

## **Integrating children's values in policymaking: challenges and opportunities in a diverse society**

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### **ABSTRACT**

Values are a central dimension of human social life, they are core to a person's self-concept and identity and drive individual actions towards both personal enhancement and social transformation. At a social level, values govern how individuals relate to others and shape the organization of societies being, therefore, powerful guidelines to face new societal challenges like inclusion/exclusion issues, social justice or cultural diversity.

Research with adults in this field has demonstrated that human values are powerful predictors of a wide range of behaviours, attitudes and beliefs. However, research with children is still very recent and has mostly focused on adolescents and older children, probably due to concerns about young children's capabilities to produce reliable information and discourse. In the same way, children's voices regarding political issues have been frequently dismissed even when children's right to participate fully in political and cultural life is specifically recognized in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. Therefore, giving voice to children is ultimately a matter of respecting their rights.

To address this gap we introduce in this presentation a project that seeks to respond to this need by mapping the basic human values (e.g. Schwartz, 1992) of children and young adolescents (6 to 14 years) and its associations with the representations of justice and attitudes towards different social groups. Also, we intend to propose further directions to incorporate values and children's views in education policies and decision-making.

**Keywords:** Values; childhood; citizenship; social policy; policymaking

### **1. Basic Human Values Theory**

Values are a central dimension of human social life, they are core to a person's self-concept and drive individual actions towards both personal development and social transformation (Bardi & Schwartz, 2003). At a social level, values govern how individuals relate to others and shape the organization of societies being, therefore, powerful guidelines to face new societal challenges like the inclusion of social and cultural diversity and social justice (Inglehart & Baker, 2000; Schwartz 1999, 2008).

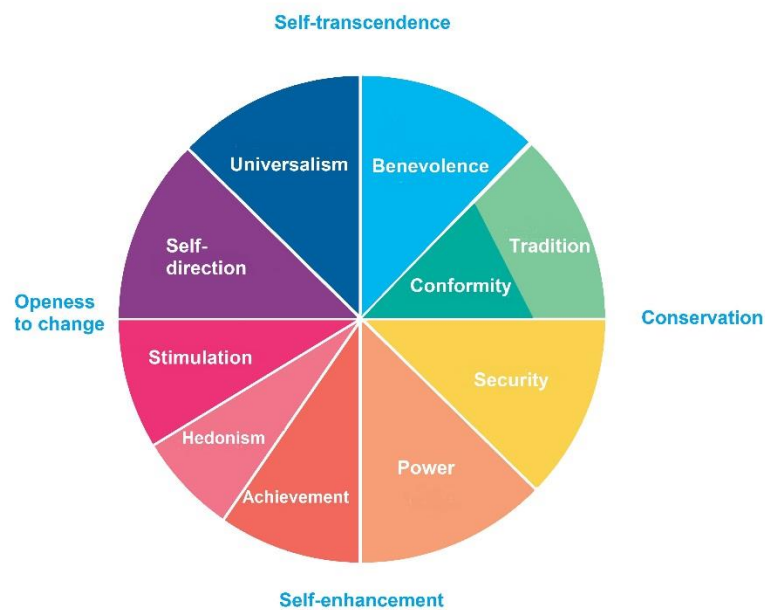
Shalom H. Schwartz has developed one of the most influential theories on social values. Within the Theory of Basic Human Values (TBHV), Schwartz conceptualizes values as trans-situational concepts or beliefs that inform desirable end states and guide the selection of behaviour, which can be organized based on compatibilities and conflicts in their underlying motivations and ordered by relative importance. Defined this way, values differ from attitudes in two main aspects: (1) their generality of abstractness and (2) their hierarchical ordering by importance (Schwartz, 1992; Schwartz, 1994; Schwartz, 2006).

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Ten values have been proposed in this theory: Universalism, Benevolence, Conformity, Tradition, Security, Power, Achievement, Hedonism, Stimulation, and Self-direction and extensive cross-cultural evidence have confirmed that these are organized according to a circular motivational continuum with two bipolar meta-dimensions: 1) self-enhancement (or individual focus) vs. self-transcendence (or social focus), and 2) conservation (or self-protection) vs. openness to change (or growth) (Figure 1).

**Figure 1. Circumplex model of the Theory of Basic Human Values**



Source: by the authors, based on Schwartz (1992)

The first dimension reflects the conflict between a major concern with other's well-being versus the pursuit of individual success. The second dimension reflects the conflict between the focus on personal autonomy, freedom of action and orientation towards change versus the focus on obedience, the preservation of status quo and traditional practices.

Cross-cultural research using representative samples has also revealed a pan-cultural consensus regarding the hierarchical order of values priorities, whereby Benevolence, Universalism, and Self-direction values are prioritized over Power and Stimulation (Schwartz, 2012). Nevertheless, the formation process of value priorities depends on background characteristics, life experiences and social position. As a result, personal differences in living conditions, educational level, religiosity or professional position may drive differences in value priorities (Almeida, Machado, & Costa 2006).

Research conducted under the TBHV with adult populations has also shown that the proposed values predict a wide range of social phenomena and behaviours, such as attitudes towards immigration, interpersonal trust, social involvement, organizational membership, political activism, and subjective well-being (Ramos, Pereira, & Vala, 2016;

Bardi & Schwartz, 2003; Sagiv & Schwartz, 2000; Schwartz, 2007, 2010). Alongside, several studies aiming to account for individual and cultural variations on value preferences have identified key individual antecedents, including age, life course, gender, education, income, and socialization (Knafo & Schwartz, 2009; Schwartz, 2007) and contextual factors, like socio-economic development (Ramos, 2006).

Regarding young populations, only a few recent studies have addressed children's values, however, earlier research is increasingly providing important insights on value change and stability at early ages. These studies offer extended support to the TBHV showing that the structure of children's values, apparently, does not change with age and is convergent with adults (Cieciuch, Davidov, & Algesheimer, 2016; Cieciuch, Döring, & Harasimczuk, 2013; Döring, 2010; Collins, Lee, Sneddon, & Döring, 2017). Otherwise, differences have been found between adolescents and adults in contrast to the pan-cultural value hierarchy found in adulthood (Cieciuch, Döring, & Harasimczuk, 2013), adolescents seem to attribute more importance to openness to change/self-enhancement and less to conservation/self-transcendence (Tulviste & Tamm, 2014). Also, studies suggest changes associated with age, indicating that development promotes the reorientation of value priorities, decreasing the importance of individualistic values (self-enhancement) and increasing the prominence of solidarity values (self-transcendence) (Rodrigues et al., 2016).

Despite these recent advances in our knowledge about the structure and development of values at an early age, additional studies are needed to get broader and more comprehensive views. Especially, in order to identify their high potential for the design of public policies and interventions in the educational field.

## **2. The importance of values within the curriculum frameworks**

To date, educational systems have been designed to suit a specific mode of production closely following the dictations of the industrial revolution basically focused on discipline and knowledge transfer (Chalkiadaki, 2018) as well as exclusively subject-based paying scant attention to the development of other competencies and skills (Altinyelken, 2015).

Changes in the labour market within globalised economies, the increasing pressure to improve the economic competitiveness of countries and the increase of ethnic and cultural diversity in our societies have led many countries to review their curricula content and pay much more attention to skills, attitudes, competencies and the notion of flexibility (Carnoy, 1999). Within these determinant factors, processes of globalisation, in particular international contributor agencies, have notably influenced educational policies and reforms in the past 20 years through funding mechanisms and aid conditionality as stated by Altinkeyen (2015).

Developments in society and economy are therefore requiring that educational systems "equip young people with new skills and competencies, which allow them to benefit from the emerging new forms of socialisation and to contribute actively to economic development under a system where the main asset is knowledge" (Ananiadou & Claro, 2009, p. 5).

Consequently, attitudes and values as key aspects of the successful development of societies (Döring, 2010; Inglehart & Baker, 2000; Schwartz, 1999, 2008) are increasingly integrated into curricula frameworks all over the world (Howells, 2018).

Already in the past decade, a report published for UNESCO by Jacques Delors (1996) presented four recommended pillars for the education of the new century: learning to know, learning to do, learning to live together and learning to be. The two last pillars perfectly explain this new idea of education whereas 'learning to live together' implies an effort to get along with diversity in a build hatred world and 'learning to be' embodies the challenge of fully developing the creative potential of each individual, in all its richness and complexity.

Many noteworthy reports have arisen since that, all of them emphasizing this new commitment to education. In 2013, the civil society joint statement co-signed by Global Campaign for Education and Education International, among others, expressed that it "is crucial for education to be transformative, geared towards social and environmental justice, the democratization of power structures, promotion of equality and non-discrimination and respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms", highlighting once again the need of a whole set of essential skills beyond the core dimension of literacy, such as creativity, curiosity, critical thinking, civic-mindedness, solidarity, cooperation, self-discipline, self-confidence, co-responsibility, dialogue, compassion, empathy, courage, self-awareness, resilience, leadership or humility.

Recently, two main documents drafted the direction for the transformation of educational curricula worldwide: the OECD Future of Education and Skills 2030, also known as OECD learning compass 2030, and the World Economic Forum's 21st-Century Skills.

OECD learning compass 2030 considers attitudes and values as key components in helping students navigate towards well-being and build a more inclusive and fair society. The document specifically states the importance of including values within the curricula and defines them as central principles and beliefs that influence one's choices, judgements, behaviours and actions on the path towards individual, societal and environmental well-being and summarises the core shared values that might be developed at school in order to foster citizenship and strengthen trust in institutions and communities. The proposed values are respect, fairness, personal and social responsibility, integrity and self-awareness (Howells, 2018) (see Table 1).

**Table 1. Set of knowledge, skills, attitudes and values proposed by the OECD Future of Education and Skills 2030**

Knowledge	Skills	Attitudes and values
-Disciplinary knowledge -Interdisciplinary knowledge -Practical knowledge	-Cognitive and metacognitive skills -Social and emotional skills -Physical and practical skills	-Personal values -Social values -Societal values -Human values
		-Openness towards people from other cultures -Respect for cultural otherness -Global-mindedness Responsibility

Source: by the authors, based on Howells (2018)

As for the World Economic Forum's 21st-Century Skills, the challenge lies more in preparing the education system to thrive in today's innovation-driven economy and be capable of training future workers to adapt to the competitive labour market. To this end, a set of new skills also referred to as "character qualities" like persistence, curiosity or initiative and new competencies like collaboration, creativity or problem-solving have to be framed in addition to foundational skills (literacy and numeracy) (see Table 2).

**Table 2. Set of competencies proposed by the World Economic Forum as the 21st-Century Skills**

Foundational literacies	Competencies	Character qualities
Literacy Numeracy ICT literacy Scientific literacy Financial literacy Cultural and civic literacy	Critical thinking Problem-solving Creativity Communication Collaboration	Curiosity Initiative Persistence/ grit Adaptability Leadership Social and cultural awareness

Source: by the authors, based on World Economic Forum (2016)

These documents supposed a kind of revolution within curricula all over the world, implying several transformations in the educational systems. Countries like Finland, Australia or Singapore were the first to incorporate those ideas into their rectifying documents and have been inspiring experiences for what is happening in our focus country, Portugal.

Portugal is a noted example of a country that has developed a strategic education reform. In 2017, the country officially adopted Legislative Order no. 5908/2017, which allows Portuguese schools to join the "Project for Autonomy and Curriculum Flexibility (PACF)" on a voluntary basis. PACF aims at providing schools with the necessary conditions to manage the curriculum, integrate practices that promote better learning

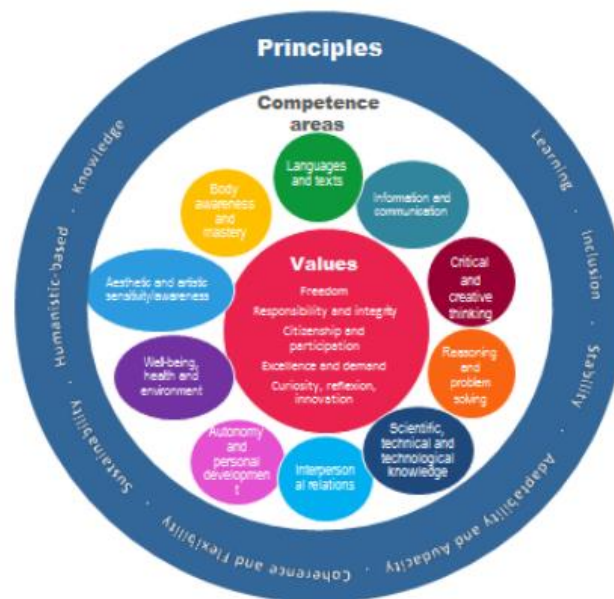
and support schools in effectively exercising autonomy and greater flexibility (OECD, 2018).

Later in the academic year 2018-2019, the legislation that explains what mandatory education for Portuguese young people should be, comes definitively into effect, as well as the measures and guidelines necessary to put in practice an inclusive education with clearly defined principles and objectives.

In this way, Decree-Law no. 55/2018, of July 6, establishes the curriculum for basic and secondary education and the guiding principles for the appraisal of learning. The document recognizes that the School must train students to live in a society with new realities and new challenges and that “it is necessary to develop in students skills that allow them to question established knowledge, integrate emerging knowledge, communicate efficiently and solve complex problems”. Also, Decree-Law no. 54/2018, of 6 July, which establishes the legal regime for inclusive education comes into effect, taking into account that the School must respond to the needs of all students, especially the needs of students who face different kind of difficulties (Pinto, 2019).

In addition to this legislation, the Ministry of Education published the Students' Profile by the End of Compulsory Schooling (Directorate-General for Education/Ministry of Education, 2017), a guiding document that describes the principles, vision, values and competencies (Figure 2) the country wishes Portuguese students to have by the time they finish compulsory schooling in terms of “students’ profile”. Together, with the objective of making the programs more flexible, the Ministry of Education (2018a & 2018b) defined the Essential Learning for each of the subjects and disciplinary areas of Basic and Secondary Education.

**Figure 2. Set of principles, competencies and values defined in the Students' Profile by the End of Compulsory Schooling**



Source: Students' Profile by the End of Compulsory Schooling, Directorate-General for Education/Ministry of Education (2017)

The Students' Profile emerged as a reference document for the organization of the entire educational system, contributing to the articulation of the decisions involving various dimensions of curriculum development. One of its main objectives is to contribute to the students' development of values and skills that allow them to face the complex challenges of this century and to manage the multiple uncertainties consequence of the evolution of knowledge and technology.

The proposals contained in the document are based on important principles: 1) promotion of a democratic, fair, inclusive and sustainable society; 2) contribute to sustainable development; 3) evaluation of holistic knowledge that generates solutions to social problems; 4) a humanistic profile that implies a concrete conception of the society which advocates for the centrality of both human values and human dignity; 5) defence of a transversal approach to the teaching and learning process focused on the development of skills and lifelong learning for a permanent adaptation to a society in constant change; 6) educating/teaching for the effective achievement of learning, with coherence and flexibility.

The promotion of education based on these principles should contribute to the formation of a citizen with certain characteristics: 1) democratic, fair, inclusive, responsible for himself and for the world around him; 2) able to promote respect for human dignity, for the exercise of full citizenship and for socio-cultural diversity; 3) able to reject all forms of discrimination and social exclusion; 4) creative with competence in collaborative work and communication skills; 5) endowed with cultural, scientific and technological literacy that allows it to critically analyze and question reality, evaluate and select information, formulate hypotheses and make informed decisions; 6) able to deal with change and uncertainty in a fast-moving world transformation; 7) able to think critically and, ultimately, 8) free and autonomous.

To this purpose, the document appeals to the commitment of all stakeholders involved, from school to families, guardians, policymakers and every member of the society.

Again, values are included as key elements in the formation of future citizens. Within the scope of this document, values are understood "as guidelines according to which certain actions, behaviours and beliefs are defined as appropriate and desirable". Values help us to understand the way people act and bring closer complex relationships like those formed between personality, context and behaviour. Thus, there is a set of values that the Portuguese educational system is expected to encourage their students to achieve: responsibility and integrity; excellence and rigorousness, curiosity, reflection and innovation; citizenship and participation and freedom (understood in terms of self-direction, motivated by the principles of citizenship, common welfare, mutual respect and human rights) (Directorate General of Education/ Ministry of Education Portugal, 2017).

As we can see the document appeals for the inclusion of values in the educational curriculum and the way that it defines the construct closely follows values' previous definitions and Schwartz's conception. The set of values proposed also slightly fits the dimensions of the theoretical model.

### 3. How to assess the impact of schools in transmitting values? Instruments for measuring values from an early age

Instilling values in children is among the cornerstones of every society and in this task school and educators play a key role, affecting the value transmission process (Berson & Oreg, 2016), in addition, values are now embedded in the school curricula, so an important point to take into account is how educational institutions and practitioners could be able to assess their impact on transmitting values.

Practitioners working in public services usually encounter difficulties when they are faced with the need to do research or evaluations about the practice, so researchers and academicians could provide them from its vast experience with useful and manageable devices to collect primary data by their own that are reliable, valid and easily administered (Kara, 2012). Furthermore, for the assessment of values in childhood and adolescence, measures have to be understandable and appropriate for these young populations to facilitate the report of their own values once evidence has demonstrated that they hold a conception of their values' schema from very early on (Döring, 2010).

Recently, some advances were made in the field of values' measurement in young populations via trustworthy self-report instruments.

The Picture-Based Value Survey for Children (PBVS-C) was the first child-friendly instrument developed in the field. This instrument was developed within the conceptual framework of Schwartz's (1992) theory of human values by Döring et al. (2010) to facilitate children's understanding of the abstract component of values since previous existing instruments like the Portrait Values Questionnaire (PVQ; Schwartz et al., 2001) imposed high demands on language skills or cognitive capacities, being inappropriate for the youngest. From a picture-based approach, the PBVS-C transforms Schwartz's definition and explanation of the 10 value types in cartoon-like pictures in which a leading character performs a value-relevant action. This resulted in 20 pictures (two per value type) with a short caption for each picture to avoid ambiguity in the understanding of the motivational goal underlying the pictures. The completion task lies in a ranking procedure in which participants sort the items according to the level of importance. After a presentation of the set of pictures, children are asked to think of their goals in life and the things that are important to them. Then they are requested to sort the items according to five levels of importance, from very important to not important at all.

This instrument has been applied in studies with children as young as 5 years old (Abramson, Daniel & Knafo-Noam, 2018) and the original German version in English has been validated in different cultural contexts such as Poland, Bulgaria, the Ukraine, France, Italy, Switzerland, the UK, New Zealand, Estonia, Israel and Brazil (Döring et al. 2015; Cieciuch, Harasimczuk & Döring, 2013; Uzefovsky, Döring & Knafo-Noam, 2016; Roazzi, Gomes, Souza & Bilsky, 2016; Döring, Makarova, Herzog, & Bardi, 2017).

Studies with the PBVS-C have revealed that children's values are structured as clearly as adults and alongside the Schwartz circular model, that children's values direct their behaviour and that children's values have a genetic component but are also affected by social contexts and significant life events, and many more (Döring, 2018).

Nevertheless, the PBVS-C could present difficulties for younger children since the instrument requires quite demanding reading abilities. To overcome this constraint a



new promising tool has been developed by Collins et al. (2017), the Animated Values Instrument (AVI).

The AVI introduces a combination of verbal, visual and auditory information to increase young children's comprehension of the values presented. The animations depict a value-expressive behaviour and are accompanied by a statement (auditory and written) expressed as a desirable motivational goal. The animations are presented within a series of small subsets, based on best-worst scaling. For the completion of the task, children have to drag a yellow smiling face to the animation most like them and a red frowning face to the animation least like them, in each of the 21 sets of five value animations (Collins et al., 2017).

Collins et al. (2017)'s validation study found the majority of young children to be consistent in their values choices and coherent in their structure at both the sample and individual level for the first time. Further, the four higher-order and 10 basic values were clearly distinguished reflecting the theoretical model in spite of some value misplacements.

Later on, some improvements were made to the original AVI by Lee et al. (2017) resulting in a revised version of the instrument (AVI-r). The AVI-r uses the same design as the AVI, where each value scenario is placed within subsets based on a balanced incomplete block experimental design in order to ensure that each item is seen the same number of times (5 times) and each pair of items is seen together once across 21 values subsets (Lee et al., 2017).

Again, Lee et al. (2017) study found that the circular structure of values exists within children as young as five. This time, with all children-points of all subgroups located within the circular structure of values, indicating that the intra-individual structure of children's values is compatible with Schwartz's (1992) theory.

To date, a total of 17 studies applying the PBVS-C and a total of 4 studies applying the AVI have been identified showing similar results regarding children's value priorities (Alvarez et al., 2021).

These two instruments prove that there have been several advances in value measurement within young populations and might serve as a starting point to continue improving studies in the field. However, literature regarding children's values agrees on a need to develop more research in order to contribute to policymaking and to implement interventions in education. To this purpose, in the following section, we present a research project that has children's values and their implications for education as the central focus.

#### **4. CLAVE: A project on the development of human values in childhood and early adolescence**

Nowadays societies are facing multiple challenges when it comes to integrating social and cultural diversity. Europe is in the spotlight of a changing world where the consolidation of more inclusive and reflective societies is still a pending issue.

In this context, mapping the prevalence and expression of basic human values within young populations and the role of values in the formation of representations of justice

and attitudes towards different social groups (age, gender, nationality, etc.), as well as in terms of personal growth and well-being becomes crucial.

Transnational research in these fields is not only needed in order to clarify scientific knowledge about the development and relationship between these factors but can also inform national and European public policies aimed at creating more inclusive societies.

CLAVE project - "The social development of human values in childhood and early adolescence"- funded by the Portuguese Foundation for Science and Technology (Ref. PTDC/SOC-SOC/30635/2017) and led by a team of researchers from the Institute of Social Sciences of the University of Lisbon and the ISCTE-IUL emerged with this specific aim.

The project seeks to respond to this need by proposing to map the basic human values of children and young adolescents (6-14 years), and their association with other central factors, for a better understanding of the current and future dynamics of inclusion and exclusion in the European area. The project aims also at analyzing the role of socialization processes in the family context in forming and developing human values. The project's main fieldwork is being carried out in Portugal and up to this time, three studies have been concluded.

One of the studies consists of a validation of the PBVS-C instrument in the Portuguese context. To this purpose, an adapted version of the PBVS-C was administered to a sample of 218 Portuguese children (6 to 10-year-olds) attending two public elementary schools. Results will be published soon but preliminary analyses allow us to draw three main conclusions: 1) it is possible to measure children's values in a reliable and valid way using the PBVS-C; 2) the value structure of Portuguese children is similar to those of children from other countries; 3) Portuguese children have a structure and hierarchy of values similar to those of adults.

The second study coincided with the first breakout of the COVID-19 pandemic in Portugal. The school's lockdown forced the CLAVE team to find an alternative to gathering data via face-to-face contact so the team decided to collect data online. The "online" alternative ended up bringing benefits to the project, reaching a larger and more diverse sample. The survey took place between 25 May and 13 July and 1744 children and 2385 parents have participated.

The third study consisted of a second wave of the previous one for participants who have already filled the first questionnaire and was also opened to new participation. This longitudinal study will help understand if there have been significant changes in the lives of children, adolescents and parents and, to what extent, these may be related to the evolution of the pandemic.

Currently, another two studies are taking place in Spain and Brazil. Results will be useful to compare children's values among different cultural contexts, as well as identifying differences and similarities in the way they coped with the pandemic.

#### **4.1. Implications of CLAVE project for educational policies and interventions**

The results of the project are expected to increase knowledge on the development of children's values and their influence on other educational, socio-economic and cultural factors.

Furthermore, the project has a high potential in terms of the crucial information that it would provide for educational institutions and educators and also making an innovative effort giving the necessary tools to achieve their goals on the inclusion of values in the curricula. Making these tools available in the school context will allow teachers to evaluate their impact on the transmission of values, values' development monitoring and, ultimately, give children the chance to express their own values through reliable and scientifically valid instruments. This contribution is particularly important at a time when schools are challenged to organize their curriculum and pedagogical practices with a view to developing the Profile of Students by the End of Compulsory Schooling.

In terms of knowledge transfer from academia to schools, the project will also give several contributions, specifically regarding values education, bringing together these two worlds in mutually beneficial partnerships.

## **5. Conclusion**

Values represent what is important to a person; they express our guiding principles in life and shape self-concept and identity. Accordingly, values have been identified as core constructs of human existence fundamental to the organization of societies and to face new societal challenges regarding social and cultural diversity.

Values of children are of a special importance since they embody the next generation and shape the world of the future. Despite their importance, only a few recent studies focused on childhood and adolescence, examining how values emerge from early on in human life and how they develop throughout life-span in contrast to hundreds of empirical studies about values in adulthood.

In addition, there is wide agreement that schools play an important role in shaping children's character, imparting in them different kinds of virtues such as curiosity, achievement, benevolence, and citizenship (Berson & Oreg, 2016).

For a long time, values were part of the 'hidden curricula' of schools but recently they have been explicitly integrated into the curricula at the core of the learning process.

Portugal is a noted example of a country that has recently implemented a curriculum reform that included values as core aspects of the educational curriculum. The reform has been materialised through a guiding document entitled "The Students Profile by the End of Compulsory Schooling" that specifically defines a set of values students are expected to achieve. Citizenship, curiosity and reflection are some of the values proposed and all of them align with Schwartz's model.

In this context, mapping the prevalence and expression of basic human values within young populations becomes a pressing issue and the CLAVE project is compromised to address this gap by studying values in Portuguese schoolchildren and early adolescents from 6 to 14 years old. Aiming also at studying the association of values with other central factors as attitudes towards different social groups or social justice, for a better understanding of the current and future dynamics of inclusion and exclusion in the European area.

The project has also the objective of contributing to knowledge transfer from academia to schools providing teachers and educators with reliable and valid measurement

instruments to evaluate their impact in transmitting values and also improving their knowledge in the field of values.

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