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Some examination of the education perception of teachers working in primary education

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Abstract

The purpose of the study is analyzing the education perception philosophic and ideological bases of teachers who are employed in elementary schools located in Konya, Turkey depending on some variables. The research was executed in accordance with scanning model. In accordance with obtained results; Pragmatism is dominant in education perception of teachers. Depending on gender and age variable, it has been seen that there is differentiation at the education perception of teachers. This survey is quoted from master thesis.

1. Introduction

Education is a process to change human behaviour to an intended way. Philosophy describes world view and the perspective. Every human being has aims, attitudes and values about life, and all of them are the aspects of philosophy. In turn, human being organizes the life in terms of the philosophic understanding that he/she has. Education and philosophy are so close to each other because of the fact that human behaviours have a philosophic root and education is aimed to change human behaviour towards a positive way. So, objectives of the program, process and the subjects are arranged due to a philosophic understanding.

Teachers have a significant role during the application process of education. Teachers also act as a role model for students after their families. Thereby, their perception has to be taken into consideration because their thoughts affect their behaviour, attitudes towards students, relationship with coworkers and educational objectives. These thoughts are the results of their philosophic beliefs.

2. Method

This study was done to evaluate the philosophic and idealogic roots of classroom teacher's education perception. The main question for this study was "which philosophic and idealogic concepts affect classroom teacher when they organize the education process?". The universe of the study is classroom teachers from Karatay, Meram, Selcuklu countries in Konya and the sample is randomly chosen 221 classroom teachers. Both qualitative and quantitative methods were used for this study.

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3. Collecting and Analyzing Data

After making the literature research and taking the expert opinion, the survey and the interview form were prepared by the researcher. The survey contains two different sections. First section contains questions about demographic information and the second section contains questions about the effects of idealism, socialism, realism, pragmatism, existentialism, liberalism and nationalism to sub-subjects of education. 12 randomly chosen teachers were interviewed from experiment group by qualitative methods after applying the survey. Interviews were audio recorded with permission.

Data was analyzed by SPSS statistic program and results were presented with frequency and percentage tables. The data gathered from interviews was analyzed by quantitative methods. The results from interviews were interpreted in comparison with the survey results.

4. Findings and Interpretation

4.1. Demographic results

When we look at the participant's gender distribution; the sample is of mostly represented by females.

Teacher who are participant to the survey average age of the sample is 31-40.

According to participants education level distribution; high school graduates have a significant portion in the sample.

4.2. Survey Results

According to philosophy and ideology distribution due to knowledge area; idealism was preferred about "knowledge." As a result of this, it can be said that teachers pay attention to the valid and continuity absolute knowledge. Moreover, liberalism, which defends that the knowledge is person-centered, was the least preferred ideology supported this result.

Pragmatism was the most preferred ideology among others in terms of curriculum content. This supports the idea that the teachers are aimed for students to gain the ability to solve the individual and social problems and to feel a part of a whole.

According to the philosophy and ideology distribution due to students; pragmatism was the first ideology. Pragmatism, which gives students active role, was chosen the popular one; in contrast, idealism, which gives teachers active role, was chosen the least gave a chance to clarify the understanding of participants. The percentages of philosophy and the ideologies were so close to each other. Among the ideologies liberalism and nationalism were the two preferred ones, so that explains that students are expected to be intellectuals in terms of social expectations, and to have jobs in terms of personal expectations.

It can be seen from philosophy and ideology distribution due to teacher qualifications; that teachers tend to prefer pragmatic philosophy. That means, teachers do not see themselves as the dominant role but as a guide. Liberalism and existentialism both define the role of the teacher as a guide preferred the second preferred philosophies.

Philosophy and ideology distribution due to school's role shows that pragmatism was the first philosophy about school's role. According to pragmatism, school functions as a bridge between student and the society, and prepares students to solve the problems they encounter during their life. Idealism was the least preferred philosophy because school is defined as an agency which cognitively educates students for life.

According to philosophy and ideology distribution due to school's social function; realism, idealism, nationalism and pragmatism have close percentages. It can be said that teachers perceive school-society relation towards the society's benefit. In contrast, existentialist philosophy, which is totally person-centered, was the least preferred philosophy.

About ethics; teachers tend to behave nationalist about the behavioral aspect of the education because nationalism was the most preferred philosophy. Existentialism and liberalism both of which are person-centered philosophies were the least preferred ones because teachers do not want students to develop an ethical attitude rather than social norms.

Philosophy and ideology distribution due to aesthetic shows that existentialism, nationalism, pragmatism, liberalism, and idealism have close percentages. The reason for this is might be that the participants could not distinguish the differentiation of meaning about items. In turn, it is difficult to come up with a certain evaluation about aesthetic understanding.

When we look at philosophy and ideology distribution due to gender; there are no significant differences about preferring the philosophies and ideologies in terms of gender. The only differentiation between women and men are on the “school’s social role” and “aesthetic” topics. Women tend to prefer realism on “school’s social role”; on the other hand, men prefer idealism. Women prefer existentialism, and men prefer nationalism about aesthetic.

About philosophy and ideology distribution due to age; it can be clearly seen that teachers’ education understanding did not vary about curriculum, teacher qualifications and ethics. Moreover, about other topics the differentiation is on the age of 50 and over. The dominating philosophy varied about knowledge at the age of 50 and over. For this age group pragmatism, socialism and realism are the dominating philosophies, but for other age group idealism is the dominating philosophy. Age of 50 prefer realism as a teaching method, but other age groups prefer pragmatic teaching method. The reason for this difference might be that older teacher cannot adopt themselves to new student-centered education system. Realist education approach contains lecturing, discussion and application, so teacher who were education in a traditional way have the idea that teachers have to be the center of the classroom. There are three different philosophies about “student.” These are: liberalism for 30 and below, nationalism for 31-40 and 41-50, socialism for 50 and above. For “school’s social role” there are also three different philosophies; these are: pragmatism for “30 and below”, nationalism for “31-40”, and realism for “41-50” and “50 and over.” In aesthetic “30 and below” and “31-40” prefer pragmatism, “41-50” prefer idealism, and “50 and above” prefer nationalism.

Teachers’ education perception due to purity; pragmatism and nationalism are prevalent among teachers who have an understanding of pure education. Pragmatism was preferred because it is aimed to solve problems in accordance to moderns educational understanding. In turn, the teachers are familiar with this approach. In contemporary society nationalism dominates the nation, so teachers are effected by this idea.

After evaluating the results of the eleven teachers their preferences are pragmatism, nationalism and liberalism. The participants were appraised, there is a significance in terms of their choices. For instance, participants who choose nationalism tend to prefer idealism. This result shows that these participants have a conservative attitudes. In addition to that, participants whose choice was pragmatism had a tendency to choose socialism. That is because teachers associate these philosophies about raising productive students.

As a result, 22 teachers have a pure educational understanding whether they prefer two or more choices. However, rest of the 199 teachers’ choices are eclectic because teachers in this group preferred more than one philosophies in every topic. So, it is difficult to define the educational understanding in terms of a specific philosophy. These results are supported by the findings of Tekin & Ustun (2006). Tekin & Ustun (2006) found that teacher candidates do not have a certain philosophy about educational understanding.

According to philosophy and ideology distribution due to teachers’ education perception purity; pragmatism and nationalism are prevalent among teachers who have a pure educational understanding. They prefer pragmatism because pragmatism puts students in the center, and also it is rooted to pragmatic philosophy. On the other hand, teacher prefer nationalism because they have a tendency to raise students in terms of national norms.

About percentage and frequency of philosophies and ideologies; it is clearly seen that pragmatism is the most preferred philosophy among others; nationalism is the second philosophy. The least preferred philosophy is socialism. According to results, teachers perceive education as a tool to shape lives and to protect social system.

When the results were compared in terms of philosophies and ideologies; pragmatism, idealism, existentialism, and realism were in sequence. Idealism, which is rooted from traditional educational understanding, was chosen after pragmatism, which is a recent approach, because teaching moral still important for teachers. Among ideologies nationalism is the first one, then liberalism and socialism were chosen. Liberalism might be chosen because in this ideology individualism is under focus.

4.3. Interview results

In this section semi-structured interview results were presented.

a. Teachers’ definition of educational understanding:

When teachers were asked to define their educational understandings, it was found that teachers preferred student-centered education. For instance;

“I pay extreme attention student participation in my class. Students should allowed to expresss their opinion in terms of specific rules, and should be free; however, they should know how to be respectful. I cannot stand spoiled behaviours. Students have to themselves. Thus, they can be functional citisens in the future.” (K5).

“It is for sure students are able to solve the problems, be creative and critical; they will search their own problems. For me, students have to have self-confident, but they will not blame others for the things they did wrong. Thus, they have an ability to criticizes themselves.” (K3).

Some teachers responded society-centered questions like this;

“Students have to be educated for society because the more they are beneficial for themselves the more beneficial they are for the society. Specifically, in today’s curcinstances we have to lead them to have a national sense of mind; to do so we help students to develop self-confident.” (K6)

“Actually, my priority for students is not educating them to know more. For my educational purposes educating students to be beneficial for society is so important because students having a sense of self-confident do not harm themselves, country or nation.” (K9).

b. Results about teachers’ educational understandings in terms of philosophies and ideologies:

Second question was about their philosophical and ideological stand point during their employment. According to results, teachers did not define their point of view because of lack of knowledge about ideological systems. Such as;

“As a philosophy i heard about realism nad idealism, but i literally do not know what these philosophies are all about. I also learnt constructivism and progressism because of new curriculum”. (K12).

“In genaral i do not have information about philosophies. I heard about them, but i did no search for them. I do not feel i miss something actually.” (K5).

“Idealism aims to raise people who defense themselves and their rights. It means if a teacher is idealist, students will have ability to defense their rights and make thier own objectives.” (K10).

“I cannot defense my educational stnad point because all of the philosophies are out of our culture. These philosophies developed in their own culture, so they cannot adopted to our education and social system. If you insist to schoose among them, i have a nationalistic stand point. However, i emphasize that it is so difficult for a teracher to have a certain philosophical view. If so, they close themselves, had prevent personal growth.” (K9).

c. Results about the effects of philosophy and ideology for education process

When teachers were asked to explain the effects of philosophies and ideologies during the education process, the consensus was that teacher should not reflect their point of view at class. Providing a qualified education, having a common education and being safe in their work place were the reasons for this consensus. For example;

“For me it is wrong to reflect your own philosophy and ideology. If all teachers reflect tehir own way of thinking, there cannot be a common and qulified education. Thus, there will not be no improvement.” (K2).

“I do not approve to educate a student in terms of teachers’ philosophies and ideologies. As a result of this there will be a caos. Especially, at middle school level, teachers certainly have to avoid having nonnatioanlist behaviours and thoughts.” (K6).

“a teacher can have a philosophy, and whether or not it will be reflected to his/her job. However, he/she has to keep it in backstage, or quit this job because teachers are not paid for these reasons. As teachers we are the millerstone of this country, and our duty is to follow the the directions.” (K10).

“Country’s idelogy and philosophy is important than indiviudal preferences; it si impossible for teacher to be out. Hence, teachers cannot apply their personal stand point. Teachers, students, curriculum and education were shaped by the government, so it is so weird to talk baout philosophy and ideology.” (K4).

“a teacher should not have an ideology because it is not his/her duty to be busy with this kind of activities. Teachers have only one philosophy or ideology which is nationalism. Clearly, a teacher is a coomand for national education, and it is the duty.” . (K7).

5. Results and recommendations

5.1. Survey results:

For survey the participants were 98 male and 123 female. The average age for the sample is 31-40, and %76,9 has a bachelor's degree.

Among nine education area idealism was preferred for knowledge, pragmatism was chosen for curriculum, teaching methods, teacher qualification and school's function, realism was preferred for school's social function, nationalism was for student and ethics, and existentialism for austephic.

There are no gender differences about educational understanding beside "school's social function" and "auspostec" areas. For "school's social function" ares women preferred realism, on the other hand men preferred idealism. Women participants chose existentialism; men preferred nationalism about austephics.

According to age variable, teachers have different opinions at he age of 50 and above. Traditional undertanding dominates their way of thinking. There is no differentiation among other age groups.

Teachers' understanding do not vary according to their education level.

It was observed that teachers' educational understanding is so eclectic. For instance, only 40 teachers have a pure educatioanl understanding in compariosn to 181. In turn, teachers develop their own philosophies by effecting from different ideologies.

According to results, philosophical statements are dominating. Among philosophies the most preferred one is pragmatism, and idealism was the first one among ideologies. Socialism is the least preferred one among all philosophies and ideologies. Additionally, ideologies are prevelent among women; on the other hand, philosophies areprevelenet among men.

5.2. Interview results:

Seven female and five male were interviewed, and all of the teachers were college graduates.

Teachers defined their educational understanding as student-centered. This result is supported by the pre-survey results because teachers tend to chose student-centered statements.

Teachers were not clear how to express their educational understanding in terms of philosophies and ideologies because of lacking true sufficient information, and having an eclectic understanding.

Teachers are against the idea that all the educators have the same thoughts patterns because there will be no improvement if they stuck to a certain kind of philosophy and ideology. Thus, teachers have to search all the approaches, and then choose the suitable one among them.

Teachers indicated that they did not reflect their point of view upon education because they believe that this action will effect commanlity and quality of education, create caos, and risk their career.

6. Recommendations

These are some of the recommendations in terms of results;

- The most significant result is that teachers are lack of adequate and sufficient knowledge about philosophies and ideologies, so conferences, seminara, and in-service activities can be organized.
- In college of education, philosophy derived classes can be given importance for preservice teachers. It is also necessary for teachers to have an opinion that philosophy is not just for philosophers.
- Teachers should be a part developing national education philosophy by strengting the relations with ministry of education. Teachers' opinions, recomendations and critics should be considered in depth, so teachers might not have the thought to be a messenger between government and the school.

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