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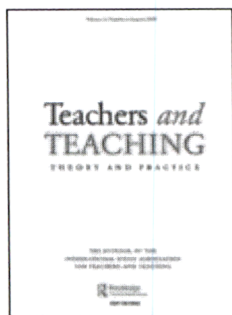
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A study of the Greek school teachers' moral judgment structures

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The purpose of the present paper is to examine the teachers' cognitive structures through moral judgment schemas, as well as whether the above-mentioned structures diversify among teachers, depending on education level, specialty, age, teaching experience, and gender. Moreover, another aim is to examine whether these cognitive structures can predict students' behaviors. Two hundred and fifty eight in-service teachers (men, $n = 83$; women, $n = 175$; $M_{\text{age}} = 41.24$, $SD = 8.06$; $M_{\text{experiences}} = 14.91$, $SD = 9.46$), in elementary ($n = 96$), and intermediate education level ($n = 158$), participated in the study. The results revealed that the primary education teachers' moral judgment is based on the moral concepts of the maintaining norms schema, while the one of those of secondary education is rather based on the postconventional schema. Furthermore, the results of the present study revealed that age, experience, and gender do not constitute causes of diversification of moral concepts and that the personal interest schema can forecast any irresponsible behaviors on the part of the students.

Keywords: teacher moral judgment; moral judgment schemas; moral education; psychology

Teachers constitute a component of the educational system in all countries, which – among other things – is responsible for the healthy mental development of all students. This means that – in the framework of teaching – teachers, apart from their responsibility to upgrade students' knowledge, are also liable to contribute to the strengthening of the students' character. This pivotal role placed on teachers within the educational procedure has often been stressed, since the teachers' knowledge and skills are factors which greatly affect both learning (Darling-Hammond, 1998) and students' moral development (Chang, 1994). According to Campbell (2003), 'the ethical dimensions of the teachers' professional practice inevitably influence the overall moral and ethical climate in schools' (p. 28).

In the literature concerning the way in which moral development is achieved within school, opinions are contradictory (Ryan, 1992). Head (1997) maintained that moral education is not something that can be covered by a specific course, but a thorough school approach is necessary, in which practice keeps pace with theory. Another viewpoint maintained that moral development is the result of teaching procedures (e.g., Cummings, Dyas, Maddux, & Kochman, 2001). Teaching has been described as 'moral by nature' (Chang, 1994, p. 81), and this is because schools constitute a place

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where ethics is taught in several ways, both implicit and explicit, i.e., by means of the things that cannot be said but are rather implicit as well as by the things that are clearly stated. In addition, Goodlad, Soder, and Sirotnik (1990) maintained that 'Teaching is a fundamentally moral enterprise in which adults ask and require children to change in directions chosen by the adults' (p. 264).

In any case, the teacher is the person dominating the procedures followed in the school environment, as far as the students' moral development is concerned. Despite the above-mentioned acknowledgment of the teachers' positive contribution in students' moral development, the interest in scientific approaches for the study of moral reasoning and teachers' behaviors (Cummings et al., 2001) is extremely limited. In addition, Wansheng and Wujie (2004) argued that many teachers neglect students' moral education, because the former do not have adequate knowledge concerning the function of ethics, so as to lead and direct the students towards a thorough development. According to Lyons (1990) and Tirri (1999), teachers have reported being ill-prepared for dealing with those moral dilemmas they have identified in their work. Other researches have indicated that teachers are not always aware of the moral impact of their actions (Jackson, Boostrom, & Hansen, 1993).

All the above-mentioned references reveal the significance of the present study, which aims at the examination of the structures of the teachers' moral reasoning in a specific community-country. The comprehension of the teachers' moral judgment (an aspect of their moral identity) can contribute to the improvement of their education, so as to be able to examine in a better way the moral dimensions of their profession, as well as to make an effective contribution to the students' moral development. And this is because teaching, which constitutes part of the teachers' work, is an activity that continually requires ethical judgments (Coldron & Smith, 1999).

Most studies on the development of moral judgment have been based on Kohlberg's cognitive-developmental theory (1976). Kohlberg suggested that the development of moral judgment is achieved on three successive main levels, of two stages each. The levels are 'preconventional', 'conventional', and 'postconventional'. However, Kohlberg's diachronic theory received the contestation of many moral development researchers (for reviews, see Rest, Narvaez, Bebeau, & Thoma, 1999). The main issue of such a contestation has been Kohlberg's ideas on the moral judgment stages, i.e., the adoption of the hard-line stage model.

Instead of using the term *moral stages*, Rest and colleagues (Narvaez, 1998, 2001; Rest et al., 1999; Rest, Narvaez, Thoma, & Bebeau, 2000), in the framework of a neo-Kohlbergian approach of moral thinking, suggested the reformulation of Kohlberg's six stages into three basic schemas. These schemas are more concrete than Kohlberg's stages but are more abstract than the typical schemas of social cognition (e.g., person schemas, role schemas). In addition, they suggested that stages represent moral schemas that can be characterized as 'prior moral knowledge' concerning different ways to get along with others. Rest and their colleagues placed three structures in moral thinking development: the personal interest schema (which derives from Kohlberg's Stages 2 and 3); the maintaining norms schema (deriving from Kohlberg's Stage 4); and the postconventional schema (deriving from Kohlberg's Stages 5 and 6).

Taking under consideration Kohlberg's statement that stages represent moral schemas (Narvaez, 1998), it can be considered that the individuals in the *personal interest schema* are interested in the satisfaction of their personal needs and interests. In this schema, the individual applies (complies with) and obeys the rules only when they

satisfy his/her immediate needs and interests. Such a consideration obviously does not reveal any sociocentric perspective (Narvaez, 1998). Additionally, for the individual in this schema, the main motive to exhibit the right behavior is his/her need to be perceived by others as a good person. In other words, it can be said that the individual in this schema considers an action as morally right depending on the impact this very action has on him/her (Narvaez, 1998).

The *maintaining norms schema* is maintained to be developmentally more advanced in attaining a sociocentric perspective (Narvaez, 1998). In this schema, an individual's moral thinking focuses on the domination of the system, the roles, and rules determined by the system as well as the maintenance of social order. For Rest et al. (1999) the maintenance of social order determines ethics, and that's because law is connected to order in a moral sense. In the *postconventional schema* (according to Kohlberg), both right moral behavior and duties should be rather based on the universally accepted moral values than on the arbitrary rules established by the social contract. Rest et al. (1999), in the framework of reconstructing the postconventional schema, suggested four elements that should characterize moral thinking. In order to fulfill his/her moral obligations, an individual should be based on primary moral criteria, appeal to an ideal, shared ideals, and full reciprocity.

According to Rest et al. (1999), 'a schema is a cognitive structure that consists of the mental representation of some stimulus phenomena, including the relationship among the elements. Schemas are general cognitive structures in that they provide a skeletal conception that is exemplified (or instantiated) by particular cases or experiences' (p. 136). The individuality of the moral schema in which each teacher belongs to, due to his/her different experiences, may explain the finding that teachers do not perceive the same problem as being moral in nature, or they see different aspects of the situation as morally relevant (Husu, 2004; Husu & Tirri, 2001). Studies on elementary teachers' understanding of aspects of educational methods revealed that teachers conceptualize issues differently and that these different ways of understanding corresponded to the teachers' moral judgment levels (Johnston, 1985, 1989; Johnston & Lubomudrov, 1987).

In addition, Rest et al. (1999) maintained that schemas enable us to describe the developmental aspect of moral judgment and individual's construction of basic moral concepts. Researchers consider that the outcome of the developmental changes (age and education) is that individuals conceptualize moral problems differently (e.g., Kohlberg, 1984; Rest, 1986). Although it has already been mentioned that there are differences among teachers concerning the perception of what is moral and what is not, research findings concerning the relation between moral judgment and age revealed that this relation is not conclusive, with some studies showing decreases with age while others no differences at all (MacCallum, 1993).

As an evaluation method for the neo-Kohlbergian approach, the Defining Issues Test (DIT; Rest et al., 1999) was applied. DIT – a paper-and-pencil, a multiple-choice test – is based on moral stage typology initially defined by Kohlberg. DIT is based on the 'soft-stage' model, which assumes that, with experience, people learn to use a variety of moral judgment schemas whose pattern of use changes with development. DIT was chosen to be used in the present study, as a relation of schemas to measuring moral judgment was considered to exist, something that DIT actually does (Narvaez, 2002). The same researcher maintained that DIT is a device for activating moral schemas, considering that reading moral dilemmas and the DIT issue statements activate moral schemas (to the extent that a person has developed them).

The assessment of moral judgment has been carried out in a variety of fields including: medicine, business, dentistry, journalism, veterinary medicine, education, and sports (Rest & Narvaez, 1994). Within the field of education, the number of empirical studies on the teachers' moral reasoning/ judgment – and actually those still in-service – is limited and scarce (Cummings, Harlow, & Maddux, 2007). Diessner (1991) after reviewing 30 studies concluded that most in-service teachers reasoned only at the conventional level as measured by Kohlberg's MJI. Using DIT, Diessner concluded that most teachers had *P* scores in the 40s, and that 30–50% of the time, teachers were at the principled level. Helkama (1993), after examining almost 100 teachers, maintained that more than 50% of them scored on the postconventional level of Stage 5 in their judgments. Recently, the results of a review of the last three decades' research revealed that the teachers' moral reasoning levels are relatively low (Cummings et al., 2007).

The main purpose of the preset paper is to evaluate the teachers' moral judgment through the study of the cognitive structures interpreting the moral schemas. A secondary purpose of the present study is to examine the impact of the teachers' moral judgment on the perception of the students' behavior in the class. In addition, another purpose is the examination of the impact the developmental procedures have on the teachers' shaping of moral concepts.

The literature review for the present study led to the following assumptions: (1) the teachers' moral judgment is expected to be held in the context of principles; (2) moral judgment among teachers' groups, such as the educational level and specialty, is not expected to be differentiated – although it is expected to be differentiated by gender; (3) the teachers' perception of the students' behavior is expected to be related to their moral schemas; and (4) the impact of the developmental procedures (age and years of teaching) on the moral schemas' shaping is expected.

Method

Participants

Participants in this study were 258 in-service teachers (men, $n = 83$; women, $n = 175$) from two education levels (elementary education, $n = 96$; and secondary education, $n = 158$). From elementary education, there were 15 kindergarten teachers and 81 school-teachers, while from secondary education there were 4 theology masters, 34 literature masters, 16 mathematicians, 14 physicists-chemists, 54 physical education teachers, 17 foreign language teachers, 6 computer instructors, 3 musicians, 4 biologists, 3 sociologists, 3 other specialties (1 lawyer, 1 home economics instructor, and 1 theater researcher), as well as 4 who did not indicate their specialty. The teachers' years of experience ranged from 1 to 40 years with a mean $M = 14.91$, $SD = 9.46$ years. Ages ranged from 23 to 59 with a mean $M = 41.24$, $SD = 8.06$ years.

Procedure

The teachers were selected by the schools as representative of the teacher population with respect to age, gender, teaching experience, subject area, and specialty. All teachers completed the DIT (Rest, 1979) and the Scale Behavior Students' in Classroom (SBSC; Nikopoulou, Tsitskaris, Doganis, & Kioumourtzoglou, 2006). The procedure was independently performed by each teacher individually, without the researchers' presence.

Measures

Overlapping measures were employed to assess the four hypotheses. For this reason, the following instruments were used:

Defining Issues Test

DIT (Rest, 1979) assesses changes in moral judgment of teachers, a datum examined in all four hypotheses. In the present study, the Greek version by Margoulis (1989) was used. The validity of the Greek version has been tested in two areas: the social (Margoulis, 1989) and the sports one (Proios, 2006; Proios & Doganis, 2003, 2006; Proios & Proios, 2008; Proios, Doganis, & Athanailidis, 2004). Specifically, the short version of the DIT, consisting of three stories, was used (Heinz, Prisoner, Newspaper). Each story has 12 issues, which the subject is asked to evaluate on a five-point scale according to the importance attributed to the dilemma, with 1 = no importance and 5 = great importance. Next, the subject is asked to consider the set of 12 items and to rank the four most important ones.

On the basis of this ranking, a number of indexes emerge, such as Stages 2, 3, 4, 5A, 5B, and 6 (which roughly correspond to the Kohlbergian stages). In the framework of the neo-Kohlbergian approach of moral thinking, Kohlberg's six stages were grouped in three basic schemas: the personal interest schema (Stages 2+3); the maintaining norms schema (Stage 4); and the postconventional schema (Stages 5+6) (Rest et al., 1999).

Additionally, there are two checks on the reliability of each subject's questionnaire. One check is the *M* score. According to Rest (1986):

M items were written to sound lofty and pretentious but not to mean anything. These items do not present any stage of thinking but rather represent a tendency to endorse statements rather for their pretentiousness than their meaning. The second check on the subject reliability is the consistency check; this involves a comparison of a subject's rating with the subject's ranking. (pp. 3.4, 3.5)

In the present study both checks were applied.

Scale Rating Students' Behaviors in Classroom

The SRSB developed by Nikopoulou et al. (2006), in order to evaluate an intervention program for the rating of the students' behavior by their teachers, based on Hellison's model. The original SRSB is a 26-item inventory and consists of five sub-scales measuring behaviors relevant to Participation (11 items), Irresponsibility (7 items), Cooperation (4 items), Nationalities' cooperation (2 items), and Help acceptance (2 items). Responses were indicated on a five-point Likert scale anchored by strongly agree (1) and strongly disagree (5).

A principal component factor analysis with varimax rotation was conducted in order to examine the factorial structure of SRSB. The results, however, did not provide the expected findings (loading items with common content in the respective factors). Thus, we considered that the choice of the items' content as well as their wording might not have been the appropriate one. Then, 19 out of the 26 items were chosen; namely those that presented the best behavior in factor analysis. After that, another principal component factor analysis with varimax rotation was conducted on

the responses provided to the 19-item version. The results of the SRSB factor analysis revealed that the 19 items were divided into four factors: Factor 1, labeled Participation (e.g., Pay attention when the teacher gives directions), Factor 2, labeled Goals (e.g., Poses personal learning aims), Factor 3, labeled Irresponsibility (e.g., Pushes others in order to go out faster for break) and Factor 4, Cooperation (e.g., Cooperates with others – regardless of gender – for the solution of an exercise). The internal factors' coherence of the questionnaire was examined by the test of Cronbach's alpha. The results revealed a satisfactory validity of the questionnaire. More specifically, the sub-scales' reliabilities were: Participation, $\alpha = .72$, Goals, $\alpha = .78$, Irresponsibility, $\alpha = .80$, and Cooperation, $\alpha = .78$.

Results

Group schemas profile

The descriptive statistics (Table 1) revealed that totally the in-service Greek teachers' scores were ($M = 31.85$, $SD = 16.36$) higher in postconventional schema in comparison to the moral schemas – interest schema and maintaining norms ($M = 10.95$, $SD = 5.64$ and $M = 30.76$, $SD = 15.20$), respectively. In addition, descriptive statistics revealed that the teachers in the *Others* category (lawyer, home economics instructor, and theater researcher) along with the biologists and mathematicians scored higher in the postconventional schema ($M = 38.87$, $SD = 13.89$; $M = 38.30$, $SD = 14.76$; $M = 37.59$, $SD = 14.69$), respectively (Table 1).

The results of the descriptive statistics also revealed that the secondary education teachers scored higher in the postconventional schema ($M = 33.79$, $SD = 16.49$),

Table 1. Descriptive statistics.

Specialty	N	Personal interest		Maintaining norms		Postconventional	
		M	SD	M	SD	M	SD
Theology masters	4	7.76	4.84	36.63	8.61	20.80	12.19
Literature masters	34	11.53	6.64	27.54	16.28	33.10	18.26
Mathematicians	16	12.40	5.17	24.01	10.79	37.59	14.69
Physicists-chemists	14	11.64	5.11	28.79	19.81	36.14	13.95
Foreign language teachers	54	11.73	5.51	30.53	14.64	33.12	16.67
Schoolteachers–kindergarten teachers	17	10.42	5.45	35.06	20.69	29.78	16.18
Computer instructors	96	9.67	5.65	33.19	13.81	28.53	16.14
Musicians	6	13.59	6.17	31.65	16.56	33.32	19.76
Biologists	3	11.46	6.13	27.73	5.09	34.40	18.37
Sociologists	4	12.75	4.93	28.32	28.08	38.30	14.76
Other (Lawyer, home economics, theater researchers)	3	12.75	7.09	32.20	11.69	34.40	16.45
	3	12.18	6.29	24.40	10.18	38.87	13.89
Differences (Sig.)		$F(11,199) = .768$, $p > .05$		$F(11,248) = .862$, $p > .05$		$F(11,248) = .948$, $p > .05$	
Total	254	10.95	5.64	30.76	15.20	31.85	16.36

Table 2. Descriptive statistics.

Education level	<i>N</i>	Personal interest		Maintaining norms		Postconventional	
		<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Elementary	96	9.67	5.65	33.19	13.81	28.53	16.14
Secondary	158	11.77	5.61	29.53	14.89	33.79	16.49
Differences (Sig.)		$F(1,190) = 6.47$, $p < .05$		$F(1,238) = 3.68$, $p < .05$		$F(1,238) = 5.92$, $p < .05$	

Table 3. Descriptive statistics.

Specialty	<i>N</i>	Personal interest		Maintaining norms		Postconventional	
		<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Men	83	11.54	5.55	31.28	15.64	32.82	16.22
Women	175	10.71	5.67	30.52	15.03	31.41	16.44
Differences (Sig.)		$F(1,205) = .932$, $p > .05$		$F(1,254) = .136$, $p > .05$		$F(1,254) = .409$, $p > .05$	

while the elementary teachers scored higher in the maintaining schema ($M = 33.19$, $SD = 13.81$) (Table 2). In addition, these results revealed that men scored higher in the postconventional schema than the women ($M = 32.82$, $SD = 16.22$; $M = 31.41$, $SD = 16.44$) (Table 3).

Group schemas' differences

Univariate analyses were used in order to check the importance of differences in means of moral schemas among teachers' specialties, educational level and men and women. Firstly, a one-way ANOVA was conducted with moral schemas (personal interest, maintaining norms, and postconventional) scores as a dependent variable and the teachers' specialty as an independent variable. The results did not reveal any significant differences among teachers' specialties concerning the moral schemas scores (personal interest, $F(11, 199) = .768$, $p > .05$; maintaining norms, $F(11, 248) = .862$, $p > .05$; and postconventional, $F(11, 248) = .948$, $p > .05$).

A second, one-way ANOVA was conducted with moral schemas (personal interest, maintaining norms, and postconventional) scores as a dependent variable and the teachers' educational level as an independent variable. The results revealed significant differences among teachers' educational level concerning the moral schemas scores (personal interest, $F(1, 190) = 6.47$, $p < .05$; maintaining norms, $F(1, 238) = 3.68$, $p < .05$; and postconventional, $F(1, 238) = 5.92$, $p < .05$).

Finally, a third one-way ANOVA was conducted with moral schemas (personal interest, maintaining norms, and postconventional) scores as a dependent variable and the gender as an independent variable. The results did not reveal significant differences between men and women concerning the moral schemas scores (personal interest, $F(1, 205) = .932$, $p > .05$; maintaining norms, $F(1, 254) = .136$, $p > .05$; and postconventional, $F(1, 254) = .409$, $p > .05$).

Effect of age and teaching experiences on moral judgment schemas

To determine whether the moral schemas differed significantly with regard to developmental factors (age and teaching experiences), a MANOVA was conducted. The results revealed that the responses did not vary significantly by age and teaching experiences, Wilks' lambda = .26, $F(38, 114) = .62$, $p = .99$; Wilks' lambda = .24, $F(38, 114) = .72$, $p = .95$, respectively. However, each follow-up univariate analysis was proved to be insignificant.

Relationship between moral judgment schemas and students behaviors in classroom

Following Aiken and West (1991), multiple regression analyses in terms of interaction for the moral schemas were used. Aiken and West noted that multiple regression is often more appropriate than ANOVA for naturalistic studies that involve measured variables. Furthermore, multiple regression analysis allows for a test of the expected interaction effects without loss of the information that results from transforming a continuous variable (such as the DIT moral judgment score) into a dichotomous one.

Four students' behaviors were separately regressed, in the first step on personal interest, in the second step on maintaining norms, and in the third step on preconventional. As it can be seen from Table 4, hierarchical regression analyses revealed that an Irresponsibility ($b = -.27$) was a negative predictor of the personal interest schema. No other significant moral schemas interactions emerged for the other student behavior.

Table 4. Hierarchical regression analysis of moral schemas in students' behaviors (Participation, Goals, Irresponsibility, and Cooperation).

Step	Variable	R^2	R^2 change	β	t
<i>Participation</i>					
1	Personal interest		.02	.148	1.83 (ns)
2	Maintaining norms		.01	.040	0.49 (ns)
3	Postconventional	.02	.01	.185	0.43 (ns)
<i>Goals</i>					
1	Personal interest		.01	.013	0.15 (ns)
2	Maintaining norms		.01	.110	1.35 (ns)
3	Postconventional	.02	.01	.448	1.03 (ns)
<i>Irresponsibility</i>					
1	Personal interest		.04	-.271	-3.40*
2	Maintaining norms		.01	-.136	1.71 (ns)
3	Preconventional	.05	.00	-.091	-0.21 (ns)
<i>Cooperation</i>					
1	Personal interest		.01	.031	0.38 (ns)
2	Maintaining norms		.01	-.111	-1.37 (ns)
3	Postconventional	.02	.01	-.180	-0.42 (ns)

* $p < .05$.

Note: ns = not significant.

Discussion

In the present paper, there was an attempt to determine the teachers' moral thinking through the study of moral judgment schema development and some hypotheses were made. More specifically, it was considered that Greek teachers think on the basis determined by the postconventional schema moral thinking. This hypothesis has been maintained, since the results of the present study revealed that, generally speaking, the Greek teachers' ethics is principled (postconventional schema). This result is contradictory to the result of another study (using DIT as a measurement instrument), which revealed that pre-service and in-service teachers prefer personal interest or maintaining norms schema moral thinking (Diessner, 1991).

However, the finding of Diessner's study partly supports the result of the present study, which revealed that the elementary teachers prefer the maintaining norms schema, contrary to the secondary education teachers who were revealed to prefer the preconventional schema moral thinking. This result asserted the hypothesis that the teachers' moral judgment differs depending on the educational level. The result that elementary teachers prefer to solve moral dilemmas in the framework of the maintaining norms schema is further supported by the results of a review which revealed that the moral reasoning levels of in-service and pre-service teachers are relatively low (Cummings et al., 2007).

Rest et al. (1999) argued that 'The schemas, however, enable us to describe the developmental aspect of moral judgment, and the individual's construction of basic moral concepts' (p. 12). Taking into consideration the above-mentioned statement as well as the Kohlbergian terms on moral concepts described in the maintaining schema, it could be considered that elementary teachers are capable of maintaining status quo social structures, but they would not have the criteria and concepts to construct, develop, or create new social structures (such as classroom or a qualitatively new form of curriculum) (Diessner, 1991). On the contrary, the latter can be achieved by the secondary education teachers as they think on the basis of the postconventional schema moral thinking.

A morally developed individual (in the postconventional schema moral thinking) is considered to be distinguished by a moral sensitivity. Moral sensitivity is the first component of moral development; it is the ability to determine the various components of a moral situation (Rest, 1983). Thus, a morally sensitive teacher can apprehend in a better way his/her roles in the school, such as students' socialization (Narvaez, 2002). The morally sensitive teacher would be affected by the students' actions, as he/she apprehends in a better way the students' feelings and needs (Johnston & Lubomudrov, 1987; Holt, Kauchak, & Person, 1980), and he/she would comprehend that each student constitutes a different unit and does not incorporate all the character traits of students generally. Finally, the morally sensitive teacher would determine in a better way the codes and rules governing the practice of education.

In compliance with the findings of the present study, concerning the educational practice – and more specifically the field of teaching – a set of differentiations is expected among teachers, due to the different level of moral reasoning they exhibited and – actually – between elementary (primary) and secondary education. This is further supported by the findings of a research establishing that the improvement of moral reasoning affects the improvement of teaching ability (Oja, 1997). Researches have revealed that teachers with high moral reasoning are expected to adopt a more

democratic teaching style (Johnston & Lubomudrov, 1987; MacCallum, 1991) and establish an intellectual and participatory climate in the classroom (Holt et al., 1980).

The hypothesis that the teachers' moral judgment is not expected to be different outside the education level was further applied. Thus, it was also considered that it would not be different among teachers of different specialty as well. The result of the present study confirmed this hypothesis. This reveals that the courses of study in several academic disciplines do not seem to exhibit any significant differences concerning issues affecting the students' moral development. This is further confirmed by the result of another study which indicated that there are no differences in moral reasoning between education majors and liberal arts majors attending the same institution (Derryberry, Snyder, Wilson, & Barger, 2006). However, the above-mentioned results are contradictory to those of other studies which revealed that the moral sensitivity of the individuals practicing a specific profession – such as teachers – exhibit great variability (Bebeau, 2002) and that teachers use different ethical perspectives in their practical reflection (Husu, 2004).

In the present study, differences in moral judgment among groups of individuals were also sought in gender. Taking into consideration Gilligan's (1982) viewpoints who maintained that moral reasoning in women tends to reflect the care orientation (e.g., the care orientation reflecting an ideal of attachment, loving and being loved, listening and being listened to, and responding and being responded to), whereas men usually adopt justice in order to deal with moral dilemmas (e.g., the justice orientation reflecting an ideal of equality, reciprocity, and fairness between persons), it was considered that moral judgment would be different in relation to gender. Although the present study does not examine the moral orientations in gender, its result did not indicate any differences in moral judgment schemas between men and women, supporting thus the result of a previous study that orientations are not closely related to gender (Jaffee & Hyde, 2000) as well as the statement that 'Most models of moral development make no claims about gender differences' (Walker, 2006, p. 109).

The result of the present study that there are no significant differences in moral judgment schemas between men and women is supported by the results of meta-analyses revealing that there is no relation between gender and moral stage (Walker, 2006). This result is further supported by that of another study which acknowledged that individuals can employ both justice and care orientations, but asserted that only one of them (either justice or care) prevails in the people's thinking (Gilligan & Attanucci, 1988).

The results of another study revealed that women tend to exhibit greater moral sensitivity than men (Bebeau & Brabeck, 1987). On the contrary, the results of the present study – although statistically insignificant – indicated that men scored higher than women in moral schemas. This result is contrary to Gilligan's statement that Kohlberg's model undervalues the ethic of care, categorizing such reasoning at lower stage. In addition, this very result supports the statement that men exhibit greater sensitivity in issues of justice (Gilligan, 1982). Finally, it could be said that on the basis of the researchers' statements that gender differences in moral reasoning are quite controversial (e.g., Walker, 1995), it seems that both genders have both justice and care orientations available, and use them differentially, depending on a variety of contextual and background factors (see Jaffe & Hyde, 2000 for further details).

In the present study, the developmental character of moral schemas was also examined. Considering that schemas enable us to describe the developmental aspect of moral judgment, as aforementioned, and that human development is closely related to

age and experience (Kohlberg, 1969), it was also considered that age and experience (years of teaching) will also affect the shaping of moral schemas. As far as age is concerned, the hypothesis that age is significantly related to the development of moral judgment schemas was not maintained. Contrary to the result of the present study, evidence deriving from another study supported that moral judgment schemas change with age (Narvaez, 1998). However, many researchers maintained that this relation between moral judgment and age is versatile. Rest, Deemer, Barnett, Spickelmeir, and Volker (1986) maintained that while 'age trend data indicates that people do develop over time, but it does not indicate why or how – that is, the causes, conditions, and mechanisms of development' (p. 32). A recent research on a sample between 14 and 49 years of age revealed that while moral judgment scores increased until early adulthood, then they exhibited some versatility, without any evident trend (Proios & Doganis, 2006). In this case, the statement that moral development may reach a plateau at the beginning of adulthood (Rest, 1979) applies. Finally, it could be supported that it is not age itself that has a strong and consistent relation to the development in moral judgment but rather the years of formal education (Rest et al., 1986).

Just like age, experience as well did not support the hypothesis that the years of teaching reveal the developmental character of the moral judgment schemas. According to Piaget (1970), cognitive development takes place because humans are active interpreters of their experiences. However, from the results of the present study it is concluded that experience gained from in-class teaching does not contribute to the teachers' cognitive development. This further supports Kohlberg's (1969) statement that special kinds social experience, are particularly conducive to development in moral thinking, come from 'role-taking' experiences. Such role-taking experiences 'are those social experiences in which a person takes the point of view of another' (Rest et al., 1986, p. 32).

A last hypothesis employed in the present study was the existence of a relation between the teachers' moral judgment schemas and the students' perceived in-class behaviors. The results of the multiple regressive analyses, partly, confirmed the above-mentioned hypothesis. They revealed a significant relationship only between the *personal interest* schema to the behavior of *Irresponsibility*. Results of another study revealed that the teachers' moral judgment is related to various aspects of the teachers' conceptualizations of discipline (MacCallum, 1993), further supporting the present result. All the above mentioned indicate that teachers with a moral orientation to the *personal interest*, by all probability, might tolerate the behavior of *Irresponsibility* in the classroom (e.g., neglect to do homework, lack of respect towards others – schoolmates, teachers, etc.). This is further supported by the result of another study which revealed a small significant relationship between pre-service teacher education students' level of principled moral reasoning and their propensity to engage in academic misconduct, a form of unethical behavior (Cummings et al., 2001).

Conclusions

The conclusion of the present study revealed the Greek teachers' moral knowledge through the study of the moral judgment schemas. This was found on a satisfactory level in the case of secondary education teachers and unsatisfactory ones in the case of those of elementary education. The literature review revealed the significant role of the teacher in the students' moral development. And this is because school age (childhood and adolescence) is considered the best time for the moral education of

children (Lind, 1997). However, the result that the elementary teachers' moral thinking is not principled revealed that, by all probability, it is hard for them to correspond to the demands of applying a curriculum aiming at the students' moral development. The teachers are demanded to act as moral exemplars and models, which presupposes good disposition and moral character on their part (Osguthorpe, 2008).

The above-mentioned precondition reveals the need, within the framework of teachers' training, to apprehend the moral dimension of teaching, or/and the development of the teachers' moral fantasy (Joseph, 2003). Moral fantasy has been maintained to affect moral reasoning, allowing individuals to think of more creative means within as many moral limitations as possible and evaluate – from a moral point of view – the framework of a condition which needs moral judgment, moral rules that enter into a game (Werhane, 2002).

From the findings of the present study, it is concluded that the teachers of both these education levels do not exhibit any different characteristics concerning their moral judgment in relation to age, years of teaching, and gender. Thus, it is apprehended that probably all of them act in the same way anticipating the students, while all of them should be anticipated in the same way in the framework of their education aiming at the increase of their moral qualities.

However, the finding of low level moral judgment indicates the need to implement courses for the development of the teachers' moral judgment both in the elementary and the secondary education as well, since their scores were not that high anyway. At this point, it should be noted that viewpoints on the impact of the teachers' training courses are also contradictory (Diessner, 1991).

Finally, another conclusion resulting from the findings of the present study is the predictive role of the teachers' moral judgment on the expected behaviors exhibited by the students. This means that the students' expected behaviors probably are related to their teachers' concept of what they consider moral. This conclusion further supports the above-mentioned suggestion for the improvement of the teachers' moral reasoning.

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