

Environmental Topics and Environmental Ethics in Primary School Humanities and Social Sciences Education during the Late Ottoman Period (1913-1918)

Ramazan ALABAŞ*

Kastamonu University, Kastamonu, TURKEY

Abstract

Environmental education has been given in various primary school courses in Turkey, predominantly in Life Sciences, Social Sciences, and Science courses. This study, while focusing on the relationship between environment and child education, aims to decipher the roots of environmental education in Turkey. In order to accomplish this task at hand, the article focuses on the early 20th century, in the late Ottoman period, and investigates the topics on environment and environmental ethics in the civics course Lectures on Morality [Musâhabât-ı Ahlâkiye] by analyzing the course curriculum and textbooks. The documents of this research are the primary school curriculum of 1913 and 1914 prepared by the Ministry of Education, and the five textbooks of Lectures on Morality. This study is structured with document analysis technique based on quantitative research model. The data gathered from documents were evaluated with content analysis and interpreted accordingly. The article concludes that the education system in the Ottoman Empire of the early 20th century played a crucial role in the development of the idea of 'conserving the environment' and the curriculum and the textbooks of the Lectures of Morality course include for environmental topics. These topics are divided into four main categories in the textbooks of Lectures on Morality: the existence of different livelihoods in the environment and protection of species, raising environmental awareness, utilizing nature and loving animals. The conclusion of the article shows that in the early 20th century, primary school education paid attention and made efforts on environmental literacy and environmental awareness in Turkey.

Keywords: Environmental education, environmental ethics, history of environmental education, history of education, curriculum, textbook

Introduction

The concept of the environment cannot be confined to a single discipline and it has been an interest not only to scientific research, but also takes a place in our everyday lives. The environment has been discussed from various perspectives, from the economy to sociology and philosophy. Those studies focused on what the environment entails as a concept to its effects, and its influence on individuals and societies and the attention to environmental conservation. Likewise, the field of education has discussed the environment from various perspectives and has worked on how to develop knowledge, skills, attitudes and values related to the environment. Today's education predominantly focuses on increasing students' capacity for environmental awareness, environmental literacy, and developing curiosity about the environment by leading students to do research on the environment, and to think critically on the interaction between humans and the environment. These efforts are evident in the curricula, in the courses on environment, the various courses' outcomes that deal with the topics of the environment or the special programs with a concentration on the environment. Historically, environmental problems began with human's first contact with natural

resources to meet basic needs that eventually ended up harming the environment. Especially the heavy industrialization of the 19th century increased the direct damage of humanity to the environment (Ahi & Özsoy, 2015). The field of environmental education was born from the idea that humanity is responsible and needs to address all the damage it has caused to control nature (Özdemir, 2017). Actually, the connection between these two words 'environment' and 'education' was made in the mid-1960's (Palmer, 1998). However, Palmer and Neal (1994) assert that some researchers mentioned the use of the concept environmental education in the 'International Union for Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources' meeting that took place in Paris in 1948.

Environmental education first appeared and started to be used in academic literature and education systems around the late 1960s (Kyburz-Graber, 2013). Since then, the term has been coined with numerous definitions that form its basis on the interaction between nature, humanity and education and an effort to understand nature without human agency (Le Grange, 2013). The foundations of environmental education can be traced back to the works of 18th and 19th century thinkers, writers and educators such as Goethe, Rousseau, Froebel, Dewey and Montessori and 'environmental studies movements' can be seen in the early 20th century (Palmer, 1998). Anna Comstock's *The Handbook of Nature Study* written in 1911, which was based on the late 19th century works on environment and environmental education, has a fundamental place in the historical foundation of environmental education (Athman & Monroe, 2001). During the 20th century, developments such as the establishment of the American Nature Study Society in 1908 by Liberty Hyde Bailey, a proponent for the study of nature, development and acceptance of ecology as a scientific field in 1920's, and the emergence of the concept of 'conservation education' as a result of the 'dust bowl' in 1930's (McCrea, 2006), can be considered as cornerstones in the development of environmental education. In the USA, environmental education was born from the richness of studies in the field in the early 1900's (Biedenweg, Monroe & Wojcik, 2013). The conservation movement of the late 1920's and early 1930's is the predecessor to today's environmental studies (Bruker, 1973). The modern environmental education movement, which is grounded in the study of nature and conservation education, advanced in the late 1960's and early 1970's (Atalay, 2015). Concurrently, terms such as environmental management education, resource use education, environmental quality education and environmental education were put to use at the end of 1960's (Minton, 1980).

The 1970's saw the establishment of official stances on environmental education through international conferences. The Stockholm Conference organized by UNESCO in 1972 and the Belgrade Workshop of 1975 set the framework of environmental education. The outlook and strategies for curriculum development and production for environmental education around the world was determined at the Intergovernmental Conference on Environmental Education organized by UNESCO in Tbilisi in 1977 (McComas, 2002). In this conference, the objectives of environmental education have been identified as cultivating awareness of economic, social, political and ecological dimensions, protecting and empowering those who aspire to help the environment, and creating new societal patterns and attitudes regarding the environment (Emmelin, 1978). Additionally, at the Intergovernmental Conference on Environmental Education, the objectives and principles of environmental education have been regulated (Palmer & Neal, 1994). During the 1970's, environmental education has been defined as teaching individuals the core processes of nature and the environment (Ahi, Yaya & Özsoy, 2014). "World Conservation Strategy" prepared by the IUCN (International Union for Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources) in 1980, which underlined the importance of sustainable development and protection of resources, has been a critical document for environmental education (Palmer & Neal, 1994). In the 1980's the

dominant perspective was maintaining a global awareness through environmental education. Whereas in the 1990's there was a shift to a sustainable future-oriented environmental education and in the 2000's the focus moved to identifying socio-ecological problems, and resolving them with the active participation of actors that include politicians, policy makers, educators, and teachers (Palmer, 1998). Environmental hazards have become an issue that different disciplines from the fields of physical sciences to social sciences have paid attention to (Smith, 2004) and environmental education's focus has been directed towards environmental protection and management on a global scale from the mid-20th century onwards.

The transformation of the environmental education in Europe through the 1970's has also influenced the studies in Turkey, and more content on environmental education has been added to the curricula in accordance with the developments and tendencies in the USA and Europe. A strong emphasis on environmental education was included in the 1992 and 2000 secondary school curricula (Erdoğan, Kostova & Marcinkowski, 2009). In Turkey, trainings on environmental protection were given in accordance with the European Union's 1st Environment Action Program (1973-1977) and the Third Cycle of Five-Year Plans (1973-1977) (Karataş, 2018). Another prominent step towards environmental education is the "Turkey Environmental Education Seminar" organized in June 7-8, 1990 (Soykan & Atasoy, 2012). Additionally, a selective course *Environment and Humans 1* has been implemented in the secondary schools' curriculum (Ünal & Dımışki, 1999). To this day, environmental education rather than a sole course, has been given as part of the courses such as life sciences, social studies, sciences, geography and biology.

Starting from Turkey's first Primary School Curriculum of 1924, the objectives, learning outcomes and content on environmental education have been part of various courses. For instance, Yolcu (2014) stated that since 1924 Primary School Curriculum, all the Life Sciences courses include objectives, learning outcomes and content on environmental education. Although the concept of environmental education has not been explicitly used, awareness of and sensitivity to the environment and building a connection with natural surroundings; plants, animals, forests, and seas has been an indispensable part of the Turkish culture. Such as the famous *Dede Korkut Hikayeleri* [Book of Dede Korkut] which depicts the epic stories of Oghuz Turks, approached human-nature relations within the framework of environmental literacy and environmental responsibilities (Derman & Aslan, 2016). Moreover, environmental awareness has been influenced by ecological aspects in the religious beliefs of Turkic peoples. That said, the value system based on the principles of Islam dictates that individuals are responsible for the environment, and asks for environmental awareness (Yediyıldız, 2008). For Muslim Turks, environmental awareness has been identified with preservation of natural resources, increasing the green areas by making orchards and gardens, focusing on arboriculture, conservation of food, cleanliness, habitat for animals, considering nature and city-planning to locate the appropriate spaces for cities and a concise effort to follow the ideas of cleanliness in every aspect of life (Macit, 2002). For the Ottomans environmental awareness was considered crucial and special attention was paid to keeping the environment clean, and the state punished those who harmed or damaged the environment (Gedikli, 2002). According to Ottoman archival sources, some of the high-altitude forests were protected by the state, as high-altitude forests preserve water sources, collect spring water, protect the ground surface, provide a habitat for animals and clean the air and maintain good air quality (Macit, 2002). During the time of Mehmet II, the Conqueror to fight with soil erosion around slopes, trees were planted and cutting down trees from forests was banned (Özdemir, 2002). Furthermore, during the reign of Suleiman I, the Magnificent (1520-1566) precautions were taken to preserve the aesthetic panorama of the city and measures taken to stop environmental pollution (Özdemir, 2002). In the Second

Constitution Period (1908-1918), the environment became more of a focal point that led to efforts of conservation of plants and animals and the political parties of the time included environmental issues into their party programs (Dinçer, 1988). These studies on the history of the environment in the Ottoman State illustrate that the Ottomans had an awareness of environmental issues that was bound to religious concerns and made legal arrangements to preserve the environment and address some of the issues surrounding it. That said, research efforts on the history of the environment in the Ottoman Empire related to the perception of human-nature relations and the perception of the environment linked with the social changes during Ottoman times can be considered relatively new (İnal, 2011). Issues such as “landscape change, ecological recovery, agricultural transformations, urban environments, population change, and natural resources” are the new areas of interest in the study of the Ottoman Empire (İnal, 2011).

The 19th century witnessed reform movements in the Ottoman Empire; modern schools that followed both religious and secular education were established. At the end of the 19th century, reformist movements in primary school education proliferated under the influence of “new method [usûl-i cedîd]” (Meşeci Giorgetti, 2014). The reestablishment of the constitution in 1908 started the Second Constitution Period that lasted until the collapse of the Empire, having a unique place in history (Akagündüz, 2015). During this period, new ideas on education and on schools of thought surfaced. These ideas were especially influential on the formation of philosophy of modern education in Turkey (Tümer Erdem, 2015). Education became a special area of interest and its methods, objectives, function, curriculum and philosophy were discussed intensively (Doğan, 2018). In the field of education, discussions and practices on environmental protection can be seen as well. For example, a student-teacher association was established and a ‘tree festival’ was organized and celebrated in the schools (Akyüz, 2018; Ergün, 1996). An educational association “Köylü Bilgi Cemiyeti [Villager Information Association]” was established to inform the villagers on agriculture, husbandry and horticulture through periodicals and pamphlets (Eraslan & Karadoğan, 2013). From the formal education standpoint, environmental topics were covered both in the curriculum and in textbooks. One of the courses that aimed for citizenship education with the principles of the Second Constitution Period is *Musâhabât-ı Ahlâkiye* [Lectures on Morality]. A closer look into learning outcomes of the course, building upon the values, skills, attitudes, sensibilities and awareness one has to embody shows the citizen profile the education system was aspiring to.

The main philosophical outlook of the course is the moral values a student has to embody and exemplify. In this course, these moral values which were based on the understanding of “duty” and “right”; were categorized under six titles “religious duties, personal duties, duties towards family, duties towards homeland, duties towards humanity and duties towards animals” (Maarif-i Umûmiye Nezareti, 1913; Maarif-i Umûmiye Nezareti, 1914). Thereby, issues of morals that influence human behavior have been broadened from interpersonal perspectives to relations with and between species, and non-living things. In other words, the environment has become a criterion for foundations and selection of (the appropriate) moral principles that guide human behavior. While the discussion of the relationship between morals and the environment has a long history, the conceptualization of the relationship as an academic field, which concentrates on building moral sensibility towards the environment, is relatively new and open to development (Özdemir, 1999).

The conceptualization of morality has been going through an evolution: historically at the “Premoral” period, humans’ interests lie within the confines of individual and society, whereas with the period “Contemporary/Future” which deals with morals that include and relate with animals, plants, ecosystems, rocks, the planet and the cosmos,

the focus has broadened (Nash, 1989). Traditional morality and metaphysics formed a framework to address the ever increasing environmental issues of the 1960's and 1970's (Edelglass, 2006). In the 1970's, the invention of environmental ethics was based on the change of perception that nature is an infinite source and the realization that nature does not have the capacity or ability to neutralize the waste humans create (Stenmark, 2016). This led to an awareness of global environmental pollution. Furthermore, environmental ethics became a distinct sub discipline of philosophy in the 1970's (Cooper, 1998). Educators studied the morality of the human-nature relations and underlined the importance of environmental values. Hence, environmental ethics and values have become a part of environmental education (Sauvé, 2005). Thereupon, effective environmental education accentuates moral understanding and environmental values (Özdemir, 2017). Morals include the criterion to choose from different moral principles (Yazıcı, 2016). In fact, morals are human's proactive nature and because of human's unique nature, it demonstrates individual features (Akgündüz, 2013). Moral principles distinguish the "good-bad" behaviors or "do's-don'ts" of behaviors which include environmental ethics.

Environmental ethics, which are based on the foundational principles of theories of ethics, contribute to theories and critiques of environment studies (Arcan, 2014). Stenmark (2016) defines environmental ethics as "the systematic and critical study of the moral judgments and attitudes which (consciously or unconsciously) guide human beings in the way they behave towards nature" (Stenmark, 2016:15). Environmental ethics direct human behavior towards nature through moral norms and this guidance toward nature has been approached differently by various theories of environmental ethics (Ertan, 2004). These theories, which investigate the moral relationship between humans and the natural environment, can be divided into two main categories: anthropocentric ethics and non-anthropocentric ethics (Stenmark, 2016). In anthropocentric ethics, actions that allow humans to benefit from nature are considered right. Anthropocentric ethics are influenced by the machinist worldview, which identifies nature as a "non-living machine" that humans utilize for the benefit of humanity. The opposite side to this understanding of ethics can be found in theocentric ethics which perceive that all beings and things, alive or not, are creations of God (Özdemir, 2017). Biocentric ethics, which bring focus to all living species including humans, and ecocentric ethics which include all living and non-living entities into the scope of ethics, are central to the perception of non-anthropocentric ethics (Stenmark, 2016). Furthermore, Stenmark (2016:62) asserts that "the ethical apprehensions in the non-anthropocentric ethics lack an all-encompassing terminology and states that some consider ecosophy, deep ecology and the land ethic as part of the non-anthropocentric ethics".

These understandings of environmental ethics have been influential on the implementation of environmental education (including the curriculum, skills and growth of attitudes) on the states' educational system. Thus, the pathways of education systems; the curricula which have been instrumental not only in locating the environment in the education system, but also understanding the capabilities and practices of environmental education within the system are worth analyzing. Curriculum includes all the tasks and activities that belong to a particular course during the teaching process. The textbooks reflect the official perception of the curriculum in detail. Consequently, textbooks echo the ideologies, politics and the principles of educating individuals of the state. In this respect, this article can be seen as an effort to contribute to today's studies on environmental education by exploring the comprehension of the "environment" in the humanities and social studies curriculum and textbooks in the last decade of the Ottoman Empire. The study limits its scope to the Second Constitution Period, and to a humanities and social studies course; the *Musâhabât-ı Ahlâkiye*. As stated before, this period is home to many discussions and

reformist developments that are the very first in the field of education. The research makes connections and tries to understand the relation between “environment and child education” by looking at the school curriculum and humanities and social studies textbooks during the late Ottoman period and by doing this hopes to reflect on environmental education in the context of the history of education in Turkey. While environmental education has been studied through analyzing curriculum and textbooks of social sciences based courses (Atasoy, 2005; Tanrıverdi, 2009; Akinoğlu & Sarı, 2009; Kodan & Bozdemir, 2014; Yolcu, 2014), an inquiry on the curriculum and textbooks of the Ottoman period cannot be found. Thus, this study analyses the place of environmental education in the 1913 and 1914 primary school course *Musâhabât-ı Ahlâkiye* curricula and textbooks during the Second Constitution Period. In order to reach the aforementioned outcomes, the study asked: a. How was the content on the environment treated in the 1913 and 1914 *Musâhabât-ı Ahlâkiye* curriculum? b. How was the content on the environment treated in the textbooks written in lieu of the 1913 and 1914 *Musâhabât-ı Ahlâkiye* curriculum? c. What kind of morality related to the environment can we talk about in the *Musâhabât-ı Ahlâkiye* textbooks?

Methodology

The study was structured on the document analysis approach based on a qualitative research method. The document analysis approach includes material analysis which gathers information about the investigated facts or events (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2013). In this approach, documents consist of texts (words) and visual materials such as drawings, photographs, graphs, and posters as well as maps, journals, textbooks, institutional regulations, teacher’s course plans, and letters between parents and schools (Freebody, 2003). The documents such as laws, curriculums, textbooks, course materials, and student testimonies can be considered as the primary sources to analyze the mentality and developments of the particular era which illustrates the social and historical roots of the implementation of the educational practices.

Research Material

This article analyzes the curriculum and textbooks of the Late Ottoman period; specifically, the curriculum of 1913, ‘Curriculum for Primary Schools with One or Two Grades and Teachers’ (henceforth, the 1913 curriculum) and the curriculum of 1914, ‘Curriculum for Primary Schools with Six, Five, Four and Three Grades and Teachers’ (henceforth, the 1914 curriculum) prepared by the Ministry of Education. According to the curriculum, primary schools were divided into three terms; devre-i evveli (the beginners’ level), devre-i mutavassıta (the intermediate level), devre-i âliye (the upper level). Each term is composed of two grades. In the 1914 curriculum, the environmental issues were taught only in the beginner and intermediate levels, so the research focuses on the textbooks of these two levels. For the beginners’ level; *Musahabat-ı Ahlakıye (Diniye, Tarihiye, Medeniye)* [Lectures on Morality (Religion, History and Civilization)] (henceforth “Textbook 1”), printed in 1332/1916 and written by Ali Seydi; and Mehmed Asım and Ahmed Cevad’s textbook *Anadolu Yavrusunun Kitabı İkinci Kitap Kıraat ve Musahabat-ı Ahlakıye* [Book of Children of Anatolia, Second Book Reading and Lectures of Morality] (henceforth “Textbook 2”) printed in 1333/1917 are examined. For the intermediate level; *Yeni Musâhabât-ı Ahlâkiye Diniye, Medeniye, Tarihiye* [The New Lectures on Morality, Religion, Civilization and History] (henceforth “Textbook 3”) written for the first grade of this level by H. Natan and Midhat Sadullah and printed in 1333/1917; and Ahmet Cevad’s *Musahabat-ı Ahlakıye (Sıhhiye, Medeniye, Vatanıye ve İnsaniye)* [Lectures on Morality (Health, Civilization, Homeland and Humanity)] (henceforth “Textbook 4”) printed in 1334/1918 written for the first grade of intermediate level were studied. For the second grade of the intermediate level,

Ahmet Cevad's *Musahabat-ı Ahlakıye, Sıhhiye, Medeniye, Vatanıye ve İnsaniye* [Lectures on Morality (Health, Civilization, Homeland and Humanity)] (henceforth "Textbook 5") printed in 1333/1917 were examined. These textbooks include information on fundamentals of moral rules and citizenship in order to raise influential citizens and are crucial for the Social Studies courses of the Second Constitution Period and early days of the Turkish Republic.

Data Analysis

The process of document analysis follows the phases of "locating and authenticating the document, understanding and then analyzing, and finally using the document" (Forster, 1995 cited in Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2011:193). This study follows the aforementioned steps; searching and acquiring the documents based on the initial research questions and close reading of the documents. During the document analysis, the study used content analysis method. An extensive content analysis was needed as the dataset was solely composed of the texts (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2013:227). In this respect, the research followed Bailey's approach to document analysis which is composed of "choosing sample, developing categories, determining unit of analysis and quantification" (as cited by Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2013:227) stages. At the first phase, the 1913 and 1914 curriculums obtained from the libraries, and five textbooks written in light of the curriculum were identified which was followed by a close reading stage. In the next stage of the document analysis, two categories have been established in order to approach the research questions: "environmental topics and ethical approaches to the representation of environmental topics". These categories have subsections: environmental awareness, living species, non-living things, anthropocentric ethics and non-anthropocentric ethics. Depending on the objectives of a research, the units of analysis can be words, themes, characters, sentences or paragraphs, articles and content (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2013). This study selected "words, sentences or paragraphs, and content" as the units of analysis. The research presented its findings as a report skipping the last step 'quantification' as Yıldırım & Şimşek (2013) assert findings can be reported without the quantification step. At the last stage of document analysis, "using the document", all the data gathered during the research has been evaluated according to the research questions as the documents used in the research are official records that are open to public.

Validity and Reliability

While the nature of qualitative research uses concepts of validity and reliability, alternative concepts; credibility and transferability can also be implemented. For credibility, expert review, and for transferability detailed description are the recommended methods (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2013). To sustain the credibility of this research, expert opinions were asked for and experts agreed on the categories that were created during the content analysis phase. The transferability of the research was accomplished with a detailed description method. In the cases where explanations are needed, direct quotations are used for the sections the categories generated by the use of this method. Detailed description is the approach that "transfers the reordered raw data in the light of emerging concepts and themes without any commentary while staying true to the data's nature as much as possible" that gives the reader the opportunity to make their own deductions and interpretations by looking into the quotations (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2013:304-305).

Findings

The research findings are analyzed under three titles: “The issue of the environment in the *Musâhabât-ı Ahlâkiye* in primary school curriculums of 1913 and 1914, the issue of the environment in the textbooks of *Musâhabât-ı Ahlâkiye* and lastly, environmental ethics in the *Musâhabât-ı Ahlâkiye* textbooks”.

The Issue of the Environment in the Musâhabât-ı Ahlâkiye in Primary School Curriculums of 1913 and 1914

The primary school curriculum of 1913, which was prepared by the Ministry of Education, was intended for the schools with one or two grades and teachers. In those years, curricula were designed for six grades and were implemented based on the number of grades and teachers at each school. For instance, in “schools with two grades and two teachers”, one of the teachers is responsible for the beginners’ level’s two grades and the other is responsible for the intermediate and upper levels. *Musâhabât-ı Ahlâkiye* was taught in the *Reading* course of the humanities and social studies curriculum of 1913. The *Reading* course is three hours each week for grades 1 to 6. On the other hand, the 1914 curriculum was prepared for schools with three, four, five and six grades and teachers. The *Musâhabât-ı Ahlâkiye* in this curriculum was established as a separate class with dedicated hours, and was removed from the *Reading* course. The contact hours of *Musâhabât-ı Ahlâkiye* in the beginner’s level first grade is 3, and in the second grade it is 2 per week. In the intermediate level’s first grade, the contact hours are 2 and for the second grade 1 hour per week. At the upper level, both grades receive an hour of instruction (Maarif-i Umûmiye Nezareti, 1914). The curriculums of *Musâhabât-ı Ahlâkiye* of 1913 and 1914 don’t contain an objectives section but have a list of topics specified for each grade level. This list contains topics such as citizenship knowledge, love for homeland, love for the family, values (cleanliness, righteousness, courageousness, patience, respect, prudence and obedience), personal duties, environmental duties, and information on the state institutions (Maarif-i Umûmiye Nezareti, 1913). As *Musâhabât-ı Ahlâkiye* was given under the *Reading* course in the 1913 curriculum, the topics of the first and second grades were indicated together. Table 1 indicates the topics on the environment.

Table 1.

Topics on the environment in the Musâhabât-ı Ahlâkiye in the 1913 curriculum

<i>1st and 2nd Grades</i>	
<i>Beginners’ Level</i>	Shouldn’t harm plants and trees
	Shouldn’t harm animals and birds
	We should love animals and birds
	We should love plants and trees
	We should breath in the fresh air
	We should love our homeland
	We should respect our ancestors and their legacy
<i>Intermediate Level</i>	Commerce
	Blessings of the homeland
	The Legacy of the Ancestors: mosques, madrasas, fountains, tombs, bridges, soup-kitchens, caravansary, schools, roads
	Respect to our farms and farmers
	Entrepreneurship: Above and below the earth is full of blessings from God. The servants of God and children of the homeland need to take advantage of

	these blessings.
Upper Level	Respect and fondness for craftsmen such as farmers, blacksmiths, sailors and carpenters Duties toward animals Shouldn't harm forests Shouldn't damage roads, stream beds and fountains Paying attention while using public goods Benefitting from the shared places and gardens

As seen in Table 1 separate topics on the environment are dedicated to each level in the 1913 curriculum; and these topics include environmental awareness, respect to the environment, and individuals' benefit from the environment.

The 1914 curriculum follows the same pathway with a couple of additions to the environmental topics. As stated before, in the 1914 curriculum *Musâhabât-ı Ahlâkiye* was separated from the *Reading* course and made a course of its own. The topics for each grade were specified. Environmental topics can be seen in the beginners' and intermediate levels; that's why some topics in the 1913 curriculum have been changed. Table 2 shows the environmental topics in the *Musâhabât-ı Ahlâkiye* in the 1914 curriculum.

Table 2.

Topics on the environment in the Musâhabât-ı Ahlâkiye in the 1914 curriculum

	1st Grade	2nd Grade
Beginners' Level	Not to harm plants and trees Not to harm animals and birds We should love animals and birds We should love plants and trees We should breath in the fresh air We should love the homeland Poems and legends on morals: Iron and the advice of a blacksmith	The land in the homeland and foreign countries Blessings of the homeland The Legacy of the Ancestors: Mosques, madrasas, fountains, tombs, bridges, soup-kitchens, caravansary, schools, and roads Respect to our homes, farms and farmers Benefits of animals to humans, avoid harming animals
Intermediate Level	Entrepreneurship: Above and below the earth is full of blessings from God. Servants of God and children of the homeland need to take advantage of these blessings Duties towards homeland Duties toward animals	Roads belong to the public Those who damage roads are no different from thieves We should not do any harm to forests We shouldn't damage roads, stream beds and fountains Paying attention while using public goods Benefitting from the shared places and gardens

As seen in table 2, themes of "environmental protection, conveying awareness of nature to next generations, the use of natural resources, the place of environment in economy" can be deduced from the 1914 curriculum.

Environmental Topics in the Textbooks of Musâhabât-ı Ahlâkiye

The textbooks of *Musâhabât-ı Ahlâkiye* has been investigated in order to decipher how the environmental topics were discussed. Four categories have been developed as a result of content analysis of the textbooks. Below in table 3, the title of texts, the subject of the texts and the categories they belonged to are given.

Table 3.

The issue of the environment in the textbooks of Musâhabât-ı Ahlâkiye in accordance with 1913 and 1914 Curriculums

<i>Textbook</i>	<i>Text's Title</i>	<i>Text's Subject</i>	<i>Category</i>
Textbook 1	We should not harm plants and animals	Not do any harm to plants and animals	
Textbook 2	Nest	Sparrow's life space and not harming the living space	
Textbook 2	Kids, we should love the countryside	The lives of living creatures around children, not harming the birds	The existence of different living spaces and protecting the living species
Textbook 2	Spring	Spring season, the lives of the living species in the environment, love for nature	
Textbook 3	Seeing our flaws and making an effort to correcting them	Not cutting down the cherry tree and protecting it	
Textbook 4	Animals	Living spaces of poultry, farm animals and some other animals, caring for all living species	
Textbook 1	Breathing fresh air	Air pollution, the importance of fresh air for humans, and interaction with the natural environment	
Textbook 2	How our ancestors used to live	Air pollution, the importance of fresh air for humans, and interaction with the natural environment	
Textbook 2	A hike	Protecting environmental components: Living (plane tree) and non-living (fountain, bridge etc.)	Raising environmental awareness
Textbook 3	Farmers	Getting away from the city, and interacting with the natural environment	
Textbook 4	Helpful sports	The importance of fresh air and direct sunlight for human health	
Textbook 5	State institutions	Protecting environmental components: Living (forests, streams) and non-living (roads, fountains, bridges etc.), environmental problems (floods, droughts)	
Textbook 5	Municipalities	Duties of municipalities towards	

		environment (parks, green areas, clean environment, environmental pollution (issue of waste))	
Textbook 1	Iron	Valuable rocks, mineral deposit and use of mines	
Textbook 2	Humans should be experts on what they do	Climate, weather and the effects of these on the economy and businesses	Benefitting from nature
Textbook 3	Blessings of God	Natural resources (forests, water, mines) and the use of natural resources	
Textbook 5	A harmful villager	Benefitting from the forest and cutting down trees	
Textbook 2	Two white rabbits	Rabbit care at home and being good to animals	
Textbook 2	Grandmother	Poultry animals	
Textbook 2	Butterfly	Information on butterflies, and on caring and protecting them	
Textbook 3	Being gentle to animals	Especially not harming, or torturing animals who doesn't harm or cause a threat to humans and caring for all animals	Love for animals
Textbook 3	Frogs	The natural habitat of frogs and on not killing them.	
Textbook 3	Goldfinch	Compassion to the bird specie (goldfinch)	

As seen from the table above, environmental topics have been indicated in four categories: “the existence of different living spaces and protecting the living species, raising environmental awareness, benefitting from nature, and love for animals”. The content about the first category “the existence of different living spaces and protecting the living species” are presented under the title; “We should not harm plants and animals” in textbook 1. This four-page long story is about a dialogue between a mother and her two children on the conservation of plants and protecting animals. The story begins with one of the children Sacid, who values and believes in the protection of birds, cats, dogs and all animals, bringing a kitten home which he found while walking back from school. It continues with his mother’s advice on the issue of not killing or being cruel to animals, not picking flowers and the importance of protecting and caring for plants and animals. This story is followed by an image entitled “Merciless cartwright” depicting a rider with a horsewhip on a carriage. Textbook 3 also have the same image and title that highlight riding of horses or using them in cartwright and not to harm them in any way. In textbook 2, children’s awareness on different living spaces in the environment are stated in the text; “Kids, we should love the countryside”: “*Pay attention to how a plant grows from the soil, how it flowers, how it yields its fruit... Watch the butterflies, the sun, the moon, the sunrise and the sunset and the stars*” (p.118). The text “Spring” concentrates on the concepts of seasons, wind and sun; introduces forests and green fields as living spaces and gives information on the plants living there such as daisies, poppies, violets and tulips and explains the relationship of bees with these plants. In textbook 3, the issue of protecting the living species is explained with a story of a kid who cut down a cherry tree. This action is criticized and the sadness emanating from cutting down a tree is perceived as even more than feeling sadness of “losing all wealth”. In textbook 4, living spaces of some species are

introduced, and the text underlines the importance of compassion and care for all species: *“My dears [yavrularım], please show compassion and care to living creatures. Do not harm them in any way. Do not trap birds. Do not damage their nests. Do not torture cats”* (p.152). Poems, fables and stories about animals and plants are included in all the textbooks. With the use of these literary genres, information on nature has been conveyed.

In the second category “raising environmental awareness”, the texts give prominence to environmental topics such as environmental problems, the importance of fresh air, and awareness of protecting the living and non-living things of the environment. The text “We should all breathe in fresh air” in textbook 1 concentrates on air pollution, and states the effects of air in the cities on human health and highlights the importance of going to green areas like gardens and coppices. In a similar fashion, textbook 3 brings forth the countryside and villages where one can find “fresh air” by stating, *“We should love the trees, countryside and flowers. They gave us life and wellness. Fresh air, lots of sunlight are the two most needed ingredients for life that one can only find in the countryside and villages”* (p.118). On the other hand, textbook 2 explains environmental pollution and the importance of fresh air for humans through living spaces and professions. In the text, “How our ancestors used to live” the past is compared with the present: *“They [our ancestors] didn’t have homes like today... They always lived with fresh air... Our ancestors used to live on agriculture and husbandry, always breathed fresh air and lived at the countryside. We should live like them and love the countryside and agriculture”* (p.62-63). In textbook 3, in a poem called “Farmers”, a family’s happy life in and within nature has been depicted in these verses: *“if you like this farm dear educated citizen/get away from this noisy and stormy city”*. The difficulties of living in a city are emphasized with noise. The text “Helpful Sports” in textbook 4 pays attention to the benefits of fresh air and sunlight on human’s health in these sentences: *“Breathing fresh air is very important to care for health”* and *“the sun very much like fresh air is very beneficial to the human body, helps to increase strength. The powerful sun ray kills the microbe and protects humans from diseases”* (p.22-23). In textbook 5, a five-page text “State Institutions” focuses on the protection of environmental components; living things (forests, streams) and non-living things (roads, fountains, bridges etc.). The text underlines the importance of controlled logging of forests according to scientific principles. Additionally, in textbook 5 environmental awareness is connected with protection of soil and flora: *“Forests hold back the floods caused by heavy rains and prevent river floods. During the time of cultivation, forests hold back the rain. Fields without forests and trees usually get damaged by the river floods and face drought”* (p.33). Under the title “Municipalities,” the duties of municipalities concerning the environment such as creating parks, green fields and a clean environment overall, and dealing with environmental problems such as garbage disposal and street pollution have been listed. (p.94)

“Benefitting from nature” is the third category in human-environment relations. This category concentrates on the economic value of rocks, mines and distills use of these environmental components for economic growth. In textbook 1, Mehmet Emin’s poem “Iron” marks the usefulness of iron: *“... Yes, iron is a mineral that gives life to crafts/ because of it, the world does not turn into a desert/and humanity is happy and free because of it.”* Likewise, textbook 3 highlights the natural resources (forests, water and mines) of the homeland, and the inadequacy of using its full potential. Textbook 5 points out the conscious use of forests with a story “A harmful villager” that advises to cut down dead wood rather than live trees. Textbook 2 draws attention to the nature’s role in the economic activities of everyday life. In text *“Humans should be experts on what they do”* nature’s role is expressed as (Mehmed Asim & Ahmed Cevad, 1917:126): *“Winds help to separate the ear of wheat from the its straw. That said, there*

are strong winds such as whirlwinds and we have to learn to differentiate the good winds from the bad ones."

The last category is "love for animals" which informs about the living spaces of animals and highlights loving animals. This concentrated view led to the creation of a separate category for animals. The features of the category are about not harming, or torturing animals especially those who don't harm or cause a threat to humans and caring for all animals. All the textbooks underline the importance of benefitting from animals without giving them any harm and why this way of acting is a necessity.

Environmental Ethics in Musâhabât-ı Ahlâkiye Textbooks

The article aims to investigate the ethical dimension of the environmental issues in the *Musâhabât-ı Ahlâkiye* textbooks. In this respect, looking into which environmental ethics approach fits to the way the textbooks address environmental issues is one of the concerns of this article.

Textbook 1 states that the green fields belong to the public and individuals can use the plants and trees as needed (Ali Seydi, 1916: 113). The statements in textbook 2 fall into the anthropocentric ethics approach which stresses that plants and animals are valuable because of their benefits to humanity (Akkoyunlu Ertan, 1998). Statements such as "*we should love trees, green fields and flowers. They always give us health and life... Green fields, croplands, high hills are full of blessings of God. We should go to countryside, live in villages, and appreciate these beautiful blessings of God*" are examples of this approach (Mehmed Asim & Ahmed Cevad, 1917: 119). In a similar fashion, textbook 3 underlines the idea of human-centered benefits of the environment with the statements (p.65): "*We always use and take advantage of the soil, trees, sea, water, mines and animals. In order to sustain our lives, we get our food from the soil. We use the materials we got from trees and underground to shelter and build our homes. The walls and pavements are being built with the rocks from these huge mountains.*" Additionally, textbook 3 includes statements about the killing of animals that have the potential to kill humans. That said, textbook 4 emphasizes how in numerous ways animals can work for the good of humans: from birds' chirping, to farm animals' work for humans or horses' devotion and servitude (p.151). In contrast, textbook 5 states that humans should not exploit forests and should not cut down more than needed. While an anthropocentric approach is dominant throughout the textbooks, the idea of protecting the animals that don't pose any threat is emphasized as well. The statement in textbook 2 "*never ever damage a bird's nest, and harm a bird or butterfly*", informative texts on the ban of killing frogs and the necessities of protecting a goldfinch in textbook 3 are some of the examples of this approach. In textbook 5, cutting down young trees instead of dead wood is distinguished as an environmental issue. Thus, evaluating the environment from only a human-centered ethical view is not sufficient in the textbooks. Besides, it is evident that evaluating species other than humans ethically is a concern in these textbooks. This brings out the perception of protecting living species. Another attitude; not forgetting the benefits of plants and animals for humanity and the use of these only as needed, has also been given prominence. This perception is called "weak anthropocentric" in which the needs and interests of humans are not ignored, but what is considered ethical is the use of the environment without damaging it (Özdemir, 2017).

Other than the weak anthropocentric approach, biocentric and ecocentric approaches are evident in the textbooks as well. In textbook 1, the understanding that plants and animals like humans have feelings can be noticed. Sentences that are reminiscent to biocentric ethics; "*don't forget that plants and trees have feelings and they have a purpose*" can be found which criticize the idea of consuming plants and trees more

than needed. Not damaging the natural habitat of birds, and protecting animals because they are creations of God is mentioned in textbook 1. Additionally, the idea that animals have feelings have been iterated: *“just like humans have feelings, animals have feelings, too. Like us, they feel joy and pain”*. Biocentric ethics bases its foundation on the premise that animals have a purpose in their life so they should be respected (Karatekin & Sönmez, 2016). Furthermore, in textbook 4, harming and torturing living species is categorized as negative behavior (p.152), repeating the perception of human’s benefitting from animals and the idea that animals feel: *“Humans should not forget that like them animals have life. Humans should understand that harming them is prohibited.”* Furthermore, all textbooks stressed many times that torture and cruelty to animals are very negative behaviors and strongly prohibited. For example in textbook 2, cockfights are given as a case and the organizers of such events are condemned: *“those who organize cockfights have made a very evil behavior.”*

On the other hand, content that is relevant to the ecocentric perception, which adds non-living things into environmental ethics is visible in textbook 5. The protection of living things (forests, and rivers etc.) and non-living things (roads, fountains, bridges etc.) is mentioned and this obligation to protect is perceived as not only a personal duty but also as a responsibility for the good of future generations. In this respect, protecting the environmental components, living and non-living, and passing them down to future generations is a “duty”. Those who don’t fulfill this duty will be punished not only by law, but also by religion: *“Those who damage or overuse the living and non-living things are evil persons. They are considered as the enemy of humanity and punished by law. In afterlife, they will face the utmost punishment”* (Ahmet Cevad, 1917: 25).

Discussion and Conclusion

Even though the concepts of environment and education have not been contextualized as environmental education until the end of the 1960’s, to that period educational practices have included applications that relate to the environment. In the field of education, throughout the history of the discipline, nature has been used “not only for military purposes, but for religious purposes, for the needs of children and its relation to environmental purposes as well” (Akyüz, 1979). Especially, the last quarter of the 20th century has seen “an increase in environmental problems” that led to a trend of environmental education that focused on conserving nature and using it within regulations. The Second Constitution period which can be defined with the new schools of thought and applications in education, played an important role in the historical evolution of environmental education in Turkey. The education system went under a change with translations of the works of Froebel, Pestalozzi and Demolins (Meşeci Giorgetti, 2014). Although, one cannot find a systematic pattern in these efforts, there has been an attempt to transfer these contemporary thoughts and ideas to Turkish education (Ergün, 1996). Furthermore, in this period, a new moral system, a new way of life and a new relationship between the state and individual were contextualized (Gündüz, 2010). In other words, the reformist movement in education of the 19th century has been systematized during the Second Constitution period with the implementation of new curriculum and the writing of new textbooks accordingly. These efforts included the appearance of and interest in the environmental topics both in the curriculum and the textbooks.

The article deals with the way topics on environment has appeared in the *Musâhabât-ı Ahlâkiye*, a humanities and social studies course during the Second Constitution Period by looking into the traces of environmental education in the curriculums and textbooks produced in 1913 and 1914. The article finds that in the 1913 and 1914 curriculum of *Musâhabât-ı Ahlâkiye*, environmental topics were discussed in every grade of the 6-year-long primary school program. Back then, primary school includes

children between ages 7-12 (Özalp, 1982). The intention of the curriculum mainly is to introduce nature and the environment and underline the benefits of these to humans. The learning outcomes of the curriculum that relate to environmental topics are about loving, caring for and conserving the living and non-living things in the environment. The titles in the curriculum which is about protecting nature, all the living species (plants and animals) and non-living things (roads, fountains, bridges) underline that it is also a 'duty' to protect. A text topic is created under "above and below the earth is full of blessings from God. As servants of God and children of the homeland we need to take advantage of these blessings" which underlines the importance of using the natural resources. That said, the research find that the aim of the course is to raise individuals who love and appreciate nature; and feel responsible for it, who have an awareness of protecting the living and the non-living things and identify them as part of cultural heritage that has become susceptible to the historical environment.

The article found that environmental topics and concerns, whether directly or not, are discussed in the *Musâhabât-ı Ahlâkiye* textbooks. Environmental education was perceived as a part of citizenship education. All the textbooks touch upon environmental topics through informative texts, stories and poems, and illustrations, which were used to reify the concepts (Please see appendix 1 for examples).

The gist of the text "Not to harm plants and trees" of textbook 1 written for the 1st grades is about "the existence of different living spaces in the environment and protecting the living species." "Breathing Fresh Air" aims to raise environmental awareness, and gives information on "air pollution, the importance of fresh air for humans, and interaction with the natural environment". That said, in "Iron" what is emphasized is the "valuable rocks, mineral deposits and use of mines". Textbook 2 which is written for the 2nd grades, covers more on the environment. There are three texts that deal with "the existence of different living spaces in the environment and protecting the living species" which brings up the importance of fresh air for humans, and protection of living (plane tree) and non-living things. Another section is devoted to how humans benefit from nature and how "climate, weather effects the economy and business". The love for animals is explained in two texts. To develop values and thinking skills about the environment, poems on nature and the environment are used in the textbooks for the 1st and 2nd grades. Poems have the potential to be passed on and spark positive emotions and thoughts in children (Oğuzkan, 1997), in this case to gain positive emotions and behavior towards nature and the environment.

In textbook 3 written for the 3rd grade, environmental awareness is given in six texts that concentrate on love for animals, the existence of different living spaces in the environment, and protecting living species. Textbook 4 written for 3rd graders, includes a text "Animals" which focuses on poultry, farm animals and living spaces of other animals, caring for all living species. Meydan (2015) asserts that Zeynizâde Mehmet Hâzık's textbook "Malumat-ı Medeniyye ve Ahlâkiyye" [Knowledge on Civilization and Morality] written in 1912 has emphasized the "duty" of caring for and protecting animals that humans benefit from. Similarly, Pehlivan Ağırakça (2013) states that the last chapters of the morality textbooks of the Second Constitution Period are devoted to individual's duties towards animals. Moreover, Doğan (1994) underlines that in the textbooks of the period, the topic of 'not harming animals' was considered to be a desired behavioral characteristic of individuals. Compared to other textbooks analyzed, in textbook 5, written for 4th graders, environmental problems such as drought and floods were included. All textbooks focus on understanding and protecting the environment. Actually, environmental education strives for influencing human behavior rather than only passing down knowledge (Yıldırım, Kışoğlu & Salman, 2018). This effort on the content of the textbooks can be summarized as knowledge building and developing a positive attitude towards the environment. This attitude is evident in what

one can call “supportive documents”, for instance *Çocuk Duygusu* [Children’s Feelings] a children’s magazine of the Second Constitution Period that has short essays on the love for nature and animals (Gurbetoğlu, 2007). Additionally, the magazine has poems with themes of love for animals, and conservation of birds’ life spaces (Alabaş, 2012). In the same period, a pre-school teacher’s manual written by Kazım Nami, *Çocuk Bahçesi Rehberi* [Children’s Playground Guide] recommended teachers to choose topics such as “animals, plants and minerals” (Gurbetoğlu & Atlı, 2014).

In fact, the *Musâhabât-ı Ahlâkiye* course focuses on moral duties and teaching of moral values. While the course concentrates on creating a sense of duty, it also aspires for students to develop an eagerness to learn about all the things an individual has made a connection with so that a sense of duty would be established. That’s why it moves towards raising model citizens in the primary school level, and environmental topics and values surrounding it has been perceived as a duty. In the establishment of the relationship between humans and the environment, a moral concern for plants and animals are included. In the textbooks, the environment has been categorized within personal duties and linked with moral dimensions. Similarly, Meydan (2015) states that a similar a case of Zeynizâde Mehmet Hâzık’s *Malumat-ı Medeniyye ve Ahlâkiyye* [Lectures on Civilization and Morality] textbook printed in 1912 includes environmental topics into the study of morality. The curriculums and the textbooks of the Late Ottoman period carried the scholarly approach of the era; specifically, Ottoman moralists’ view of morality that includes “other beings” which is defined as an individual’s duty and responsibility to the living and non-living things in the environment (Erdem, 2006). They reasoned an individual’s duties and responsibilities to other beings with Islam’s ascription to individuals as a religious duty and humanity’s potential to benefit from animals and plants in various ways (Kaya, 2012). This perception is evident in the textbooks analyzed for this study, underlining religious responsibility as a part of environmental sensibility. Theocentric ethics, which are based on the premise that all species, living and non-living things in the environment should be respected because all are a creation of God, is the dominant perception in all textbooks researched for this study. A theocentric outlook is reflected with the fundamentals of Islamic thought of morality. Other than religious duty, the textbooks underline how humans benefit from plants and animals in various ways. In this context, the textbooks grasped environmental education from an anthropocentric ethics perspective. That said, the textbooks argue that species other than humans have a value and importance in the environment. While this perception is dominated by the idea of “benefits of living things for humans”, the idea of conservation is evident as well. This approach suits to weak anthropocentric perception, which as mentioned before, considers the use of the environment without damaging it as ethical (Özdemir, 2017). Benefitting from nature should not be limitless or beyond measure, but it should be based on what is needed. Considering the understanding of the morality education of the era, the notion of not spending or wasting and living a simple way of life is reflected in the textbooks (Doğan, 1994). Following weak anthropocentric perception, biocentric and ecocentric perceptions can be seen in the textbooks. These perceptions are evident in textbook 1 with statements reinforcing the belief that like humans, plants and animals have feelings and the inclusion of non-living things into the environmental ethics in textbook 5, which suits to ecocentric perception.

In conclusion, although during the late Ottoman period, we cannot see the words “environment” and “education” used together, themes of environmental education have been appeared in the curriculum. In the early years of the 20th century, it is evident that efforts on environmental literacy and environmental sensibility have been included in the curriculums and textbooks. Today’s studies on environmental education reference to and underline awareness, knowledge and environmental literacy, which are the objectives of the famous Intergovernmental Conference at Tbilisi in 1977 (Biedenweg,

Monroe & Wojcik, 2013). One can infer that educators of the Late Ottoman period contributed to the development of environmental education in Turkey by including knowledge and learning outcome components such as ecological knowledge, information on nature, and efforts on raising environmental awareness into the *Musahabat-ı Ahlakiye* curriculum and textbooks. According to Erten (2004) environmental education not only introduces knowledge on ecology but it aims to develop positive attitudes towards the environment, and changes in behavior. Even though it might not be perceived of as effective in raising environmental awareness from today's pedagogical standards, the textbooks of the Second Constitution Period chose to use a language with imperatives and advice on the topic of loving the environment to develop attitudes and behavioral changes towards the environment. That said, explaining the consequences of the environmental problems with examples, and positioning humanity as an element in nature can be considered as an important step towards raising environmental awareness. Additionally, the textbooks don't follow solely an anthropocentric perspective, with the influence of Islamic duties of protecting and caring for all living species, bringing forth a theocentric perspective into the understanding of the environment. From this perspective, "feeling appreciation, love and compassion and by observing the environment one can notice that not only humans but other species quote God." As stated above, biocentric and ecocentric views also can be seen in the textbooks.

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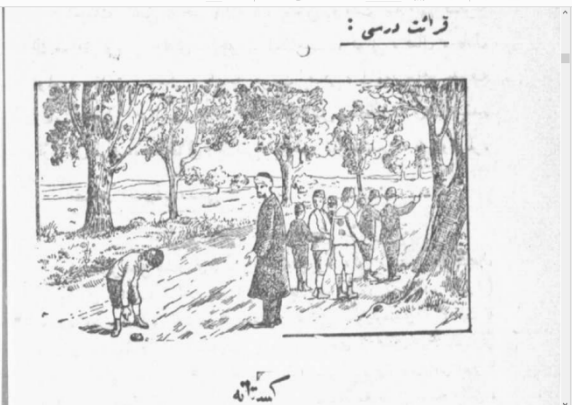
Appendix 1. Examples of Environment in the Textbooks



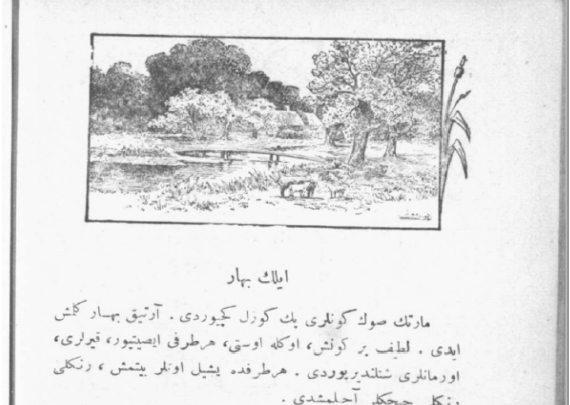
“Crow and Fox” (Source: Ali Seydi, 1916)



“Forest” (Source: H. Natan ve M. Sadullah, 1917)



“Chestnut” (Source: M. Asım ve A. Cevad, 1917)



“Spring” (Source: M. Asım ve A. Cevad, 1917)

Appendix 2. Covers of 1913 and 1914 Primary School Curriculum



Osmanlı'nın Son Döneminde (1913-1918) İlkokul Beşeri ve Sosyal Bilimler Eğitiminde Çevreyle İlgili Konular ve Çevre Ahlakı

Ramazan ALABAŞ

Kastamonu Üniversitesi, Kastamonu, Türkiye

Özet

Türkiye’de günümüzde temel eğitim düzeyindeki okullarda çevre eğitimi ile ilgili konulara hayat bilgisi, sosyal bilgiler ve fen bilimleri derslerinde diğer derslere göre daha sıklıkla yer verilmektedir. Çevre ve çocuk eğitimi arasındaki ilişkinin değerlendirilmesine odaklanan bu çalışma günümüzde Türkiye’de verilen çevre eğitiminin köklerine inmeyi amaçlamaktadır. Bu köklere inme çabasında özellikle Osmanlı Devleti’nin son dönemleri olan 20. yüzyılın başlarına odaklanılmıştır. Araştırmada Osmanlı Devleti’nin son dönemlerinde yayımlanan 1913 ve 1914 ilköğretim programındaki sosyal bilimler eğitimi ile ilgili bir ders olan *Musâhabât-ı Ahlâkiye* öğretim programında ve bu programa göre yazılmış *Musâhabât-ı Ahlâkiye* ders kitaplarında çevre ile ilgili konular ve çevre ahlakı incelenmiştir. Çalışma, nitel araştırma modeline dayalı doküman incelemesi tekniğiyle yapılandırılmıştır. Araştırmanın dokümanlarını 1913 ve 1914 tarihlerinde Maarif-i Umûmiye Nezaretince ilköğretimde uygulanmak üzere hazırlanan *Mekâtib-i İbtidaiye Ders Müfredatları* ve bu müfredatlara göre 1916-1918 yıllarında yazılmış “*Musâhabât-ı Ahlâkiye*” kitapları oluşturmuştur. Dokümanlardan elde edilen veriler içerik analizi ile değerlendirilip yorumlanmıştır.

Araştırma sonucunda, Osmanlı Devleti’nin son dönemleri olan 20. yüzyılın başlarında eğitim sisteminin çevreyi koruma fikrinin gelişmesinde rol oynadığı, 1913 ve 1914 programındaki *Musâhabât-ı Ahlâkiye* dersinde ve bu programa göre hazırlanan *Musâhabât-ı Ahlâkiye* ders kitaplarında çevre konularına yer verildiği ortaya çıkmıştır. İçerik analizi sonucunda *Musâhabât-ı Ahlâkiye* ders kitaplarında çevre ile ilgili konular “çevrede farklı yaşam alanlarının varlığı ve canlı türlerini koruma, çevre bilinci oluşturma, doğadan faydalanma ve hayvan sevgisi” olmak üzere dört kategoride ortaya çıkmıştır. Bu araştırma sonuçları göstermektedir ki Türkiye’de 20. yüzyılın ilk çeyreğinde ilkokullar, çevre okuryazarlığı ve çevre duyarlılığı konusunda çaba harcamıştır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Çevre eğitimi, çevre etiği, çevre eğitimi tarihi, eğitim tarihi, program, ders kitabı