

THE ECONOMIC CRISIS, PERFORMANCE MODELS AND VALUE-BASED EDUCATION

Ana-Maria GRIGORE*, Andreea MITROI**

***Motto:** The significant problems we face cannot be solved at the same level of understanding where we were when we created them.*

Albert Einstein

***Abstract.** Moral capitalism will replace the present brutal and merciless capitalism when we are able to look above our own interests, considering them from a systemic perspective.*

Moral capitalism cannot arise from nothing. The way in which moral norms are absorbed and implemented is determined by the familial and social context that we inhabit. People should learn to be „good” or behave in a moral way. We are not born like this, but we are born with a certain capacity to learn and understand the moral rules of behaviour.

The educational system should get rid of the perennial mentality of individualism and its emphasis on effectiveness at any cost, and focus on the appreciation of values like the respect for other peers, other cultures, and the environment.

***Keywords:** moral crisis, moral capitalism, education, value-based education.*

1. Introduction

They say that a near-death experience makes one re-evaluate their priorities and values. The world economy has just undergone such an experience. The crisis has brought to light not only the flaws of the ruling economic model, but also the flaws of our society.

Much has been written about how the financial sector indulged in mindless risks and how this and the resulting fiscal deficits have seriously afflicted the economy; however, little has been recorded on the emergence

* Hyperion University of Bucharest, 169 Calea Călărașilor, St., Bucharest, Romania, e-mail: anagrig27@gmail.com

** Hyperion University of Bucharest, 169 Calea Călărașilor, St., Bucharest, Romania, e-mail: amitroi@yahoo.com

of a fundamental „moral deficit”, which appears to be more serious and even more difficult to correct than the financial problems. The incessant pursuit of profit and placing one’s interest before everything seem to have failed in attaining the dreamt prosperity; instead, these have unquestionably contributed to the outgrowth of the moral deficit (Stiglitz, 2010).

2. The Spiritual Crisis and the Moral Capitalism

The current economic crisis is actually a spiritual crisis (Zohar, 2009). This translates to a complete lack of vision for our future development, due to a very low spiritual capital.

Wall Street was responsible for its own death, a sort of negligence suicide. It lived and died on account of the unleashed force of the market capitalism. The financial centre collapsed under its own excesses, the best examples being John Belushi, Jimi Hendrix, Janis Joplin or Jim Morrison (Young, 2009).

It is also worth remarking that the present crisis represents the most recent and serious consequence of the way in which the importance of ethics and responsibility have been neglected in the decision making process of the business environment.

The rush to make money has led to dysfunctional financial markets, which has eventually caused the great financial crisis of 2008. Therefore, it should now be a lesson of what can happen to an economic system dominated by greed and personal interests.

In 1991, Pope John Paul II revealed his vision of the world since the fall of the Soviet bloc. He clearly suggested that although Communism had come to an end, it had not been substituted by the clean capitalism. He denounced the ‘consumer society’ as attempting to demonstrate that it can satisfy people’s material needs better than Communism, while excluding spiritual values. Consequently, the Pope supported the idea of a ‘moral’ capitalism.

Along the same line, it becomes evident that if one’s primary values are utterly materialistic, everything will be weighed in dollars and cents. As a result, the obsessive quest for material gain has been conducive to short-term thinking and focus on personal interests. Today, man is motivated by the desire to possess, not by ideals. At the same time, the money-oriented culture fathers cynicism and indifference to life’s tragedies and people’s needs.

Moral capitalism implies that business people use their decision making power to analyze and balance their own urges, like greed and other

temptations. It also connotes that virtue and personal interests are increasingly interdependent.

Moral capitalism cannot exact spiritual perfection, yet it only requires our uninterrupted effort to surpass primary urges. It much relies on our humanity and capacity to activate the divine side of this passing world and use our virtues to direct passions.

Ridderstrale and Nordstrom wrote in their “Karaoke Capitalism” (2007) that ‘leaders face the challenge of transforming *bureaucracies* into *amorocracies*. Bureaucracy came from the French *bureau*, meaning office. The new organization comes from the Italian *amore*. It is an organization based on passion and love’.

According to the same authors, ‘all extraordinary achievements depend on passion – in sports, art, politics, business, etc. Certainly, successful companies have core capabilities that determine what they can do. Most organizations also have core opportunities reflecting what is possible to do. But more important than anything else are the core passions, what people in organizations actually care about doing.’

In a 2009 interview, Danah Zohar posits that ‘corporate social responsibility is the term that people use when they mean compassion. Every corporation is for CSR but they don’t usually practise it. But if you really are compassionate (which doesn’t mean pitying people but feeling [empathy] for them) you are going to be much better at relating to your employees and the wider community.’

Danah Zohar also underlines the fact that moral capitalism cannot emerge from nothing. It is our full responsibility to make good things happen. Family and society influence the way in which moral norms are acquired and put into practice. People have to learn how to be good. They are not born good, but come to life with a certain capacity to be so.

The present article upholds the opinion that education is the surest and most powerful long-term way of solving this fundamental issue of our epoch. It is necessary that moral values be included in the curriculum. Education is an efficient weapon. School ought to eliminate the mentality oriented to individualism and effectiveness at all costs. Education can be a means for people to return to real values, such as the respect shown to other peers, other cultures, as well as the environment. One of the solutions could be the complex and humanist approach of man, which includes the attempt of developing all forms of human intelligence, not only the rational one.

In his 'The 8th Habit: From Effectiveness to Greatness', Stephen Covey enumerates four types of intelligence: mental (IQ), physical (PQ), emotional (EQ), and spiritual (SQ).

The spiritual intelligence is the most important of all, as it guides the other three types of intelligence. According to Danah Zohar, 'SQ is the ability to access higher meanings, values, abiding purposes, and unconscious aspects of the self and to embed these meanings, values, and purposes in living a richer and more creative life [...] It was the intelligence that guided men and women like Churchill, Gandhi, Nelson Mandela, Martin Luther King Jr., and Mother Teresa. The secret of their leadership was their ability to *inspire* people, to give them a sense of something worth struggling for.'

Danah Zohar and Ian Marshall point out in 'SQ – Spiritual Intelligence, The Ultimate Intelligence' that 'unlike IQ, which computers have, and EQ, which exists in higher mammals, SQ is uniquely human and the most fundamental of the three. It is linked to humanity's need for meaning; an issue very much at the forefront of people's minds [...] SQ is what we use to develop our longing and capacity for meaning, vision and value. It allows us to dream and to strive. It underlies the things we believe in and the role our beliefs and values play in the actions that we take and the shape we give to our lives.'

The highest forms that these four types of intelligence take are: vision for the mental intelligence, discipline for the physical intelligence, passion for the emotional intelligence, and conscience for the spiritual intelligence.

As stated by Thomas Jefferson, 'the moral sense, or conscience, is as much a part of man as his leg or arm. It is given to all human beings in a stronger or weaker degree, as force of members is given them in a greater or less degree. It may be strengthened by exercise [...]'

3. Education Today

Theoretically, there is a lot more education today than it was in the past. Practically, this is contradicted by so many instances of degradation that one can witness nowadays: more greed, selfishness, lack of sincerity and integrity. Unfortunately, education does no longer represent emancipation, ennoblement and evolution.

The educational system is wrongly directed: it aims at shallow acquisition, based on information intake, instead of developing the individual as a human being. Overall, the system is focused on material results, while the spiritual factor is neglected, which clearly encourages negative

human features like jealousy, hate and rivalry. Kindness, compassion or honesty are forgotten virtues.

In 'Moral Values and Higher Education', Dennis L. Thomson emphasizes that university ought to 'replace customary morality by reflective morality' if it really wants to approach moral values.

Furthermore, the moral education available through the customary morality can be compared to microwave cooking: it provides one in a few minutes what reflective morality can accomplish only after long and often excruciating reassessment. Dennis L. Thomson concludes in a suggestive manner that 'for customary morality, there is no wrestling with the angel in the dark night of the soul.'

Science is policy, not a belief, as physicist J. J. Thomson tries to emphasize. This underlies one of the important differences between morality and religion and, at the same time, tells education from instruction, with focus on conveying to learners what is considered to be a real belief. As far as instruction is concerned, there is a key at the end of every book. On the other hand, education is not concerned with storing and using information, nor does it focus on acquiring, processing and employing new data. To illustrate, chemistry education is a matter of teaching not chemistry, but how to be a chemist. As J. J. Thomson demonstrates, there is no doubt that the moral development in higher education aims beyond the moral instruction during one's childhood. It is not morality that is taught, but how to be a responsible and reflective militant of morality.

What is, under these circumstances, the true meaning of the word 'education'? Does education make you wiser? Happier? Content? Does it make you become a better person? Or is education much more than this?

The role of education is to enhance the value of the potential already existing in children.

Education is actually the process of removing the ignorance that covers one's inner knowledge (Krishna, 2008).

4. Value-Based Education

In transition countries like Romania, the communist regime had a minimum contribution to the value system. The values proposed by the communists were rejected or gradually lost their supporters. However, at the time of the communist fall, the collapse of the value system was not followed by the adoption of a new set of solid values. Therefore, people have had nothing to relate to, their behaviour and decisions being generally

steered by personal material interests. Such countries have fallen into a value crisis, a sort of general nihilism.

Consequently, today's Romania can benefit from a return to the values and traditions prior to the communist regime. People can regain what once offered them strength and trust; in turn, these can become the necessary reference points for taking the right decisions in the free market transactions (Young, 2009).

In a corrupt business environment, moral capitalism is out of the question. The reference points are no longer firm, while there is no belief in the existence of some truth. 'Anything works.'

Education needs to be enriched with VALUES. First, however, we need to understand the true meaning of 'values'. They are virtues, ideals and qualities, on which actions and beliefs are based. Values are primary principles, which shape our view of the world, attitude and behaviour. There are, on the one hand, the inner values: Love, Kindness, Compassion, Commiseration, Liking, Empathy; on the other hand, there are the values one must apply in daily activities: Punctuality, Discipline, Submission, Way of conduct, Compliance.

Why are values important?

- Values bring quality and meaning to life.
- Values reveal a person's identity and character.
- Values are a guideline to what one should do or should not do.
- Values help people to understand that what they are is more important than what they have.

Value-based education assists the development of the students' character, good conduct, moral integrity, self-discipline, compassion, love for all living things, responsibility, and many other positive qualities. Moreover, education makes students feel at their ease. Gradually, being disciplined, punctual, etc. becomes the students' second nature. Their academic performance improves, along with the capacity to spend more time studying.

Despite all this, the curriculum does not attach enough importance to the value-based education. Is it because the value-based education is not a course that can be printed and marked? Is it because the result of teaching cannot be seen immediately? Or is it because we think that students will acquire these values in one way or another and that it is not our responsibility to teach them these values?

So, what do we need?

We need urgent change from what we are to what we should become. It is necessary that school understand the value of education and of supplementary education. We need a complete metamorphosis of education and, accordingly, we should expect a butterfly emerging from the cocoon; however, improvement does not result in a butterfly, but only in a faster caterpillar.

Where does value-based education fit in the curriculum? Anywhere.

Students are not born with a set of values. They all the time acquire all types of values from parents, teachers, classmates.

It can therefore be said that, in a way, values are more readily acquired than learnt. Nevertheless, students need guidance to acquire the right values. Evidently, this is not a one man's job.

Indian professor Prasad Krishna believes that the value-based education is achievable through three types of approaches:

1. The independent approach – teaching fundamental values in an independent manner. The weekly schedule includes particularly chosen times, when students are voluntarily and deliberately induced fundamental values.

2. The integrated approach – the values and the subjects in the curriculum are conceptually brought together. For instance, while teaching the pendulum and its movement, an analogy can be drawn with the way in which our state of mind evolves.

3. The subtle approach – the teacher has such a personality that he/she is both a model and a mentor.

5. Conclusions

It has become a common cliché to notice that the Chinese pictograms for the word 'crisis' both read 'danger' and 'opportunity'. We have seen the danger. The question is: will we take the opportunity to escape the moral and ethical confusion that surrounds us, will we regain the balance between individualism and community, between means and ends and, above everything else, will we educate people ready to live up to a number of shared ideals and values?

REFERENCES

- [1] Covey, S., *The 8th Habit. From Effectiveness to Greatness*, Alfa Publisher, 2006
- [2] Krishna, P., *Education in Values – Strategies and Challenges for Value Education*, National Symposium on Engineering Education, India <http://cce.iisc.ernet.in/nsee/nsee05.html>
- [3] Ridderstrale, J. K. Nordstrom, *Karaoke capitalism, Management for humanity*, Public Publishing, 2007

- [4] Stiglitz, J., *In free fall, America, free market and global economic collapse*, Public Publishing, 2010.
- [5] Thomson, Dennis L., *Moral Values and Higher Education – a notion at risk*, Brighton Young University, 1991.
- [6] Young St., *Moral Capitalism – a reconciliation of private interests with public good*, Curtea Veche Publishing, 2009.
- [7] Zohar, D., I. Marshall, *SQ: Connecting with Our Spiritual Intelligence*, New York: Bloomsbury, 2000.
- [8] Zohar, D, *Adjust your spirit levels*, Australian Human Resources Institute, 2009, http://www.ahri.com.au/MMSdocuments/comms/hrm_magazine/hrm_2009/hrm_2009_04_meet_danah_zohar_spirit_levels.pdf.