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Philosophy Group Teacher Candidates' Preferences with Regard to Educational Philosophies of Teaching and Learning Activities

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ABSTRACT The purpose of this study is to determine philosophy group teacher candidates' educational philosophies about teaching and learning activities. The sample of the research is constituted by, 149 female and 30 male, in total 179 philosophy group candidates who were selected randomly among the active students during 2011-2012 academic year in a state university education department pedagogical training program. Based on the survey methodology, study was done by using "Educational Beliefs Scale" as the data collection tool. In this survey there are 40 Likert style items aiming to determine teachers' adopted educational beliefs. Cronbach's alpha coefficients of internal consistency of the scale were tested between 0.70-0.91 for sub scales and reliability coefficient was ranging between 0.69-0.86 in lower dimensions. During data analysis, descriptive statistics and t-test were used. According to the results, philosophy group teacher candidate were adopted the Existentialist philosophy the most while they adopted the Essentialist philosophy the least. While there were no differences among teacher candidates adopted educational philosophies in terms of gender and educational status variables, except Essentialism female teacher candidates score higher than male teacher candidates in the remaining dimensions. Graduates on the other hand adopted Progressivism and Reconstructionist educational philosophies more than the others. When teacher candidates adopted philosophies compared there were a low positive correlation between Existentialism and Perennialism, a low negative correlation between Essentialism and Progressivism, a high positive correlation between Existentialism and Progressivism, and a moderate positive correlation between Progressivism and Reconstructionist.

INTRODUCTION

Defining a concept means that also determining the scope and the borders of that concept. In this respect, the difficulty of defining philosophy is evident (Bicer 2013). Even though there is not an agreed upon universal definition of the concept of philosophy, in the most general sense it is expressed as "a knowledge area formed by systematic, in-depth and speculative thought of human beings with regard to universe and their relationship with it" (Gutek 2001: 2). The education, which is a social phenomenon in terms of the transmission of knowledge, skills and values (Quan-Baffour and Arko-Achemfuor 2013), is also a wide and complex concept which cannot be put under one single definition like philosophy. In the broadest sense,

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as a process; education can be defined as the process of influence of man to generate wanted change in behavior intentionally either on himself or another (Uysal 2004). Both philosophy and education help individuals to create goals to determine their expectations from life, to relate various situations they faced to each other, to interpret different thoughts, and "without being attached to previous views make a stand with his/her own point of view" (Kiziltan 2012). As it can be seen, the topic of both philosophy and education is the individual and his various activities. According to Kuken (1996), as the source of all sciences philosophy's field of ethics distinguishes human education as its topic entirely. Also as Arslan (1996) states, for which purpose and how people should be educated, which knowledge and skills should be taught to them, how they should be disciplined, is short, the questions and suggestions with regard to the idea of a right education are in the special field of philosophy. On the other hand, the quality of the relationship that teachers build with their students is based on the meanings that they put into the human nature (Gutek 2001). At this point, where the relationship between education and philosophy gets complicated, phi-

losophy of education emerges as a separate field of knowledge.

Philosophy of education is a discipline or a systematic whole of ideas and concepts that investigates and controls the assumptions, beliefs, decisions and measures guiding the applications and educational policies in terms of consistency and meaning. Philosophy of education evaluates the understanding of human nature at the basis of educational systems. It attempts to create new philosophies to be used in education. It gathers philosophical and educational approaches related to the topics like human nature, society together in a systematic way (Kincal 1996). In another words, "When philosophy of education taken in to account as a process, it can be stated as an effort to explain principles, ideas and concepts that direct education as well as the problems preventing education" (Buyukduvenci 1987: 53).

Although education activity is as old as human history, it sustained its existence in the field of philosophy till modern times. Today, while both fields seem to be independent from each other, the relationship of philosophy and education is a deep and multi-dimensional one. Since education of individuals perceived as one of the most important endeavors throughout the history, there has been a constant effort to find the best ways to educate man and reach the best educational models (Tozlu 1997). "Education-teaching activities of education system, their application methods, behavioral dimensions, causes and consequences" (Coban 2002: 311-312) were put forward differently by philosophical approaches having different perspectives.

Perennialism evaluating education through philosophical perspective is an educational philosophy which is mainly based on Realist and Thomist philosophies. Perennialists presents universe with its spiritual aspect and human's place in the universe metaphysically. For Perennialist, school is a social institution that is established to develop human's mental potential (Gutek 2001). According to Perennialism which is reflecting enlightenment, rationalism, humanism and optimism, since everywhere human has the same universal nature, for everyone education should be based on the same universal principles and emphasises that it should be built upon these facts. In Perennialism finding the essence human's constant universal nature, among the objectives of education the development and perfection of the human mind is very important (Cevizci 2000; Arslan 1996). As an educational philosophy Essentialism is also based on the realistic and idealistic philosophies. According to this approach, human as a social and cultural being has no knwoledge by birth. Later knowledge is acquired through induction and it is absolute truth (Sonmez 2009). For Essentialism human's nature is free from their individual cultural and historical constructs. In this regard, Essentialism unlike other philosophies wants to create a better life through human nature which is common to all human beings (Holma 2007).

Progressivism with its fundamentals based on W. James and J. Dewey's pragmatism and W. Kilpatrick's "project method", generally within the framework of the child's interests, gives importance to the educational innovations which are rest on the activities that might bring significant consequences in child's behaviors, working standards and principles of action (Knoll 2010; Bas 2013). And some progressivists following J. Dewey see social and institutional reforms as the broader framework of schools (Gutek 2001). According to Progressivism education is not a preparation for the future life but it is life itself. All the real problems of life should be reflected to the realm of education as much as possible thus all kinds of classes representing the entire life should be included in the program (Dewey 2008).

The new construct which is also called as social re-constructionism refers to a fundamental opposition to the conservative perennialist and essentialist theories which reflects social values and phenomenon of the past. Re-constructionist state that culture and education should be reconstructed based on the needs of the modern world. According to them, education is the construction project of the social reform of the modern era (Ergun 2009). The most convenient way to build civilization for humanity requires individuals who can use science and technology in the most effective way to reach the desired goals and plan on his and society's reconstructions (Ergen 2012).

According to the contemporary philosophical approach existentialism, the main problem is to create value and the act of selection. Man builds his own selves. Since he is not previously completed, already finished creation, his existence comes before his essence. This condition, thus, the act of selection is none other than his

freedom (Sartre 1996). In this context, the goal of an existentialist education is to provide awareness for individuals with regard to the value of the act of making choices and therefore making them free and realize their freedom (Gutek 2001). According to existentialism, education which is the process of bringing individuals to their limits should be arranged in a way to allow individual to make choices (Kneller 1964).

Defined in many different ways by philosophers and educator throughout the history, education always has a philosophical perspective. As well as influencing the intellectual fields like science, art and morality, by leading education, determining educational goals and guiding educational applications philosophy of education takes its place as a discipline which imposes important duties for teachers who are a crucial variable in the adaptation process of the individual to the rapidly changing modern era. Since through the philosophical beliefs they adopted teachers not only influence the individuals they train but also influence their environment. When the related literature is reviewed, it is seen that though some teachers adopt traditional educational philosophies and plans their teachinglearning activities in this direction, some teachers would still prefer to adopt contemporary educational philosophies (Ekiz 2007; Duman and Ulubey 2008; Tekin and Ustun 2008). Moreover, as each teacher can adopt one single educational philosophy, they can also adopt more than one educational philosophy (Doganay and Sari 2003). This situation shapes their feelings, thought and behaviors in their entire professional lives and affects the next generations at the same rate as well. Determining philosophy group teacher candidates adopted philosophies carries importance as they gain professional skills, especially, since they will shape the future and undertake a different mission with regard to contributing students' critical thinking skills at secondary schools. In this context, philosophy group teacher candidates adopted educational philosophies with regard to teaching-learning activities were aimed to be investigated with this research. In line with this general purpose;

- What are the educational philosophies adopted by philosophy group teacher candidates?
- 2. Are there any differences among the educational philosophies adopted by philosophy group teachers candidates based on gender and educational status?

3. What are the relationships among the educational philosophies adopted by philosophy group teacher candidates? Answers to these questions were sought.

METHODOLOGY

Model

The survey methodology has been used to determine the educational philosophies adopted by philosophy group teachers candidates in a descriptive manner. Survey research model is defined as "an approach that tries to describe a situation, which took place in the past or currently exists, as it is" (Karasar 2012).

Population and Sample

The sample of 179 philosophy group teacher candidates who were receiving pedagogical formation training from a state university education faculty during 2011-2012 academic year were surveyed for this research. Among the participating teacher candidates 149 of them were female and 30 of them were male. Also 84 of these philosophy group teacher candidates were still pursuing an undergraduate degree while 95 of them were graduates of four year undergraduate programs.

Data Collection Tool

The research data was collected using "Educational Beliefs Scale (EBS)" developed by Yilmaz et al. (2011). Each one referring to a different educational philosophy EBS constitutes of fivedimensional scale which has 40 items trying to determine teachers' adopted educational beliefs. Thus, EBS has five subscales; *Perennialism*, Essentialism, Progressivism, Re-constructionism and Existentialism. The items on the scale were scored between 1-strongly disagree and 5strongly agree score range. There were no reverse scored items on the scale. Cronbach Alfa internal consistency coefficients were between 0.07-0.91 at tested sub scales and the confidence coefficient was ranging between 0.69-0.86 at the sub dimensions.

Data Analysis

For the overall analysis of the participant opinions descriptive statistics were used while

t-tests were used to make comparisons. Pearson Correlation coefficient was used to determine the relationships among the adopted educational philosophies. In correlation analysis to determine the strength of the relationship following measure taken into account; 0.07-1.00 high, 0.69-0.30 moderate and 0.29-0.00 low (Buyukozturk 2010). Statistical significance level .05 has been accepted as the basis level for analysis in the study.

RESULTS

In this section of the research, primarily predominant educational philosophies adopted by the philosophy group teacher candidates were determined, after wards some comparisons were made based on gender and educational status of the candidates and finally the relationships among the educational philosophies of teacher candidates were investigated. The distribution of predominant educational philosophies adopted by philosophy group teacher candidates can be seen in Table 1.

Table 1: The distribution of predominant educational philosophies adopted by philosophy group teacher candidates

Dominant educational philosophies	f	%
Perennialism	8	5.4
Essentialism	6	4.0
Progressivism	39	26.2
Re-constructionism	7	4.7
Existentialism	89	59.7
Total*	149	100.0

^{*30} students gave highest score to more than one educational philosophy therefore it is not indicated in the frequency table.

As it can be seen in Table 1, majority of the teacher candidates adopted *Existentialism*

(59.7%), followed by *Progressivism* (26.2%) as educational philosophies while *Essentialism* (4.0%) was the least adopted educational philosophy based on the research results. As more than half of the candidates participating in this research adopted the *Existentialism* educational philosophy, candidates adopting the other remaining philosophies constitute the other half of the participants. The distribution of educational philosophies adopted by teacher candidates based on gender variable is presented in Table 2.

When Table 2 examined, it is seen that female philosophy group teacher candidates scores higher in all dimensions (Perennialism, Progressivism, Re-constructionism, Existentialism) except Essentialism compared to the male teacher candidates. In Essentialism dimension male teacher candidates scored higher than female teacher candidates ($\overline{X}=11.83$). The results of the t-test done to determine whether there are any significant difference among teacher candidates adopted educational philosophies based on gender revealed that there are not any significant differences. The results of the analysis done to determine the distribution of educational philosophies adopted by philosophy group teachers based on education status are presented in Table 3.

Table 3 shows the educational philosophies adopted by philosophy group teacher candidates based on education status. According to this, philosophy group teacher who were still in their 4th year of undergraduate degree scored higher at *Perennialism* (\overline{X} =29.60), *Essentialism* (\overline{X} =11.68) ve *Existentialism* (\overline{X} =30.83) dimensions compared to the teacher candidates who graduated. *Progressivism* (\overline{X} =56.27) and *Re-constructionism* (\overline{X} =26.92) were adopted by graduated teacher candidates more as educational philo-

Table 2: Educational philosophies adopted by philosophy group teachers based on gender

Educational philosophies	Gender	N	\overline{X}	S	Sd	t	p
Perennialism	Female	149	29.36	4.45	177	.068	.946
	Male	30	29.30	5.13			
Essentialism	Female	149	11.04	4.25	177	.733	.468
	Male	30	11.83	5.55			
Progressivism	Female	149	56.41	8.37	177	.730	.467
	Male	30	55.17	9.18			
Re-constructionism	Female	149	26.82	4.77	177	.132	.896
	Male	30	26.70	4.76			
Existentialism	Female	149	31.22	5.17	177	1.507	.134
	Male	30	29.57	6.99			

Table 3: Educational philosophies adopted by philosophy group teachers based on education status

Educational philosophies	Ed. status	N	\overline{X}	S	Sd	t	p
Perennialism	4. Class	84	29.60	4.93	177	.703	.483
	Graduate	95	29.12	4.23			
Essentialism	4. Class	84	11.68	4.82	177	1.404	.162
	Graduate	95	10.74	4.14			
Progressivism	4. Class	84	56.12	8.37	177	.121	.904
	Graduate	95	56.27	8.66			
Re-constructionism	4. Class	84	26.68	4.53	177	.332	.740
	Graduate	95	26.92	4.97			
Existentialism	4. Class	84	30.83	5.45	177	.264	.792
	Graduate	95	30.05	5.63			

sophies. The results of the t-test done to determine whether there are any significant difference among teacher candidates adopted educational philosophies based on education status revealed that there are not any significant differences.

When the philosophical preferences of philosophy group teacher candidates were investigated, it was seen that preferences were focused on more than one philosophical approach. The distribution of the relationships among these educational philosophies adopted by teacher candidates is presented in Table 4.

Table 4: The relationship among educational philosophies adopted by philosophy group teacher candidates

Educational philosophies	Perennialism	Essentialism	Progressivism	Re-constructionism	Existentialism
Perennialism	1.00	039	.279	.279	.313
Essentialism	039	1	362	065	.291
Progressivism	.279	362	1	.592	.766
Re-constructioni	sm .279	065	.592	1	.494
Existentialism	.313	291	.766	.494	1

When Table 4 is investigated, it is determined that among the educational philosophies preferred by philosophy group teacher candidates, there are a positive low correlation (r=.313, p<0.05) between Perennialism and Existentialism, a negative low correlation (r=-.362, p<0.05) between Essentialism and Progressivism, a positive moderate correlation (r=.592, p<0.01) between Progressivism and Re-constructionism, a positive high correlation (r.,766, p<0.01) between Existentialism and Progressivism and a positive moderate correlation (r=.494, p<0.01) between Existentialism and Re-constructionism.

DISCUSSION

In this research philosophy group teacher candidates' predominant adopted educational philosophies were determined, followed by it the report of the most participated dimensions based on gender and education status were given. According to this, it is concluded that majority of the philosophy group teacher candidates adopted Existentialism, followed by Progressivism as educational philosophies and Essentialism were the least adopted educational philosophy. When compared with similar researches these findings were matching with results of the research conducted by Yilmaz et al. (2012) suggesting that the most prefer educational philosophies by teachers are Existentialism, Progressivism, Perennialism, Re-constructionism and Essentialism in order. Also in their research Doganay and Sari (2003) determined that Existentialism, Experimentalism, Realism, Perennialism and Idealism are the most preferred educational philosophies. Therefore, it can be said that the research results show some similarities and support each other with that regard. The abolition of the obligation to prepare lesson plans at both primary and secondary school level might be considered effective for the Existentialism taking the first placed as the most preferred philosophy in the stated research results. Since, existentialism keeps its distance to the understanding of plans and programs that are not allowing opportunities for the freedom of choice, creativity; therefore individuality for the sake of educational standardization and which are determining process of learning absolutely in order to increase productivity (Arslanoglu 2012; Kale 2009; Sonmez 2005).

Based on the gender variable, female philosophy group teacher candidates scored higher in

all educational philosophies except Essentialism compared to the male teacher candidates. In Doganay and Sari (2002) and Duman and Ulubey (2008)'s research female teacher candidates scored higher in all educational philosophies except Perennialism compared to the male teacher candidates. As the findings of these researches compared, due to the fact that both essentialism and perennialism are traditional educational philosophies and considering their parallel notions in different points, it can be said that male teacher candidates are more traditional about educational activities compared to the female teacher candidates. Being parallel with the results of Doganay and Sari (2002) and Duman and Ulubey (2008)'s researches, the research results show that female teacher candidates score higher in contemporary educational philosophies compared to male teacher candidates, therefore, it can be said that findings support of each oth-

When philosophy group teacher candidates adopted educational philosophies investigated based on education status variable compared to the graduated philosophy group teacher candidates, teacher candidates who were still in their 4th year of undergraduate degree scored higher in Perennialism, Essentialism, and Existentialism dimensions. It is also seen that Progressivism and Re-constructionism educational philosophies were adopted more by the graduate teacher candidates. This situation might be caused by that fact that in recent years, Turkish education system has been dominated by constructivist education approach therefore; during the teacher preparation process constructivism is being emphasized repeatedly. In addition, since the graduated teacher candidates were more close to being appointed as teachers compared to the other teacher candidates who were still in training, it brings to mind that they know the Progressivism and Re-constructionism elements that Turkish education system is based on.

When philosophy group teachers' philosophical preferences are investigated it is seen that their preferences are not concentrated on one single philosophical viewpoint. As the results are reviewed it is seen that while the relationship between traditional and contemporary philosophies are low, the relationship among contemporary philosophies are usually at moderate or high levels. For example, it is detected that there are a positive low correlation between

Perennialism and Existentialism and a negative low correlation between Essentialism and Progressivism. On the other hand, it is concluded that there are a positive moderate correlation between Progressivism and Re-constructionism, and a positive high correlation between Existentialism and Progressivism and a positive moderate correlation between Existentialism and Reconstructionism. Therefore, finding a significant positive correlation among Prograssivism, Reconstructionism, and Existentialism stated as contemporary philosophies in the literature indicates that these philosophies are in close relationship with the main arguments of the teaching-learning process. In this context, they all emphasize student centered activities while Existentialism stresses the students search for their personal truths during the learning process, Progressivism underlines the active experience and Re-constructionism focuses on the learning process as in fact the effort to re-construction of the society (Bicer 2012; Gutek 2001; Sonmez 2005). The significant negative correlation between Essentialism and Progressivism, as Gutek (2001) stated, can be explained by the argument that while as a conservative philosophy Essentialism based on the development of general mental abilities, as a change oriented contemporary educational philosophy Pregressivism assume that teaching should carried out with real-life problems.

Similar results like teacher candidates preference of more than one philosophy simultaneously were observed by Tekin and Ustun (2008) in their research findings as well. According to the research findings, it can be said that philosophy group teacher candidates have multiple philosophical preferences, and during planning and application of teaching-learning activities they adopted the most useful and compatible parts of the educational philosophies based on their needs.

CONCLUSION

According to the results obtained by this research, majority of the philosophy group teacher candidates adopted *Existentialism*, followed by *Progressivism* as educational philosophies and *Essentialism* were the least adopted educational philosophy. Based on the gender variable, it is observed that female philosophy group teacher candidates scored higher in all

dimensions except *Essentialism* compared to the male teacher candidates. With regard to *Essentialism* dimension, male teacher candidates score higher than female teacher candidates.

Although there are no significant difference among educational philosophies adopted by philosophy group teachers based on education status variable, compared to the graduated philosophy group teacher candidates, teacher candidates who were still in their 4th year of undergraduate degree scored higher in *Perennialism*, *Essentialism*, and *Existentialism* dimensions. *Progressivism* and *Re-constructionism* educational philosophies were adopted more by the graduate teacher candidates.

According to the level of relationships among the educational philosophies preferred by philosophy group teacher candidates, there are a positive low correlation between Perennialism and Existentialism, a negative low correlation between Essentialism and Progressivism, a positive moderate correlation between Progressivism and Re-constructionism, a positive high correlation between Existentialism and Progressivism and a positive moderate correlation between Existentialism and Re-constructionism.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Even though this research is limited to only philosophy group teacher candidates, by adding different sections to the further research teacher candidates' philosophical preferences with regard to education can be investigated in detail and comparison. The teacher candidates from different age groups and socio-cultural backgrounds, who participated in this research, can further be investigated in terms of the course of their adopted educational philosophy with either cross-sectional or longitudinal studies. Moreover while researching, teacher candidates or teachers adopted educational philosophies using qualitative research approaches like participant observation or case studies to gather detailed information that can be effective to obtain important results. In all the fields of teacher preparation, 'Educational Philosophy' courses can be given as mandatory courses to assure teacher candidates' understanding of different educational philosophies and to allow them to evaluate the concept of education from a philosophical perspective through a 'Philosophy' course.

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