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# Exploring Educational Philosophy of Primary School Teacher Candidates in Turkey

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## Abstract

Every teacher has a philosophy that affects their education practices and approaches to students. The adopted educational philosophy guides the teachers who are the implementers of the curriculum. Therefore, it is crucial to explore the educational philosophy adopted by teacher candidates, who are expected to be good curriculum practitioners and be educated in this direction. This qualitative study explored primary school teacher candidates' philosophy of education. Data were collected from 24 primary school teacher candidates and analyzed thematically. The results showed that the participants mostly held the philosophy of Progressivism, and some had an eclectic understanding. Because Turkey's current primary school curriculum was prepared according to the philosophy of Progressivism, it can be inferred that teacher candidates who believe in this philosophy are compatible with the curriculum. It is also concluded that teacher candidates with a philosophy other than Progressivism have not yet fully understood the curriculum. Activities related to increasing knowledge and awareness about educational philosophies in teacher education programs are recommended.

**Keywords:** Curriculum, educational philosophies, teacher candidates, teacher education

## 1. Introduction

The curriculum is like a map in education that helps schools and teachers guide students in their learning journey. This is especially important now as the world is changing a lot due to new technologies and people from different places coming together. So, it is not just about learning facts anymore; it is also about understanding different perspectives and being able to adjust to new

situations (OECD, 2020). That is why it is really important to teach students to be open-minded and able to adapt (Hudson & Luke, 2023). Like the curriculum, future teachers' education is also important. Teachers need to know how to help all kinds of students, including those with different needs (Demirkol, 2022). So, the programs that teach future teachers are focusing on these things too. It is like giving teachers the right tools to help students succeed in a changing world.

The curriculum is undeniably the cornerstone of any educational system, intricately weaving together a tapestry of objectives, content, teaching and learning methodologies, and evaluation techniques. However, its significance goes beyond being a mere blueprint; it embodies a profound philosophy of education that serves as the guiding light for all pedagogical endeavors. This philosophy acts as an invisible hand that shapes the very essence of teaching and learning activities, molding them into a coherent and purposeful experience for both educators and learners (Glassen, 2019). Through its intricate threads, this philosophy breathes life into teachers' practices, influencing their approaches to students, their instructional techniques, and their nurturing of a holistic educational environment.

Embedded within this educational philosophy is the wisdom to discern and align curriculum content with its overarching objectives (Gwele, 2005). It serves as a compass that empowers educators to traverse the complex landscape of knowledge and select materials that resonate with the educational goals at hand (Ornstein, 1991). Moreover, this philosophy orchestrates the symphony of learning-teaching activities, harmonizing diverse methods, techniques, and strategies that cater to varied learning styles and student needs. It is a foundation upon which effective measurement and evaluation strategies are erected, ensuring that the educational journey remains accountable, rigorous, and attuned to the pulse of progress (Gordon, 2018).

In the context of Turkey, over the last 50 years, the curriculum has undergone systematic changes, resulting in variations in the educational philosophy based on the curriculum (Demirel, 2015; Gültekin, 2020; Korkmaz, 2017; Orakçı et al., 2018)). This dynamic landscape has imparted varied learning experiences to preservice teachers, exposing them to a mosaic of curricula and a spectrum of educators educated across different eras. The interplay of these elements shapes the educational philosophy that preservice teachers internalize, which will inevitably influence their future practices and reverberate through the classrooms they steward (Soccorsi, 2013). Thus, the exploration of preservice teachers' educational philosophy stands as a pivotal endeavor, for it is they who will emerge as the torchbearers of the present curriculum, instilling knowledge, values, and inspiration into the next generation of learners. As such, understanding their perspectives becomes an indispensable compass, guiding the evolution of both curriculum and pedagogy in the years to come.

## **2. Literature Review**

### **2.1. Major Philosophical Movements**

The human desire to understand the world around us has led to the development of philosophy. Over time, philosophers have developed a variety of different perspectives on the nature of reality, knowledge, and ethics. In this study, Idealism and Realism from traditional philosophical movements, and Pragmatism and Existentialism from contemporary philosophical movements were analyzed. Brief information about these philosophical movements is as follows:

### **2.1.1. Idealism**

Idealism, rooted in Plato's teachings and significant in Western philosophy, centers on spirit, morality, mind, and thought to elucidate the universe, asserting that reality exists within the mind rather than the external world. While Idealism suggests a separation between reality and the mind, adherents view Realism as spiritual, positing that external phenomena stem from thoughts. Genuine comprehension is attainable through the intellect, not the senses, promoting conscious reasoning (Akpınar, 2019; Ocak & Akkaş Baysal, 2019). Immutable values underlie this philosophy (Demirel, 2015), guiding education to nurture children in alignment with their inherent capacities and thwart the development of a counterfeit identity (Tozlu, 2006). Idealism in education advocates a pupil-centered methodology, prioritizing mind-derived knowledge, with educators tasked to extract students' mental contents and foster analytical thinking (Akpınar, 2017; Ocak & Akkaş Baysal, 2019). Teachers should transmit their wisdom, inspire realism, impart pedagogical skills fervently, and kindle students' thirst for learning while fostering rapport and the exchange of viewpoints (Ozman & Craver, 2003).

### **2.1.2. Realism**

Contrasting Idealism, Realism, influenced by Aristotle, Bacon, Locke, and Russell, posits an external, objectively existing world (Akpınar, 2019; Aytaç, 2020). Reality, value, and knowledge are shaped independently of the human mind (Cevizci, 2014). Realism's objective knowledge is universally valid (Ocak & Akkaş Baysal, 2019), demanding evidence-backed, prejudice-free conclusions. Education aims at optimizing human abilities (Ocak & Akkaş Baysal, 2019). Emphasizing critical thinking, logic, and scientific methods, teacher-centric Realist education instills information and research skills, viewing students as teacher-guided blank slates (Akpınar, 2017).

### **2.1.3. Pragmatism**

Emerging in the 19th century in England and the USA, Pragmatism, emphasizing utility, counts Mills, Pierce, and Dewey as key proponents (Ocak & Akkaş Baysal, 2019). Pragmatism posits that functional efficacy defines goodness; knowledge applicable in reality holds greater value. The philosophy recognizes the fluid nature of the world with ever-changing values and truths (Ocak & Akkaş Baysal, 2019; Tozlu, 2006). To navigate this flux, Pragmatism fosters critical thinking and problem-solving skills (Demirel, 2015). It advocates practical education, preparing students for a dynamic world through interdisciplinary curricula, tailored to learners' characteristics and participation (Akpınar, 2017). Education becomes a lifelong enriching process (Akpınar, 2017), and teachers guide the development of problem-solving skills and real-world acumen, utilizing active, experiential learning environments (Coşkun & Taneri, 2021).

### **2.1.4. Existentialism**

Post-World War II Europe saw the emergence of Existentialism, represented by figures like Sartre, Kierkegaard, and Nietzsche (Akpınar, 2017; Ocak & Akkaş Baysal, 2019). Existentialism asserts that individuals create their own meaning in life, prioritizing personal freedom, responsibilities, and preferences (Ocak & Akkaş Baysal, 2019). This philosophy advocates self-development and rejects imposition (Demirel, 2015), making self-exploration the core of education (Akpınar, 2017). Students take precedence over curriculum and teachers, requiring freedom, individuality, and choice rather than standardization (Akpınar, 2017). Existentialism's applicability

in education is debated due to its departure from traditional practices (Demirel, 2015; Akpunar, 2019). In classrooms, students are encouraged to question, create, and explore their identities within their cultural and social contexts (Ozman & Craver, 2003).

## **2.2. The Philosophy of Education and Main Educational Philosophies**

Understanding teachers' educational philosophies aids in shaping effective teaching methods and curricula, aligning with curriculum goals (Akpunar, 2017). For instance, Perennialism, rooted in Idealism and Realism, focuses on nurturing gifted students through Socratic methods and classical subjects, while Progressivism emphasizes problem-solving and democratic values. This study explores widely studied educational philosophies, including Perennialism, Essentialism, Progressivism, and Reconstructivism.

### **2.2.1 Perennialism**

Perennialism, rooted in Plato, Socrates, and Aristotle and influenced by Idealism and Realism, advocates education based on universal truths, with Adler and Hutchins as pioneers (Demirel, 2015). Intellectual education holds importance in Perennialism (Akpınar, 2017). The philosophy emphasizes classical works for nurturing virtuous individuals, calling for a curriculum including past successes in literature, science, history, and philosophy (Cevizci, 2013). Expertise is essential in education, demanding teachers be masters in their fields, while education's unchanging and universal nature focuses on character development and subject-centered instruction (Akpunar, 2019; Aytaç, 2020; Tuncel, 2004). In summary, Perennialism's principles encompass teaching universal values, fostering cognitive abilities, instilling moral virtues, and integrating classical works.

### **2.2.2. Essentialism**

Emerging as a response to Progressivism in the 1930s in the USA, Essentialism, pioneered by William Bagley, stresses preserving society's cultural heritage and transmitting it to new generations through education (Aytaç, 2020; Cevizci, 2013; Doğanay, 2011; Coşkun & Taneri, 2021). Essentialism's principles include favoring the current state as satisfactory, prioritizing student discipline for learning, emphasizing teacher training for teacher-centered education, focusing on knowledge transmission, cultivating self-control, promoting practice and memorization for effective learning, concentrating on core skills like reading and math, enabling challenges for students as needed, and adopting a teacher-centered approach for discipline (Akpınar, 2019).

### **2.2.3. Progressivism**

Pragmatism in education, exemplified by John Dewey, challenges traditional education by advocating a dynamic school that embodies life itself rather than preparing for it. Its tenets include student-centered lessons, fostering scientific problem-solving skills, grounding learning in experience, enabling experimentation and learning from mistakes, promoting critical and creative thinking, and nurturing a democratic environment (Aytaç, 2020; Cevizci, 2013; Demir & Aktı Aslan, 2021; Yapıcı, 2013). Progressivism's curriculum emphasizes humanistic, active, student-centered, and cooperative learning, and relates to multicultural/intercultural education by promoting a democratic and inclusive environment where diverse perspectives are valued (Demirel, 2015).

#### **2.2.4. Reconstructionism**

Emerging from progressive education and aligned with democratic ideals suited for contemporary cultural diversity, the Reconstructionist approach emphasizes forward-looking education, critical thinking, practical application of knowledge, and creating a democratic school environment for societal fairness (Akpınar, 2019). Its curriculum underscores educational equality, social transformation, democratic society building, teacher-led change, and a community-oriented educational approach (Akpınar, 2019; Demirel, 2015).

#### **2.2.5. Eclecticism**

Eclecticism involves selecting the best aspects from different philosophical beliefs without strictly adhering to a single paradigm, aiming to address individual purposes (Cevizci, 2013). Eclectics recognize the challenge of attaining absolute truth and combine elements from various paradigms as needed; for instance, a teacher might employ Pragmatism in certain lessons while adopting Essentialism for others (Cevizci, 2013).

### **2.3. Teachers' Educational Philosophies**

Teachers should adopt a clearly defined teaching philosophy to establish a comprehensive framework for their instructional practice and decision-making. This approach assists them in maintaining their central goal, which involves fostering and cultivating their students' growth. Teachers should be conscious of their teaching philosophy to enable a critical assessment of teaching strategies and curriculum materials, ensuring their alignment with students' values and aspirations for achievement. Furthermore, personal teaching philosophies function as a foundation for self-examination, enabling educators to consistently appraise their methods and implement adjustments when needed, aiming to better cater to their students' requirements. Teachers who dedicate time to introspect on their pedagogical principles and convictions can establish a more productive learning atmosphere for their students. By comprehending their individual teaching philosophy, teachers can more effectively tailor their instruction to suit their students' needs, thereby advancing student accomplishment and advancement. The literature contains numerous investigations into the pedagogical philosophies of in-service and pre-service teachers. This section presents a brief summary of these research endeavors.

Kumral (2015) delved into the teaching philosophies of teacher candidates through quantitative research techniques. Results indicated that a majority of participants inclined toward Progressive and Constructivist teaching methodologies. The study also revealed that female student-teachers were more inclined to endorse progressive teaching methods, while male student-teachers exhibited a preference for traditional teaching approaches (Kumral, 2015). According to Ekiz's research (2007), aspiring teachers voiced unfavorable opinions concerning Perennialism and Essentialism, yet displayed favorable perspectives regarding Progressivism and Reconstructionism. Kozikoğlu and Erden's (2018) research results showed that preservice teachers adopted Essentialism at least, while they mostly adopted contemporary philosophies such as Existentialism and Progressivism. Male student teachers participating in the study selected Perennialism and Essentialism, which are traditional, while female student teachers preferred more contemporary philosophies, such as Progressivism and existentialism. According to Yapıcı's (2013) study, male student teachers emphasized religious, moral, and cultural values and stated their importance. However, the female teacher candidates underlined that they embraced an

understanding of where the students were central and active. In addition, Bolat and Baş (2018) concluded that their participants in the study have mostly adopted a progressive understanding.

Demir and Aktı Aslan's (2021) research with teachers showed that male teachers generally used the concepts of Essentialism. The study also found that primary school teachers tend to favor the educational philosophies of Progressivism and Existentialism. Another study conducted by Bueno (2019) discovered that preservice teachers tended to prefer Reconstructionism and Perennialism. According to Aytaç's (2020) study, preservice teachers primarily favored Progressivism and Reconstructionism as their educational philosophy. The research also demonstrated that female teachers tended to adopt a more progressive approach. Furthermore, Aytaç (2020) discovered that Essentialism was the least preferred philosophy among primary school teacher candidates. Sağlı Uzunöz (2016) found in her study that preservice teachers mostly had Progressive and Existentialist understandings. The same study found that while male student teachers had a more Essentialist viewpoint, female student teachers had a more progressive understanding.

Current research aims to investigate the educational beliefs held by student teachers in primary school teacher education program and employs a qualitative methodology. While previous studies on preservice teachers' philosophies have used quantitative methods, this study uses a qualitative approach to provide a deeper understanding of the topic. Teachers' beliefs about education are a significant predictor of their teaching-learning mentality (Soccorsi, 2013; Yalçın İncik, 2018), and it is important to explore the educational philosophy that preservice teachers adopt. Understanding the teaching philosophies of preservice teachers who will be implementing the 2018 curriculum in Turkey, which is based on a Progressive philosophy, will help to ensure that the curriculum is implemented more effectively and efficiently. In addition, it is believed that this study will be useful for the evaluation of the primary school teacher education catalog, which was changed by the Higher Education Council of Turkey in 2018, to some extent.

The following were the questions that guided this study:

- 1) What do prospective primary school teachers think about educational philosophies?
- 2) Which educational philosophy do prospective primary school teachers consider themselves closest to?

### **3. Research Methodology**

This study examined the educational philosophies of primary school preservice teachers. A qualitative research design was employed to achieve this objective.

#### **3.1. Research Design**

The purpose of this study was to explore the educational philosophy held by primary school preservice teachers. This qualitative study employed the basic qualitative research design. It is, according to Merriam and Tisdell (2016) among qualitative research designs such as case study, grounded theory and phenomenology. Merriam and Tisdell's (2016) characterization involves the delineation of basic qualitative design as a methodological framework aiming to grasp the manner in which individuals comprehend and contextualize their existence and surroundings. This approach emphasizes the exploration of significance, comprehension, and progression. Within the

realm of basic qualitative research design, data accrual is accomplished through means such as interviews, observations, and the analysis of documents.

### **3.2. Participants of the Study**

The research took place among future educators who were registered at Kilis 7 Aralık University's program for educating primary school teachers during the academic year 2021-2022. The first reason for choosing this university was that its students generally belong to disadvantaged groups. The second reason is that the first researcher works at this university, making it easier to reach the participants. The study group was chosen from among students taking the elective Primary School Curriculum course, and the participants included 24 junior primary school preservice teachers (5 males and 19 females) in the teacher education program. The participants taking part in the research were chosen utilizing the criterion sampling technique, as outlined by Yazar and Keskin (2020).

### **3.3. Instruments**

The study utilized a comprehensive data collection form with the intent of gathering multifaceted insights. This open-ended questionnaire was formulated based on insights from a literature review and input from experts in the field. Furthermore, it underwent thorough evaluation and refinement from two academic professionals: one specializing in primary school education and the other in curriculum and instruction. The questionnaire has demographic questions such as age, gender, and grade level and two thought-provoking open-ended questions. The questions explored each participant's educational philosophy, inviting them to articulate their beliefs and principles about teaching and learning. These questions were very carefully created to get thoughtful and real answers from future primary school teachers. These different viewpoints are the most important part of what this study has found. The primary researcher conducted the data collection in person, and each participant required approximately 30-45 minutes to complete the form.

### **3.4. Data Analysis Techniques**

The gathered data were transferred to Microsoft Word and examined for themes using thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2019). This approach helps to identify patterns and ideas in qualitative data, to understand how people see a research topic. The data were initially coded in a descriptive way (Saldaña, 2019), and then themes were created based on those codes. Two experts in the field, a primary school education, and an educational researcher, also shared their thoughts. The themes were organized according to their viewpoints and suggestions.

### **3.5. Trustworthiness, Credibility, and Ethical Issues**

For the trustworthiness, transferability, consistency, and confirmability of this qualitative research (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2013), some techniques were employed. To establish the credibility of the study, consistent interaction with participants was maintained during the entire data collection period. The data was enriched by utilizing both the data collection form and the notes compiled during the interview sessions. Additionally, the input of experts in the field was sought to validate the themes that emerged. The findings were revised in accordance with the recommendations of two experts, one with a doctoral degree in primary school education and one in curriculum and instruction. The participants were asked to analyze the themes and express their opinions. For transferability, detailed descriptions (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016) and quotations from the

participants' opinions were included, and no corrections were made to the participants' opinions in cases of grammatical mistakes. To ensure consistency, the researchers used a holistic approach (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2013) while collecting and analyzing the data. The raw data, initial coding, categories, and conclusions drawn were securely stored on a computer with password protection to ensure reliability.

The study was approved by the ethics committee before it began. Because the participants of this study were also students who had taken the first researcher's course it was made clear to them that the research and the course were separate subjects and that the perception that they were required to participate in the study was not accurate. In the opinion form, no questions were included that would introduce the participants, such as names, student numbers, or IDs. No expressions were used to introduce the participants to the analysis documents or reports. The codes such as P<sub>1</sub>, P<sub>2</sub>, P<sub>3</sub>, and P<sub>4</sub> were used for participating teacher candidates.

## **4. Results**

The purpose of this study was to explore primary school teacher candidates' preferred educational philosophies. The results showed that most preservice teachers prefer Progressivism, while a small number prefer Essentialism. Some preservice teachers also have an Eclectic approach that is a blend of different philosophies. More information about the findings is organized into themes as follows:

### **4.1. Progressivist Teacher Candidates**

The nature of Progressivism is change. People, society, and life are in a constant state of change. Education should be structured with this understanding. Individuals should benefit from the education they receive and use it in their lives. Preservice teachers who adopted this philosophy highlighted issues such as social change, improving social life, and responding to the needs of society. For example, P<sub>3</sub> expressed her opinions as follows:

*I think the needs of students should be at the forefront. From my point of view, it is essential for students to participate actively in the process of learning and to be engaged within the classroom environment. Practical knowledge they can use should be taught. I think the problem-solving skills of students need to be developed... I prefer an educational philosophy in which all students can express themselves freely.* (P<sub>3</sub>, Female)

Some of the participants shared their thoughts on designing, implementing, and assessing education and creating a democratic learning environment that addresses the needs of students as well as the teacher's role in this process. For example, P<sub>4</sub> and P<sub>7</sub> expressed their views as follows:

*The important thing is the student. The teacher should consider individual differences. The student should be in the center. The teacher should be in the position of guiding to find the information. Democracy education should be paid importance. Creating democratic and independent environments in school and classroom environments will prepare students for democracy and independence. Not every student's learning pace method is the same. Students learn in the process. For this reason, the teacher should use process-oriented assessment methods.* (P<sub>4</sub>, Female)

*From the moment I chose this job, the only thing that mattered to me was the students. The purpose of a primary school teacher is not just to teach his students to read and write or to teach basic lessons... It is necessary to make children learn and understand by thinking, understanding, and self-discovery rather than fixed information and monotonous expressions.* (P<sub>7</sub>, Male)



Some preservice teachers referred to Progressivism by emphasizing change, the continuous development of society, and problem-solving. For example, P8 and P10 expressed their views as follows:

*I think it would be more efficient to educate my students appropriately in the changing and developing world, industry, and society. (P8, Female)*

*The method of "problem-solving" should be taken as a basis in learning... As a primary school preservice teacher, in my opinion, students can keep democracy alive in social life by improving their problem-solving skills. (P10, Female)*

#### **4.2. Eclectic Teacher Candidates**

Eclecticism is not based on single philosophy but can be described as the adoption and application of the principles of different philosophies with a pragmatic approach. Those who hold this view argue that some principles of different philosophies can be selected and applied to education. The study revealed that some preservice teachers believe it is appropriate to choose elements from different educational philosophies rather than subscribing to one because a single philosophy cannot adequately fulfill the needs of society, teachers, and students. Some participants expressed their views as follows:

*Indicating a preference for one specific educational philosophy in the classroom implies that the teacher is not considering the varied interests and needs of all students, and also implies that the teacher is not open to incorporating valuable elements from other educational philosophies. In this context, I adopt the eclectic approach as it allows me to try to take the beneficial aspects from each approach and apply the wrong aspects of the approach I was forced to. (P13, Male)*

*I think it would be very difficult to keep up with the new and changing world with traditional methods alone. But if I use Progressivism, which is a contemporary education philosophy, with traditional education, it seems more possible to train students who can meet the needs of society. (P1, Female)*

*As a primary school teacher candidate, I think it is not correct to say that I have a single mentality (Progressivism, Perennialism, Pragmatism...). In my opinion, a teacher's understanding of education should change according to the event, time, place, student, opportunities, and many other things, and should adapt to all kinds of impossibilities and produce solutions. (P14, Female)*

*Actually, I have an eclectic mindset on every subject. I mean, I choose the best according to myself from different ideas. I think it would be good to choose the principles most appropriate for my students and me. (P15, Male)*

*Each teacher should apply different approaches according to the conditions and environment. So I think a more ideal education period will pass and it will be more beneficial and more effective for the students. (P16, Female)*

*Each philosophy has a different purpose, content, and method. I take the appropriate part of each philosophy for my students and process it to use my product philosophy. I create and organize a logically consistent and interconnected system. I combine ideas from different philosophies with my own to make philosophy more suitable for students. (P17, Female)*

#### **4.3. Essentialist Teacher Candidates**

Essentialism is based on teachers being educated as field experts, arranging their educational practices accordingly, and teaching traditional values. Participants who supported this approach stated that they should help students' mental development, convey societal values, and that the

teacher should be an expert in his or her field. The following are some of the participants' perspectives:

*Personally, I would like to be a teacher adopting an idealistic educational philosophy. Because the values of society are important. It is necessary to raise children for them. (P2, Male)*

*I think teachers should be experts in their field. For example, as a primary school preservice teacher, at first, I have to learn these things myself in order to educate my students well and ensure their development, and more importantly, to teach our values. For this, I need to attach importance to subjects such as reading, writing, and mathematics. If I am good, my students will be better too. (P23, Male)*

## **5. Discussion**

Teachers' educational philosophies influence their educational planning, implementation, and evaluation. Teachers' educational philosophies play a pivotal role in shaping their instructional practices and approaches to curriculum. The choice of teaching methods and materials is intricately linked to their philosophies, impacting students' engagement and learning experiences. The teaching method chosen following the philosophy affects the teaching materials to be used and the student's participation in the lessons. Aslan (2022), Baş & Şentürk (2019), and Eğmir & Çelik (2019) have found that there is a clear correlation between the educational philosophy that teachers adopt and their understanding of the curriculum. For example, teachers who adopt Progressivism and Reconstructionism mostly use student and problem-solving-based teaching methods. As a result, preservice teachers must be prepared to follow the educational philosophy adopted by the current curriculum during teacher education programs.

Analyzing the scholarly studies on the pedagogical philosophies adopted by student teachers in general and by primary teacher education students in particular, it was found that student teachers preferred Progressivism the most and Essentialism the least (Ekiz, 2007; Bolat & Baş, 2018; Kozikoğlu & Erden, 2018). In studies conducted with prospective teachers, it was found that some student teachers had different educational philosophies, such as Existentialism (Demir & Aktı Aslan, 2021; Saçlı Uzunöz, 2016). This result can be attributed to the fact that the foreign-sourced scales used in the studies contained scale items related to this philosophy. According to the literature review in terms of gender variables, female preservice teachers have a more Progressive understanding, while male preservice teachers prefer more traditional philosophies such as Essentialism and Perennialism.

This study examined the philosophical beliefs of primary school preservice teachers and found that a majority of them prefer the Progressivist educational philosophy. This finding is consistent with other research on preservice teachers, which has shown that they tend to lean toward Progressivism. For example, a study by Bingöl and Kinay (2018) found that Turkish language preservice teachers also prefer contemporary educational approaches. Yolcu and Sarı (2022) found that preservice teacher candidates in Turkey have a strong support for contemporary educational philosophies, with a particular interest in Progressivism and Existentialism. İzalan and Gögebakan-Yıldız (2018) found that primary school teachers in Turkey also prefer modern educational philosophies.

Research with alternative teaching certification students in Turkey has also found that preservice teachers' beliefs about education are predominantly rooted in Progressivism and Reconstructionism, with a lesser emphasis on Essentialism (Şahan & Terzi, 2015; Hayırsever & Oğuz, 2017). This alignment is also seen in the United States, where Edlin (2013) found that 78% of

preservice teachers identify with Progressivism. In the Philippines, Tupas and Pendon (2016) found that Filipino student teachers distinctly favor Progressivism.

These studies suggest that there is a global trend of preservice teachers preferring Progressivism. However, Aydın et al. (2020) found that there is a striking divergence in pedagogical tendencies based on gender. This intriguing phenomenon, situated within the broader landscape of educational ideology, not only offers a compelling window into the dynamics of belief systems but also signals the need for a more profound exploration of its underlying origins and implications. In a wider context, the gender-related dissimilarity in pedagogical preferences prompts a thorough examination of the intricate interplay between societal norms, cultural influences, and educational contexts that collectively shape the educational philosophies of prospective educators. Beyond being a matter of academic intrigue, the implications of this distinct trend reach deep into the realm of teacher preparation, resonating with the ever-evolving landscape of education. As we endeavor to unravel the factors underpinning this phenomenon, it becomes increasingly apparent that a comprehensive exploration is warranted, one that carefully considers individual experiences, social dynamics, and contextual intricacies that contribute to the formulation of unique pedagogical worldviews. In effect, the scholarly community stands poised to glean valuable insights from the interplay between conventional and contemporary educational orientations, propelling us toward a more comprehensive understanding of the multifaceted dimensions that characterize pedagogy within the diverse and dynamic educational milieu.

The 2018 primary school curriculum in Turkey is based on the educational philosophy of Progressivism (Gültekin, 2020). As a result, student teachers who hold this philosophy are more likely to be compatible with the curriculum and successfully achieve its goals. However, preservice teachers come from a variety of backgrounds and have different educational beliefs, which can make it challenging for them to fully adopt the philosophy of the current curriculum during their four-year undergraduate program. It is essential to take the necessary actions to ensure this change, such as providing lessons, practices, and guidance that are aligned with the philosophy of Progressivism (Bay et al., 2012; Akyıldız, 2016).

According to another finding of the current study, some participants have an eclectic approach. The participants, who have an eclectic approach with a pragmatic understanding, adopt the suitable principles of major educational philosophies, so they prefer the educational principles of different philosophies instead of a single one. It is worth noting that preservice teachers who have a broad understanding of educational philosophies often draw on Progressivism and Reconstructionism. These teachers are concerned with social justice issues and are supportive of change and reform. They seek to adopt the current curriculum while also incorporating their own beliefs and values.

Apart from the preservice teachers who have a Progressive and eclectic approach, participants who state a preference for the philosophy of Essentialism draw attention to the fact that they emphasize traditional values and help students' mental development. Yapıcı's (2013) research also supports this finding. According to this, preservice teachers have an eclectic philosophy with a pragmatic understanding instead of a certain philosophy. The results of Glassen's (2019) study with US teachers, Gafoor and Haskar Babu's (2013) study with Indian preservice teachers, and Thomas and Guzman Foster's (2020) study with Saudi Arabian female preservice teachers also indicate that participants prefer more than one educational philosophy and have an eclectic understanding.

This research found that a small number of preservice teachers identified with the educational philosophy of Essentialism, which emphasizes the importance of traditional teaching methods and teachers as experts in their field. These preservice teachers highlighted the value of traditional teaching methods and the role of the teacher as an expert. Other studies in the literature (e.g., Arellado, 2022; Börekçi & Uyangör, 2021; Çelik & Zelyurt, 2021; Edlin, 2013; Kozikoğlu & Erren, 2018; Yapıcı, 2013; Magulod, 2017; Ryan, 2008; Tupas & Pendon, 2016) have also shown that preservice teachers tend to have less preference for Essentialism. This may be because they have received education through a traditional approach, which could have influenced their understanding of Essentialism.

It is important to mention the fact that male in-service and preservice teachers tend to hold a more traditional perspective on education and adopt an understanding of Essentialism and Perennialism, compared to females (Yalçın İncik, 2018; Aydın et al., 2020; Eğmir & Çelik, 2019; Gündoğdu et al., 2020; Kumral, 2022). This difference can be explained by their personality and cultural characteristics. In addition, the social acceptance of men as more authoritarian can be effective in having this mentality.

## **6. Conclusion**

This study examined the preferences of primary school preservice teachers' educational philosophies. The study illuminates that the prevailing educational philosophy of Progressivism holds substantial sway within the primary school preservice teacher cohort. This resonance with Progressivism resonates with prior research, underlining the significance of a compatible philosophy with the prevailing curriculum. The prominence of the eclectic approach, whereby participants integrate diverse educational principles rather than adhering strictly to a single philosophy, underscores the nuanced perspectives held by future educators. While the dominance of Progressivism is evident, a subset of participants gravitates towards Essentialism, highlighting a belief in traditional teaching methods and the teacher's expert role. The distinct gender-based predilections, with female preservice teachers embracing more modern philosophies while male counterparts inclined towards traditional perspectives, imply the influence of cultural and societal factors on educational outlooks.

As teachers shape the future of education, the study underscores the criticality of preparing preservice teachers to align their educational philosophies with the prevailing curriculum. Strategies aimed at facilitating this alignment, such as tailored lessons and guidance emphasizing the principles of Progressivism, are crucial for ensuring a seamless integration of pedagogical approaches. Moreover, recognizing the prevalence of eclectic orientations, characterized by a pragmatic amalgamation of educational philosophies, can aid in fostering a flexible and adaptive teaching approach. The gender-based disparities in philosophical inclinations shed light on the multifaceted nature of educational perspectives and the role of societal constructs in shaping educational paradigms. Overall, this research enhances our understanding of the educational philosophies held by preservice primary school teachers and prepares future teachers for diverse classrooms.

Building on the findings of this research, it is evident that a majority of participants firmly embrace a Progressive teaching philosophy. This alignment has profound implications, particularly in our increasingly multicultural society. The Progressivist approach offers a unique lens through which to address the intricacies of diversity and cultural variations within the classroom. Through

its emphasis on experiential learning, critical thinking, and student-centered methodologies, Progressivism seamlessly dovetails with the objectives of multicultural education as outlined by Bennett (1999). This congruence prompts educators to establish all-encompassing and interactive learning spaces that honor the diverse heritage and lived encounters of their students. Progressivist teachers are inherently inclined to integrate a multitude of viewpoints, thereby enriching the educational experience with a wider range of perspectives. By seamlessly incorporating real-world challenges into the curriculum, these teachers empower students to partake in collaborative issue resolution, mirroring the intricate nature of our interconnected global society. Moreover, the Progressivist philosophy's emphasis on fostering dialogue and critically evaluating disparate cultural standpoints paves the way for an environment where students can genuinely cultivate an enhanced understanding of and adeptness in navigating the multicultural panorama. In light of the research's revelations, it becomes evident that Progressivism's principles stand as an effective pedagogical approach to championing inclusivity, diversity, and adept cultural engagement within the educational sphere.

The outcomes of this study could potentially provide direction for the advancement of curricula and teacher education. However, the research does have specific limitations. Firstly, it relied on qualitative approaches, which implies that the conclusions might not be applicable to a broader audience. Next, the research depended on information provided by the participants themselves, potentially leading to partiality in the outcomes. Third, the study was conducted in a single geographical location and faculty of education, which means that the findings may not be representative of all teacher education programs. Despite these limitations, the findings of this study can be used to improve curriculum development discourse and educate future primary school teachers.

Drawing from the findings of this research that delved into the perspectives of primary school teacher candidates regarding their favored educational philosophies, several recommendations emerge. It is advisable for preservice teachers to actively cultivate their individual educational philosophies, fostering a compass that directs their outlooks on education, pedagogy, learning dynamics, and student engagement. Such an endeavor holds the promise of enhancing their aptitude as educators and their ability to adeptly execute the curriculum. Concurrently, institutions dedicated to teacher education bear the opportunity to orchestrate an array of enriching initiatives designed to augment the knowledge base and consciousness of future instructors concerning diverse educational philosophies. These initiatives encompass a spectrum of pragmatic exercises, thought-provoking conferences, enlightening seminars, and incisive analyses of educational literature. Qualitative and quantitative research can be conducted to investigate the philosophy that preservice teachers have and their views on the teaching profession. In-depth qualitative research can be conducted with preservice teachers who hold different views on the philosophy of education on which the current curriculum is based. There is evidence in the literature that male prospective teachers tend to have more traditional educational beliefs, while females choose more contemporary ones. It would be useful to investigate the reasons for this difference using different methods and tools

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