



Developing Moral Capital in Schools

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Abstract

An abundance of models and approaches have been formed to develop school effectiveness. Schools have been analyzed with respect to psychological, sociological, cultural and administrative dimensions. Social and cultural capitals- as the recently developed nonmonetary forms of capital-have been investigated with respect to school organizations. Nonetheless so far there has been no in-depth research on moral capital in schools as an original concept. In the present research, the concept of moral capital has been defined; and the interrelationship between the development of moral environment at schools and moral capital as well as moral leadership has been analysed.

Keywords

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Introduction

The rapid global transformation on the rise has made it difficult for people to keep pace with this change and put them face to face with a multitude of adaptation problems. The changes experienced in technological, social, economic and cultural structures have been influential on the attitudes and value judgments of people and led a split-up in moral approaches among people. Moral values compose a guiding framework for us in determining whether our conducts are right or not. The loss of the significance of values or the problem of frugality turns our moral judgments upside down and leads to a chaos.

This rapid social transformation triggers a substantial change in the structure of schools as a moral system. As moral systems, schools experience difficulty in securing moral stability. The hardships confronted by schools in the formation of moral culture push students into a value conflict in which case students go through ethical dilemmas in determining the right and the wrong.

An individual's intelligence, capacity and character are effective in his/her moral development. Moral maturity or the person's resolution to be good is influential on his/her education, career and financial rise. Moral capital is a type of capital that is effective on moral attitude, dignity and social-acceptance. Moral capital is a capital type that can be multiplied, invested, earned, lost or possessed (Swartz, 2009).

Once such definition of moral capital is acknowledged then this question gains importance: Is the possessed moral capital linked to the production of social inequalities? The absence of normative codes created by poverty, the effect of poverty on physical, mental development and health are all influential on an adolescent's moral life and even more has a guiding effect over his/her decision making process. The impact of poverty on adolescents is not merely physical; this effect extends over

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to a lack of willingness in participating different daily activities and also creates a structural inequality. The development of moral capital seems to be related to economic capital for impoverished youth.

The Development of Moral Capital Concept

The definition of morality in relation to an economic concept is also closely linked to the economic meaning of the investment on moral values. Since moral capital contributes to establishing a sphere of trust, it creates a favorable setting for fiscal investment as well. The blockage of moral capital against the socially disapproved acts like crime and violence demonstrates its role as a moral insurance (Godfrey, 2005).

In the analysis of social and cultural structure of schools, capital types have been employed. In the past, the concept of capital was immediately associated with fiscal or monetary capital. However, in recent years other than economic capital non-financial forms of capital have also been opened to discussion. Bordieu lists three types of capital mainly as economic, social and cultural capitals (Bordieu, 1986). Economic capital includes money, structures and commodities. Social capital integrates social values formed by social webs and relations (Coleman, 1988; Putnam, 1995; Çelik and Ekinci, 2012). Cultural capital is described as an educational investment internalizing an individual's specific behavior, directing the knowledge, inclination and habits within the process of socialization (Vryonides, 2007, p.868).

Cultural capital directs the formation of educational policies aimed at eliminating the inequalities in education. The children belonging to high social-status families make further use of educational system compared to the children belonging to low social-status families. Cultural capital poses a risk for the children belonging to low social-status families (Olneck, 2000, Reay, 2004; Khalifa, 2010).

Valverde has added the concept of moral capital to non-economic forms of capital. Moral capital is the capacity to construct an appropriate social structure to influence others via moral decisions and acts, managing the perceptions related to the good and bad and changing moral decisions. Moral capital is deemed to be a long-term investment aiming to develop moral values.

Moral capital is the capacity to construct an appropriate social structure to influence others via moral decisions and actions, managing the perceptions related to the good and the bad and changing moral decisions. The individual is positioned according to the moral trust others feel towards him/her. Moral capital is a social production capacity based on the competency to distinguish the good from the bad. In putting moral decisions into practice friends, religious organizations and family play a crucial role. Unlike economic capital, moral capital is not an earned capital. A long-term investment is required to develop this capital type (Lisenberg, 1991, p.301).

Moral capital determined by Varlarde is described as a hard-to-find moral value accumulation and conceptualized as the maximization of a society's and the individuals' moral capitals. Echoing the concept of cultural capital which Bordieu defines as a social process, Valverde has developed a more naturalized concept structuring the position and habits. There are certain moral rules in society that lead our conducts. Valverde defines the characteristics of moral economy by delineating the concept of moral capital and he underscores that through social organizations moral rules are refined and reflected on a person's behaviors (Valverde, 1990).

Valverde's concept of moral capital is closely linked to the concept of benevolence. In the 19th century benevolence was practiced as a long-term project in the impoverished townships to improve moral education. By rendering a small size financial investment to moral capital, benevolent people have actually invested to the character development of people to gain moral benefit in particular. The main objective of benevolence is to be able to develop moral capital and manage moral capital through internalizing by creating a transformation in the conducts of poor citizens. It is considered that moral

devastation can be prevented through benevolence and reforming the personalities of poor individuals (Hier, 2002, p. 327).

Moral judgments regarding the moral features of poor people are reshaped through moral capital offered by benevolent people. Valverde argues that moral regulations are substantially important in order to stop moral devastation and determine the forms of conduct people must follow. Moral capital does not only enable a compulsory obedience to moral principles but also develops, practice and internalizes the appropriate moral codes (Hier, 2002).

Kane has treated moral capital with respect to political leadership and analyzed the behaviors of political leaders. Kane defines moral capital as a reliable and effective form of service structured upon basic values, tenets and goals of any given society. Likewise, moral capital can be on personal and organizational levels. The development of moral capital is particularly worthy for politicians who recurrently attempt to create an impact on moral perceptions of society (Kane, 2001).

Moral Environment

Moral environment is defined as the kind of setting where individuals socially coexist. The roots of the concept of environment date back to biological research and picture the relationship between individual and environment (such as climate and environmental pollution). Social environment reflects a person's web of human relations. A number of environmental studies manifest that the environment affecting human behaviors possesses a complex system of relations. Bronfenbrenner has analyzed the impact of environment on human life within the theory of ecologic system. Bronfenbrenner developed a four-level system theory in human development. The system comprises of the microsystem (immediate context of work, home and school), the mesosystem (interrelationships between microsystems), the exosystem (institutions and practices affecting youth) and the macrosystem (social and cultural contexts) (Bronfenbrenner, 1992, p.226).

There is a microsystem where each individual lives in. Microsystem has an impact over a person's acts and actions and the individual interacts with this microsystem all the time. Students' microsystem consists of home, school and immediate social environment. The association student forms between his/her family, friends, teachers and social environment all take place within this micro setting.

Macrosystem integrates belief systems, sources, lifestyles, environmental threats, facilities, life concerning choices and social change examples. Economic policies, poverty and their effect on school quality, educational inequality, injustice, discrimination and similar factors all constitute an individual's macrosystem. The ideology, culture, the experiences in human rights, cultural practices of a society are all effective on the macrosystem of the individual (Swartz, 2010).

There is a close relationship between micro, macro, meso and exosystems. The microsystem of the individual is a small part of mesosystem. Mesosystem represents the relations amongst home, school, environment and society. Exosystem is under the effect of microsystem and macrosystem. Justice system, government policies, parents' workplace conditions, economy, health and social services and mass communication tools make of ecosystem (Swartz, 2010).

Ecologic system theory underlines the presence of much complex factors that are effective on the moral development of a human being. Socio-cultural factors are effective on the mental development of a person. Similarly, moral development of a human being is also shaped by means of such socio-cultural factors (Hertzke, 1998). Moral knowledge and moral decision-making behavior of any student are closely related to the moral ecology s/he lives in.

Moral life at schools is sustained within a moral ecology. Whenever the moral ecology at schools is disrupted moral life conditions also deteriorate in which case the likelihood of performing immoral acts rises. Schools with appropriate moral ecology strive to offer better moral living conditions for their students.

Moral development theories attempt to elucidate a child's moral development through narrating short stories. The relevant moral development theories of Piaget and Kohlberg are grounded on the method of moral story narration. In these theories the moral development of an adolescent has not been analyzed with respect to environmental variables such as poverty but has been directly associated with physical development. In moral development the surrounding of the child has been taken as a permanent environment and external factors influential on moral development have not been included in it (Damon, 1984).

Poverty is deemed to be a complex factor affecting moral responsibility roles and decision-making behaviors of an individual. Poverty creates a substantial conflict between moral beliefs of an individual and the consequences of his/her behaviors. The poverty young people go through also shapes their cognitive lives. Relevant studies put forward that poverty has brought about physical resistance, depression, anxiety, despair, weariness, impassivity and dissatisfaction (Evans and English, 2002, p. 1238-1244).

In moral aspect, the following question needs to be answered: Are morally poor adolescents more problematic compared to middle class adolescents? From an ecological perspective, it can be concluded that financially poor adolescents are more problematic. In terms of social class it is observed that compared to middle class youngsters, poor adolescents are closer to higher levels of risk behavior and crime ratios (Swartz, 2010, p. 315).

Schools' mission of raising good students gains increasing importance each new day. A good student should not merely be defined as a student having acquired certain knowledge and skills. A good student is also categorized as the one acting in compliance with moral values.

The increasing level of moral deterioration in society spoils the moral ecology at schools. Moral deterioration causes the death of an individual's character. The death of character ignites the emergence of immoral conducts such as drug use, alcohol addiction, theft and fraud, murdering and several other misdeeds.

Investing on Moral Capital

In a school with weak moral values it is not possible to build a moral capital accumulation in an expected level. Presently the mission of schools to raise individuals performing morally approved actions has been put into jeopardy to a great extent. Specifically postmodern ethics deny the existence of universal moral values. Postmodern ethics claim that there are no universal moral values. Postmodernism advocates a pluralist point of view. Each single individual has the freedom of selecting his/her own truth. Universal ethical principles are the ethical codes dominant powers enforce upon people.

Postmodern ethics argue that universal ethical principles of modernism are presented to people as an approach enforcing certain forms of behavior upon people. "I do not care about the moral acts of others, I am not a guardian of others" approach is regarded as a basic paradigm of postmodern ethics. In modern society allegedly immoral behaviors can be accepted as moral in a postmodern approach in which case an ethical conflict arises. Rejection of universal ethical principles brings moral education and development of moral values into discussion (Bauman, 1993). Rejection of universal ethical principles leaves moral education mission of schools in the shade. Modern schools are left vulnerable in the face of postmodern ethics. In a world that is becoming increasingly individualized and constituted by people living under greater risk, a critical problem of ethical turndown has been encountered. In a world where moral capital has lost its meaning, development of moral capital stands out as the basic educational policy.

Rather than producing outputs, the schools are expected to generate meanings. Developing moral capital at schools shall be aidful in creating a strong ethical climate. In a school where ethical principles are clear-cut and basic values are adopted it is likely that moral capital shall develop. Development of moral capital necessitates that school principals and teachers perform as powerful role models.

The schools lack a solid moral philosophy in terms of investing on moral capital. The chances that a school with no aim of being virtuous invests on moral capital are rather weak. Moral philosophy of a school is shaped in line with the moral philosophy of the school principal and the teachers. The teachers who fail to be approved role models morally lessen moral capital of a school. In schools that have adopted the mission of being virtuous, the development of moral capital bears strategic significance. A virtuous school offers its students morally good samples. Moral stories experienced at schools assist in sharing students' common moral values (Çelik, 2011; Firat, 2010)).

In developing moral capital at schools two critical factors are foregrounded the first of which is school culture and the second is moral leadership. School culture is helpful in the formation of a favorable social and cultural setting for moral capital. Since moral capital is created parallel to moral values it is necessary that school culture should back up the development of moral values. Other than that the school personnel's moral capital can be raised by means of an effective moral leadership conduct. In the development of moral capital, personal dimension is formed by moral leadership and organizational dimension is formed by the school culture. School culture factor independently is not effective in the development of moral capital. In addition to school culture an effective moral leadership can further enrich the schools in terms of moral capital.

Moral capital which develops parallel to the association between moral culture and moral leadership at schools is pictured below. Four separate moral capital types are observed. At schools the highest level of moral capital is formed in the first box where the moral culture is strong and the level of moral leadership is high. On the other hand, the lowest level of moral capital takes place in the fourth box where moral culture is weak and the level of moral leadership is low. In the second and third boxes there exists mid-level moral capital. The schools must aim at developing high level moral capital and thus schools must be transformed into a structure where moral culture is strong and additionally moral leadership is effective.

		MORAL LEADERSHIP	
		Yüksek	Düşük
MORAL CULTURE	Strong	I High Moral Capital	II
	Weak	III	IV Low Moral Capital

Figure 1. The effect of moral leadership and moral culture on developing moral capital

Moral capital is associated with economic structure (Ernesto & Tervio, 2013). Moral capital affects the economic structure to a considerable extent. Banks (2006) clarifies the connection between moral capital and economic structure in relation to the concept of moral economy. Banks argues that economic activities are directed within the framework of moral values and norms. To illustrate, market connection is regarded as a relation of trust. Decision-making behavior of clients is determined via moral values (values such as integrity, trust and responsibility). The capital needed to operate economic structure in compliance with moral values is acknowledged to be moral capital.

Schools are democratic organizations established to meet the educational needs of a society. Education bears a moral dimension as well. The objective is to help the students gain certain values while rendering educational services (Wong, 1998). Schools transmit moral capital to students and support the development of the society's moral capital in parallel direction. At schools only an effective moral leadership can guarantee the development of moral capital and transmission of this capital to the students.

Sergiovanni has introduced a set of conceptual definitions of leadership. Sergiovanni points out that the form of bureaucratic leadership is related to the codes, work definitions and outputs that aim to control teacher and student behaviors. Bureaucratic leadership has little impact on the development of moral capital. Psychological leadership is associated with motivation and human relations skills. In psychology-based leadership families and students are motivated to ensure full development of students' personality. In the type of leadership based on technical and rational authority, teaching and learning are emphasized. In technical-rational leadership developing teacher's teaching skills are highly prioritized. Sergiovanni underlines that moral leadership is based on moral authority. A moral leader renders support to the moral development of the teacher and the students and strives to build a moral culture at school (Sergiovanni, 1992, Greenfield, 2004, Early, 2008).

Conclusion

Schools that aim to transmit the knowledge of modern age are increasingly moving away from viewing themselves responsible for the moral development of children. Do schools really bear no responsibility towards the moral development of children? We are trying to educate the students who have elevated mathematics, physics, history or foreign language skills together with violence-oriented or low-personality students under the roof of the same school. In such an age when moral capital is increasingly depleted the approaches such as "Leaving a better virtuous school to students" or "Preserving moral values of each single child" remain as nothing but naive wishes.

Schools are not or should not be profit-seeking commercial organizations. Being educational institutions, schools are expected to function to prioritize public benefit. Other than assisting students in developing their knowledge and skills, schools must also strive to help them gain certain moral values.

Why are schools so reluctant to develop moral capital? School principals and teachers are mostly engaged in the teaching dimension since a school's academic success is basically determined via its achievement in teaching dimension. The ratio of successful students in exams is taken as the indicator of a school's academic brilliance. Investment on moral capital is pushed to secondary position after the aim of increasing the level of educational success. Swartz has put forth that moral capital is tightly linked to social inequalities. Failure of schools to make sufficient moral capital investment is effective on the absence of moral rules amidst poor students and the improper moral decisions they take.

The schools have not been adequately analyzed in relation to nonfinancial forms of capital. Moral capital is considered to be quite an original concept that can be utilized in the analysis of schools. Issues such as success of schools, forming moral culture, trusted school model, discipline problems at schools are the kinds of topics that deserve reanalysis in terms of moral capital.

Moral capital at schools calls for a long-term investment. School principals, teachers, students and parents are expected to cooperate to ensure the development of moral capital. If schools develop and generalize the kind of values that can form moral culture, then a viable moral setting for moral capital can be created. Developing moral capital at schools foregrounds the moral leadership role of school principals and teachers.

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