



# Teacher Candidates' Experiences in Using Story-writing Technique to Learn Educational Philosophies: a Turkey Sample

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## Abstract

Since the participant teacher candidates did not find the philosophy of education course fun and preferred using stories, this study was designed as action research. In this study, 51 teacher candidates were asked to write individual or group stories about the educational philosophies of perennialism, essentialism, progressivism, and reconstructionism. The study results revealed that they were more inclined to adopt reconstructionism and progressive educational philosophies than perennialism and essentialism. Like their tendencies, all the participants wrote compelling stories about the given educational philosophies. According to their opinions at the end of the term, it was concluded that writing a story improved permanent learning, creativity, and imagination. Similarly, story-writing helped them learn educational philosophies quickly and contributed to their perspectives on educational philosophies.

**Keywords** Philosophy of education · Storytelling · Story-writing · Action research

## Introduction

Philosophy began by asking questions about what people think and care about, explored the dimensions of thinking and how the human mind works, and ultimately helped us better understand human nature and the world (Daniel and Auriac 2011). Initially dealing with cultures, lives, and beliefs, philosophy has turned its face towards specific disciplines such as religion, psychology, sociology, and education that gave rise to field-specific philosophies (Sorell 2018). Additionally, philosophy is acknowledged as a method of offering a perspective. A philosophical perspective offers a vision and guidance for actions (Ornstein and Hunkins 2009). Educational philosophies play a vital role in the philosophical perspectives of teachers and teacher candidates. Indeed, teaching practices can be too complex and

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inconsistent without an educational philosophy (Fielding 2000). In this regard, appreciating an educational philosophy is expected to provide a vision and guidance in teaching (Beatty et al. 2009).

The philosophy of education can be defined as a discipline or systematic ideas and concepts that approach education as a whole and guide education policies and practices (Kanatlı and Schreglman 2014). It also deals with the values and attitudes desired to be gained through teachers, curriculum, and instructional activities (Cevizci 2015). There are four mainstream educational philosophies: *perennialism*, *essentialism*, *progressivism*, and *reconstructionism* (Demirel 2007; Ornstein and Hunkins 2009; Segall and Wilson 2004). They offer practical educational suggestions within the framework of the principles of the philosophy they depend. The educational philosophies are grouped as traditional and contemporary by the teacher and student roles (Gutek 2006). In perennialism, known as the oldest and traditional educational philosophy, a teacher is a respected field expert who is considered a source of information and guidance for students in the relevant field (Cohen 1999; Scott et al. 1994). Another traditional educational philosophy is essentialism, characterized by a system that operates with discipline, obedience, reward, and punishment in addition to strict teacher authority in the classroom (Scott et al. 1994). Progressivism is a contemporary educational philosophy in which a teacher is accepted as a group leader and plays a role in student guidance and actions (Hill 1997). Since progressivism highly values learning by doing, the methods such as problem-solving, in which a learner plays a leading role, are preferred in progressivism (Kolb 2014; Scott et al. 1994). Reconstructionism, another contemporary educational philosophy, adopts a perspective in which students are educated to establish a new social order based on democracy and freedom (Kneller 1965; Scott et al. 1994). Therefore, it appreciates student choices and emphasizes that choices create freedom (Karhoff 2003; Cohen 1999).

Educational philosophy is taught within the scope of the teacher training programs (Yüksel 2008). Teachers' previous experiences and beliefs play a role in internalizing educational philosophies (Kane et al. 2002; Weshah 2013). Thus, developing a practical educational philosophy should be among the priorities of teacher candidates (Deryakulu and Atal-Köysüren 2018). Teacher candidates need to carry out activities in which they can both be active and create their experiences to adopt educational philosophies rather than acquire them as academic knowledge.

Within the scope of this study, the story writing technique was used to teach educational philosophies to teacher candidates. A story results from artistic creativity and the combination of elements such as plot, place, time, and characters (Muliawan et al. 2020). Although stories share common features with fairy tales and novels, they differ from fairy tales because there is a realistic aspect in a story plot. Similarly, a story is different from a novel in conciseness and comprehensibility. It has a privileged place in literary genres and conveys values and knowledge that can be used both in and out of school (Hensel and Rasco 1992). Besides, a story is an authentic teaching strategy that brings meaning to events that coursebooks cannot convey (Psomos and Kordaki 2012; Tindall 1996). Stories are also used to share information, persuade others, change behaviors, and convey values (Shaffer et al. 2018). Shuyi (2017) states that stories have an important place in pedagogy. Picken (2000) believes that stories are practical educational tools as they are believable, memorable, and entertaining. He suggests using stories to teach any content, from easy to challenging subjects and integrating them into every lesson stage.

"Story writing" is one of the most frequently used writing activities (Cutler and Graham 2008) because students at all levels enjoy story-reading and story-writing activities (Franz and Pope 2005; Sever 2013). Story-related activities appeal to student imagination, develop creativity and reveal the experiences in students' inner worlds, which can be the main

reason students enjoy such activities (Turgut and Kışla 2015). *Story-writing students* not only realize their interest in writing about a topic but also see that they learn something new. Alkaaf (2017) indicates that learning through stories helps students develop self-confidence and positive attitudes towards oral expression, writing, listening, and acting skills. Philosophical movements can be taught through story writing in a context that would improve student comprehension and motivation (Weber 1990; Klassen 2006). It might restore student participation and interest in the philosophy of education because, through stories, individuals gain insights about themselves, humanity, and the world (Hwang 2004). In this sense, the study examined the effects of using the story-writing technique on teacher candidates' learning educational philosophies.

## Method

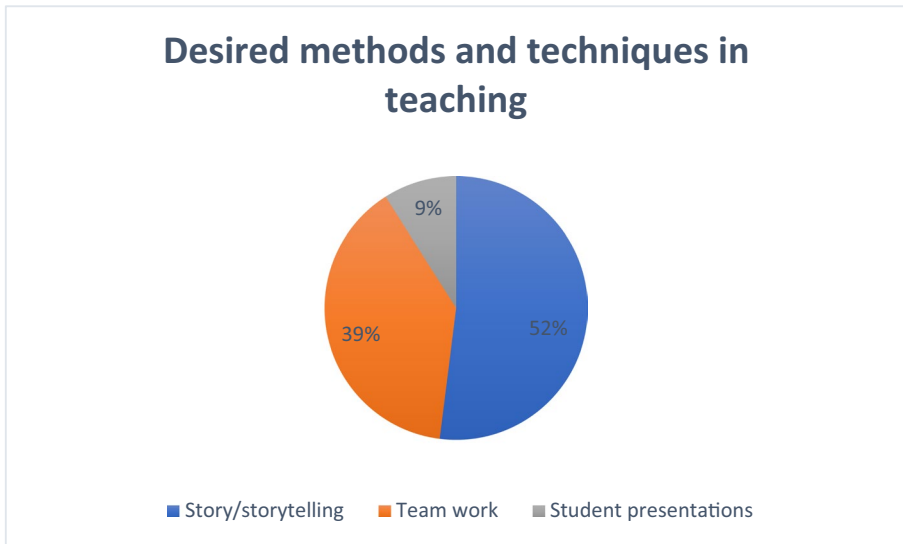
Action research, also known as teacher research, was used in this study (Cain 2008). Action research can be defined as finding solutions to various problems in a classroom or school (Lari et al. 2019; Barcelona 2020). It is a research method that identifies problems, applies solutions in the field, and monitors the process (Meyer 2000). According to Carr (2007), who addresses the methodological concerns of action research, action research can be a tool to integrate theories with practice. In action research, the research becomes the action itself, which makes it a unique method (Mahani and Molki 2012). Action research aims to produce new information as well as to improve the existing situation and obtain new results (McNiff and Whitehead 2011). In this regard, improving learning is vital for enriching future practices and actions (McNiff 2016). The reason for conducting action research, the source of the problem, and the action plan are explained as follows.

## Problem Statement and Action Plan

The starting point of this research was the first researcher's observations on the first-grade teacher candidates in the philosophy of education course, her teaching experiences, and the feedback at the end of the semester. According to her observations, those teacher candidates believed in that the course was an ordinary one that would not affect their professional lives. However, educators are expected to implement innovative practices to improve traditional educational practices, create opportunities for new practices, and facilitate problem-solving in the learning process (Kemmis 2010). Therefore, intending to modify the course accordingly, the researcher asked them two questions about their opinions about the philosophy of education course at the beginning of the course period. The first question was "*Is educational philosophies lesson fun?*" and they were asked to score out of 10 points. The students found the course content moderately entertaining, giving a score of 4.9 out of 10.

The second question was, "*Which methods/techniques would you like to experience in the educational philosophies lesson? a) story/storytelling, b) teamwork, c) Student presentations,*" 52% preferred storytelling, 39% teamwork, and only 9% student presentations (Graph 1).

According to the student responses, the course content was not very entertaining, the students wanted to be active (39% chose teamwork), and they preferred to use the story/storytelling technique to make the lesson funnier. In action research, data is systematically collected, evaluated, and used as in the following research steps (Whitehead and McNiff 2006). In light of the given data, it was planned to assign a story-writing project in which students would be active in individual or group work and do project presentations in the classroom. The



**Graph 1** Desired methods and techniques in the educational philosophies lesson

students were expected to write a story about the educational philosophies of perennialism, essentialism, progressivism, and reconstructionism. Assignments were announced in the 3rd week of the term, and the deadline was the 10th week. As of the announcement date, weekly feedback about the stories was given to the students (see Fig. 1).

### Participants

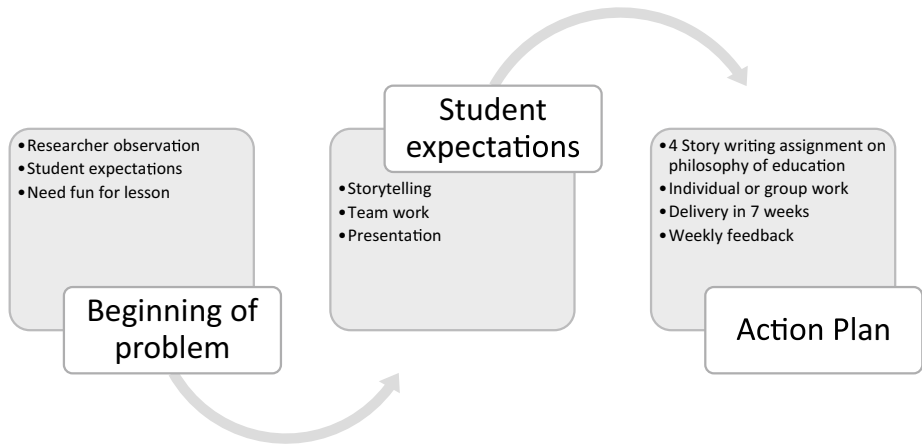
The participants were 2 male and 57 female first-year preschool teacher candidates studying in an education faculty of a foundation university in Turkey in the 2021–2022 fall semester. By its nature, qualitative research has unique topics and results, and therefore the participants are selected using the purposive sampling method (Creswell 2017), which allows an in-depth study of a given topic with considerable content (Patton 2014). The participants in the study were selected using the criterion sampling method, which is one of the purposeful sampling methods. All participants participated voluntarily and allowed the stories they would write to be used for the study analysis.

### Data Collection and Analysis

The study data included students' stories about the educational philosophies, their end-of-term opinions, and the data obtained with *the Educational Philosophy Tendencies Scale*.

### Stories

Within the scope of the action plan, the students were asked to write four different stories about each of the educational philosophies of perennialism, essentialism, progressivism, and reconstructionism. Students were free to choose the method they desired, such as



**Fig. 1** The stages of action research

group (including 2–3 students) or individual work. Accordingly, 30\*4 (total 120) stories were written by 59 students. The desired features of the stories were scored as shown in Table 1 below: story elements (25%), the story flow (25%), and the features of educational philosophy (50%). Two researchers scored the stories, and the inter-rater reliability was 86%.

### Educational Philosophy Tendencies Scale

Aytaç and Uyangör (2020) developed the scale to determine students' tendencies toward educational philosophy. It is a five-point Likert-type scale consisting of 36 items and four sub-dimensions: perennialism (7 items), essentialism (7 items), progressivism (13 items), and reconstructionism (9 items). The scale explains 45.01% of the total variance. The Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficient was 0.83.

### Student Responses

At the end of the term, students were asked four questions to evaluate their story-writing processes. Three questions are Likert-type, and one is an open-ended question. The questions are as follows: "Has your story writing process helped you learn educational philosophies?", "Did it positively affect your perspective on the philosophy of education course?", "Would you recommend that students who will take this course be given a story assignment?" and "What were your most important achievements in the story writing process?".

### Findings

All findings are presented in titles, tables, and graphics, considering the problem order.

**Table 1** Scoring criteria

Main topics	Subtitles			
Story elements (25 points)	Protagonist	Sidekick/supporting character	Time	Place
Story flow (25 points)	Originality	Title coherent with the plot	The use of observations	Fluent Expression of thoughts
Features of an educational philosophy (50 points)	Teacher roles	Student roles	Preferred courses and the underlying reasons	Explicit manifestation of an educational approach, primary elements
				Plot Creative analogies

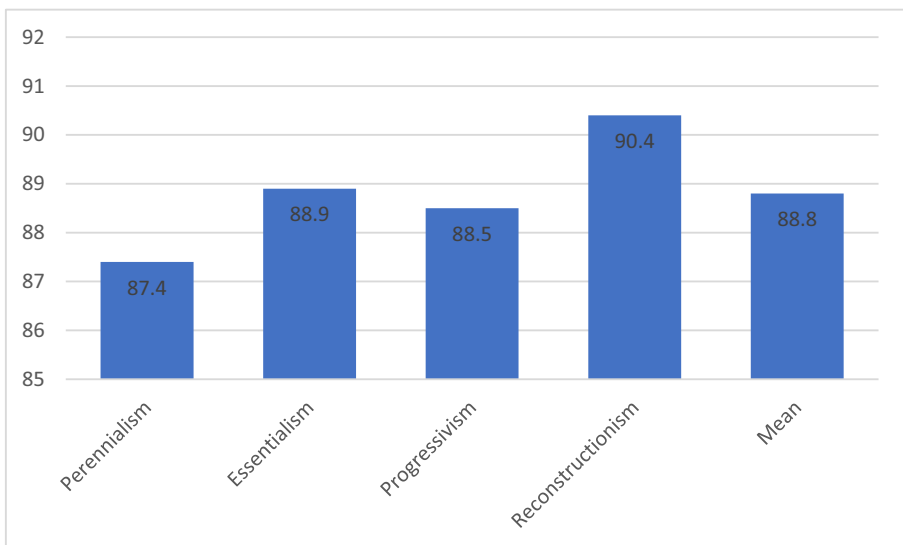
## Stories

Students were asked to write four stories for each of the educational philosophies, and the scoring was done following the criteria of 50% for story elements and flow and 50% for reflecting the features of educational philosophies (see Table 1). Accordingly, the lowest score was 87, and the highest was 90. Although there was a slight difference in the scores regarding the stories on given educational philosophies, the lowest average (87) was measured in perennialism, and the highest (90,4) was in reconstructionism (see Graph 2).

The stories about which the teacher candidates wrote their educational philosophies were subjected to content analysis under two headings: *perspective* and *plot*. The content analysis results are shown in Table 2 below.

Table 2 shows the perspectives of the stories written about the educational philosophies of perennialism, essentialism, progressivism, and reconstructionism. A submissive perspective was the most prevalent theme in the stories about the philosophical movement “perennialism”. It was followed by despair. It was determined that pessimism and hopelessness themes were commonly dealt with in the stories of the essentialism movement. The stories on the progressivism movement had much innovative and diligent manner. Lastly, the stories about the reconstructionism movement mainly addressed the theme of being in search of something.

Table 3 shows the story plots. For example, discipline and traditional school education were the prominent issues in the stories on perennialism. Most stories about the essentialism movement reflected school rules and teacher pressure. However, fun teaching was emphasized in the stories on progressivism. Innovative approaches and future dreams followed it. Lastly, students wrote about social changes and leadership initiatives more than other themes in the reconstructionism movement.



**Graph 2** The participants' success in story-writing

**Table 2** The content analysis codes by story perspective

Educational Philosophies	Perspective	f	Educational Philosophies	Perspective	f
Perennialism	Submissive	20	Progressivism	Innovative	20
	Desperate	8		Diligent	19
	Critical	7		Being in search of something	7
	Being in search of something	7		Questioning	7
	Innovative	7		Submissive	5
	Questioning	6			
Essentialism	Pessimistic	15	Reconstructionism	Being in search of something	21
	Desperate	14		Innovative	19
	Questioning	8		Diligent	17
	Submissive	6			
	Determined	6			
	Critical	5			

### Educational Philosophy Tendencies Scale

The 36-item and 4-sub-dimension scale (i.e., perennialism, essentialism, progressivism, and reconstructionism) was used to assess students' tendencies toward educational philosophies. The items are scored from 1 (Strongly disagree) to 5 (Strongly agree) points.

As seen above, the teacher candidates mainly adopted the educational philosophy of progressivism ( $X=4.85$ ) and reconstructionism ( $X=4.72$ ), while the essentialism ( $X=2.20$ ) and perennialism ( $X=3.15$ ) were the least adopted movements (See Table 4).

### Teacher Candidates' Opinions at the End of the Process

Likert-type and open-ended questions were asked to the participants at the end of the philosophy of education course. They were asked to score the questions from 1 to 10. The results are shown in Graph 3.

Accordingly, 88% of the students expressed that story writing helped them learn educational philosophies. Story writing assignment on educational philosophies positively affected their opinions about those movements (76%). 78% of the students recommended having a story-writing assignment in the philosophy of education course.

The open-ended questions were about students' gains from story writing assignments. The content analysis results revealed the given themes: the effects on learning, effects on skills, effects on educational philosophies, and affective effects (see Table 5). Of all the themes, subject reinforcement and permanent learning were the most mentioned benefits. In the theme of "the effects on skills," improved creativity and imagination were the most remarkable benefits, followed by better writing and collaborative work skills. In the effects on the philosophy of education, the participants stated that they had better intellectual thinking skills and realized that educational philosophies had correspondence in real life. Lastly, it was

**Table 3** The content analysis codes by plot

Educational Philosophies	Plot	f
Perpetualism	A dream student	17
	School discipline	11
	Traditional education	10
	Family pressure	7
	An endeavoring/fighting spirit	4
	Strict rules	4
	World school	3
	Hospitality	1
	School rules	12
	Teacher pressure	12
Essentialism	Family pressure	10
	Strict rules	7
	Goal-oriented work	6
	Well-disciplined	6
	An endeavoring/fighting spirit	4

“...: Ilay is an ideal student who attends a school that teaches classical works and prepares gifted students considered for life....”

“...Miderris Ali aims to educate gifted students using strict rules and discipline. With all those rules, he desires to prepare students for life, and make them be autonomous and responsible individuals...”

“...Zoe is stunned by the rules of her new school where the nobles are educated. Here, many classics, old information, and strict moral rules wait for her....”

“...Eagerly waiting to hear their children’s names, the most distinguished families in London gathered in front of the Platon Academy. It is an exceptional event for them because their children have been accepted by the academy, which would offer them an elite and universal education....”

“... Van Gogh wakes up early this morning, as always. Palace School starts at 7 o’clock. If he were late, his teacher would get really mad at him. Like all Palace School students, Van Gogh is wary of his Latin teacher, Mr. Steve. In fact, all teachers at the school are like Mr. Steve. That is the rule of this school....”

“...Forty-six-year-old and very experienced Nebahat teacher, who has devoted years to teaching and has a successful resume, enters the classroom and says, “Shut up and take your seats!”

“...There are students in Yildirim’s room again, the school principal. The teacher brings them here due to their disruptive behaviors in the classroom. Undisciplined and disruptive behaviors are what teachers get mad at the most because strict rules govern this school....”

“...A teacher who has dedicated his life to correct the wrongs... The obstacles on his way to break the taboos... However, nothing can dissuade him from his path....”

Table 3 (continued)

Educational Philosophies	Plot	f
Progressivism	Innovative approaches (12)	12
	Effective teacher guidance (12)	12
	Experiencing success	11
	Future dreams	3
	Family pressure	3
	Sacrifice	2
	Innovative approaches	12
Reconstructionism	Social changes	15
	Leadership	14
	An endeavoring/fighting spirit	9
	Quest for a new life	9
	Women education	4
	Democratic society	3
	Talent discovery	3

"...This school is different from all other schools. Here, regardless of being rich or poor, only student talents are considered. In this school, there are many classes such as painting, music, mathematics, computer technologies, world languages, and literature. Also, some experts update the courses and training and supervise the instruction..."

"...Will Hasan's curiosity and passion for reading challenge everyone? Despite all the obstacles, the dreams of a village boy, written on straw paper..."

"...The words of our teacher mesmerize me. The solution to all problems is in the hands of humanity, so there is still hope. Before hopes are lost, something has to be done, or it would be too late..."

"Sevgi Teacher, claiming that school is everywhere, takes her students to a camp. The students are divided into groups, and they fulfill the duties cooperatively. Students are delighted. They learn to cope with life by producing solutions to the problems they encounter..."

"...Bangalore, a school in India, is the place for educators and students who want to shape the future with their unconventional education system. They aim to establish a new social order and a new world that has much peace in all respects..."

"...The people who steer the future should not only know how to distinguish right from wrong but also lead to practice change. Those who dream of changing the future should take action instead of expecting it from others..."

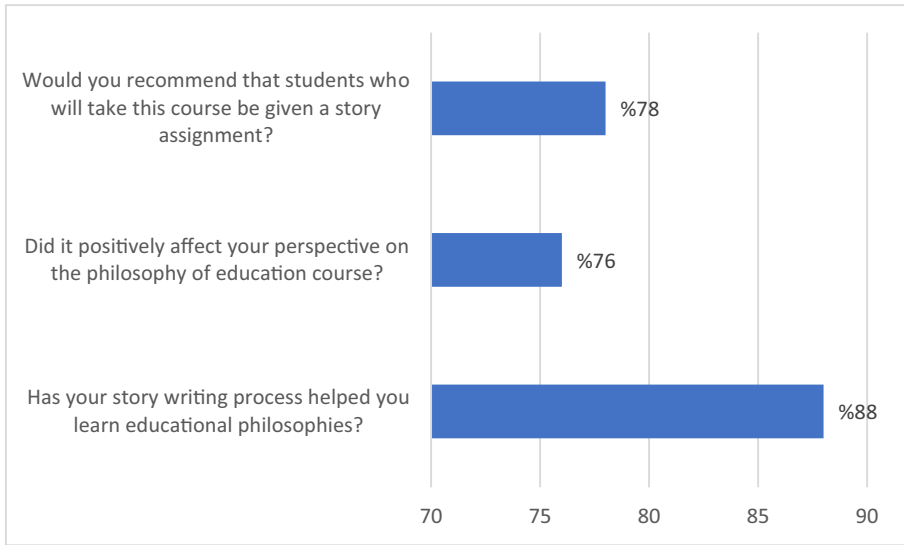
"...Will Hasan's curiosity and passion for reading challenge everyone? Despite all the obstacles, the dreams of a village boy, written on straw paper..."

"...women and girls are not valued where Asiye Teacher works. She is upset about it, so, with the help of residents, she attempts to establish a new order in which everyone would have equal access to education..."

"...the presence of democracy in any event in her school and the idea of a better community thanks to democracy are what Mary likes most about her school. Such an understanding minimizes the differences between students..."

**Table 4** Teacher candidates' educational philosophy tendencies

	N	X	Sd	Min.	Max.
Perennialism	51	3.15	1.02	1.00	5.00
Essentialism	51	2.20	1.00	1.00	5.00
Progressivism	51	4.85	0.17	4.31	5.00
Reconstructionism	51	4.72	0.33	3.78	5.00



**Graph 3** The participant opinions at the end of the term

**Table 5** The content analysis results in the benefits of story-writing assignments

Themes	Codes	Frequency
Effects on the learning process	Reinforcement/permanent learning	15
	Learning to research	4
	Learning the project logic	1
Effects on skills	Better imagination	11
	Higher creativity	11
	Better writing/expressive skills	7
	Better collaborative work skills	5
	Understanding the challenges of writing a story	4
Effects on the philosophy of education	Better philosophical thinking skills	3
	Learning that educational philosophies have correspondence with real life	2
Affective effects	Being happy to create a story	6
	Higher self-confidence	1

found that story-writing assignments- that is, creating something- increased happiness and self-confidence. The word cloud related to benefits is shown in Fig. 2, in which permanent learning, creativity, imagination, and writing skills are exceptional experiences.

## Discussion and Conclusion

The philosophy of education deals with abstract and theoretical ideas, which may result in student prejudice against this course (Yazıcı and Seçkin 2010). Studies show that about a quarter of individual learning differences stem from affective characteristics. For instance, bias is an affective characteristic, and many biased students find the course challenging, feel concerned about it and experience negative attitudes and behaviors (Bloom and Black 1979). In this study, the teacher candidates' initial predictions and prejudices that the course would not be fun were the main reason for conducting action research. In this study, teacher candidates' initial prediction that the philosophy of education course would not be fun was the main reason for the action research. When we sought the participants' opinions to design a compelling philosophy of education course, they preferred to experience story-writing and collaborative work. Therefore, they were asked to write stories about educational philosophies through group work, and the whole process was evaluated at the end of the term.

The end-of-the-term assessments underlined the popularity of progressivism and reconstructionism philosophies. Similarly, in their studies on teacher candidates' educational beliefs, Minor et al. (2002), and Silvernail (1992) concluded that they mostly adopted a progressive approach. While there was a moderate tendency toward perennialism, considered traditional, essentialism remained at a low level. There are similar studies on contemporary and traditional educational philosophies (e.g., Yazon and Ang-Manaig 2019; Brady 2019; Minor et al. (2002); Fries 2012; Bonner and Chen 2009). In this study, the participant teacher candidates were more successful in writing stories about contemporary education philosophy than the traditional ones, albeit slightly different. It may be because they better understand their favorite educational philosophies or topics they are interested in, and they can easily give examples from their experiences (Graves 1983; Garzotto 2014; McDowell 2018). They write about the topics that they can convey their experiences comfortably, which contributes to improving writing skills (Chaney 2011; Dilidüzgün 2013).

At the end of the term, teacher candidates were asked to evaluate the course. Accordingly, it was understood that story-writing was considerably effective in learning the philosophy of education. Storytelling/writing in teaching is an effective, meaningful, and supportive way of learning (Yasar-Akyar et al. 2022), and it is also a method the brain prefers to keep the plot in mind and share it (Shankar et al. 2001). McEwan and Egan (1995, p. 202) emphasized that stories with a purpose also influence learners' academic success and learning. The majority recommended using story-writing assignments in the philosophy of education course. Despite the positive contributions of story-writing, the participants indicated that creating a story is also challenging.

Teacher candidates stated that story-writing contributed to their learning of educational philosophies, especially to permanent learning. Teaching through stories is preferred in various areas and levels of education (Savage and Svage 1993; Caminotti and Gray 2012) because it is more than just entertainment; it is a powerful learning and teaching tool that everyone loves (Hearne et al. 1998, p. 5). It also helps learners be responsible for their learning (Hein 1991). Similar studies concluded that teaching through stories was effective in permanent learning (Rowcliffe 2004; Fernandes 2012; Jordan 1992) observed that story-based teaching helped



students develop positive attitudes and behaviors towards lessons. Teaching through stories supports meaningful learning by allowing students to increase motivation, develop imagination, solve problems, and reflect on and interpret from different perspectives (Klassen 2009; Kohnen et al. 2019). Similarly, this study proved that teaching through stories improved many skills such as imagination, creativity, group work, and creative writing.

It was observed that the use of story-writing in the philosophy of education course was effective in permanent learning, imagination, creativity, group work, and expressive writing. The participants were partially more successful in writing the stories on their favorite contemporary educational philosophies. Thus, it can be inferred that story-writing in teacher training can be compelling in delivering courses that are less fun and rather theoretical or abstract concepts.

**Data Availability** A part of dataset generated during the current study are available in the attach files [external item] repository, (<https://docs.google.com/forms/d/1sKtaxcy5Xh-UsNlytW15jyamKMmcAbB-yaay8A6rB7M/edit#responses>).

A part of dataset generated during the current study are available in the attach files [external item] repository, (<https://www.mentimeter.com/app/presentation/a60ea6989d229d0831cb8894789273ee/7be7d0beb23f/edit>).

## Declarations

**Conflict of Interest** No authors have a conflict of interest for this research.

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