



### **Student acquisition of social skills through teacher modelling**

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The research question of whether Victorian Government schools provide opportunities, in the form of explicit teacher modelling, for the development of social skills and social competence was investigated from school leaders', teachers' and students' own perspectives. The essence of this study was to determine if students felt they could thrive at school and their belief that opportunities are available for them to succeed. Two Victorian Government secondary schools were involved in the study and eight male and ten female young people aged 12- 14years volunteered to be interviewed over the course of their first year in secondary school. Teachers and principals at the school were also interviewed.

Students do not identify teachers as role models for social skills however school leaders believe that teachers are role models for students. Students and teachers all place value on positive student-teacher relationships. The variance of social skill instruction in secondary schools and classrooms points to significant differences between the intent and practice within schools. There appears to be considerable differences in the perception of this aspect of the Australian Curriculum's personal and social domain within schools, and between teachers and their classrooms. This would limit the opportunity for students to develop social skills as there appears to be no whole school strategic social emotional curriculum plan, few resources and no teacher professional development in pedagogy.

The research describes the opportunities that are available for secondary students at Victorian Government schools to develop social skills and social competence. The research contributes and informs teacher pedagogy and contributes to knowledge about the value placed on social competence by students, teachers and school leaders. It also provides insight into the importance that students make of teacher interpersonal skills, their subsequent engagement with teachers and their sense of connectedness and belonging to school.