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ETHICS EDUCATION AND CURRICULUM PROPOSALS FOR THE CONSTRUCTION OF COMMON LIFE

Abstract: In this study, the fact that the ethics or moral education of today does not achieve its objective and falls behind the conditions of modern society and the global world will be argued and this opinion will be discussed in the case of Turkey. In today's world where the use of communication and media tools becomes rapidly widespread and influences societies in all the world, basing ethics merely on religious morality or social values is not only unrealistic but also conflicting. Therefore, it seems necessary to accept a universal base consisting of top priority values in which morals do not depend on the time, space, society or the individual. In this respect, this study will argue that ethical thinking and behaviour should be based on secular and global values instead of religious and traditional ones and structuring the curriculums accordingly will be suggested. This will also be in opposition to the micro-moral forms generated by postmodern thought and the relativization of the ethics.

Keywords: ethics education, modernism, globalization, religious morality, secular ethics.

Introduction

Education, besides its data transferring and skills developing functions, is a field of creation of consciousness. This consciousness includes ethical or moral decision-making and ethical action. So, one of the main aims of education is creating a base for a good life, living a right and moral life. In this regard, schools still have a great importance in shaping the future of humanity. But ethics or moral education taught in schools at present is not capable of reaching its real goal and is lacking in providing solutions for today's problems.

In recent years we have faced two important realities that affect all of our lives: globalization and postmodernism. The modern world goes through a global socialization. Information and communication technologies form the base of this new socialization model and media gets a central role in our lives. Societies open to social, cultural and economic influences take the place of the past's closed societies.

While a hundred years ago societies were based on commonness of national, cultural, traditional and religious values, today's societies have become progressively similar in life styles and consuming habits and this transformation makes national societies' terrains more indefinite, hybrid and pluralist.

Postmodernism, the phenomenon that has entered our lives with globalization, has started affecting almost all fields from policy to philosophy, education to science. This situation comes with new issues and it is related to every field of life as well. The new life style which emphasizes the individual rather than the society, highlights limitless freedom against social responsibility, basing itself on endless consumption and focusing on gratification that erodes the values of mankind. This erosion reveals once more the importance of ethics or moral education.

When evaluated within both global circumstances and the negative effects of postmodernism, it can be said that moral education taught in schools is insufficient – at least in Turkey. Considering moral education as just a part of religious education and tying it to traditional cultural values is a transitional and yet a confrontational solution. The thing we need in today's complicated relations network is a basic, uncomplicated education model which is based on common sense. Thus, problems which we face globally would take an important step towards resolving them on a global scale.

Today's Ethical Problems and the Concept of Universal Ethics

Although it is often ignored, one of the main goals of ethics education is to make a happy life possible. This is why the creation of happy individuals and societies have been associated with an ethics-based education since Ancient times. In short, a happy life refers to a life in which the individuals achieve their goals and participate harmoniously in the life of society. If we think about it in this context, life means to live with other people and this is only possible if one acts ethically or morally. However, this basic necessity seems to be forgotten today.

One of the most important reasons for this is the fact that modern society's moral or ethical responsibility is taken from the individual and melted into administrative and legal bureaucracy (Bauman 2001). The transfer of responsibility from the personal space to the institutional space, diminishes the individual responsibilities and makes it unnecessary for people to think about what is ethical or moral. This leads to a mechanization of society and deepens the abyss between individuals. This way the world turns into a place where almost no intimacy exists between people. Today, when modernism has become global, this situation is reflected in all societies and all relationships between individuals. Although globalization, which emerged as a model of economic integration, is responsible for societies becoming more and more similar, this similarity doesn't turn into intimacy. Furthermore, postmodernism, which is defined as the cultural context of globalization (Jameson 1991), makes way for extreme individualization and devalues society in favour of

the individual. In the past the idea of universalization showed the intention to build a good order for all humanity and referred to the global dissemination of a good change. But the global world of today does not only carry these attributes but also indicates to uncertainties. Therefore, the most important sense of the idea of globalization today is the uncertain, irregular and maverick nature of issues (Bauman 1998a).

At the same time this case points at a fractured identity, integrity and social life. The postmodern man, who entered our lives with a new definition, tries to establish his own spontaneous and independent life with all his power, without limiting himself with rules and measures (Funk 2013). The idea of devotion has not only lost its legitimacy but is also found unnecessary. People are not encouraged to reach moral ideals or maintain ethical values and they are not willing to push their own limits (Bauman 1998b). The only thing that consumers are steered to is consumption and with everything we consume we also consume part of our human values and responsibilities. We are only spectators in front of our TVs or computers. Things such as hunger, poverty, injustice and murder have become magazine subjects and the more we watch them the more insensitive we get. The manner in which these disasters are portrayed in the media, gradually strengthens the ordinary everyday ethical insensitivity (Bauman 1998a). This new form of socialization that dulls the sense of responsibility and solidarity leads to constant restlessness, feelings of insecurity and existential emptiness, even if we are not aware of it.

However, the desire for security is one of the most important needs and forms the basis of a society. This security doesn't refer to the security that is provided by the state but security between two subjects. This kind of security can only be achieved by dialogue. However, the concept that defines today's human relationships is not a dialogue but a monologue. Therefore, just like being inside a communication network does not create a dialogue, it also does not create real conditions for a relationship, such as commitment, responsibility and solidarity. What is important today is that everyone live their own reality. In this society, where nobody has the right to tell anybody what is good or bad, right or wrong, real or illusion, *anything goes* (Funk 2013). Whereas social theories are defined as impositions, the aim to reach an universal norm is denied. This structure, which makes individual pluralism possible, is problematic when it comes to define justice or ethics, for example. A large number of different definitions can be formulated and these definitions are all equally accepted.

This pessimistic and chaotic picture is a serious crisis for today's modern society. Education plays an important role in overcoming this crisis and it is necessary to fill the holes, left by the it, with humanity again. Optimistic expectations for the future need to be reconsidered on the basis of ethics. As Bauman said, "politicians completely killed utopias and yesterday's idealists have been made pragmatic today" (Bauman 2001, p. 11). But the goal of education goes beyond meeting the pragmatic needs of society and also creates ideals for humanity. Education should

create a utopia: it should point out the conditions for a humanitarian and ethical life, which will bring us to global happiness, in a stronger way. Even though today's art, literature and media drag the world into pessimism, education should show that there is a better alternative for humanity.

Although the above mentioned problems are typical of our era, they are closely connected to the ever-existing main issues of ethics, which are human rights, justice, rightness, peaceful cooperation, responsibility and solidarity. They only need to be approached in a new light according to today's conditions. Today's reality is that we live in a global order, this is why our problems need to be solved in the context of global ethics. Kant says: "The biggest problem for the human species is to achieve a society of citizens, to which the sanction of universal justice can be applied; nature forces the human species to solve this problem [...]. This problem is not only the hardest but also the last problem that will be solved by the human species" (Kant 1960, p. 36–37). This way Kant describes that during the search for universal ethics, an individual feels responsible for all humanity during his actions. Therefore, global ethics describe an ethical sensitivity and responsibility that covers all people in the world and goes beyond the individual and national ethical awareness.

Expressions such as "treat people like you want them to treat you", "never look at people as if they were tools, because they are not tools but the objective", "be honest", "don't kill" and "be fair", are accepted and believed to be right by nearly all societies and they do not need any rule of law or metaphysical framework in order to be accepted. The function of global ethics in this context is to give effect to these principles in many different societies, religions, beliefs or philosophies; to reevaluate present problems within the framework of existing values and suggest problems on a global level (Ceylan 2002). This solution will of course be possible with the help of a dialogue between individuals and societies. In this context Habermas claims that the theory of communicative action will not only develop a dialogue but will also offer a way out of the ethical dilemmas of modern society. According to Habermas, the self-centered and objectifying mind will be, with the help of this theory, replaced by intersubjectivity based on mutual recognition and a sensitive and selfless rationality towards the other. Even the still unfinished project of modernization will be completed on a basis of a communicative mind, which is based on the mutual agreement of subjects (Habermas 2013).

This ethical view on communication of Habermas also reminds us of a significant problem of advanced modern society: media-supported socialization. It is a one-way relation with mass media and in fact it cancels the need for human interaction (Funk 2013). Individuals have concentrated themselves on their own lives and rights so much that there is no communication platform that would enable generating ideas about common life or the future of humanity. This is why Bauman says that the most prominent victim of technology is the moral self (Bauman 1998b). The fact that tools have become objectives, pushes people and everything connected

to humanity to the background. The humanity ideal, placed into the centre of life by the Enlightenment might have even been replaced by tools.

This unhealthy dimension of technological development is not exclusively related to communication and media devices. The rapidly developing war technology of today is now able to wipe out humanity and even the whole planet in a short amount of time. If we add the insensitivity and extreme individualization of people to this situation it becomes even more pessimistic. Kant's recommendation for the "global citizenship law" besides state law and interstate law, seems to be important in this context (Habermas 1998). This kind of law, which is based on political and moral partnership will ensure a government of societies based on an ethical compromise and pave the way to an eternal dialogue. If an existing or proposed norm is beneficial for all humanity, it can be discussed in cooperation with all societies and within a dialogue. This dialogue, based on a relationship of mutual recognition and established with the others, will maintain the respect, peace and security for individuals and societies.

The thesis that the happiness and freedom of each of us is depends on the happiness and freedom of others is the biggest argument against the relativism, which is presented to us as a new value. If we ask what is good for us or for the others, we cannot reach a general unifying framework. The right thing to ask is what is equally good for all of us (Habermas 1990). For example, it cannot be accepted as right in any place or any time for a child to be denied education and childhood needs and be exploited for labor. Denying the truth of this statement contradicts reason. This is why a common ethical framework, based on the collective wisdom of all humanity is very important. This is only possible through education and starting from childhood. The longer ethical thinking and actions are being carried out, the healthier the society will become.

Moral Education in Turkey and its Deficiencies

As in many other societies, the idea that religion and morality are inseparable and that morality should be taught as a part of religious education, is also very common in Turkey. Moral education is structured as a direct extension of religious studies. The course taught from the beginning of 4th class in Elementary School until the 12th class of Middle School is called Religious Culture and Moral Knowledge. Thus, having a good moral is identified with being religious, or, better said, with being a good Muslim. The curriculum is almost solely focused on Islam, even based on a single sect of Islam. Only 3-4 pages in the textbook teach about other big religions and faiths (for instance in the textbooks of 8th and 9th grades: 1,5 pages for Judaism, 1 page for Christianity, a total of 1 page for beliefs such as Hinduism and Buddhism and only a few paragraphs for Atheism). It is frequently emphasized throughout the curriculum that Islam is the last religion and that the Qur'an is the only holy book that has been unchanged until today. This emphasis creates, even if

only indirectly, a hierarchical superiority amongst other religions and marginalizes the other (*Religious culture and moral knowledge textbooks*, 2015).

The curriculum is divided into six areas; “faith”, “worship”, “the prophet Muhammed”, “the Qur’an and interpretation”, “moral” and “religion and culture”. The moral part consists of “love, friendship and brotherhood, “behavior that needs to be avoided in Islam”, “religion and good moral” and “bad habits according to Islam” (*Religious culture and moral knowledge curriculum guide* 2010, p. 13–17). According to the curriculum the following moral objectives are supposed to be taught to students: understanding the role of religion by being moral, understanding the importance of being moral in individual and community life, being able to give examples from the life of the prophet Muhammed in terms of moral attitudes and behaviours praised in Islam, understanding the importance of exemplary behaviour of the prophet Muhammed for social life and learning that his words steer mankind to the good and the beautiful. Therefore it is said that the student will be a good and moral Muslim if he lives like the prophet Muhammed.

In the early 2000s, in a report on religious and moral education in Turkey it was stated that this religion and sect-centered education is insufficient for the postmodern and secularized world, discriminates other religions and does not show enough respect to the freedom of religion and conscience (Şaşmaz at al. 2011). In order to fix this situation Values Education has been added to the curriculum as of 2010. But this education, which has been carried out through different seminars and other activities, has become a part of religious and moral education and the teaching of religious values has become more dominant. The education of morality or ethics based on religion is of course not unique to Turkey. A morality/ethics programme based on religion is being implemented in many countries of the world. But the main problem with religion based morality education is that other religions or societies are being marginalized and that being moral is identified with being religious or being connected to a particular religion. Another important problem of moral education associated with religious teachings is the development of fear-based behaviour. “Obey without thinking or only do as commanded” makes the basis of ethics issues. For example, in terms of Islam the Qur’an does not only regulate religious rituals but it is also the most important source of regulating everyday life. According to the Qur’an people’s thoughts and actions are organized in five categories: expressly forbidden (*haram*), expressly enjoined (*wajib* or *fard*), disliked but not prohibited (*makruh*), recommended but not enjoined (*mandub*), and those undiscussed, hence permitted through silence (*mubah*) (Mathewes 2010, p. 77). This way, thinking about one’s own actions and the power of decision making is completely removed and each step is connected with the rules. Thus, what is achieved is not internalization but formal acceptance. This represents an obstacle for children with immature characters in terms of developing positive behaviour.

The right ethical way is not to offer people blind obedience but prepare them to make their own decisions. It is the creation of a conscious level in which one makes

the right decision in every situation and acts ethically. Helping someone poor is without doubt a good action, but what makes this behaviour ethical is not that it is commanded in religious texts but the action itself. This question, which is also discussed in Socrates *Euthyphro* Dialogue, has revealed one of the most important problems of the history of philosophy: “Is conduct right because the gods command it, or do the gods command it because it is right?” If the right action is only right because God has commanded it, then we don’t need to think about it. There is only a command that must be respected (Rachel 2003, p. 50–51). But we mustn’t forget that the content of the right behaviour shows differences amongst religions and their interpretations. The second option is that God already commands what is right. In this situation the right thing is independent from God or any command of any religion and is true in itself everywhere and every time.

This does not mean that there is nothing supporting the moral development in the holy books. However, the emphasis lies on dependence instead of independence of religion, promoting fear instead of courage, connecting good and evil to a reward and punishment system and creating an obstacle in self-realization of people and in ethical maturation. If this maturity is not achieved, people will remain passive in all situations and will require a rule imposed from the outside. Ethics, meanwhile, require the person to be ethical and think critically. It requires to be always prepared in the face of changing conditions and have enough knowledge to make the right decisions. This is because conditions of people have continuously changed throughout history and along with the changes new problems emerge. Thus, a conflict arises between the old and the new and the old rules have to be revised and reinterpreted. This is how an ethical investigation begins. Nevertheless, it does not seem possible anymore to reinterpret our religious teachings or create new rules for every new ethical problem, because the socio-economic conditions of today are very different from the socio-economic conditions of the time when the religions emerged (Kurtz 2008). For example, Islam and other religions do not give us answers on which attitude to adopt when it comes to global warming, what the best economical system is or how to deal with the increasing technology addiction. In fact, they give us inhuman answers on subjects such as polygamy, racism and slavery, which we cannot reconcile with moral or ethical behaviour nowadays. This is because they reflect their own historical and social conditions.

For all these reasons the moral or ethics education based on religious education is far removed from today’s problems; it displays an approach that is disconnected from life, suggests that morality or ethics cannot pass beyond the interpretation of religious rules and is insufficient in solving the problems of the new generations. Such an approach in a country like Turkey, where more than one ethnicity, religion and sect exist, is not only not connective but sometimes can also cause discriminating problems. In fact, national borders have lost their meaning in today’s world and more random encounters and more pluralistic relationship between subjects have started to emerge. This is why a more universal perspective is needed.

Ethics Education for all Humanity

So how can we achieve an ethical set of values based on humanity's collective wisdom instead of religious obedience and coercion of traditional norms and how can we create a curriculum for this purpose? In this context, we need to focus on the following basic questions: What are the common values of humanity? Which knowledge is important to have for humanity? Is a common good for humanity possible? Can honesty, fairness, kindness and equality be defined in a way so that it doesn't change according to time, space, society or person? Focusing on these questions and shaping the ethical education around these will help us solve the social problems of today.

Before the religions, as we know them today, emerged in the world, people thought about how ethical or moral life should be lived, and ethical philosophy, for example, has dealt with it as a humanitarian problem. The most important responsibility of today's educators is to also see it as a humanitarian problem and to educate individuals who protect their culture and values, but who at the same time think of it as a part of the world and act accordingly. This is why ethical education shouldn't be taught as an extension of religious studies but restructured with human rights and democratic values in mind. Moreover, ethical thinking and acting should become a habit rather than being seen as a mandated lesson and spread throughout the curriculum. Concepts such as good, evil, truth, justice, virtue and happiness shouldn't be affected by daily politics and not relativized. In order to form a connection between thought and action, ethical education should be integrated above all in philosophy, literature and art classes and works that reflect humanity's common sense should be reflected upon.

For example, characters encountered in works by Dostoyevski, Hugo or Camus will create an ethical questioning for students and make them think about what virtue, good or evil is. He/she will witness the devastation of war inflicted on humanity in a painting of Picasso and hear the notes of peace in Beethoven's music. He/she will learn that Antigone's ethical thinking and actions are not only valid for the Antique world but are immortal and thus understand the importance of achieving a high value for humanity. He/she will be able to question what virtue is in the *Menon* Dialogue and will think about justice. We can find many different examples in different regions of the world. We can benefit from ethical teachings about concepts such as kindness and truth, which are not restricted to a society, religion or ideology. The views of Socrates and Kant in the Western world, the teachings of Yunus Emre and Celaleddin Rumi in the Eastern World and the narratives of Confucius or Buddha in the Far East look at humanity as a whole and point to our common destiny. Our aim should be to protect these common values and pass it to future generations as the value of all humanity.

These values can of course be strengthened with religions. But we shouldn't be integrating the teaching of ethics or moral into any religion but we should ensure

that all religions are the source of all ethical teachings. If the good and the truth are similar for all mankind, they also should have the same characteristics in religions. Therefore, what is moral in a religious belief should be moral for all humanity. In this regard, the confrontational and alienating aspects of religion should be set aside and joint aspects in goodness and humanity should be taken into account. Mutual respect and understanding should be encouraged and all beliefs and views that consider the individual as actual value should be respected and accepted equally.

This cooperation, which is defined as “teaching the human condition” by Edgar Morin will find and unveil the real values of humanity within the rich diversity of individuals, societies and cultures. It will provide an extended understanding beyond one’s own individuality and society and this will bring us to the ethics of the human species. We first see ourselves in the universe, then a country, a society and a culture. Realizing all these aspects of ours and improving the education process in this direction will pave the way to a universal responsibility and solidarity. This will in a way be a learning process for living, sharing and establishing proper communication. Morin speaks of the creation of four types of consciousness in the education environment for the development of this process: “anthropological consciousness”, i.e. defining our unity in diversity; “ecological consciousness”, i.e. underlining the common life with other living beings on earth; “earth citizenship consciousness”, i.e. developing a sense of responsibility and solidarity with all humanity; and the “dialogical consciousness” based on criticism and self-criticism, which gives us the chance to know each other (Morin 1999). To have command over these information during the teaching process will not only ensure development of science or intelligence but will also ensure an emotional and ethical development.

When we look at what humanity has become, we could suggest that the primary education target is to ensure the development of consciousness, because there is no scientific or technological value that can be put in its place. Similar to that, normative regulations are also far from creating consciousness or value. This is why an education, which internalizes ethical values from childhood, seems necessary for the future world. Today many psychologists and pedagogues argue that the human personality is mostly shaped during the process of pre-school education. This is why it is important to start ethical education from early childhood and strengthen it in the future. While academic deficiencies can be resolved during the process, lack of awareness about ethical and human rights is more difficult to solve. As Aristotle said; when we make a habit of acting virtuously we become virtuous, we learn to act fairly to people that act fair (Aristotle 2008). This however needs experience and time. The sooner this experience is developed, the sooner it is started and the longer it is applied, the easier it is to create a system with common values.

Conclusion

Just as humanity is based on a common origin, it also shares a common destiny and purpose. The most general definition of this purpose is to live in harmony. Instead of seeing our differences as problems, focusing on the common points of our problems and thinking that we are separate from each other, knowing that we are connected to each other will create a more livable world. This is why our aim should be to accept humanity as a value and to create values for humanity. The purpose of the schools in this regard should be to educate all humanity. To establish schools not only as scientific but also ethical institutions should be the top priority of today's educators. An ethics training supported by art, literature, philosophy and cultural diversity will reintegrate humanist principles and values into our lives and enable us to reach rational ethical wisdom. The next step is to spread this ethical wisdom to all communities in the world in order to create a common consensus.

To build an intercultural ethical awareness among individuals, societies and religions, is the main task for today's societies. Just like our countries come together for economic and political cooperation they should also come together for ethical cooperation. In fact, this is an even more important and urgent task. A universal ethical proclamation lead by educators can set the basic conditions for an international ethics training and a curriculum can be created in this context. As soon as the idea of a universal ethics training is accepted by different societies, world peace will no longer be an utopia. This is the first and foremost lesson to be submitted by educators.

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EDUKACJA ETYCZNA I INNE PROPOZYCJE SZKOLNEGO PROGRAMU NAUCZANIA W KONSTRUOWANIU ŻYCIA WSPÓLNEGO

Streszczenie: Niniejszy artykuł przedstawia tezę, że współczesne wychowanie moralne oparte na religii nie spełnia swojej roli z powodu braku dostosowania do warunków społecznych i złożoności problemów nękających obecnie świat. Teza ta została omówiona na przykładzie Turcji. W czasach szerokiego rozpowszechnienia *mass* mediów i innych narzędzi społecznej komunikacji opieranie etyki wyłącznie na moralności religijnej jest nie tylko nierealistyczne, ale może również prowadzić do dodatkowych konfliktów na tle ideologicznym. Dlatego niezbędne wydaje się poszukiwanie innej uniwersalnej podstawy dla budowania wspólnego życia ludzi o różnych światopoglądach i wierzeniach. Za najważniejsze autorka uważa dążenie do uniwersalnego pojęcia moralności, które będzie niezależne od czasu, miejsca, społeczeństwa czy jednostki. W związku z tym jest ona zdania, że etyczny sposób myślenia i zachowania powinien być oparty raczej na wartościach świeckich niż na religijnych. W dalszej kolejności postuluje wprowadzenie do szkolnych programów nauczania edukacji etycznej ukierunkowanej racjonalistycznie. Wyraża przy

tym sprzeciw wobec koncepcji etycznych sformułowanych przez myślicieli postmodernistycznych, którzy relatywizują moralność.

Słowa kluczowe: nauczanie etyki, modernizm, globalizacja, moralność religijna, etyka świecka.

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