**BOĞAZİÇİ UNIVERSITY JOURNAL OF EDUCATION**
2026, Vol. 43-5, Article e26003
https://doi.org/10.52597/buje.1750806

# Discursive Construction of Teacher Identity: A Critical Analysis of the National Education Academy in Türkiye

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**Abstract**

*This study critically explores how teacher identity is discursively constructed in the policy framework of Türkiye's newly established National Education Academy. To this end, the new Teaching Profession Law, the Regulation on the Presidency of the National Education Academy, and the National Education Academy Website have been analysed, employing the tools of Fairclough's (2013) and van Dijk's (1980) critical discourse analysis approaches. Findings reveal that teacher identity is shaped by a dual discourse. While a moral-cultural discourse portrays teachers as carriers of national values, cultural heritage, and moral responsibility, a managerial narrative emphasizes compliance, credentialism, and performance monitoring. This hybrid framing aligns with broader conservative-nationalist and neoliberal ideologies, presenting teachers as both cultural transmitters and state-managed professionals.*

*Key Words: Teacher identity, critical ,discourse analysis, teacher education, education policy, National Education Academy*

**Article Info**

Received: 25.07.2025
Revised: 23.12.2025
Accepted: 24.12.2025
Published Online: 29.06.2026

**Article Type**

Research Article

## Introduction

The past several decades have seen a growing international attention to the preparation, recruitment, and retention of teachers, although teacher education was largely overlooked in educational policy across most countries until the 1980s (Furlong, 2013; Furlong et al., 2013). A key factor behind this renewed focus is the dramatic changes and challenges brought about by globalisation and the rise of neoliberalism. As Zhao (2010) argues, globalisation has reshaped the demands placed on education systems, requiring teacher preparation programs to equip educators with the tools to develop globally competent students, capable of adapting to rapid social and economic change. In parallel, the rise of neoliberal policy agendas, which increasingly link education to economic prosperity and global competitiveness, has driven a significant shift towards the marketisation of education, including teacher education policies (Abbott et al., 2019).

These neoliberal global forces have led to concrete reform movements in teacher education across various national contexts. As Wang et al. (2011) note, such reforms tend to follow two broad trajectories: one emphasizing standardized preparation for global economic competitiveness, and another promoting critical commitments to democracy and social justice, with policy trends largely favouring the former. Reflecting this policy dominance, Menter and Flores (2021) and later Menter (2024) identify several interconnected reform trends in teacher education: greater integration of theory and practice, the introduction of teacher competence frameworks, stronger connections between pre-service and in-service education, increased influence of transnational organisations on national policy, and heightened attention to the social status and working conditions of teachers. In parallel, neoliberal reforms in teacher education framed university-based programs as outdated and inefficient, promoting professionalization and deregulation through standardized curricula, assessment schemes,

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To cite: Oral Saribaş, Y., & Etuş, Ö. (2026). Discursive construction of teacher identity: A critical analysis of the National Education Academy in Türkiye. *Boğaziçi University Journal of Education, 43-5,* Article e26003. https://doi.org/10.52597/buje.1750806

and teaching standards, while reducing the role and responsibility of universities in teacher preparation (Güven, 2022).

Collectively, these developments have resulted in sustained government control and intervention over the purpose, content, and delivery of teacher education worldwide, alongside a significant decline in the institutional autonomy of universities that provide teacher education (Furlong, 2013). Since the late 20th century, these global trends have shaped the national policy directions for teacher education worldwide (for comparative examples, see Akiba, 2013; Darling-Hammond & Lieberman, 2013; Murray et al., 2019). Türkiye represents a compelling case in this regard. National reforms in teacher education have evolved significantly since the 1980s, particularly following the transfer of Initial Teacher Education (ITE) to universities through the establishment of Faculties of Education in 1982. Most recently, the Ministry of National Education (MoNE) has introduced the National Education Academy (NEA), marking the beginning of a new era in teacher education.

This policy initiative is significant not only because it redefines the teaching profession in terms of the required standards, qualifications, roles, and responsibilities, but also because it restructures teacher preparation, professional practice, and ongoing development. Yet the impact of such reforms extends beyond structural reorganization. Policy reforms also operate discursively, as they emerge from complex negotiations and contestations that are constructed to a large extent within language and discourses (Goodwin, 2010). Through these discourses, policies construct subjectivities and position individuals in specific roles (Ball, 1993). In this view, policies play a crucial role in determining what counts as being a 'good' or 'effective' teacher, what learning looks like, and how a 'good' lesson should be recognised (Ball, 2015). These discursive constructions are deeply implicated in identity formation, which occurs at the intersection of the individual and the social (Clarke, 2009).

Situating NEA within this broader context, this paper critically explores the discursive construction of teacher identity in its policy documents. To this end, it first provides a historical overview of ITE policies and reforms in Türkiye, with particular focus on developments since 1982. This is followed by a presentation of the methodology, outlining the data sources and analytical procedures employed. The findings section then examines the discursive strategies and thematic patterns through which NEA constructs teacher identity, offering a critical interpretation of their underlying ideological assumptions. The paper concludes by discussing the implications of these findings for teacher education policy and the professional identity of teachers in Türkiye.

## An Overview of Initial Teacher Education Policies and Reforms in Türkiye

Teacher education policies and practices in Türkiye since the foundation of the Republic can be divided into two periods: the period between 1923 and 1982, and 1982 onwards (Erdem et al, 2019). This paper focuses on the second period to set the stage for the introduction of NEA. The year 1982 marked a significant turning point in ITE, as the enactment of the Council of Higher Education Council (CoHE) ation across the country (Nergis, 2011). Since then, ITE has been provided by the Faculties of Education at the level of higher education, following the concurrent model that combines general, theoretical, and practical training (Kilimci, 2009). In addition to the restructuring of initial ITE in 1998 and 2006, Türkiye also undertook major curriculum reforms, first in 2004 and then in 2007 (Yiğit, 2012). Table 1 below presents a timeline of the major reforms in ITE in Türkiye since 1982.

**Table 1**

*Timeline of Major Reforms in ITE in Türkiye*

| Year/Period | Reform | Main Features |
|---|---|---|
| 1982 | CoHE Reform – University Integration | Teacher education transferred to universities; Faculties of Education established; centralization under CoHE. |
| 1997–1998 | National Education Development Project (NEDP) | World Bank-supported reform: updated curriculum, emphasized practicum and methodologies; attempted standardization. |
| 2001-2015 | Bologna Process Reforms | Signed Bologna Declaration; European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS) and Diploma Supplement adopted; Erasmus/Socrates mobility programs initiated; Commission for Academic Assessment and Quality Improvement (YÖDEK) was established for Quality Assurance and Accreditation. |

| Year/Period | Reform | Main Features |
|---|---|---|
| 2006 | ITE Curriculum Reform | Increased focus on general culture and elective courses; reduced practicum; 25% flexibility granted to faculties. |
| 2006-2017 | Launch and Implementation of NQF-HETR | National Qualifications Framework for Higher Education (NQF-HETR), which defined level-based learning outcomes across all higher education programs in alignment with the European Qualifications Framework (EQF), introduced. ITE programs were required to align curricula, outcomes, and assessments with these standards. |
| 2018 | ITE Curriculum Reform | Rebalanced curriculum with ~45–50% content knowledge, 30–35% pedagogy, 15–20% general culture; split practicum into two terms. |
| 2020 | Autonomy Reform | CoHE delegated curriculum development authority to education faculties. |

As shown in Table 1, the first comprehensive restructuring of the teacher education system was initiated in 1997 via NEDP supported by the World Bank (Grossman et al., 2010). This sought to align teacher education with the newly introduced eight-year compulsory education system, revise curricula to place greater emphasis on teacher competencies and practice-based courses, and introduce minor programs to expand preservice teachers' qualifications (Ulubey & Başaran, 2019). Teacher education programs were revised again in 2006, embedding professional knowledge courses into curricula, increasing the share of general culture courses, granting education faculties flexibility to design a quarter of their courses, and redistributing program content across content knowledge, pedagogical content knowledge, and general culture to align with European Union teacher training programs (Ulubey & Başaran, 2019).

Alongside these structural and curricular reforms, Bologna Process reforms have also significantly shaped ITE in Türkiye by aligning its structure and standards with the broader European Higher Education Area. Since joining the Process in 2001, Türkiye has adopted the European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS) and the Diploma Supplement, established quality assurance structures, and developed the National Qualifications Framework for Higher Education in line with the European Qualifications Framework (CoHE, 2003; 2009). By 2015, these reforms had consolidated around outcome-based curricula, quality assurance, mobility, and lifelong learning, thereby embedding ITE within a Europeanized higher education framework (CoHE, 2015).

Building on these developments, teacher competencies became a central focus of national teacher education policy. The General Competencies for the Teaching Profession, first published in 2006, provided a detailed framework for teacher education (Tosuntaş, 2020). This process was reinforced in 2015 with the adoption of the Turkish Qualifications Framework, aligned with EQF, and further advanced in 2017 when the competencies were comprehensively revised to create a more integrated and holistic framework (Tosuntaş, 2020).

In line with this updating of the General Competencies and the European Commission's recommendations for core ITE programs, including a minimum of 25% elective courses, a further reform was initiated in 2018 (Tican-Başaran et al., 2022). This reform placed renewed emphasis on content knowledge and pedagogical content knowledge, with the purpose of strengthening the professional preparation of preservice teachers (Ulubey & Başaran, 2019) and aligning the programs with the developments in the national K-12 curricula and educational sciences (CoHE, 2018). Finally, the latest reform delegated the authority to develop and update of ITE programs to the faculties of education themselves, in accordance with the published competencies by official institutions (Tican-Başaran et al., 2022).

The recent establishment of NEA by MoNE marks another significant milestone in the evolution of teacher education in Türkiye. Until now, ITE was under the sole authority of universities, provided by the Faculties of Education and regulated by CoHE since 1982. With the enactment of the Teaching Profession Law, NEA has been formally established under MoNE, and tasked with the organisation, delivery, and evaluation of preparatory training for teacher candidates. Thus, the university-based model of ITE will now be complemented by MoNE. According to the law, teacher candidates must complete this training at NEA prior to appointment (teaching Profession Law, 2024). Under the new system, admission to NEA's preparatory training will be determined by the results of the Academy Entrance Exam (MEB-AGS), which was administered for the first time in July 2025

(MoNE, 2024). Upon the completion of university-based ITE, prospective teachers will thus receive NEA's preparatory training consisting of approximately 550 hours (Ajans Kamu, 2024).

This development signals a notable shift from a higher education-led model to a more state-controlled, dual-structured system that expands MoNE's authority over teacher preparation. MoNE, Yusuf Tekin, justifies this new policy initiative on the grounds that while universities offer academic instruction, NEA will provide more intensive, practice-oriented training to better prepare teacher candidates for the profession (Hürriyet, 2024). He also underscores that Turkish education faculties currently offer only around 96 hours of practicum, whereas teacher candidates in countries such as France, Belgium, and Italy undergo between 160 and 550 hours of practice before entering the profession (NTV, 2024). Moreover, he argues that "there are almost no countries where teachers are appointed directly after earning a bachelor's degree" (Kırman, 2024).

These justifications reflect an appeal to international standards and national capacity gaps, framing NEA as a way to enhance practice-based training and raise professional standards. Yet they also construct a particular narrative of insufficiency surrounding university-based teacher education in Türkiye, which functions discursively to legitimise the increasing centralisation of teacher education under state authority. While this official framing emphasizes enhanced practical preparation, it also raises important questions about the broader implications of shifting authority away from universities. These include the erosion of institutional autonomy of universities, the redistribution of responsibility between higher education and the state, and the ways in which teacher professionalism may be redefined through this emerging policy framework. Crucially, such shifts are not only structural but also discursive, shaping how the teaching profession and teacher identity itself are constructed within policy narratives.

Given that these structural and discursive shifts position NEA as a key policy actor in shaping official meanings of teacher identity, this study investigates what meanings are produced and how they are discursively constructed in its key policy texts. Acknowledging the inherently discursive nature of educational policymaking (Thomas, 2005), it seeks to deepen our understanding of how these official discourses operate within the evolving landscape of teacher education in Türkiye. Furthermore, the Teaching Profession Law, which regulates the establishment and duties of NEA, was only recently published in October 2024 (Teaching Profession Law, 2024), with the Academy formally established on January 1, 2025. Although it became operational on September 1, 2025, the training has not yet begun. Thus, research on this topic remains extremely limited, except for a few policy commentaries and preliminary analyses (Karataş, 2024, 2025; Polat, 2024). Likewise, most studies on teacher identity in the Turkish context focus on the construction of professional identity from the perspective of teachers, particularly pre-service teachers, and rely primarily on interviews as the main data collection tool (Görkaş Kayabaşı & Koç, 2024). By focusing on the discursive dimensions of state policy, this study offers a novel perspective on teacher identity construction in Türkiye, one that complements and extends existing teacher-centered research.

## Method

### Research Design

This study is situated within a qualitative research design, drawing specifically from the field of Critical Discourse Studies (CDS) as its analytical and interpretive foundation. CDS, also known as Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), is an inter/multi-disciplinary approach to language in use that seeks to understand the complex workings of language within society (Forchtner & Wodak, 2017). It conceptualizes discourse as "socially constitutive as well as socially shaped" (Fairclough et al., 2011, p.358), meaning that discourse both reflects and constructs social realities. CDS investigates society through discourse, analysing language in its historical, socio-political and cultural contexts (Flowerdew & Richardson, 2017). What makes CDS critical lies in its commitment to social problems rooted in unequal distributions of power and access, with the explicit aim of challenging social inequality (Flowerdew & Richardson, 2017; Forchtner & Wodak, 2017; van Dijk, 2017).

CDS is not merely a set of analytical tools but a critical stance within the discipline of Discourse Studies that combines critical analysis, theory, and applications (van Dijk, 2015). Rather than constituting a single theory or one specific method, CDS encompasses a variety of approaches that draw on various theoretical backgrounds, linguistic theories, and different types of data, often employing distinctive yet overlapping analytical methods (Flowerdew & Richardson, 2017; Wodak & Meyer, 2015). While these approaches cannot be regarded as theories in their own right, neither can they be reduced purely to methodological frameworks (Forchtner & Wodak, 2017).

While the central concepts of discourse, critique, ideology, and power are constitutive of every approach in CDS, their interpretation and operationalization vary (Reisigl & Wodak, 2015). Accordingly, CDS research typically begins not with a fixed methodology, but with a social problem and a corresponding research topic and question (Bloor & Bloor, 2013). The choice of methods and analytical tools is shaped by the nature of the topic itself, resulting in a diversity of approaches to CDA research (Fairclough et al., 2011). These include, among others, the Discourse-Historical Approach, Sociocognitive Approach, Cognitive Linguistic Approach, Dialectical-Relational Approach, Multimodal CDA, and Corpus-based CDA (Flowerdew & Richardson, 2017; Wodak & Meyer, 2015).

Aligned with this topic-driven and problem-oriented nature of CDS research, this study adopts a framework suited to its focus on the discursive construction of teacher identity in the policy discourse of NEA. Specifically, it combines Fairclough's (2013) dialectical-relational approach with van Dijk's (1980) Macro-Structure Analysis. Fairclough's (2013) three-dimensional framework conceptualizes discourse as operating at three interrelated levels: the textual (linguistic features and organization), the discursive practice (processes of production, distribution, and interpretation), and the social practice (broader socio-political structures and institutional contexts). This approach foregrounds how language both reflects and (re)produces power relations (Fairclough, 2013), making it particularly suitable for analysing policy texts that construct and regulate professional norms and standards.

van Dijk's (1980) Macro-Structure Analysis complements Fairclough's (2013) approach by focusing on the thematic and organizational structure of discourse. It distinguishes between macrostructures (overall topics and meanings), superstructures (schematic organization of the text), and microstructures (lexical, syntactic, and rhetorical strategies), enabling the identification of predominant themes and ideological patterns in discourses (van Dijk, 1980). This layered model enables the analysis of dominant ideas and ideological patterns embedded within discourse (van Dijk, 1980).

These two CDS approaches, when used together, provide a comprehensive analytical lens, capturing both the micro-level textual features and macro-level ideological functions of policy discourse. CDS is particularly suitable for policy analysis, given that discourse is "always simultaneously constitutive of (i) social identities, (ii) social relations and (iii) systems of knowledge and belief" (Fairclough, 2013, p.92). As Fairclough et al. (2011) note, "discourse constitutes situations, objects of knowledge, and the social identities of and relationships between people and groups of people" (p.358). In a dialectical understanding of discourse, particular configurations of the social world such as hierarchies, exclusions, or dominant ideologies are embedded in linguistic conceptualizations. "In language, we do not simply name things but conceptualize things," meaning that discursive practices can produce and reproduce unequal power relations by shaping the way people, practices, and institutions are represented and positioned (Fairclough et al., 2011, p. 358).

This has particular relevance for educational policy discourse, which not only regulates institutional practices but also constructs the public images of teaching professionals. In this context, teacher identity is both a discursive and ideological concept. Rather than a fixed or inherent quality, identity is "a discursive construction" (Johnson, 2006, p. 213), "co-constructed through language and other semiotic resources" (Zotzmann & O'Regan, 2016, p. 2). These discourse-based approaches also emphasize that teacher identity is constructed both internally by the individual and externally through social structures such as the regulatory educational authorities, individual schools and working cultures (Barkhuizen, 2016; Morake, 2020). It encompasses both the attributes that teachers ascribe to themselves, and the attributes assigned to the teaching profession by external sources (Alsup, 2004). Therefore, as Clark (2013, p. 19) aptly notes, "as much attention needs to be paid to the ways in which identities, and particularly social identities, are ascribed and constructed by others as well as by ourselves within specific social and cultural contexts."

**Data Sources**

The dataset for this study comprises three primary documents that represent the official discourse shaping the teaching profession and the institutional framework of the newly established NEA in Türkiye. These documents are: (1) the Teaching Profession Law (No. 7528), published in the Official Gazette on October 18, 2024; (2) the Regulation on the Presidency of the National Education Academy, published in the Official Gazette on March 19, 2025; and (3) selected content from the official website of the National Education Academy. These texts were purposefully selected based on their institutional authority, legal and policy relevance, and their discursive function in defining the professional norms, standards, and expectations associated with the teaching profession.

These documents vary not only in genre but also in length and communicative function, as shown in Table 2. The Teaching Profession Law provides the formal legal framework for teacher professionalism and the institutionalisation of NEA, while The Regulation on the Presidency of NEA details the Academy's organisational structure, duties, roles, and working principles, offering insight into how teacher preparation is structured and governed at the institutional level. The selected content from NEA website, though limited in scope, is highly discursive and symbolic, projecting the institution's public image and core values.

**Table 2**

*Documents Included in the Dataset*

| Document | Genre | Word Count |
|---|---|---|
| Teaching Profession Law | Legal Text | 7686 |
| Regulation on the Presidency of the National Education Academy | Legal-Administrative Text | 3800 |
| National Education Academy Website | Institutional Communication | 267 |

Together, these documents constitute the key policy instruments through which NEA is constructed and legitimized within national discourse. They not only prescribe regulatory and procedural frameworks but also contribute to the discursive construction of teacher identity by articulating the values, competencies, and roles expected of teachers in this restructured system. Their analysis thus directly serves to explore how teacher identity is shaped within and through policy discourse in the context of Türkiye's recent teacher education reform.

The first policy document analysed in this study is the Teaching Profession Law. The introductory four articles of the law define the scope, principles, and aims. The next two articles in the second section describe the rights, duties, and responsibilities of teachers. The third section, comprising twelve articles, focuses on teacher qualifications, selection, preparatory training, appointment to teaching, and relocation. This is followed by another section addressing professional development, career progression, and administrator appointments. The fifth section covers reward and disciplinary measures, while the sixth section regulates the establishment, duties, and organization of NEA. The final section concerns the protection of education personnel from violence as well as the amended and repealed provisions. As a legal text, the law is inherently prescriptive and formal in tone, but it also constructs normative roles, values, and professional identities through specific linguistic and discursive choices.

The second policy document is the Regulation on the Presidency of NEA. This legal-administrative text outlines the institutional structure, governance model, working procedures, and functional responsibilities of NEA. It defines the duties of the President, the Academic Council, and various directorates within the Academy, while also detailing the operational frameworks for teacher training, career development, digital content production, and institutional partnerships. Although highly procedural and technical in tone, the Regulation plays a significant discursive role by codifying the bureaucratic logic of teacher training, specifying the hierarchical relationships among actors, and reinforcing a compliance-based professional identity. In this sense, the Regulation extends the ideological framework of the Teaching Profession Law, embedding it within a detailed institutional apparatus.

The third source is the official website of NAE. The analysis focused on four sections from the website: "The Importance of Teacher Academies," "History of the Academy," "Founding Objectives," and the "Vision and Mission Statement." Rather than analysing all available content, the selection focused on sections that explicitly articulate the institutional vision, values, and assumptions about the teaching profession and thus directly relate to the discursive construction of teacher identity. Informative or procedural content lacking such discursive features was excluded to maintain analytical focus. As publicly oriented institutional texts, these website materials aim to communicate the Academy's mission, values, and rationale to a broader audience, using a more accessible and often promotional tone. They offer insight into how NEA discursively positions itself and frames the identity and role of future teachers.

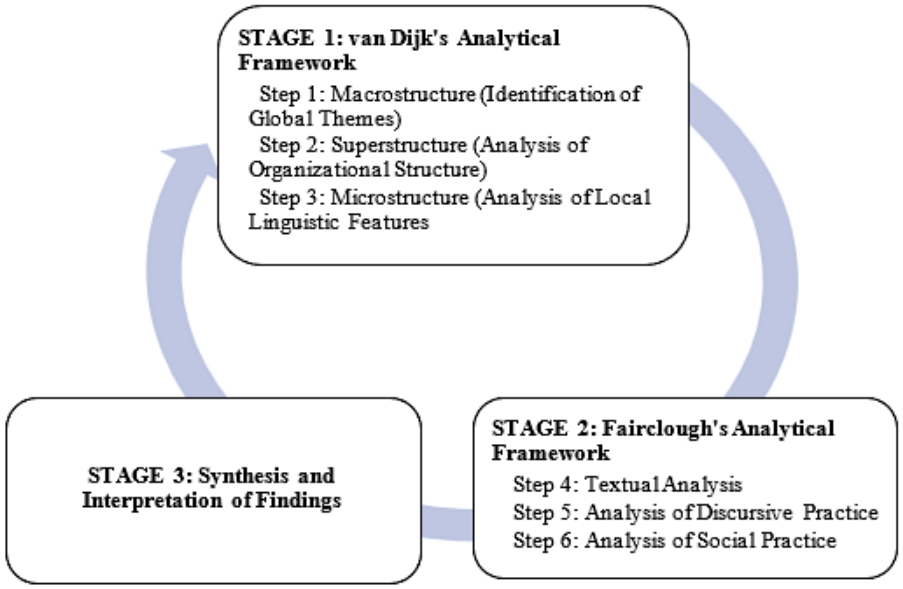
## Data Analysis

By drawing on the complementary strengths of van Dijk's (1980) and Fairclough's (2013) approaches, this study adopted a three-stage analytical process. The purpose was to examine how the linguistic and structural features of

discourse contribute to the ideological construction of teacher identity in official NEA policy texts. The analysis proceeded from structural mapping to socio-ideological interpretation. As illustrated in Figure 1, the analysis was both sequential and cyclical, allowing for interpretive movement between textual features, discursive positioning, and broader socio-political context. The analytical process was iterative and recursive rather than rigidly linear, involving a continuous return to the texts as new insights emerged across stages.

**Figure 1**

*Data Analysis Process*




Stage 1 began with the application of van Dijk's framework, which enabled a systematic mapping of discourse structure. In Step 1 (Macrostructure), each document was analysed for its overarching themes, global meanings, and the discursive purpose that oriented the text as a whole. This macro-level semantic reading surfaced the dominant narratives and ideological framings underpinning the discursive construction of teacher identity. In Step 2 (Superstructure), the focus shifted to the schematic organisation of the texts. This involved examining how content was ordered, what types of information were prioritised or backgrounded, and how the narrative logic of each was constructed. Step 3 (Microstructure) involved a detailed linguistic analysis at the local level. Here, close attention was paid to vocabulary choices, syntactic patterns, modality, and rhetorical strategies that contribute to meaning-making. The microstructure analysis was particularly useful for identifying how normative values were encoded in seemingly technical or neutral language, thereby uncovering how ideological meanings are embedded in linguistic form.

Following the structural and linguistic mapping, Stage 2 proceeded with Fairclough's three-dimensional approach to deepen the interpretive reach of the analysis. In Step 4 (Textual Analysis), lexical and grammatical patterns were revisited with a critical eye to examine how they foregrounded certain subject positions while backgrounding others. Particular attention was paid to collocations, passive constructions, and lexical metaphors that shaped how teachers and teaching were framed and represented. Step 5 (Discursive Practice) focused on intertextuality and interdiscursivity, tracing how policy texts echoed or appropriated other discourses, including international standards, previous national reforms, or neoliberal logics. This level of analysis revealed how identity constructions are embedded in institutional histories and policy dialogues. In Step 6 (Social Practice), the texts were situated within broader socio-political and ideological contexts. This included examining how the policy discourse aligns with state-led educational restructuring in Türkiye, the centralisation of authority under MoNE, and the global circulation of teacher quality and accountability discourses. This stage enabled a critical reading of how power operates through discourse to shape both institutional realities and professional subjectivities.

Finally, in Stage 3, the findings from both van Dijk's and Fairclough's frameworks were synthesized to develop an integrated, critical interpretation of how teacher identity is discursively constructed in NEA policy texts. This final stage was not an act of simple integration of results, but a deliberate interpretive strategy that connected the patterns identified at the textual and structural levels. Through this synthesis, it became possible to

identify recurring discursive strategies that cut across the legal, administrative, and promotional texts. The recursive, cyclical design of the analysis allowed for a dialogic engagement with the data, where interpretations were constantly refined through movement between levels of analysis. In doing so, the study foregrounds how official discourse functions not merely as a reflection of policy but as a constitutive force that shapes what it means to be a teacher in contemporary Türkiye.

## Findings

### The Teaching Profession Law as a Regulatory Framework for Constructing Teacher Identity

The Teaching Profession Law establishes a comprehensive legal, administrative, and professional framework for the teaching profession in Türkiye. Its primary function is regulatory: it codifies teachers' rights, duties, recruitment, career progression, and disciplinary processes, while also defining the structure and function of NEA. This legal framing follows a conventional legislative format, with sections and articles organized thematically and hierarchically, reflecting a superstructure designed for institutional clarity and enforceability. At the microstructural level, the law employs formal legal discourse, characterized by modal verbs of obligation (e.g., “must” and “is required”), passive constructions (e.g., “shall be applied”), and technical terminology, emphasizing the state’s authority in establishing professional norms and expectations. Although the tone remains impersonal and objective, occasional references to national values, particularly Atatürk’s principles, introduce a symbolic and ideological layer to the construction of professional identity. Table 3 summarizes these findings:

**Table 3**

*Findings from the Analysis of the Teaching Profession Law*

| Level | Findings |
|---|---|
| Macrostructure | This law outlines the fundamental rules and framework for the teaching profession. It emphasizes turning teaching into a recognized and professional career, while also ensuring teachers’ rights, responsibilities, and career development are well-defined and supported. |
| Superstructure | The document follows a clear, legal-style structure. It is divided into sections such as “Rights and Responsibilities”, “Professional Development”, and “Rewards and Discipline”, each supported by numbered articles. The arrangement moves logically from the law’s purpose and scope to more specific details, such as teacher selection and career progression. |
| Microstructure | The language is formal and precise, as expected in legal texts. Words such as “shall” and “provisions” are common, and long, detailed sentences are used to ensure clarity and avoid ambiguity. Key terms such as “teacher,” “contracted teacher,” and “Academy” are repeated consistently to reinforce legal definitions. While the text maintains an objective and impersonal tone, occasional references to national values, such as Atatürk’s principles, serve to reinforce the law’s ideological alignment and state authority. |

However, the law not only regulates but also constructs a highly stratified vision of teacher identity that merges national, moral, and managerial imperatives through its discursive choices. The macro-level propositions frame teachers as "virtuous” professionals, who “embrace, preserve, and promote the national, moral, human, spiritual, and cultural values of the Turkish Nation”, and “love their family, homeland, and nation, and always strive to elevate them”. This particular discourse portrays teachers as agents of cultural continuity and patriotic devotion. The moral and national responsibility attributed to teachers is particularly telling because it is not merely symbolic but legally codified as part of the profession.

The teacher roles and responsibilities introduced within the law are also revealing. It extends the teacher’s remit beyond classroom instruction, and frames teachers as multifunctional and multitasking professionals who are expected to take on a wide range of organizational, instructional, and collaborative responsibilities. They include participation in committees, ceremonies and clubs, collaboration with colleagues, and engagement in ongoing professional development. Such descriptions present teachers as institutional functionaries, embedded in and accountable to the bureaucratic life of the school. This broad functional framing aligns with a managerialist discourse which views teachers as operational agents within a highly structured, state-managed educational apparatus. It constructs a professional identity rooted less in pedagogical autonomy and more in institutional compliance.

The law's emphasis on standardization through centralized training, credentialed career progression, and service-based performance metrics reinforces this vision of identity. The hierarchical progression from teacher to expert teacher and then head teacher reflects a credentialist logic, where professionalism is measured by advancement within a bureaucratic hierarchy. Disciplinary provisions introduced within the law further entrench this understanding of teacher professionalism by institutionalizing mechanisms of surveillance and reinforcing the construction of a tightly regulated professional identity.

In sum, the Teaching Profession Law constructs teacher identity as a moral-national servant of the state, situated within a hierarchical and compliance-based framework. It sets out the normative and legal foundations that underpin the broader governance of teacher professionalism. This framework is further formalised in the Regulation on the Presidency of the National Education Academy, which translates these ideals into institutional structures and administrative procedures.

**The Regulation on the Presidency of the National Education Academy as an Administrative Framework for Institutionalizing Teacher Professionalism**

Where the Teaching Profession Law codifies the ideological and legal foundations of teacher professionalism, the Regulation on the Presidency of NEA functions as an administrative framework that institutionalizes these ideals through concrete structures and procedures. Prepared based on Article 32 of the Teaching Profession Law, the regulation defines the Academy's internal governance, working mechanisms, and the roles and responsibilities of all relevant actors. Its primary function is regulatory and procedural, but its discursive function is no less significant. The regulation constructs a particular institutional ethos, embedding bureaucratic authority, managerial professionalism, and national loyalty within the operational framework of NEA. As such, it offers critical insight into how the teacher identity introduced in the Teaching Profession Law is institutionally instantiated, monitored, and reproduced.

At the macrostructural level, the regulation frames NEA as a highly centralised and multi-layered bureaucratic organisation. It constructs a detailed institutional narrative centered on efficiency, procedural compliance, and competency-based professionalism, while reinforcing the cultural and ideological imperatives outlined in the Law. The document identifies NEA's purpose as "preparing and implementing training programmes for teacher candidates" and "supporting career development and the acquisition of necessary competencies for teachers, administrators, and other personnel" (Article 5). These statements position NEA not merely as a training provider, but as the authoritative mechanism for regulating the teacher preparation and appointment process, from pre-service preparation to in-service development and leadership. Prospective teachers are formally defined as "teacher candidates" enrolled in a "preparatory training programme" (Articles 4 and 14), signifying a discursive shift that institutionalises NEA as an obligatory intermediary between university education and public appointment.

Super structurally, the regulation is divided into five major sections and over twenty articles, following a tightly controlled legal-administrative format. It opens with standard provisions including the aim, scope, legal basis, and definitions, and then details NEA's organisational structure, functional responsibilities, decision-making processes, and internal units. This design foregrounds procedural rationality and a rigid institutional hierarchy. NEA is composed of a President, an Academic Council, and nine directorates. These service units are outlined in Articles 11–20 and collectively support the Academy's operational logic. Their responsibilities range from delivering preparatory and professional development programmes to managing assessments, producing digital content, coordinating implementation, and aligning training with strategic goals. The structural mapping of responsibility and authority across these units reinforces a highly compartmentalised and vertically integrated institutional logic. For example, the Directorate of Preparatory Training is responsible for designing and coordinating the pre-service programme, while the Directorate of Professional Development oversees in-service training. The Directorate of Professional Competencies and Quality Enhancement defines the standards expected at different career stages, and the Directorate of Measurement and Evaluation develops tools to assess progress within the training process. Assigned specific mandates, each unit plays a formative role in shaping the professional trajectory and identity of prospective teachers.

At the microstructural level, the regulation uses highly formalised administrative language, incorporating modal verbs of obligation (e.g. "is responsible for preparing and implementing"), nominalisations (e.g. "area of responsibility" "determination of competencies"), and recursive clauses typical of bureaucratic legal discourse. Despite its procedural tone, the regulation embeds a range of value-laden expressions that reflect and reproduce the ideological agenda underpinning the Teaching Profession Law. Teachers are expected to acquire "the

knowledge, skills, attitudes, and values required by the teaching profession," including "digital competencies" (Article 5/d), suggesting a hybrid construction of the ideal teacher as both technologically proficient and ethically grounded. Moreover, the President's mandate includes ensuring alignment with "the Constitution, laws, Presidential decrees, development plans, and upper policy documents" (Article 6), situating NEA within the strategic governance framework of the state. Table 4 summarizes these findings:

**Table 4**

*Findings from the Analysis of the Regulation on the Presidency of NEA*

| Level | Findings |
|---|---|
| Macrostructure | The Regulation frames NEA as the institutional mechanism for preparing, regulating, and supervising prospective teachers. It also establishes teacher education as a state-controlled, competency-based process that continues beyond university training, while reinforcing the state's ideological and strategic role in shaping teacher professionalism. |
| Superstructure | It follows a rigid legal-administrative format. Organised into hierarchical articles detailing the duties of the President, Academic Council, and various directorates, it emphasises procedural order, institutional hierarchy, and role differentiation. |
| Microstructure | It employs formal bureaucratic language, nominalisations, and obligation-driven syntax. While encoding ideological assumptions through competence frameworks (e.g., moral values, digital literacy), it embeds surveillance, accountability, and credentialism as normalised practices within teacher preparation. It also incorporates subtle appeals to strategic state goals. For instance, the President is tasked with managing the Academy "in line with the Constitution, laws, Presidential decrees, development plans, strategic plans, and other upper policy documents" (Article 6) |

A notable discursive feature is the regulation's emphasis on monitoring and standardisation as tools of professional formation. The Directorate of Preparatory Training is tasked not only with coordinating the training of prospective teachers but also overseeing processes such as "attendance, assessment and evaluation, practical training, and disciplinary procedures" (Article 14). These provisions construct prospective teachers as institutional subjects whose professional readiness is contingent upon compliance with a tightly monitored and centrally prescribed framework. Similarly, the Academic Council plays a decisive role in establishing training standards, evaluating appeals, and approving institutional programmes (Article 7), thereby reinforcing NEA's function as the gatekeeper of professional legitimacy. This institutional framing redefines teacher identity in terms of hierarchical progression and externally validated qualification.

The inclusion of directorates focused on digital content, coordination logistics, administrative operations, and strategic planning illustrates how the training of prospective teachers is embedded within broader systems of governance and policy alignment. While the regulation lacks the aspirational tone and promotional strategies evident on NEA's public website, it nonetheless incorporates subtle appeals to national heritage and strategic state goals. The Directorate of Educational Heritage and Museums, for example, is tasked with documenting the history of Turkish education and preparing biographies of teachers who are presented as sources of professional inspiration (Article 20). These provisions frame teaching not only as a professional duty but also as a vocation rooted in national memory and public service.

In sum, the regulation operationalises and institutionalises the discursive identity constructed in the Teaching Profession Law, transforming ideological aspirations into enforceable procedures. It represents the bureaucratic grammar of teacher professionalism in contemporary Türkiye, where compliance, certification, and alignment with national strategic goals are central to becoming a teacher. While less emotionally charged than NEA website or ideologically explicit than the Law, the Regulation constructs teacher identity through its detailed structuring of institutional processes, its codification of roles, and its formalisation of training standards. It projects an image of the teacher not only as a practitioner but as a state-shaped professional operating within a tightly managed system of training, evaluation, and progression. The result is a professional identity defined as much by institutional embeddedness as by pedagogical expertise or moral disposition.

### The National Education Academy Webpage as a Platform for Symbolic Representation and Public Legitimization

The selected content of NEA website serves a different function from the other two documents. While the Teaching Profession Law regulates and the Regulation on the Presidency of NEA formalizes, the website promotes and justifies the new teacher education model to a broader audience. At the macrostructural level, its content highlights NEA's strategic role in Türkiye's educational transformation, positioning it as a necessary response to national needs and global challenges. It emphasizes the Academy's role in shaping education policies and ensuring their effective implementation, enhancing teaching quality through professional development programs, and developing teachers who can meet the evolving needs of students and society.

In terms of the dominant microstructure, the selected texts use medium-length sentences that balance descriptive information with promotional assertions. Unlike the formal legal style of the law or the administrative language of the regulation, the website uses a persuasive tone, serving to build trust in the Academy's role and vision. It employs rhetorical strategies such as metaphors, positive framing, and future-oriented language, including motivational phrasing that positions NEA as a transformative force in education reform. These include the description of education as the "foundation stone of society", portrayal of teachers as the driving force of quality improvement and innovation, and frequent references to meeting "future educational needs" and fostering "continuous development". It also draws on emotionally resonant terms such as "ground-breaking role", "strategically important", and "raising quality standards", positioning NEA as both visionary and essential. It should be noted that the superstructure level was not analysed for this document, as the partial selection of content from the website did not provide sufficient basis for examining its overall structural organization (for detailed explanation of the selection process, see the section 'Data Sources'). Table 5 summarizes these findings:

**Table 5**

*Findings from the Analysis of NEA Website*

| Level | Findings |
|---|---|
| Macrostructure | The text presents NEA as a key institution for Türkiye's educational transformation. It highlights the Academy's role in shaping education policies, improving teacher quality, and fostering innovation to meet future educational needs. |
| Microstructure | The language is informative in its presentation of institutional goals, motivational through the use of positively charged terms such as "ground-breaking", and future-oriented by emphasizing the "strategic importance" of the Academy in shaping education. It integrates descriptive and persuasive tones, employs metaphors (e.g., 'education as the foundation stone of society'), and positions teachers as central to national educational progress. |

This discourse reflects a dual strategy. On one hand, it appeals to national values by emphasizing cultural continuity and moral responsibility. On the other, it draws from a global language of quality, performance, and innovation. These two strands come together to present NEA as both a guardian of cultural heritage and a driver of modernization. The promotional nature of the website also serves a legitimizing function. It builds a public narrative around NEA's necessity and potential impact, reinforcing the state's authority to restructure teacher preparation. In doing so, the website echoes and extends the moral-national and managerial discourses found in both the law and the regulation, but it presents them in a more accessible and aspirational language.

Together, these three documents construct a coordinated policy narrative. The Teaching Profession Law establishes the normative and legal foundations of teacher identity; the Regulation operationalises these foundations through administrative structures and institutional procedures; and the website publicly promotes this vision by framing the teacher as a morally upright, nationally loyal, and professionally competent figure. While the documents differ in tone, format, and communicative function, they converge in portraying teachers as cultural exemplars and state-aligned professionals. Taken together, they articulate a model of teaching defined by moral authority, bureaucratic regulation, and national service.

## Discussion and Conclusion

The critical discourse analysis of the Teaching Profession Law, the Regulation on the Presidency of NEA, and NEA website has demonstrated that NEA explicitly draws on intersecting neoliberal, conservative, and nationalist ideologies in the construction of teacher identity. A prominent discursive thread across the findings is the portrayal of teachers as moral and cultural figures. They are positioned as guardians of national heritage and values, rather than as autonomous professionals. In this regard, the Teaching Profession Law emphasizes teachers' responsibility for preserving and transmitting national identity, and the Regulation incorporates national and moral values into the expected training outcomes and professional competencies for teachers, aligning teacher development with broader state-defined value frameworks. NEA website reinforces this vision by depicting teachers as foundational to shaping future generations. This recurring discourse recasts teaching as a vocation grounded in national morality, rather than a profession grounded in pedagogical expertise and professional autonomy. Accompanied with the consistent absence of references to democratic citizenship, human rights, or social justice throughout the documents, this particular discourse aligns with the broader conservative-nationalist policy context in Türkiye (Yücesan-Özdemir & Özdemir, 2012).

Alongside this moral-cultural narrative, the documents embed managerial discourses that regulate teacher professionalism. These reflect a neoliberal approach to education, including the adoption of market rationality in content, employment regime, and governance structures, which has accelerated in Türkiye over the past two decades (Ertürk, 2012). The Teaching Profession Law introduces structured career ladders, service points, and credential-based progression, and frames teachers as multifunctional professionals expected to fulfil a broad range of institutional roles. The regulation formalises this framework through administrative procedures, defining organisational structures such as roles and service units, as well as procedural mechanisms for teacher training, competency assessment, and career development. Together, these documents reflect a shift toward a tightly governed professionalism, privileging accountability and compliance over autonomy and reflexivity.

Across the three documents, a dual teacher identity that blends moral-cultural valorisation with bureaucratic regulation emerges. Teachers are portrayed simultaneously as value-laden figures and state-managed professionals. The Teaching Profession Law provides the normative regulatory framework, the regulation institutionalises it through organisational and procedural structures, and NEA Website publicly promotes and legitimizes this construction. Underlying this discourse is a pattern of centralization and ideological control that overrides pedagogical autonomy or professional agency. Rather than enhancing teacher quality as it claimed, NEA's discourse articulates a vision of teacher identity defined by loyalty, discipline, and alignment with state-defined objectives. This integration of cultural-moral and managerial elements reveals a strategy of ideological regulation. Teachers are framed not as independent cultural actors, but as agents of moral-nationalist (re)production and bureaucratic implementation. With the added pressures of performance monitoring and credentialism, teacher identity is tightly aligned with the ideological and structural goals of the state.

Taken together, the Teaching Profession Law, the Regulation on the Presidency of NEA, and NEA website articulate a coordinated discursive framework for teacher identity in Türkiye. They function across legal, institutional, and symbolic domains to produce a coherent vision of the teacher as a moral-national figure and a state-regulated professional. Through distinct forms of discourse including the legal codification, administrative formalisation, and public promotion, these texts embed ideological expectations within professional structures. This layered construction demonstrates how regulatory, institutional, and symbolic discourses work together to shape a unified vision of teacher identity.

This coordinated discursive construction of teacher identity reflects not only the internal logic of NEA, but also broader ideological shifts in Turkish education policy. As Emanet (2023) argues, these shifts mark a move away from conservative liberal democracy toward intertwined processes of neoliberal consolidation and Islamization. This Islamic-nationalist narrative has dominated the education reform discourse (Sen, 2020), especially since the articulation of the 'pious generation' ideal in 2010s (Emanet, 2023; Toker, 2021). NEA exemplifies this shift, where teacher identity is framed through moral fidelity, national loyalty, and institutional discipline. This also resonates with observations by Erol et al. (2016) on the increasing centralization of policy-making under a unified party-state structure. In this light, NEA is more than an institutional reform, it functions as an ideological project designed to align teacher education with broader political aims.

The decisive role that NEA reform plays in shaping teacher identity must also be read as part of the very shift it enacts in terms of the teacher education governance. As Young and Boyd (2010) observe, ITE programs may be governed through a variety of mechanisms: directly by governments, through professional colleges with

regulatory authority, or by individual universities. Building on Gideonse's (1993) framework, they outline three modes of governance, political, institutional, and professional, each associated with distinct imaginaries of teacher professionalism and identity (Young & Boyd, 2010). In institutional modes, where universities hold primary authority, teachers tend to be positioned as public intellectuals, with critical autonomy and pedagogical agency (Young & Boyd, 2010). In contrast, political modes locate control within state institutions, framing teachers as civil servants and implementers of national education agendas, often subordinating professional judgment to ideological conformity (Young & Boyd, 2010). Finally, professional modes grant the teaching profession greater self-regulation, emphasizing the teacher as a skilled and ethical practitioner (Young & Boyd, 2010).

Viewed through this lens, NEA reform reflects a shift away from a university-based institutional mode toward an explicitly political governance mode. While the previous system already entailed substantial state regulation and standardization through the oversight of CoHE, NEA marks a decisive shift in both form and degree of this control. This transition is not merely administrative, it signifies a redefinition of teacher identity itself: from a semi-autonomous, academically trained educator to a state-shaped professional, whose legitimacy is anchored in compliance with centralized standards and ideological alignment with national priorities. Although NEA is formally positioned as a complementary and intermediary institution, in practice, it functions as a centralizing mechanism that reshapes both the governance and discursive formation of teacher identity.

Overall, this study illustrates how teacher education reforms can function as tools of ideological control and (re)production. The dual construction of teacher identity rooted in morality and regulated through institutional discourses limits space for professional autonomy, critical agency, and cultural pluralism. NEA reform clearly aligns with global trends that prioritize the development of standardized competencies over commitments to social justice, human rights, and critical consciousness (Wang et al., 2011). It stands in contrast to justice- and equity-oriented teacher education (Cochran-Smith, 2019) and challenges the vision of teachers as public intellectuals (Young & Boyd, 2010) or transformative intellectuals equipped to question, critique, and act against structural inequities (Giroux, 1988). From this perspective, the underlying conservative-nationalist and neoliberal narratives of NEA risk marginalizing democratic values, cultural pluralism, and participatory educational practices. In Türkiye, this may result in narrow definitions of professional success, centred on compliance, credentialism, and alignment with dominant political and ideological agendas, rather than fostering creativity, criticality, and inclusive pedagogy.

Nonetheless, this study is limited to three documents, offering an analysis of top-down, policy-level construction of teacher identity. Future research could explore how these discourses are interpreted, challenged, or appropriated by teachers in their everyday practice. This would reveal how policy aspirations interact with lived realities and professional agency. Additionally, longitudinal studies could trace how the discursive framing of teachers evolves over time, particularly as Türkiye navigates shifting cultural, political, and global influences.

## Acknowledgements

During the preparation of this manuscript, OpenAI's ChatGPT 5o was used for language refinement and editing. The tool was solely employed to improve clarity, conciseness and cohesion throughout the manuscript. All intellectual content, interpretations, and arguments presented in the manuscript are entirely the authors' own.

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## Öğretmen Kimliğinin Söylemsel İnşası: Türkiye'de Milli Eğitim Akademisinin Eleştirel Bir Analizi

**Öz**

*Bu çalışma, öğretmen kimliğinin Türkiye'de yeni kurulan Milli Eğitim Akademisi'nin politika çerçevesinde söylemsel olarak nasıl inşa edildiğini eleştirel bir biçimde incelemektedir. Bu doğrultuda, yeni Öğretmenlik Mesleği Kanunu, Milli Eğitim Akademisi Başkanlığı Yönetmeliği ve Milli Eğitim Akademisi Web Sitesi, Fairclough (2013) ve van Dijk'in (1980) eleştirel söylem analizi yaklaşımlarının araçları kullanılarak analiz edilmiştir. Bulgular, Milli Eğitim Akademisi politikalarının öğretmen kimliğini ikili bir söylem tarafından şekillendirdiğini ortaya koymaktadır. Ahlaki-kültürel söylem öğretmenleri ulusal değerlerin, kültürel mirasın ve ahlaki sorumlulukların taşıyıcıları olarak sunarken, yönetsel söylem uyum, yeterlilik belgeleri ve performans izlemeye vurgu yapmaktadır. Bu hibrit çerçeve, daha geniş muhafazakâr-milliyetçi ve neoliberal ideolojilerle örtüşmekte olup, öğretmenleri hem kültürel aktarıcılar hem de devlet tarafından yönetilen profesyoneller olarak sunmaktadır.*

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