

The Relationship between Bioculture and Bioenvironment

Abdullah Karatas

Nigde University, School of Foreign Languages, 51100 Nigde, Turkey
E-mail: abduallahkaratas3@gmail.com

KEYWORDS Human Beings. Environmental Problems. Education. Culture. Anthropocentrism.

ABSTRACT Today's environmental problems adversely affect all living beings around the world. Gradual environmental pollution, which consumes natural things and changes climatic conditions, also causes acid rain. The cause of this adverse effect is directly related to anthropocentrism. Despite all these things, human beings continue to destroy and consume nature for their own interests. However, humans are part of nature, like all other creatures. Invariably, human beings cut the branch they are sitting on. Because of this reason, bioculture which is a cultural structure based on the sustainability of life, should be implemented in all segments of the society. Obviously, the destruction of the bioenvironment is inevitable in a society deprived of such a cultural structure. Education is the key concept for the creation of this structure.

INTRODUCTION

Creating awareness for environmental protection and development in the society is of great importance for the good health and livelihood of future generations. This is because all living beings have the right to live in the world. According to Framarin (2014); both human and nonhuman entities in nature are interconnected, and hence have intrinsic value. Human beings should consider themselves as part of nature and should also know that every being in nature has an intrinsic worth (Venter and Ferreira 2014). However, human beings started being too hostile to nature from the industrial revolution period; they become to consider nature as an everlasting source in order to achieve their goals and still considers it as such. In line with such point of view, they preferred to destroy the sources that nature offered for us rather than protecting them. Today, the world faces enormous social, political and environmental challenges (Callicott 2014). The extent of environmental pollution caused by humans is already so great that some scientist question whether the Earth can continue to support life if immediate corrective action is not taken (Hossain and Rao 2014). This is because human beings see themselves as dif-

ferent and superior to nature through technology and science, while they accept nature as a meta for the human purposes. The protection of nature by future generations and the sustainability of life will be possible if only there be a change of peoples' perception of *nature*. If human beings actually realize the significance of nature, they will endeavor to protect and develop it. There is therefore a need to teach the society and raise their awareness on the importance of nature to man. According to Çobanoglu and Gazi (2008); education as a dimension of culture is vital in the society and plays a significant role in enhancing the cultural level of the same just as blood sustains an organism. Education serves a vital purpose in the formation of cultural structure which defends the sanctity of life. If the term of bioculture is spread and internalized at all segments of the society for such a purpose, future generations will take a chance to live in more secure and healthy world.

Objectives

This paper examines the relationship between bioculture and bioenvironment, describes the terms of culture and bioculture and comprehensively mentions the role of education in the internalization of bioculture in the society. It also talked about the effect of bioculture on bioenvironment.

METHODOLOGY

The paper is based on qualitative research approaches. By so doing, the paper relies heavily on the existing literature relevant to it. The

Address for Correspondence:
Dr. Abdullah Karatas,
Nigde University
School of Foreign Languages (51100)
Nigde, Turkey
Telephone: +90 (388) 2252001
E-mail: abduallahkaratas3@gmail.com

paper makes a modest contribution to the literature by analyzing the relationship between the bioculture and bioenvironment. Anthropocentrism is the main reason for the global environmental problems. To eliminate this view, the paper suggests the internalization of bioculture in the society. In accomplishing this paper, library data, many documented sources and different articles written by different scholars have been used.

OBSERVATIONS AND DISCUSSION

Terms of Culture and Bioculture

Every society continues its existence by means of transferring its national and moral values, beliefs, traditions and customs to the future generations. All values shared within the same geography and transferred from one generation to another create an identity in the societies. This makes them different from other societies and as well enables them to live in unity with integrity. This is because sharing of common values holds individuals together, and keeps them within the framework of the same ideals which simplifies and harmonizes them in the society. Culture, which is one of the significant factors holding the society together, serves such a purpose as well.

The existence of culture together with a human being is the product of human beings. It is not possible to think of culture without human beings and human beings without culture. Human beings are instruments that transfer former and present cultural elements to the future generations (Albayrak 2010). Culture is transmitted through the interaction and learning between generations through the process of socialization (Friedlmeier 2005: 123). Culture can be stated as one of the most significant factors for the development and sustainability of a society. If this development and sustainability are not ensured, the societies cannot survive (Amoah 2012). Culture, which is considerably significant for the society and acting like the identity of the society, is reflected as a synthesis of values system, traditions-customs, attitudes, beliefs, morality, art and symbols. In this context, culture can briefly be defined as the lifestyle of human beings within the society (Inceoglu 2010: 127). Culture is an embodiment of common material, moral values, traditions, customs, art, mentality,

historical background, social institutions and ensures inter-individual perception and thinking. Culture consists of all kinds of elements such as language, feeling, art and a way of living, which are valid within the society and continues as a tradition (MEGEP 2010). As emphasized in the definition, culture plays a significant role in the society. Human beings maintain their relationships with the environment through culture (Cocks 2010: 71). In this context, cultures of human beings also have influence on their relationships with nature. Individuals aiming to protect and develop nature and having the responsibility of leaving a clean world to future generations can instill such favorable moralities to their children and contribute to the formation of such cultural structure. All living beings together with human beings need such formation, that is, biocultural structure.

Bioculture provides the necessary incentives for every endeavour to be governed by biocentric principles and to be oriented toward the better understanding and preservation of the environment and all forms of life. In the spirit of bioculture, every individual on the planet is encouraged to actively engage in the search for new paradigms and to join environmentally committed legislators, scholars, educators, and business leaders in influencing governmental protection of environmental issues around the world. To alleviate regional conflicts and reconcile economic growth with environmental harmony, a new vision in every aspect of development - industry, energy, transport, agriculture and regional development- is needed. The environment, as a common point of reference, can bring all peoples of the world together, in harmony and coexistence (Arvanitis 2007). On the other hand, human beings today are unable to cope with the environmental problems that they caused. This is because environmental problems have an influence upon all living beings globally and lead to the extinction of species day by day. For example; polluted air is a real danger to all forms of life. There is an urgent need to reduce levels of air pollution globally. Although air quality measures have had positive results at some locations in the world, millions of people in both developing and developed countries die prematurely every year because of long-term exposure to air pollutants. The health of many more people is seriously affected (UNEP Year Book 2014). *Water pollution* is another environ-

mental hazard that poses *great danger* to both humans and other living beings. Most of the industrial pollutants are directly or indirectly discharged into rivers. As a result, rivers become highly polluted and unsuitable for domestic and irrigation purposes. The effects of this pollution on public health and the environment are usually great in magnitude (Mahbub et al. 2014). Thanks to human beings because all environmental values are under threat.

Species are wiped off the face of the earth because of their destroyed habitats. However, it should be kept in mind that human beings as species among species can experience the same outcome. Culture is a very important factor at this point. Sustainability of the habitats and culture are inseparably interconnected to one another. Cultural structure in support of the divinity of life will also support the protection of nature. This is because human beings are dependent on nature for survival and they are also not special and prerogative among the forms of life in nature (Stevens 2003). But even if environmental values are made to be protected in accordance with laws and effective penalties, yet things cannot work well. As long as the *anthropocentric perspective* is not replaced by the biocentric one, efforts will still remain inconclusive. However the formation of public environmental concern can serve as an important prerequisite to initiate collective protests and promote policy changes in order to improve the deteriorating environment (Hao 2014). This is beneficial and promising for a safer environment, but at the same time unsatisfactory. To solve *intractable environmental problems, environmental awareness of people should be increased*. Here education is the key concept. This is because it is possible to change perspectives and behaviors of human beings in the desired direction through education.

The Relationship between Bioculture and Education

Human activities have the greatest effect on environment and ecology (Azizmohammed and Kohzadi 2014). Defence for life needs have become a priority in every facet of our lives. Poverty, hunger, diseases, environmental pollution, a declining resource base, the rapid loss of species and habitats, are all global problems. They are all related, and they don't respect national boundaries. Addressing them will require an

unprecedented level of international cooperation. If we are to solve the problems of our world, nations must redirect their efforts away from conflict, but towards environmental restoration and eradication of poverty, hunger and disease (Arvanitis 2007). Those most vulnerable to climate change today are largely those who already lack resources (Humphreys 2014). In this context, educational campaign should be declared across the world and it is required to remove all obstacles preventing the harmony with nature, protection and development of environmental values and the state of being environmentally conscious. It is important not to make a mistake in the issue of locating nature against human beings and human beings against nature as well as comprehend multifaceted and complex interaction between the society and nature (Keles et al. 2009: 78). It can be stated that education is one of the most significant factors for the comprehension of this interaction.

Generations who are raised to be environmentally friendly with education can play an active role in solving environmental problems as environmental volunteers in future. Following few generations, it is possible to reap the benefit of instructional problems that will be applied rapidly in line with the communication instruments if they are specially given to the children. When green consciousness is generalized with the education of grown-ups, perspectives about problems will be controlled and appropriate policies will be developed. The assurance of our future and the sustainability of human beings depend largely and solely on the availability of such precautions and raising awareness (Alpagut 1997: 118-119). Education, as a way of activating consciousness plays a considerably significant role in the social life. It can be stated that it is not quite realistic to succeed in a society without education. The way of reaching permanent solutions to the environmental problems is based upon generations whose consciousnesses are raised in line with the education.

The consensus that education is the leading solution to environmental problems is gradually developing in the world. Solving environmental problems require natural comprehension and artificial environment thoroughly, so as to protect it and use it without destroying. In fact, environmental problems stem from the exploitation and unsustainable consumption of natural

resources by considering human interests above those of other living beings (Geray 1997: 323-324). Basically, through the educational activities for grown-ups, people can be shown the reality of environmental problems, real problems underlying environmental problems and the effect of the destruction of the nature for the sake of more profit. As for children at early ages, they should be raised with respect and compassion for all living beings. Teachers should teach them respect for nature. In this way, children can learn the importance of nature for us and they will love it and if they love it, they will protect it (Erten 2012: 99).

The instillation of love of nature to both grown-ups and children and the emphasis of the fact that human beings are not owners of nature but just part of nature and also in need of it for survival can positively change our societal point of view about the environment. The spread of such environmentally friendly ideas at all levels of the society with education can raise consciousness of human beings about the environment and lead them to be more sensitive about it. However, such education should first and foremost highlight the effects of environmental problems and accordingly give particular importance to the protection and development of the environment with all effort. In this way, generations whose environmental consciousness is raised within the scope of formal and non-formal education can play active role in the solution of environmental problems by becoming environmental volunteers for the protection of natural life. The increase of environmental problems with globalization stems from industrial activities and can only be resolved permanently by such education.

It can be stated that the process of globalization is almost an inseparable part of daily life, including its effects and statements (Çoban 2002: 119). With the advent of globalization, a major change in economic, social and educational priorities is shaping world views ways of life and is creating new challenges for humanity. To meet these challenges, education for the new millennium requires a radical shift away from intra-disciplinary entrenchment but into creative and thoughtful action for the development of the highest potential of each individual and also for the benefit of the world and future generations. The purpose and responsibility of such an education is to uplift the spirit of humanity in

order to reverse the crisis in values that has resulted in serious environmental deterioration. By providing interdisciplinary models with concern for all living beings and the environment at the core of every specialty, this education seeks to apply environmental protection to every human endeavour. The purpose of this education is to urge scholars, decision makers, diplomats, business and civic leaders to actively contribute to the development of a biocentric society (Arvanitis 2007).

The chance of living in a healthier world in the future is only achieved through such an education. On the contrary, if the education does not include environmental consciousness, love of art and ability to think, it will result in failure (Çobanoglu and Gazi 2008: 22). However, a society that appreciates and protects the environment and endeavors to develop it, and also filled with the sense of art and aesthetics, is of great importance for a healthier and safer future. However, a social structure that is shaped around only technological and economic activities may be a threat to nature (Sieferle 2003: 27). Such a threat can be stated as the primary cause of global and environmental problems (Palmer 2003: 249). In this context, the whole society should be made to feel the importance and the urgency of environmental problems and effective precautions should be taken as soon as possible.

Environmental pollution is an international problem and a matter of vital importance for all. However, environmental quality and quality of life are inextricably linked. Human rights violation, disease, hunger, lack of safe water resources and poverty are more common in areas of severe environmental abuse. For this reason, individuals should be made to feel these environmental concerns and they should be empowered through education to protect the environment. An educational approach which advocates for the sustainability of life should be supported by the government, the business world and public administration. Such an education should be disseminated as widely as possible with the assistance of educational institutions, businesses, municipal authorities, governments, non-governmental organizations and other stakeholders (Arvanitis 2007). This is because it is only possible with an actual educational campaign to change people's viewpoints about the environment and enable people to internalize the significance of life. In this way, generations

whose consciousness are raised through education for the importance and sustainability of life can be the architects of bio-cultural structure of the society.

The Effect of Bioculture on Bioenvironment

It is not an overstatement that the underlying reason of today's environmental problems is the desire of human beings to control nature. Human beings believe that they are the most gifted creatures in nature and therefore are superior to all other *living* and *nonliving beings* through the history of civilization (Algan 2008: 191). Actually, environmental problems stemmed from incorrect relations between nature and human beings and also from natural interventions. This is because cultivable areas are intoxicated and water and air are polluted for the sake of more profit. Furthermore, habitats of living beings and nature are destroyed and damaged considerably thereby upsetting nature. Nevertheless, these problems are mostly ignored. However, in order to reach healthier and safer environmental conditions, human beings should take responsibility and such a responsibility should not include only government authorities but everybody in a society (Taubert 1988).

Certainly, continuously and systematically conducted educational activities are the most effective channels to encourage everybody for the protection and development of environment as well as the sustainability of life within the planet with awakened consciousness (Taubert 1988). Educational activities to be conducted in the environment can illuminate the way for a wide range of problems. It can be stated that the primary objectives of education for the environment are to enable individuals to grasp their environment as a whole and to raise individuals as citizens who have critical point of views on the environment and who are also responsive, conscious and enterprising in environmental matters. The objectives of such education are; (a) to demonstrate the close relationship between the environment and the dominating economy, (b) to create environmental awareness and consciousness and also to be able to show the existence of alternative forms of societies and values (Geray 1997: 325-326). By means of such an education, each individual within the society can obviously observe the reality of the sanctity of life and the importance of living in a clean and

healthy environment and also exhibit environmental friendly behaviors in this respect. As for the uneducated individuals, they continue to damage and consume nature for their selfish interests because they cannot internalize the respect for life.

A society that internalizes love of nature, having environmental consciousness and artistic sensitivity, acquires questioning and ethical values, and teaches thinking rather than memorizing through education can reach the desired level. In this context, education is considered as not only the process of acquiring knowledge but life itself. What the cultural level refers here can be called an infinite kind of respect for all human beings. When put in another way, it is a kind of respect given to all animals or forms of life, their needs, for every life, democratic aims/values, social justice and the point desired to be continuously maintained (Çobanoğlu and Gazi 2008: 24). Respect for life helps to pursue the actual and moral life (Des Jardins 2006: 268). All the earth needs such a moral sense. This is because extinct species disappeared as a consequence of changes of their natural environment and were replaced by new ones. Why don't human beings disappear as such? Damaging the environment and natural balance instead of protecting it can be explained with unconscious behaviors (Alpagut 2007: 118). However, unfortunately, human beings continue to exhibit unconscious behaviors against nature. At this point, bioculture is of great importance. This is because bioculture reflects a lively spirit as an important integrative factor for the continuance of an evolution of all forms of life which will be in harmony with human beings in the future. Today, the relationship between the bioculture and bioenvironment is becoming increasingly important. This is because the bioenvironment is influenced by bioculture (Çobanoğlu and Gazi 2008: 18).

Bioculture, which is defending the sustainability and sanctity of life aims at preserving the bioenvironment, in other words, the living beings and their habitats. For this reason, bioculture should be integrated in the society. Bioenvironment can be damaged continuously if bioculture does not exist in the society. Even if human beings endeavored to deter from offences against nature in accordance with laws and penalties, however, it cannot be stated that positive results will be obtained as long as the point of

views, beliefs and behaviors do not change. In this regard, education is considerably important as a source of hope in the progress of the solution of substantial environmental problems (Kanellopoulos 1988). This is because education can be stated as one of the most effective methods that can raise the consciousness of human beings and provide harmony between human and nature (Mizuyama 2011: 123) and can also enhance the sensibility of human beings towards environmental problems (Carter 2007: 360).

Environmental friendly behaviors if acquired by kids in line with the education can illuminate the way for the solution of a wide range of environmental problems in the future. Awakening the consciousness of not only children, but also grownups with different educational programs will ensure the formation of cultural structure protecting the environment with its values and endeavoring to develop it. Accordingly, individuals who accept the environment as a whole with its living beings can internalize the consciousness and responsibility of transferring the environmental values to the next generations confidently and quietly.

CONCLUSION

Harmony between human and nature is of great importance for the future of all living beings. Today global environmental problems have reached a critical point that threatens the survival of all living beings. For this reason, human beings really need to cooperate with other creatures. Some species and habitats which are destroyed through pollution or urbanization and which are unfortunately killed for their fur and economic values can only be observed in pictures or museums today. Human beings are also considerably influenced by the environmental problems they cause. Invariably, they are cutting their own throats. The underlying reason for all environmental problems is the fact that human beings destroy nature for the sake of more profit. In order to increase their consciousness and to acquire environmental sensitivity, the divinity of life should be acknowledged, the respect for life and the fact that all living beings have a right to live in a clean and safe environment should be recognized. To realize this, it is essential to create a perspective based on living beings. In other words, biocultural structure is re-

quired in the society. At this juncture, education plays the most significant role. This is because the change of perspectives and behaviors of human beings will only be possible through education. Each individual to whom the love of nature is inculcated in by means of education will not be a source of environmental problems, but a part of the solution because such individuals have digested an attitude of respect for all living beings as a principle.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Improving *environmental literacy* of young people is of great importance for solving environmental problems because environmentally conscious young people are the hope of tomorrow and today's *young people* will be leading tomorrow's society. In this context, environmental education is the key concept and it is critical for achieving *environmental* awareness. Environmental education should be used as a tool which upholds biocultural understanding in the society. Environmentally conscious young people will defend the sanctity of life for all living beings and obtain bioculture as their guide through environmental education. Therefore, all level of schools should integrate environmental education into their curricula. Not only the students, but parents, the public and the workforce should be educated as well, so that they can adapt to bioculture. To achieve this goal, social media, non-governmental organizations, private sector, local governments and the other government agencies should support these educational activities.

REFERENCES

- Albayrak M 2010. Atatürkçü düşüncede milli kültürün anlama yeri ve önemi. From <<http://www.mustafaal-bayrak.org.tr/?p=45>> (Retrieved on 30 January 2014).
- Algan N 2008. İklim etigi. *Mülkiyeliler Birliği Dergisi*, 32(259): 191-204.
- Alpagut B 1997. Doğal çevre ve insanın evrimi. In: Rusen Keles (Ed.): *İnsan Çevre Toplum*. Ankara: İmge, pp.113-119.
- Amoah DO 2012. The Importance of Culture for National Development. From <<http://www.modernghana.com/news/418364/1/the-importance-of-culture-for-national-development.html>> (Retrieved on 1 April 2014).
- Arvanitis AV 2007. Biopolicy-building a society of vision and hope. In: Aysegül Mengi (Ed.): *Rusen Keles'e Armagan, V. Kitap: Çevre ve Politika*. Ankara: Ymge, pp. 13-26.

- Azizmohammedi F, Kohzadi H 2014. The impact of anthropocentrism on natural environment from the perspective of Margaret Atwood. *Anthropologist*, 17(2): 647- 653.
- Callicott J B 2014. Reply to Thomas Greaves. *Journal of Environmental Humanities*, 4: 207-211.
- Carter N 2007. *The Politics of the Environment: Ideas, Activism, Policy*. United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press.
- Cocks M 2010. What is biocultural diversity? A theoretical review. In: Danial Bates, J Tucker (Eds.): *Human Ecology*. New York: Springer, pp. 67-79.
- Çoban A 2002. Küreselmeye karşı olmak: Olanaklar ve sınırlılıklar. *Praksis*, 7: 117-164.
- Çobanoğlu N, Gazi S 2008. Biyoetik bir değer olarak kent kültürü öğelerinin sağlıklı kentlerde yansımaları. *Planlama-TMMOB şehir Plancıları Odası Yayını*, 42: 17-25.
- Des Jardins J 2006. *Çevre Etiği*. Rusen Keles (Translator). Ankara: Imge.
- Erten S 2012. Türk ve Azeri öğretmen adaylarında çevre bilinci. *Eğitim ve Bilim Dergisi*, 37(166): 88-100.
- Framarin CG 2014. Karma, rebirth, and the value of nature. *Journal of Environmental Ethics*, 36(2): 215-233.
- Friedlmeier W 2005. Emotional development and culture: Reciprocal contributions of cross cultural research and developmental psychology. In: Wolfgang Friedlmeier, Pradeep Chakkarath, Beate Schwarz (Eds.): *Culture and Human Development*. East Sussex, UK: Psychology Press, pp. 125-152.
- Geray C 1997. Çevre için eğitim. In: Rusen Keles (Ed.): *İnsan Çevre Toplumu*. Ankara: Imge, pp. 323-342.
- Hao F 2014. The effect of economic affluence and ecological degradation on Chinese environmental concern: A multilevel analysis. *Journal of Environmental Studies and Sciences*, 4(2): 123-131.
- Hossain K, Rao AR 2014. Environmental change and its effect. *European Journal of Sustainable Development*, 3(2): 89-96.
- Humphreys S 2014. Climate justice: The claim of the past. *Journal of Human Rights and the Environment*, 5(2): 134-148.
- Inceoglu M 2010. *Tutum Algi İletişim*. İstanbul: Beykent Üniversitesi Yayınevi.
- Kanellopoulos AC 1988. The Future of International Education. From <<http://biopolitics.gr/biowp/wp-content/uploads/2013/04/fe-kanellopoulos.pdf>> (Retrieved on 5 May 2014).
- Keles R, Hamamci C, Çoban A 2009. *Çevre Politikası*. Ankara: Imge.
- Mahbub A, Tanvir HMD, Afrin LT 2014. An evaluation of environmental and social impact due to industrial activities -A case study of Bangshi River around Dhaka Export Processing Zone (DEPZ), Bangladesh. *International Research Journal of Environment Sciences*, 3(2): 103-111.
- MEGEP-Vocational Education and Training System Strengthening Project 2010. From <<http://megep.meb.gov.tr/>> (Retrieved on 27 April 2014).
- Mizuyama M 2011. The environment as an issue in citizenship education. In: Norio Ikeno (Ed.): *Citizenship Education in Japan*. Great Britain: MPG Books Group, pp. 116-130.
- Palmer J 2003. *Environmental Education in the 21 st Century, Theory, Practice, Progress and Promise*. New York: Routledge.
- Sieferle RP 2003. The ends of nature. In: Carl Friedrich Gethman, E Ehlers (Eds.): *Environment Across Cultures*. New York, USA: Springer, pp. 13-28.
- Stevens RJ 2003. Ecologically Sustainable Development: A Sociological Perspective. From <<http://www.angelfire.com/cantina/favouriteurls/ESD.html>> (Retrieved on 18 January 2014).
- Taubert E 1988. The Bio-environment and Education. From <<http://users.hol.gr/~bio/HTML/cross/edu.htm>> (Retrieved on 23 April 2014).
- UNEP-United Nations Environment Programme Year Book 2014. Emerging Issues in Our Global Environment. <<http://www.unep.org/yearbook/>> (Retrieved on 8 August 2014).
- Venter E, Ferreira JG 2014. A plea for environmental education that focuses on learning to care. *Journal of Human Ecology*, 46(1): 33-38.