Predicting Democratic Attitudes and Educational Philosophies of Student Teachers

By

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Abstract

The curriculum of Turkey aims to bring up creative and productive individuals who are able to think in a democratic and critical way. To realize this, a democratic education environment is a prequisite. The educational environment that teachers create is deeply affected by their philosophical views. Nevertheless, revealing the extent of this effect can be a source of data in order to use in pre-service training of teachers who are expected to create a democratic classroom environment. This study aims to predict democratic attitudes and educational philosophies of student teachers. This quantitative study was designed in relational screening model. In this study, the study group was comprised of 226 student teachers who study at the different departments of Education Faculty in Pamukkale University. To collect the data, the Inventory of Educational Thoughts and Applications, which was designed by the researcher, was used in addition to the Democratic Attitudes Inventory. To model the relationships between variables, multiple linear regression analyses were performed through SPSS 15.0. The student teachers having low scores on democratic attitudes had traditional philosophy, and the student teachers having high scores on democratic attitudes had popular educational philosophy. Furthermore, the findings indicated that the democratic attitudes and educational philosophies of student teachers were related with each other, and they have an effect on each other. The variables of freedom of thought, source of decision, and supremacy of law predicted traditional educational philosophy significantly. It was also found that the variables of source of decision and supremacy of law were significant predictors of popular educational philosophy.

Keywords: *Student Teacher, Traditional Educational Philosophy, Democratic Attitudes, Learning Environment*

1. Introduction

The current curriculum has been designed by prioritizing the values of constructivist paradigm, and used since the year of 2005. Therefore, these curriculums in use aim to raise creative and productive individuals who are able to think through a democratic and critical stance. According to Gutek (2001), if an individual cannot develop independent thinking skills, she/he becomes a person who is inspected by authoritative people, and dwelled on traditional habits. Beyer (1996) also suggests that it is of importance to think critically, reflect and discuss on standard of judgments, and express different viewpoints in educational environments. For instance, the actions such as explaining, confirming or refusing thoughts, being curious, questioning, and criticizing if necessary are the needs of individuals (Yeşil, 2005). To meet these needs, individuals need to show a conscious and critical participation. Apple and Bean (1995) point to the democratization of educational environments to provide a conscious and critical participation.

According to Varış (1996), critical attitude in thinking, reading and listening is directly related to democratic ideals. In other words, democratization of educational environments is prerequisite for teaching individuals how to develop a modern, scientific and democratic thinking skill, take responsibilities, see matters from different viewpoints, seek logic behind opposite views, and have pacific and tolerant features (Celep, 1995). According to the findings of the research conducted in Turkey, it was found that classroom environment, discipline understanding of school, and student participation have an effect on democratic attitudes and behaviors of students (Bilgen, 1994; Binbaşıoğlu, 2000; Karakütük, 2001; Kıncal, 2000; Kısakürek, 1985); used methods and techniques hava an effect on democratic attitudes of students in terms of its being student-centered or teacher centered (Büyükkaragöz, 1986; Ertürk,1986; Gömleksiz, 1994; Kavak, 1986; Kayabaşı, 1992; Tezcan, 1981; Türkoğlu, 1988); the views

of students were not considered on the matters related to them (GökveOkçabol, 1998, Oğur, 1999). In a school which limits learning activities of students, hinders students to develop their skills, adopt a teacher-authoritarian view, democratic behaviors do not show up in students (Celep, 1995). In other words, to create a democratic educational environment, the educational philosophy of teachers should play a pivotal role.

As in the case of other scientific processes, philosophy add meaning to the processes and concepts related to the education. If a framework is necessary to set objectives, shape educational curriculums and create educational environment, this framework is determined by philosophy. Brauner and Burns (1965) stated that the philosophical part of education cannot be ignored. According to them, education without philosophy is same with a blind man who does not have a guide dog.

The philosophy of education help teachers understand conceptual discussions and researches about educational processes, and make their own way. Therefore, the philosophy of education has a significant role for teachers at the beginning of their career and throughout their teaching career. Without the philosophy of education, it is considerably difficult for teachers or student teacher to understand the applications in the educational process (Winc, 2012; Gosselin, 2007).

Many definitions can be found for the philosophy of education; however, it can be defined as the ideas about the all elements and processes related to the school, and the efforts attempting to explain these ideas. In this sense, many philosophical movements can be found. Among these philosophical movement, Realism, Idealism, Pragmatism, Existentialism, Perennialism, Essentialism, Progressivism and Reconstructionism are the ones in the foreground (Ergün, 2009; Sönmez, 2008 and 2009; Veal, 2007; Demirel, 2006; Labaree, 2005; Red and Davis, 1999; Tozlu, 1997; Turgut, 1996; McNeil, 1996; Ornstein and Hunkins, 1988). The aforementioned movements have a host of different features. Furthermore, even the representatives of the same movement have different ideas. Nevertheless, Ornstein and Hunkins (1998) classify these movements in two main groups in terms of their views toward students and teachers. Based on their views toward students and teachers, Realism, Perennialism and Essentialism can be classified in one group, and Pragmatism, Progressivism, Reconstructionism, Existentialism and Humanism in the other.

The group of Realism, Perennialism and Essentialism focus on the constancy of knowledge. The teacher is the one who will transfer this knowledge to students. In this sense, students are responsible for learning from their teachers. The role of teachers or educational specialists is to decide what they should teach, and how they will create educational environments to transfer exact knowledge to the students accurately and permanently. Such an environment introduces the necessary tools and equipment by itself. For instance, pencil, notebook and book are essential tools and equipment for these movements. Concordantly, examinations and standard tests conducted in these examinations become reliable materials which measure to what extent students learn. These movements which are still in use can be called as traditional or classical movements.

The group of Pragmatism, Progressivism, Reconstructionism, Existentialism and Humanist movements underlines the uniqueness of individuals, and supports that individuals and their experiences are valuable (Hamrah, 2012; Saeverot 2011). Furthermore, students – or individuals- have the power to change societies through education (McNeil, 1996; Red and Davis, 1999). These arguments focus on students in educational environment. In other words, these movements suggest that it is necessary to create educational environments regarding the interests, needs and expectations of students.

According to Dewey, the pioneer of pragmatism and progressivism in education, the designed environments in which information is presented mechanically ask learners to absorb information passively and give it in the same way, and, in turn, this weakens development, learning and growth of students. On the contrary, the research-based reformist teaching methods reach to the peak by aiming to

give students natural impulses such as curiosity and research, and experience (Ralston, 2011; Watras, 2012; Ryan, 1995; Neubert, 2010). In this situation, teaching role of teachers is removed and guiding role come to the forefront for students in the heart of education process. Such a process focuses on students to gain experience. Thus, learning environment is subject to changes with educational equipments. Against to classical or traditional movement, popular approaches can be called as a philosophy which considers individuals as the center in educational processes, places an emphasis on effort, experience, interests and needs of individuals, and is formed by the common values of Pragmatism, Progressivism, Reconstructionism and Existentialism. As Meyer (2006) stated, the definition of popular approaches might arise from the growing significance of individualism and relativism in recent times. Bingham (2011) suggests that the developments in technology and communication also cause changes in educational thought and applications.

Educational philosophy help teachers understand conceptual discussions and research about educational processes, and make their own way. Therefore, educational philosophy plays a significant role for teachers from the beginning of teaching profession to the end.Without educational philosophy, it is fairly difficult for teachers or student teachers to understand the application in the education process (Winc, 2012; Gosselin, 2007). It is certain that philosophical views and life paradigms of teachers have an effect on the classroom environment that is created by them (Doğanay, Çuhadar, Sarı, 2004). Nevertheless, revealing the extent of this effect can be a source of data in order to use in pre-service training of teachers who are expected to create a democratic classroom environment.

For a democratic community life, democratic quality of the education which individuals take as members of the community is fairly important. Clearly, democratic attitudes of teachers are effective throughout democratic education process. In Turkey, many studies have been carried out to find out democratic attitudes of teachers and student teachers with various variables (Büyükkaragöz, 1990; Ertürk, 1986; Gözütok, 1995; Saracaloğlu, 1997; Gömleksiz 1994; Yıldrım, 1994, Saracaloğlu, Evin, Varol, 2004; BulutSerin'in 2006; GömleksizveKan 2008, Gençve Kalafat, 2007; EktemveSünbül, 2011; Ercoşkunve Nalçacı, 2008). Thus, the significance of democratic education has come into prominence. However, there is a dearth of studies relating democratic understanding of teachers or student teachers with their educational philosophy. In this sense, this study aims to predict democratic attitudes and educational philosophies of student teachers participated in the study.

2. Method

Design of the Study
This quantitative study was designed in relational screening model. In quantitative studies which test hypotheses through numerical values, the aim of relational screening model is to find out relationship, effect and distribution between variables in education, psychology or other social fields (Wiersma, 1985, p.16). In addition, it is only possible to seek for real causal relationship with experimental models (Karasar, 1995, p.82).

Participants
From different departments [Turkish Language Teaching (n=45), Social Studies Teaching (n=42), Pre-school Teaching (n=47), Primary School Teaching (n=52) and Mathematics Teaching (n=40)] of Education Faculty in Pamukkale University, 226 student teachers participated in the study. The 161 participants were selected through proportional stratified sampling, and the number of female and male participants was 161 and 65 respectively.

Instruments
To collect the data, the Inventory of Educational Thoughts and Applications (IETA), which was designed by the researcher, was used in addition to the Democratic Attitudes Inventory which was developed by İflazoğlu and Çaydaş (2004). The subcategories of democratic attitudes inventory are freedom of thought,

religious tendency, source of decision, supremacy of law and belief in democracy. The internal consistency coefficient, Cronbach's alpha, was found .86 for the whole inventory. For the subcategories, it was found .85 for freedom of thought, .56 for source of decision, .64 for supremacy of law and .54 for belief in democracy (İflazoğlu&Çaydaş, 2004, p. 5).

As the other instrument of the research, the Inventory of Educational Thoughts and Applications (IETA) was used. IETA, which was designed by the researcher, is able to find out educational thoughts and applications of student teachers in two subcategories as traditional and popular. The inventory consists of 42 items in two subcategories as Traditional and Popular. The traditional subcategory includes philosophies of Realism, Essentialism and Perennialism. On the other hand, Pragmatism, Progressivism, Reconstructionism and Existentialism are in the popular subcategory in which individuals consider content subjects as a tool for self-development, and the needs and expectations of individuals are taken into consideration.

The variance percentages which the factors of the inventory accounted for were as follows: %37.54 for traditional subcategory and %23.99 for the popular subcategory. Two of the subcategories accounted %61.533 of the total variance. The subcategories of the inventory had significant, negative and moderate correlations with each other (r= -.52 p<0.01). Furthermore, the results of confirmatory factor analysis for the inventory [χ^2 (the chi-square) value was significant (χ^2= 2393.39; p<.01); other fit indices were found as follows: RMSEA= .092, NFI= .94, CFI= .95, SRMR= .048, GFI= .87, AGFI= .84.] indicated that the model of the inventory had a good fit. According to the data of the current study, it was found that the subcategories of the inventory had significant, negative and high correlations with each other(r= -.87 p<0.01). The internal consistency coefficient, Cronbach's alpha, was recomputed for the current study, and for the subcategories of traditional and popular, they were found to be .81 (n=226) and .96 (n=226) respectively.

Data Analysis

In the study, multiple linear regression analyses were performed through SPSS 15.0 through using the data of the two inventories. To be able to carry out regression analyses, the assumptions of normality and linearity were tested with autocorrelation for traditional and popular subcategories of the IETA, and the Democratic Attitudes Inventory. The normal distribution curve in Figure 1 shows a linear relationship between traditional subcategory and democratic attitudes, and the normal distribution curve in Figure 2 indicates a linear relationship between popular subcategory and democratic attitudes.
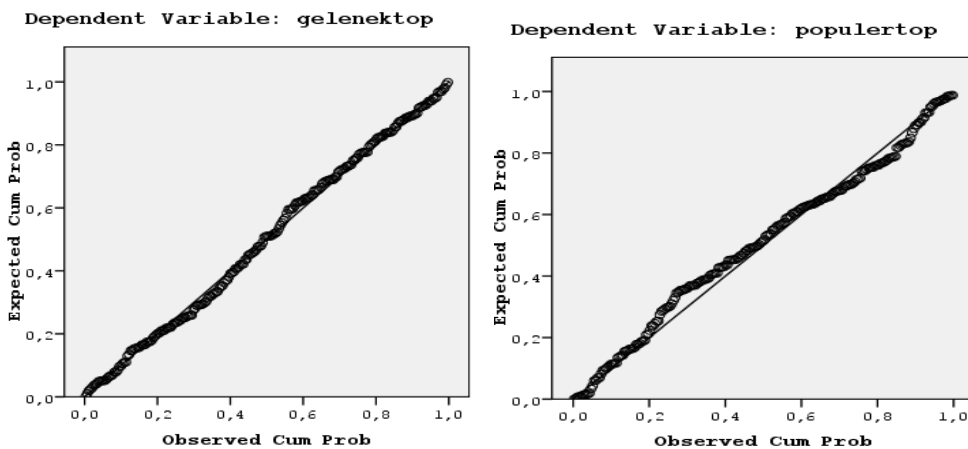

Figure 1: *TheFigure of Normal Distribution Curve***Figure 2:***TheFigure of Normal Distribution Curve*
Considering the normal distribution curves in Figure 1 and 2, the figures of normal distribution curves for observed and predicted residuals distributed normally. Moreover, Durbin-Watson test was applied to find out if autocorrelation, which results in systematic errors, was found. The results [Durbin-Watson

(traditionalsubcategory)= 1.75 ve Durbin-Watson (populersubcategory) = 1.81] indicated that there was not an autocorrelation as the values were below 2. To evaluate the results of multiple regression analyses after assumption tests, regression coefficients, standardized regression coefficients (β), t-test results of regression coefficients, multiple regression coefficients and the coefficient of determination were analyzed.

3. Findings

In Table 1, the results of multiple linear regression analyses are related to the prediction of traditional educational philosophy based on the democratic attitudes of student teachers.

Table 1: *The Results of Multiple Linear Regression Analyses related to the Prediction of Traditional Educational Philosophy*

Variables	B	Std. Error	β	t	p	Zero-order	Partial r
(Constant)	48,21	7,05	-	6,836	,000	-	-
Freedom of Thought	-,42	,098	-,167	-4,348	,000	-,458	-,281
Source of Decision	6,21	,355	,727	17,504	,000	,834	,762
Supremacy of Law	-1,38	,480	-,110	-2,887	,004	-,392	-,191
Belief in Democracy	-,05	,332	-,006	-,164	,870	,018	-,011
R= ,852	**R²= ,726**						
F= 146,440	**p= ,000**						

Based on the binary and partial correlations in the analyses, the attitudes toward the source of decision had significant, positive and high correlations with traditional educational philosophy (r= .83), and the correlation coefficient was computed as r=.76 between two variables when other variables were controlled. The attitudes toward the freedom of thought had significant, negative and moderate correlations with traditional educational philosophy (r= .46), and the correlation coefficient was computed as r= -.28 between two variables when other variables were controlled. The attitudes toward the supremacy of law significantly and moderately correlated with traditional educational philosophy (r= -.39), and the correlation coefficient was computed as r= -.19 between two variables when other variables were controlled.

According to standardized regression values (β), the relative significance sequence of predicting variables on traditional educational philosophy was as follows: source of decision, freedom of thought, supremacy of law and belief in democracy. In terms of t-test results regarding the significance of regression coefficients, the variables of freedom of thought, source of decision and supremacy of law were significant predictors of traditional educational philosophy. The aforementioned four variables accounted for %73 of total variance for traditional educational philosophy.

In Table 2, the results of multiple linear regression analyses are related to the prediction of popular educational philosophy based on the democratic attitudes of student teachers.

Table 2: *The Results of Multiple Linear Regression Analyses related to the Prediction of Popular Educational Philosophy*

Variables	B	Std. Error	β	t	p	Zero-order	Partial r
(Constant)	57,191	7,522	-	7,603	,000	-	-
Freedom of Thought	,172	,104	,073	1,650	,100	,318	,110
Source of Decision	-4,562	,378	-,579	-12,056	,000	-,731	-,630
Supremacy of Law	3,857	,512	,333	7,531	,000	,556	,452
Belief in Democracy	,451	,354	,052	1,274	,204	,042	,085
R= ,796	**R²= ,634**						
F= 95,613	**p= ,000**						

Based on the binary and partial correlations in the analyses, the attitudes toward the source of decision had significant, negative and moderate correlations with popular educational philosophy (r= -.73), and the correlation coefficient was computed as r= -.63 between two variables when other variables were controlled. The attitudes toward the supremacy of law significantly and moderately correlated with popular educational philosophy (r= .56), and the correlation coefficient was computed as r= .45 between two variables when other variables were controlled. The attitudes toward the freedom of thought had significant, positive and moderate correlations with popular educational philosophy (r= .32), and the correlation coefficient was computed as r= .11 between two variables when other variables were controlled.

According to standardized regression values (β), the relative significance sequence of predicting variables on popular educational philosophy was as follows: source of decision, supremacy of law, freedom of thought, and belief in democracy. In terms of t-test results regarding the significance of regression coefficients, the variables of source of decision and supremacy of law were significant predictors of popular educational philosophy. The aforementioned four variables accounted for %63 of total variance for popular educational philosophy.

4. Conclusions and Discussion

It was concluded from the study that there is a relationship between democratic attitudes and educational philosophies of student teachers, and they have an effect on each other. Also, the student teachers having low scores on democratic attitudes have traditional philosophy, and the student teachers having high scores on democratic attitudes have popular educational philosophy. At the end of the study, it was found that the variables of freedom of thought, source of decision and supremacy of law are significant predictors of traditional educational philosophy. On the other hand, the variables of source of decision and supremacy of law are the significant predictors of popular educational philosophy.

The student teachers who think that decisions should be given in social life by directors and statesmen have traditional educational philosophy, and the student teacher who think that the decisions related to society should not be taken only by directors and statesmen have popular educational philosophy. In traditional educational philosophy, the democratic attitudes are in line with the educational philosophies of student teachers who practice or believe that learning environments in classrooms should be designed according to the views of decision-makers rather than the interests, needs and expectations of students. On the contrary, in popular educational philosophy, the student teachers think that learning environments should be designed considering the interests, needs and expectations of students, and they believe that teaching students what to learn and how to behave is not proper. Therefore, the democratic attitudes are in line with the educational philosophies of student teachers for popular educational philosophy since they believe that learning environments in classrooms should not be designed according to the views of decision-makers.

A similar harmony can be seen between the attitudes regarding supremacy of law and educational philosophies. As the attitude scores of participants regarding supremacy of law increase, their scores regarding traditional educational philosophy decrease. The scores in the popular educational philosophy increase for the participants who refuse the government pressure for the matters unsolved by the law, and believe the supremacy of law.

Moreover, there are consistent relationships between the attitudes regarding freedom of thought and possessed educational philosophy. The freedom of thought scores decrease for the participants having traditional educational philosophy, and they increase for the participants having popular educational philosophy. It can be concluded that the participants who describe themselves as democrats but have traditional educational philosophy essentially support militant democracy.

According to Uyanık and Salur (2003), the understanding of democracy can be classified as liberal and militant understanding. In militant democracy, opposed to liberal democracy, it is important for democracy to protect itself. Therefore, it is natural to prohibit organizations and parties to keep democracy alive or to protect democracy. The study of Doğanay, Çuhadar and Sarı (2004) indicates that most of student teachers (%88) support militant democracy. The learning environment of a teacher who has a militant understanding of democracy would reflect traditional educational philosophy. If the desired one is a democratic learning environment in which the interests, needs, expectations and questioning of students are considered, it might be a necessity to make democratic attitudes of student teachers more liberal.

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