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## Educational Ideologies in Transition: Analyzing Teachers' Shifting Perspectives through Structured Reflection

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**Abstract:** This study investigates the ideological orientations of teachers and the potential transformation of these orientations over 14 weeks, focusing specifically on their conceptualizations of educational ideologies within conservative and liberal frameworks. The research employs an inventory-based assessment to capture participants' ideological stances. Initial findings revealed participants' tendency to associate ideological labels with political dualities, reflecting simplified views on educational ideologies. Throughout the study's second phase, participants engaged in critical reading assignments and reflective discussions designed to expand their awareness and understanding of various educational ideological paradigms. Findings indicate a notable shift in ideological positioning, primarily driven by exposure to foundational texts and structured reflection sessions. In the final phase, participants re-took the initial inventory, allowing for a direct comparison of ideological stances. The comparative analysis demonstrated subtle yet significant shifts, particularly regarding participants' views on the interrelations between educational ideology, social equity, and the intellectual demands of modern pedagogy. This study underscores the transformative potential of immersive engagement with diverse ideological perspectives, highlighting the need for professional development models that prioritize reflective dialogue and critical exploration of ideological content.

**Keywords:** *Educational ideologies, professional development, teacher education.*

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### Introduction

Ideology is perceived more as a term associated with the beliefs of an individual or a group of individuals. Educational ideologies, in particular, are critical components that shape individuals' approaches to knowledge, teaching, and learning. Forming our educational thoughts is a complex process influenced by numerous factors, such as accepted knowledge, social values, beliefs, attitudes, politics, culture, family, and educational ideologies (Eagleton, 2015; Harrison, 2023). These elements frequently function as the foundational pillars of our worldviews. While educational systems are molded by society's cultural, social, and economic dynamics, these ideologies simultaneously affect individuals' cognitive understandings. For instance, an individual's educational ideology may shape the beliefs about social equity, individual autonomy, or civic responsibility, influencing approach to learning and engagement with educational content. Educational ideologies, therefore, provide the framework through which knowledge transmission and understanding are facilitated. These ideologies encompass broader philosophical beliefs regarding the purpose of education, the nature of knowledge, and the roles of teachers and students in the learning process. Ideologies also influence the broader educational landscape by shaping policies, curricula, and pedagogical practices (Cruickshank et al., 2006; Curren, 2007).

In Turkey, as well as many other countries, the prevailing educational ideology of the ruling party generally shapes the aims of education, the methods of teaching, and the criteria for success. However, resistance to dominant educational ideologies can catalyze change (Freire, 1970; Illich, 1971). Educators and students who question prevailing beliefs cultivate a culture of inquiry and critical thinking, creating an environment where diverse perspectives are valued and explored. This diversity enhances the educational landscape, allowing a broader range of experiences and perspectives to inform teaching and learning practices (Ravitch, 2011). In this regard, education emerges not merely as a mechanism for knowledge transmission but as a powerful force capable of transforming individuals and societal structures.

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In the early years of the Turkish Republic, there were approximately 12,000 teachers, whereas today, this number has risen to nearly 1.2 million. This period marks a significant transformation of the teaching profession in Turkey. The profession has been shaped by historical and ideological changes, becoming a crucial part of both the social structure and the education system. Young republic era, the *idealist* teacher model envisioned educators as not only professionally competent but also as individuals guided by these ideals who would shape the future of society with a national and secular educational vision. During this period, teachers generally held values such as secularism, nationalism, and a strong sense of national-state awareness, and the teaching profession enjoyed high social prestige (İnal, 2011). However, by the 1940s, an ideological shift had begun within the Turkish education system. During this time, teachers' ideological orientations became more pronounced, and the direction of education began to align with the rise of authoritarian and nationalist ideologies worldwide.

By the 1980s, Turkey underwent another significant ideological shift. Following the 1980 military coup and the subsequent political restructuring, religiously oriented ideologies became more prominent in the educational sphere. The military regime and the transition to civilian rule resulted in a political environment where religion began to play a more central role in shaping public life and educational practices. During this period, the role of teachers became increasingly complex as they navigated a landscape in which religious references were more pronounced. The teachers of this era found themselves representing not only secular-nationalist values but also religiously motivated ideologies (İnal, 2011). Kartal's (2020) study states that "*Following the foundation of the Turkish Republic, an educational system was developed in order to raise individuals who are of one culture, nationalist, and loyal to the republican ideology. The said notions were loaded with Kemalist principles and the Kemalist definition of nationality; and after the beginning of the multiparty period, spiritualism. After 1980's, educational plans were prepared with the maxim of "Turkish, Nationalist, Religious"* (p, 1).

Looking at the teaching profession from a broader perspective, the idealist teacher model of the early Republican period gradually gave way to a transformation in which the societal status of teachers began to decline. In the early years, teachers enjoyed significant societal respect, but as the ideological landscape of education shifted, this respect began to erode. The ideological diversification in education led to a fragmentation of the profession, as teachers became more closely associated with different beliefs and educational ideologies. Initially, educators were united around common goals, but over time, this unity fractured as teachers embraced a broader range of educational philosophies and political beliefs (İnal, 2011; Kartal, 2020; Ozmon & Craver, 2008).

The relationship between educational philosophy and educational ideologies represents two interrelated components that significantly influence teaching processes in Turkey. The educational philosophy of the ruling party during the last two decades deliberately provided a framework for teachers to articulate their own fundamental beliefs, values, and objectives regarding education (Kartal, 2020) while their educational ideologies are aimed at developing specific educational policies, practices, and approaches based on these philosophical foundations (Ömürlüoğlu, 2020).

This is why the ruling political will has chosen teachers to transmit the truths embedded in their belief system to new generations and has implemented different practices in teacher training policies. Even more importantly, in Turkey, where a single party has governed for more than 22 continuous years, it is nearly impossible for teachers to implement practices that fall outside the expectations of the political will.

### *The Core Concept of Educational Ideology*

O'Neill (1990), in his seminal work regarded as a masterpiece in the field, elucidates why he prefers the term educational ideology over the traditional term philosophy of education. He notes that terms such as essentialism, perennialism, existentialism, and progressivism—often associated with educational philosophy—tend to emphasize the abstract and theoretical dimensions of philosophical thought. In contrast, he underscores that the concept of ideology pertains directly to social action based on overarching ideas (O'Neill, 1983). In other words, O'Neill establishes a fourfold foundation to delineate the points of divergence between educational ideologies and general philosophical systems.

1. They are more specific systems of general ideas than most philosophies tend to be.
2. They are immediately rooted in social ethics (that is, in moral and political philosophy) and only distantly rooted in the more abstract system of philosophy, like realism, idealism, and pragmatism.
3. They are intended primarily to direct social action and not merely to clarify or order knowledge.
4. They are both a cause and an effect of fundamental social change (O'Neill, 1983, p. 2).

Building upon the widely accepted definition provided by Gutek (2013), ideology can be characterized as a belief system that interprets history within a specific temporal context and guides groups toward certain actions. Gutek asserts that this historical forecasting serves as the foundation for the behaviors of particular individuals or groups, acting as a "*programmatically and action-oriented phenomenon*" (p. 167) that aids in understanding various socio-political, economic, and educational realities, ultimately shaping future policies (Althusser, 2019; Eagleton, 2015; Heywood, 2019). Gutek

posits that elucidating temporal and contextual roots—essentially making the past known—facilitates the convergence of individuals sharing common ideologies, thereby enabling the prediction of future outcomes.

Educational ideologies encompass a wide spectrum, ranging from extreme conservatism (fundamentalism) to radical anarchism. These ideologies are closely intertwined with political beliefs and significantly influence educational policies and practices. O'Neill (1990) organized educational ideologies into six distinct categories, which he placed under two overarching classifications. He distinguished these ideologies as conservative and liberal, each containing three subcategories. The information presented below is summarized from O'Neill's (1983) work, in Table 1 educational ideologies are presented in *italics*, with the belief systems upon which these ideologies are founded listed on the 1st row, and how these ideologies manifest in social life are provided under each educational ideology.

Table 1. *The Educational Ideologies*

<b>REACTIONARY CONSERVATISM (Anti-intellectual Authoritarianism)</b>	<b>INTELLECTUAL CONSERVATISM (Philosophical and/or Theological Absolutism)</b>	<b>SOCIAL CONSERVATISM (Social and/or Religious Traditionalism)</b>	<b>LIBERALISM (Change within the established social order)</b>	<b>LIBERATIONISM (Rapid and large scale changes in the basic nature of established social order)</b>	<b>ANARCHISM (Liberation of Mankind from Institutional restraints)</b>
<i>Educational Fundamentalism</i>	<i>Educational Intellectualism</i>	<i>Educational Conservatism</i>	<i>Educational Liberalism</i>	<i>Educational Liberationism</i>	<i>Educational Anarchism</i>
Religious Fundamentalism	Theological Intellectualism	Religious Conservatism	Method	Reform	Tactical
Secular Fundamentalism	Philosophical Intellectualism	Secular Conservatism	Directive (structured) Non-directive	Radical  Revolutionary	Radical  Utopian

Source: Adapted from O'Neill (1990)

According to O'Neill (1990), *fundamentalism* is regarded as a vehicle for restructuring society based on a predetermined standard of moral virtue, where humans are viewed as moral agents. This perspective embodies an underlying anti-intellectualism, opposing the critical evaluation of established belief systems and behavioral norms. A key feature of this approach is the call for a return to historical values as a means of realigning society and addressing contemporary moral challenges. *Educational intellectualism* is viewed as a comprehensive orientation to life, focusing on the cultivation of intellectual faculties and the pursuit of wisdom. It predominantly draws upon the Western intellectual tradition, particularly classical thought, and seeks to engage with the broader intellectual history of humanity, positioning this heritage as essential for understanding human nature and existence. *Educational conservatism* emphasizes reasoned conformity, valuing the wisdom of the past as a reliable foundation for guiding present decisions and actions. Education, accordingly, is viewed as a mechanism of socialization, designed to integrate individuals into the prevailing social system.

*Educational liberalism* is conceptualized as an indispensable tool for addressing practical challenges and facilitating problem-solving in everyday life. In this context, education is viewed as a comprehensive process aimed at fostering personal effectiveness and enhancing individual potential. It encourages learners to develop critical thinking skills, enabling them to analyze situations, generate solutions, and make informed decisions. *Liberationism* is seen as an essential instrument for implementing necessary social reforms. The overarching aim is to instigate significant, large-scale changes in society that will fundamentally alter the nature and functioning of the established social order. *Educational anarchism* is grounded in the principles of free choice and self-determination, operating within a rational and humanistic social context. The ideology seeks to foster the emergence of an "educational society," which aims to either eliminate or substantially diminish the necessity for formal educational institutions and other institutional constraints that restrict personal autonomy (Kiraz & Ozdemir, 2006).

### *The Rationale of the Study*

The rationale that directs this research is related to understanding the philosophical and ideological foundations of teachers since many pre-service and graduate-level teacher education programs mainly focus on subject matter expertise rather than general or pedagogical capability. They receive limited or insufficient training in educational philosophy courses but concentrate more on courses such as classroom management and lesson planning, then start their professional life (Colgan, 2018; Roosevelt, 2011). However, comprehensive educational thoughts critically engage with the educational philosophy and the curriculum. The *gap* in inaccurate philosophical and ideological teacher training can prevent teachers from fully understanding or questioning the ideological or curricular messages dictated by the

dominant regime. Winch (2012) indicates that these courses both provide students [teacher candidates] with a background to comprehend concepts and approaches and help them how apply this knowledge in their professional lives. Teachers who study educational philosophy improve their ability to evaluate the educational system from a broader perspective. In addition, by exploring various perspectives on education and its philosophical stance, teachers gain a better understanding of the teaching profession. Therefore, having knowledge of educational philosophy helps teachers better understand the interaction between education and society and review and implement curricula in this light. Also, philosophy helps them address both ethical and moral issues of the educational environment and critically associate alternative educational approaches (Clark, 2013). Hence, the rationale for this research lies in the curiosity about the extent to which teachers are aware of their own educational ideologies, how these ideologies and philosophies are shaped, and how the teacher training they receive influences their perceptions and perspectives on education. On the other hand, this research aims to explore how teachers' perceptions, ideologies, and philosophies evolve within a formal teaching process.

### Methodology

Generally, evaluations of teachers' professional competencies focus on three core dimensions: expertise in subject matter, pedagogical skills, and a breadth of general cultural knowledge (Cruickshank et al., 2006). However, the primary objective of this study is to delve into teachers' philosophical orientations toward education and, more critically, to examine the educational ideologies they adhere to, how these ideologies are shaped, and whether they may evolve over time. Accordingly, the research framework is organized around two key phases, supported by the following research questions:

#### 1. Which educational ideologies held by teachers?

This question aims to identify the main ideologies that influence teachers' perspectives on education, exploring whether they align with certain philosophical or political schools of thought.

#### 2. During this research have teachers' educational ideologies evolved?

The aim here is to investigate whether participants' educational ideologies, as well as philosophies, have been shaped through interactions with classmates, course materials studied, discussion sessions, and assignments completed.

### Research Process

This study employed a mixed-methods, more specifically, sequential explanatory approach, integrating both quantitative and qualitative research methodologies during a course titled "Philosophical and Ideological Foundations of Education." The research process consists of three phases, with data collection spanning a 14-week period. In the first phase, during the initial week of the course, the "Educational Ideologies Inventory," developed by O'Neill (1990) and consisting of 104 items – the inventory was introduced to the literature in 2006 through the scientific adaptation work carried out by Kiraz and Ozdemir (2006) – was administered to identify the educational ideologies held by teachers.

The second phase, from the second to the thirteenth week, involved reading three articles (see Table 2) for each educational ideology – participants were required to submit written reports --approximately 2000 to 2500 words reflecting how the conceptual frameworks learned in class were shaped by the readings – followed by discussions. Weeks started with a two-digit numbers (such as 2, 4, and 6) and were theoretical weeks that every participant was obligated to read all three articles of the week and prepare for in-class discussions. Following the theoretical weeks, participant prepared the reflection paper of their personal and introspective response that emphasizes self-awareness and the influence of the readings on their thoughts, feelings, and experiences and shared ideas in the form of Socratic method, think-pair-share, debate, and peer-review. This was to encourage the participants to unite with material to their own life and gain better insights into their perspective. During these processes, one of the researchers took notes and observed to create a qualitative data set while the instructor was active in teaching and conveying the course. At this stage, notes, observations, reflection papers, and after-class interviews were the main data sources. Data derived from the participants' assignments and reflection papers were used as a source for interviews in the form of a think-aloud method. In the final phase, during the fourteenth week, the inventory was re-administered. Discussions were held with the participants to explore what influenced their perspectives on education and whether there were any changes in their views throughout the study. The data set was analyzed using discourse analysis methodology. Because discourse analysis is a methodological approach and focuses on how individuals construct ideas about social phenomena. Phillips and Hardy (2002) view discourse as a foundational element of the social world, asserting that an in-depth understanding of society can only be achieved through the analysis of discourse. In addition, they highlight the challenges associated with discourse analysis, such as the significant time and effort it demands, alongside the relatively limited body of research available in the field. Despite these limitations, discourse analysis remains a valuable tool as it seeks to identify the rules, structures, and contextual conditions that generate and sustain discourse. This method is often favored for its ability to provide a deeper, more comprehensive understanding of human-related issues. Discourse analysis typically involves the examination of both written and spoken texts, where verbal outputs are transcribed as accurately as possible to their

original form. In addition, non-verbal forms of communication, such as images, signs, and symbols, can also be analyzed as part of this method.

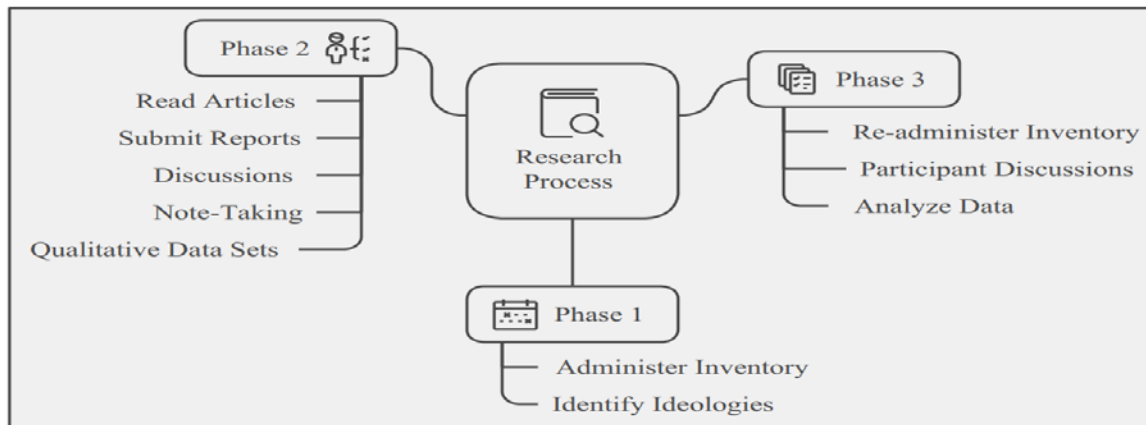


Figure 1. Research Process

### Settings, Participants, and Researchers

This study was conducted at Çanakkale Onsekiz Mart University, located in the Marmara region of western Turkey. It was carried out within the Department of Educational Sciences as part of the course "Philosophical and Ideological Foundations of Education" (code EDS 6076). Data were collected over two consecutive semesters, each lasting 14 weeks, amounting to a total research period of 28 weeks. The participants consisted of 16 individuals, 7 in the first semester and 9 in the second. The participants were composed of teachers and lecturers, including 6 Ph.D. candidates and 11 Master's students. The group included 3 males and 13 females, with ages ranging from 24 to 38.

The positionality of the researchers in this study is a crucial aspect to consider, as it influences both the research process and its outcomes. The study was conducted at Çanakkale Onsekiz Mart University. In this context, the first researcher is a professor with a Ph.D. degree from one of the USA graduate schools and has 25 years of research and teaching experience in the field. The second researcher holds a Ph. D. degree in the curriculum and instruction field and is a primary school teacher with experience in conducting qualitative research. Researchers' role in administering and analyzing the inventory and reflective papers positioned them as both facilitators and evaluators of the participants' educational ideologies.

In a study focused on educational ideologies, the researcher's personal beliefs, values, and experiences could potentially influence the interpretation of the data. However, the researchers were aware of the potential for bias and ensured objectivity by employing content analysis methods, which allowed participants' views and shifts to be captured accurately, reflecting their true perspectives rather than the researcher's own interpretations.

Additionally, the researchers setting and participants played an important role in shaping the findings. Since the participants were a mix of Ph.D. candidates and Master's students, they likely already had some familiarity with educational ideologies, which may have influenced their initial self-assessment and later reflections. The researchers were also conscious of the influence of the sociopolitical context in Turkey, where political ideologies significantly affect education, and recognized that this could have shaped the participants' ideologies both before and after engaging with the reading materials. In light of these considerations, the researchers aimed to create a neutral and supportive environment for discussion and reflection, while acknowledging the potential impact of their own positionality on the research process. By continuously revisiting their assumptions and striving for objectivity, the researchers aimed to provide a comprehensive and unbiased analysis of how educational ideologies evolved throughout the study.

### Data Collection and Analysis

#### Inventory (pre-post\*)

At the beginning of the semester, during the first week, participants were administered a 104-item, 8-category, 5 item Likert-type inventory. The questions of the inventory are "Strongly Agree" to "Strongly Disagree," with options including Strongly Agree, Agree, Neutral, Disagree, and Strongly Disagree. The eight categories covered in the inventory were: Fundamentalism, Intellectualism, Conservatism, Liberalism, Liberationism, Anarchism, General Conservatism, and General Liberalism. The six categories from Fundamentalism to Anarchism each contained 14 items, while General Conservatism and General Liberalism included 10 items each. The questions were randomly distributed throughout the inventory. For example, the questions related to Educational Fundamentalism were question numbers 5, 17, 19, 25, 33, 42, 52, 62, 71, 78, 87, 90, 97, and 101. Similarly, questions from other subcategories were scattered randomly across the inventory.

Once participants completed the survey, both participants and researchers calculated raw scores by assigning values as follows: +2 for Strongly Agree, +1 for Agree, 0 for Neutral, -1 for Disagree, and -2 for Strongly Disagree. These raw scores were then averaged, and standard deviations were calculated. Below is an actual example illustrating the outcomes based on these calculations.

\*The same inventory was applied on the 14<sup>th</sup> week (last week) of the semester.

### *Weekly Selected Readings*

Following the initial data collection through the inventory administered in the first week, the data collection process continued from the second week onward using readings from O'Neill's (1983) "Rethinking Education: Selected Readings in the Educational Ideologies" book. Each week focused on a different educational ideology. The aim here is to see whether, as one reads texts related to the relevant educational ideologies and gains awareness, they adopt different ideologies.

The process began with a 150-minute theoretical discussion and analysis of each ideology, during which participants' comments and reflections were meticulously recorded in the form of observational notes. In the subsequent week, participants engaged in critical discussions based on three assigned academic articles relevant to the specific ideology discussed. Reflective papers prepared by the participants supported these discussions. The reflective papers served as key data sources, which, alongside the observational notes from class discussions, were subjected to content analysis. Participants were interviewed after each discussion session. The findings derived from this analysis are presented in the results section of this study.

*Table 2. Weekly Selected Readings List*

<b>Ideologies</b>	<b>Author</b>	<b>Article</b>	<b>Author</b>	<b>Article</b>	<b>Author</b>	<b>Article</b>
Fundamentalism Week 2-3	<i>Max Rafferty</i>	Suffer, Little Children	<i>Robert N. Bellah</i>	Civil Religion in America	<i>Ben Brodinsky</i>	Back to the Basics: The Movement and its Meaning
Intellectualism Week 4-5	<i>Alexander M. Schindler</i>	Jewish Religious Education	<i>Robert Maynard Hutchins</i>	Liberal Education	<i>St. John's College (Annapolis)</i>	The St. John's Program
Conservatism Week 6-7	<i>Vernon Smith</i>	Traditional Education	<i>Arthur Bestor</i>	The Fundamentals of Education	<i>Frank E. Gaebelin</i>	Toward a Philosophy of Christian Education
Liberalism Week 8-9	<i>John Dewey</i>	The Child and the Curriculum	<i>A.S. Neill</i>	The Summerhill Approach to Education	<i>Maxine Greene</i>	Teacher as Stranger
Liberationism Week 10-11	<i>Jonathan Kozol</i>	The Night is Dark and I Am Far From Home	<i>B. F. Skinner</i>	Education in Walden Two	<i>Paulo Freire</i>	Beyond Educational Oppression
Anarchism Week 12-13	<i>Ivan Illich</i>	The Alternative Schooling	<i>Joel H. Spring</i>	Anarchism and Education: A Dissenting Tradition	<i>Paul Goodman</i>	Compulsory Mis-Education

### *Analysis Procedure*

*Phase 1 (Week 1):* At the beginning of the study, participants recorded their scores on a table by *self-assessing* their responses to the questions of the inventory. This allowed them to gain insight into their educational ideologies at the outset of the research (see Figure 2).

*Phase 2 (Weeks 2-13):* (see Table 2) The main focus of the study, however, is whether the participants' ideological perspectives shift throughout the process and, if so, what factors contribute to these changes. To uncover these potential shifts, notes, observation records, and interviews were analyzed using content analysis (Robert & Boullaguet, 1997).

Initially, codes were identified, followed by categories and themes that examined the factors influencing participants' ideological perspectives and what led to changes in their ideological approaches when certain factors were recognized (Neuman, 2014). For instance, one participant stated,

When I heard the term ideology, I always associated it with politics, like being right-wing or left-wing. When I related it to education, I thought of a leftist teacher or a right-wing parent or student. I've just realized there are things I didn't know. More importantly, I noticed that even when listening to politicians, I was biased in my views towards people and events...

From this participant's expression, codes such as "political," "right-wing," "left-wing," "biased," and "realization" were extracted. Similar statements from other participants resulted in a lengthy list of codes. Subsequently, categories were derived from these discourses (Discourse Analysis), such as "The Language of Political Science," "Educational Paradigms and Change," "Foundations of Curriculum Development and Ideology," "Preservation of State Continuity," and "Secularism and Fundamentalism." These categories were grouped under themes. Rather than generating new themes, the study explored how these categories were shaped under the six educational ideologies.

*Phase 3 (Week 14):* In this phase of the study, mirroring the procedures of the initial week, the inventory was re-administered, allowing participants to independently recalculate their responses to the inventory questions. Subsequently, participants were provided with the calculation sheet that detailed their initial responses (see Figure 3). They were prompted to analyze any potential changes in their educational ideologies and, if changes were identified, to reflect on the factors that may have influenced these shifts. This process aimed to facilitate a deeper understanding of the dynamics affecting the evolution of educational beliefs among the participants.

## Results

This section presents results under three main headings, with the second section containing subheadings under the main heading. The first and third headings are relatively brief as they primarily summarize the participants' positions on educational ideologies. The second heading is presented in more detail as it pertains to the research process itself. As previously mentioned, the study was conducted in three phases. The first phase involved identifying participants' beliefs and ideologies regarding education. The second phase consisted of a 12-week period alternating between theoretical discussions and practical debates, and the final phase involved reapplying the inventory to assess any changes in participants' educational perspectives by the end of the process.

### *Phase 1: Initial Positions on Educational Ideologies*

The initial phase of this study revealed that, despite the active engagement of all participants within the education field there was a notable unfamiliarity with the concept of educational ideology. Before the administration of the inventory, researchers solicited participants' perceptions regarding their ideologies. However, the participants lacked sufficient knowledge about the concept of educational ideology. They expressed that their understanding of educational ideologies was limited and predominantly philosophical concepts such as progressivism, constructivism, revolution, reconstructionism, perennialism, existentialism, and liberalism. However, upon completing the inventory and reflecting on their results, participants encountered cognitive challenges in identifying educational ideologies with which they had previously had limited exposure. For instance, participants interpreted fundamentalism as synonymous with radicalism and associated anarchism with terrorism. Initially, participants endeavored to associate themselves with a singular ideology; however, following clarification that scores across all ideologies should be considered, they began to recognize that their beliefs could encompass multiple dominant educational ideologies. Although there were notable differences in participants' ideological perceptions of education, over half reported experiencing confusion when attempting to relate these differences to the inventory questions. The liberationist and intellectualist ideologies emerged as particularly challenging for participants to articulate.

The findings further illuminate a nuanced landscape of educational ideologies among a cohort of 16 educators, as said before, comprising three doctoral candidates and 13 master's degree students. Through the analysis of an inventory containing 104 education-related questions, this research aimed to unveil the ideological beliefs held by these participants, highlighting both the commonalities and divergences within their perspectives. Results from the participants indicated a dominance of conservative educational ideologies, with many participants aligning themselves with General Conservatism or specific variants. This trend reflects a commitment to traditional pedagogical practices that prioritize structure, discipline, and clearly delineated authority within educational contexts. Conversely, liberal educational ideologies, including liberationism and Anarchism were less frequently endorsed, with only a minority identifying with Liberalism or Liberationism. The presence of a single educator espousing an anarchist educational ideology positions this individual as an outlier within the predominantly conservative framework.

Despite the evident predominance of conservative ideologies, considerable commonalities emerged concerning the values of order and authority in the classroom. Many educators articulated the belief that these elements are essential for cultivating effective learning environments. This shared perspective may stem from the formal training received by these participants, which often emphasizes conventional teaching methodologies and classroom management strategies

(Darling-Hammond, 2006). The strong representation of fundamentalism, intellectualism and conservatism suggests a broader ideological commitment to fixed principles and a rigorous approach to knowledge, reinforcing traditional educational models centered on well-defined curricula and measurable outcomes.

Although the consensus around conservative ideologies, significant divergences in educational beliefs and practices were observed among participants. Individual life experiences, diverse professional contexts, and unique personal values likely contributed to these variations. Educators with varying teaching backgrounds, such as those operating in multicultural classrooms or in socioeconomically disadvantaged areas, exhibited inclinations toward liberationism, advocating for equity, inclusivity, and social justice in their pedagogical approaches.

The similarities and differences in educational ideologies among participants can be situated within the broader context of Turkey's educational policies and teacher training systems. The historical and cultural context of Turkey plays a pivotal role in shaping educational ideologies, often promoting conservative values that align with traditional pedagogical approaches. The centralization of the education system and an exam-oriented curriculum that emphasizes rote memorization may further contribute to the predominance of conservative thought among educators. Additionally, the teacher training system in Turkey has faced criticism for its inadequacies, as many programs prioritize traditional methodologies (Durdukoca, 2018) over critical pedagogy, potentially inhibiting the development of liberal or progressive educational ideologies. This situation may leave educators feeling constrained by the prevailing educational framework, thus resulting in a lack of ideological diversity in their beliefs. Moreover, the socio-political environment in Turkey may further entrench conservative ideologies, as educators may be reluctant to adopt more liberal perspectives due to concerns regarding societal reaction or disapproval. This atmosphere can stifle open discourse on educational ideologies, limiting the potential for ideological shifts among educators.

### *Phase 2: Awakening Ideological Awareness: A Paradigmatic Shift in Educational Perspectives*

The findings of this phase illustrate a dynamic evolution of the participants' understanding of educational ideologies over a 12-week period, during which they engaged in both theoretical readings and discussions. Initially, participants seemed to be closer to conservative ideologies. However, as they explored various educational philosophies—from fundamentalism to anarchism—they began to experience shifts in their thought processes, revealing complexities in their previously held beliefs.

#### *Fundamentalism*

Participants were first introduced to Max Rafferty's 'Suffer, Little Children', which presented a fundamentalist view of education. Several participants expressed their initial reactions, highlighting the rigid structures this ideology often promotes. One participant noted,

Rafferty's emphasis on strict discipline and traditional values made me believe that these were essential for student success. Initially, I thought that maintaining order in the classroom was crucial, especially within the context of Turkish education, where authority is often emphasized. However, I began to wonder if this approach might also strangle creativity and independent thought in my students.

Another stated, *"The idea that education should be grounded in traditional values resonated with my background, yet I started to see how this rigidity could hinder students' ability to think critically... In Turkey, where educational practices are often conservative, I questioned whether this was truly preparing students for a rapidly changing world."* A third participant remarked, *"...while I appreciated the focus on authority, I found myself questioning whether this was truly in the best interest of my students' learning. This reflection was particularly important given the centralized nature of the Turkish education system, which often prioritizes uniformity over individual expression."*

Participants' exploration of Max Rafferty's *Suffer, Little Children* prompted a profound reevaluation of the fundamentalist ideology that often shapes educational practices. Many participants initially found Rafferty's emphasis on strict discipline and traditional values compelling, aligning it with their own experiences within the Turkish educational context. However, as discussions progressed, participants began to voice concerns about the rigidity of this approach. This evolving dialogue led to a collective realization that while authority and discipline can contribute to a structured learning environment, they may also limit opportunities for creativity and independent thought formation. Through these reflections, participants highlighted the necessity of fostering ideological awareness, emphasizing that a balanced approach to education—one that harmonizes discipline with opportunities for critical thinking and individual expression—is essential for preparing students to navigate the complexities of the modern world.

#### *Intellectualism*

As discussions transitioned to intellectualism, participants engaged with Robert Maynard Hutchins' 'Liberal Education.' The text prompted a reevaluation of traditional practices. One participant said, *"Hutchins' argument for a broad-based liberal education made me realize that focusing solely on rote memorization, which is prevalent in the Turkish curriculum, might not prepare students for real-world challenges. I began to see the value in nurturing critical thinking and creativity."*

Another shared, *"I used to think that the more structured my curriculum, the better, but Hutchins helped me understand that intellectual curiosity is essential. This perspective has made me reconsider how I present material to my students, emphasizing inquiry rather than just compliance, unlike Hutchins."* A sixth participant noted, *"His work encouraged me to think critically about the impact of traditional educational practices in Turkey, where standardized testing often dictates teaching methods. I realized that I needed to prioritize developing students' ability to engage with complex ideas rather than merely preparing them for exams. But without exam how do I evaluate..."* These reflections revealed a growing awareness of the limitations of conventional educational frameworks in Turkey and a desire to foster a more holistic approach to learning.

Participants' engagement with Robert Maynard Hutchins catalyzed a transformative reevaluation of their educational practices, particularly within the context of the Turkish curriculum. Hutchins' advocacy for a broad-based liberal education challenged participants to reconsider the predominant reliance on rote memorization, which many recognized as insufficient for preparing students for real-world challenges. This realization points to a growing awareness of the limitations inherent in traditional educational frameworks that prioritize standardized responses over critical engagement. Furthermore, participants began to appreciate the significance of fostering intellectual potential, curiosity and creativity in their teaching methodologies. Additionally, participants recognized the detrimental effects of standardized testing on pedagogical approaches. This acknowledgment aligns with critiques of high-stakes testing, which often suppress creativity and limit the scope of learning experiences in favor of measurable outcomes.

Overall, although intellectualism is a conservative ideology, it is evident that the readings and arguments presented by Hutchins fostered an awareness among participants regarding their own situational understanding within this framework. Participants' reflections on intellectualism revealed a collective aspiration to move beyond conventional educational practices toward a more holistic approach that emphasizes critical thinking, creativity, and intellectual engagement. By fostering an educational environment that prioritizes these values, educators can better prepare students for the complexities of the modern world, ultimately contributing to a more dynamic and responsive educational landscape in Turkey.

### *Conservatism*

As discussions shifted to conservatism, participants engaged deeply with Vernon Smith's 'Traditional Education', prompting a reflective analysis of their own educational practices and beliefs. One participant expressed,

Smith's emphasis on the importance of structure and discipline in education initially resonated with me. I've always believed that a strong foundation in traditional methods was necessary for student success, especially within the context of Turkish education, where authority is often emphasized... However, as I delved deeper into his arguments, I began to question whether this strict adherence to tradition might actually limit my students' ability to adapt to new ideas and challenges. The realization that a rigid educational framework can potentially destroy creativity and critical thinking was eye-opening, leading me to rethink my approach to classroom management and lesson planning....

Another participant reflected,

...While I previously thought that maintaining a rigid curriculum was essential for effective teaching, Smith's arguments challenged me to reconsider the balance between structure and flexibility. He posits that an overly strict approach... which made me rethink my own methods. Now, I see the value in allowing some room for exploration and inquiry within a traditional framework. By incorporating elements of student-led discussions and project-based learning, [contrary to Vernon Smith] I believe I can honor traditional values while also fostering an environment that encourages critical engagement. This balance is particularly important in the Turkish context, where educational practices often prioritize conformity.

A third participant stated,

Reading Smith has encouraged me to think about the role of authority [a teacher] in the classroom. I always thought discipline was paramount, and that a teacher's authority should be unquestioned. However, I've come to realize that fostering an environment where students feel empowered to express their ideas and question established norms cannot, in fact, solely enrich their learning experience. This is especially relevant in Turkey, where students are often conditioned to accept authority without question. By allowing space for dialogue and debate, I can help my students develop their own voices and critical thinking skills and make them self-disciplined....

Moreover, another participant articulated,

In Turkey, where educational practices frequently lean heavily on authority and conformity... Smith's insights prompted me to reflect on how an inflexible educational approach may hinder students from developing the skills necessary for handling complex situations. I began to wonder if, instead of merely imparting knowledge, my role as an educator should also include promoting adaptability and resilience in my students. This

perspective shift is crucial for aligning our educational practices with the demands of an ever-changing global landscape.

Finally, a fifth participant remarked,

...Ultimately, I believe that while conservatism emphasizes stability and tradition, it is essential to integrate contemporary to traditional values. Smith's work inspired me to consider how I can blend traditional values with innovative strategies. By doing so, I can better prepare my students for both stability and adaptability in their future endeavors. This approach not only respects the foundational principles of education but also acknowledges the need for growth and evolution within the classroom, paving the way for a more holistic learning experience....

The engagement with Vernon Smith's 'Traditional Education' prompted participants to reflect critically on their conservative pedagogical beliefs while simultaneously recognizing the potential for a gradual evolution toward more liberal approaches. Although they identified strongly with the values of structure, discipline, and authority typically associated with conservatism, their reflections revealed an emerging awareness of the limitations of a strictly traditional educational framework. Participants began to appreciate the importance of balancing these conservative ideals with the need for flexibility and student engagement. This shift indicates a growing recognition that fostering creativity for preparing students for the complexities of the modern world.

As they navigated the discussions, participants articulated a desire to incorporate elements of inquiry and dialogue within their teaching practices, demonstrating a willingness to adapt while still honoring their foundational beliefs. This nuanced evolution signifies that, even within a predominantly conservative context, there exists the potential for transformative change in educational ideologies. Ultimately, by embracing a more holistic approach that integrates both conservative and liberal values, educators in Turkey can better equip themselves to thrive in an ever-changing landscape, promoting a more dynamic and responsive educational environment.

#### *Liberalism*

Moving into liberal ideologies, texts like John Dewey's 'The Child and the Curriculum' and A.S. Neill's 'The Summerhill Approach to Education' sparked significant reflection. One participant stated,

Dewey's focus on child-centered learning challenged my notion that I needed to control the classroom environment. I began to see how fostering a sense of autonomy in students can lead to deeper engagement... This is particularly relevant in Turkey, where students are often passive recipients of knowledge rather than active participants in their learning.

Another remarked, *"Neill's approach to education was eye-opening. I appreciated his belief that students should have the freedom to direct their own learning. This resonates with my experiences in Turkish classrooms, where creativity is often stifled by inflexible curricula."* A third participant said, *"Both Dewey and Neill made me question the very foundation of my teaching philosophy. I realized that education should not just be about following a predetermined path but about exploring possibilities together with my students, especially in a system that often discourages deviation from the norm."* This shift highlighted the participants' growing recognition of the importance of liberal values in education, particularly in a context that traditionally emphasizes conformity.

#### *Liberationism*

As participants explored liberationist ideologies through Paulo Freire's 'Beyond Educational Oppression', profound realizations emerged. One educator reflected, *"Freire's critique of the 'banking model' made me uncomfortable, but it was necessary. I realized that my teaching methods had sometimes reinforced societal inequalities. This is especially true in Turkey, where educational disparities often reflect broader social inequities."* Another stated,

...His emphasis on dialogue and critical consciousness made me rethink how I interact with my students. I want to empower them to challenge the status quo and become agents of change in their communities.... In the Turkish context, this feels particularly urgent given the socio-political climate. In the context of Turkey, where socio-political tensions often suppress dissenting voices, the urgency of Freire's philosophy becomes particularly salient... [The participant is in a state of hopelessness, somewhat anxious as well] In the Turkish context, this feels particularly urgent given the socio-political climate. This sentiment underscores the necessity for educators to cultivate meaningful thinking among their students, enabling them to navigate complex social issues and engage meaningfully with their communities. By encouraging dialogue, educators can empower students to articulate their views and challenge existing power structures, ultimately fostering a sense of agency and responsibility. Furthermore, this approach aligns with Freire's vision of education as a tool for liberation rather than mere conformity.

The participant's commitment to empowering students reflects a broader desire among educators to create a learning environment that values inquiry and active participation. As students learn to question and analyze the world around

them, they are better equipped to address the challenges facing their communities, thus embodying the role of change agents that Freire so passionately advocated. In this way, the participant's reflections not only illuminate the relevance of Freire's work but also demonstrate the potential for education to serve as a catalyst for social transformation in Turkey.

A third participant shared, *"Engaging with Freire's work helped me understand that education must be a tool for social justice, not just a means to an end. I began to see my role as not only a teacher but also a facilitator of empowerment, especially for marginalized students."* This exploration fostered a deeper commitment to inclusivity and equity among the participants, connecting their readings to the challenges faced in the Turkish education system.

### Anarchism

Finally, the exploration of anarchism through Ivan Illich's 'The Alternative Schooling' opened new avenues of thought. One participant noted, *"Illich's ideas about deschooling society really resonated with me. I had never considered that learning could happen outside the traditional classroom. In Turkey, where educational practices are often rigid and formal, this perspective felt liberating."* Another shared, *"His perspective made me reflect on my own experiences in informal education settings where students learn through real-life interactions. I started to think about how we could create more flexible learning environments that encourage exploration."* A third educator remarked, *"Illich helped me see that true education can take many forms, and it's essential to create spaces that allow for freedom and creativity. This aligns with my belief that learning should not be confined to a rigid structure, especially in a system where alternative educational approaches are often overlooked."* This engagement with anarchist thought further enriched participants' understanding of the possibilities for educational practice beyond traditional boundaries.

By the end of the 12 weeks, a notable shift in ideological alignment was observed. Many participants, who had initially leaned toward conservative views, began to embrace more liberal perspectives, recognizing the importance of inclusivity and social justice in education. As one participant summarized,

I started off believing in strict discipline and authority, but now I value a more equitable approach. The discussions around liberationism and the concept of fostering equity really resonated with me, especially in light of the challenges we face in Turkey's educational landscape. I've come to understand that education should not only convey knowledge but also empower students to question and challenge the status quo. This transformation in my thinking has not only impacted my pedagogical practices but has also deepened my commitment to nurturing an inclusive classroom environment.

In conclusion, this qualitative exploration demonstrates that engagement with diverse educational ideologies not only enriched participants' understanding but also initiated significant shifts in their beliefs. The iterative process of reading and discussion allowed for a deeper appreciation of the complexities of educational thought, ultimately fostering a more nuanced approach to their pedagogical practices and paving the way for an inclusive educational philosophy.

### Phase 3: A shift: Did any change occur?

In the first phase (see Figure 2) of the study, the inventory answered by the participants was re-administered in the final week (see Figure 3)--the 14th week. When examining the results, which the participants evaluated themselves, some changes were observed. To compare the initial assessment results with those of the final week, graphics 1 and 2 and, the comments made by the participants are presented below.

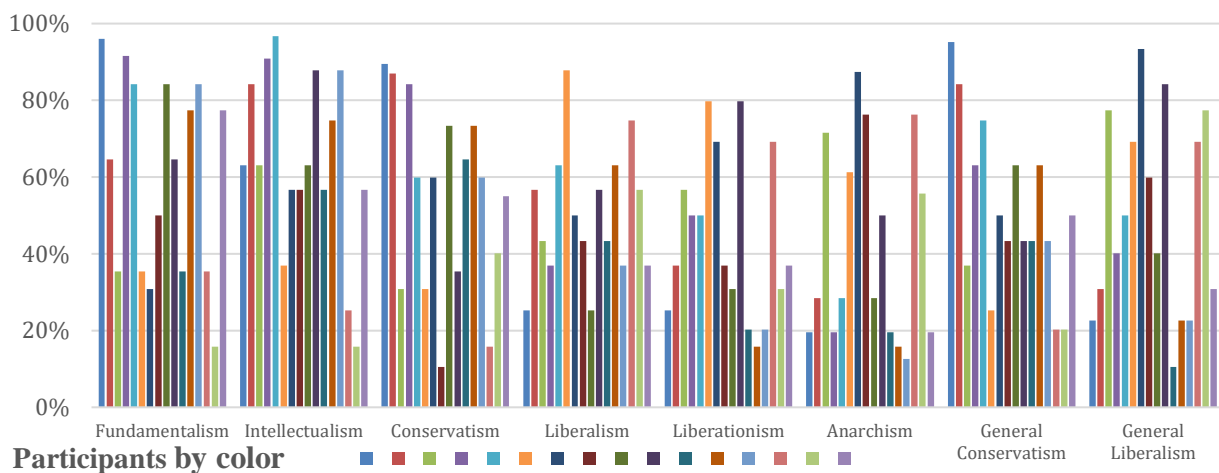


Figure 2. First Administration of the Educational Ideologies Inventory

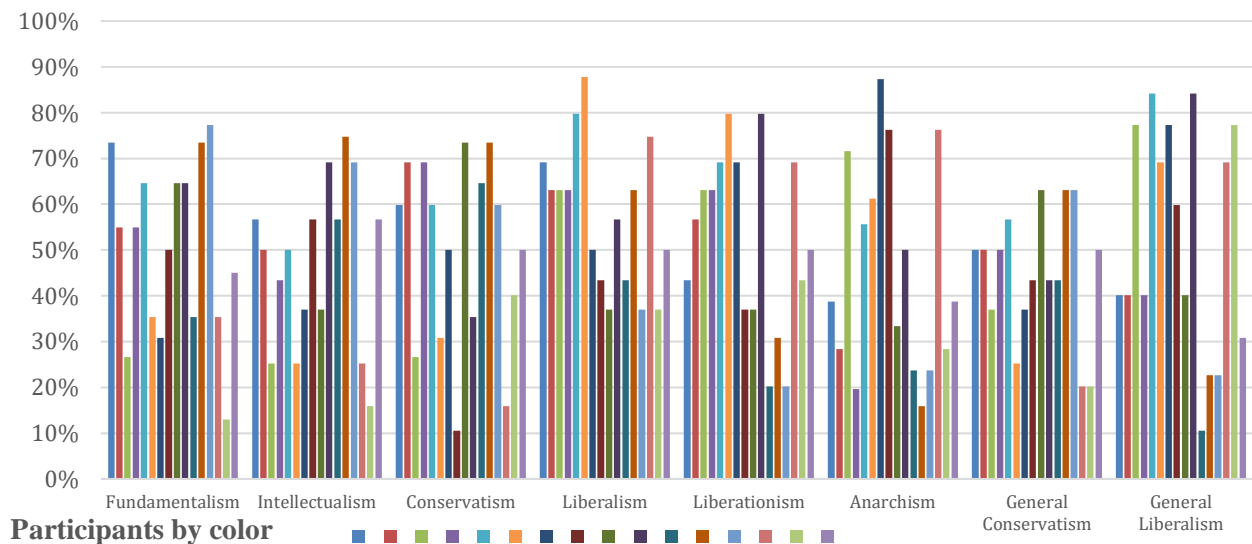


Figure 3. Last Administration of the Educational Ideologies Inventory

The results of the Educational Ideologies Inventory, administered at both the beginning and the conclusion of the study, indicate that the 12-week period of theoretical reading and reflective discussions resulted in notable shifts in the participants' perspectives on education. These changes reflect several key patterns, as illustrated in Figures 2 and 3:

1. A shift from a predominantly conservative stance toward a more liberal orientation.
2. A participant maintaining a conservative ideology, yet becoming more receptive to liberal viewpoints and developing a degree of sympathy for them.
3. A movement away from conservative beliefs, accompanied by the recognition that liberal ideology aligns more closely with their own values.
4. Participants who exhibited no significant change in their educational outlook.

Upon closer examination of these differences, the study sought to explore the underlying factors contributing to these shifts, which constitutes one of the central research questions. Participants articulated their experiences of ideological change in a variety of ways. For instance, one participant expressed that the idea of simultaneously holding an extreme conservative viewpoint while also identifying as a liberationist seemed foreign to them at the outset, but through the course of the readings, they came to understand the relationship between conservatism and liberation. Another participant, who initially identified with a liberal stance but emphasized that conservatism does not inherently equate to religious extremism and reported experiencing what they (participants) described as an ideological enlightenment.

Similarly, other participants shared their evolving perspectives. One participant, for example, stated:

Anarchism has always seemed intimidating to me. However, as I engaged with the readings, I began to realize that anarchism does not necessarily involve chaos, terror, or destruction. Rather, it involves the idea of dismantling the existing educational system to create a new one. Yes, in that sense, I am an anarchist, but I am an educational anarchist.

Another participant reflected on how deeply they had been influenced by Jonathan Kozol's essay "*The Night Is Dark and I Am Far From Home*", noting how they had previously felt constrained by rigid educational beliefs but now embraced a more flexible, open-minded approach. They emphasized that ideologies are not inherently negative or abstract, stating:

Martin Luther King was one of the most significant revolutionaries in American history—a Black priest, a reformist, but not one who advocated for violence. The concept of the Black priest is intriguing, for example... A scholar, a conservative religious figure, a peaceful revolutionary—an anarchist who can lead a revolution for Black rights without resorting to violence.

This range of reflections illustrates the complex and multifaceted nature of the participants' ideological transformations throughout the study.

## Discussion

The results of this study's first phase revealed an interplay between participants' educational ideologies and their limited familiarity with the meaning of educational philosophy. The participants displayed a kind of confusion about educational ideologies between theoretical understanding and practical application. The cognitive challenges that participants demonstrate in identifying and articulating their ideological positions suggest that ideologies about education are not

always clearly defined (Akinola-Akomolafe, 2020). Research about a general lack of attention to educational philosophy courses in teacher training programs exists, where the focus is often on pedagogical techniques rather than critical engagement with underlying ideologies (Darling-Hammond, 2006; Winch, 2012). As participants' inventory results show, their beliefs did not always support precisely one singular ideological perspective.

The centralized education systems generally place focus on structured curricula and standardized assessments that contribute to a more conservative educational understanding that prioritizes order, discipline, and authority (Sancar, 2012). This result reflects a trend that conservative educational ideologies often dominate systems with firm structures (Douthat, 2021; Durdukoca, 2018). The deviation in ideological beliefs among participants underlines that ideologies are shaped by both personal and societal factors (Ulum & Köksal, 2021). Though conservative ideologies direct the educational experiences of participants, it is normal that ideological alignment is not always uniform (Marcus & Fischer, 2014; Sharifian, 2015; Ulum & Köksal, 2019, 2021). Moreover, the socio-political atmosphere in Turkey probably affects participants' hesitancy to embrace liberal ideologies and the socio-political climate may limit more liberal educational thoughts.

The results from Phase 2 of this study tell a philosophical move in the participants' educational ideologies through the engagement with different philosophical frameworks as participants moved from a preliminary position with conservative educational ideologies to a more liberal orientation. For instance, the initial commitment to conservative ideologies such as fundamentalism and intellectualism generated reflections that prompted participants to inquire about these perspectives, principally in the context of Turkey's educational system. However, as they met liberal ideologies such as Dewey's child-centered approach and Freire's liberationist philosophy, participants began analyzing their pedagogical thoughts. This advancement in thought shows that educational ideologies are not static but diverse (Bartolomé, 2008). This alteration demonstrates the influence of theoretical discussions in challenging preconceived ideas and expanding the participants' conceptualizations of educational ideology. The movement from a conservative position toward a liberal may not be solely from the discussion but as participants engaged with thinkers like John Dewey and Paulo Freire, they may begin to distinguish the need for an educational shift (Nevin, 2021). This shift underscores the importance of developing flexible individuals who can steer complex societal challenges (Gram-Hanssen, 2019). The ideological alteration does not permanently include a complete departure from former beliefs but can instead comprise a more incorporated and balanced approach to education.

The answers of participants in Phase 3 (Post Administration of Inventory) added information about their ideological shifts. For example, the awareness that anarchism is not synonymous with chaos can implicate a positive reimagining of the educational system. This indicates that, through acquaintance with alternative educational philosophies, participants were able to reconsider their early predispositions and hold more fluid, context-dependent considerations of educational ideology. The response is that educational ideologies can be fluid, with elements of both conservative and liberal viewpoints existing within an individual's belief system (Glaser et al., 2021). In the case of the Turkish educational context, where stiff structures and conformism routinely rule, the participants' fresh awareness of the potential for flexibility and originality in teaching is particularly significant. Engaging with a range of educational ideologies may meaningfully reshape educators' perspectives, allowing them to accept more complete, comprehensive, and vibrant approaches to education.

This research would be a small-scale ideological shift study that fosters ideological awareness and openness to change is essential for the professional growth of educators. The insights gained during this process have inferences for individual teaching practices and the potential to understand systemic change maneuvers in educational systems.

### Conclusion

Awareness of teachers' ideological positions is vital, as it shapes the pedagogical choices. The political and social contexts in which educators operate can impose ideological constraints that limit their ability to express their own beliefs freely. When examining ideology in education, it is necessary to consider not only theoretical viewpoints but also practical dimensions. In this regard, analyzing how teachers reflect ideological structures in the past, present, and potential future is a crucial area of study.

The results suggest that participants initially associate their educational ideologies with educational philosophies; however, later in the course most of them develop a better understanding of what ideologies are and how they have connections to education. This process of understanding the meaning of each specific educational ideology help participants not only distinguish the ideologies themselves but also become aware of the social, cultural, and political factors that influence their formation. Moreover, participants' awareness of their own ideological places could represent a significant turning point in their professional development. In this context, it is probable that educational ideologies might shape teachers' pedagogical approaches and teaching styles and influence students' learning experiences. Teachers' ideological awareness about education might also affect how the broader educational system is shaped within its societal context. Therefore, ideological awareness in education could allow teachers to develop more conscious, critical, and effective pedagogical approaches.

### Recommendations

Given the findings discussed, it is crucial for educators to actively engage in self-reflection regarding their own ideological positions. This awareness should be fostered through continuous professional development opportunities, workshops, and collaborative discussions that encourage educators to explore and critically evaluate the underlying beliefs shaping their teaching practices. Educators should be encouraged to recognize that their personal ideologies, when aligned with their pedagogical approaches, can enhance student engagement and learning outcomes. Moreover, schools and educational institutions should create spaces for open dialogue about educational ideologies, allowing teachers to express and challenge their beliefs in a supportive and respectful environment. Such spaces could also serve as platforms for teachers to collectively navigate the tensions between personal beliefs and institutional expectations, helping to foster a more inclusive and innovative educational climate.

In addition, policymakers should be mindful of the ideological constraints imposed by educational systems. For instance, in contexts like Turkey, where centralized education systems may prioritize conservative values, efforts should be made to allow greater ideological flexibility. Encouraging diversity in educational practices and embracing a range of pedagogical approaches will not only enhance educators' professional autonomy but also create more inclusive and effective learning environments for students.

Future research could focus on large-scale quantitative studies to investigate how teachers' ideological awareness influences personal teaching approaches. Such studies could provide solid data on how ideological awareness affects teachers' pedagogical decisions and offer a deeper understanding of the role of ideologies in education. Also, it is a well-known fact that educational reforms imposed by centralist systems are often embedded with specific ideological messages. Future research could investigate how teachers perceive these reforms and recognize the underlying ideological messages. Studies regarding the awareness of educational ideologies could also enable teachers to develop more conscious and critical pedagogical approaches. Such research, by increasing ideological awareness in education, could contribute to teachers developing more effective and socially responsible educational practices.

### Limitations

This study is limited to participants pursuing master's and doctoral level studies in the field of curriculum development. The inventory can be used in broader research to identify educators' educational ideologies.

### Ethical Considerations

All relevant ethical principles were meticulously followed during the preparation of this article. The research, which includes data collection, analysis, and interpretation, was conducted in strict adherence to established ethical standards, with particular attention given to minimizing potential risks to participants. Participation in the study was entirely voluntary, and explicit informed consent was obtained from all participants. Before the study commenced, participants were provided with a comprehensive explanation of the study's content.

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The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

### Generative AI

AI was used to enhance the language of the work and eliminate semantic errors.

### Authorship Contribution

Kiraz: Idea, research design, theoretical background. Yılmaz Yıldız: Analyzing, thematic coding, reviewing.

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