The Viewpoints of Education Faculty Last Grade Students about the Environment according to Anthropocentric and Non-anthropocentric Approaches

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SYNOPSIS

INTRODUCTION

Approaches that investigate human being-environment relations can be considered in a new discipline of ethical philosophy that is called environmental ethics. Two of these approaches have mechanical and ecological dimensions; the mechanical dimension covers anthropocentric and societal approaches, and reaches the conclusion that nature is a means to benefit people; the ecological dimension which is emerging as an alternative to this view includes life and environment centred approaches, and reaches the conclusion that variety should be maintained in nature and that the systems should be placed to center, not human or another living being. (Ünder, 1996). In fact, human being-environment relations can be broadly categorized as anthropocentric, that is human centred, and as non-anthropocentric, that isn’t human centred.

Anthropocentric approaches are values that adopt organizing social life and save people health (Merchant, 1992). Non-anthropocentric approaches (one of them is ecocentrism) are values that adopt people as a part of ecosystems and save ecosystems’ health (Merchant, 1992). While the anthropocentric approach places the human at the centre of the ethical universe, non-anthropocentric approaches take radically different positions. All living beings, and in some theories, even lifeless things such as mountains and stones appear in the centre. This is the ethical view of the non-anthropocentric approach (Thompson, 1998). According to these views, non-anthropocentric approaches and viewpoints directed towards the environment can be said to be more affirmative than anthropocentric approaches.
The most efficient way to develop people’s positive viewpoints towards the environment, in other words, in forming awareness towards the environment, is to begin the environmental training at an early age (Hungerford & Volk, 1990; Tilbury, 1994; Tbilisi Declaration, 1977; Wilson, 1994).

Individuals begin to take their environmental education in their families and continue this in formal education. It is emphasized that environmental education should be given to individuals beginning from preschool to various levels of primary school, high school and university in formal education because of its interdisciplinary feature (Yılmaz et al., 2002). Families, teachers, shortly all adults are very important to develop children’s environmental ideas and attitudes; in other words, they have to know that their messages, emotions and ideas, positive behaviours about environment as models for their children are important at developing their ecological culture (Atasoy, 2005). At any level of education, teachers have crucial importance with their viewpoints towards environment and nature. Teacher candidates need to be educated about environment for developing positive values because of their role for children.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of this research is to determine the viewpoints of last year university students about environment within the frame of anthropocentric and non-anthropocentric approaches.

METHODOLOGY

This study adopted quantitative research method and the survey method was used to collect data. In accordance with the purpose of study, a 5 point Likert scale called “The Viewpoint towards Environment” which was developed by researchers was applied as means of data collection. Last year students (N=761) at different majors at Ondokuz Mayıs University Education Faculty formed the research sample. The analyses of data were done by using SPSS 15.0 package. The scale applied in this research was developed through literature scanning by the researcher. Its reliability coefficient was determined as .81 (Cronbach α). 22 articles measuring demographic data and viewpoints towards environment were included in the scale. The scale has 4 factors which are ‘natural source usage and industrial development’, ‘human-nature relation and industrialism problem’, ‘human population problem’, and ‘importance of human population’.

FINDINGS

In accordance with anthropocentric and non-anthropocentric approaches, it was ascertained that education faculty last year students’ viewpoints towards the environment are predominantly (%85 of all participants) non-anthropocentric. The most efficient subject in this rate is ‘natural source usage and industrial development’ and the least is ‘importance of human population’.

According to participants’ gender and branches, significant differences were found. It was ascertained that women participants’ environmental viewpoints were closer to non-anthropocentric viewpoints than men’s and pre-school teacher candidate students’ environmental viewpoints were closer to non-anthropocentric viewpoints than other branches.

DISCUSSION and RESULTS

It was ascertained that education faculty last grade students’ viewpoints towards the environment are predominantly (%85 of all participants) non-anthropocentric. This means that approaches and behaviours towards the environment and nature are positive in this research,
when thinking about anthropocentric approaches and its damage to environment in history (Bozkurt, 1994; Parker, 2007).

‘Importance of human population’ is the least efficient factor in the general rate of non-anthropocentrics. It can be said that current political ideas which give a big importance to population growth are effective in this subject.

Women participants are closer to non-anthropocentric approaches than men. Many researches have the same finding about environmental viewpoint, attitude, interest, behaviour or so on (Casey & Scott, 2006; Erol, 2005; Şama, 2003; Tuncer et al., 2009; Yücel et al., 2006). It can be said that when it comes to nature, women are more kind-hearted and emotional than men; but men use nature or natural sources more than women does (Casey & Scott, 2006; Tikka, Kuitunen & Tynys, 2000).

Pre-school teacher candidate students are closer to non-anthropocentric approaches than other branches, but mostly than art teacher candidate students. It might be due to the high number of women in preschool teacher education major (38/41).

SUGGESTIONS

It is a positive result that viewpoints of pre-service teachers towards the environment are generally non-anthropocentric. It is important to convey these views to their students in the future.

On the other hand, population growth is a subject that has to be learned with its dangers and other possible results by students. These topics should be taught to teacher candidate students as part of their instructional program.

Moreover, more responsibilities regarded both with their profession and environment should be given to art teacher candidate students to improve their positive views towards environment.

Lastly, in order to determine the situation in formal education, a related scale can be applied to teachers rather than teacher candidate students with its recent condition or by developing it, and the conclusions can be evaluated.
REFERENCES


