against Kohlberg's (1978) theory

is the fact that he presents a hierarchical description of moral reasoning, instead of a model for moral education and development. Even Lickona (1991) argues the focus to be on reasoning skills, rather than moral content. The most important criticism of Rens (2005) against Kohlberg's moral theory comes from a Christian perspective. Kohlberg (1978) argues that the educator should be a neutral facilitator, who assists learners to reflect on moral dilemmas in an ever-developing way. According to Rens (2005), a Christian educator (or relevant role-player) cannot educate neutrally, because the learner is a child of God who, because of the fall of man, leans towards wrong-doing. The researcher, in agreement with Rens (2005), criticises the aspect of neutrality because relevant role-players, as indicated by Kohlberg, have to play an involved and interactive role in the character-development and character-building of students.

Studies in our own country that have dealt with similar aspects of values, character, education, character education and values education were also studied. These include, among others, Abdool (2005), dealing with the value-orientation of learn-ers in secondary schools. His didactic guidelines could be formulated for values education in South African schools. Abdool (2005) also found that Heenan's (2009) cornerstone values could quite easily be adapted for the South African context. Challens (2008) deals with guidelines to implement a character-education programme in secondary schools. In his studies, Challens (2008) mentions that character education is of cardinal importance for instruction and education, because it offers a possible solution where it guides learners to realise the difference between right and wrong, which is in correlation with Heenan's (2009) eight cornerstone values; as well as to say "no" to aspects such as drugs, alcohol, sex, gangs and other social prob-lems, as mentioned in the problem statement. Rens (2005) proposes guidelines for value education in South African schools, because of the worldwide cry from societies to bring a stop to the decline in values. Rens (2005) indicates that character-development and character-building programmes should be the ideal solution to stop the decline in values. The focus should be on character-building programmes that concentrate mainly on values such as honesty and respect. These specific arguments are in consonance with the title of this article. Llale (2003) proposes a model for teaching values to secondary school learners and teachers regarding traffic safety education. Although Llale (2003) worked on the traffic safety education, her study indicates that values play a positive role in decisions one has to make for one's own life. Lepholletse (2008) discussed teacher's influence on the value-orientation of learners in secondary schools. To equip adolescent learners with sufficient knowledge, appropriate skills and

positive values for them to achieve good involvement, especially in their different societies, Lepholletse (2008) argues that you have to focus on value and character. There is, however, a value dilemma in South Africa and in the rest of the world, which is obvious in the prioritising of values by certain groups and different people. Freeks (2007) deals with a character-building programme for further education and training at colleges. His study indicates that character education is one of the building blocks for the preservation of a healthy society, and could probably help, in the values it promotes, to remove evil from society and its institutions. Therefore, character education must be taught in our educational institutions, where we are responsible to teach the youth and young adults to be good citizens (Ellison, 2011).

Problem Statement

The main aim of the study is to determine how college students' lives are influenced by involved role-players in character-development and character-building.

The most important problems facing young people across the world today include especially violence, gang-rape, parties where drugs and promiscuous sex are the order of the day, social problems and a lack of respect for each other and for the world around them (Engelbrecht, 2001; Georgiades, Boyle & Fife, 2013; Staff Reporter, 2014; Van der Merwe, 2011). Hence, it is important to determine how the lives of students might be influenced by these problems. On the aspect of discipline, Ellison (2011) raised a critical point noting that researchers have found a disproportionate minority representation among students on the receiving end of corrective disciplinary practices. For more than 20 years, school discipline has been characterised as being a major concern of the general public, especially in America (Ellison, 2011). Although children go through the same stages of development, Ellison (2011) also indicated that children's development may stop as determined by their moral environment. It is mainly because of these destructive social problems that parents, sociologists, political scientists and worried citizens have begun to join forces in many countries to try to reverse a decay in values (Lovat, Clement, Dally & Toomey, 2011; Nieuwenhuis et al., 2007). Scientists have been interested in understanding moral behaviour for decades (Khanam, 2008). In America, it is fundamental to raise children of strong moral character, especially as this applies to character-development and character-building (cf. Lapsley & Narvaez, 2006). In New Zealand, parents are unable to provide a home environment where children are safe, nurtured and morally guided. Instead, students from troubled and dysfunctional homes are bringing practised patterns of anti-social behaviour into the classrooms and the playground (Galloway, 2007).

The family has to play an appreciably larger role in character education, and should act as moral mentors in order to have an influence on character-development and character-building. The more children grow up in a family with strong values, the less their involvement will be in violence and dangerous behaviour, for example bullying (Ayeni-biowo & Akinbode, 2011; Cunniff & Mostert, 2012; De Wet, C 2014; De Wet, NC 2010). The reason why most of these learners suffer at institutions such as schools, colleges and universities, is because of problems such as lying, cheating, bullying, and others mentioned before. These problems have prompted institutions to consider the teaching of good character (Helterbran & Strahler, 2013). However, there are still gaps in educational knowledge about values development, especially in New Zealand schools, when it comes to the effect on student learning (Notman, 2012). The reason for the emphasis on New Zealand and the comparison between the two countries is that values-education and character-building and development are a core part of New Zealand's curriculum in recent years, which is not the case in South Africa. On the other hand, the situation in New Zealand is, in some ways, like the situation in South Africa i.e. an increasing number of troubled and dysfunctional homes, anti-social behavior in classrooms and playgrounds, continual disobedience and violence among students, etc. is the order of the day. Studies done in New Zealand are relevant to South Africa, and research in character-development and character-building has been particularly insightful and worth reviewing here. Teaching and developing good character in children has long been a goal of parents, teachers, relevant role-players and society, with the hope that values would carry on into adulthood (Helterbran & Strahler, 2013). In Freeks' (2007) study it is clearly indicated that the school, next to the parental home ought to play a major role in character education and values education. Most parents have ambitions for their children, including the development of important moral dispositions (Lapsley & Narvaez, 2006). Character and values education are needed to address the gap and deficiencies in terms of inadequate values and norms in schools (Lessing & De Witt, 2011). According to Van der Merwe (2011), there is a daily increase in violent behaviour among learners. In an erstwhile report in *Rapport* (Pretorius, 2006), in the supplement *Perspektief*, a worrying story was published, and the question was pertinently asked "where have the parents gone?", where the violence among children at school has become a particular problem prompting this same question. According to this report (cf. also Berkowitz, 2011; Lapsley &

Narvaez, 2006; Lepholletse, 2008; Rens, 2005), the primary role of parents is to help their children develop self-respect. For example, if a child has self-respect, he/she will express it at school through his/her behaviour and will have respect for other people's time, relationships livelihood and property. If children go to school with a strong sense of self-respect, the teacher does not need to use time to teach them manners. If a child has a sense of self-respect, he will not "steal" the school's time by disrupting the class, fighting with his friends, swearing and doing other improper things (Berkowitz, 2011; Pretorius, 2006). Disruptive behaviour usually interferes with the instructional process by negatively impacting class-room instruction. This behaviour moreover inter-feres with the learner's own learning or the educa-tion process of others (Ellison, 2011).

An organisation named *Brahma Kumaris* was the seed for Living Values Education and began offering a program for educators created by educators worldwide to help teachers with values education of learners. These programmes, now offered by the Association of Living Values Education International, enable learners, under the guidance of a trained person/teacher, to investigate 12 universal values and to develop and influence learners' character-development and character-building (Living Values, 2005). These 'living values'-programmes are at present being implemented in 67 countries around the world (Living Values, 2005). The latest development was a strategy to teach character through the use of Socratic seminaring, which is a form of carefully planned discussions that offer teachers and relevant role-players the opportunity to focus on those areas of character education deemed critical to personal and even societal morality. The initial idea of the strategy was to teach character to promote global citizenship (Helterbran & Strahler, 2013).

In the USA, Lickona, Schaps and Lewis (2003) proposed 11 basic principles of effective character education some time ago, to guide schools as they plan their character education. These principles include issues such as core ethical values, developing good character, developing the school as a caring community and the relationship between character education and the academic curriculum and evaluation. Many character-building programmes in the USA have since been built on this foundation to have an influence over the character-development and character-building of learners. Many such character-building pro-grammes have already been implemented at schools, where positive results have been achieved (De Waal et al., 2010, Lickona & Davidson, 2005; Proctor, Tsukayama, Wood, Maltby, Eades & Linley, 2011). Lickona's (2013) latest contribution in the field of character education was his 12 points of gratitude, where he offers suggestions for parents on nurturing gratitude in children. He also stated that having a family discussion on gratitude will instil its definition in children.

In New Zealand, an urgent request was made to implement values in the curriculum because of the destructive social problems and behaviour of learners (Notman, 2012). The main purpose was to influence their lives with regard to character-development and character-building.

If societies in different countries around the world are experiencing the many problems they do as a result of the decay of values (Lovat et al., 2011; Rens, 2005), one could not escape asking the following question: 'what is the situation in South Africa?'

In South Africa, newspapers such as the *Beeld*, *Star*, *Herald* and others, are filled on a daily basis with reports about fraud and murder (Boqo, 2014a; Essop, 2013; Nel, 2014; Van der Merwe, 2014), violence (Boqo, 2014b; Carstens & Zwecker, 2013; Joubert, 2014), theft (Boqo, 2014b), sex (Staff Reporter, 2014), divorces and drug smuggling (Otto, 2013), Satanism (Mestry, 2008; Olifant, 2014) etc. Schools, colleges and other institutions have serious problems when it comes to the behaviour of students and the values that they espouse (Challens, 2008; Freeks, 2007; Freeks & Lotter, 2011; Lessing & De Witt, 2011). However, these schools can have a remarkable influence on students' lives with regard to character-development and character-building.

Crime, violence and the decay of values are serious problems in South African schools and have enormous implications for the *new* democratic South Africa (Jansen, 2001; Van der Merwe, 2011). Discipline is a serious problem in schools, and the instilling and developing of this value does not seem to receive priority, although we know that this important institution can have a significant influence in the lives of learners (Rens, 2005). Nieuwenhuis et al. (2007) are convinced that values education should be implemented at school level and in tertiary education institutions. South Africa's situation is made more difficult, among others, through the variety of population groups and concomitant cultural differences, which play an important role in the value systems established among people. Even in a post-apartheid era, where nation-building and democracy are lofty objectives, ethical and moral values ought to be firmly established (Van der Walt, BJ 2010). The question that now arises as to what is being done in South Africa with regard to this problem.

The present government, that came into power in 1994, started a value education process in schools as from 1999 (Dhai, 2008; Mangcu, 1999; Van der Merwe, 2011), but it is disappointing to note that instead of an explicit focus on character education, where the process is largely focused on nation building, democracy and human rights, with

a purpose to overcome the inequalities and injustices of the apartheid system (Carl & De Klerk, 2001; Van der Walt, BJ 2010).

Social scientists and researchers agree that the inculcation of the above values in South Africa as a young democracy are important and urgent, and that value education and character-education programmes should be emphasised again (Freeks, 2007; Regan & Page, 2008). Values that promote moral behaviour, values about work ethics, and values aimed at realising people's full potential, must also receive urgent attention (Ferreira & Wilkinson, 2009; Lessing & De Witt, 2011).

Research Questions
A summary of the two questions investigated in this article can be stated as follows:
- What influence toward character-development and character-building can people and institutions have on the lives of students?
- What is the role of involved persons and/or factors in terms of character-development and character-building in the lives of students?

Purpose of the Research
The purpose of the investigation was to determine how college students' lives are influenced by relevant role-players' and institutions' contributing role in the context of character-development and character-building.

Research Objectives
Specific objectives of the study are:
- To determine the influence with regard to character-development and character-building that persons and institutions have on the lives of students; and
- To determine what the role is of involved persons and/or factors associated with character-development and character-building in the lives of students.

Research Methodology
In this article, the research design is embedded in a quantitative approach. According to De Vos (2005) (cf. also Freeks & Lotter, 2011) the use of quantitative approaches is effective in undertaking this type of research.

The empirical information was gathered by means of a questionnaire and the questionnaire had been used before, in a larger research project by the author (Freeks, 2007). A questionnaire was compiled (cf. Freeks, 2007) to determine the influence that certain role-players and institutions played in character-development and character-building in the context of students' lives. This questionnaire was mainly used as a sort of management instrument in the value orientation of students. The questions in the questionnaire are discussed separately. The age range of students was not a determinant factor, on account of the fact that students of any age could register at a Further Education and Training (FET) college. The

questionnaire was compiled as a means to obtain necessary and useful information from the students, and according to the author (see also Abdool, 2005; Challens, 2008; De Vos, 2005; Lepholletse, 2008; Llale, 2003; Rens, 2005) this method of investigation is an ideal way to measure students' value orientation, as well as to determine whether persons and institutions have an influence on their lives. This method is simple, practical and feasible. The questionnaire consisted of three sections. Section A dealt with demographic information, section B with general life values, and section C covered specific values and the lifestyles of the students. The demographic information included aspects such as the level, gender and mother tongue of the student. Religious, relational, moral, aesthetic, economic, and cultural values were included in the general life values (section B). Every life value in the questionnaire was described on the basis of indicators that corresponded to the determined value. The respondent was also required to indicate the importance of the value in his/her daily life (i.e. how important each of the following values are (A) for yourself (B) for the other students in the college?), where 1 = not important at all; 2 = not really important; 3 = of average importance; 4 = fairly important; 5 = of the utmost importance. The student was, in addition, required to share his/her opinion on how important he/she considered the value (i.e. to what extent do each of the following persons or institutions influence your life? (now and/or in the past)), where none = 1; little = 2; average = 3; large = 4; very large = 5; as well as to what extent the student, at the time of questioning, was the type of person he/she would like to be, where not at all = 1; a little = 2; in a way = 3; completely = 4. The specific values and lifestyle habits covered by the questionnaire included aspects such as smoking, alcohol use, drug use, sexual activities, Human Immunodeficiency Virus/Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (HIV/AIDS) etc. (i.e. how often do you smoke? 1 = not applicable; 2 = now and then; 3 = regularly, how often do you use alcoholic liquor? 1 = never; 2 = 1-2 times per month; 3 = 1-3 times per month; 4 = almost daily).

Rens, Rossouw, Rossouw and Vreken (2005) designed the questionnaire and the validity and reliability can therefore be determined by reference to the fact that it had previously been used to determine the value orientation of students at a particular university and learners from a specific high school. The questionnaire also clearly indicated that students' names would not appear anywhere on the document, and that all information supplied would be treated in the strictest confidence. All negative information about the college and the students or lecturers would also not be divulged outside the institution.

A pilot study was first conducted among 15 students to determine whether the information obtained would yield the desired results before the researcher distributed the questionnaires among the students, which it was found to do.

Population

The college the participants attended was established in terms of the new FET Act and declared as a FET College on 25 September 2001. The college is one of three public FET Colleges in the NorthWest Province. The college consists of five campuses, and provides education and training within the FET guidelines consisting of levels 2-4 programmes on the National Qualification Framework (NQF) as well as the South African Post Secondary Education (SAPSE) 190/191 (National Education) programmes.

The college offers courses and programmes in all the fields of FET, but the majority of courses fall in the fields of Business Studies and Engineering Studies. The best-known courses and programmes are in the fields of Business Studies, and these fields have the largest enrolments and are responsible for most of the income of the college. However, the field of Engineering Studies also generates sufficient funding (Vuselela FET College, 2005).

The population consisted of all the students of the three FET Colleges in the North West Province (see Table 1). The three colleges together have 11 campuses. College A has five campuses, College B has three campuses, and College C has four campuses. It was necessary, however, to draw a convenience sample where seven of the 11 campuses were chosen for the study. The reason for this were both practical and financial in nature, and also because travel between campuses was prohibitive.

From College A four campuses participated, and from College B, two campuses participated. From College C, one campus participated. The seven campuses (see Table 2) have a total of about 2,000 students, as the author determined telephonically from the campus managers. Only 840 students participated in the study, due to the absence of many students during the period of the study. The reachable population on the day that the study took place was therefore significantly smaller than the estimated 2,000 enrolled students at the relevant colleges.

Table 1 Number of participants per college

College	*N*	*%*
A	650	77.38
B	130	15.48
C	60	7.14
Total	840	100

From Table 1 it is clear that College A had the largest number of students in the study group – the reason for this is because four campuses participated in the questionnaire. At College B, two campuses participated, and at College C only one campus participated in the study.

Table 2 Number of participants per campus

Campus	Response to the questionnaires distributed	% of the population of the campus	% of the total population
1. Campus A1	400 of the 420	95	47.74
2. Campus A2	90 of the 400	23	10.71
3. Campus A3	123 of the 200	62	14.52
4. Campus A4	37 of the 75	49	4.40
5. Campus B1	84 of the 200	42	10.00
6. Campus B2	46 of the 250	18	5.48
7. Campus C	60 of the 400	15	7.14
Total	840 of the 1,945		

In Table 2 it is indicated that the researcher obtained a good response with the questionnaire study in A1, A2, A3 and A4. In the case of A1, a good response was probably obtained because the researcher had been a lecturer at the particular campus. The only two campuses where the researcher could not administer the questionnaires himself, as a result of problems with leave, were campus C and B2. On these two campuses, the response rate was very low.

Procedures

The following procedures were followed in this study:

- The researcher first of all directed letters to the Chief Executive Officers (CEOs) of the specific colleges with the request that the study could be undertaken at the particular campuses.
- Once permission was obtained from the CEOs of the different colleges, the researcher remained in contact with the campus managers.
- Appointments were made with the different campus managers to inform them about the nature of the study as well as the underlying objectives of the study.
- For two of the seven campuses, viz. Campus C and Campus B2, the researcher was obliged to send the questionnaires to be handed out by the lecturers to be completed. The researcher himself took the questionnaires to the remaining campuses on the given dates to have them filled in under his personal supervision.

Data Analysis

All the necessary information obtained through the questionnaires was processed by the Statistical Consultation Services of the North-West University (Potchefstroom Campus). The questionnaire had been compiled in both Afrikaans and English by the researcher, and had been language-edited by an expert language editor.

The following statistical techniques were used for the processing of the information gathered by way of the questionnaire.

The 20 life values (a section of the questionnaire, cf. Freeks, 2007) dealt specifically with values and life habits of students in order to closely scrutinise certain behavioural problems, and a comparison was done between the responses of students from different campuses; between men and women, between different language groups, in order to ascertain students' own views of their values, and the opinion of co-students' values. Descriptive statistics were used and questions were discussed separately.

The validity and reliability of the questionnaire emanate from the fact that it had already been used very successfully by previous researchers.

Ethical Aspects

During a meeting between the Managing Director of the relevant college, the chairman of their governing board, the researcher and a representative of the North West University (Potchefstroom Campus), a joint suggestion was made that a broader investigation should be established, in a scientific way, with cognisance of the nature and size of the above-mentioned type of problem experienced at the relevant further education and training college. The need for the development of a character-building programme for a tertiary institution such as the FET college, in question was strongly considered, and named as a possible solution. All of this led to the study.

The researcher directed letters to the CEOs and campus managers to obtain permission to run the investigation. Before the questionnaire was completed, they also completed a permission note, which made it clear that they were completing the questionnaire voluntarily, and that they were participating in a project aimed at promoting moral values. All information about the students was dealt with in terms of the necessary confidentiality and no individual was identified in the research report.

Results and Discussion

The importance of education is holistic in its focus point (Lovat et al., 2011) and both value and character education deal with the cognitive, social and also the emotional drives of any student as a whole person, including students abroad. Values, as mentioned earlier, are universal, and applicable to students in other countries and in South Africa as an emerging resource in relation to other countries.

In Table 3, attention is directed to the influence of character-development and character-building, emanating from the different persons and institutions in terms of students' lives. The influences are ranked in order to determine whose influence upon character-development and character-building was the greatest. The percentage indicated is an addition of the four aspects: large and very large, none, and little.

Table 3 The influence of role-players on the character-development and character-building of students

Persons	None %	Little %	Reasonably %	Large %	Very large %	Average weighting (out of 5)	Rank order
a. Father	22.34	7.66	12.86	14.55	42.60	3.47	4
b. Mother	8.01	2.54	6.48	13.34	69.63	4.34	1
c. Brothers/sisters	8.03	10.79	19.47	25.26	36.45	3.71	3
d. Friends (male/female)	9.50	17.91	34.06	22.52	16.01	3.18	6
e. Teachers	16.71	14.27	29.48	23.37	16.17	3.08	7
f. Lecturers	11.88	13.09	28.34	27.26	19.43	3.29	5
g. A particular person	4.81	3.94	10.28	17.72	63.24	4.31	2
Institutions:							
a. Parental home	13.48	12.40	21.56	24.53	28.03	3.41	3
b. Church	12.26	18.60	23.45	21.83	23.85	3.26	4
c. Primary School	8.63	12.26	24.53	26.95	27.63	3.53	2
d. High School	7.33	7.05	22.13	26.56	36.93	3.79	1

From Table 3 it emerges that persons such as the mother (4.34) and the father (3.47), brothers and sisters (3.71) and lecturers (3.29) had a large to very large influence on character-development and character-building in the lives of students according to their own perception. A specific person (4.31) such as a pastor, boyfriend or girlfriend also had a fairly large to very large influence on character-development and character-building when it came to students' lives. It therefore amounts to the fact that parents, specific persons and lecturers are the most important role-players when it comes to character-development and character-building.

Furthermore, 24.97% of the students said that the lecturers had no/little influence in terms of character-development and character-building, 30.98% said that teachers had no/little influence in terms of character-development and character-

building, and 30% felt that the father had no/little influence in terms of character-development and character-building.

From the finding it emerges that the role of the father is very low in comparison with the mother, brothers, sisters and a significant other.

In terms of institutions it emerges that the parental home (3.41), primary school (3.53) and high school (3.79) have a reasonably large to very large influence on character-development and character-building in students' lives. This amounts to the reality that the parental home played a less important role than did the school. During the primary and high school period, the teachers clearly

did their work well and in particular, saw to it that character-development and character-building received due attention.

Furthermore, 25.88% of the students indicated that the parental home had no/little influence on character-development and character-building, and with regard to the church, 30.86% said that it had no/little influence on character-development and character-building in their lives.

In Table 4 the students' responses are summarised, with regard to the question as to who or what had contributed to what they are today. The percentage indicated is an addition of the four aspects: large and very large, none, and little.

Table 4 The role of involved persons and factors on the character-development and character-building of students

		None %	Little %	Reasonably %	Large %	Very large %	Average weighting out of 5	Rank order
a.	God/a higher spiritual force	3.87	3.22	7.47	12.37	73.07	4.48	2
b.	Parents	1.91	2.42	6.11	18.07	71.50	4.54	1
c.	Teachers	6.40	12.00	28.53	30.67	22.40	3.51	4
d.	College lecturers	2.22	3.66	10.72	17.91	65.49	4.41	3
e.	Yourself	9.84	24.12	33.02	21.02	11.99	3.01	8
f.	Friends	20.24	21.32	31.31	16.33	10.80	2.76	9
g.	Fate, coincidence, luck, accident	13.27	15.42	32.31	24.53	14.48	3.12	6
h.	Specific teachers	14.39	15.64	30.17	25.42	14.39	3.10	7
i.	Specific lecturers	15.58	15.30	26.43	25.03	17.66	3.14	5

From Table 4 it becomes clear that the students felt that it was through the agency of God (85.44%) (large/very large) or their parents (89.57%), that they are who they are today (large/very large). The college lecturers (83.4%) were reported to have had the third largest influence on character-development and character-building of students (large/very large). Furthermore, 41.56% of the students said that friends had no/little influence on character-development and character-building; 28.69% said that fate/coincidence/accident or luck had no/little influence in terms of character-development and character-building; 30.03% said that specific teachers had no/little influence in terms of character-development and character-building; 30.88% said that specific lecturers had no/little influence in terms of character-development and character-building; and 4.33% said that the parental home had none/little influence on character-development and character-building in their lives.

From Table 4, it emerges that students consider other people and factors much higher than their own influence (8th place out of 9). This indicates to a large degree that students have things happen to them, and do not make them happen themselves. They probably also do not have a strong sense of independence, even though they indicated it as being a very important life value.

Findings

From the literature, the following findings could be deduced:

• With regard to the theories, programmes and models derived from the literature survey, values, character, values education, character education, character-development and character-building with regard to students can be said to be relevant, effective and meaningful. These programmes, theories and models define good character (cf. Freeks, 2007; Hattingh, 1991; Lapsley & Narvaez, 2006; Lickona, 2013; Lickona & Davidson, 2005; Rens, 2005).

• Character-building must be compatible with our teaching and learning of values because it improves behaviour and attitude (Lapsley & Narvaez, 2006).

• The literature also indicates that moral education and character-development are essential among students, precisely because man is a value-driven being (cf. Kohlberg, 1978; Lapsley & Narvaez, 2006; Lickona, 1991, 2013; Sayin, 2014).

• Character-development and character-building ensures that children develop good judgement, integrity and essential virtues (Lickona, 2013).

• The literature also indicates that parents, educators, scientists, researchers and various other citizens in many countries are worried about the decay in values and character, and would like to find ways to alleviate it (cf. Berkowitz, 2011; Ellison, 2011; Freeks, 2007; Helterbran & Strahler, 2013; Khanam, 2008; Lickona, 2013; Lickona et al., 2003; Lovat et al., 2011; Nieuwenhuis et al., 2007).

• From the literature it is also clear that the parental

home or family life should be regarded as important for students, because this is where prevention of students' involvement in violence and dangerous behaviour can take place (cf. Cunniff & Mostert, 2012; De Wet, C 2014; De Wet, NC 2010; Helterbran & Strahler, 2013; Lapsley & Narvaez, 2006).

- Students believe in general that the teacher and other relevant role-players can make a difference in their personal moral development as students (Arthur, 2011).
- The cornerstone values of Heenan are of great significance for the South African context (Abdool, 2005).

From the investigation it also emerged that character-development and character-building of the students could be used fruitfully in effecting a positive change in the values and character of the students.

With regard to the research questions, the following was found:

- Role-players such as father, mother, brothers, sisters and lecturers play an important role in terms of character-development and character-building in the lives of students.
- Even specific individuals, such as a pastor, a boyfriend or a girlfriend, can have a reasonably important role in terms of character-development and character-building in the lives of students.
- At institutions it emerged that the influence of the parental home, primary school and high school in terms of character-development and character-building was reasonably important to important.
- In looking at the role of persons and/or factors in the lives of students, it was remarkable that students indicated that who and what they were came about because of the role of God in their lives.

Limitations

With regard to the investigation, certain gaps and shortcomings were identified that can be addressed in future studies.

At campuses C and B2, where the researcher could not undertake the investigation personally, a low response rate to the questionnaire was achieved.

Another possible gap in the study is that lecturers' own value orientation was not determined, and this could play a significant role in character-development and character-building. Their opinions and attitudes with regard to character-development and character-building could probably have made a contribution in terms of determining the practical feasibility of a character-building programme. The moral developmental level of the students was not determined, because it is a very comprehensive process to determine. Information about this angle would have been of great value for the project.

Seeing that this investigation was limited to FET colleges in the North West Province, the findings cannot be extrapolated to all the FET colleges in South Africa. A more comprehensive investigation involving all the colleges, where a meaningful examination of all the different sub-groups (gender, language and cultural groups, level of education etc.) can be built on the foundations of this study, done in the North West Province.

Recommendations

The following recommendations can be made emanating from the investigation in terms of improving the present situation:

- Character-building programmes should be developed for all FET colleges in South Africa, so that character-development and character-building can have a greater impact on students.
- Lecturers ought to be trained and equipped to offer character-development and character-building courses at colleges in an integrated fashion.
- Moral values should constitute a large part of character-development and character-building at further education and training colleges.
- Colleges must make use of special programmes and professional help (experts) to assist students.

Conclusion

From the study, the following general conclusions can be drawn:

- Value-addition and character-building can inculcate a positive attitude in students.
- Apart from the role of the parents with regard to value-addition and character-building, the role of the lecturer in FET colleges is indispensable for the student.
- Specific persons, such as, for example, a pastor, can be as important a role player with regard to his/her influence in terms of character-development and character-building, which amounts to the cardinal importance of the church with regard to character-development and character-building in the spiritual lives of students.
- God is an essential and important aspect in the religious lives of students.

Final Word

In this article the influence of people, institutions and factors on character-development and character-building in the lives of college students was emphasised. Character-development and character-building can be seen as crucial and indispensable in the lives of contemporary youth.

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