

Reaffirming Citizenship Education in an Uncertain World: The important role of school¹

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Abstract

The last decades of the 20th century are characterized by uncertainty in all sectors of life. Every citizen has to adapt to this new reality and redefine his/her personal beliefs and values. Thus, one major question arisen is the following: Which is the contemporary school's role to citizenship education? This article presents the challenges that should be faced in the uncertain world we now live and how education can be the solution to this. Furthermore, some preliminary research findings of a doctoral study are presented examining the issue of morality in culturally differentiated students in Greek schools.

Key Words

Education, Morality, Uncertainty

Introduction

There is not just one wholly accepted definition of the word *education* and its aims, as this term has been tackled since the beginning of philosophy. In this article, a brief analysis of some philosophers' aspects is presented, from Aristotle until the last decades of the 20th century. The study of such a long lasting philosophical background is not important only for the enrichment of our knowledge. It is mostly because the use of the past may help us think more cogently about the present and the future of education.

Aristotle is one of the Greek philosophers who gave much emphasis on the value of education. Learning and being educated is the only way to make someone happy and live in *eudaimonia*. Therefore, education should aim to the teaching of the virtues necessary for the right action. For Aristotle, a happy life consists not only of moral values, such as courage, wisdom, self-control and justice, but also of intellectual values, like art, scientific knowledge, practical wisdom, philosophic

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wisdom an intuitive reason. All these may provide someone the basis for the right action to be made (Suppes, 1996).

As centuries go on, many approaches concerning education are made. The Age of Enlightenment is a very important period that influences the conception of education and the educational systems adopted in European countries. Education is construed as the manner to cultivate people's cognitive and social skills. Furthermore, it is strongly believed that children shouldn't be taught rules of moral behavior, as it was supported some centuries ago. On the contrary, they should learn how to think and act freely in a way that will develop their moral autonomy. Jean-Jacques Rousseau believes that education must emphasize each child's special characteristics, abilities and needs. A good teacher should teach children how to learn and indicate ways to develop moral values that other people respect, such as charity, cooperation, compassion and support (Perakis-Rouggas, 2010).

During the 20th century, John Dewey (1934) says that education has only one purpose: to help young children become members of the society. However, any education institution must adapt its methods and forms to the needs of the society in which it exists. Some years later, Martin Luther King during his speech at Morehouse College (1947) supports that "the function of education is to teach one to think intensively and to think critically. [...] We must remember that intelligence is not enough. Intelligence plus character—that is the goal of true education". Finally, Arthur Foshay (1991) says that education targets different aspects, such as "to develop the intellect, to serve social needs, to contribute to the economy, to create an effective work force, to prepare students for a job or career, to promote a particular social or political system". However, all these purposes imply the human existence in its wholeness and serve the most major purpose of the education, which is the realization of what it is to be a human being.

In summary form, education is highly connected with people's personal, social and moral development. Each society must base its improvement on the quality of education provided to its citizens. Especially in times, which are full of rapid changes and uncertainty, education, is the only hope of humanity, as it is "the most powerful weapon, which you can use to change the world", according to Nelson Mandela.

Facing Times of Uncertainty

The world nowadays is facing many rapid changes in all aspects of life. In the age of globalization these changes affect the entire world. Everything seems unstable and this causes uncertainty, fear and anxiety to citizens, who are obliged to adopt quickly to this new reality.

Our planet is coming up against new challenges. Firstly, the worldwide economic crisis causes lack of financial opportunity to people of all ages, while, at the same time, unemployment is rising in a staggering pace. Moreover, wars between countries, as well as religious conflicts between people, have led to even greater percentage of refugees and the ejection of poverty in almost every corner of the planet. Societies have become multicultural, as people from different countries and cultural backgrounds coexist. At the same time, the fear caused by terrorism and criminality has led to the increase of strong political views. Finally, the dramatic climate changes and the destruction of natural resources have been added to this endless list of contemporary global data (Loudenback, 2016).

The changes listed above indicate the inner crisis that takes place in each one of us in our daily life. Human beings, global problems and morality are closely connected to each other. Humans are responsible both for creating and solving these problems. Some people violate norms, codes, ethics or abuse freedom against others. While everybody is aware of his/her rights, his/her obligation of being responsible as a person and a citizen has become secondary or unnecessary. However, every person should be aware of solving the deep-rooted social problems by being conscious about the accepted moral values in the society (Himanshoo, 2015).

The important role of school in times of uncertainty

Based on the previous theoretical elements, we can realize how important the role of the school is, as it is one of the major factors of socialization, cognitive, sentimental and moral development of children. Teachers have a multidimensional role, which must correspond to the requirements of contemporary, continuously changing societies.

The priority of a teacher should be to develop young children's ability to learn and think critically. Furthermore, because of the great influence a teacher has on his/her students, one of his/her obligations is to teach them the truth in order to make them discover the good and right. Through a teacher's personality and way of teaching, universal values (such as social justice, economic prosperity and ecologic consciousness) can be transferred to children which will enable them to be morally cultivated citizens. Being well educated both in science, arts and moral values is the best investment in the progress of societies and the solution of all global problems. Young people have to get rid of materialistic principles and equip themselves with high ideals. Teachers can easily manage that by being an exemplar of good behavior and by enlightening them intellectually (Himanshoo, 2015).

Moreover, educational systems from all over the world should pay more attention to the multicultural character of societies. This means that they should focus on values, such as humanitarianism, the acceptance of heterogeneity, respect, freedom, empathy, charity, volunteering, peace etc., which should be in harmony

with the structure of a nation. That is why we need teachers who “are always optimistic and looking at the horizon with thoughts clear from rancor, hatred and repulsion, but ready to teach love, apology and passion” (Himanshoo, 2015).

Education is the only way to get rid of our inner deadlocks and widen our horizons towards a new world free of any problem that is now threatening us. As soon as we all realize its power and the opportunity of young children to change things, everything is going to be better.

Aims of the research

Having in mind that a) morality is both an internal procedure, as it is related to personal beliefs and values, and an external procedure, due to the influence of every person’s background (Paraskevopoulos, 1990), b) school is very significant for children’s moral education, all the previous data led to some thoughts concerning the morality of culturally differentiated students.

The aim of this research was to examine: a) students’ morality and b) the influence of some factors, like gender, age, origin, religion to moral development. More specific aims of the current research were the examination of: a) how important students think some moral values are, b) students’ morality concerning these values (meaning moral thoughts, sentiments and actions), c) whether moral thoughts and sentiments converge or diverge from moral actions, d) the criteria students use, in order to consider an action as moral and e) the correlation between students’ morality and factors, like gender, age, origin and religion.

Methodology of the research

The target group of this research were students from the 4th to the 6th grades of Primary Schools and from the 1st to the 3rd grades of High Schools of Greece. The research tool that was chosen was the questionnaire and the method of sample collection was the convenience sampling.

The research was conducted in three (3) phases:

1. Testing of the questionnaire to a small number of students (N = 19), in order to make corrections.
2. Pilot research (N = 251), in order to find out the questionnaire’s validity and reliability.
3. Total research to schools all over Greece (N = 1.008).

Description of the questionnaire

The research tool that was chosen was the questionnaire. Initially, there was a brief note informing the participants about the research's aims and clarifying that it is anonymous.

The questionnaire was separated into five (5) parts:

- In the first part, the participants had to rate from 0 to 10 ten moral values, according to how important they think that they are. The moral values were: sincerity, freedom, obedience, respect, faith to God, justice, charity, trust, volunteering and honesty. They were selected from a total of hundreds of moral values not only because they are timeless but also because children are already familiar to them from their first school years.
- In the second part, the participants had to rate from 0 to 6 (1: totally disagree, 6: totally agree) how much they believe they must obey the rules concerning the moral values above. In that way, their moral thoughts were examined and how much their "must do" list of morality is influenced by external factors, to whom a child is exposed from his/her early years (e.g., family, school, friends, state etc.).
- In the third part of the questionnaire, students had to rate from 0 to 6 (1: totally disagree, 6: totally agree) how much they want to follow the ten moral values above. In this way, their personal desires were examined, as morality emanates from inherent instincts too, apart from external sources.
- In the fourth part children had to rate from 0 to 6 (1: never, 6: always) how often they behave according to these ten moral values. In this way, convergence with moral thoughts or moral sentiments was examined and which one of these affects more moral behavior.
- In the last part of the questionnaire, participants were asked to rate from 0 to 6 (1: totally disagree, 6: totally agree) ten criteria for considering an action as moral. Half of the criteria concerned the utilitarian aspect of an action, whereas the rest dealt with the need for something to be done due to an existing rule or law. In this way, children may show whether their morality is based more on teleological or deontological criteria.

Findings of the research

1. Concerning participants' demographical elements, they are presented below (N = 1.008)
2. **Gender:** Male participants were 511 (50,7%) and female participants were 497 (49,3%).
3. **Class:** 152 students (15,1%) were in the 4th class of Primary School, 146 students (14,5%) were in the 5th class of Primary School, 201 students

(19,9%) were in the 6th class of Primary School. 152 students (15,1%) were in the 1st class of High School, 152 students (15,1%) were in the 2nd class of High School and 205 students (20,3%) were in the 3rd class of High School.

4. **Origin of students and their parents:** 788 students, whose father was born in Greece, were also born in Greece (78,2%), whereas 154 students, whose father was born in another country, were born in Greece (15,3%). 23 students, whose father was born in Greece, were from another country (2,3%), whereas 43 students, whose father was from another country, were also born in another country (4,2%).
5. 771 students, whose mother was born in Greece, were also from Greece (76,5%), whereas 171 students, whose mother was from another country, were born in Greece (16,9%). 17 students, whose mother was from Greece, were born in another country (1,7%), whereas 49 students, whose mother was from another country, were from another country, too (4,9%).
6. **Religion:** 931 students (92,4%) were Christians (either orthodox or catholic), 25 students (2,5%) were Muslims, 36 students (3,6%) were unbaptized and 16 students (1,6%) said they do not believe in God.

The following Table (Table 1) shows the mean of moral values' rating according to students' gender. As we can see, all values are important for the participants and the differences between them are slight. Respect is the most important value for children (8,91), whereas volunteering had the lowest mean (7,21). We can also see that girls rated the ten moral values higher than boys.

Table 1: Mean of values' rating according to students' gender

	Sincerity	Freedom	Obedience	Respect	Faith to God
Male	8,34	8,33	8,42	8,69	8,44
Female	8,84	8,81	8,62	9,13	8,73
Total	8,59	8,57	8,52	8,91	8,58
	Justice	Charity	Trust	Volunteering	Honesty
Male	8,41	8,21	7,86	6,77	8,41
Female	8,82	8,87	8,16	7,66	8,83
Total	8,61	8,53	8,01	7,21	8,62

Table 2 shows the mean of moral values' rating according to students' age. One of the most important findings of this Table is that, as children grow older, they rate the moral values lower. This is shown more intensively in the values of

obedience (4th class of Primary: 8,71 Vs 3rd class of High School: 8,03), faith to God (4th class of Primary: 8,95 s 3rd class of High School: 7,79) and trust (4th class of Primary: 8,51 Vs 3rd class of High School: 7,48).

Table 2: Mean of values' rating according to students' age

	Sincerity	Freedom	Obedience	Respect	Faith to God
4 th Primary	8,65	8,75	8,71	9,11	8,95
5 th Primary	8,83	8,57	9,08	8,87	9,01
6 th Primary	8,77	8,65	8,86	9,11	9,04
1 st High	8,41	8,19	8,43	8,87	8,76
2 nd High	8,32	8,60	8,08	8,63	8,09
3 rd High	8,52	8,61	8,03	8,82	7,79
Total	8,59	8,57	8,52	8,91	8,58
	Justice	Charity	Trust	Volunteering	Honesty
4 th Primary	8,73	8,71	8,51	7,72	8,61
5 th Primary	9,05	8,86	8,12	7,11	9,07
6 th Primary	8,71	8,63	8,43	7,05	8,87
1 st High	8,35	8,38	7,62	7,23	8,40
2 nd High	8,55	8,37	7,95	6,88	8,44
3 rd High	8,35	8,31	7,48	7,30	8,37
Total	8,61	8,53	8,01	7,21	8,62

Table 3 shows the mean of moral values' rating according to students' origin. The differences may be slight, but it seems that Greek students rate the ten moral values higher than foreign students (value of trust is exempted: Greek students: 7,99 Vs foreign students: 8,20).

Table 3: Mean of values' rating according to students' origin

	Sincerity	Freedom	Obedience	Respect	Faith to God
Greece	8,60	8,60	8,54	8,92	8,61
Other	8,41	8,11	8,24	8,71	8,15
Total	8,59	8,57	8,52	8,91	8,58
	Justice	Charity	Trust	Volunteering	Honesty
Greece	8,63	8,54	7,99	7,23	8,63
Other	8,36	8,41	8,20	6,98	8,45
Total	8,61	8,53	8,01	7,21	8,62

Finally, Table 4 shows the mean of moral values' rating according to students' religion. One important finding is that students who do not believe in God rated the moral values lower than all the other students (value of freedom is excepted, where Muslims had the lowest rating: 8,04). More specifically, the value of obedience (6,19), respect (7,81), faith to God (1,56), charity (7,06), trust (6,50), volunteering (5,63) and honesty (7,50) had significant differences when rated by godless students compared to other participants.

Table 4: Mean of values' rating according to students' religion

	Sincerity	Freedom	Obedience	Respect	Faith to God
Christian	8,62	8,58	8,56	8,94	8,78
Muslim	8,68	8,04	8,40	8,36	8,00
Unbaptized	7,92	8,72	8,64	8,92	7,11
Godless	7,87	8,25	6,19	7,81	1,56
Total	8,59	8,57	8,52	8,91	8,58
	Justice	Charity	Trust	Volunteering	Honesty
Christian	8,65	8,58	8,03	7,24	8,66
Muslim	8,44	8,40	7,76	7,56	8,52
Unbaptized	8,00	8,08	8,17	6,94	8,17
Godless	8,00	7,06	6,50	5,63	7,50
Total	8,61	8,53	8,01	7,21	8,62

Correlation analysis (Pearson's coefficient) between a) students' moral thoughts and behavior and b) students' moral sentiments and behavior showed some interesting findings. More specifically, there are statistically significant correlations between the variables, as in all cases $p=0,000 < 0,001$. Furthermore, in all cases the correlation between the variables is positive and Pearson's correlation between moral sentiments and behavior is higher than Pearson's correlation between moral thoughts and behavior. In the next Tables (Table 5, 6, 7) some correlations between variables are presented indicatively.

Table 5: Pearson's correlation for the value of freedom to talk

		I respect others' opinion
I must respect others' opinion	Pearson's Correlation	.398
	Sig (2-tailed)	.000
	N	1008
I want to respect others' opinion	Pearson's Correlation	.479
	Sig (2-tailed)	.000
	N	1008

According to Table 5, which presents the value of freedom to talk, there is a significant correlation in both cases ($p=0,000<0,001$) but the correlation between moral sentiments and behavior ($r=0,48$) is higher than that between moral thoughts and behavior ($r=0,39$).

Table 6: Pearson's correlation for the value of obeying a religion's rules

		I obey my religion's rules
I must obey my religion's rules	Pearson's Correlation	.667
	Sig (2-tailed)	.000
	N	1008
I want to obey my religion's rules	Pearson's Correlation	.691
	Sig (2-tailed)	.000
	N	1008

According to Table 6, which presents the value of obeying a religion's rules, there is statistically significant correlation in both cases ($p=0,000<0,001$) but the correlation between moral sentiments and behavior ($r=0,69$) is higher than that between moral thoughts and behavior ($r=0,67$).

Table 7: Pearson's correlation for the value of respect

		I respect my classmates
I must respect my classmates	Pearson's Correlation	.453
	Sig (2-tailed)	.000
	N	1008
I want to respect my classmates	Pearson's Correlation	.522
	Sig (2-tailed)	.000
	N	1008

According to Table 7, which presents the value of respect, there is statistically significant correlation in both cases ($p=0,000<0,001$) but the correlation between moral sentiments and behavior ($r=0,52$) is higher than that between moral thoughts and behavior ($r=0,45$).

Finally, concerning the criteria children use to consider an action as moral, what was examined is whether their choices differ in relation to their gender, age, origin and religion.

Table 8 shows the means of criteria's rating according to students' gender. As we can see, the differences between male and female participants were slight. Concerning the first 5 criteria, which are related to the utilitarian aspect of morality, both boys and girls believe that moral actions can not disappoint other people ($m=3,36$). Furthermore, girls believe more than boys that moral actions should benefit many people apart from themselves. Concerning the last 5 criteria, which are related to the obedience to rules and laws, family is the most important sector that implies rules to its members for both boys and girls ($m=5,42$). However, they also recognize the influence that other external factors have on their moral decisions, such as school, religion and friends, where girls tend to rate a little higher than boys.

Table 8: Means of criteria's rating according to students' gender

	Male	Female	Total
It benefits many people	5.33	5.47	5.40
It benefits me	5.16	5.11	5.13
It benefits me, even if I disappoint some others	3.59	3.13	3.36
It benefits me and people I love	5.51	5.51	5.51
Shows affection to people in need	5.25	5.43	5.34
Agrees with the country's rules	4.81	4.76	4.78
Agrees with the school's rules	5.11	5.25	5.18
Agrees with my religion's rules	5.16	5.21	5.19
Agrees with my family's rules	5.40	5.44	5.42
Agrees with my friends' rules	4.81	4.85	4.83

Table 9 shows the means of criteria's rating according to students' age. Concerning the first 5 criteria, which are related to the utilitarian aspect of morality, children agree with the benefits they and/or other people may have from a moral action, independently of their age, even if as they grow older they rate them a little lower. Concerning the last 5 criteria, which are related to the obedience to rules and laws, the differences are more intense. As children grow older, they seem to believe less in the obligation of obeying to country's rules (4th class of Primary: $m=5,08$ Vs 3rd class of High school: $m=4,33$), school's rules (4th

class of Primary: m=5,57 Vs 3rd class of High school: m=4,65) and religion's rules (4th class of Primary: m=5,44 Vs 3rd class of High school: m=4,71). However, their family's and friends' rules are more important for them to follow.

Table 9: Means of criteria's rating according to students' gender

	4 th Pr.	5 th Pr.	6 th Pr.	1 st High	2 nd High	3 rd High	Total
It benefits many people	5.51	5.56	5.39	5.41	5.34	5.26	5.40
It benefits me	5.38	5.25	5.19	4.95	4.96	5.08	5.13
It benefits me. even if I disappoint others	3.53	3.23	2.95	3.66	3.38	3.50	3.36
It benefits me and people I love	5.74	5.54	5.44	5.67	5.41	5.35	5.51
Shows affection to people in need	5.44	5.46	5.39	5.33	5.29	5.19	5.34
Agrees with the country's rules	5.08	5.25	4.94	4.85	4.39	4.33	4.78
Agrees with the school's rules	5.57	5.51	5.38	5.28	4.82	4.65	5.18
Agrees with my religion's rules	5.44	5.47	5.37	5.24	5.00	4.71	5.19
Agrees with my family's rules	5.51	5.59	5.56	5.42	5.37	5.13	5.42
Agrees with my friends' rules	5.05	4.80	4.92	4.85	4.84	4.58	4.83

Table 10 shows the means of criteria's rating according to students' origin. As we can see, the differences between Greek and foreign students are very slight.

Concerning the first 5 criteria, which are related to the utilitarian aspect of morality, the most important for both Greek and foreign students is that a moral action benefits many people (m=5,41 and m=5,24, respectively), especially those who they love (m=5,52 and m=5,35, respectively). Concerning the last 5 criteria, which are related to the obedience to rules and laws, there are no great differences between Greek and foreign students. Family's rules are the most important for both (m=5,42 and m=5,41, respectively).

Table 10: Means of criteria's rating according to students' gender

	Greece	Other	Total
It benefits many people	5.41	5.24	5.40
It benefits me	5.13	5.26	5.13
It benefits me. even if I disappoint some others	3.32	3.92	3.36
It benefits me and people I love	5.52	5.35	5.51
Shows affection to people in need	5.34	5.32	5.34
Agrees with the country's rules	4.79	4.70	4.78
Agrees with the school's rules	5.18	5.14	5.18
Agrees with my religion's rules	5.20	4.95	5.19
Agrees with my family's rules	5.42	5.41	5.42
Agrees with my friends' rules	4.82	4.91	4.83

Table 11 shows the means of criteria's rating according to students' religion. As we can see, students who said that they do not believe in God rated lower than all the other students the 10 criteria ('It benefits me and the people I love' is the exception, m=5,63). The differences are more intense at the last 5 criteria, which are related to the obedience to rules and laws, as their rates are much lower from the others', especially when talking about country's rules (m=3,81), school's rules (m=3,81) and religion's rules (m=2,31).

Table 11: Means of criteria's rating according to students' religion

	Christian	Muslim	Unbaptized	Godless	Total
It benefits many people	5.42	5.12	5.36	5.00	5.40
It benefits me	5.13	5.16	5.25	5.00	5.13
It benefits me. even if I disappoint some others	3.34	4.16	3.56	3.12	3.36
It benefits me and people I love	5.50	5.44	5.67	5.63	5.51

Table 11. cont'd

Shows affection to people in need	5.35	5.28	5.44	4.88	5.34
Agrees with the country's rules	4.80	4.64	4.97	3.81	4.78
Agrees with the school's rules	5.20	4.96	5.39	3.81	5.18
Agrees with my religion's rules	5.26	4.96	4.72	2.31	5.19
Agrees with my family's rules	5.44	5.36	5.31	4.75	5.42
Agrees with my friends' rules	4.83	4.92	4.89	4.38	4.83

Conclusion

The research's findings lead to some significant conclusions concerning children's morality.

First, children are familiar with many moral values from their early years and consider most of them as very important for their lives. However, as they grow older, they seem to perceive differently those values. Obedience towards rules and laws is diminished, especially those imposed by the state, the school or the religion. On the contrary, the recognition of how important the other values are remains high. It is also surprising that trust is a value, whose significance is limited as children grow up. This may be because children in High School are already teenagers and live more intensively through their relationships, so any betrayal from their friends or fellows could lead to lack of trust towards others.

Concerning children's two major cultural elements, such as their origin and their religion, it seems that they do not affect their morality to a great degree. This may be interpreted in two ways: On the one hand, foreign students are adapted to the moral values that are accepted by the Greek society and get used to them, incorporating them in their personal set of values. On the other hand, we could possibly talk about a common morality among people. This morality is based on a total of common moral values, even if they are expressed in different ways in each society, according to its traditions and social circumstances.

Nevertheless, the emphasis should be given to those children who support that they do not believe in God, even though they are not older than 15 years old. They seem to have a totally different aspect of view concerning the obedience to any kind of rules, not only religious but also those of their state or school, as they believe that this is not very important for their lives. So, a diptych is created between those who are influenced and those who are not influenced by their religion and how is their morality affected from that.

Furthermore, children base their decisions on both their thoughts and sentiments. However, personal desires seem to affect them more, when facing a moral issue and this shows that inherent instincts are stronger than external influences when a person has to make a decision.

Finally, morality is formulated according to how much someone and/or other people benefit from an action. The provocation of positive circumstances in someone's life, such as joy, pleasure, happiness etc., is very important, when having to make moral decisions and act somehow. On the other hand, obeying external rules and laws is also significant in order for a society to develop and live in harmony.

Undoubtedly, the previous observations create many occasions for discussion, especially concerning the role of school to children's morality. As it was mentioned in the abstract, the findings presented are part of an ongoing research for a doctoral study. The next steps of this research are to examine how teachers' perceptions and methods concerning moral education affect the development of children's morality and what the differentiations in contemporary multicultural classrooms (where heterogeneity is very high) are.

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