



RESEARCH ARTICLE

AN ANALYSIS OF EDUCATIONAL PHILOSOPHIES AND TEACHER COMPETENCIES

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ABSTRACT

This survey research intends to describe the relation between educational philosophies and teacher competencies. The sample of the research comprises 489 teacher candidates studying at Necatibey University Faculty of Education and 494 teachers working in Karesi and Altıeylül provinces of Balıkesir during the 2014-2015 academic year. The data was collected through “Preferences for Educational Philosophies Scale” and “Teacher Competence Scale”. Mann Whitney U-Test and Spearman Brown Rank Correlation Test were used in data analysis. The results revealed that progressivism and re-constructionism philosophies, which are based on contemporary approach to education, are preferred to essentialism and perennialism philosophies, which advocate more traditional approaches. As regards educational philosophies and teacher competencies according to the gender variable, a significant difference was found to exist in favor of female participants in progressivism and re-constructionism, and in favor of male participants in essentialism and perennialism. The study also revealed higher teacher competency mean ranks for women than for men. It was concluded that teachers and teacher candidates who show orientation towards progressivism and re-constructionism philosophies have higher levels of competency self-perception, and those who show orientation towards essentialism and perennialism philosophies have low levels of competency self-perception.

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INTRODUCTION

The teacher is, and has always been, one of the most important elements of educational systems because it is only well-qualified teachers that can realize high-quality education. Thus, education is qualified to the extent to which the teachers who perform it are qualified themselves. Although the educational philosophy identifies the foundation of education, and scientific and technological developments, and transformations in the structure of society bring about certain changes in the teacher role, they do not diminish the importance of teacher. Teachers remain the greatest figure of the system even in the most contemporary teaching practices. Teachers’ educational philosophies and their teaching capabilities are critical for the fulfillment of their responsibility. In broad terms, philosophy is a life style, a perspective, and a worldview (Ergün, 2009). In other words, it is a field of knowledge that formed as a result of systematic and in-depth thinking about human beings’ relation with the

universe (Guttek, 2001). Pearsall (1998) defines philosophy as the basic nature of knowledge, and a field dealing with the concepts of fact and existence. According to Tozlu and Yayla (2005), philosophy can be defined as the values and knowledge systems human beings possess and live with. This may be indicative of that philosophy is personal and linked with an individual’s power of thinking (Ertürk, 2013). Philosophy constitutes the foundation of all fields of science, each of which has its own philosophy (Ergün, 2009). A branch of science with which philosophy has a strong interaction is education. A multi-dimensional and in-depth relation exists between philosophy and education (Ekiz, 2007). Philosophy grants education a system of qualities and values, while education functions as a system and endeavor geared towards helping individuals reach and gain them (Değirmencioğlu, 2000). Educational philosophy, which emerges from the philosophy-education interaction, can be defined as a branch of philosophy treating education by methods that are unique to philosophy (Cevizci, 2003). As Erden (1998) views, educational philosophy is a discipline holistically analyzing theories concerning education, practices and dimensions, the interactions among these, and the consistency of these interactions.

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A certain orientation towards a philosophy or philosophies in education influences the entire system of education (Sönmez, 2002). Numerous philosophical movements were born throughout history. Their implications on education have led to educational philosophies (Tekin and Üstün, 2008) and influenced which direction the educational practices will take (Doğanay, 2011). Four commonly acknowledged educational philosophies are as follows: perennialism, essentialism, progressivism, and re-constructionism (Ornstein and Hunkins, 1993). Based on their most remarkable characteristics, the literature regards perennialism and essentialism philosophies as traditional, and progressivism and re-constructionism as contemporary educational philosophies (Ornstein and Hunkins, 1993). Below is a brief description of each one of them. Perennialism holds that the essence of the human being remains the same always and everywhere. It believes that there are absolute truths in the universe, and that education should be defined by these universal truths. This philosophy is concerned with educating proper individuals with a solid character. As reasoning is the most significant quality of human nature, education should give importance to the development of human mind (intellectual education). Perennialism regards education as a tool which prepares the individual for life experiences, through world classics designed to show students both the spiritual and material aspects of the world (Tozlu, 1997; Fidan and Erden, 1998; Demirel, 2008; Ergün, 2009).

Essentialism asserts that the school has the duty to preserve culture and transfer it to the next generation. Teachers should transfer validated facts to children and youngsters, who should develop their cognitive capacities by memorizing these facts. It is as such because for the civilizations to be furthered, human beings must learn the pre-learned facts and past experiences. This philosophy puts the emphasis on the teacher and subject-matter (Tozlu, 1997; Fidan and Erden, 1998; Ergün, 2009; Ercan, 2014; Ornstein and Hunkins, 1993). Unlike progressivism, perennialism and essentialism philosophies contend that education is not mere transference of readily-known facts, but the very life itself. Education should be geared towards individuals' interests. It advocates a student-centered approach wherein the teacher functions as a guide. This philosophical thought emphasizes learning through problem solving. The individual should relate the necessary knowledge to life, thus attach meaning to it. In progressivism philosophy, the individual should learn by doing and experiencing (Tozlu, 1997; Fidan and Erden, 1998; Sönmez, 2002; Cevizci, 2003; Ergün, 2009; Ornstein and Hunkins, 1993).

In the re-constructionism philosophy, education is considered as a means of transformation. The main aim of education is to build the world civilization, ensure peace and welfare, bring change through practice, and gain values such as love, cooperation, and stability. The aim of the school, in particular, is to reconstruct and reorganize the society (Ergün, 2009; Tozlu, 1997; Sönmez, 2002; Cevizci, 2003; Ergün, 2009; Ornstein and Hunkins, 1993). Besides their educational philosophies, their teaching competencies also influence the way teachers and teacher candidates plan teaching and learning processes. No matter which education philosophy they have

adopted, the teachers should possess certain qualities. Korthagen (2004) states that the question of "Who is actually a good teacher?" has been answered by different sources based on varied opinions and facts, enlisting different qualities of good teachers. These qualities can be classified into two: professional and personal. Many studies have focused on personal characteristics that a teacher should possess, each dealing with different personality traits. It is yet impossible to claim that there is a consensus over the standards defining the qualities a good teacher. Nevertheless, it is commonly conceived that these qualities entail communicating effectively, motivating students to learn and cooperate, working efficiently, showing tolerance, and being perseverant, stable, respectful, self-confident, and sociable (Çelikten, Şanal and Yeni, 2005).

The personal traits of a teacher are important, yet when these personal traits are complemented with professional qualities, they become meaningful. Indeed, a teacher can fulfill the primary duty of teaching only when he or she has the professional competencies. Professional competencies are basically mastery of field knowledge, pedagogical knowledge, and general world knowledge (Kavcar, 2002). Field knowledge can be defined as the teacher candidate's having specialty in a certain topic in teacher training programs. No matter how much a teacher candidate has mastered field-specific knowledge, he or she cannot succeed in the teaching career unless he or she transfers this knowledge to students. Therefore, the teacher should have the capability of teaching. This dimension refers to the occupational knowledge of the teacher, and involves the competencies of planning the learning process, preparing the teaching learning environment, effectively implementing the instruction process, and evaluating students' performance. The general knowledge dimension involves a teacher's transferring the societal culture to students. To accomplish this duty, a teacher should be knowledgeable about the society he or she lives in and its cultural characteristics (Çelikten, Şanal and Yeni, 2005).

The philosophical research carried out on teacher candidates are threefold: scale, design, and adaptation studies (Semerci, Semerci and Çerçi 2002; Yılmaz, Altınkurt and Çokluk, 2011); identification of philosophical orientations, and analysis of these orientations from the viewpoint of different variables (Doğanay and Sarı, 2003; Ekiz, 2005; Yan Fung, 2005; Ekiz, 2007; Çoban, 2002; Kaya, 2007; Duman and Ulubey, 2008; Duman, 2008; Tekin and Üstün, 2008; Üstüner, 2008; Karadağ, Baloğlu and Kaya, 2009; Doğanay, 2011; Biçer, Er and Özel, 2013; Yapıcı, 2013; Alkın, Tunca and Ulubey, 2014). The research pertaining to teacher competencies, on the other hand, can be categorized into two: identification of teachers' or teacher candidates' teaching competencies (İlhan, 2004; Karacaoğlu, 2009; Yeşilyurt, 2011; Özer and Gelen, 2008; Şeker, Deniz and Gorgen, 2005; Köksal, 2008) and analysis of the relation of these competencies with different variables (Darling Hammond, 1999). While ample evidence exists in the literature showing that teachers' educational philosophies are influential on the planning of teaching-learning situations (Austin and Reinhardt, 1999; Elisasser, 2008; Karakuş, 2006) and that teachers' teaching competencies directly impact the quality of this process (Baskan, 2001;

Çelikten, Şanal and Yeni, 2005; Demirel and Kaya, 2006; Karaçalı, 2004; Arslan and Özpınar, 2008), it seems that the relation between the two variables has not been focus of research. Thus, it is high time the relation between the educational philosophies held by teacher candidates and teacher competencies were defined.

This study intends to describe the relation between educational philosophies and teacher competencies. Thus, the following research questions were asked:

- What are the adopted teaching philosophies and the levels of teaching competencies?
- How do the adopted teaching philosophies and teacher competencies vary according to
 - gender,
 - teacher group?
- In what way do the educational philosophies relate with teacher competencies?

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The present study which intends to investigate the educational philosophies adopted and teacher competencies uses the relational screening model. This research model determines the existence and degree of joint variation between two or more variants (Karasar, 2004). As this study intends to describe the relation between educational philosophies and teacher competencies, it was suitable to employ this model.

Population and Sample

The population of the research comprises 4500 teacher candidates studying at Necatibey University Faculty of Education, and 2059 and 2130 teachers working in Karesi and Altıeylül provinces of Balıkesir, respectively, during the 2014-2015 academic year. The sample of the research, on the other hand, comprises 489 teacher candidates studying at Necatibey University Faculty of Education and 494 teachers. Of the participants, 437 are male, and 546 are female.

The sample selected represents approximately 10% of the teachers, and 10% of the teacher candidates. The sample size is representative of the population.

Data Collection Tools

Preferences for Educational Philosophies Scale: The scale was developed by the researchers to determine the participants' educational philosophies; it is comprised of the essentialism, perennialism, progressivism, and re-constructionism sub-dimensions. *Each sub-dimension has 9 items, so there are totally 36 items.* Cronbach Alpha coefficient values of the subdimensions were found to be as follows: essentialism 0,72, perennialism 0,67, progressivism 0,88, and re-constructionism 0,86. The overall value for the scale was 0,84.

Teacher Competence Scale: The scale consists of two sub-dimensions and 21 items. It was designed by Gibson and Dembo (1984), and revised by Guskey and Pessero (1994). Diken (2004) adapted the scale to Turkish. During adaptation, 5 items did not prove compatible, thus were eliminated from the scale. The internal consistency coefficient was 0,71 for the seven-item dimension comprising individual factors, 0,73 for the nine-item subdimension comprising external factors, and 0,71 for the scale overall.

Data Analysis

The first step in data analysis was testing whether the scores obtained from the participants demonstrate normal distribution or not. KS value was found as $p < .05$. Among the t-tests, nonparametric Mann-Whitney U Test was used to analyze differences, Spearman correlation test was used to compare relations.

RESULTS

In this section, the findings presented in the tables derived from research and interpreted.

Table 1. Participants' Educational Philosophies and Their Teaching Competencies

	Mean Values of Scores Obtained from the Scale				
	Gender		Group		Total (983)
	M (437)	F (546)	Pre-service Teacher (489)	Teacher (494)	
Essentialism	23,49	21,76	22,44	22,61	22,53
Perennialism	31,27	30,21	29,36	31,99	30,68
Progressivism	39,60	40,63	39,62	40,71	40,17
Re-constructionism	39,64	40,31	39,39	40,62	40,01
Teacher Competency	55,71	56,84	56,77	55,90	56,34

Table 2. Analysis of Teaching Competencies and Educational Philosophies According to Gender

	Gender	N	Mean rank.	Rank total	U	p
Essentialism	Female	546	460,4	251412,50	102081,50	0,000*
	Male	437	530,5	232223,50		
Perennialism	Female	546	471,9	257662,00	108331,00	0,013*
	Male	437	517,1	225974,00		
Progressivism	Female	546	525,4	286873,00	101060,00	0,000*
	Male	437	450,3	196763,00		
Re-constructionism	Female	546	511,6	279326,50	108606,50	0,015*
	Male	437	467,5	204309,50		
Teacher competency	Female	546	515,1	281242,00	106691,00	0,004*
	Male	437	463,1	202394,00		

Table 1 presents the mean values of participants according to gender and groups. An analysis of these variables according to gender reveals that male participants' mean scores pertaining to essentialism and perennialism are higher than female participants', and female participants' mean scores pertaining to progressivism and Re-constructionism are higher than male participants'. The analysis of participant groups shows that the mean scores pertaining to teachers' educational philosophies are higher than the mean scores pertaining to teacher candidates' educational philosophies. The participants' mean scores pertaining to re-constructionism and progressivism were higher than those pertaining to essentialism and perennialism. An analysis of the participants' educational philosophies according to gender pointed to a significant difference in favor of females as regards progressivism and re-constructionism, and males as regards essentialism and perennialism. Moreover, female participants' mean rank values belonging to teacher competencies proved higher.

linear correlation between progressivism and re-constructionism.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

This study, which intends to shed light onto the relation between educational philosophies and teaching competencies, demonstrated that the study group prefer progressivism and re-constructionism philosophies, which are based on contemporary approaches to education, to essentialism and perennialism, which advocate more traditional approaches to education. Similarly, Kaya (2007) investigated school administrators' philosophical choices as regards the education process through four dimensions: perennialism, essentialism, progressivism, and re-constructionism. The researcher concluded that school administrators tend to act according to progressivism and re-constructionism movements.

Table 3. A Comparative Analysis of Teacher Competencies and Educational Philosophies according to group

	Group	N	Mean rank.	Rank total	U	p
Essentialism	Teacher	494	496,40	245219,50	118611,50	0,625
	Preservice t.	489	487,56	238416,50		
Perennialism	Teacher	494	556,91	275111,50	88719,50	0,000*
	Preservice t.	489	426,43	208524,50		
Progressivism	Teacher	494	513,10	253472,00	110359,00	0,018*
	Preservice t.	489	470,68	230164,00		
Re-constructionism	Teacher	494	519,74	256752,50	107078,50	0,002*
	Preservice t.	489	463,97	226883,50		
Teacher competence	Teacher	494	472,49	233411,50	111146,50	0,030*
	Preservice t.	489	511,71	250224,50		

Table 4. The Relation between Teacher Competencies and Philosophical Approaches

	Tc	Es	Pe	Pr	Rc
Teacher competencies	1				
Essentialism	-,216**	1			
Perennialism	-,055	,491**	1		
Progressivism	,289**	-,299**	,052	1	
Re-constructionism	,201**	-,202**	,143**	,661**	1

**Spearman correlation test is significant at $p < 0,01$.

The educational philosophies followed by the participants were analyzed according to the status of being teachers and pre-service teachers. No significant difference was found between teachers and preservice teachers as to the essentialism educational philosophy. On the other hand, values pertaining to teachers were significantly higher in perennialism, progressivism, and re-constructionism philosophies. In addition, the teacher competency scores of teacher candidates were significantly higher. Spearman correlation test was conducted to determine the extent to which participants' teaching competencies and their educational philosophies, and philosophies among each other, relate to each other. As a result, the competency level of the study group and the essentialism thought showed weak linear negative correlation. The competency level of the study group, and progressivism and re-constructionism, however, showed weak linear positive correlation. As regards the philosophical thoughts observed, the following relations were seen: moderate positive linear correlation between essentialism and perennialism, weak negative linear correlation between progressivism and essentialism, weak positive linear correlation between perennialism and re-constructionism, and moderate positive

An analysis of educational philosophies according to gender showed a significant difference in favor of female participants as to progressivism and re-constructionism, and a significant difference in favor of male participants as to essentialism and perennialism. In other words, female participants preferred progressivism and re-constructionism educational philosophies more than male participants do, and male participants showed tendency towards essentialism and perennialism, the more traditional approaches. This is parallel to the results of a study focusing on teacher candidates conducted by Beytekin and Kadı (2015). However, some studies in the related literature demonstrated that gender is not a variable that influences participants' educational philosophies (Yapıcı, 2013; Doğanay, 2011; Biçer, Er and Özel, 2013; Ilgaz, Bülbül and Çuhadar, 2013). The results showed that the dominant educational philosophies are progressivism and re-constructionism. These results are in concordance with Ekiz' study (2005, 2007) with teacher candidates. Ekiz (2005) found that senior students in the Classroom Teacher Undergraduate Program had low perennialism and essentialism scores. The same study revealed that teacher candidates studying in various departments had high mean scores of progressivism and re-constructionism; that

is, they tend to favor these philosophies. In addition, teachers' score average pertaining to progressivism and re-constructionism educational philosophies is higher than teacher candidates'. This may be indicative of the fact that teachers tend to favor progressive and reconstructive philosophies more than teacher candidates do. As regards the gender variable, teaching competency scores of female teachers are higher than those of male teachers. In other words, female teachers regard themselves more competent in the profession of teaching. This is parallel to the finding Yalçın's (2011) study. By contrast, a study conducted on education faculty students showed that male teacher candidates have higher perception of self-competence (Elkatmış, Demirbaş and Ertuğrul, 2013). A similar finding (Ross, Cousins and Gadalla, 1996) was that self-competency perception of male teachers is significantly higher than that of female teachers (Ross, Cousins and Gadalla, 1996). Nevertheless, the related literature includes studies demonstrating that gender has no effect on teacher competency perceptions (Gençtürk and Memiş, 2010; Kösterelioglu and Kösterelioglu, 2008; Gencer and Çakıroğlu, 2007).

Teachers' orientation towards educational philosophies was analyzed according to whether the participants are teachers or teacher candidates; it was observed that no significant difference exists between the two groups as regards essentialism. A significant difference emerged in favor of teachers in perennialism, progressivism, and re-constructionism philosophies. Yapıcı (2013) carried out a relevant study and did not find a strong orientation towards any one of these educational philosophies on the side of teachers and teacher candidates. Ilgaz, Bülbül and Çuhadar (2013) investigated the relation between teacher candidates' educational beliefs and perceptions of self-competence, and their variation of these variables according to gender and faculties where they study. This study yielded the relation between teacher candidates' perception of self-confidence and contemporary approaches to education (progressivism, re-constructionism, and existentialism). Among the educational philosophies followed, there is positive linear correlation between essentialism and perennialism, and between progressivism and re-constructionism. On the other hand, a weak positive linear correlation was found between perennialism and re-constructionism. These point to a relation between philosophies representing traditional approaches to education (perennialism -essentialism), and between those representing modern approaches to teaching (progressivism-re-constructionism). Similarly, Meral (2014) investigated the effect of secondary school math teachers' educational philosophies and their approaches to teaching-learning on their ability to arrange for constructive teaching environment.

The research revealed significant positive relations between perennialism and essentialism, and between progressivism and re-constructionism philosophies. It was found that the competency level of participants who follow progressivism and re-constructionism is higher than those following essentialism. Similarly, Ilgaz, Bülbül and Çuhadar (2013) examined the relation between teacher candidates' orientations and competency perceptions from the viewpoint of gender and faculty. They found positive correlation between teacher

candidates' competencies and educational philosophies supporting modern approaches to teaching (progressivism, re-constructionism, and existentialism).

The results revealed that the progressivism and re-constructionism oriented teachers and teacher candidates have high self-perception of teaching competencies, whereas the essentialism and perennialism oriented ones have low self-perception of teaching competencies. Overall, the findings of the study are in concordance with those of other studies in the literature related with educational philosophies and teacher competencies, and show that following educational philosophies that are aligned with contemporary teaching approaches increases self-perception of competency. Needless to say, taking courses on educational philosophies as part of the undergraduate education will enhance the training process of teacher candidates. To improve teachers' self-perception of competencies, it is also advisable to raise awareness of teachers currently working in educational institutions about contemporary education philosophies through several in-service training programs. Further studies focusing on the relation between educational philosophies adopted by teacher candidates and by teachers will surely shed light onto the related literature.

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