Hacettepe Üniversitesi Eğitim Fakültesi Dergisi

Hacettepe University Journal of Education

e-ISSN: 2536-4758

Investigation of Teachers' Cognitive Constructs of the Ideal Student in the Context of the Maarif Model Student Profile*

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Article Information

Received: 31.07.2025

Accepted: 10.12.2025

Online First: 19.01.2026

Published: 31.01.2026

ABSTRACT

This study aims to examine teachers' cognitive constructs of the ideal student in the context of the TCEM Student Profile. In line with this purpose, the study was conducted with the phenomenology design from qualitative research. The participants in the study consisted of 24 teachers with at least five years of teaching experience working in MoNE secondary schools in Erzurum and Kahramanmaraş provinces and teaching within the scope of TCEM. Teachers' cognitive construct data on the ideal student were collected with the Repertory Grid Form (RGF), analyzed with the descriptive analysis technique, and presented in tables and graphs. The research findings reveal that teachers' cognitive constructs of the ideal student are generally shaped within a value-based framework; as emphasized in the TCEM Student Profile, a student model that prioritizes individual responsibility and is equipped with ethical values that will contribute to social life. In addition, the study revealed that teachers shaped the definition of the ideal student not only through cognitive competencies but also through a multifaceted personality structure. When the qualities put forward by the teachers were evaluated in terms of frequency and importance scores, it was concluded that the themes of "Moral", "Willful" and "Productive" were represented more intensely than the other themes. In addition, it is seen that the concepts of moral consistency, internal control and productive participation are at the forefront in teachers' mental representations of the ideal student, while the other qualities serve the integrity of this triad with a supportive function.

Keywords: Education Model for the Turkish Century, student profile, cognitive fiction, repertoire grid form

doi: 10.16986/hunefd.1754900 Article Type: Research Article

Citation Information: Sevim, O., & Uzun, A. (2026). Investigation of teachers' cognitive constructs of the ideal student in the context of the Maarif Model student profile. *Hacettepe University Journal of Education, 41*(1), 156-173. https://doi.org/10.16986/hunefd.1754900

1. INTRODUCTION

Education, as a human-centered social institution, operates through a structured system that ensures its continuity, organization, and effectiveness. As a result, it has maintained its value throughout history as a holistic and integrated set of practices (Kadıoğlu Ateş & Görgülü, 2023). Education, one of the main factors that play a decisive role in the development of individuals, societies and states (Ateş, 2024), also has a unique position within state organizations. In particular, the goal of raising individuals in accordance with the requirements of the age necessitates that education systems should be based on up-to-date, contemporary and dynamic structures (Kadıoğlu Ateş, Aydın, & İstemihan, 2023). In this direction, each country determines the target group of people and creates an educational vision on how to educate and train them (Ateş, 2024). Because the basic dynamic of the state is human beings and their education and development as useful individuals. Therefore, education programs in countries are carried out by the state.

In Türkiye, the preparation, development and implementation of curricula are carried out by the Ministry of National Education (MoNE). From the early years of the Republic to the present day, educational programs in Türkiye have been developed at certain intervals and according to needs (Demirel, 2007). Most recently, the Ministry of National Education developed the Turkish Century Education Model (TCEM) with broad participation and a holistic approach. As of the 2024-2025 academic year, TCEM has been gradually introduced for all subjects in pre-school, 1st, 5th and 9th grades (MoNE, 2024).

* This research was carried out by obtaining the necessary ethical permissions from the Kahramanmaraş Sütçü İmam University Social and Human Sciences Scientific Research and Publication Ethics Committee (25.04.2025 / 8 protocol number).

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The main goal of the TCEM is to raise competent and virtuous individuals (MoNE, 2024, p. 5). In this respect, the main starting point of the model is that students acquire the necessary competencies and qualifications at the end of an education and training process (Yıldırım & Çalışkan, 2024; Uyumaz & Karadoğan, 2025). The general structure of the model was determined holistically as "student profile, virtue-value, and skills framework" by MoNE (2024) within the framework of the common text of the TCEM. With this model, it is stated that the basic approach of the curricula is to establish the equation of "good person-good citizen, virtuous individual-appropriate citizen" in order to create values and national consciousness (Yıldırım & Çalışkan, 2024). The inclusion of virtue and competence in the student profile created in this context is considered a positive practice on behalf of the program (Yıldırım & Çalışkan, 2024). The design of the TCEM curriculum was made within the framework of sub-themes such as learning outcomes aimed to be gained by students and learning-teaching experiences, measurement and evaluation, which consist of all components in this process (MoNE, 2024). Therefore, the comprehensive framework provided by the model offers a strong conceptual basis for examining teachers' perceptions of the ideal student.

At the design stage of a program, it should be able to answer the questions "Why? and How?" (Oprandi, 2022). It is important to provide a clear rationale for preparing or developing the programs in question and to consider their applicability in real educational settings. In this regard, MoNE has gained substantial experience and developed considerable field competence in curriculum preparation over time. However, ensuring that teachers – the primary implementers of curricula – are informed about and engaged with the various stages of the program is a critical factor that may influence the extent to which the intended outcomes of the curriculum are achieved. Identifying and reflecting the results of the implementation processes of the programs with all positive and negative aspects is of great importance in the curriculum development process (Demeuse & Strauven, 2016; Demirel, 2007). The aim here is to identify the strengths and weaknesses of the curricula and to prepare more qualified programs. In this respect, it is necessary to consult their opinions in order to determine how the curricula are understood and implemented by teachers, who are the stakeholders of the curricula in educational environments (Ertürk, 1975; Zengin, 2010). In terms of teachers being the implementers of curricula, teachers' opinions contribute to determining the extent to which the curriculum is successful in the implementation phase of the curriculum and increasing the quality of the curriculum (Gömleksiz & Bulut, 2006; Kaymakcan, 2009; Yürük & Topchubaev, 2022). Therefore, understanding teachers' cognitive structures is vital for interpreting how curricular intentions are translated into classroom practice.

1.1. Purpose of the Study

With TCEM, it is aimed to construct the "ideal student" profile by putting the student profile at the center. In this respect, the cognitive constructs of teachers, who are the important executors of the program, are of great importance in revealing the ideal student profile. Because cognitive construct is defined as the process of associating an event, situation, concept or attitude with one's own perceptions, experiences and available knowledge (Karadağ, 2011; Tanhan, 2013). Cognitive constructs are subjective because individuals make sense of the world with these constructs reflecting their experiences (Burr, King, & Butt, 2012). Therefore, cognitive constructs provide important clues in understanding individuals' behaviors in this direction by revealing a certain event, phenomenon and situation (Aydoğdu, Altay, & Dilber, 2021). In this respect, teachers' cognitive constructs about ideal student qualities that will reflect the profile of virtuous and competent students are determined as a factor that will directly affect the success of the TCEM in practice.

When the related literature is examined, it is understood that the reflections of TCEM in the scientific literature are still limited and the existing studies are generally limited to the analysis of policy documents or programs (Arslan, 2025; Ateş, 2024; Karataş, 2024; Kuzu, Göçer, & Akçay, 2024; Yurdakul, 2024). When the studies on teachers' perceptions and opinions about ideal student qualities are examined, it is understood that these studies only include the analysis of teachers' opinions (Akgül, 2015; Arık, Arkonaç, Yılmazer, & Cinan, 1991; Avcı & Durmuşçelebi, 2014; Babaoğlan, Çelik, & Nalbant, 2018; İçme & Büyük; 2023), and there is no study that deals with the level of overlap or relationship with TCEM. Considering the role and importance of the level of overlap between teachers' views on ideal student qualities and the TCEM student profile in the effectiveness of TCEM, in order to meet this need in the relevant literature, this study tried to examine teachers' cognitive constructs of the ideal student in the context of the TCEM Student Profile.

1.1.1. Sub-problems of the study

In line with the aim of the study, answers to the following research questions were sought:

1. What kind of a student profile do the frequency values of the cognitive constructs developed by teachers regarding ideal student qualities describe?
2. How do the cognitive constructs developed by teachers about ideal student qualities overlap with the "Student Profile" of the TCEM at the thematic level?
3. In which ways do the thematic areas with the highest frequency and importance level in teacher perceptions resemble the student characteristics defined in the "Student Profile" of the TCEM?
4. To what extent do the total and average importance scores of the cognitive constructs produced by teachers in the thematic context overlap with the "Student Profile" of the TCEM?

2. METHODOLOGY

2.1. Research Design

In this study, in which teachers' cognitive constructs of the ideal student were tried to be examined in the context of the TCEM student profile, the qualitative research approach (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2021), which involves investigating and understanding the perceptions, observations, experiences and constructs of individuals or social phenomena in their natural environments in realistic and different dimensions, was taken as a basis in accordance with the purpose of the study. Qualitative research is holistic research that deals with personal interpretations in the context of individual experiences within a scientific understanding (Klenke, 2016). In this context, in this study, the phenomenological design, which is one of the qualitative research designs, was used to reveal teachers' cognitive constructs about the student profile in the context of TCEM. Because phenomenological design offers the opportunity to understand how experiences are lived on a situation or phenomenon, the phenomenon of transferring one's own experience, and the opportunity to reach various dimensions that cannot be obtained in different ways and methods (Büyüköztürk, Çakmak, Akgün, Karadeniz, & Demirel, 2013; Cresswell, 2013; Giorgi, 1997). On the other hand, the primary goal in studies conducted in the field of education and with the phenomenological design type is to define and make sense of the experiences in the education and training process (Gönüldaş, Atmaca, & Yılmaz, 2025). In phenomenological research, first of all, it is necessary to plan the research, determine the focal points, objectives and the application group. The phenomenological research process used in this study is shown in Figure 1:

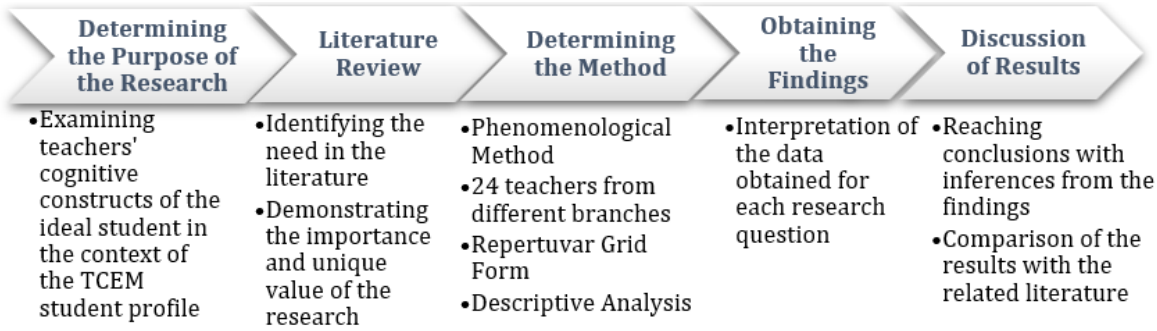


Figure 1. Steps of the phenomenological research process

Figure 1 shows the sequential stages of the phenomenological research process used in the study. The process begins by determining the research purpose, which involves examining teachers' cognitive constructs regarding the ideal student within the context of the TCEM student profile. Next is the literature review phase, where the need for the study is identified and the significance and originality of the research are demonstrated. The following stage involves determining the method, including the selection of the phenomenological design, participant group, data collection tool, and analysis technique. The findings are then obtained by interpreting data for each research question. The final stage involves discussing the results, drawing conclusions based on the findings, and comparing them with the existing literature.

2.2. Participants

The study group consists of 24 teachers who teach 5th grade courses at the middle school level under the TCEM program, which began in the 2024-2025 academic year. Information about the participants is presented in Table 1:

Table 1.
Participant Information

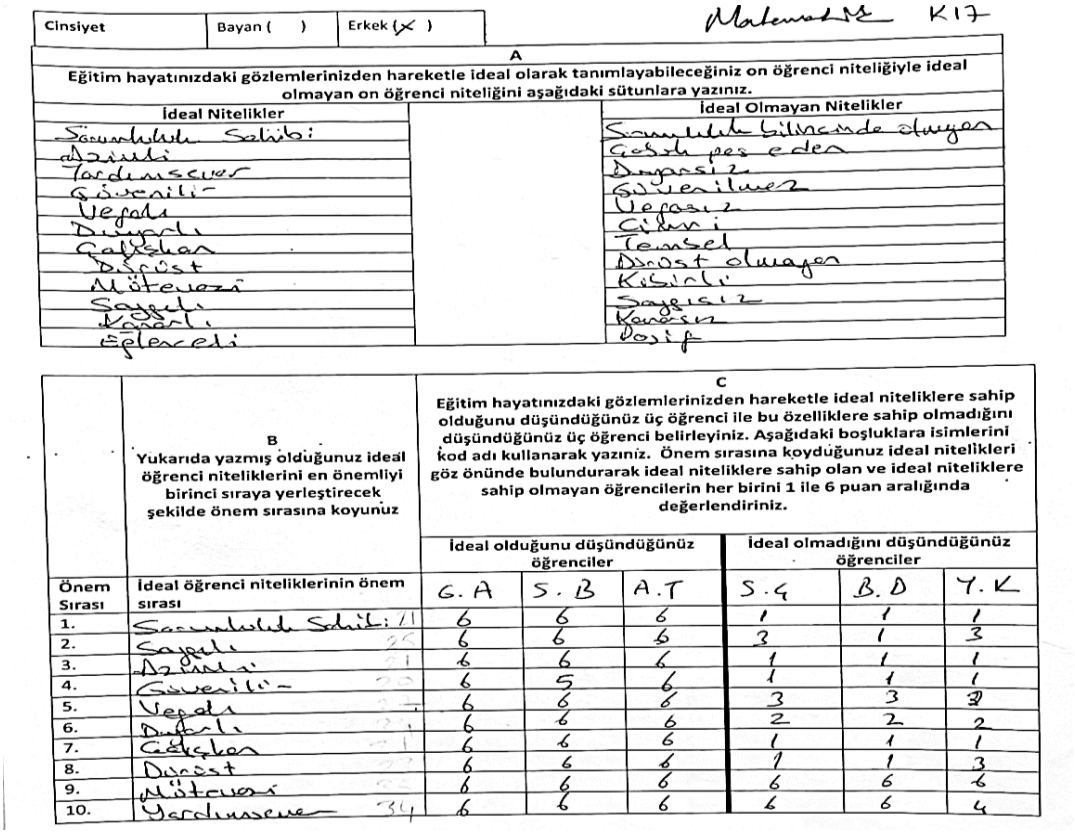
Participant	Branch	*f*	Place of duty
T1, T2, T3, T4	Turkish	4	Erzurum
T5, T6, T7	Foreign Language	3	Kahramanmaraş
T8, T9	Social Studies	2	Erzurum
T10, T11	Religious Culture and Ethics	2	Erzurum
T12, T13, T14	Mathematics	3	Kahramanmaraş
T15, T16, T17	Science	3	Kahramanmaraş
T18, T19	Information Technologies	2	Kahramanmaraş
T20, T21	Music	2	Erzurum
T22, T23	Visual Arts	2	Kahramanmaraş
T24	Physical Education	1	Erzurum

The participants were selected from among teachers working in Erzurum and Kahramanmaraş provinces with at least five years of teaching experience. In this direction, the criterion sampling method, which is based on the participation of individuals who meet a certain period of professional experience, was adopted. During the reporting of the data in the study, the names of the teachers were not included and coding was done as T1, T2, T3… In addition, maximum diversity sampling

was ensured by including teachers from different branches (Turkish, Mathematics, Science, Foreign Language, Religious Culture and Moral Knowledge, Social Sciences, Physical Education, Music, Visual Arts, Information Technologies) and collecting data from two different geographical regions (Erzurum and Kahramanmaraş). In this way, it was aimed to enrich the research findings by diversifying teacher views in terms of branches and regional contexts. In the sampling process, an approach based on equal chance was followed in the selection of individuals to be included in the sample and in this respect, the principles of random sampling were also utilized (Kerlinger & Lee, 1999). Mertens (2014) states that for random sampling, a sampling frame that covers all elements of the universe should be created first. This principle was followed in the study.

2.3. Data Collection

The data were collected using the Repertory Grid Form (RGF), which was first developed by Kelly (1955) and aims to reveal the relationships between individuals' perceptions, interpretations and personal structures (Figure 2). Additionally, the English version of the RGF is provided in Appendix 1. The RGF is a psychological research tool developed to understand how individuals construct the world, and it allows participants to systematically reveal their personal views, perception structures and evaluation criteria (Birgün, 2023; Maitland & Viney, 2008; Winter, 1985).



Cinsiyet	Bayan ( )	Erkek (X)

A

Eğitim hayatınızdaki gözlemlerinizden hareketle ideal olarak tanımlayabileceğiniz on öğrenci niteliğiyle ideal olmayan on öğrenci niteliğini aşağıdaki sütunlara yazınız.

İdeal Nitelikler	İdeal Olmayan Nitelikler
Sorumluluk Sahibi	Sorumluluk bilincinde olmayan
Azimli	Gelişime açık olmayan
Yardımsever	Duyarsız
Güvenilir	Güvenilmez
Vefalı	Vefasız
Duyarlı	Cimri
Çalışkan	Temsil
Dürüst	Dürüst olmayan
Mütevazı	Kibirli
Saygılı	Saygısız
Kararlı	Kavgacı
Eğlenceli	Pasif

	B Yukarıda yazmış olduğunuz ideal öğrenci niteliklerini en önemliyi birinci sıraya yerleştirecek şekilde önem sırasına koyunuz	C Eğitim hayatınızdaki gözlemlerinizden hareketle ideal niteliklere sahip olduğunu düşündüğünüz üç öğrenci ile bu özelliklere sahip olmadığını düşündüğünüz üç öğrenci belirleyiniz. Aşağıdaki boşluklara isimlerini kod adı kullanarak yazınız. Önem sırasına koyduğunuz ideal nitelikleri göz önünde bulundurarak ideal niteliklere sahip olan ve ideal niteliklere sahip olmayan öğrencilerin her birini 1 ile 6 puan aralığında değerlendiriniz.						
		İdeal olduğunu düşündüğünüz öğrenciler			İdeal olmadığını düşündüğünüz öğrenciler		
Önem Sırası	İdeal öğrenci niteliklerinin önem sırası	G.A	S.B	A.T	S.G	B.D	Y.K
1.	Sorumluluk Sahibi	6	6	6	1	1	1
2.	Saygılı	6	6	6	3	1	3
3.	Azimli	6	6	6	1	1	1
4.	Güvenilir	6	5	6	1	1	1
5.	Vefalı	6	6	6	3	3	3
6.	Duyarlı	6	6	6	2	2	2
7.	Çalışkan	6	6	6	1	1	1
8.	Dürüst	6	6	6	1	1	3
9.	Mütevazı	6	6	6	6	6	6
10.	Yardımsever	6	6	6	6	6	4

Figure 2. An excerpt from the repertoire grid form

The RGF used in this study (Figure 2) was structured by the researchers and consists of three main parts:

- In Part A, participants were asked to list ideal student qualities and non-ideal student qualities based on their observations in their educational life. They were asked to identify ten characteristics for each category (e.g. ideal qualities such as responsible, respectful; non-ideal qualities such as disrespectful, indifferent).

- In Part B, participants were asked to rank the ideal qualities they wrote in Part A in order of importance. This ranking reflects the importance the participant attaches to the student qualities and forms the basis for the subsequent evaluation.

- In Part C, participant teachers were asked to identify three students in their classes as having ideal student qualities and three students as having non-ideal student qualities and to code these students. Then, they were asked to rate these six students in the range of 1 to 6 points according to each ideal quality listed in Part B. In this way, it was aimed to establish a quantitative relationship between teacher perceptions and student observations.

The data obtained through the RGF were systematically evaluated in order to analyze the personal constructs of the participants regarding student qualities. Due to the limited number of studies in this field with the RGF technique, the

participant teachers were informed in detail about the structure and functioning of the form before the interviews, and the data collection process was carried out face-to-face.

2.4. Data Collection

Teachers ranked the ten cognitive constructs they produced about ideal student qualities starting from the most important one and scored these cognitive constructs according to the 3 ideal and 3 non-ideal students they observed in their teaching lives. Then, the relative importance scores of the cognitive constructs were obtained by multiplying the scores given by the teachers to each of these cognitive constructs by decreasing multiples from 10 to 1, starting from the most important. After the scores were calculated, the cognitive constructs developed by the teachers were distributed to these themes by considering the themes in the TCEM Student Profile and the number of cognitive constructs in the themes was reached. The cognitive constructs collected in the same theme were sorted in descending order according to their relative importance scores. Finally, the cognitive fictions developed by each participant were scored in the themes to which they belonged, and the total score and average scores of each theme were reached. The cognitive constructs produced were assigned to the TCEM Student Profile groups with the descriptive analysis technique.

2.5. Procedures for the Consistency, Verifiability, Credibility and Transferability of the Research

In order to ensure consistency in the study, the data collection and analysis process was carried out systematically. All stages from the structuring of the RGF to the interviews with teachers and the theme-based analysis of cognitive constructs were recorded in detail. This systematic organization ensured that each step of the research was implemented in a traceable and consistent manner, strengthening the methodological coherence of the study. By documenting how the Repertory Grid Form was structured, how the interviews were conducted, and how the cognitive constructs were subsequently analyzed, the research process became transparent and verifiable. In addition, aligning the interview procedures with the research aims provided a clear operational pathway between data collection and analysis, allowing the cognitive constructs produced by teachers to be interpreted within a coherent methodological framework (Table 2).

Table 2.
Alignment of Research Questions and Interview Questions

Research Questions (RQs)	**Interview Questions (IQs)**
RQ1. What kind of a student profile do the frequency values of the cognitive constructs developed by teachers regarding ideal student qualities describe?	IQ1. What qualities do you consider ideal for a student? IQ2. What qualities do you consider non-ideal for a student?
RQ2. How do the cognitive constructs developed by teachers about ideal student qualities overlap with the "Student Profile" of the TCEM at the thematic level?	IQ3. Which of the ideal qualities you have identified are most important to you?
RQ3. In which ways do the thematic areas with the highest frequency and importance level in teacher perceptions resemble the student characteristics defined in the "Student Profile" of the TCEM?	IQ4. When you think about the students in your class, which three students do you consider to have the ideal qualities, and which three students do you consider not to have these qualities?
RQ4. To what extent do the total and average importance scores of the cognitive constructs produced by teachers in the thematic context overlap with the "Student Profile" of the TCEM?	IQ5. How do you evaluate products using the ideal features you identified, and how do you score them according to the Repertory Grid system?

The processes of data collection and analysis were clearly defined to ensure the replicability of the research under similar conditions (Miles & Huberman, 1994). In addition, the cognitive construct scoring system, which was also used in similar studies in the relevant literature (Karadağ, 2011; Sevim, Akan, & Yıldırım, 2020; Tanhan, 2013), served as an element that increased objectivity in the analysis. In order to ensure confirmability in the study, the data were structured directly based on the statements of the participants in order to minimize the prejudices of the researchers and to ensure that the data were analyzed objectively (LeCompte & Goetz, 1982). The relative importance scores developed based on the ratings given by the participants allowed the analysis to be carried out independently of the researcher's interpretation. In the process of assigning the obtained cognitive constructs to the TCEM Student Profile themes, firstly, each researcher independently made his/her own classification, then these classifications were mutually evaluated, and in the last stage, a full consensus was reached on the themes to which all cognitive constructs belonged by discussing the cases where there was disagreement. The credibility of the study was strengthened through the selection of participants, openness in the data collection process and face-to-face debriefing interviews (Miles & Huberman, 1994). In particular, the selection of participants from different branches and different provinces ensured data diversity and increased the relevance of the findings to the reality of the participants. During the interviews, the RGF technique was introduced to the teachers in detail and a trust relationship was established by ensuring their voluntary participation in the process. In addition, the fact that the teachers produced cognitive constructs based on their direct observations and scored according to these constructs increased the internal validity of the data. The research process, participant characteristics and data collection tool were explained in detail to ensure transferability to other studies and similar contexts (LeCompte & Goetz, 1982). Participants' branches, duty stations and

length of experience were presented in a table, and detailed information was provided on the structure and functioning of the form used. These comprehensive explanations support the usability of the study in other sample groups or in different contexts where similar educational policies are implemented.

3. FINDINGS

3.1. Findings Related to the First Research Question

The 240 cognitive constructs related to ideal student qualities obtained through the repertoire grid form applied to the teachers were analyzed both holistically and thematically, and the findings were presented with frequency and percentage values. In this analysis, firstly, the frequency of repetition of cognitive constructs was examined and the top ten cognitive constructs with the highest frequency values were respectful (f: 21; 8,8%), responsible (f: 18; 7,5%), honest (f: 15; 6,3%), hardworking (f: 13; 5,4%), reliable (f: 13; 5,4%), decisive (f: 8; 3,3%), loyal (f: 8; 3,3%), helpful (f: 8; 3,3%), moral (f: 7; 2,9%), determined (f: 7; 2,9%); 85 of the 240 cognitive constructs were found to be different concepts.

This analysis based on the frequency of repetition of the cognitive constructs formed by teachers indicates that the perception of the ideal student is shaped on the axis of values. The prominence of concepts such as "respectful", "responsible", "honest", "hardworking" and "reliable" reveals that teachers prioritize relationship-based, trust-based and self-disciplined individual qualities in their mental representations of the ideal student profile. In particular, the high repetition frequencies of concepts such as respectful (f: 21; 8.8%) and responsible (f: 18; 7.5%) indicate that these values are the main determinants in the eyes of teachers. On the other hand, the fact that qualities such as diligence (f: 13), determination (f: 8), loyalty (f: 8), helpfulness (f: 8), morality (f: 7) and perseverance (f: 7) are also frequently mentioned indicates that the ideal student profile is constructed not only in cognitive but also in affective and character-based aspects. In this context, teacher perception tends towards a multidimensional definition of a student who both prioritizes individual responsibility and displays a moral stance in social interaction.

3.2. Findings Related to the Second Research Question

After examining the frequency values of the cognitive constructs produced by the teachers, a thematic analysis was conducted on the cognitive constructs and it was determined that the cognitive constructs were grouped under 10 main constructs in the TCEM Student Profile. These main constructs are shown in Table 3.

Table 3.
Distribution of Cognitive Constructs to Main Constructs of TCEM Student Profile

CF	PN/CCS	CFS	CF	PN/CCS	CFS	CF	PN/CCS	CFS
Morality (n=64)								
Respectful	(7/1)	290	Decency	(21/2)	189	Reliable	(17/4)	140
Honest	(11/1)	280	Moral	(12/2)	189	Respectful	(11/5)	138
Reliable	(14/1)	270	Honest	(2/2)	189	Reliable	(4/4)	126
Respectful	(24/1)	270	Honest	(15/2)	189	Honest	(3/6)	120
Reliable	(1/1)	240	Example person	(6/3)	184	Respectful	(2/6)	120
Respectful	(12/1)	240	Moral	(11/4)	182	Reliable	(20/6)	105
Respectful	(15/1)	230	Reliable	(2/3)	176	Reliable	(19/7)	88
Moral	(13/2)	225	Decency	(10/4)	168	Respectful	(20/7)	84
Respectful	(17/2)	225	Honest	(20/4)	168	Respectful	(16/8)	81
Honest	(6/1)	220	Respectful	(21/3)	168	Honest	(13/8)	75
Respectful	(23/1)	220	Good morals	(6/4)	161	Honest	(1/8)	69
Moral	(3/2)	216	Respectful	(19/4)	161	Honest	(17/8)	69
Honest	(7/2)	216	Moral	(15/5)	156	Reliable	(3/8)	66
Moral	(21/1)	210	Reliable	(7/4)	154	Modest	(4/9)	64
Honest	(18/1)	210	Reliable	(23/3)	152	Honest	(9/8)	63
Respectful	(3/1)	210	Reliable	(22/5)	150	Tolerant	(21/8)	63
Respectful	(4/2)	207	Reliable	(9/4)	147	Honest	(4/8)	60
Respectful	(10/2)	207	Honest	(21/4)	147	Empathizing	(21/9)	30
Honest	(10/3)	200	Respectful	(18/4)	147	Respectful	(22/10)	29
Respectful	(1/2)	198	Empathetic	(2/5)	144	Respectful	(9/10)	23
Respectful	(6/2)	198	Empathizes	(9/3)	144			
Respectful	(8/3)	192	Reliable	(11/6)	140			

Wise (n=3)								
Recognizes weaknesses/strengths	(5/2)	189	Idealist	(10/7)	84	Conscious	(10/8)	72
Courageous (n=6)								
Brave	(8/9)	42	Enterprising	(3/10)	24	Enterprising	(22/8)	81
Defending your rights	(6/10)	28	Enterprising	(4/10)	33	Enterprising	(24/4)	161
Estetics (n=16)								
Compatible	(14/3)	208	Responsive	(17/6)	120	Kind	(13/10)	23
Regular	(22/2)	180	Regular	(4/6)	110	Responsive	(16/10)	22
Regular	(18/3)	168	Good behavior	(6/7)	84	Responsive	(20/10)	21
Regular	(3/4)	154	Regular	(7/9)	50	Responsive	(12/10)	20
Regular	(10/5)	120	Responsive	(19/9)	40			
Responsive	(8/5)	120	Gentle	(11/10)	23			
Willful (n=54)								
Responsible	(9/1)	270	Responsible	(3/3)	168	Determination	(5/6)	105
Responsible	(11/3)	240	Responsible	(12/3)	168	Loyal	(18/6)	105
Recognizing borders	(5/1)	240	Punctual	(7/6)	165	Responsible	(14/7)	92
Responsible	(22/1)	230	Loyal	(17/5)	162	Determined	(1/7)	88
Not giving up easily	(9/2)	216	Loyal	(4/5)	156	Humble	(3/7)	84
Responsible	(17/1)	210	Responsible	(15/4)	154	Humble	(17/9)	72
Responsible	(20/1)	210	Humble	(22/7)	144	Loyal	(22/9)	64
Principle holder	(19/2)	207	Determined	(16/4)	140	Disciplined	(15/8)	63
A sense of homework	(19/3)	200	Responsible	(23/4)	140	Loyal	(8/8)	63
Responsible	(4/1)	200	Loyal	(19/6)	135	Humble	(16/9)	54
Responsible	(8/1)	200	Responsible	(1/4)	133	Punctual	(14/9)	52
Loyal	(2/1)	200	Determined	(19/5)	132	Disciplined	(13/9)	42
A sense of responsibility	(5/4)	189	Responsible	(24/5)	132	Determined	(24/9)	42
Responsible	(18/2)	189	Confident	(13/5)	132	Principled	(1/9)	40
Determined	(22/3)	184	Can manage their time well	(9/6)	115	Humble	(9/9)	38
Responsible	(13/3)	184	Stable	(16/5)	114	Responsible	(7/10)	25
Self-regulated	(8/2)	180	Durable	(9/5)	114	Loyal	(1/10)	23
Determined	(20/3)	176	Determined	(8/6)	105	Following the rules	(10/10)	22
Compassionate (n=24)								
Compassionate	(10/1)	200	Animal lover	(23/6)	100	Understanding	(2/8)	63
Helpful	(8/4)	175	Full of love	(8/7)	96	Helpful	(20/8)	63
Compassionate	(2/4)	168	Intimate	(6/8)	81	Full of love	(12/9)	48
Understanding	(12/5)	138	Sensitive to friends	(5/8)	81	Helpful	(3/9)	48
Compassionate	(18/5)	126	Helpful	(21/7)	80	Selfless	(23/9)	38
Helpful	(12/6)	125	Full of love	(24/7)	72	Helpful	(17/10)	34
Compassionate	(21/6)	120	Selfless	(14/8)	69	Intimate	(18/10)	21
Helpful	(22/6)	110	Positive	(12/8)	66	Helpful	(19/10)	21
Healthy (n=2)								
Clean	(6/6)	110	Self-care	(2/9)	54			
Questioner (n=16)								
Smart	(12/4)	217	Curious	(23/7)	96	Curious	(10/9)	50
Open-minded	(24/3)	168	Smart	(11/7)	96	Collaborative and cooperative	(5/10)	25
Open-eyed	(22/4)	147	Smart	(2/7)	92	Researcher	(23/10)	19
Questioner	(14/5)	144	Open-eyed	(4/7)	84	Questioner	(15/10)	15
Being curious and doing research	(5/5)	120	Smart	(24/8)	63			
Careful	(7/7)	112	Questioner	(23/8)	57			

Productive (n=50)								
Listens attentively to the lesson	(19/1)	240	Self-expression	(24/6)	135	Hardworking	(17/7)	84
Hardworking	(14/2)	225	Creative	(14/6)	135	Self-confident	(16/7)	84
Hardworking	(11/2)	216	Hardworking	(6/5)	132	Hardworking	(15/7)	80
Expressing feelings/thoughts	(5/3)	216	Determined	(3/5)	126	A good listener	(12/7)	80
Wanting success	(16/1)	210	Determined	(20/5)	126	Asking about their shortcomings	(19/8)	60
Hardworking	(7/3)	192	Self-confident	(18/7)	120	It's fun	(18/9)	54
Hardworking	(20/2)	189	Abundant reading	(1/5)	120	It's fun	(20/9)	54
Hardworking	(24/2)	189	Hardworking	(10/6)	115	It's fun	(6/9)	50
Creative	(16/2)	189	Hardworking	(23/5)	108	Open communication with teachers	(5/9)	50
Determined	(4/3)	184	Determined	(16/6)	105	Social	(11/9)	48
Hardworking	(1/3)	176	Hardworking	(9/7)	104	Related	(15/9)	40
Humorous	(7/5)	174	Social	(7/8)	102	Social	(14/10)	24
Determined	(14/4)	168	Repeating what they have learned	(1/6)	100	Willing to take part	(24/10)	21
Determined	(17/3)	168	Talkative	(18/8)	99	Humorous	(8/10)	20
Expressing their feelings	(16/3)	168	Patient	(11/8)	96	Good listener	(2/10)	20
Able to communicate	(15/3)	168	Goal setting	(5/7)	88	Patient	(21/10)	19
Hardworking	(13/4)	161	Reader	(15/6)	85			
Patriot (n=5)								
Committed to national and spiritual values	(13/1)	250	Patriot	(21/5)	156	Defending their faith	(13/7)	96
Patriot	(23/2)	243	Connected to his family	(13/6)	130			

* **CF:** Cognitive Fiction; **PN:** Participant Number; **CCS:** Cognitive Construction Sequence; **CFS:** Cognitive Fiction Score

When the main constructs in Table 3 are analyzed, when the number of cognitive constructs in each main construct and the scores related to their relative importance levels are analyzed in the context of the TCEM Student Profile, the following findings are reached in the context of each main construct:

Morality: There are 64 cognitive fictions in this group. It is the main construct with the highest number of cognitive constructs among the main constructs. According to the relative importance level, the top three highest scores belong to 3 cognitive constructs expressed by 6 different teachers. These cognitive constructs are respectful (290), honest (280), trustworthy (270), respectful (270), trustworthy (240) and respectful (240). The fact that the main construct "Moral" had the highest number of cognitive constructs in the study underlines the importance teachers attach to moral qualities in their definitions of ideal students. The fact that the highest scoring cognitive constructs point to relationship-based values such as "respectful", "honest" and "trustworthy" reveals that teacher perception is shaped by internalized values, trust-based relationships and social courtesy expectations in student behavior. This approach overlaps to a great extent with the definition of a "moral" individual within the framework of the TCEM Student Profile as an individual who is fair, truthful, reliable, respectful and sensitive to social responsibility. This emphasis on moral values in teachers' perception of the ideal student shows that the education system has internalized the mission of raising a character-based person rather than individual achievement.

Wise: There are 3 cognitive fictions in this group. It is the second main construct with the least number of cognitive constructs among the main constructs. The cognitive constructs in this main construct are listed as recognizing weaknesses/strengths (189), idealist (84) and conscious (72) according to their relative importance level. Teachers' definitions of the main construct of "Wise" position the student not only as an individual equipped with knowledge but also as an individual who is self-aware, idealistic and conscious. While this perspective addresses the concept of wisdom on the axis of inner maturity and personal development, the definition of "Wise" in the TCEM Student Profile focuses more on the social interaction dimension of knowledge with the profile of an individual who thinks independently, shares knowledge and has a high aesthetic sensitivity.

Although both approaches are based on similar value bases, wisdom in teacher perception is associated more with the individual's capacity for self-knowledge and living a meaningful life, while the TCEM definition emphasizes the aspects of this capacity reflected in society.

Courageous: There are 6 cognitive constructs in this group. According to the relative importance level, the first three highest scores belong to 3 cognitive constructs expressed by 3 different teachers. These cognitive constructs are brave (42), assertive (28) and assertive (24). In the study, it is seen that the cognitive constructs under the main construct of "Courageous" are concentrated around qualities such as brave, defending his/her rights and assertive. These findings show that in teachers' perceptions of the ideal student, courage is embodied not only as a characteristic reflecting individual self-confidence, but also in individuals who can assume social responsibility, have a developed sense of justice and do not hesitate to express themselves. Attitudes such as students standing up for their rights or showing initiative were associated with a participatory and subjective individual profile rather than a passive one. This approach coincides with the definition of "courageous" in the TCEM Student Profile visual as risk-taking, initiative, supportive and entrepreneurial. Therefore, in teacher perception, courage is not only personal courage, but also the state of being an individual who can take a moral stance in interaction with society.

Estetics: There are 16 cognitive constructs in this group. According to the relative importance level, the first three highest scores belong to 3 cognitive constructs expressed by 3 different teachers. These cognitive constructs are listed as harmonious (208), regular (180) and orderly (168). Cognitive constructs such as harmonious, regular and sensitive under the main construct of "Aesthetics" in the research show that teachers define the concept of aesthetics not only as a formality limited to appearance, but also as the elegance of behavior, the delicacy of relationships and the reflection of emotional harmony. The prominent expressions in this theme reveal a holistic perception of aesthetics that envisions the student as a measured, balanced individual who acts in harmony with his/her environment. This perspective overlaps to a great extent with the definition of "an individual who has aesthetic sensitivity and acts elegantly and moderately" in the TCEM Student Profile at the meaning level. Therefore, teachers' aesthetically oriented expectations are based not only on physical order, but also on the student's display of inner harmony and kindness in spiritual, behavioral and relational areas.

Willful: There are 54 cognitive fictions in this group. It is the second main construct with the highest number of cognitive constructs among the main constructs. According to the relative importance level, the first three highest scores belong to 2 cognitive constructs expressed by 4 different teachers. These cognitive constructs are as follows: responsible (270), responsible (240), recognizes limits (240) and responsible (230). In the study, it is seen that the main construct of "strong-willed" is strongly represented by personal discipline indicators such as responsible, recognizing boundaries and self-controlled. These characteristics, which stand out in teachers' perceptions of the ideal student, point to a strong consensus that the student should be an individual who can direct his/her own behavior, who is determined, planned and has developed internal control, rather than someone who only complies with external rules. In this respect, the "Willful" theme displays a stance that emphasizes the individual's capacity for self-management in cognitive and affective domains. The meaning that teachers attribute to this theme overlaps with the definition of "self-disciplined, determined, persevering and self-directed individual" in the TCEM Student Profile, indicating that education adopts an orientation based on character development, not only on knowledge.

Compassionate: There are 24 cognitive constructs in this group. According to the relative importance level, the first three highest scores belong to 2 cognitive constructs expressed by 3 different teachers. These cognitive constructs are compassionate (200), helpful (175) and merciful (168). In the study, the cognitive constructs of benevolent, understanding, loving and highly emotionally sensitive cognitive constructs gathered under the main construct of "compassionate" reveal that teachers have an expectation of an individual who can establish empathy-based relationships, manage their emotions and act with social sensitivity in their perceptions of the ideal student. The fact that the highest importance scores belong to concepts such as "compassionate" and "benevolent" shows that teachers care not only about academic competence but also about the capacity to establish human contact and develop emotion-centered interactions. This approach overlaps highly with the definition of "empathetic, cooperative, socially and environmentally sensitive individual" that is prominent in the TCEM Student Profile. Therefore, in the teacher's perception, the ideal student is constructed as a multifaceted personality integrated not only with knowledge but also with sensitivity and love-based relationships.

Healthy: There are 2 cognitive constructs in this group. It is the main construct with the least number of cognitive constructs among the main constructs. The cognitive constructs in this main construct are ranked as clean (110) and self-caring (54) according to their relative importance level. The fact that the main construct of "healthy" was represented by only two cognitive constructs in the study shows that this theme is relatively less prioritized in teachers' perceptions of the ideal student. However, expressions such as "clean" and "self-caring" were considered as indicators of the student's self-care and sense of personal responsibility; in this context, it was understood that physical appearance, personal hygiene and order were considered as a complementary dimension of the student profile. This approach overlaps with the definition of "an individual who takes care of himself/herself, respects his/her environment and pays attention to his/her quality of life" in the TCEM Student Profile; therefore, for teachers, being healthy is not only a physical competence, but also a sense of responsibility that is integrated with self-respect and environmental awareness.

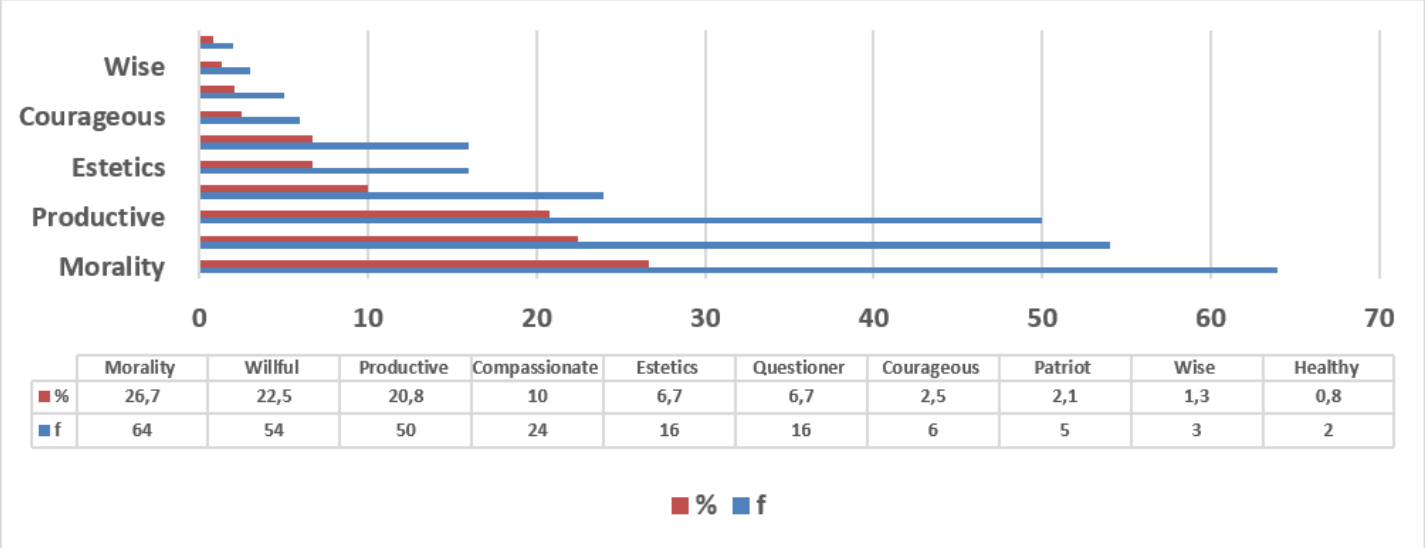
Questioner: There are 16 cognitive constructs in this group. According to the relative importance level, the first three highest scores belong to 3 cognitive constructs expressed by 3 different teachers. These cognitive constructs are listed as intelligent (217), open-minded (168), and open-eyed (147). Cognitive constructs such as intelligent, open-minded and open-eyed under the main construct of "Inquirer" in the research show that teachers attach importance not only to academic achievement but also to high-level cognitive skills such as critical thinking, intellectual flexibility and research orientation in their perceptions of the ideal student. In this theme, it is seen that a profile of an individual who is intellectually active, mentally alert to his/her environment and questions existing knowledge is desired. Teachers' expectations in this direction overlap highly with the definition of "researcher, questioner, problem solver, open to innovation and critical thinker" defined within the scope of the TCEM Student Profile. Therefore, in the perception of teachers, inquisitiveness is not just curiosity; it is also considered as an attitude shaped by cognitive depth and intrinsic motivation for learning.

Productive: There are 50 cognitive constructs in this group. It is the third main construct with the highest number of cognitive constructs among the main constructs. According to the relative importance level, the first three highest scores belong to 3 cognitive constructs expressed by 4 different teachers. These cognitive constructs are as follows: listening attentively (240), hardworking (225), diligent (216) and expressing feelings and thoughts (216). The cognitive constructs under the main construct of "Productive" such as listening attentively to the lesson, hardworking, determined and expressing their feelings/thoughts show that teachers have a multifaceted understanding of productivity in their definition of the ideal student. This understanding includes not only knowledge production based on academic performance but also emotional expression skills, social participation and openness to learning. Teachers do not see productivity as limited to the mere expenditure of effort, but rather integrate it with the individual's intrinsic motivation to develop, the power to assert oneself, and the desire for continuous progress. This approach overlaps highly with the definition of "hardworking, goal-oriented, eager to learn and productive individual" in the TCEM Student Profile; thus, the productive student profile finds a strong place in teacher perception as a development model based on both individual responsibility and social contribution.

Patriotic: There are 5 cognitive constructs in this group. According to the relative importance level, it is seen that the first three highest scores belong to 2 cognitive constructs expressed by 3 different teachers. These cognitive constructs are as follows: devoted to national and spiritual values (250), patriotic (243) and patriotic (156). Cognitive constructs such as "committed to national and spiritual values" and "patriotic", which stand out under the main construct of "patriotic" in the study, show that teachers attach great importance not only to individual qualities but also to social belonging, cultural commitment and value-centered identity construction in their perceptions of ideal students. In line with these constructs, teachers desire students to be individuals who feel responsibility towards their family, country and social values, have a developed sense of identity and exhibit a moral stance. This approach directly overlaps with the definition of "an individual who has a national consciousness, protects his/her values and cares about his/her duties towards the society" within the framework of the TCEM Student Profile. Therefore, in the perception of teachers, patriotism is seen not only as an abstract sense of belonging, but also as a fundamental virtue that the individual should be equipped with values, sensitive to the society and grow up in a responsibility-based integrity.

3.2. Findings Related to the Third Research Question

The distribution rates of the cognitive constructs seen in Table 3 to the main constructs were also examined and the findings are shown in Figure 3.



	Morality	Willful	Productive	Compassionate	Estetics	Questioner	Courageous	Patriot	Wise	Healthy
%	26,7	22,5	20,8	10	6,7	6,7	2,5	2,1	1,3	0,8
f	64	54	50	24	16	16	6	5	3	2

Figure 3. Distribution of cognitive fictions to main fictions

When Figure 3 is examined, the main constructs are listed as moral, strong-willed, productive, compassionate, aesthetic, questioning, courageous, patriotic, wise and healthy in terms of the number of cognitive constructs they have. When the

distribution of the cognitive constructs in Figure 3 is analyzed, it is seen that the themes represented most intensely in teacher perceptions are moral (f=64), strong-willed (f=54) and productive (f=50), respectively. This distribution reveals that teachers attribute great importance to individual moral elements such as value-based stance, responsibility and self-control, and productive qualities such as effort, perseverance and creativity in their expectations for the ideal student profile. In particular, the fact that the main constructs of "moral" and "strong-willed" make up about half of the total constructs shows that teachers primarily emphasize personality development and character education in their definitions of students. In this context, it can be said that there is a high level of overlap between the understanding of "moral, responsible, determined, productive and value-oriented individual" in the TCEM Student Profile and teachers' perceptions. On the other hand, the representation of healthy (f=2), wise (f=3), patriotic (f=5) and courageous (f=6) constructs with relatively low frequencies indicates that these themes have an indirect or secondary importance in teacher definitions; however, this does not suggest that these values are ignored, but rather that high-level personal qualities are prioritized. Therefore, Figure 3 reveals that the teacher perception of the ideal student is structured on the basis of moral integrity, self-control and productivity, and in this respect, it has a significant parallelism with the TCEM Student Profile.

3.2. Findings Related to the Fourth Research Question

Table 4 presents the distribution of the total relative importance scores of the cognitive constructs that 24 teachers included in their definitions of the ideal student within the framework of the 10 main construct themes of the TCEM Student Profile. The main construct-based scores of each participant were calculated both individually and in total to determine general trends and priorities.

Table 4.
Distribution of Total Cognitive Construct Scores According to Main Constructs of TCEM Student Profile

Participant	Ethical	Wise	Courageous	Estetics	Willful	Compassionate	Healthy	Questioner	Productive	Patriotic
1	507				284				396	
2	629				200	231	54	92	20	
3	396		24	154	252	48			126	
4	457		33	110	356			84	184	
5		189			534	81		145	354	
6	763		28	84		81	110		182	
7	660			50	190			112	468	
8	192		42	120	548	271			20	
9	377				753				104	
10	575	156		120	22	200		50	115	
11	740			23	240			96	360	
12	429			20	168	377		217	80	
13	300			23	358				161	65
14	270			208	144	69		144	552	
15	575				217			15	373	
16	81			22	308				756	
17	434			120	444	34			252	
18	357			168	294	147			273	
19	241			40	674	21			300	
20	357			21	386	63			369	
21	807					200			19	156
22	179		81	180	622	110		147		
23	372				140	38		172	108	
24	270		161		174	72		231	345	243
Total	9968	345	369	1463	7308	2043	164	1505	5917	464
Mean	433,4	172,5	61,5	91,4	332,2	127,7	82	125,4	257,3	154,7

Table 4 shows the total and average scores of the cognitive constructs produced by teachers in the thematic context. Accordingly, it is understood that the themes evaluated by the users with the highest total and average scores in the thematic context are morality, willful and productive, respectively. When Table 4 is analyzed, 13 teachers (1, 2, 3, 4, 6, 7, 10, 11, 12, 15, 18, 21, 23) gave the highest score to the moral theme; 6 teachers (5, 8, 9, 13, 17, 19, 20, 22) gave the highest score to the willful theme; and 3 teachers (15, 17, 24) gave the highest score to the productive theme. This reveals that the "moral" theme plays a dominant and central role in teacher perceptions, but in the context of individual differences, some teachers also prioritize the "strong-willed" and "productive" themes in terms of ideal student qualities.

When Table 4 is analyzed, it is seen that apart from these first three themes, there is no other theme evaluated by the teachers with the highest score. The fact that these three main constructs are prioritized in teachers' definitions largely reflects the "individual who is loyal to his/her values, hardworking, self-developing and contributing to society" model emphasized in the TCEM Student Profile. Other constructs (inquisitive, compassionate, esthetic, patriotic, etc.) are considered to be complementary to this construct in cognitive, emotional and cultural dimensions and assume more supportive roles in teacher perceptions. The findings obtained in this framework reveal that teachers' definitions of the ideal student show a strong tendency towards the profile of an individual with a multidimensional but central moral and volitional structure.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The findings obtained in line with the first problem of the study show that teachers' mental representations of the ideal student are largely shaped within a value-based framework. The high frequencies of concepts such as "respectful", "responsible", "honest", "hardworking" and "trustworthy" are noteworthy in terms of revealing that basic qualities such as relational sensitivity, self-control and trustworthiness of the individual come to the fore in teachers' perceptions. This shows that teachers attach importance not only to academic achievement but also to the individual's character traits and social interaction skills in their expectations of the ideal student. In addition, the fact that qualities such as "determination", "loyalty", "benevolence", "helpfulness", "morality" and "perseverance" were also mentioned with remarkable frequency indicates that teachers evaluate the student profile with a multidimensional approach and prioritize affective characteristics as well as cognitive competencies. As a result, the teacher perception in this study points to a student model that prioritizes individual responsibility and is equipped with ethical values that will contribute to social life, as emphasized in the TCEM Student Profile.

The finding that teachers' mental representations of the ideal student are predominantly shaped by a value-based orientation is consistent with both national and international research. Earlier studies in Türkiye show that teachers attribute equal or even greater importance to moral attitudes and a sense of responsibility compared to academic performance in their evaluations of students (Alkış & Güleç, 2006; Erdağ & Karadağ, 2017). More recent research conducted within the framework of the Turkish Century Education Model (TCEM) similarly highlights that the model conceptualizes the ideal student as a "competent and virtuous individual" and places moral character, social sensitivity, cooperation, and responsibility at the center of its pedagogical vision (Arslan & Çelikel, 2025; Karataş, 2025; MoNE, 2024). Analyses of TCEM curricular documents further indicate that the model structures learning outcomes within a virtue–value–action framework, thereby integrating cognitive, affective, and ethical components of student development (Aydın, 2025; Ceylan, 2025).

These findings suggest that values education, rather than functioning as a supplementary component of the curriculum, constitutes a fundamental dimension of teachers' pedagogical orientations. They also demonstrate a strong convergence between teachers' ideal student representations and the official student profile defined in the TCEM, which emphasizes moral values, social responsibility, and cooperative attitudes (MoNE, 2024). In this regard, teachers' perceptions extend beyond purely cognitive outcomes and instead reflect a holistic understanding of student development that includes ethical and socio-emotional dimensions. This aligns with international scholarship underscoring the crucial role of moral and values-based education in supporting students' well-rounded development (Berkowitz, 2002; Elenbaas & Killen, 2021; Elias, Kranzler, Parker, Kash, & Weissberg, 2014; Nucci, 2001). Overall, the convergence between teacher perceptions and the TCEM student profile demonstrates the centrality of value-oriented pedagogical approaches in shaping contemporary conceptualizations of the "ideal student."

Within the scope of the second research question, the thematic grouping of teachers' cognitive constructs in relation to the ten core themes of the Türkiye Century Education Model (TCEM) Student Profile reveals that teachers envisage the "ideal student" not solely through the lens of cognitive competencies, but rather as a multidimensional individual. When the frequency and importance scores of these constructs were examined, the themes of "Moral" (n = 64), "Willful" (n = 54) and "Productive" (n = 50) emerged as more strongly represented than the remaining themes. According to the participating teachers, the ideal student is characterised as an individual with a solid moral foundation, well-developed self-control, high productivity and strong interpersonal values. This orientation dovetails with the TCEM Student Profile, which frames the ideal student as a socially sensitive, ethically grounded, cooperative and responsible individual (TCEM, 2024; Eurydice, 2025). It further underscores the point that education is not merely knowledge-based, but fundamentally a values-based system oriented toward human development. International scholarship likewise emphasises that the development of moral character, social responsibility and productive dispositions is central to holistic student development (Elenbaas & Killen, 2021; Aybek & Oğuz, 2025). In this respect, the alignment between teacher perceptions and the Student Profile of the TCEM suggests that pedagogical orientations in Türkiye are increasingly incorporating holistic, value-centred conceptions of the ideal student.

The findings of the study indicate that teachers' mental constructs regarding the ideal student are largely aligned with the notion of the "competent and virtuous individual" articulated in the TCEM Student Profile. The prominence of qualities such as moral, strong-willed, and productive within teachers' statements demonstrates that the ideal student is conceptualized not merely through academic performance or cognitive competencies, but through multidimensional attributes that include character, self-discipline, responsibility, and social contribution. This finding supports the view that educational processes

function not only as mechanisms for transmitting knowledge but also as value-laden systems that prioritize the moral and personal development of the individual.

Recent research also supports this view. For instance, Gökçeli (2025) in his analysis of character education practices, emphasizes that contemporary educational systems increasingly embed values and ethical dispositions across the curriculum and that teachers perceive moral and social competencies as foundational for students' holistic development. These findings resonate with the TCEM Student Profile, which adopts a holistic framework integrating learners' moral, social, emotional, and intellectual competencies (MoNE, 2023). Furthermore, contemporary evaluations of the model highlight that one of its key strengths lies in its balanced structure, which does not confine student development to cognitive skills alone but embeds character formation and values education as essential components (Arslan & Çelikel, 2025; Yıldırım & Çalışkan, 2024). In this regard, teachers' mental representations of the ideal student appear to be closely aligned with the human profile envisioned by current educational policies in Türkiye.

When the thematic distribution of the cognitive constructs developed by teachers within the scope of the third research question is examined, it becomes evident which dimensions predominantly shape their perceptions of the ideal student. As illustrated in Figure 3, the themes of "Moral" (f = 64), "Willful" (f = 54) and "Productive" (f = 50) emerge as the most frequently emphasized areas. This distribution clearly indicates that teachers conceptualize the ideal student through a value-centered perspective, attributing primary importance to personality-based qualities such as moral integrity, self-discipline and responsibility. The fact that the "moral" and "strong-willed" categories alone constitute nearly half of all cognitive constructs demonstrates that teachers prioritize character development over individual academic achievement, and that their expectations are shaped around ethical, consistent and socially responsible behaviors.

This perspective reflects a strong pedagogical stance that positions the ideal student as a well-rounded individual who embodies not only cognitive skills but also deeply internalized values. Such an approach is highly consistent with the conceptualization of the "competent and virtuous person" articulated in the TCEM Student Profile, which emphasizes moral maturity, willpower, cooperation, responsibility and productivity as foundational qualities of student development (MoNE, 2023). Contemporary analyses of the TCEM also highlight that the model's virtue-value-action framework places ethical and personal development at the heart of the curriculum (Arslan & Çelikel, 2025; Yıldırım & Çalışkan, 2024). In line with these findings, recent research underscores that modern education systems—including those implementing the TCEM—are increasingly foregrounding values education and character formation as integral components of holistic student development (Gökçeli, 2025).

The data obtained within the scope of the research clearly demonstrate that moral attitudes and personality-based characteristics are prioritized in teachers' mental representations of the ideal student. The high frequency of the "moral", "strong-willed" and "productive" themes in teachers' constructs indicates that the individual is expected to be shaped by a value-based stance alongside academic competencies. This orientation is consistent with the values education literature, which underscores that character formation and ethical dispositions occupy a central place in contemporary educational processes (Doğan & Aşlamacı, 2025; Gökçeli, 2025). Recent studies on the Türkiye Century Education Model (TCEM) similarly show that the model is structured around the "competent and virtuous individual" profile and that moral maturity, responsibility and productivity are treated as core targets of student development rather than secondary outcomes (Ateş, 2024; MoNE, 2024).

In this framework, the "competent and virtuous person" model emphasized in the TCEM Student Profile reflects a holistic vision in which cognitive equipment and ethical sensitivity are jointly foregrounded (Doğan & Aşlamacı, 2025; MoNE, 2024). The strong representation of this orientation in teachers' mental constructs provides meaningful empirical evidence regarding how current education policies are translated into classroom-level expectations and perceptions. Thus, teachers' views suggest that character and values education is not merely a theoretical ideal embedded in policy documents, but an operative pedagogical paradigm that actively guides instructional practices and the construction of the ideal student image in everyday school life.

The findings obtained in line with the fourth question of the study reveal once again that teachers' perceptions are shaped within a values-based framework. According to the data in Table 4, the majority of teachers attributed high importance to the themes of "Moral", "Willful" and "Productive" in their definitions of the ideal student, and these three themes stood out by far in terms of total and average scores. In particular, the fact that 13 teachers gave the highest score to the "Moral" theme reveals that this theme has a central position in teachers' minds. It is seen that the basic qualities expected from students by the teachers who were oriented towards the theme "Strong-willed" were shaped around skills related to personal discipline such as taking responsibility, determination and self-control. The presence of 8 teachers who gave the highest score in this theme indicates a strong expectation for the student's capacity to manage his/her own behavior in teacher perception. The theme of productivity is noteworthy in terms of the meaning attributed to both academic and social and emotional production processes. The fact that three teachers defined the ideal student profile mostly through this theme shows that within the framework of individual differences, some teachers attach more importance to the student's active participation in the learning process, expressiveness and intrinsic motivation. The fact that other themes (e.g. Inquisitive, Compassionate, Esthetic, Patriotic) were rated lower by the teachers does not mean that these qualities are considered worthless; on the

contrary, it shows that these qualities assume a complementary and supportive function in the definition of the ideal student. As a result, in this study, it is seen that the concepts of moral consistency, internal control and productive participation are at the forefront in teachers' mental representations of the ideal student, while the other qualities serve the integrity of this triad with a supportive function. This structure overlaps highly with the TCEM Student Profile's understanding of "an individual who is loyal to his/her values, develops himself/herself, and contributes to the society" and reveals that teacher perceptions adopt an educational vision focused on character building rather than individual achievement.

The research findings once again demonstrate that teachers' perceptions of the ideal student are predominantly shaped by a value-based orientation. The prominence of the "moral," "strong-willed," and "productive" themes in terms of both total and average scores indicates that teachers prioritize personality formation over purely cognitive gains when articulating their expectations for students. This perspective is consistent with educational theorists who argue that character development should lie at the heart of the educational process. For example, Ryan and Bohlin (1999) assert that cultivating a values-based environment under the guidance of the teacher is essential for raising virtuous individuals.

Recent scholarship on the Türkiye Century Education Model (TCEM) similarly underscores that contemporary educational reforms in Türkiye conceptualize student development through an integrated framework in which ethical sensitivity, responsibility, self-regulation, and social contribution constitute core components of the "competent and virtuous person" model (Doğan & Aşlamacı, 2025; MoNE, 2023). Evaluations of TCEM further highlight that character and value formation are not peripheral additions but foundational elements structuring curriculum design and pedagogical aims (Ateş, 2024; Şan & Aslaner, 2024).

The alignment between these policy orientations and teachers' mental constructs suggests that value- and character-based perspectives are not merely theoretical ideals but are actively reflected in classroom expectations and teacher judgments. In this sense, the emphasis placed by teachers on moral consistency, self-control, and social productivity shows that contemporary education derives its meaning not only from academic outputs but also from the cultivation of a value-oriented character aligned with national educational priorities.

5. RECOMMENDATIONS

In this study, the cognitive constructs of teachers working within the scope of the TCEM curriculum regarding the ideal student profile were examined, and the findings show that teachers predominantly conceptualize the ideal student through value-oriented, responsible, and personality-based characteristics. These results indicate that teachers' perceptions are strongly aligned with the "competent and virtuous individual" emphasized in the TCEM Student Profile, highlighting those contemporary educational reforms in Türkiye place moral and character development at the center of student formation rather than treating them as supplementary outcomes. In light of these evaluations, several recommendations can be put forward for future research:

Future studies should expand the sample to include different school levels, broader geographic regions, and larger participant groups in order to examine whether value-based perceptions of the ideal student vary across diverse educational contexts. Additionally, research investigating how teachers translate the TCEM student profile into classroom practices, assessment processes, and student guidance would provide important insights into the practical reflections of the model. Longitudinal and mixed-methods designs may also be employed to explore how students' moral, willful, and productive characteristics develop over time within the TCEM framework. Overall, this study offers an initial empirical contribution to understanding how teachers interpret the "competent and virtuous individual" model in practice, and future research will be essential in further clarifying how the TCEM vision shapes school culture, pedagogical practices, and student development.

Research and Publication Ethics Statement

This research was carried out by obtaining the necessary permissions from the Kahramanmaraş Sütçü İmam University Social and Human Sciences Scientific Research Ethical principles and rules were taken into consideration in the collection, analysis, and reporting of data (25.04.2025 / 8 protocol number). The authors declare that all information in this study has been obtained and presented in accordance with academic rules and ethical conduct.

Contribution Rates of Authors to the Article

The authors declare that each author made an important contribution to every stage of the study. The first author contributed 50% and the second author contributed 50% to this article.

Support Statement

This research has not received any funding.

Acknowledgement

We thank the teachers who contributed to this study for their participation.

Statement of Interest

Authors certify that they have no affiliations with or involvement in any organization or entity with any financial interest or non-financial interest in the subject matter or materials discussed in this manuscript.

Using Artificial Intelligence for Writing Assistance

The study utilized DeepL for the translation of the text into English. We declare that artificial intelligence was not used for writing assistance.

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Appendix 1: English version of the repertoire grid form

Gender	F( )	M( )	

A		
Ideal Qualities		Undesirable Qualities

	B Please rank the ideal student qualities you listed above in order of importance, placing the most important one first.	C Based on your observations in your teaching career, identify three students who you believe possess ideal qualities and three students who you believe do not possess these qualities. Write their names in the spaces below. Considering the ideal qualities you have ranked in order of importance, rate each student who possesses ideal qualities and each student who does not possess ideal qualities on a scale of 1 to 6 points.						
		Students you consider ideal			Students you consider unsuitable		
Importance Order	The order of importance of ideal student qualities						
1.							
2.							
3.							
4.							
5.							
6.							
7.							
8.							
9.							
10.							

What are your expectations of the students? Briefly explain.