

THE USE OF BLOG ACTIVITIES TO PROMOTE REFLECTION
IN AN ELT PRACTICUM

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DECLARATION OF ORIGINALITY

I, Esra Bener, certify that

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ABSTRACT

The Use of Blog Activities to Promote Reflection in an ELT Practicum

The current study aimed to promote reflection on teaching practice among eighteen pre-service English language teachers at a public university in Turkey via integration of reflective blog activities into a practicum. Data were collected through archival documents of participants' blog entries, two focus group interviews and two surveys. The framework analysis to detect the depth of reflection in a total of 457 blog entries of the participants revealed evidence of medium or high level reflection in most (61%) of the entries and the highest level of reflection was found in 12% of the entries. The results indicated that the blog activities guided and systematically promoted reflectivity among pre-service teachers and thus might have created for them an opportunity to engage in deeper levels of reflection. Among the types of blog activities, journal writing and self-evaluation activities yielded higher reflection levels. Exchanging online peer feedback, sharing practice teaching experiences, having a larger audience, as well as the blended design of the course and efficiency of blogs were cited in the interviews and surveys as the features related to blogs which might have influenced the extent of reflection demonstrated by the participants. In English language teacher training, this study could provide an example for the utilization of blog activities as an alternative method to enhance reflection by pre-service teachers in a context where English is used as a foreign language.

ÖZET

İngiliz Dili Eğitimi Uygulama Dersinde Yansıtmayı Teşvik Edici Blog

Aktivitelerinin Kullanımı

Bu durum çalışması, Türkiye’de bir devlet üniversitesinde İngiliz dili eğitimi bölümündeki on sekiz öğretmen adayının öğretmenlik uygulaması üzerine yansıtıcı düşüncelerini geliştirmek amacıyla, uygulama dersinde blog kullanımını incelemiştir. Veriler öğretmen adaylarının yansıtıcı blog yazıları ve yorumlarının arşivsel dökümanları, anketler ve hedef grup mülakatları ile elde edilmiştir. 457 blog girdisindeki yansıtıcı düşünmenin derinliğini ölçmek için yapılan yapı analizi sonucunda, girdilerin çoğunda (%61) orta yada ileri seviye ve %12’inde en ileri seviye yansıtıcı düşünme izlerine rastlandı. Sonuçlar, bu çalışmada düzenlenen blog aktivitelerinin öğretmen adaylarını yansıtıcı düşünmeye yönlendirdiği ve sistematik olarak teşvik ettiği; bu yüzden onların daha derin yansıtma ile meşgul olmalarına bir fırsat yaratmış olabileceğini gösterdi. Blog aktivite türlesi arasında, özellikle günlük yazma ve öz değerlendirme aktiviteleri daha yüksek yansıtıcı düşünme seviyeleri sağladı. Mülakatlar ve anketlerin içerik analizi sonucunda çevrimiçi akran dönütü, öğretmenlik uygulaması deneyimlerini paylaşma, daha geniş bir kitleye ulaşma, dersin karma dizaynı, ve blogların verimliliği kılımcılar tarafından gösterilen yansıtıcı düşünmenin derecesini etkilemiş olabilecek blogla alakalı faktörler arasında listelenmiştir. İngiliz dili öğretmeni eğitiminde, bu çalışma, yansıtıcı düşünmeyi artırma amacıyla İngilizce’nin yabancı dil olduğu bir bağlamda blog aktivitelerinin kullanılmasına örnek oluşturabilir.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Statement of the problem

Teachers need to be career-long learners because of the characteristics of the profession of teaching (Grundy & Stanley, 1995). Both the extraneous variables (e.g., contexts, learners, needs, aims, methods, and resources) and the intrinsic ones (e.g., experience, assumptions about learning and teaching, content knowledge and preparation) affect the profession's well-being. There are differences across groups of learners, and the same should be the case with teacher performance. Given the unstable nature of a teaching environment, it is impossible for one to pick a single always safe way up to this slippery slope (Zeichner, 1996). Teachers will need every means at their disposal in order to find the most effective way with different learners and in different contexts. It is wise to try to add every relevant teaching experience to their pedagogical knowledge in order to engage in lifelong professional learning. Besides, they can use this information to improve their teaching skills. Properly reflecting on a teaching experience will turn it into a golden coin which can be added to their treasure whether it is a successful attempt or not since it is possible to learn from failures as well as from achievements.

Ability to reflect on one's profession is counted as one of the features of an effective teacher (Brookfield, 1995; Henderson, 1996; La Boskey, 1994; Rodgers, 2002; Loughran, 2002; Howard, 2003). Teachers who engage in reflection can be more successful in their careers (Clarke & Hollinsworth, 2002). Dewey (1933) states that "open-mindedness, responsibility, and wholeheartedness" are counted as affective

elements of being a reflective teacher (pp. 29-30). Among the practical elements, “solitary reflection, ongoing inquiry, and perpetual problem-solving” are listed (Larrivee, 1999, p. 8). Reflection is a challenging process, considering these demanding elements of reflection (Larrivee & Cooper, 2006). Teachers first need to be affectively ready, eager and sincere to carry on this process. Then they need to allocate some time to look back and think about their teaching experiences, especially on their own. In time, they are supposed to make better sense of their experiences and make more effective professional decisions. Eventually, reflection is expected to turn into a life-long professional habit.

More is expected from novice teachers as they simultaneously “teach and learn to teach” (Feiman & Nemser, 2001, p. 1026). It takes a long time to learn to be a reflective practitioner. In that case, it is necessary to equip teacher candidates with reflective tools from the beginning of their college education. However, in English language teaching (ELT) programs in Turkey, reflective practice is mostly expected from students in the last year of their university education. Starting from the first year of their education, especially during practice-teaching teacher candidates need to be guided to be able to reflect and continue reflecting during their professional lives (Yeşilbursa, 2011); what is more, teacher educators are supposed use every method that they can in order to support this learning process.

Journal writing experiences, videotaped student teaching presentations, class discussions, peer observations, instructor, self or peer evaluations, and concept maps are among the well-known techniques of becoming better reflectors implemented by teacher educators (Sockman & Sharma, 2008). Possessing the power to combine most of these

techniques, weblog as a Web 2.0 tool, is a preferable alternative environment that can support reflective learning in classrooms. Research shows applications of using blogs to support reflection in pre-service teaching (Herring, Scheidt, Bonus, & Wright, 2005; Stiler & Philleo, 2003; Harper, 2005; Kuzu, 2007, Killeavy & Moloney, 2010; Glava & Glava, 2010; Kim, 2011; Shoffner, 2008; Kim & King, 2011; Rinke, Stebick, Schaefer, & Gaffney, 2009; Sharma, 2010; Yang, 2009; Storch, 2005; Wassell & Crouch, 2008). Blogging can provide an additional space where student teachers can reflect on their experiences using different media forms, where they can share their experiences with one another forming a community of practice, that is, a group of people sharing similar experiences and enterprises (Wenger & Synder, 2000). Blogs, which occur in an environment different from a classroom, may present new opportunities for pre-service teachers for further reflective practices. Reflection, when carried out in a community, may offer its practitioners different points of views (Alterio, 2004, p. 322; Storch, 2005), helping them to discover their potentials as reflective practitioners (Vygotsky, 1978).

Based on the theories by Schön (1983) and Vygotsky (1978), the current study aimed to encourage reflective practice among pre-service teachers through the use of blogging. Reflectivity was attempted to be promoted via blog activities and accompanying online commentaries. The level of reflectivity within the online entries of the pre-service teachers was evaluated by using a reflective framework and factors that might have influenced the level of reflection demonstrated by the pre-service teachers were discussed.

1.2 Aim and objectives of the study

The aim of the current study is to promote reflection among pre-service teachers via integration of blog activities in a practicum in order to support and enrich the challenging process of becoming a reflective teacher and to compensate for the limited meeting hours of the course due to practice teaching responsibilities. The objectives of the current study are as follows:

- to encourage the participants who are pre-service teachers to gain a reflective perspective on teaching.
- to find out a more comprehensive teacher training design for the current practice teaching course.
- to enable the participants to engage in reflective activities collaboratively in a community.
- to encourage the participants to learn from each other's experiences.
- to encourage the participants who are pre-service teachers to support each other academically and emotionally during practicum.
- to explore how to integrate a Web 2.0 tool, a weblog, into a practice teaching course.
- to explore how to promote reflection among the participants with online reflective blog activities in a practice teaching course.
- to explore the affordances and efficiency of using a blogging tool for reflective purposes.

1.3 Significance of the study

This study is significant for its potential contribution to the improvement of teacher training programs and to the integration of technology into a class-based teacher training course. It is important in its attempt to measure a complex phenomenon, reflection, and to try to determine the factors leading to a certain depth of reflection. This information is valuable because it can be used to encourage higher reflection levels by pre-service teachers. It is also significant as it discusses the issue in a specific context (a practice teaching course at a public university in Istanbul, Turkey). It attempts to present the findings in an authentic way by providing to-the-point excerpts from student blogs, interviews and surveys. Eventually, the study is important because it exemplifies the reflective use of blogging in a practice teaching course in higher education.

1.4 Research questions and data sets

Given the qualitative nature of the study, the research questions at the beginning of the study were adjusted during different phases of the study. The final research questions and their related data sets are as follows:

1. To what extent do the blog entries by the pre-service teachers demonstrate reflection?

Data sets for research question one:

- i. Quantitative data collected from the blog entries
- ii. Qualitative data collected from the blog entries

2. What features of blog activities might have influenced the extent of the reflection demonstrated by the pre-service teachers?

Data sets for research question two:

- i. Qualitative data from the student interviews
- ii. Qualitative data from the surveys
- iii. Quantitative data collected from the blog entries
- iv. Qualitative data collected from the blog entries

3. What features related to blogs might have influenced the extent of the reflection demonstrated by the pre-service teachers?

Data sets for research question three:

- i. Qualitative data from the student interviews
- ii. Qualitative data from the surveys
- iii. Quantitative data collected from the blog entries
- iv. Qualitative data collected from the blog entries

1.5 Definitions of terms

In order to ensure understanding of some of the key terms, definitions of these terms as they were used in the study are as follows:

Reflection: The current study highlights the definition of reflection by Black and Plowright (2010), which will be quoted in the literature review part.

Reflective practice: Reflective practice is “a questioning orientation toward one’s actions, decisions, and outcomes; and an acceptance of responsibility for one’s professional practice.” (Larrivee & Cooper, 2006)

Blog: “Blog is the common word to describe a weblog or a website where people post thoughts and information about news or topics of interest.” (West, Wright, Gabbitas, & Graham, 2006)

Reflective blog activity: Throughout the current study, a reflective blog activity refers to an online exercise which has an objective to improve the reflective progress of the performer, and one which is performed by following certain steps, requirements and due dates.

Blended course: In this study, a blended course is one which requires students’ presence in both face-to-face class sessions and on an online platform that is the blog environment. Students are supposed to participate in both in-class activities and blog activities.

Pre-service teacher (student teacher): Within the current study, an undergraduate senior student who majors in education, specifically teaching, who takes a practice teaching course (practicum or teacher training course) and who engages in student teaching activities is referred to as a pre-service teacher or student teacher. Sometimes the term teacher candidate is used interchangeably with the terms pre-service or student teacher.

Practicum (practice teaching course): Pre-service teachers take undergraduate courses at the university and they also do their practice teaching at various K–12

schools. Here, practice teaching refers to hands-on experiences of pre-service teachers in their training schools (cooperating schools) via classroom observations and teaching presentations under the supervision of cooperating teachers and faculty instructors. Pre-service teachers have studied many theories related to teaching within their years of university education; however, they have limited teaching experience. Struggling to connect theory and practice is one of the most significant aspects of being a pre-service teacher. An English language teaching (ELT) practicum is the practice teaching course specifically designed for English language education student teachers.

Student teaching: Student teaching is the period of guided teaching experience under the supervision of a cooperating teacher and an instructor supervisor.

Cooperating school: A cooperating school is an accredited local school that works with the university to guide the teaching activities of a student teacher.

Cooperating teacher: A cooperating teacher is a qualified teacher in an accredited school who guides and supervises a student teacher.

1.6 Conclusion

In the first chapter, the rationale for the current study and its significance were discussed. The aim of the current study other accompanying objectives were explained. Research questions were presented. Terms relevant to the current study such as reflection, reflective practice, blog, reflective blog activity, blended course, pre-service teacher, practicum, student teaching, cooperating teacher, and cooperating school were defined. The next chapter will discuss the review of literature for the current study.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

2.1 Introduction

This chapter will review the literature on which the current study is grounded. The key concepts reviewed are reflection and blogging. It will begin with the concept of reflection in teaching. A detailed literature review of reflection in teaching will attempt to form an understanding of the phenomenon. Then, it will move to the other key topic of the study, blogging, dwelling on blogging with reflective purposes in higher education. The chapter ends with the discussion of previous studies on reflective blogging by pre-service teachers.

2.2 Reflection in teaching

Teachers, due to the nature of their profession, deal with differing learner needs, aims, contexts, materials, and schedules. In order to keep up with this change, rethinking educational goals and rearranging educational programs are significant tasks which can only be performed by reflective educators (Burnett & Lingam, 2007). Reflection helps teachers to look back and plan their future teaching based on their evaluations of past experiences (Lin et al., 1995). Furthermore, reflection provides a means to connect theory and practice successfully (Greene & Magliaro, 2004). Taking these into consideration, reflective practice is supposed to be one of the assets of an effective teacher. With some insight and effort, teachers can become reflective practitioners of the type that Schön (1983) talks about. According to him, teachers as reflective practitioners question their teaching experiences regularly; based on the answers, they take action and

reshape their understandings; cyclically, they analyze these reshaped actions and reflect on them as well. Preparing lesson plans, teaching and testing are well-known experiences of teachers which take a long time. If teachers add reflection to these activities, that is, if teachers go one step further and allocate time to reflect on their actions, these experiences will lead to precious insights which will add to their professional growth (Schön, 1983).

The roots of reflection as an educational concept go back to Dewey, the founder of inquiry-oriented learning. Reflection, according to Dewey (1910), is “active, persistent and careful consideration of any belief or supposed form of knowledge in the light of the grounds that support it and the further conclusions to which it tends” (p. 6). Boyd and Fales (1983) define reflection as “the process of internally examining and exploring an issue of concern, triggered by an experience, which creates and clarifies meaning in terms of self, and which results in a changed conceptual perspective” (p. 100). Their definition focuses on the norms by the socio-constructivist approach such as experience and transformation (Vygotsky, 1978). With a similar point of view, Boud, Keogh and Walker (1985) define reflection as “a generic term for those intellectual and affective activities in which individuals engage to explore their experiences in order to lead to new understandings and appreciation” (p. 19). In a more recent definition, Black and Plowright (2010) emphasize reflection as a professional practice and they mention the professional contributions of reflection such as developing professional knowledge and deeper learning within the definition. According to Black and Plowright (2010), reflection is:

the process of engaging with learning and/or professional practice that provides an opportunity to critically analyze and evaluate that learning or practice. The purpose is to develop professional knowledge, understanding and practice that incorporate a deeper form of learning which is transformational in nature and is empowering, enlightening and ultimately emancipatory. (p. 246)

Considering the emphasis of reflection as a professional and a socio-constructivist learning practice, the definition of reflection that belongs to Black and Plowright (2010) is favored in the current study. In order to have a better understanding of definitions of reflection, White, Fook, and Gardner (2006) list four common elements shared by these definitions:

a process (cognitive, emotional, experiential) of examining assumptions (of many different types and levels) embedded in actions or experience, a linking of these assumptions with many different origins, a review and re-evaluation of these according to relevant (depending on context, and purpose) criteria, and a reworking of concepts and practice based on this re-evaluation. (p. 13)

The ongoing nature of reflection is remarked by the term process in these definitions of reflection emphasizing place of action and experience. Dewey (1910) also mentions the importance of affective elements such as persistence and caution. Reflection requires one to consider any belief or knowledge with a questioning mind. Adhering to different perspectives, different contexts and purposes is valued. After a process of reviewing, re-examining or re-evaluating, a re-formation or confirmation of concepts or practices is aimed.

According to Dewey (1910), reflective thought is different, as it is not only linear but also consecutive in that “reflection involves not simply a sequence of ideas but a consequence – a consecutive ordering in such a way that each determines the next as its proper outcome, while each in turn leans back on its predecessors” (pp. 2-3). This

continuing process of reflection enables making more meaning out of experiences. The resulting meaning is open to further changes as well. Rogers (2002), in her article discussing Dewey's work on reflection, emphasizes that reflection is a scientific process involving certain steps as observation, description, analysis and experimentation. The last step, experimentation, may become the next experience to be analyzed for further learning, which refers to Dewey's continuity concept. Referring to Dewey, Rogers (2002) indicates that, along with cognitive discipline, reflection requires emotional discipline as well. These emotional factors are engaging in the experience with wholeheartedness, interpreting it with an open mind and taking action when change is necessary with responsibility (pp. 858-863). Finally, she focuses on the social aspect of reflection by reminding that it can be carried out in solitude or with others.

Terms such as reflection, reflective thinking, reflective practice, and critical reflection can sometimes be used interchangeably because they share some common features (Larrivee & Cooper, 2006). Reflective practice is "an ongoing process of examining and refining practice, variously focused on the personal, pedagogical, curricular, intellectual, societal, and/or ethical contexts associated with professional work" (Cole & Knowles, 2000, p. 2). Taggart and Wilson (2005) define reflective thinking as "the process of making informed and logical decisions on educational matters, then assessing the consequences of those decisions" (p. 1). Farrell (1995) defines critical reflection as "a response to a past experience involving conscious recall and examination of the experience as a basis for evaluation and decision-making, and as a source for planning and action" (p. 95). These definitions involve some of the common elements shared by the definitions of reflection, which have been discussed above

(White et al., 2006). To revise, they talk about a process, a linking, a review, an evaluation, or a reworking of concepts and practice based on this re-evaluation. During these processes of examination such as having an experience, considering an experience or making decisions, there is a link to previous knowledge, experiences, assumptions, beliefs or broader purposes. After a revision, the next step is making an assessment and then making a decision to rework these concepts or to keep them. Action may take place and these decisions may be applied in practice. Furthermore, as reflection is an ongoing process, consequences of this action will also be examined and the whole process may restart.

The place of reflection in the field of teaching became more prominent after the emergence of Schön's ideas of reflective practice and education (1983, 1987). Schön claims an overemphasis of technical rationality, which is the discipline of knowledge and the methods that are believed to make formal, propositional knowledge reliable and valid (1983). He argues that, along with technical rationality, practical knowledge is also essential to practitioners. Practitioners have this practical knowledge, *knowing-in-action*, yet, they may not be able to formulate this in propositional terms (p. 198). He describes knowing-in-action as a visible action revealing that a person knows how to do something such as driving a car. He claims that teachers use knowing-in-action most of the time until it doesn't work; and at that time they may engage in reflection. To him, teachers need to employ their own knowing-in-action, because it is impossible for them to keep teaching while questioning their every decision during a lesson, they just know what to do next as part of their repertoire unless there is an unfamiliar incident, thought or feeling.

Schön (1987) based his perspective of teaching on Dewey's ideas about reflection. According to him, a teacher should be a decision maker and a *reflective practitioner* who analyzes experience, learns from experience and reconstructs meaning repeatedly. The cyclical nature of reflection was stated as to frame and reframe by Schön (1983). Reflection is positioned in practice and the understanding and actions of reflective practitioners on situations cannot always be generalized as rules. His ideas on reflection are supported by other researchers (e.g., Valli, 1992; Zeichner, 1996; Darling-Hammond & Snyder, 2000). Similar to Schön's work, many other books emphasized the importance of reflection in practice (e.g., Calderhead & Gates, 1993; Clift, Houston, & Pugach, 1990; Grimmett & Erickson, 1988; LaBoskey, 1994; Loughran, 1996; Osterman & Kottkamp, 1993).

Reflection, being cognitive and metacognitive in nature, is a complex process. It may be difficult either because of its cognitive requirements such as necessary content knowledge, or because of its demanding metacognitive processes like awareness and self-assessment (Driscoll, 2000; Duell, 1986). Sparks-Langer and Colton (1991) talk about three aspects of reflection: cognition, critical thinking, and narrative inquiry. In the field of education, cognition refers to the field knowledge of a teacher. The second aspect of reflection, critical thinking, is related to beliefs, experiences, values and purposes of teachers. Some researchers believe that reflection is a strategy for developing higher order thinking skills such as critical thinking (Payne, 2004; Rosenshine & Meister, 1992). It requires learners to monitor and assess their own learning which leads to self-assessment. By calling forth prior knowledge, reflection enables more holistic learning. The third aspect of reflection, narrative inquiry, refers to

the teaching and learning stories told by teachers. The narrative quality may increase if a teacher has good cognition and critical thinking skills.

To sum up, beginning with Dewey and Schön's work, reflection has found itself a place in education and teacher training. Supporters of reflective approach in teacher training claim that reflection encourages teachers and pre-service teachers to obtain the habit of making the most of their teaching experiences via many scientific practices such as cognition, analysis, evaluation, critical thinking, experimentation, and meaning reconstruction.

2.2.1 Classification and evaluation of reflection

Schön (1983) classifies reflection by focusing on the time of reflection, such as reflection-*in*-action and reflection-*on*-action. He says that in reflection-*in*-action:

the practitioner allows himself to experience surprise, puzzlement, or confusion in a situation which he finds uncertain or unique. He reflects on the phenomenon before him, and on the prior understandings which have been implicit in his behavior. He carries out an experiment which serves to generate both a new understanding of the phenomenon and a change in the situation. (p. 68)

As understood from Schön's explanation, reflection-*in*-action is performed during an action. For instance, teachers may adjust their ways of doing things by considering the ongoing experiences within the classroom. Teachers may not question their every move in a lesson; instead, they engage in their teaching routines. However, when an unexpected situation occurs, it may lead to immediate reflection regarding the reasons underlying that situation and the actions to be performed to deal with the situation.

Reflection-*in*-action emphasizes the interactive nature of teaching and the necessity for

more sophisticated immediate interventions in the course of teaching. On the contrary, reflection-*on*-action is thinking after the experience type of reflection. This one necessitates looking back after an action, e.g., a teacher reflecting on an incident or a lesson after it has finished. Here, practitioners evaluate the outcomes of their actions considering alternative scenarios. Reflecting on practice increases one's self-awareness, leading to the realization of uncritical assumptions. This type of reflection may enable a practitioner to realize their strengths and weaknesses. Teachers are to engage in both kinds of reflective practice; however, according to Schön (1983), in order to be competent in reflection-in-action, which requires on-the-spot reflection, one should first improve in reflection-on-action, which can be performed after the fact.

Researchers have classified reflection into different categories in terms of its depth or content; and many of those attribute critical reflection as the superior level of reflection (Ho & Richards, 1993; Hatton & Smith, 1995; Jay & Johnson, 2002). Ho and Richards (1993) list two types of reflection, descriptive and critical. According to these researchers, descriptive reflection refers to a belief, an expert's view, explanation of an application, or description of a learning context. On the contrary, they associate critical reflection with detecting problems, justifying, evaluating, offering alternatives, setting objectives and being aware of personal development. Hatton and Smith (1995) list four different types of reflection. Similar to Ho and Richards', in this classification, while the first level, descriptive writing, is merely narrative of events; the second level, descriptive reflection, is self-explaining reasons for an action. The third level is dialogic reflection, which requires stopping and considering with the aim of giving an account of what happened and what might have happened. The fourth level, critical reflection, is being

aware that there are many variables to consider such as other perspectives, contextual differences, historical, ethical and socio-political issues. They attribute critical reflection the ability to consider the results of one's actions, evaluating social, political and/or cultural aspects.

Jay and Johnson (2002) have characterized reflection as having three dimensions; descriptive, comparative and critical. Descriptive reflection involves describing a situation or a problem. Comparative reflection involves thinking about the situation from different perspectives. Jay and Johnson's critical reflection involves looking at various perspectives of a situation or problem and at all of the players involved such as teachers, students, the school, and the community. A number of studies point out that pre-service teachers tend to deal with lower level or descriptive reflection rather than higher level or critical reflection (e.g., Calderhead, 1992; Hatton & Smith, 1995; McIntyre, 1993; Whipp, 2003; Yost, Sentner, & Forlenza-Bailey, 2000). Although higher levels of reflection are favored, lower levels of reflection also have important value because they can be considered as signs of effort and improvement which eventually may lead to higher levels of reflection.

Research depicts a lot of studies aimed at identifying developmental or hierarchical aspects of reflection (Collier, 1999; Dinkelman, 2000; Galvez-Martin, Bowman, & Morrison, 1998; Hatton & Smith, 1995; Kitchener & King, 1981; Rearick & Feldman, 1998; Ross, 1989). Although each has its own drawbacks, they are significant in terms of making reflection visible so that the quality of both pre-service and in-service teacher reflection can be evaluated in a more reliable way. The frameworks have been assumed to refer to two different dimensions of reflection:

“breadth” of reflection and “depth” of reflection (Luttenberg & Bergen, 2008). Breadth (i.e., content) of reflection is influenced by experience and context. It is described in terms of the level of sophistication about teaching issues. At the beginning, reflection is about concerns of the teacher; then, it proceeds to the concerns of students; finally to concerns of all. Prior levels may be labeled as technical or pragmatic, while later levels may be called social or cultural. Some examples of these frameworks are the ones developed by Van Manen (1991), Valli (1992), and Day (1999). These frameworks stem from the work of Van Manen (1977) and Habermas (1971). To illustrate, Van Manen (1991) determines three categories for reflection: anticipatory, active or interactive and recollective reflection. Anticipatory reflection is about expectations we have about the things to happen. This ability enables teachers to be ready, planned or aware during the course of action. Active or interactive reflection, on the other hand, is similar to Schön’s (1983) reflection-in-action which is performed during action. Recollective reflection helps us make meaning of our previous experiences.

Frameworks which focus on the depth of reflection basically stem from the work of Dewey (1933) and Schön (1987). Depth (i.e., form) of reflection is less dependent on context and more concerned about style and form. Depth of reflection is described in terms of the level of thinking, which ranges from description to higher order or critical thinking accomplished without necessarily proceeding in a linear fashion. Two examples of frameworks focusing on depth of reflection are the frameworks developed by Bain, Ballantyne, Packer, and Mills (1999) and Ward and McCotter (2004). They point out the need for a reflective rubric that measures reflection by associating it with student teacher learning. They state the importance of making the valued qualities of student teachers

more visible. The statements in their rubric give student teachers a detailed account of the actions and experiences when they reflect to a certain degree. Ward and McCotter (2004) have used such labels as routine, technical, and dialogical for the first three categories in their rubric. They call the highest level as transformative, adhering to the outcome expected from reflective practice. In the first level, routine reflection, the focus is on self-concerns without doubt or questioning, instead placing blame on other factors. In the technical level, reflection is used as an instrument to solve a problem but does not examine the problem itself. There is no mention of other perspectives and no new insights gained from the reflection. In the third level, dialogic reflection, the process of inquiry and ongoing questioning is emphasized, leading to new insights. The highest level, transformative reflection, carefully examines assumptions and purposes. The writers mention that this type of reflection is rare among pre-service teachers because it takes a longer time than a semester or a year to develop. Similarly, in the framework by Bain et al. (1999), in the first level, reporting, students merely describe or report an experience. While there is no transformation of data in the first level, in the second level, responding, there's little transformation but no judgment. In the third level relating, students relate their experiences with their prior learning and engage in superficial reasoning. In the fourth level, reasoning, we can talk about a high level of transformation of data with a deep understanding. Linking theory with practice and considering alternative scenarios are characteristics of this level. The highest level, reconstructing, is about formulating a personal theory of teaching, taking a stance in complicated issues and planning future learning. To sum up, research depicts example reflective frameworks which focus on depth or content of reflection.

2.2.2 Reflective teaching in pre-service teacher education

Many researchers count reflection as one of the significant features of efficient teachers (Brookfield, 1995; Henderson, 1996; La Boskey, 1994; Lyons, 1998; Zeicher & Liston, 1996; Martin & Double, 1998; Crotty & Allyn, 2001; Rodgers, 2002; Loughran, 2002; Howard, 2003; Farrell, 2007). Richards and Lockhart (1994) say that a reflective approach to teaching is “one in which teachers and student teachers collect data about teaching, examine their attitudes, beliefs, assumptions and teaching practices, and use the information obtained as a basis for critical reflection about teaching” (p. 1).

Reflective teaching is a kind of professional evaluation of one’s teaching experiences in order to discover a way to better their actions and attitudes in that context. In addition to analyzing experiences in terms of their academic aspects, Jay and Johnson (2002) add that cultural, sociopolitical and moral aspects of teaching should also be included in a reflective approach to teaching (p. 80). Farrell (2007) lists benefits of reflective teaching as follows:

- It frees the teacher from routine and impulsive action.
- It helps teachers become more confident in their actions and decisions.
- It provides information for teachers to make informed decisions.
- It helps teachers to critically reflect on all aspects of their work.
- It helps teachers to develop strategies for intervention and change.
- It recognizes teachers are professionals.
- It is a cathartic experience for practicing (and novice) teachers. (p. 7)

Etscheidt, Curran, and Sawyer (2012) warn that teacher reflection must never be allowed to become a very broad and vague term which is impossible to be defined, explicitly taught or fostered. These broad and vague interpretations of reflection can hinder understanding of the effectiveness or ineffectiveness of teacher training programs which

claim to hold a reflective approach to teaching. In order to avoid this, the focus of reflection must be clearly described by teacher training programs and the required skills must be improved with practice.

Reflection has a particular place in pre-service teacher education. First of all, pre-service teachers need to start forming an identity for themselves as future professional teachers. Reflection helps pre-service teachers to shape and reshape the mental model of their own understanding of being a professional teacher (Payne, 2004). Furthermore, it can be a real challenge for pre-service teachers to connect their raw theory knowledge to real-life teaching experiences. Reflective activities can scaffold them to link theory to practice (Brubacher, Case, & Reagan, 1994; Greene & Magliaro, 2004; Levin & Camp, 2002; Valli, 1992).

Many teacher education programs, including the ones in Turkey, require their students to complete a one-year practicum in cooperating K–12 schools during their senior year. Student teachers are supposed to observe their cooperating teachers in classrooms and perform student teaching presentations. This practicum experience accompanied with practicum courses assist pre-service teachers to observe or even try different teaching methods, to develop an understanding of learner needs and classroom management, and link their content knowledge to practice and become future reflective teachers (Snyder, 1998; Holt & Reynolds, 2000; Rosen & Abt-Perkins, 2000; Dinkelman, 2000).

2.2.3 Role of community in teacher reflection

Social constructivist theory (SCT) puts social or cultural interaction and active participation at the heart of the learning process (Phillips, 1995). SCT is based on the cognitive approaches of Piaget and especially Vygotsky. Piaget (1952) listed two alternatives, assimilation and accommodation, which might happen when a learner runs into new information. The learner might relate new information to prior knowledge (assimilation) or transform prior knowledge in the light of the new knowledge (accommodation). One of the premises of SCT is that learners do not passively receive information; instead they engage in either assimilation or accommodation. Another premise of SCT is that learners construct meaning based on their current or prior knowledge. According to Vygotsky (1986), each learner has different prior knowledge, and different experiences; this affects construction of meaning. A learner's social environment, language, and cultural history are interrelated with one's cognitive development. People engage in their surroundings via language and experience. At the same time, socio cultural context affects both the way we think and learn and what we think and learn. This interdependent relationship results in co-construction of meaning. In his revolutionary concept of zone of proximal development, Vygotsky reveals the importance of social interaction in learning. With the aid of more capable others, learners can manage to learn what they cannot accomplish on their own (1978). For this reason, social interaction is a fundamental part of student-centered learning. Making use of SCT premises that are mentioned above, in a learning environment, Nuthall (2002) focuses on the significance of group activities that encourage discussion and analysis among the students. Nuthall argues that this social interaction among the group members

promotes critical thinking. By means of group activities in classrooms, each group member may have a chance to contribute to the quality of discussion and analysis. Beck and Kosnik (2006), discussing pre-service teacher education, argue that activities based on SCT could assist teacher candidates in linking theory to practice. Learning communities, which are formed in teacher education programs, could function as platforms where pre-service teachers share their experiences with their peers and instructors, gain different perspectives and engage in reflection.

Many researchers consider reflection as a social activity rather than an individual one (Greene & Magliaro, 2004; Hawkes & Romiszowski, 2001; Hernández-Ramos, 2004; Kemmis, 1985; Von Wright, 1992; West, Wright, & Graham, 2005) and suggest that interacting with fellow learners or experts may encourage pre-service teachers to compare or contrast their own meaning making processes with others. By viewing different perspectives pre-service teachers can better understand the process they are going through and become better individual reflectors. In a study by Greene and Magliaro (2004), pre-service teachers affirmed that they could make a better analysis of the video-cases with the mentors who were experienced faculty members. Both the pre-service teachers and faculty members accepted that interaction, and the online chats about video-case studies with mentors, helped them better reflect on their own experience because of guidance and encouragement gradually increasing the depth of reflection. Writing their own thoughts and experiences for others to read contributed to their own understanding and learning as well. Additionally, it motivated the pre-service teachers to be more careful about the content of their communication.

In learning communities, members share “a particular way of talking about the phenomena, tools, and sense-making approaches for building their collaborative knowledge with a set of common collective tasks” (Riel & Fulton, 2001, p. 519). Pre-service teachers may become a part of a learning community so long as they work collaboratively with their teacher trainers, peers and cooperating teachers. Learner autonomy is important so that individual learners can each make a contribution of their own to the community. If teacher trainers direct students strictly, learners will most likely repeat the pattern displayed by their teachers. In that case, learners cannot make their precious personal contributions freely to the community. Teacher trainers need to refrain from the directive role and work as a guide so that student teachers can take control of their own learning and become an active member of a learning community (Freire, 2003). When pre-service teachers interact with other interested parties related to their teaching experiences, they learn to express their ideas and tell their narrative stories in a more organized way (LaBoskey, 1993). Research also shows that the quality of reflective thinking increases when pre-service teachers are exposed to different perspectives in a learning community. They may sometimes agree and find justification; or they may sometimes be challenged and accept new ideas (Bain et al., 1999; Francis, 1995; Hatton & Smith, 1995; LaBoskey, 1994; Liston & Zeichner, 1990; Mewborn, 1999; Richert, 1992; Yost et al., 2000).

2.2.4 Promoting teacher reflection

Dewey claims that reflection is a process that is learned (1933). During this process, learners need to be guided to promote their engagement in reflection (Chapman, Radmont & Smiley, 2005; Gravett & Peterson, 2002; Rosie, 2000). However, teacher

education researchers have not come to an agreement on how to promote reflection. Researchers have used different methods so as to increase the quality of reflection. Yost et al. (2000) argue that pre-service teachers need clinical experiences connected to various reflective approaches “seminars, journal writing, portfolios, and action research. Teacher education programs must integrate these elements so that the developmental process of novice teachers’ reflective abilities can be actualized to the fullest extent possible” (p. 47).

One way of promoting reflection is using narrative methods such as reports, portfolios, logs and journals. In order to encourage the cyclical nature of reflection, journal writing is used as one of the best-known ways (Zeichner & Liston, 1987; Collier, 1999). In pre-service teacher education, journal writing simply involves a pre-service teacher writing about their practicum experiences, which may or may not be guided by reflective prompts. It is claimed that journals improve pre-service students’ thinking skills (Good & Whang, 2003). Journal writing may encourage more consistent and deeper thinking about teaching by increasing the quality and amount of inner conversation. As a result of their three-year study, Gordon and Debus (1999) found that reflective journal writing is an effective learning strategy. Through reflective journal writing teachers can find more about themselves and their teaching assumptions (Sockman & Sharma, 2008). Hettich claims that students have positive attitudes towards journal writing because it helps them to connect what they learn at school with their hands-on experience (1990). Additionally, journals can be effective thanks to the guiding prompts given to pre-service teachers. These prompts, which can be in the form of questions, may encourage reflective thinking (McCrinkle, 1995). Bain, Mills,

Ballantyne, and Packer (2002) combined journal writing with feedback method. As a result of their study, feedback related to the depth of reflection on journals of pre-service teachers has provided positive and immediate response. Similarly, Samuels and Betts (2007) used journal writing as a self-assessment tool to improve the quality of reflection of nine pre-service teachers in one academic year. Participants joined weekly peer-feedback sessions to share their reflections on their journals. The collected journal entries were evaluated by using the framework by Bain et al. (1999), and the results indicated that journal writing and self-assessment contribute to the reflective progress of the participants. Participants also reported that peer-feedback sessions are facilitative and motivating; yet, some participants found journal writing time-consuming and tiresome. Gadsby and Cronin (2012) also claim that one disadvantage of journal writing is that there may be too much of a writing burden on students. It should be noted that journal writing goes along with practice teaching. So long as student teachers carry on their practice teaching, they can reflect on these experiences and have a better understanding of them via journal writing. It is even better when student teachers are given opportunities to try teaching during their practicum with student teaching presentations. In this way, they can reflect on their student teaching experiences along with their observations in their journals.

Establishing opportunities to build community may also encourage pre-service teacher reflection. Feedback, observation, interviews and communication with mentors or peers help student teachers gain multiple perspectives. Collaboration, working together and sharing experiences increase student teachers' awareness towards teaching and learning processes (Kraft, 2002). Valli (1997) claims that pre-service teachers can

contribute their learning by peer observation followed by peer evaluation. In a study by Hatton and Smith (1995), pre-service teachers recorded their student teaching videos and discussed them with their peers and instructors. Pre-service teachers stated that the discussions helped them improve their reflective thinking.

The use of video recording, electronic portfolios, and blogging are other methods to promote reflective thinking of pre-service teachers. In video-based teacher training, pre-service teachers watch videos of experienced teachers' teaching or their own teaching, and then they evaluate those performances or learn from them (Rowley & Hart, 1996; Friel & Carboni, 2000; McCurry, 2000; Dymond & Benz, 2006; Hsueh-Hua & Rosenbusch, 2005). In the study by Calandra, Brantley-Dias, Fox and Lee (2007), novice teachers were recorded during their student teaching presentations. After watching their own videos, they wrote reflective lesson analyses and chose critical incidents. Then, they edited their videos by creating video clips showing these critical incidents and uploaded those video clips to their electronic portfolio pages along with their reflective reports. The researchers coded these reflective reports according to the reflective framework by Sparks-Langer, Simmons, Pasch, Colton, and Starke (1990). The results revealed that pre-service teachers who wrote reflective reports along with video scaffolding engaged in deeper levels of reflection than the pre-service teachers who wrote reflective reports without video scaffolding. Another example is the study by Stiler and Philleo (2003), who listed the perceived advantages of using blogs for pre-service teachers' reflective practices. They integrated blogs into two undergraduate education courses. Each student was supposed to set up his/her own blog and make a posting about their thoughts on the content of the course after every class meeting. Data

were collected via two different surveys at the end of the study. Most of the students (70%) said it was easy to use and over half of them said they were satisfied with the tool and recommended it for future use. Based on observations and the surveys, the researchers also reported that the use of blogs positively affected the reflection level of the participants by means of providing space to write their thoughts and encouraging them to reflect on the courses.

Other methods to promote reflection are critical incident analysis and concept mapping. Critical incident analysis as a teaching related activity requires learners to choose an incident from their practicum experience, retell the experience and analyze it by questioning influencing factors, reasons, results and alternatives (Tripp, 1993). Tripp says that incidents may seem typical; however, the questioning process in the analysis stage makes incidents sources of critical thinking and reflection which may lead to professional development. Another method to promote reflection, concept mapping, is using graphical tools for organizing and presenting knowledge (Novak, 1977). They include concepts within circles or boxes, and connections between concepts are shown by linking lines. Beyerbach and Smith (1990) asked seventeen pre-service teachers to use a computer-based concept-mapping program to organize their thoughts about the concept of effective teaching. The study revealed that these students started to use this computer program as a basis for reflection on the teaching and learning processes rather than merely describing emotional reactions. This study indicated that concept maps might have a potential to promote reflection.

All in all, several studies indicate that reflection can be systematically promoted in various ways such as journal writing, portfolios, feedback, class observation,

microteaching, student teaching, video-recording, blogging, electronic portfolios, critical incident analysis and concept mapping.

To conclude this part of the literature view, the main focus of the first part of the literature review was to understand pre-service teacher reflection. First of all, reflection in education was discussed in general terms. Then classification of reflection, evaluation of reflection, reflective teaching in pre-service teacher education, role of community in teacher reflection, and promoting teacher reflection were addressed respectively. The following part of the literature review will focus on the technological tool which will be used to promote pre-service teacher reflection, namely blogging. Use of educational technology and specifically pedagogical blogging in higher education will be introduced. On the whole, reflective blogging by pre-service teachers will be discussed in detail with insight from previous studies.

2.3 Blogging in higher education

Technology has become a daily part of a great number of students' lives. Today's students are even referred to by Prensky (2001) as digital natives who have been exposed to technology for all or most of their lives. Considering this information, a student centered learning approach in education necessitates acknowledging the place of technology in students' lives. Teachers cannot assume that their students will learn the way they did (Prensky, 2001); accordingly, classrooms of the 21st century have already allocated technology as a pedagogical tool. Richardson (2006) points out that not all instructors or learners are necessarily competent in dealing with technology; however, there are many tools appropriate for pedagogical use which may be exploited with a

little effort on the part of the learners and instructors. He adds that learners use technology in their social life; this can be altered to utilizing technology to encourage them in academic participation. When adopted with careful consideration, Web 2.0 tools can be used for pedagogical purposes in higher education (DiNucci, 1999; Grosseck, 2009). For Web 2.0 tools, such as wikis, blogs, microblogs and social networking sites, the web is used not only to get information but also to generate and share information (Maloney, 2007). Web 2.0 empowers internet users to attain more active roles by offering the ability to be sources of online information in many forms of media such as texts, images, links, videos or podcasts. This ability to share information online has already been put to pedagogical use. For instance, microblogging and discussion boards can be used to organize online class discussions or to gather reader response. In addition, wikis are preferred especially for collaborative school projects to organize documents and resources or for collaborative handouts by students taking the same course. Social networking sites can be used as personal learning platforms or to announce events and gather community support or opinions. Moreover, according to Grosseck (2009), blogs can be used as pedagogical tools in higher education for authentic writing experiences; to receive or give feedback among students or instructors via the comment function; to announce homework and assignments; to construct knowledge via sharing with peers, and to get different answers to a question from a group of students.

Social interaction, collaboration, and negotiation are key concepts for SCT which highlights the significance of forming learning communities where people can interact and assist each other with construction of meaning (Beck & Kosnik, 2006). Notably, by using Web 2.0 tools, learning communities do not have to happen only within the boundaries of a classroom. Today information technology offers us virtual platforms

where learners and teachers can meet as members of an online community. Blogs can specifically serve as a platform to build an online learning community where students engage in reflection together with other members (McConnell, 2006). Ferdig and Trammel (2004) add that students will be inclined to analyze and reflect on their writings, given the commentary feature provided by blogs. As the current study aimed to build a small online learning community where participants share and comment on their reflections regarding their academic experiences, blogging as a pedagogical tool was employed. Blogging was the main tool of the current study, so as to have an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon, blogging for pedagogical reasons in higher education will be discussed in detail in the following section.

2.3.1 Features and history of blogs

The term weblog or shortly blog is defined as an online platform which enables “individuals to chronologically record their writing and reflections” (Sharma, 2010, p. 129). According to Richardson (2005), blogs can serve as “collaborative spaces where people negotiate and construct meaning and texts” (p. 90). Blogs, which can function somewhat like websites, make the process of sharing messages and commenting very simple. Since users do not need to know html language, any internet user who can maintain an e-mail address can administer a blog after following a few instructions given by blog hosting sites.

At the beginning, blogs were used mainly to gather selected links. However, after Blogger® started to be used in 1999, weblogs began to expand more quickly. Five years later, Merriam-Webster® announced the word “blog” as its word of the year (2004).

Today there are many blog hosting sites and innumerable bloggers all around the world. Among the other tools and media of the web, especially blogs form a source of countless reading material from cooking and gardening to rocket science. Generally, blogs are used for many purposes such as for news, research, business, journals, and education (Carney, 2009). Actually, Altun (2005) classifies blogs into seven different categories based on their purposes: personal blogs, group blogs, press blogs, project management blogs, library blogs, institutional blogs and instructional blogs.

Blogs share typical features, and individual ownership is one of the most significant ones (Bartlett-Bragg, 2003). The owner of the blog can address readers in one's own way, edit any post, customize the blog's appearance, and decide on privacy settings. Another feature is that a blogger can choose to give hyperlinks to other material on the web (Paquet, 2002). Today, blogs enable us to share pictures, podcasts and videos as well. Apart from ownership; linking and sharing, archiving and reverse chronological ordering are other prominent features of blogs. With the opportunity to archive and reach older posts via links, blogs can log information permanently and readers can check the older posts anytime. The fact that the latest post appears at the top of a page enables readers to reach the latest update easily (Paquet, 2002). Notably, the comment feature of a blog is very crucial in terms of enabling social interactivity between bloggers and their readers. It adds a conversational aspect to blogging. It even helps creating a social network between bloggers and readers (Burgess, 2006, pp. 109-110). This feature of blogs helps keep dynamism by adding interactivity to the basic self-expression feature. Especially while blogging for educational purposes, peers' comments and instructors' comments may serve as valuable feedback (Ellison & Wu, 2008). Thanks to the

comment feature of blogs, feedback and interaction facilitate sharing knowledge and building up a social context for collaborative learning.

2.3.2 Blogs as pedagogical tools

In higher education, papers or articles are the most common methods employed for comprehensive writing. Following papers and articles, blogs are also functional in terms of comprehensive writing. Blogs allow combining writing skills with critical thinking and creativity since bloggers need to activate either their imagination or thoughts in order to write something on their blogs in their own words. While discussion boards and e-mails can be used for academic writing as well, research suggests that blogs are preferred over discussion boards and e-mails for academic writing activities due to blogs' individualistic and organizational features (Herring et al., 2005). Trammell (2004) lists four benefits of blogging as a pedagogical tool:

- Increasing participation and sense of community of practice
- Attracting attention to the subject matter and leading one's own learning
- Helping students to become better informed by reading, filtering and posting
- Making room for different viewpoints

Paulus, Payne and Jahns (2009) have reported that blogs can help teachers to contextualize their instruction. Blog posts assist teachers in understanding the nature of their students' learning processes and adjusting their teaching styles if necessary. Moreover, blogs can be a platform where students can continue their learning as they offer the opportunity to ask more questions and have further discussions (p. 13).

Bartlett-Bragg (2003) identifies many different kinds of blogs used for educational purposes. The first one is group blogs. These blogs have multiple users who share ideas and engage in a discussion. For instance, a group of academics may share articles or essays and readers leave their related comments. The second type is publishing writings which are used to share essays online. These blogs may be used to publish students' work so that they can reach other audience. The third type of educational blog is field notes and journals of professional practice, where learners use blogs to collect and publish their writings related to a practicum. For instance, health and nursing students keep blogs to write about their field experiences; pre-service teachers use blogs to write about their practice teaching experiences. Another type is personal opinion publishing. Here, academics share their personal opinions on topics related to their expertise or interest in education, current trends or controversial issues as short essays or articles. Writers may have an intention to take part in an academic debate with their readers. The fourth type of blog is research journals. These blogs are used as online spaces where researchers can record and share their incomplete or informal writings before formal publishing. Learning journals constitute another type of educational blog. This may involve using a blog for collecting student work as a learning journal. Students may be required to administer their own blogs as a course requirement. Finally, Downes (2004) adds that class blogs can be used to announce homework, list readings, summaries, exercises or useful links, to organize discussions or workshops. To sum up, blogs are used in many ways for pedagogical purposes by educators since they especially encourage comprehensive writing along with several other benefits.

Integration of blogs into a class-based course can be an example of blended learning which is defined by Garrison and Kanuka (2004) as a planned combination of face-to-face and online learning experiences. They say that blended learning has both simple and complex features. It is simple because basically it is comprised of synchronous (e.g., face-to-face) and asynchronous (e.g., text-based internet) learning experiences. The complexity, on the other hand, lies in its applicability, implementation and design selection. They favor blended learning by claiming that “with the combination of synchronous verbal and asynchronous written communication in the context of a cohesive community of inquiry, blended learning offers a distinct advantage in supporting higher levels of learning through critical discourse and reflective thinking” (p. 98). There have been many ways to integrate blogs into class-based courses. Previous studies have shown that blogs can function as an online course management tool (Lin & Yuan, 2006), a discussion forum (Yang, 2009; Deng & Yuen, 2010), an electronic portfolio (Dippold, 2009; Farmer, Yue, & Brooks, 2008), a group blogging space (Philip & Nicholls, 2009), an electronic learning diary (Glava & Glava, 2011), a platform for uploading podcasts (Kim & King, 2011), a project-based learning environment (Jimoyiannis & Angelaina, 2012) and an arena for reflective discussion by pre-service teachers (Stiler & Philleo, 2003).

2.4 Reflective blogging by pre-service teachers

Blogging in higher education has been the focus of many previous studies. The study by West et al. (2006) is significant in terms of showing the real challenges experienced while integrating blogs in a practicum course by both pre-service teachers and instructors. It might give an idea to future researchers who want to implement blogs in

pre-service teacher education. In this study, 86 students majoring in the field of teaching registered in the instructional technology course and they were paired and expected to read only their partner's blogs and the instructor's blog, and comment on them. The researchers did not utilize strict guidelines since they thought that blogs were individual by nature and they should not be governed by strict rules. The content of the blogs consisted of practicum experiences of the pre-service teachers; yet, students were free to decide the frequency and length of their postings. The assessment was made by the course instructors at the end of the semester via interviews with students. The results revealed that the participants mostly considered blogging helpful and enjoyable. However, both the instructors and the participants experienced difficulties regarding how to use the tool effectively. Most students did not post or comment regularly; as a result, some students felt isolated. The participants said that blogs were supposed to be more effective and helpful but this could not be accomplished. The instructors said that activities should have been structured in a more detailed way so that the students could be guided better. The instructors also mentioned the difficulty of monitoring and analyzing the large quantity of student posts. The findings of this study may give some valuable information to the researchers who are interested in incorporating blogs into undergraduate courses.

In a qualitative study by Kuzu (2007), views of pre-service teachers about the course blog were investigated. The aim of blogging was to support the understanding of the course content, maintain social interactivity and provide a space to do the related activities. Thirty undergraduate students, enrolled in the Information Technology in Education course, participated in the study which lasted fourteen weeks. Blogging was

introduced to the participants on the fifth week and the course blog included the instructor's posts and participants' commentaries the numbers of which ranged from 0 to 17. Participation in blogging was voluntary and it was limited to the students who took the course, to make the participants feel more secure. Eighteen of thirty students created their own blogs on a voluntary basis. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews. According to the findings, 80% of the participants made positive comments regarding the instructional and interactional use of blogs. The results showed that interaction (communication with peers and the instructor, discussions on the course content, and having an opportunity to ask about unclear points from the course content) was the most frequently favored theme regarding the positive sides of having a course blog.

Deng and Yuen (2013) aimed to understand the perceptions and motivation factors of student teachers in terms of voluntary academic blogging. Two classes participated in the study and the same instructor taught both of them. Class A consisted of 28 graduate students participating in an immersion program. Class B comprised 22 senior students who were pre-service English teachers. The main aim of blogging for Class A was to share their experiences about the immersion program. For Class B, the main aim of blogging was to support the documenting and reflection of practice teaching experiences while increasing interaction among the pre-service teachers. In both classes blogging activities which lasted for eight weeks were voluntary, open-ended and loosely structured. Although the nature of the blogs was less academic and blogging was a voluntary part of the course, both researchers and instructors made an effort to encourage the students by designing blog activities and supporting them. Data sources

were the content of the student blogs, individual interviews and a questionnaire. The results of the questionnaire about prior experiences with web-based technologies showed participants' familiarity with the technologies. Theme coding was carried out post by post, searching for the overall purpose by analyzing the salient theme (Herring et al., 2005); the inter-rater agreement was high (0.86). After monitoring participants' blog activities, the researchers found that class A made a total of 26 blog posts and one comment; on the other hand, class B made 75 blog posts and 62 comments. At the end of the study, the researchers concluded that the perceptions of the student teachers were affected by individual, social, contextual and academic factors. In Class A, participants had known each other for only one month before starting to blog; however, in Class B, participants were senior students, all in the same class. The fact that the students were already well acquainted as classmates in Class B, contributed to the stronger sense of online community. The casual pedagogical design, lack of time, reluctance to blog, the open nature of blogging technology, unwillingness to talk about themselves in public, being uncomfortable with the tool were counted as factors influencing the engagement in blogging. Regarding the information and insights it contains, this article can be a rich source of information for those who would like to integrate academic blogging as part of a college-based course.

Fisher and Kim (2013) explored the use of blogs by pre-service language teachers in two different countries, the UK and the USA. They investigated how pre-service language teachers use and understand the affordances of blogs for professional development. Data were collected via individual interviews and blog entries of pre-service teachers over eight to nine months. In the UK setting, the entries of the

participants showed analytical reflection on professional development and professional identity. While writing an entry, pre-service teachers could take a step back and have a look at the event with a holistic view. This was counted as the affordance of blogs by the student teachers in the UK setting. On the other hand, in the USA setting, rather than emphasizing individualistic features of blogging as in the UK setting, sharing and collaborative learning were among the favored affordances of blogs. The participants used the blog to share their ideas and materials and to learn from each other. Despite these discrepancies, there were common themes. Researchers concluded that blogging encouraged both groups of participants to generate new understandings with the blog working as a thinking device (Lotman, 1988). In both settings, pre-service teachers expressed that this experience of blogging might have positive implications for their own teaching.

Hernández-Ramos (2004) used an online discussion forum along with individual blogs as tools for enhancing reflective writing by fifty-two pre-service teachers enrolled in the Instructional Technology in Education course in a teacher preparation program. Students were supposed to post regularly on their own blogs and participate in online discussions which were related to the course content. Students also met two hours a week in class. The results were evaluated quantitatively by calculating the frequency of the posting messages and qualitatively by discourse analysis of the posting messages. The researcher claimed that the online posts enabled him to learn views of some students who might not have spoken up in a class meeting. He said that this also gave teachers a chance to observe their students' intellectual progress. Even though benefits were expressed by the students, online discussions did not develop as the researcher expected.

Students were required to post a reply to the instructor's topic, and to at least one of their peers' postings. All students replied to each of the three postings by the professor, only about half of them replied to a peer's posting, and fewer than five posted in reply to a peer's reply or, in other words, engaged in online conversation. Hernández-Ramos suggested that students might have been overwhelmed by the use of two different technology tools, course requirements and other obligation, or maybe simply one semester was not enough to appreciate the affordance of the tools.

In a phenomenological study by Xie and Sharma (2005), nine PhD students enrolled in a graduate level course offered at an American university kept blogs as part of a graduate course. The researchers stated that they preferred to gather qualitative data via interviews due to the highly personal nature of blogs. The participants expressed that blogs helped their learning by offering different perspectives from their peers or instructors. They claimed that blogging helped them to organize their reflections. With regard to this, participants could follow their own improvement. Researchers concluded that a more guided and structured introduction to the technology would yield more appropriate usage. Further exploration deemed to be necessary on the issue of whether blogs could potentially encourage a sense of community and about dealing with privacy concerns properly.

In 2006, Scaletta administered a survey to 125 undergraduate students from different departments of the university who kept blogs. The survey included items about perceived blog audience, causes for blogging, and the extent of their blogging activities. One of the significant findings of the study was about perceived blog audience; most of the students (77%) reported a small number of readers, 30 or less. The researcher

concluded that the participants did not think that they broadcasted to a large anonymous audience; instead they were in communication with a small group who read each other's blog postings. This study showed that, contrary to common belief, privacy concerns while blogging which would discourage use of blogs in higher education was not a big issue for students.

2.5 Evaluation of online reflection by pre-service teachers

Several attempts have been made in order to evaluate the reflectivity of pre-service teachers on online platforms. For example, Xie, Ke and Sharma (2008) adopted an empirical design to evaluate the effect of peer-feedback on twenty seven political science doctoral students' reflectivity in blog based online journaling. The control group and the experimental group students both took the same education by the same instructor throughout the semester; additionally, they wrote online journals on their blogs. While the experimental group gave and received peer and instructor feedback, the control group went on blogging without any feedback. At the end of the semester two samples of online journals, one being from the second week and the other being from the last week, were chosen and coded, using a coding scheme for each participant. Both groups improved in terms of their reflectivity, which indicated that blog based online journaling with or without feedback provided a means for the participants to improve their reflectivity. However, the results were unexpected because the group which did not give or take any feedback scored higher than the feedback group considering the reflective thinking levels. The researchers concluded that the nature of feedback affected the results since the specific feedback provided in this research was descriptive in nature rather than constructive. This study showed the importance of the nature of feedback

given to pre-service teachers. Researchers reported the importance of encouraging pre-service teachers and instructors to be constructive rather than descriptive while giving feedback.

Yang (2009) analyzed the use of blogs as a discussion forum in order to promote critical and collaborative reflection. Two blogs were set up by two instructors to be used as discussion forums by 43 student teachers at a foreign language education department in Taiwan. The collected data included messages and comments on the blogs. Data were analyzed using the framework by Ho and Richards (1993) to discriminate critical versus descriptive reflection. According to the findings, most of the data were descriptive while 38% of the blog content was critical in nature. This research demonstrates that simply using the technology is not enough to enhance critical reflective thinking and the researcher suggested that instructors should find ways to enhance critical thinking more actively by using this tool.

Wopereis, Sloep, and Poortman (2010) made use of blogs in their study to enhance the reflective practice of 20 pre-service teachers of different departments from two teacher-training institutions in the Netherlands. The researchers devised a blog network where blogs were connected to each other through Really Simple Syndication feeds and links. Students possessed their own blogs and followed other students' blogs and the course blog. During eight weeks of the practicum, student teachers were asked to write their reflections on their blogs and comment on their peers' blogs. Two trained raters scored the content of the blogs using a specific coding system. At the end of eight weeks, students were interviewed in groups and filled in a questionnaire. It was concluded that pre-service teachers appreciated the opportunity to read others' ideas,

give or take feedback, and to gain different perspectives. Blogs were found to be appropriate tools to maintain structured reflective writing. However, researchers reported that most of the reflections were at the survival level, e.g., dealing with students who make noise during the lesson. Though students took formal instruction on higher levels of reflection, thematic, sequential, or spiral reflection were rarely observed. There was not a lot of feedback available to be recorded; they stated that the fact that students met in person regularly could have caused this. Researchers stated the need for longitudinal studies on this matter so that the change in reflection ability could be recorded.

Sharma (2010) carried out two sets of implementations in an undergraduate course by incorporating blogs for reflective purposes into two graduate courses. The first implementation was exploratory to build the second one on. The results of the first implementation showed that not all the participants blogged regularly. In the latter one, more guidance and structure were provided which led to more consistent writing; however the posts were generally low in reflectivity level and there were minimal blog comments. Most of the students' blogged only for their course grade without understanding the importance of their blogging activities. With respect to the results, some of the deterrents were "the novelty of the technology, the lack of specific guidelines on how and why to blog, the intrusion of other deadlines, and the presence of established modes of reflection" (p.139).

Too (2013) examined the reflections of 25 pre-service language teachers in Malaysia on blogs and online forums. The study was carried out in two stages. Firstly, pre-service teachers were asked to reply to four prompts in an online forum. Two of the

prompts required students' reflections on the pedagogy course they took. In addition, they were asked to write two replies to their friends' entries. After a one-month break, the second stage of the study included ten reflective entries on a drama pedagogy course posted to a blog created by each participant. This time students were not given any prompts. A total of 286 entries were collected and analyzed by using a framework developed by the researcher based on how well the participants organized their thoughts in writing. The framework included descriptors of five levels of reflection inspired by earlier reflective frameworks of Moon (1999), Hatton and Smith (1995), and Ward and McCotter (2004). The first level, identification, included description, narration and expression of feelings. While a learner in the second level association does not provide examples from their experiences or texts, in the third level, integration, learners need to provide examples to support their positions. In the fourth level, analysis, comprehensive analyses accompany examples to support learners' standpoints. The highest level is called transformation, which requires a change of perspective or adoption of a new approach as a result of reflective thinking. Data were also collected from interviews and document analysis of the course syllabi. A total of 40% of the entries showed reflection at the third or fourth level. Additionally, 23% of the total weblog entries were labeled as the lower levels of reflection and 27% of the reflections were categorized at the highest level. One outcome of the study was the reflective framework designed by the researcher. Another outcome was the importance of matching the learning outcomes and the syllabi in order to encourage deeper levels of reflection by the student teachers.

In the current study, blogging was used for reflective purposes by a group of senior pre-service foreign language teachers at a Turkish public university as part of a

blended practice teaching course. Instead of working individually, working in a learning community, sharing of practicum experience within the community increased awareness of pre-service teachers (Putnam & Borko, 2000). Furthermore, by hearing different students' perspectives and resources, mentors and classrooms, they had access to more information than they could reach on their own. Poling (2005) claimed that blogs could enhance learning by enabling peers to help each other, promoting reflection, aiding outside class learning, helping to create better work, and supporting professional communication outside of class.

2.6 Conclusion

To conclude, the review of literature focuses on a reflective practice approach which has had a considerable effect on teacher education since the work of Dewey and Schön in the field. As a method to promote reflection among pre-service foreign language teachers, blogging is emphasized. Detailed discussion of blogs gives a clear understanding of their pedagogical affordances. With the insight gathered from previous studies on blogs as educational tools, a guided and structured way to use the tool is favored. Studies on the integration of blogs into courses generously model how to or how not to integrate blogs into the current undergraduate teacher training courses. When it comes to evaluation of reflection, the discussion of previous reflective frameworks and the studies applying several of those frameworks enlighten the way. In short, the discussion of a conceptual framework for reflection and blogging serve as the basis on which the following sections of the study are built. On the foundation of the review of the related literature, the following section will discuss the methodological details of the current study.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

The methods and procedures employed in the present study are reported in this chapter. It elaborates on the design of the study, setting, participants, tools, data collection methods, and procedures. Then it dwells on the researcher role, data sources and data analysis. Next, it gives account of the methods to increase trustworthiness in this research. It ends with the summary of the chapter.

3.2 Design of the study

The present study basically aimed to contribute to the understanding of developing reflective thinking in pre-service teacher education through the use of blogging. The issue of developing reflective thinking in pre-service teacher education is a versatile and prolonged process. The fact that this issue needs to be explored in detail using multiple data sources in its own context leads to favoring a case study design. Additionally, the constructivist approach, emphasizing the importance of social construction of reality, which is central to this study, is also in line with the case study approach. Yin (2003) states that case study approach is an appropriate research method when the boundaries are not clear between the phenomenon (reflection) and context (pre-service teacher education); and when you want to cover contextual conditions because you believe they are relevant to the phenomenon under study. Taking these into consideration, a case study research design was adopted for the current study.

Qualitative research is a type of scientific research that seeks to explore phenomena by using a relatively flexible and iterative design. It exploits open-ended question format and mainly textual data format instead of numerical data. A case study, which can employ either qualitative or quantitative research design, is an empirical method which has the purpose of investigating a contemporary phenomenon in its context. It is an in-depth study of a specific situation. Rather than fully answering a question, it offers insight and elaboration which may lead to the creation of new hypotheses. Data are collected using methods allowing in-depth inquiry such as interview, observation, and content analysis (Yin, 2003).

In the current study three types of data collection methods were employed. An initial survey was administered to understand the characteristics of the participants. Archival documenting of the blog entries and focus group interviews were two other methods utilized. At the end, an open-ended final survey was administered. Qualitative data as in the forms of document and self-report, quantitative data as in the forms of ordinal levels, frequencies and percentages were collected. The selection of mainly qualitative data collection methods enabled the researcher to explore the phenomenon in its context in a detailed way (Marshall & Rossman, 1999). Additionally qualitative data were quantified by using a framework approach in order to have a better understanding of the reflection phenomenon.

3.3 Setting

The context of the study was a practicum course named Seminar on Practice Teaching, which is offered to senior students studying at a public university's department of

foreign language education, in İstanbul, Turkey, in the spring semester of 2013. This course is actually the combination of both the practicum course called Practice Teaching and the seminar on the practicum course called Seminar on Practice Teaching. The practice teaching course coexists with the seminar course since the practice teaching course calls for pre-service teachers to do the necessary field practice and the seminar course calls for them to reflect on their practice teaching experiences. In the Practice Teaching course, pre-service teachers complete their practicum in their cooperating schools; and simultaneously, in the Seminar on Practice Teaching course, they meet in class and they learn more about practice teaching and discuss practicum experiences. The Practice Teaching course includes ten to fifteen hours of class observation, six student teaching presentations, and writing a story of their practicum. At the same time, the Seminar on Practice Teaching course requires pre-service teachers to complete a portfolio consisting of five journals on the practicum, three reaction papers on field related articles, an evaluation of three peer presentations, an evaluation of three supervised student teaching presentations and a report on participation in professional development activity such as a workshop or seminar. In addition, students are supposed to participate in the course weekly for two hours and make one presentation on a given topic.

In the current study, some adaptations were carried out in the areas of course design and requirements. While the Practice Teaching course requirements and design remained the same, the Seminar on Practice Teaching course went through some adaptations. The course was divided into two components, which were weekly two-hour class meetings and presence on the online platform. In-class work, comprising 25% of

the overall course grade, included one reaction paper on an article related to field of teaching, an in-class presentation on a topic assigned from the course syllabus, and a report on participation in professional development activity such as a workshop or seminar. Online work comprising 75% of the overall course grade, included fourteen reflective blog activities to be completed by the end of the semester (see Appendix A for the course requirements). Several of these blog activities were adapted from traditional assignments of the course such as self-evaluation or peer evaluation of student teaching presentations and journal writing. Detailed information related to blog activities will be given in the tools section.

The course took place in the last semester of the teacher training program. It was defined on the school website as follows: “observation and supervision of carefully prepared student teaching in selected schools followed by critical appraisal” (Boğaziçi University, 2014). As part of the course, student teachers are assigned to different cooperating local K–12 schools where they complete their training at two or three different grade levels under the supervision of their practicum instructors at the university and cooperating teachers (teachers of cooperating schools who supervise student teachers). They are supposed to complete three supervised student teaching presentations and three peer observations within the second semester at their cooperating schools, preferably at different grade levels.

The course originally comprised two segments: field experience in cooperating schools and on-campus class meetings. In other words, along with school experience, course attendants meet weekly each Thursday for two hours. The courses start with the presentation of the weekly topics such as teacher beliefs, instructional technology,

reflective teaching practice, novice teachers, and the like (see Appendix B for the course syllabus). The course usually continues with discussions related to school experiences of pre-service teachers who spend a great deal of time in their cooperating schools during their practicum. However, due to the short class time (two hours a week), pre-service teachers can discuss their school experience with their peers and learn from each other to a limited extent. A blog component for the course is mainly added by the present study to compensate for this inadequacy. As a result of this addition, the setting of the current study, the practicum course comprised three segments: field experience in cooperating schools, on-campus weekly class meetings and online presence in the students' individual course related blogs.

3.4 Participants

Participants of the current study were 18 pre-service English language teachers at a prestigious public university in Turkey, and they were enrolled in the Seminar on Practice Teaching course in the spring semester of 2013. The course lasted for 16 weeks from February 21, 2013 to June 15, 2013. The participants were seventeen female students and one male student whose ages ranged from 21 to 24, with an average age of 22. All participants had passed their university's English proficiency exam before they started studying in their departments, where the language of instruction is English. Furthermore, they all had already taken at least two educational technology courses in the previous years of their university education. The participants were pre-service teachers, so they were doing their practicum as part of their curriculum. The participants were in their second term of practice teaching and doing their practice teaching in private K–12 schools in Istanbul, Turkey. In order to protect their privacy, each

participant and each cooperating school was given a pseudonym and their real names were not mentioned at all. It should also be noted that throughout the study participants were occasionally referred to as pre-service teachers. The information on the participants is illustrated in Table 1.

3.5 Tools

There were two tools used in the study, a blogging tool and blog activities. They will be discussed separately in the following section.

3.5.1 Blogging tool

The present study necessitated a blogging tool which would allow all the participants free individual online spaces. One of the most well-known blog hosting sites, Blogger®, was chosen for the current study due to being convenient, practical, free and easily compatible with Google® e-mail accounts that most of the participants already had. The participants used this space to share their reflections on their practicum and make comments on their peers' posts. It was very significant to label the blog posts in order to recognize and reach each posting separately and easily. It was necessary that the blogging tool offer categorization of the blog posts so that anyone could reach any entry related to any activity easily. Moreover, the tool was required to offer easy navigation both within a user's blog and among all the participants' blogs along with the course blog. There were several free blogging tools available and most of these tools could support the needs of the study. Eventually, Blogger®, one of the most widely used blogging tools, was selected and put to use.

Table 1. Participants of the Study.

	Pseudonym	Age	Sex	Nationality	Cooperating K-12 School
Participant 1	İpek	24	F	Turkish	Cooperating School 1
Participant 2	Merve	21	F	Turkish	Cooperating School 1
Participant 3	Gül	22	F	Turkish	Cooperating School 1
Participant 4	Dilek	23	F	Turkish	Cooperating School 1
Participant 5	Eren	21	M	Turkish	Cooperating School 1
Participant 6	Nil	22	F	Turkish	Cooperating School 2
Participant 7	Ceren	22	F	Turkish	Cooperating School 2
Participant 8	Serap	22	F	Turkish	Cooperating School 2
Participant 9	Mine	21	F	Turkish	Cooperating School 2
Participant 10	Sıla	23	F	Turkish	Cooperating School 3
Participant 11	Gaye	22	F	Turkish	Cooperating School 3
Participant 12	Büşra	22	F	Turkish	Cooperating School 3
Participant 13	Melisa	22	F	Turkish	Cooperating School 3
Participant 14	Sare	22	F	Turkish	Cooperating School 3
Participant 15	Elif	23	F	Turkish	Cooperating School 4
Participant 16	İnci	22	F	Turkish	Cooperating School 4
Participant 17	Neva	21	F	Turkish	Cooperating School 4
Participant 18	Seda	22	F	Turkish	Cooperating School 4

3.5.2 Blog activities

Johns (2004) claims that guidance is essential if reflective progress is desired. Given that pre-service teacher reflection is desirable in teacher education, one way of achieving it is through systematic guidance and practice (West et al., 2006). This guidance may include a series of activities that will lead practitioners to review their rationale for their actions. For this reason, before the blogs were set up, fourteen blog activities were prepared by the researcher under the supervision of the advisor instructor and course instructor. In organizing these blog activities, Johns' (2004) model of systematic reflection was used (see Appendix C for Johns' model of systematic reflection). Johns' model is relevant, as it illustrates the components and thought processes that lead to reflective learning. The questions in the model inspired the core prompts within the activities implemented in the current study and the activities were organized in a similar way to this model. At a cognitive level, participants' were asked describe their experiences with influencing factors. Then, at a metacognitive level, they were to think back on their experiences, make evaluations, discuss alternative strategies, dwell on their learning, plan for the future and give feedback to their peers.

The activities were adapted from the paper-based ones which had been assigned in the practice teaching course in previous years and also adapted from the early studies in the field (Gibbs, 1998; Tripp, 1993; McCurry, 2000; Rosenstein, 2002). The main purpose of organizing blog activities was to get the pre-service teachers to practice reflective thinking skills and to improve the depth of their reflective thinking in a structured way. With detailed guiding questions, descriptions, due dates, and

commentary requirements, the current blog activities were specially designed to lead pre-service teachers to reflect on their practice teaching in a planned way.

The current blog activities were also organized in a way to encourage diversity among the contents of the reflective entries expected from the participants. The concern of teacher trainers' is not only the depth of reflective thinking but also the content of it. While doing their practice teaching, pre-service teachers are expected to focus on many topics related to teaching such as classroom management, activity design, learner needs analysis, time management and so on. When their reflective entries show diversity in terms of their content, their practicum may be more thorough in terms of preparing pre-service teachers for their professional lives. Considering these, the blog activities were organized in three different categories in terms of their content: thematic activities, peer-related activities and self-related activities (see Appendix D for the instructions given to participants for blog activities). This variance was specifically applied in order to widen the content of the reflection by making them focus on different issues in different contexts with various focal points. As shown in Table 2, the activities were grouped based on their orientations.

3.5.2.1 Thematic activities

The first activity, *critical incident analysis*, is directly based on Gibbs' (1998) reflective cycle. In this model, a reflective practitioner reflects on an outstanding incident by following these predefined steps: description, feelings, evaluation, analysis, conclusion, and action plan.

Table 2. Blog Activities.

Blog activity types	N of activities	Activity titles	N of expected individual posts	% in the grading system
Thematic activities	4	1. Critical incident analysis	12 (4 entries and 8 comments)	25% of the total score
		2. Video-critique		
		3. Reflection on the classroom management tool		
		4. Reflection on the designed activity		
Peer-related activities	6	5. Student teaching video upload	8 (6 entries and 2 comments)	30% of the total score
		6-10. Peer evaluation of five different peers' student teaching presentations uploaded as videos on individual blogs		
Self-related activities	4	11-12. Self-evaluation of two different student teaching presentations	6 (4 entries and 2 comments)	20% of the total score
		13-14. Two reflective journal entries		

Similarly, this *critical incident analysis* activity requires the participants to choose an incident from their practicum experiences and analyze it in detail following the predefined steps mentioned.

Secondly, for the *video-critique activity*, students are expected to evaluate one of the two experienced teachers' teaching videos uploaded on the course blog. In this kind of video-based teacher training, known as video-case methodology, pre-service teachers watch experienced teachers' teaching videos and evaluate their performances or learn from them (Rowley & Hart, 1996; Friel & Carboni, 2000; McCurry, 2000; Dymond & Benz, 2006).

For the third activity, *reflection on the classroom management tool*, students were asked to prepare a classroom management tool, use it in their student teaching presentations and reflect on their experience. This activity was designed by the researcher and the course instructor for the current study.

Fourth, *reflection on the designed activity* is comprised of three steps. It requires participants to design a language teaching activity, apply it in a classroom and reflect on the experience on individual blogs. This activity was designed by the researcher and the course instructor for the current study. Finally, participants were expected to post six required blog entries and four blog comments as part of the theme-related activities. They accounted for 25% of the final course grade.

3.5.2.2 Peer-related activities

For the fifth activity, participants were expected to complete two steps: recording a student teaching presentation of theirs (Wu & Kao, 2008; Hernandez-Ramos, 2007), and *uploading their student teaching presentation videos* on their individual blogs. This

activity is actually a preliminary step for the following peer-evaluation activities.

However, due to the demanding nature of the current activity (planning a lesson plan, doing a student teaching presentation, shooting the video of the presentation, participating in the video-editing workshop, editing and uploading the video on one's blog), it was decided that this would be evaluated as a separate activity.

For the sixth to the tenth activities, participants were expected to watch five peer participants' student teaching videos and write an evaluation for each video. Each *peer evaluation activity* entry was regarded as a separate activity which made a total of five peer evaluation activities. By following these steps, with the affordance of blogs, pre-service teachers had the opportunity to observe and reflect on at least five different peers' student teaching presentations at a time and place of their choosing. Finally, participants were required to post six blog entries and two blog comments for student teaching presentation videos of two participants as part of the peer-related activities. Peer-related blog activities accounted for 30% of the final course grade.

3.5.2.3 Self-related activities

For the eleventh and twelfth activities, participants were expected to complete three steps: doing two student teaching presentations in their cooperating schools at different grades, writing two *self-evaluation entries of two student teaching experiences* and posting them on their individual blogs.

For the thirteenth and fourteenth activities, participants were expected to complete two steps: observing their practicum classes or student teaching and writing two journal entries regarding these observations or experiences. The *journal writing activity* was based on previous literature on the matter (Richards & Ho, 1998; Tsang &

Wong, 1996; Woodfield & Lazarus, 1998). Finally, participants were required to post four blog entries and two blog comments for each different type of activity as part of the self-related activities. Self-related blog activities accounted for 20% of the total score.

Blog activities were completed step by step throughout the study. First, blogging was introduced and guidelines for blogging were announced at the beginning of the study. Blog activities were explained and modeled; and they were organized with labeling, due-dates, and prompts. Participants were required to participate actively on the blog platform, while the course assistant adopted a facilitator or moderator role. During the process, participants were communicated via e-mail and in person, and they were supported whenever they had technical or content related difficulty. The participants were expected to complete three categories of activities respectively by posting entries on their blogs related to the assigned activities. Each participant was also responsible for writing one or two comments on the activities on other participants' blogs of their choice. To sum up, the participants were assigned to complete fourteen online activities on their individual blogs with comment and due date requirements in order to improve the depth of their reflection.

3.6 Data collection methods

In order to provide a rich description and a complete picture of the findings as much as possible, different data sources were utilized. Data were collected through an initial survey, archival documents of participants' blog entries, two focus group interviews, and a final survey.

3.6.1 Initial survey

At the beginning of the semester, on February 21, 2013, the participants were given the initial survey (see Appendix E for the initial survey questions) which included fifteen demographic questions and one final open ended question written in English. The participants completed the survey in English. The aim of the survey was to collect personal data such as age, gender, and nationality along with data about the type of cooperating school, language level, computer and internet experience, educational technology experience, videotaping resources and blended course experience of the participants. Finally, participants were asked to give a short description of the activities that could help them better evaluate and utilize their teaching experience as pre-service teachers.

3.6.2 Archival documents of participants' blog entries

The online posting flow started with the first week of the semester and continued until the end of it. At the end of the semester, the posts from each participant's personal blog were collected and saved (see Appendix F for a sample blog of a participant). Data from the blogs were grouped under three headings in order to make a systematic content analysis: required blog entries, comments or commentaries, and optional blog entries. The entries of the participants as replies to the assigned blog activities were grouped as required entries. The entries made by using the comment function of blogs were grouped as comments or commentaries. The rest of the entries related to the field of teaching were grouped as optional entries, and entries unrelated to teaching were labeled as irrelevant.

3.6.3 Interviews

Data were collected from two focus group interviews. Interviews were carried out with two groups of five participants to create an interactive dialogue between the participants and the interviewer on May, 2013. All of the participants were sent e-mail requests to participate in the interviews. Some of the participants replied via e-mail that they were unavailable on the suggested dates, while ten of them replied that they were available. A total of ten pre-service teachers participated in the group interview sessions. They were conveniently divided into two groups and separate sessions were held with each group. The interviews were carried out on the eleventh week of the study, by which time the participants had completed half of the assignments on their blogs. Each focus group interview lasted about half an hour. The main aims of the interviews were to examine the participants' experiences regarding the use of blogging for reflective purposes and to identify the features of blogs that might have an influence on the depth of pre-service teacher reflection. To this end, the semi-structured questions asked in the focus group interviews were centered on five basic topics: reflection, practicum, peer feedback, blog activities, and blended learning (see Appendix G for the list of interview questions).

3.6.4 Final survey

A survey comprised of ten open-ended questions was administered in English via email at the end of the semester, on June 13, 2013 (see Appendix H for the list of final survey questions). The survey was also uploaded on the class blog for easy access and as a record. The main aims of the final survey were to examine the participants' experiences regarding the use of blogging for reflective purposes and to identify the features of blogs

that might have had an influence on the depth of pre-service teacher reflection. Although the final survey and focus group interviews shared similar purposes, since the final survey was implemented at the end of the semester, it was important in terms of collecting overall remarks and experiences of students. Additionally, the final survey was to gather more data about the participant pre-service teachers' use of blogs for reflective purposes in order to triangulate the data collected from archival documents of participant's blog entries and focus group interviews.

3.7 Procedures

In this part, the initial preparation for the study will be discussed and steps of incorporating blog activities into the practice teaching course will be explained. Then, weekly progress of the study will be described.

3.7.1 Initial preparation

The study required a meticulous preparation stage during which time the design of a foreign language education department senior year practice teaching course was modified under the supervision of the course instructor, who had taught the course many times before and who had already used blogs as part of the current course the year before the present study, and the advisor instructor who was a specialist in computer assisted language learning. These modifications will be discussed in detail.

As for the first step, a timetable which guided the researcher through every step of the study was prepared and the actions were taken accordingly. Having a timetable, the necessary actions were foreseen and the study could be carried out in a more organized way. During the implementation, at some points, some adaptations (i.e., due-

date extension and activity order change) were made in order to facilitate the process for the participants.

Secondly, pen and paper based assignments of the traditional course were examined. They were as follows: three reaction papers on three articles about the field of education, three to five journal entries, reflection papers on three supervised (by the course instructor) and three unsupervised presentations, evaluations of three supervised peer presentations, and a reflection paper on an attended foreign language education seminar or workshop. When it was decided that the course evaluation would be based on two components, namely paper-based portfolio assignments and blog assignments, the number of journals and reaction papers was decreased and they were replaced by blog activities. The portfolio, which constituted 25% of the total course grade, was to include one reaction paper on one field related article, an individual presentation and a report on participation in professional development activities. Blog assignments, on the other hand, constituted 75% of the total course grade. Students were supposed to complete and upload posts of fourteen blog activities to their blogs at certain intervals. Additionally, they were to write comments to their peers' posts.

The spring 2013 semester in the university was comprised of sixteen weeks from late February to mid-June (fourteen course weeks and two exam weeks). Initial preparation had already been completed in the previous fall semester. The actual study went on during the whole spring semester of 2013, until the very end of the last week. The rest of the research process of the study will be discussed weekly.

3.7.2 Weekly progress of the study

Week one was the most hectic week of the study. First, the course syllabus and the online component of the course were introduced to the participants in the first week of the spring semester. A handout containing introductory information about the blog component of the course was given to the participants (see Appendix I for the handout of introduction to blogging). The aim was to introduce the online component of the course to the students and to explain the processes and the guidelines for blogging. These guidelines were established in order to set parameters for several reasons: to give a professional look to the blogs, to ease navigation, to enable spelling and grammar check, to establish a constructive tone in posts, to ensure the granting of credits, to prevent plagiarism and to promote the use of multimedia. Moreover, to establish transparency, participants were given the overall criteria which would be used for the evaluation of their blogs (see Appendix I for the criteria for evaluation of blogs).

Second, individual participant blogs were supposed to be interconnected via a course blog which would be run by the course assistant under the supervision of the course instructor. Thus, a class blog where information on announcements, blog rules and assignments, due dates, evaluation criteria, related media and important links could be found was set up. This blog was to link all individual participant blogs so that one could easily navigate through all the blogs related to the course. More importantly, this blog would be the center of the online component of the course (see Appendix J for a screenshot of the course blog).

Third, the initial survey was administered to the students of the practice teaching course on the first week of the study. All eighteen students enrolled in the course were able to fill in the survey. It did not take more than fifteen minutes for the students to complete the survey since almost all the questions were close-ended or short-answer questions. This survey helped to collect data on the characteristics of the participants.

Fourth, a lab session was scheduled for this week. As part of the study, all the participants were supposed to have their own professional blogs where they published their blog posts related to practice teaching. Beforehand, the handout titled *How to Start a Blog* had been delivered so that the participants could follow it in order to facilitate the process. In the lab, they were given personal computers so that they had a chance to have a hands-on experience in starting and posting in their own blogs. The lab session included illustrations on creating a blog, customizing, creating a new post, labeling a post and finding more information on blogging. At the end of the session, the class blog, where there was an example blog activity, was introduced to the students. For the activity, they were asked to post a photo with explanations from the previous semester's practicum experiences. The main purpose of this trial post was to encourage them to engage in blogging at once so that they could keep up with the upcoming workload.

Fifth, email correspondence between participants and the researcher started from the very first week. The researcher, having been introduced to the students as the course assistant in the first lesson, shared her e-mail address with the students so that they could enquire about any technical or content related problem while doing the assignments. Functioning as the course assistant, the researcher tried to reply students' emails as soon as possible mostly within twenty four hours. This turned out to be one of the biggest

challenges of the current study, since, despite being minor, there were many technical issues and requests for clarifications about which students needed further assistance. In addition to uploading on the course blog, the researcher emailed the descriptions and due date of each assignment to the students in order to avoid any misunderstanding.

During the second week, the researcher attended the course again. The researcher was early, so she had the chance to observe two hours of the current practice teaching course. In the last 20 minutes, she asked the class if anyone had technical problems. There were a few problems which could be solved with ease. Finally, the researcher assigned the participants their first blog activity and answered their questions about the activity. Later on, the researcher made clear that she would be available through email for further clarifications. On the following days, the researcher dealt with some technical issues in order to set up a working system. First, students sent their blog addresses. After collecting them, the researcher made sure that everyone could follow each other's blog. Then, the researcher sent e-mails about turning off the verification code for comments and comment moderation. Next, the researcher had to send personal e-mails to the students who did not follow the necessary updates. Finally, the researcher sent personal e-mails to students who did not follow some of the blogging rules discussed at the first meeting.

Within weeks two to nine, the participants were given four of the online assignments (blog activities). They were given a period of approximately two weeks to complete each activity. Participants were supposed to have posted their entries regarding the activity on their own blogs and have written at least two comments on their peers' blogs by the due date.

In week ten, the following blog activity would require shooting, editing and uploading a ten to fifteen minute in-class student teaching presentation video of each participant. Due to this upcoming assignment, a video-editing workshop was carried out with the students in week ten. Participants learnt how to edit their student teaching videos and how to upload them to their blogs.

During week eleven, two focus group interviews were carried out. Ten participants who were divided into two groups of five were interviewed.

In weeks twelve to fourteen, the participants were given the last four of the blog activities respectively. Self-evaluation activities were announced in the twelfth week and journal writing activities were announced in the thirteenth. These activities had more strict due-dates because students did not have any lessons during the last two weeks which were final exam weeks. Students were supposed to finish their last assignment by the fifteenth week of the semester.

In weeks fifteen and sixteen, the final survey was sent via e-mail correspondence to all eighteen students enrolled in the current course. They had to complete and email the survey to the course assistant by the end of the sixteenth week. By the end of the semester the data collection process had been completed.

3.8 Researcher role

The researcher is a graduate student of department of foreign language education at the same university where the study was carried out. She previously received her bachelor's degree from the same university's foreign language education department. She had taken the current practice teaching course at the same university years ago, but not in a

blended design. Additionally, she had already taken several courses from the current course instructor, thereby having the opportunity to do her research in a very familiar setting.

The current course instructor and the thesis advisor had already tried using blogs in the practicum course twice. The researcher was able to benefit from their experiences. During her graduate studies, she was able to take an educational technology course from the thesis advisor and she was excited to test blogging in an authentic environment for educational purposes. These affiliations were the reasons why the setting and the tool were appropriate and convenient choices for the researcher to base her research.

The role of the researcher was extensive. Before the study she collected and adapted the blog activities with assistance. Next, she offered two technical training sessions to the participants; introduction to blogging and video editing workshops. Then, she set up a course blog and uploaded blogging guidelines, blog activity announcements, due-dates, useful links and videos after making sure that the participants could follow each other's blogs and the course blog as well. She assisted the participants whenever there was a technical problem with the tool, sometimes face to face after their class meetings and many times via email correspondence. The researcher also observed four hours of the course sessions, which led to a better understanding of the setting. Furthermore, she carried out the initial survey and focus group interviews. When it came to data analysis, the researcher worked as one of the raters and coders. All in all, this whole process was an extensive and challenging but informative and fulfilling experience for the researcher.

3.9 Data sources

In this study, the primary sources of data were the participants' blog entries.

Additionally, tape-recorded and transcribed focus group interviews and data gathered from initial and final surveys were collected. Research questions, data sources, data collection methods and data analysis methods are illustrated in Table 3.

Table 3. Overview of the Study.

Research Questions	Data Sources	Data Collection Methods	Data Analysis
1. To what extent do the blog entries by the pre-service teachers demonstrate reflection?	Qualitative and quantitative data from the blog entries	Archival documents of the blog entries	Content analysis with a framework approach
2. What features of blog activities might have influenced the extent of the reflection demonstrated by the pre-service teachers?	Data from the focus group interviews and the surveys	Archival documents of the blog entries, focus group interviews and surveys	Content analysis
3. What features related to blogs might have influenced the extent of the reflection demonstrated by the pre-service teachers?	Qualitative and quantitative data from the blog entries	Archival documents of the blog entries, focus group interviews and surveys	Content analysis

3.10 Data analysis

Data analysis of the surveys, blog entries and interviews were done mainly by using the content analysis method of the qualitative research. The analysis process will be discussed in detail in the following sub-sections.

3.10.1 Analysis of the initial survey

The initial survey consisted of eight close-ended, seven short-answer questions and a final open-ended question. Almost all the questions aimed to gather personal data (i.e., name, gender, e-mail, computer experience, English language level, internet experience, blended design experience, blogging experience, and videotaping skills) in order to understand the characteristics of the participants. Due to the minimal quantity of close-ended questions in the survey, computer based statistical analysis was not used. Data were analyzed manually. The single open ended question was analyzed by using content analysis method by two coders who would be introduced in detail in the trustworthiness section.

3.10.2 Content analysis of the blog entries

Blog entries were analyzed through content analysis of qualitative research. Owing to the evaluative nature of the study, a framework approach was adopted. The aim of using a reflection framework was to transform the qualitative data into quantitative numbers in order to be able to measure the depth of reflective thinking of the participants.

In order to do a more effective analysis, participants' individual blog contents were archived as documents and their each entry was marked as required, optional, commentary or irrelevant. The next step was to choose an appropriate reflective framework to measure reflectivity of the entries out of many reflective frameworks proposed in the literature (Sparks-Langer et al., 1990; Mezirow, 1991; Hatton & Smith, 1995; Ho & Richards, 1993; Bain et al., 1999; Crotty & Allyn, 2001; Arter & McTighes, 2001; Hawkes & Romiszowski, 2001; Ward & Mccotter, 2004; Hegarty, 2011). The

selection was carried out in a meticulous way because of the essential role of the framework in the trustworthiness of the results. With a preliminary inspection four of the frameworks above were discarded since they were not suitable for the current study. Then, sample blog entries were analyzed by two raters separately, using six of the frameworks mentioned above. After the discussions between the raters and consulting a third party holding a PhD in the field of foreign language education and with a ten years of teaching experience, the framework of Bain et al. (1999) was selected.

The framework of Bain et al. (1999), focusing on the depth of reflection, was specifically designed to evaluate pre-service teacher reflection. The aim of the study also required measuring the depth of reflection. Additionally, this framework was developed on the grounds of Dewey's (1910) reflective procedure (i.e., problem-setting, means/end analysis, and generalization), Schön's reflective practice, and Vygotsky's constructivist approaches to reflective practice in teaching. This was also in accordance with the conceptual framework of the study. Depth of reflection was divided by the researchers into five levels moving from the lowest level (one) to the highest (five). The framework did not include a zero reflection level since it did not accept the concept of zero level reflection. Table 4 shows the selected framework which illustrates the reflective transformation expected from pre-service teachers.

The descriptors of the framework were detailed, clear and directly related to teaching which facilitated the analysis process. However, during the data analysis period, the reflector-centered design of the framework became a minor drawback especially during the scoring of the entries related to peer-feedback.

Table 4. Reflective Framework.

Reflection Levels	Level Descriptors
Level 1 Reporting	The student describes, reports or re-tells with minimal transformation, no added observations or insights.
Level 2 Responding	The student uses the source data in some way, but with little transformation or conceptualization. The student makes an observation or judgment without making any further inferences or detailing the reasons for the judgment. The student asks a 'rhetorical' question without attempting to answer it or consider alternatives. The student reports a feeling such as relief, anxiety, happiness, etc.
Level 3 Relating	The student identifies aspects of the data which have personal meaning or which connect with their prior or current experience. The student seeks a superficial understanding of relationships. The student identifies something they are good at, something that they need to improve, a mistake they have made, or an area in which they have learned from their practical experience. The student gives a superficial explanation of the reason why something has happened or identifies something they need or plan to do or change.
Level 4 Reasoning	The student integrates the data into an appropriate relationship, e.g. with theoretical concepts, personal experience, involving a high level of transformation and conceptualization. The student seeks a deep understanding of why something has happened. The student explores or analyses a concept, event or experience, asks questions and looks for answers, considers alternatives, speculates or hypothesizes about why something is happening. The student attempts to explain their own or others' behavior or feelings using their own insight, inferences, experiences or previous learning, with some depth of understanding. The student explores the relationship between theory and practice in some depth.
Level 5 Reconstructing	The student displays a high level of abstract thinking to generalize and/or apply learning. The student draws an original conclusion from their reflections, generalizes from their experience, extracts general principles, formulates a personal theory of teaching or takes a position on an issue. The student extracts and internalizes the personal significance of their learning and/or plans their own further learning on the basis of their reflections.

Source: [Bain et al., 1999, p. 60]

The agents in level descriptions were usually reflectors themselves. However, many excerpts from peer-related activities were not about the reflector as shown in the following example:

She sometimes gives very long instructions which are wordy. It would be better for her if she makes an example for students instead of giving long instructions for complex activities. (Elif, Required blog entry, May 7, 2013)

To establish clarity, it was decided that the agent did not have to be the reflector. As seen in the entry above, the subject of the entry was someone other than the reflector. However, the entry matched a certain set of descriptors within the framework by Bain et al. (1999) such as “The student identifies something that they need to improve”. However, in the entry above, the reflector did not identify something that s/he needed to improve but something that another participant needed to improve. In similar cases, the entries were categorized into the matching level without expecting them to be only about the reflector.

Eleven percent of all the entries ($n = 57$) including required entries, optional entries, and commentaries posted by the participants were discarded during the data analysis phase for several reasons. The phenomenon being investigated was written reflection; but, some of these entries did not include text. For instance one entry included only a photo of a participant’s cooperating school. This photo was relevant to the field of teaching; yet it was excluded because there was no written data accompanying the photo. Additionally, some entries were unrelated to teaching, generally posted by the participants while figuring out how to use the tool. For example a participant posted a random video of a song from a website while trying to learn how

to upload a video. Others uploaded pictures of flowers or themselves. These posts were not relevant to the purposes of the study. Another reason for excluding an entry was disagreement between the raters. As mentioned in the previous chapter, the ordinary scale used to label the depth of reflection within the entries included five levels. Whenever there was a level discrepancy between the scores assigned by the raters for the same entry, the raters discussed reevaluated the entry and discussed the results. However, due to the unclear message or language use in the entries this disagreement could not be resolved in four entries and those four entries were discarded for this reason.

As mentioned before, the entries containing only simple expressions such as sorry and thank you were also discarded by the raters because they were not specifically related to teaching. Furthermore, there were entries posted by the course assistant about technical issues related to blogging, and they were not included in the evaluation. The following entries could exemplify excluded entries:

Sorry for the delay. (Gaye, Blog comment, March 4, 2013)

Please, put the labels gadget on the right side. (Course assistant, Blog comment, March 2, 2013)

I couldn't watch the video. YouTube® says it's private. (Course assistant, Blog comment May 24, 2013)

Me too :(you better check it. (Sıla, Blog comment, May 26, 2013)

Why not? (Elif, Blog comment, March 27, 2013)

3.10.3 Analysis of the interviews and final survey

A content analysis method was implemented on the data that were obtained through interviews and surveys (see Appendix K for the sample coding chart). During the

analysis, an inductive approach allowed the thematic categories to emerge from the data (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2001). The purposes of the content analysis of the interviews and final survey were to explore the extent of the influence of blog activities that might have affected reflection of participants, and to find out features of blogs which might have influenced the depth of the participants' reflection.

Audio-recorded focus group interviews' data were transcribed and collated with the data collected from surveys. Firstly, both individually and together, data were read and reread by the two coders who would be introduced in detail in the trustworthiness section. The analysis identified the questions from both tools that focused on similar themes. The coders discussed the answers to those questions carefully. Eventually, data led to the emergence of certain categories which will be discussed further in the findings chapter.

3.11 Trustworthiness

This research aimed to establish trustworthiness in several ways. Creswell (2007) suggested qualitative researchers utilize at least two strategies to establish trustworthiness. For this study, trustworthiness of the data collection and data analysis processes was mainly attempted via data triangulation, inter-rating and inter-coding.

In order to triangulate data, multiple data collection methods were used. Participant characteristics were gathered with an initial survey. Qualitative and quantitative evidence of reflection was collected via archival documenting of the blog entries. In order to contribute to the clarification of meaning, specifically to identify the

blog-related factors that might have affected the depth of reflection, audio-recorded interviews and open-ended survey data were collected.

During data analysis, trustworthiness was established via a framework approach, inter-rating and inter-coding. The utmost importance was given to framework selection which would quantify the blog data for further analysis. After a thorough inspection of many frameworks in the literature, six of them were chosen for pretesting: frameworks by Sparks-Langer and Colton (1990), Hatton and Smith (1995), Bain et al. (1999), Hawkes and Romiszowski (2001), Crotty and Allyn (2001) and Hegarty (2011). A sample of ten blog entries was randomly selected. Two independent raters, both holding degrees in foreign language education and having almost ten years of teaching experience, each trained in qualitative research, labeled each entry with a level ranging from one to seven (depending on the framework) according to six chosen frameworks. The results were evaluated together with an expert third party while considering the affordances and drawbacks of the frameworks. The most satisfying results were gathered from the rubric by Bain et al. (1999) for several reasons. The descriptors of differing levels were more clearly written and easier to comprehend in this framework. This way it provided more consistency among the raters. This framework was also specifically prepared to measure the depth of pre-service teacher reflection. Additionally, this framework had been based on the socio-constructivist approach which also held an important place in the current study.

After analyzing the level descriptions of the selected framework, the two raters did the first rating of twenty entries together. After a consensus was reached, the raters worked on the data separately. After completing the task, the scores were compared.

Whenever there was a discrepancy with more than one level difference, raters discussed their rationale for the score in detail; either they came to a consensus, or managed to decrease the discrepancy to one level, or entirely excluded the entry (four entries were excluded). Salkind (2010) stated that each method had its own advantages and disadvantages while calculating inter-rater reliability (p. 628). For this reason, more than one statistical method was used to calculate the agreement between the raters. Computer based statistical calculations were made by using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences. Given the ordinal nature of the data, Cohen's kappa and Spearman's rank correlation coefficient calculations were made. The inter-rater agreement on individually coded data was 0.79 which indicated a high agreement between the raters. Spearman's rho was measured as 0.91 which also indicated a statistically significant agreement between the two raters (see Appendix L for measures of Cohen's kappa and Spearman's rho). In addition, K related samples Freidman's test was utilized in order to understand the statistical importance of the difference between reflection levels yielded by different types of blog activities.

While analyzing the interview and survey data, the content analysis method was used. At first, data were read and reread by the two researchers individually. Next, an independent analysis was conducted by the two coders (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The emerging themes were compared and related evidence was reorganized. A third expert party who was also the thesis advisor was consulted on the results. After reaching a consensus on the emerging categories, the coding process was completed.

Several additional techniques were used. Expert consultation was another way of increasing trustworthiness. Over the course of the study, the supervisor, who was an

expert in the field of educational sciences, was consulted. The methodology of the study was discussed in great detail in order to provide a basis for comparability. Multiple examples and direct quotations from the raw data were provided so that the exact reflections of the participants could be transferred.

3.12 Conclusion

In the methodology chapter, methods and procedures employed in the present study were discussed in detail. The study was designed as a case study research. The context of the study was a practicum course offered to senior students at a public university. The participants were 18 pre-service English language teachers at the same university enrolled in the course in the spring semester of 2013. The study lasted for a semester. Blogger® was selected as the blogging tool. Blog activities were designed in order to practice reflection in a structured way. Data were collected via archival documents of blog entries, surveys and interviews. Data analysis method was content analysis and framework approach was benefited. For this study, trustworthiness of the data collection and data analysis processes was mainly attempted via data triangulation, inter-rating and inter-coding and framework approach. The following chapter will discuss the findings resulted from the data analysis procedure.

CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS

This chapter describes the findings based on the data analyses described in the previous chapter. It starts with an account of participant characteristics gathered mainly from the initial survey for a clear understanding of the context of the current study. Later, it presents the findings regarding the research questions in the order in which the research questions were asked. It ends with a summary of the findings chapter.

4.1 Participant characteristics

The participants ($n = 18$) were given an initial survey at the first week of the semester (see Appendix E for the initial survey) whose results assisted in identifying the characteristics of the participants. All the participants were Turkish and they were foreign language education department senior-year students studying at a public university in Istanbul, Turkey. Except for one, they were all female with an average age of 22. All were doing their practice teaching at different accredited private schools in İstanbul and had taken a course on computer skills and educational technologies since those courses are among the required courses in the foreign language education department.

The survey responses revealed that participants used computers and the internet two hours a day on average. They were mostly familiar with the Web 2.0 tools; for example, most of them were aware of web quests and podcasts. Except for one all the participants were familiar with wikis and blogs; however, only two participants reported that they had their own blogs.

The information obtained from the survey showed that most of the participants needed extra guidance for shooting, editing and uploading their student teaching videos. A workshop at a computer lab had already been organized for the purposes of video editing and uploading, so this finding verified the anticipated technical difficulty. According to the findings, guidance for shooting video, borrowing the video camera from the department, and deciding on the quality of the footage were added to the content of the workshop.

Except for one, all the students had taken a blended course before; so the blended nature of the design of the current study was a familiar situation for almost all participants. Except for two, all the students said that they would prefer using computers to pen and paper when completing a written assignment.

The participants were asked to share their ideas regarding the activities they expected to complete as part of the current practice teaching course. The survey revealed that the kind of activities which the participants thought could help them evaluate and utilize their teaching experience better as pre-service teachers mostly matched the activities designed for the current study. Some of their preferences were as follows:

I prefer activities involving particular aspects of my own teaching experience rather than activities that ask for too general information. (Ceren, Initial survey, February 21, 2013)

... for example sharing a problem and trying to find a solution. (İpek, Initial survey, February 21, 2013)

... sharing activities (enjoyable ones) and reflecting upon these activities would really be helpful. (Nil, Initial survey, February 21, 2013)

... activities that will help me with classroom management, time management and how to share classroom power. (Serap, Initial survey, February 21, 2013)

Peer reflections can help us. This can be conducted online to reach other's works. (Gül, Initial survey, February 21, 2013)

... commenting on each other's experiences. (Eren, February 15, Initial survey, February 21, 2013)

... watching my peers' presentations and getting feedback from my peers. (Büşra, Initial survey, February 21, 2013)

Learning their ideas on the kinds of activities which could help them better evaluate and utilize their teaching experience confirmed their expected needs for sharing and feedback, and it was very significant in terms of observing their need for help with problematic issues such as classroom management. These suggestions about sharing and feedback were in line with the rationale underlying the use of blog activities within this practice teaching course. The blog component had been integrated into the course in order to facilitate and enhance the sharing of individual practice teaching experience with fellow pre-service teachers. They could upload their student teaching videos on their individual blogs and they could share their videos with their classmates. When it comes to feedback, as part of blog activities, participants were asked to give feedback to five fellow students' teaching videos. Plus, they were asked to write one or two comments for one or two of their classmates' postings for most of the activities. In this way feedback could be given in an organized way. On the other hand, the commonly mentioned problematic issue, classroom management, was treated as the main focus of one of the blog activities. Previously, classroom management had not been considered the theme of a separate blog activity; however, after the initial survey, an activity which focused on reflection on an applied classroom management tool was designed. In this way, participants could share their tools, ideas, and reflections on this issue. In short, the information gathered from the initial survey was insightful for the rest of the process.

4.2 Findings related to research question one

To what extent did the blog entries by the pre-service teachers demonstrate reflection?

This research question was answered from the data collected from the blog entries of the participants. The total number of blog entries gathered during a sixteen-week semester from the individual blogs of the eighteen participants who were pre-service teachers was 514. These 514 entries were labeled as required entries, optional entries, commentaries or discarded entries. Fifty-seven entries were excluded from evaluation due to several reasons which were explained in the data analysis section. As a result, 457 blog entries were accepted as included entries. It should be noted that the reflective framework adopted by the current study did not include zero reflection level (Bain et al., 1999). The depth of reflection differed from level one to level five according to the current framework. These 514 reflective blog entries included 221 required blog entries, 33 optional blog entries and 260 blog commentaries. Table 5 illustrates the distribution of blog entries.

Table 5. Number of Blog Entries.

Blog entries	Included blog entries	Discarded blog entries	Required blog entries	Optional blog entries	Blog comments
514	457	57	221	33	260

The frequency of the overall blog activity was 28.5 entries per week. The blog entries per participant ranged from 8 to 49. The average number of all the included entries of the participants was 25. Although there was a discrepancy among the degree of blog presence by the participants, more than half of the pre-service teachers ($n = 10$) posted a

number of blog entries equal to or more than the average ($n = 25$) during the sixteen-week semester. A comprehensive distribution of the number of included blog entries by all participants is shown in Table 6.

4.2.1 Required blog entries

The entries which participants posted on their blogs as part of the fourteen blog activities assigned by the practice teaching course were considered as required entries. In this study, the main function of the individual blogs was to serve as reflective spaces where the participants wrote and shared their posts related to the assigned online activities. As a result, the main focus was on the required entries of the participants. The required blog entries per participant ranged from 3 to 14. Nearly all the participants (except for two) completed at least 80% of the fourteen required blog activities. One participant failed to complete most of the required blog activities for personal reasons according to her statement in the survey. Another participant did not do the activities in the beginning; during the interview, she informed the researcher that she could not keep up with the due dates and activity demands because they had started at the very beginning of the semester. Yet, she was eventually able to adapt to blogging and carry out half of the blog activities. All of the required entries ($n = 221$) were evaluated in terms of their level of reflectivity according to the selected framework that was designed by Bain et al. (1999). Notably, all the required entries showed evidence of distinct degrees of reflectivity. There was no necessity to exclude any of the required entries. Two trained raters labeled the entries in respect to the selected framework and the inter-rater reliability was measured as high agreement by using statistical tests (Cohen's kappa and Spearman's rho).

Table 6. Number of Blog Entries per Participant.

N	Participants	Included optional blog entries n = 27	Included required blog entries n = 221	Included comments n = 209	Included blog entries n = 457	% in included blog entries
1	İpek	2	14	9	25	5.5%
2	Merve	4	11	21	36	7.9%
3	Gül	0	11	9	20	4.4%
4	Dilek	1	3	4	8	1.8%
5	Eren	1	14	12	27	5.9%
6	Nil	0	13	4	17	3,7%
7	Ceren	1	14	6	21	4.6%
8	Serap	2	13	8	23	5.0%
9	Mine	0	14	21	35	7.7%
10	Sıla	0	7	12	19	4.2%
11	Gaye	1	14	12	27	5.9%
12	Büşra	2	12	4	18	3.9%
13	Melisa	2	12	3	17	3.7%
14	Sare	3	14	10	27	5.9%
15	Elif	2	14	17	33	7.2%
16	İnci	4	14	31	49	10.7%
17	Neva	2	13	14	29	6.3%
18	Seda	0	14	12	26	5.7%

Out of all the 221 included required blog entries, 5% (n = 11) of them showed low levels (level 1 and 2) of reflection and 32% (n = 69) of them showed medium level (level 3) reflection. High level reflection (level 4) was observed in 39% (n = 87) of all the required entries. The highest level reflection (level 5) was detected in 24% (n = 52) of the entries. Based on these results, it could be stated that entries related to the required blog activities yielded mostly (39%) high reflection level according to the framework analysis; low level reflection was rare (5%), on the contrary, the amount of the highest level reflection (24%) among the required blog entries was noticeable.

4.2.2 Optional blog entries

The entries which were posted by the participants without any requirements by the practice teaching course were considered as optional entries. These optional entries were comprised of suggestions of seminars or workshops, suggestions of language teaching activities, useful links, and photos taken at practice teaching schools. Total number of optional entries was 33. Some of the optional entries were excluded due to the reasons explained in the data analysis section. As a result, 27 optional entries were analyzed according to the selected framework and labeled as reflective at differing levels. The number of the optional entries included in the study ranged from 0 to 4 per participant. Five of the eighteen participants did not post any optional entries. The average number of optional entries included in the study was 1.5; this number indicated that the participants rarely posted optional entries.

All of the included optional entries (n = 27) were evaluated in terms of their level of reflectivity according to the selected framework with a high inter-rater reliability.

According to the results, out of the 27 optional blog entries, 52% (n = 14) of them showed low levels (level 1 and 2) of reflection, and 48% (n = 13) of them showed medium level (level 3) reflection. High or highest levels of reflection (level 4 or level 5) were not observed among all the optional entries. The average reflection level of all the optional entries was calculated as 2.2 (low level reflection). Based on these results, it could be stated that the optional blog entries yielded either low reflection (52%) or medium reflection (48%) levels according to the framework analysis; high level reflection was unavailable among the optional blog entries.

4.2.3 Blog comments

Additionally, entries made via the comment function of blogs, namely commentaries or comments, were gathered separately. During the semester, pre-service teachers were required to read at least two peer posts and make two peer comments for each activity except for five of the blog activities which were peer evaluation activities. Participants were not asked to write comments on peer-related activities because the nature of the peer-related activities was already similar to comments; that is, peer evaluation activities already required participants to make comments related to peers' blog entries. However, unlike other comments, the focus of the peer-related activities' comments was preplanned, that is, participants were supposed to evaluate other participants' student teaching presentation videos.

A total number of 260 comments were gathered at the end of the sixteen-week period. A total of 51 of these 260 comments were excluded for the reasons mentioned in

the data analysis section. As a result, 209 comments were analyzed and labeled according to the selected reflective framework.

All of the included comments (n = 209) were evaluated in terms of their level of reflectivity according to the selected framework with a high inter-rater reliability. According to the results, out of the 209 optional blog entries, 46% (n = 96) of them showed low levels (level 1 and level 2) of reflection and 39% (n = 80) of them showed medium level (level 3) reflection. High reflection (level 4) was observed in 19% (n = 32) of the optional entries. The highest level reflection (level 5) was detected in only one comment. The average reflection level of all the comments was calculated as almost medium level reflection (2.6). Based on these results, it could be stated that comments yielded mostly low level reflection (46%) or medium level reflection (39%) levels according to the framework analysis.

4.2.4 The extent of overall reflection

As mentioned before, out of the total of 514 blog entries, 57 of them were excluded from evaluation. Out of 457 included blog entries, 35% of them (n = 162) contained medium level reflection as a result of the framework analysis. Low levels of reflection (level 1 and 2) were observed in 27% (n = 123) of all the included blog entries. When it comes to high level reflection, 26% (n = 119) of all the included blog entries yielded fourth level reflection. The highest level reflection (level 5) was observed in 12% (n = 53) of all the included blog entries. Considering all the included blog entries (n = 457), the average reflection level was 3.17 which corresponded to medium level reflection according to

the selected framework. Table 7 shows various degrees of reflectivity observed in all types of blog entries included in the study.

The first level of reflection which was labeled as *reporting* according to the selected framework constituted almost 5% of all the reflective entries. The entries which contained “merely description, minimal transformation and no added observation or insight” were grouped in the first level (Bain et al., 1999, p. 60). Below are two examples of level one reflection:

For the second step of this activity, we discussed their emotions/memoirs when they see these colors. Finally, we played a game named as question raffle (by me), before the game they seated in a circular shape in the class. I played music and they gave the raffle pocket hand in hand. When I stopped the music, the person who is holding the raffle pocket picked a question and answered it. It went on like this till the break time. (Merve, Required blog entry, March 25, 2013)

As Sila said some teachers don't want to apply such tools in classrooms. (Serap, Blog comment, March 29, 2013)

Table 7. Overall Frequency and Percentage of Reflection Levels.

Reflective levels	F of the blog entries (n = 457)	% in the blog entries (n = 457)	F of the optional blog entries (n = 27)	F of the required blog entries (n = 221)	F of the blog comments (n = 209)
Level 1 reporting	23	5%	7	4	12
Level 2 responding	100	21.8%	7	9	84
Level 3 relating	162	35.4%	13	69	80
Level 4 reasoning	119	26%	0	87	32
Level 5 reconstructing	53	11.5%	0	52	1

The second level was labeled as *responding* by the current framework. Slightly over 20% of the reflective blog entries were at this level. In this level, a student observes or judges something without detailing their reasoning. “The student asks a rhetorical question without attempting to answer it or considering alternatives. The student reports a feeling such as relief, anxiety, and happiness” (Bain et al., 1999, p.60).

The following are some examples of level two reflections:

It was enjoyable and students liked that activity. As they were ninth grade students, it was appropriate for their level. The only problem about the activity was about time issues. As it was the last activity of the lesson, there was not enough time for all groups to present their articles to the class. Other than this, it was a good experience. (Elif, Required blog entry, March 18, 2013)

Stanford Talks: These talks are really interesting that's why I wanted all you to take a look. there seem to be quite good discussions. They also cover some topics from our foreign language testing course. When you look at the articles we'll cover in the class, you will see ;) here is the link! (Neva, Optional blog entry, February 26, 2013)

I totally agree with what you wrote about the first video and the teaching environment we observed in it. Especially, I liked the sentence “They are our students in class, not our dolls to be activated”. The teacher in the first video tried to create an ideal atmosphere in a utopic world. However, we should be more realistic and serious sometimes. Teaching must not always be like a game. (Nil, Blog comment, March 14, 2013)

The first two levels in the framework by Bain et al., (1999) represent the low reflection levels which 27% of all the included entries exhibited. It could be said that low reflection levels were observed in around one fourth of the reflective blog entries of the participants.

Slightly more than a third of the entries (35%), which constituted the biggest pile, demonstrated medium-level reflection which was called *relating* according to the framework. In reflection level three, a student notices something they are good at,

something that they need to change for the better, something they are bad at, or something they have learned from their practical experience. “The student gives a superficial explanation of the reason why something has happened or identifies something they need or plan to do or change” (Bain et al., 1999, p.60). The following are some examples for level three reflections:

Actually the lesson was nearly as I expected. However I thought that students would be more active and they would participate much more but it was not as I expected. As there are lots of foreigners at that time I think students were not comfortable enough. When it comes to my weaknesses I am aware that I should speak up and I should develop some kind of classroom management strategies to handle students. However to make it real I am in the opinion that if I have my own class and they know me better, I can more easily use some classroom management strategies. I also realized that sometimes I made pronunciation mistakes. (Elif, Required blog entry, April 11, 2013)

What I appreciate most about my training school is their attitude towards their students. Every one of their students is really valuable. During lessons teachers try to make all of the students involved. Besides teaching the day's content they also improve student's social abilities via group work and also individual presentation. (İnci, Optional blog entry, February 26, 2013)

Hi Ceren, the activity you used is really a good one. It is interesting for students and makes them involved. Even at university (at my last year) I like the activities which make me create something new and look from different perspectives and I think people love such kinds of activities by nature. The thing is that when we design group work with such kinds of activities we should be careful because some of the students can be really passive and don't do anything. If we can deal with such kinds of problems, the activities which expect students to come up with something new can really work! (Sare, Blog comment, April 19, 2013)

Almost a third of the entries (26%) were grouped at the fourth level, which was labeled as *reasoning*. In this level, students use their own experiences, inferences to give an account of their own or others' behavior or feelings. “The student explores or analyses a concept, event or experience, asks questions and looks for answers, considers alternatives, speculates or hypothesizes about why something is happening” (Bain et al., 1999, p.60). The following are some excerpts from fourth level reflection:

The problem might have been resulted from the way I gave instructions. I was trying to explain a game that we would play together about “fruits”. I realized that I did not use simple vocabulary to express the rules of game. Although the game was a very enjoyable one, I could not get my message across to students and therefore the game was not effective for me and also for them. We could not get benefit of it. What I could do actually was to know learners very well before deciding to teach them. I should have learnt their real profile, their interests and what they could know and understand. Although I was not nervous at all during class time, I could not control them. I should have explained each and every step clearly and slowly. One other probable reason of such a problem might be because of the fact that I had never worked with such a young group of learners and did not completely know their needs and abilities. I should have analyzed them carefully in order not to have come across such kind of problem again. (Eren, Required blog entry, May 25, 2013)

Thank you, İpek, for reminding us how we were greeting our teacher, I've almost forgotten it. What an unnecessary attitude! Does standing up show our respect really? No, I don't think so. I think a teacher should expect respect from her/his students when s/he proves her/himself as an efficient teacher. Also, I totally agree with you in that teaching will be boring if the students repeat the same method for every class like in the second video. The teacher can have some rituals, but I think every lesson shouldn't be applied to the same teaching method. Otherwise, it won't be possible to reach every student in the class. (Gaye, Blog comment, March 11, 2013)

Level three and four were the most frequently encountered reflection levels in this study.

A total of 61% of all the included blog entries (n = 281) were piled in levels three and four based on the framework analysis.

The highest reflection level in the framework was the fifth one, labeled *reconstructing*. Evidence of this level of reflection was not abundant, yet it was satisfying as 12% of the included blog entries, that is, a total of 53 entries out of 457 entries were at the fifth reflection level. At this level, a student “extracts and internalizes the personal significance of their learning and/or plans their own further learning on the basis of their reflections” (Bain et al., 1999, p.60). An example for the level five reflection follows:

The techniques and the materials I used during those teachings could be the evidence that I have a chance to be an efficient teacher... While preparing those materials, I paid attention to their authenticity. I guess the parts where I asked the students to do something after they activated their previously learned schemata went better than the starting activities where activating these schemata took place. It was because the students felt comfortable and safe now that they had resources to use for upcoming activities, but in starting activities, they had to recall knowledge, which made them uneasy somehow... In a nutshell, I believe that I managed to reflect my thoughts and beliefs about language teaching on the classes I conducted even though there were some setbacks, such as with time management or managing unruly students. However, what I discovered about my teaching is that I have the desire to do it. So, I strongly believe as far as I have it, then I can be helpful to my students, thus achieve my goals. (Dilek, Required blog entry, May 13, 2013)

Furthermore, in the highest level of reflection, a student “draws an original conclusion from their reflections, generalizes from their experience, extracts general principles, formulates a personal theory of teaching or takes a position on an issue” (Bain et al., 1999, p.60). An example to this highest level of reflection could be:

So the first one of my weaknesses was that I failed to think of taking some time from my class and explain the term in detail by using clear examples and writing them on the board. Although I felt that the students didn't understand it, I couldn't think of doing so, possibly because I was very nervous, hence my second weakness: being nervous! Before I go in front of any student group, I get too much nervous, and it sometimes affects me negatively and leads me to follow just the planned actions, rather than responding and changing course according to unexpected circumstances. So I define such nervous teaching as a “robot teaching”. It is like a pre-programmed teaching, in which my mind is set to believe that I can only do pre-programmed actions. However, I should be confident and have a huge reservoir of activities and techniques and approaches that I can utilize when I am confronted with an unexpected situation. (İpek, Required blog entry, May 11, 2013)

Additionally, in level five a student “displays a high level of abstract thinking to generalize learning, formulates a personal theory of teaching and takes a position on an issue” (Bain et al., 1999, p.60). Following is an example excerpt for level five reflection:

To be honest, I am not sure about the methods that reward or punish students. To some extent, I believe we have them because they apparently work. However, I can't stop putting myself in the shoes of the students who get sad faces, and feeling sorry for them. I might be thinking too naively, but this is how I think. These students might be distracted during the class because of various reasons: they might be sick that day, they just might not be in the mood, they might be having problems that we can't think of (I am not talking about students in need of special education because I know that you would "see and evaluate" them differently). I just think that we can't expect every student to have the same amount of attention, motivation and performance. That is why I am not sure that the student who gets the most smiley faces deserves to be the "best" student. I think all the students who end up having smiley faces at the end of each month or week should be praised and congratulated (no matter how many they got, and without choosing one as the best of all), and I think each student should have at least one smiley face at the end of the appointed time so that all of them can be praised and neither is separated as the "bad" student. The teacher can have meetings with these problematic students, and s/he can explain them that they did well, but they have the potential to do better, so s/he expects them to get more smiley faces next time. So, this is not a criticism to what you said (we can all have different approaches to these kinds of things), but just an idea. (Elif, Blog comment, March 26, 2013)

In a nutshell, the average reflection level was 3.17 and the most frequently encountered (61%) levels of reflection were medium or high levels of reflection.

4.3 Findings related to research question two

What features of blog activities might have influenced the extent of the reflection demonstrated by the pre-service teachers?

This research question was answered through the content analyses of the blog entries belonging to the participants, two focus group interviews, and the final survey. As mentioned in the previous chapter, the required blog entries of the participants were posted as part of the assigned blog activities which were grouped as thematic, peer-related and self-related activities. According to the framework analysis, most of the entries related to the blog activities turned out to be reflective at medium level or higher

levels, which was a noteworthy result. To be more specific, the average reflectivity of all the required activities was 3.9 which could be categorized as high level reflection. On the other hand, there were apparent discrepancies among the attained levels of reflectivity between the types of activities. It was decided to run a statistical analysis test in order to understand the importance of the difference. Considering the sample size ($n = 18$) and the ordinal scale type used to measure reflection, a nonparametric statistical test, specifically, K related samples Freidman's test was carried out by using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences. According to the results, the difference between the reflectivity means of blog activity types was statistically significant at $p = .005$ level. As a result, type of blog activities can be one feature that might have influenced the level of reflection demonstrated by the participants. The statistical analysis of the blog activity types and their average reflection levels are shown in Table 8.

Table 8. Difference Between Reflectivity of Blog Activity Types

Ranks	
Thematic blog activities	2.00
Peer-related blog activities	1.39
Self-related blog activities	2.61
Test Statistics ^a	
N	18
Chi-Square	15.125
df	2
Asymp. significance	.001

Note: a. Friedman Test, $p < .005$

The first group of activities was thematic activities, and they asked participants who were pre-service teachers to produce a classroom material and to analyze a readily-made material or a teaching related incident and share their reflections on them. In this way, the participants were asked to engage in analysis, transformation or reconstruction of

their teaching beliefs and experiences via focusing on the means (i.e., materials). The average reflection level of the thematic activities was level four, which was a high level of reflection according to the current framework.

The second group of activities was peer-related activities, and they included shooting a student teaching presentation video, uploading the video on the blog, watching five other peers' videos and evaluating their performances. In this group, the foci of the activities were on participants' peers rather than themselves. This resulted in a medium-level of reflection (level 3) on average.

The third group of activities was self-related activities, and they yielded the highest level of average reflection achieved throughout the study. The highest reflective level of the current framework was level five, and the average reflection level of the self-related activities was 4.3 (high level). This group of activities encouraged participants to evaluate their own teaching experiences and guided them to reflect on these via reflective questions and journal writing. Self-assessment and journal writing led to higher reflective levels compared to peer-related and thematic activities. It should also be noted that self-assessment and journal writing were the last two activities assigned to the participants. In other words, the participants had already completed ten blog activities by the time they started to do self-related blog activities. Figure 1 illustrates blog activity types and their reflection levels.

The average reflectivity (3.9) of all the required blog entries related to the blog activities was quite satisfactory according to the framework by Bain et al. (1999). Judging from this reflection yielded by the scaffolding of the blog activities, it could be

concluded that blog activities might have influenced the extent of reflection demonstrated by the participants. Additional support gathered from the interviews and the final survey for this finding will be discussed in the following paragraphs.

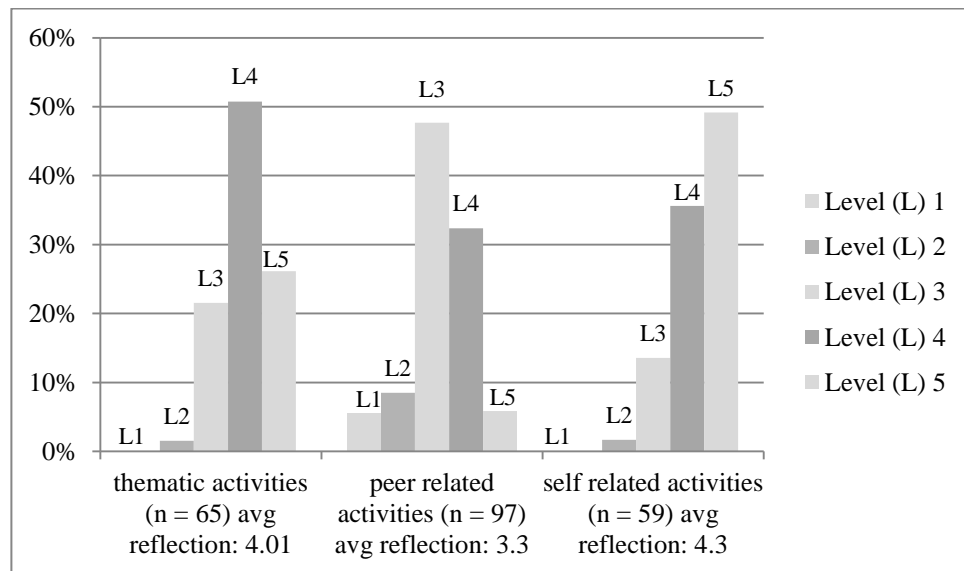


Figure 1. Blog activity types and their reflection levels.

Another feature of blog activities that might have influenced the extent of reflection demonstrated by the participants was systematic nature of the activities. The activities were developed with an underlying principle that reflection could be learnt (Dewey, 1933) and interacting with fellow learners or other experts might encourage pre-service teachers to view different perspectives (Vygotsky, 1978), understand the process they are going through and engage in deeper levels of reflection. For this reason, systematic guidance was provided with fourteen blog activities to be completed throughout the semester with a process-oriented design and biweekly due dates. Participants were asked to read at least two of their peers’ blog entries and write at least two comments. Their questions related to blog activities were answered quickly by e-mail or in the class sessions. Descriptions of the blog activities and scoring criteria for

the blog activities were posted on the course blog. To sum up, a functioning system was supported in order to promote systematic reflection.

Furthermore, the organization of the blog activities might have influenced the extent of reflection demonstrated by the participants. Activity types were organized after a review of related literature combined with the review of the activities assigned to the pre-service teachers in the traditional design of the course. Based on the John's model of reflection (2004), they were designed in a way to encourage narrative description, analysis, reflection, peer evaluation, self-evaluation, and consideration of alternative scenarios, personal teaching theories and critical thinking. One of the participants, Nil, stated in the final survey that she thought blogging helped them make progress as the activities required them to think analytically, critically, and reflectively. Analysis of teaching experiences was required in most activities, yet it was the main focus of the second blog activity, the critical incident analysis activity. To illustrate, for this activity, one participant, Ceren, wrote about an incident that happened during her observation at her cooperating school. After the narrative description of what had happened, she tried to analyze the reasons for the incident and wrote her reflections on the event while engaging in critical thinking about the incident. Below is Ceren's entry on the critical incident analysis activity:

One day, while the teacher was talking, the bell rang to finish the session. Therefore one of the students stood up and, walked to the door. Then, the teacher shouted at him and said, "I had not finished my talking, turn to your seat back and sit down." in a very harsh tone. Student got angry. When the teacher stopped talking and said he could leave; he stood and slammed the door very noisily. Then the teacher turned red with anger. I just wished to disappear, not having been exposed to this scene. I was blaming the teacher because she should not have shouted at the student at the beginning. Instead, she could use a more implicit tone to make the student turn to his seat back. The student was just a teenager, and he most probably interpreted his teacher's behavior as an insult to

him and a challenge for himself. After a few months, when I think about that incident now, I can see the details more clearly. First of all, the student's behavior was also a challenge for the teacher. He interrupted the teacher, and stood up and tried to go out. In addition, maybe, it was not the first time that he behaved in that way.” (Ceren, Required Blog Entry, March 7, 2013, 07:32)

During the interviews and the final survey, participants claimed that the blog activities increased their awareness towards teaching as a profession. They talked about the beginning of a habit of a critical approach to any experience related to their profession.

Below are some example excerpts:

Blogging makes me more conscious about the way I teach and I observe how people did the relevant activity, and compare with my own. (Eren, Interview, May 9, 2013)

Stating the evaluations that we made both about ourselves and our peers let me be more conscious about the way I teach and I observe. (Neva, Final Survey, June 13, 2013)

I have noticed the necessity to check what has been going on in other classes, to update myself, to adapt some activities to my practicum classes. (Sıla, Final Survey, June 13, 2013)

It definitely influenced my behavior when I see someone teaching. I didn't so much think on the decisions teachers make, but now it is like a habit I acquired. (Gaye, Interview, May 9, 2013)

It helped me have a critical approach to anything I did in my practice teaching, so I tried to analyze my choices and decisions in my teaching all the time. (Seda, Interview, May 9, 2013)

To conclude, different types of blog activities yielded different levels of reflection. Self-related blog activities and thematic activities encouraged high level reflection, and peer-related activities promoted medium level reflection. Each type of blog activity had a different focus; in this way, content variety in reflective entries was achieved. When the blog entries related to the blog activities were analyzed, it was observed that the

activities encouraged narrative description, analysis, reflection, evaluation and critical thinking. During the interviews and the final survey, the participants stated that they favored blog activities because they increased their awareness towards teaching as a profession.

4.4 Findings related to research question three

What features related to blogs might have influenced the extent of the reflection demonstrated by the pre-service teachers?

This research question was answered through the content analyses of two focus group interviews, the final survey and the blog entries. The foci of the current research question, the features of blogs which might have influenced the depth of reflection by the participants were identified with regard to the emerging thematic categories. These themes were categorized based on an inductive approach within content analysis of qualitative research. Data were supported by the related blog entries of the participants. The prominent themes which were mentioned by most of the participants (at least 80%) were included. These five themes were as follows: feedback, sharing, audience, efficiency of the tool, and blended design of the course. In the following sections, these features of blogs which might have influenced the depth of reflection by the participants will be discussed respectively.

4.4.1 Online peer feedback

As observed by the researcher, in the face-to-face class sessions, the sources of feedback were both the instructor and participants. On the blog component of the course, feedback was given online by using the comment function of blogs. The instructor assigned a

course assistant to guide the blogging process. Although she checked the progress and activities on the blogs, the course assistant was primarily responsible for the smooth progress of the process. The data gathered from the blogs revealed that the sources of the online feedback were the course assistant and the participants. However, the course assistant gave feedback related to technical issues and course requirements only; therefore the main sources of online feedback were actually the participants themselves. They were assigned to read two peer participants' posts and write two comments for them for each blog activity. As a result, the participants wrote a total of 260 online comments throughout the sixteen-week semester. Some of the comments ($n = 51$) were discarded due to the reasons explained in the data analysis section; as a result, a total of 209 comments were collected in the study. Judging from the number of comments by the participants, it could be said that commentary feature of blogs offered a way to increase the amount of feedback a pre-service teacher could get. This excerpt from the interview supports this claim:

I think, a cooperating teacher may not have the chance to give feedback for each and every student and presentation under normal circumstances but blogging made our blogs open to our peers, and through their feedbacks and our own reflections, I started to think critically about my own teaching. (Serap, Interview, May 9, 2013)

These blog comments were also analyzed by the raters based on the framework by Bain et al. (1999). While 46% of the comments ($n = 96$) matched lower levels of reflection according to the framework analysis, medium level and high level reflection were observed in the rest of the comments (53%). On the other hand, the highest level of reflection was barely detected (except for one) in the blog comments.

These numbers revealed that reflective thinking might have been promoted by reading and writing peer comments.

The contents of the comments were also satisfying. The participants usually wrote wordy comments which were related to the topic. They had been informed about using appropriate language and avoiding any names in their entries on the first week of the study for confidentiality. Some feedbacks were merely descriptive, yet mostly participants wrote constructive feedback for their peers. Their effort to add something new to what had already been told was noticed. As in the comment below, participants could read other views posted on a topic and they added their own ideas in their comments:

I think you covered most of the things which I also observed while watching both of the videos and I agree with most of the points you mentioned about. For example in the second video the atmosphere is very artificial in that although the classroom is very crowded and the teacher cannot make her hear by all of the students, students are silent which is not very normal taking the real over-crowded classrooms into consideration. But I am more positive about the first video than you. I think she is using the appropriate techniques for the students at that age. You are right she cannot teach everything to every student from different ages by this way. But the thing is that she seems to be aware of her student profile and arrange her style accordingly. For older students, she can change the method but for this classroom I think it is OK. Am I too positive :)? (Sare, Blog comment, March 13, 2013, 12:35 am)

The discussions made using the comment feature after the blog activities encouraged critical thinking which could be observed when the blog entries similar to the ones below were analyzed. With the help of blogs, the participants had the opportunity to have a platform to engage in an academic discussion related to their future professions. Furthermore, they could become a part of an online community which could discuss the same academic topic by giving examples and explanations from their experiences. The

comment feature gave the participants the opportunity to ask questions to each other about the ideas or examples in their blog posts. This provided an opportunity to increase communication and understanding between the participants. While answering other participants' questions, they engaged in more reflection and critical thinking as can be seen in the comments below:

Gül, I really enjoyed reading your post and it is really informative as usual! I think I will use this tool in the future with my real students and I am sure it can be effective if we know how to use it properly. I also liked your comment about the possible problems that may arise and I totally agree with possible solutions that you have mentioned about. I think the students will be motivated if they know that there is a surprise fun activity at the end but the teacher should take their learning performance into consideration while using the tool. And again as you said the teacher should not use it every day because it is like reinforcement and the reinforcements should be used at certain intervals. There is a point which I am not clear about. Even saying "thank you" or "smiling" is a reinforcement taking educational issues into consideration and reinforcements are vital most of the time. So why are the teachers not allowed to use reinforcement tools in the classroom? (Sare, Blog comment, March 26, 2013, 11:03 pm)

Thank you for your comment, Sare. I am glad that you find it useful to read my post ;). I want to use this tool in my future classes, too. And you are right in saying that reinforcements should be used at intervals rather than continuously. And about the question that you asked, I don't really know the exact answer, but they are very strict about this rule. My mentor specifically warned me not to provide any reinforcement during the lesson. I can only guess that it stems from the school's philosophy of education. Their main goal is to raise "happy children", so they might fear that some children might feel alienated or unworthy if some other children receive reinforcement. (Gül, Blog comment, March 27, 2013, 3:04 am)

After their student teaching experiences, the participants who were pre-service teachers used the comment function in order to support, motivate, empathize and give suggestions to each other in terms of their teaching performances. They generally used the sandwich method, which suggests squeezing a negative comment between positive comments, to make positive and negative comments. They made use of emoticons to

express their feelings. After watching each other's student teaching videos on their blogs, they left such comments:

Hi Eren! I like your activity. You were very initiative to choose this activity. I can understand why they couldn't get the activity the first time because it is not the kind of activity that most students are familiar with. I did this activity in my presentation, and even the university students had difficulty. I and my peer-presenters had to explain the procedure by walking around the classroom, and -at some point- we even had to give some of them some of the answers ;). But, it seems you did a good job of getting the students understand what you expected them to do, and didn't get discouraged by their confused looks at all ;). It is always a great idea to show a demonstration or to give an example answer to the students before they start doing the activity, so good call there ;). (Seda, Blog comment, April 22, 2013)

Pre-service teachers gave their peers emotional support via commentaries. In class, they had two hours to discuss the course content and talk about their experiences. This time might not have been enough for everyone to open up to their peers about a classroom management problem or an unsuccessful student teaching experience. On their blogs, pre-service teachers could witness the struggles of their peers and could find the opportunity to give them support. As seen in the following excerpts, they discussed these points during the final survey:

Comments also affected me, I felt more encouraged and more motivated for the following assignments. (Mine, Interview, May 9, 2013)

Comments for and from the peers were the best feedback because we were all in the same situation but had different ideas about for every classroom environment. So, commenting on each other fed our thoughts in a positive way. (Sıla, Final Survey, June 13, 2013)

As previously mentioned, the issue of feedback was practiced during the sixteen week study; but it was also widely mentioned by the participants during the surveys and

interviews. All the participants without exception stated that they eagerly read every comment left on their blog by their peers. All participants made such statements:

I read all of the comments because this really interests me a lot. (Eren, Final Survey, June 13, 2013)

Peer feedback led the way to self-evaluation. Sometimes it is more difficult to have an objective opinion of ourselves. In comments, you are exploring your strengths and weaknesses. (Neva, Final Survey, June 13, 2013)

When people commented on my posts which included information about practicum experiences, I could check myself if I was doing the right thing in a real class environment or not. Sometimes, my friends shared their suggestions, and those suggestions were really helpful for me. (Elif, Final Survey, June 13, 2013)

In the class, the instructor may not have enough time to give personal feedback to each student. In the current study, peer feedback was easy to get with the help of blogs. Plus, the collected peer comments had some strong features; they were not merely descriptive and they did not only focus on the strengths of the peers. Besides, they included suggestions and alternative techniques offering new ways of dealing with problems.

Some examples will follow:

Using a flag, to check out which students have participated in the activity is a really smart and useful idea. I will try to adapt this to my lessons because I have been having serious problems especially with young learners if I forget to give them a chance to speak. Some students even got offended with me :((Ceren, Blog comment, May 5, 2013, 5:44 pm)

Well actually I haven't had an experience with young learners Ceren, but I still think that I cannot be energetic; I mean I can start the lesson very energetically and move on further but can I be energetic till the end of the lesson? I am not sure. Of course I do not mean that that I certainly cannot deal with those little kids but it would be challenging for me :). (Merve, Blog comment, May 15, 7:58 pm)

In my class I also planned to use an activity similar to yours İpek. I prepared the definitions of some newspaper like a historical one focuses on the reporting part of the story or an optimistic one that sees the good and enjoyable parts of it. And I was going to give them some colorful cardboards on which they could write their reports on. But I wish I had had more time to do it :D. Next time, I will be more careful with time management. (Eren, Blog comment, April 20, 2013, 1:37 am)

Commentaries provided the participants with multiple perspectives. They suggested each other new methods or tools to deal with issues related to teaching including their advantages and disadvantages. In the following comments, several participants commented on a classroom management tool which had been used and discussed by one participant:

In one of the classes I had observed, for fourth grade students, the teacher was using colored cards, red, yellow or green, to keep track of the students' behavior throughout the lesson. The students all have their names up on a board within the class, specially prepared for the "behavior cards", and according to their behavior the teacher removes or adds the colored cards. The students do not have any card under their name at the beginning of the lesson and according to how they behave throughout the lesson the teacher adds or removes the cards. She does not instantly insert a red card, but rather it is a gradual process, unless the student's behavior is an outrageous one. For negative behavior, initially yellow is inserted and if the behavior continues the red card is inserted. As a consequence, if you still have a red card by the end of the lesson, it takes away from the recess time. On the other hand, a green card makes the students feel happy about themselves. However, if you get a red card, it does not mean that you cannot change it. If the behavior of the student ameliorates, the teacher gradually changes the cards, again first to yellow, then to green. (Büşra, Required Blog Entry, March 26, 2013, 11:45 am)

It could be observed how they learned from each other, engaged in a discussion, and contributed with their own ideas on the matter in the following excerpts:

I never heard such a tool before, so it is nice to learn it now ;) It is a form of punishment or reinforcement. So, in schools where it is forbidden to administer those (punishment or reinforcement) it could be problematic. (İnci, Blog comment, March 26, 2013, 6:19 pm)

I agree with İnci. It also reminded me putting minus or plus signs to the students' names. The principle of the tool seems similar but how it is applied is a bit different. However while reading this tool I thought that it can be distracting for students during the lesson. Students can be distracted and they can focus on these symbols and this may possibly prevent teacher from conducting the lesson smoothly. (Elif, Blog Comment, March 27, 2013, 3:33 am)

Punishment should not be used so frequently; having a red card is enough to get the message "stop". On the other hand, there is no reward for green cards- they have the right to have a break at the end of 40 minutes, that's not what teachers endow. I agree totally with your comments on punishment. (Büşra, Blog Comment, March 27, 2013, 9:40 am)

I like the tool, but I agree with you in that taking from the recess time may cause stress among the students. I think it creates a tension in the class. Red card should mean something else :). Red cards can be counted and subtracted from the number of green cards. (Merve, Blog Comment, March 27, 2013, 2:27 pm)

In my opinion, the effectiveness of this tool is highly dependent on the relationship dynamics between the teacher and the students. Unless, the students know that the teacher cares for them and that behavior is important for them and not just based on reward punishment paradigm, this would not be an effective solution for the classroom management problems one might encounter. (Sıla, Blog Comment, March 27, 2013, 5:45 pm)

To sum up, it was discussed that online peer feedback might have been a factor which encouraged deeper levels of reflective thinking by pre-service teachers. The participants posted over two hundred comments on blogs. In addition to increasing the amount of feedback received, these comments were beneficial for reflective thinking since within these comments there was evidence of encouraging critical thinking and self-evaluation, , providing emotional support, engaging in an academic discussion, and learning from each other.

4.4.2 Sharing

In class, as observed, participants of the study could share their ideas and experiences with their peers and the instructor during or after the lecture of the week within their

two-hour weekly sessions. Blogging, on the other hand, performed as an online sharing platform which was complementary to the classroom learning which was limited to two hours a week. Here participants could share teaching materials and activities with others such as the following example entries which are a teaching activity and a collection of links to useful websites:

Shrek 3! Ratatouille! And many others! Use of up-to-date films attracts all learners, but to have a video book parallel to what is being watched in the classroom, to watch them with some linguistic purposes and similarly to have some activities that motivate learners to listen more carefully must be amazing. Fourth graders have been watching these films with subtitles at school, and then at home they do the activities eagerly. The amazing thing about these videos is learners make their comments in English and in a natural way while watching. (Büşra, Optional blog entry, February 19, 2013)

Some useful links to other blogs: Teach them English. Trying to Teach.

Some Sample Pre-Reading Questions.

Doing the CELTA? Here are 10 books you need to read before you start.

(Merve, Optional blog entry, February 25, 2013)

In their entries, participants wrote about many teaching experiences or observations including motivating content about being a pre-service teacher. They shared a lot of photos and some videos of their cooperating schools along with their comments. In the following examples, one participant wrote her experiences on the first day of her practicum and another shared a photo taken in her cooperating school along with a comment as seen in Figure 2:

As a teacher trainee, I did not expect to be so welcomed by the cooperative teachers and students. On my first day, I was introduced to classes; from then on, they addressed me as Ms. Gaye, they asked me questions, sometimes I collected their homework and helped class teacher throughout the first semester. I appreciate the way teachers improve themselves: If they are not sure or do not have any idea about something, honestly they tell their students that they would

search. If they cannot handle any problems related to technology, they ask for help and they keep learning sometimes from the learners. Due to the fact that they are not arrogant or do not have problems with their egos, they can establish good relationships with the learners, with us, pre-service teachers, and with anybody in the school. So, you can feel as if you are part of this sincere and welcoming environment. (Gaye, Optional blog entry, March 3, 2013)



Figure 2. A photo taken at Serap's cooperating school from her blog.

They encourage me to participate in their huge creative world, and I love to be with them. (Serap, Optional blog entry, March 2, 2013)

By sharing their practicum experiences, the participants reported that they could learn from each other. As discussed in the literature review, peer teaching and learning in a community are among significant practices of SCT. Especially the benefits of sharing student teaching videos and teaching activities, and sharing practicum related concerns were emphasized by the participants. The following are some related excerpts:

Frankly, at the beginning the blog was only one of the course requirements to me, but I have watched some of my peers' official presentation [supervised student teaching] videos and read their comments, got to know their experiences. Then, I used the blog to see that I am not alone in what I have been experiencing. (Gül, Final Survey, June 13, 2013)

Reading my peers' posts helped me learn how to write a journal; after reading three posts. (Büşra, Final Survey, June 13, 2013)

As I mentioned above, it really affects one's improvement on the field. Having more than one perspective on something is always good. We are reminded that things can always be better and we tried to give advice to each other as well as share ideas or give feedback on our teaching on many levels. One person can only think limited in his/her own ways, but this audience we have there broadens our limits, I guess. (Sıla, Final Survey, June 13, 2013)

It provided me with new teaching methods and strategies regarding classroom management and English teaching like writing what you will do on board, which I haven't observed in my cooperating school, but in another friend's video. (Elif, Final Survey, June 13, 2013)

All the people have different perspectives, there were some points I couldn't be aware of and some of my friends were aware of them. It is just sharing. (Mine, Final Survey, June 13, 2013)

Almost every teacher candidate in my class had a different classroom environment. We all had different schools, different grades and different student profiles. With the help of sharing our experiences online and reading them, we all could have different perspectives about those different classes even if we hadn't attended in one before. I think that was the best side of this course. (Seda, Final Survey, June 13, 2013)

When you write something, you start to think about it again and reanalyze the process. It is a level beyond just sitting and observing a given classroom. And also I feel like I have observed fifteen or more classes thanks to the posts of my friends, and equipped myself with new strategies and methods, as well. (İpek, Final Survey, June 13, 2013)

Although I haven't commented on each post, I read the majority of them because I like to see how people did the relevant activity, and compare with my own. (Nil, Final Survey, June 13, 2013)

A sense of community was probably present among the participants, since they had already known each other as class-mates for several years. However, the limited hours of the practice teaching course might not have allowed them to share as much as they needed. Blogging might have been helpful in adding to their sense of community as a group of pre-service teachers. As a community of pre-service teachers, they shared their

ideas and experiences about teaching keeping their minds busy with teacher reflection. Furthermore, they supported each other whenever they expressed that they did something wrong or felt inadequate as a pre-service teacher in their entries. Below are some example excerpts:

It got us closer as class-mates, it increased our interaction, it helped us somewhat be prepared before coming to class, it created an environment where we could share what we experienced in our practice schools. (Melisa, Final Survey, June 13, 2013)

I felt as part of a community because I regularly interacted with my peers and we commented on each other's work. (Gül, Interview, May 9, 2013)

Actually I felt as a part of a practice community but it is not something like Facebook® in which you are really active and you check posts every day. (Büşra, Final Survey, June 13, 2013)

When they were asked if reading their friends' posts affected their own entries, most of the participants mentioned the effect along with their effort to find their own voice:

Actually I was reading most of what my friends had posted to have a better idea about the post requirement and to learn from their experiences. I can honestly say that I was reading almost all of what had been posted before writing my own. Reading my peers' posts affected me but while I was writing I was trying to find my own voice and write as different things as I could. (Eren, Final Survey, June 13, 2013)

Especially when I had a difficulty in posting an activity, I firstly read my friends' posts and learned how to complete the activity. However, I was always careful in not getting affected by them for my ideas while writing in my own blog, I always tried to write my own opinions. (Serap, Final Survey, June 13, 2013)

There were also some concerns about sharing their work with their peers. It took some time for some participants to get over the novelty effect of the tool. Especially at the

beginning of the study, this might have been a negative factor which affected the depth of reflections of some pre-service teachers. Below is an example excerpt:

First, it was awkward for me because I don't generally use the internet actively. I mean I like reading online but I don't like posting so much. So, it took a while to get used to sharing my own feelings and thoughts honestly. (Sila, Interview, May, 9, 2013)

In the initial survey participants reported that they were familiar with several Web 2.0 tools; except for one, all the participants were familiar with blogs. Yet, only two participants reported that they had their own blogs. When we looked at the results of the content analysis of the blog entries, it could be observed that the average reflection level of even the first four required entries was level four, a high reflection level according to the framework. This achievement revealed that most of the participants were able to deal with the novelty effect of the tool and adapt quickly.

To sum up, within the study, the current blogs performed as online spaces where the participants could share their materials, ideas, experiences, and observations related to teaching. Participants could share teaching materials and activities with others. Their positive entries regarding their practicum experiences included motivating content about being a pre-service teacher. The participants reported that they could learn from each other's practicum experiences. Additionally, they expressed that blogging might have been helpful in adding to their sense of community as a group of pre-service teachers.

4.4.3 Audience

Traditionally, the audience of the practice teaching course was mainly the instructor in the current university. Papers were submitted directly to the teacher and discussions

were done as a class. Students were supposed to observe three peers' student teaching presentations and give and receive feedback to or from these three people. On the other hand, the current tool, blogging, enabled participants to be able to check all other eighteen classmates' course work and student teaching presentation videos with ease. They were able to have eighteen more practicum experiences. In other words, they could share their course work with a considerably larger audience consisting of all the participants, course instructor and course assistant. The participants expressed that they were affected by the presence of a larger audience instead of an audience comprised merely of a course instructor. Although the blogs were available for anybody's access on the web, in their entries, the students did not mention an audience larger than their classmates and their instructor. They did not talk about privacy concerns related to having an open blog. However, most of the students said that they wrote the blog entries more carefully yet more informally than they did in the paper-based assignments with a single audience:

Blog activities give you much freedom and your audience is bigger. Also, with blog activities, you use a more daily language, smileys but you cannot do that with paper based activities. (Seda, Interview, May, 9, 2013)

Blogging was fun for me because I like expressing myself in any way. But while writing I am more careful about the content and spelling if I have an audience other than teacher. (Gül, Final Survey, June 13, 2013)

As I knew that I had an audience, I tried to be more careful and attentive. (Mine, Final Survey, June 13, 2013)

... I could have the chance to share my friends' experiences and see them teaching in a real classroom. (Melisa, Interview, May, 9, 2013)

The participants reported that having a larger audience was motivating. They expressed that having a larger audience made them feel that their writings were being more useful.

They stated that it was more enjoyable and authentic than sending an assignment to the instructor. Plus, they wanted their peers to read their posts; therefore, they tried to make their posts more appealing by using interesting headings, different format or layout, and multimedia. Below are some example excerpts:

Actually, I usually think of the instructors as my audience and it was not different while blogging, either. Only when there were comments on my writing, I thought that I really have an audience because in other types of written assignments, we don't really get written feedback; we only get the score usually. So, getting feedback; knowing that someone will read what you write and respond to it soon is quite motivating. (Neva, Final Survey, June 13, 2013)

It is good to know that your effort is not going to be for nothing. You know someone will read it and maybe learn something from it, or maybe help you see some point you failed to do. Therefore, I have a positive opinion about it, but that doesn't mean it is a stress-free job. Knowing that your peers will read what you write makes you afraid of making mistakes (in grammar/spelling/word choice), so you try to be extra careful in doing so. (Seda, Final Survey, June 13, 2013)

Of course, it is not the same with just sending your homework to the teacher, because you have to add something like pictures or videos to keep their attention and make them read your post. (Nil, Final Survey, June 13, 2013)

It was way more fun than just printing and submitting homework to the teacher. You can contribute more, share more and see more thanks to blogs. I even consider opening a blog for myself, not just for educational purposes though. (İpek, Final Survey, June 13, 2013)

To sum up, with the affordance of the current tool, blogging, participants could check all other eighteen classmates' course work and student teaching videos and learn from their practicum experiences. The participants expressed that the presence of a larger audience instead of an audience comprised merely of a course instructor had an effect on them informing that they wrote the blog entries more carefully but more informally than they did in the paper-based assignments with a single audience. The participants finally

reported that having a larger audience consisted of interested parties was more motivating, useful and authentic than having a single audience.

4.4.4 Efficiency of the tool

Thanks to the affordances of the blogging tool, one fifth of the entries included text and/or multimedia in the form of pictures, photos, links and videos. Students reported that blogs provided them with an individual space and easy access to others' individual spaces. They compared blogs to other tools such as wikis, social networks and discussion forums. One of the mentioned advantages of blogs mentioned was the organized and personal nature of the tool. Having an individual space might have added to the participants' sense of ownership since students named their blogs and personalized many features such as themes and fonts. They made use of various emoticons, different colors, and different layouts while writing their posts. Although it was not suggested, many participants chose to use their real names and share their own photos on their blogs. In addition, by having an individual space for each participant, entries of each participant could be maintained separately. If only one class blog or a discussion forum had been used, entries would have been jumbled and it would have been very difficult to follow one's progress. Having an individual space made observation and evaluation of each participant's contribution and progress easier. To talk about access, participants were asked to label their posts based on the number of the blog activity. The chronological listing feature of the blogs made the latest post easily accessible and labeling made it easy to differentiate the posts. With this labeling and archiving feature of blogs, navigation was carried out in an organized way. Participants followed each other's blogs and the course blog. The blog hosting site offered a gadget

showing the list of blogs that were followed by the blog owner, which also made navigation easier. The following example is a related excerpt:

Blog was an appropriate platform because we had to write relatively long reflections on what we experienced in our practice schools, so if we had been using a platform like forums or wikis or a group page on Facebook®, there would be a chaos, everyone's entry would jumble, and it wouldn't be organized, nice and clean and easy to follow. Besides, it would be a collaborative voice rather than our own voice if we had been using such platforms. With blogs, we have our own voice in our own area. I think it is better than the other tools we used before (wikis and canvas). I think it is useful. (Gül, Final Survey, June 13, 2013)

Another efficiency of the tool was its appropriateness for reflective activities. The asynchronous nature of blogs provided students with enough time for their thought processes for reflective thinking. When looked at the time stamps of the entries below, it could be observed that participants did not have a synchronous discussion. Although it could sometimes be a disadvantage, this asynchronous feature of blogs allocated students the time they needed to think on the messages. Time and place flexibility was appreciated by the participants. They could post their assignments and read peers' assignments any time within the due dates. In this way, individual differences were respected. They could benefit from other students reflections as they had easy access to them. They also could write their comments whenever they were available or they preferred; some wrote early in the morning and some wrote in the evening or the next day. This flexibility could also have had a role in increasing the depth of reflective thinking within the entries. The following is an example discussion made by using the comment feature on a student blog post related to the video critique activity which asked for reflection on two different short teaching videos of two different teachers in two different countries, China and the United States of America:

I agree with you Mine on some points but not on all of them. Somehow, culture influences the way people behave. For the first teacher, yes, she is very active and she is smiling all the time. I agree on those points and you claimed that students seem like parrots, which is true. Although at first glance, they seem to internalize rules of class, it is nothing but just repeating them. However, when we come to the second teacher, it is not her fault to teach such a crowded class, and because China has so many people, its schools are also over-crowded. Chinese people are collectivistic while American people are more let's say outgoing and individualistic. Those students in China cannot just walk around and do more or less similar activities like American students do. They have to be respectful, silent, obedient, because it is the way they are grown up. So, we should also think back stories of these two different cultures. (Seda, Blog comment, March 12, 2013, 14:21)

Actually, you are right for this class' similarity with the military camp and for your comment that they do not learn anything by reading out loud from their course book. Yes there is no grouping and it can be the best way. However, in the second part of the video, the students share their answers and opinions with their partners and I think that may be a better way to motivate them, and I think it works. (Merve, Blog comment, March 12, 2013, 15:40)

It is true that the students' creativity was not the focus in this class; however, I believe that was appropriate for their age. The attention span at such an age is very limited, so the teacher needs to actively control the students somehow, which I think she was very successful at. Thus, it may be necessary to keep them repeating stuff through enjoyable activities in order to keep the classroom management under control and to actually get the students engaged in the activities without losing their attention. (Dilek, Blog comment, March 12, 2013, 16:39)

I was also shocked with the second video ... so obedient, so silent students! But I think what we are missing here is the culture and educational system of China. They are not accustomed to speak freely when they are around someone grown-up, as far as I have learnt from the psychology courses. Yet, I still do not agree with the teaching methodology and this kind of strict attitude, as you stated above. (Sıla, Blog comment, March 13, 2013, 05:58)

As you declared too, making them work in groups could be much more effective and beneficial instead of a direct lecturing solely. But to prevent a likely turmoil in class, isolated walls could be of great help not to disturb others in school, in my opinion. (Eren, Blog comment, March 13, 2013, 06:40)

I could not realize it before I read your post but yes it was really easy for students to follow the instructions, they were like they made rehearsal beforehand. And I really agree with you in terms of memorization. While I was watching it, I could

not help myself to think if teacher had broken the order of doubles, what would have happened? (Dilek, Blog comment, March 13, 2013, 17:05)

As this was their senior year, pre-service teachers were busy doing their practicum, completing their curriculum requirements and job hunting. Among these demanding activities they might not have spared time for thinking back on their practice teaching experiences. The aim of the current course was to make sure they reflected on their experiences. Blogging was added as a component to this course because it had promising features that would make the practicum experience more fruitful. Blog activities were designed to promote systematic and collaborative reflection. One affordance was that these blog activities enabled the participants to systematically reflect on their practice teaching experiences and enable them to have a well-organized written online record of their practicum. Below are some example entries that reflect these ideas:

I think blogging and especially our activities made me progress in terms of becoming a reflective teacher. Activities that we are expected to fulfill were especially helpful in making us reflect on our experiences. We have thought a lot about our practicum observations and experiences to complete our activities on blogs. Now I own a professional blog which shows my practicum journey step by step. (Melisa, Final survey, June 13, 2013)

Especially when I watched my own teaching video, I critically thought about my own teaching. I evaluated my teaching process, and see how things go in a real classroom with real students. If there were not any reflection activities, I would just say “wow that was difficult or fun” and leave the classroom, but when you have to write something about it, you evaluate the process all over again and reflect on your teaching process. (Gaye, Interview, May 9, 2013)

I think activities were prepared well in order to make us think back on our teaching experiences regularly. I have done this for all activities and evaluated my observations and teaching to complete them. (Seda, Interview, May 9, 2013).

When they were asked during the final survey if they would prefer to do paper based activities or blog activities within a practice teaching course, all of the participants chose blog activities. They mentioned some of the advantages of blog activities over traditional activities such as reading other participants' entries, offering more interactivity, being easier to organize, share and present, and being more process-oriented. Several of the participants added that both types, online and traditional activities, should be included.

Below are some example excerpts:

I prefer blog activities, because I can see my friends' posts. (Gül, Interview, May 9, 2013)

When there is something better, newer and more interactive, why stick with the traditional methods? (Serap, Final Survey, June 13, 2013)

Blog activities are definitely superior to paper based activities because they are easier to organize, to share and present. (Melisa, Final Survey, June 13, 2013)

I'm happy to use blog as we didn't have to submit everything like reflection in our portfolios. We could complete the lesson like step by step. (Mine, Interview, May 9, 2013)

Participants were given more freedom compared to pen-and-paper assignments. They made use of multimedia in the forms of photos, videos, and links to support their ideas in one fifth of all the entries. The lengths of their posts were flexible as they were determined by themselves, even so, they wrote long entries especially for the required blog activities. They could choose any posts of their peers to read or comment on as the archive feature of the blogs made all the posts available to the users. Examples follow:

It was nice to have such a platform to share our ideas because even though we discuss things in class, we may not have the same opportunity to think broadly in simultaneous speech unlike in writing when we can have plenty of time to organize our thoughts and express ourselves more freely and effectively. (Sıla, Final Survey, June 13, 2013)

It allows us to upload videos images etc. and watch each other apart from posting writings which is very nice. (Serap, Final Survey, June 13, 2013)

According to the results of the initial survey, all the students were familiar with blogs, yet a few had actually owned one. Even for the ones who already had a blog, blogging for academic purposes was a new concept. A few students stated that they had adaptation problems. However, students did not express big technical issues which limited their learning activities. On the contrary, they talked about the ease and practicality of using the tool. At the beginning of the study, the blog host, Blogger®, had been selected especially for this purpose. They mentioned another important affordance of using an online platform, which was environmental friendliness. Posting their assignments online, they could save a lot of paper. Besides, it would be some extra workload to print, file and hand in an assignment biweekly. The following examples are some related excerpts:

Blogger is quite easy to use and anyone should be able to use it without any problems. I don't like to be so involved with the technology, and thus am not very aware of its advantages, but even I could use it and I am very happy to have been given the chance to explore it. (Dilek, Final Survey, June 13, 2013)

At the very beginning, it was difficult for me to adopt blogging because that was my first blog. But, gradually, I was getting better and I liked writing blogs. I also suggest that everyone (every teacher candidate) should learn at least blogging because we should keep up with technology in our world. (Sıla, Interview, May, 9, 2013)

We already prepare portfolios as paper based, so blogging activities are more preferable for me also because it is more environment-friendly and practical. (Ceren, Interview, May, 9, 2013)

It wasn't difficult, there was nothing unusual. It was like just using the internet. (Gaye, Interview, May, 9, 2013)

I think writing blogs online is easier than paper based activities. Also it is environmentally better. (Melisa, Interview, May, 9, 2013)

On the other hand, according to the survey and the interviews, there was a consensus on the inefficiency of the blog hosting site in terms of video uploading. The free version of the site did not allow uploading video files bigger than a hundred megabytes. This caused trouble for the pre-service teachers while uploading their student teaching videos. An alternative solution (uploading the video somewhere else and posting the link) was found. This inconvenience experienced during video uploading triggered some negative attitudes towards the tool as follows:

It is hard to upload a video; not possible to do it if the video is bigger than 100 megabytes, so that is a minus point. One other issue is that it is not easy to edit or write posts on mobile devices. If there was a better app that we could use on tablets or smartphones, which would help a lot and would mean that we could share anything on mobile, and I believe that's what blogging is about: sharing things instantly. (Dilek, Final Survey, June 13, 2013)

I think it is generally very easy to use blogs. But when we come to posting videos it is limited. For example I tried hard several times but I could hardly upload my video on my blog. (Ceren, Final Survey, June 13, 2013)

To sum up, as students reported in the interviews and surveys and as observed during the application of blogs within the study, blogs for reflective purposes have a number of advantages over using traditional pen-and-paper based methods. Having an individual space, easy access and navigation, asynchronous nature of blogs, time and place indifference, use of multimedia, flexibility, easiness and practicality of using the selected blog hosting site, and environmentally friendliness are among the listed affordances of using blogs for reflective purposes as part of a practicum course.

4.4.6 Blended design of the course

The current practice teaching course required face-to-face in-class sessions, observations and student teaching in cooperating K–12 schools and online presence; additionally, as for evaluation, both online and printed submissions. Observation and student teaching in cooperating schools were indispensable parts of the practicum for the participants. They helped pre-service teacher participants to experience teaching in its real context. As observed by the researcher, in-class sessions included presentation of the weekly topic by two participants. This presentation was important both in terms of peer teaching and practice for being a professional teacher. These presentations offered necessary content knowledge about teaching. Class discussions were held during and after these presentations. There was a nurturing atmosphere where students could express themselves. These sessions were also significant as participants had a chance of reflecting on their practicum as a class. The only negative side of these sessions was their limited duration due to the busy schedule of the pre-service teacher participants. This gap was filled with an online component for the course. The online platform was designed as complementary to face-to-face sessions which were limited with two hours a week. As mentioned before, the online assignments, constituting three fourths of the course grade, were completed via blogs. Blogs served as an alternative space where discussion and reflection of topics covered in class might have been extended. On average, blog activities promoted high level reflection (3.9) among the participants. The comments made (n = 209) were reflective with an average level of 2.6 which matched a medium level according to the selected framework. This showed that participants were able to engage in reflective thinking and writing after reading their peers' posts. When a

participant made a comment on a post, some other participants revealed further points which provided multiple perspectives. A total of 457 entries (89% of all entries) including 221 required blog entries, 27 optional blog entries and 209 blog comments, with a medium level reflectivity on average proved that students were able to extend their academic participation and reflective thinking on the online platform.

Blog activities and comments helped organize a functioning system on this platform. The fact that they were part of the course evaluation motivated students to adapt to blogging at once and engage in the online activities regularly. Biweekly due dates of blog activities encouraged the process-oriented course evaluation and systematic blogging by the participants. When students were asked what they thought of the blog component of the course and whether they thought one component was more advantageous they gave answers such as these:

I think that both class sessions and blog component should be included as we did this year. I regard them as complementing for each other. (Eren, Final Survey, June 13, 2013)

Blog is superior of course! I had the chance of reading all of what my friends had shared. I learnt from their experiences. (Gaye, Final Survey, June 13, 2013)

Blogging is the most effective part of this course. It allows and directs us to be reflective. (Ceren, Final Survey, June 13, 2013)

I think blogs facilitate everything in sharing experiences. We can edit, change or share more. We could not comment on each other's activities with pen and paper method. (İpek, Final Survey, June 13, 2013)

I think writing blogs is the best diaries in our century. If I hadn't been obliged to write this blog, I would have never kept a copy of my practicum days and probably I would have forgotten all of my good or bad experiences. So, that blog was a good source for me. (Büşra, Final Survey, June 13, 2013)

To sum up, a blended design of the current practicum course involved face-to-face in-class sessions, observation and student teaching in cooperating schools, and online presence in participants' individual blogs. According to the findings, each of these components of the current course had their own roles in encouraging participants to become better reflective teachers such as offering hands-on teaching experiences, offering necessary content knowledge and reflective discussions as a class, and offering a complementary individual online platform to engage in more reflective activities.

4.4 Summary of findings

This chapter presented the results of data analyses related to three research questions. Content analysis of the blog entries with a framework approach revealed that participants wrote reflective entries during the sixteen-week semester. According to the selected framework analysis (Bain et al., 1999) slightly more than a third of the entries yielded high levels of reflection. The average depth of reflection was medium level reflection. It was reported that in general blog activities encouraged high level reflection in a systematic way. The content analysis of the interviews, surveys and blog entries revealed the factors related to blogging which might have influenced this depth of reflection demonstrated by the participants. These themes which were organized with regard to the emerging thematic categories were online feedback, sharing, audience, efficiency of the tool, and blended design of the course.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

5.1 Overview of the study

The current study aimed to promote reflection on teaching practice among eighteen pre-service English language teachers by means of integrating blog activities into an undergraduate level practicum. Data were collected through archival documents of participants' blog entries, an initial survey, two focus group interviews and a final survey. To begin with, participants set up their individual blogs as part of the practice teaching course they were enrolled in; then, they were assigned to complete fourteen blog activities respectively within sixteen weeks. These blog activities were comprised of three types, namely, four thematic blog activities (critical incident analysis activity, video-critique activity, reflection on the classroom management tool activity, and reflection on the designed activity), six peer-related blog activities (uploading their student teaching presentation videos on individual blogs and peer evaluation of five different peers' student teaching presentations uploaded as videos on individual blogs), and four self-related blog activities (self-evaluation of two different student teaching presentations and two reflective journal entries). Participants posted a total of 221 blog entries related to these blog activities on their own blogs. These entries were referred to as required entries, and they were analyzed to measure their extent of reflection level by using a reflective framework by Bain et al., (1999) which had a scale of five reflection levels (level 1 to level 5) specifically designed to measure depth of student teacher reflection.

Along with posting their own required blog entries, after reading two different peers' required blog entries, participants were also asked to write at least two commentaries for two other peer participants via the comment function of blogs. In this way participants were supposed to read entries of their peers and extend their reflection while reading about and reflecting on others' experiences. A total of 260 blog comments were collected and some of these comments were discarded from the study because they were only comprised of expressions such as "sorry" or "thank you", and they did not include anything specifically related to teaching. The comments posted by the course assistant were also discarded. Eventually, 209 of the 260 comments were analyzed to measure the extent of reflection in them by using the selected reflective framework. Apart from blog comments and required entries, participants made some free entries which were not assigned. A total of 33 free blog entries were collected and they were referred to as optional entries, yet some of these optional entries were discarded from the study because some of these entries did not include any text and some were unrelated to teaching. In the end, 27 of these optional blog entries were analyzed to measure their extent of reflection level by using the selected reflective framework. Additional data were collected through focus group interviews and surveys in order to have a better understanding of the participants' characteristics and to identify the factors which might have influenced the extent of reflection demonstrated by the participants.

5.2 Review of findings and links to literature

This part will start with an overview of the findings of the study and continue with the discussion of the findings along with links to the related literature.

5.2.1 The role of blog activities in promoting reflection

As a result of the framework analysis to detect depth of reflection in a total of 457 blog entries of the participants including required blog entries, optional blog entries and blog comments, evidence of reflection was found at differing levels within all the blog entries. It should be noted that there was no zero reflection level according to the selected reflective framework (Bain et al., 1999). The average reflection level was 3.17 and 61% (n = 281) of the entries showed medium or high level reflection (level three or four) which constituted the largest pile. The average reflection level of only the required blog entries corresponded to 3.9, which was close to the high reflection level according to the selected framework. These achieved reflection levels were considerable compared to some previous findings in the literature. For example Yang (2009), using a two-level framework including descriptive versus critical reflection levels to evaluate online reflections of pre-service language teachers, reported that most of the entries (62%) included merely descriptive reflection. Too (2013), after examining a total of 286 entries containing the reflections of 25 pre-service language teachers on prompts in blogs and online forums, measured reflection with a five-level reflective framework and found that 40% of the entries showed reflection at the third level which required integration of examples from practice teaching experiences to support ideas and feelings or the fourth level which required presenting analyses to verify one's point of view. Wopereis et al. (2010) concluded that online reflections of participants, who were pre-service teachers, mostly remained in the first level, survival (e.g., what to do about students who come late), according to the four-level framework used by the researchers to measure

reflectivity; despite taking formal instruction on higher levels of reflection, thematic, sequential, or spiral reflection were rarely observed.

Several researchers have labeled the highest level reflection as critical reflection and regarded it as the superior level of reflection (Ho & Richards, 1993; Hatton & Smith, 1995; Jay & Johnson, 2002). For instance, Hatton and Smith (1995) attribute critical reflection to the ability to consider the results of one's actions, other perspectives, contextual differences, evaluating social, political and/or cultural aspects. As their framework is based on socio-constructivist theories, Bain et al. (1999) attribute the highest level in their framework, reconstruction, to the ability to draw an original conclusion from their reflections, generalize from their experience, and to be able to extract general principles to formulate a personal theory of teaching and take a stance in complicated issues and plan future learning (p. 60). In the current study, out of a total of 457 evaluated blog entries within the current study, 12% of them were at the highest level of reflection. Compared to other reflection levels, the frequency of the highest level reflection (12%) was not high, yet it could signal a potential for improvement. As stated by Wopereis et al. (2010) and Ward and McCotter (2004), the relatively short (sixteen weeks) duration of the implementation might not have been sufficient for the pre-service teachers to engage in highest level reflection to a wider extent. When it comes to lower levels of reflection, similar to the findings of Too (2013), which detected the lowest level in 23% of the reflections in their study, low level reflection (level 1 and 2) was observed in 27% (n = 123) of 457 blog entries.

Overall, the participants who were pre-service teachers mostly engaged in medium or high level teacher reflection. Several studies emphasize that pre-service

teachers are liable to deal with lower level or descriptive reflection rather than higher level or critical reflection (Calderhead, 1992; Hatton & Smith, 1995; McIntyre, 1993; Whipp, 2003; Yost et al., 2000). However, in the current study, participants who were pre-service teachers dealt mostly with medium or high level reflection rather than low level or highest level reflection. The results indicated that several features related to the blog activities and several factors related to blogging might have influenced this extent of reflection, which will be discussed in detail in the following paragraphs.

Consistent with other research which included promoting of reflection (Kolb, 1984; Tripp, 1993; Hamlin, 2004; Cox, 2005; Johns, 2004; Maddocks & Wright, 2004), the comparatively high levels of reflection revealed in the current study might be explained by the possibility that guided and systematic scaffolding of reflection resulting from these blog activities might have created an opportunity to engage in deeper levels of reflection for the participants. One feature of these blog activities was the fact that they were designed with the underlying idea that reflection could be learned and promoted in systematic and guided ways (Dewey, 1933; Tripp, 1993; Laboskey, 1993; McCrindle, 1995; Rosie, 2000; Yost et al., 2000; Cox, 2005; Samuels & Betts, 2007; Sockman & Sharma, 2008). The blog activities, which held a process-based approach to learning reflection, were organized in such a way that primarily required pre-service teachers to adopt or design some teaching materials, techniques or activities, and then apply them in their cooperating schools for practice, after which they would narrate their experiences and reflect on them through guiding questions. Another feature of these blog activities was that they viewed active participation at the center of learning to reflect (Phillips, 1995). Regarding the importance of social interaction in student centered

learning (Vygotsky, 1978; Nuthall, 2002); Beck and Kosnik (2006) argue that activities based on socio-constructivist theories could assist teacher candidates with linking theory to practice. Research also indicates that the quality of reflective thinking increases when pre-service teachers encounter multiple perspectives in a learning community (Bain et al., 1999; Francis, 1995; Hatton & Smith, 1995; LaBoskey, 1994; Liston & Zeichner, 1990; Mewborn, 1999; Richert, 1992; Yost et al., 2000) and blogs make it easier to present different viewpoints (Trammell, 2004). The current blog activities encouraged the participants to share their practice teaching experiences in a learning community, read other participants' posts which allowed them to have exposure to their peers' perspectives and write at least two comments for two peers per activity which encouraged them to think about others' views. Furthermore, the blog activities were organized in such a way that they extended the content of reflection by selecting various topics as the foci of the activities such as classroom management, critical incidents in learning environments, analysis of video-cases, peer or self-evaluation and reflection on the designed activities. Additionally, the activities required pre-service teachers to observe others' teaching performances, apply some teaching methods, and do some student teaching presentations in their cooperating practice teaching schools. In the end, they were always asked to think back on their experiences, engage in evaluation and consider alternatives. Considering these, promoting reflection with the help of other participants and creating opportunities for pre-service teachers to link theory to practice were other features of these blog activities. Consistent with the results of several other studies (Stiler & Philleo, 2003; Yang, 2009; Wopereis et al., 2010; Sharma, 2010; Too, 2013), the current findings indicated the potential of integrating blog activities into a

practicum to provide systematic opportunities to practice teacher reflection for the participants who were pre-service teachers with a careful design and guidance.

Finally, when the entries of three different types of blog activities were closely examined, it was found that there was a statistically significant difference among the reflectivity means of three activity types. Blog entries regarding self-related activities, including self-evaluation of student teaching presentations and journal writing, yielded better results than thematic and peer-related activities reaching high level reflection (4.3) according to the statistical measures. While student teaching provides pre-service teachers worthwhile teaching experiences and helps them link their theoretical knowledge to teaching practice (Hamlin, 2004), when student teaching or microteaching sessions are followed by self-evaluation, pre-service teachers find an opportunity to reflect on their strengths and weaknesses, and this may trigger alternative scenarios and future learning plans (Kpanja, 2001). Likewise, Samuels and Betts (2007) found that journal writing and self-assessment contributed to the reflective progress of the participants and peer-feedback sessions were facilitative and motivating; but, it was time-consuming and tiresome for some participants to write journals. Too much writing was listed as a disadvantage of journal writing by Gadsby and Cronin (2012) as well. As Schoffner (2005) pointed out, weblogs could be alternatives to pen and paper journaling. Due to the benefits of journal writing on reflective thinking, it was included as a journal entry blog activity in the current study. In the traditional design of the practice teaching course, students were supposed to write five journal entries. Due to negative findings related to the writing burden of journals (Samuels & Betts, 2007; Gadsby & Cronin, 2012), the current design assigned only two journal entries to the participants, and

replaced the other journal assignments with thematic blog activities such as critical incident analysis, reflection on the designed activity and reflection on the classroom management tool activity. The results were encouraging as blog entries of the participants regarding thematic activities yielded high level reflection (4.01) on average, yet slightly less than journal writing and self-evaluation activities (4.3). It should be remembered that thematic activities were mostly adapted from the early studies in the literature with the purpose of promoting teacher reflection (Gibbs, 1998; Tripp, 1993; McCurry, 2000; Rosenstein, 2002). On the other hand, the third type of activities, peer-related activities including basically peer-feedback on student teaching presentation videos facilitated medium level reflection, which was a lower level than the other types of blog activities. Nevertheless, similar to the findings of Samuels and Betts (2007), participants appreciated the contribution of the online feedback they received on their reflective progress. As previously claimed by other researchers (Deng & Yuen, 2011; Hall & Davison, 2007), all the participants reported that they read their peers' comments eagerly and peer-feedback provided them with multiple perspectives, opportunities for academic discussions, and emotional support during the practicum.

5.2.2 The role of blogging on promoting reflection

Several insightful guidelines for course design with the integration of blogs for reflective purposes was suggested by Sharma (2010) after carrying out two reflective blogging studies. One of the most important guidelines was that a structured introduction to the technology held critical significance (Sharma, 2010; Wopereis et al., 2010). Similarly, this study allocated a great deal of effort in preliminary preparation of blog activities and proper introduction of both the tool and the blog activities. Additionally, technical

problems were dealt immediately and lab workshops were organized. The course blog functioned both as a model weblog and a source of information. Eventually the participants started blogging, following others' blogs and the course blog, learned posting several entries in different media forms, and managed to do their first blog activity in the third week of the semester. To sum up, in order to have a functioning online system, educators must give priority to strong foundation.

Another guideline from Sharma (2010) for reflective blog integration was related to the need for requirements for regular posting in order to promote deeper levels of reflection. Similarly, structured and guided reflection was emphasized by several researchers (Chapman et al., 2005; Gravett & Peterson, 2002; Rosie, 2000). Some previous studies even emphasized the need for structure, planning and organization for every step of the blogging experience (Ramos, 2004; Xie & Sharma, 2005; West et al., 2006; Yang, 2009; de Andres Martinez, 2012). They tied the resulting surface level reflection rather than deep level reflection by pre-service teachers to the less structured blogging in their study. They also talked about the lack of certain requirements and guidelines as a barrier to regular and reflective posting of the participants. Considering these findings, the current study adopted a structured way to promote reflection. With insight from the findings of Ellison and Wu (2008), the results of the current study showed that pre-service teachers engaged in regular and reflective blogging when they were assigned meaningful posting requirements with a degree of freedom. This was achieved with thoughtfully-organized blog activities respecting personal preferences and having reasonable due-dates with comment requirements. The participants reported that the blended design of the course was important in establishing and keeping a functioning

system via combining face-to-face support and online presence. According to the findings, the blended-design of the practice teaching course added to the promotion of reflective thinking among the pre-service teachers (Sharma, 2010; Wopereis et al., 2010; Too, 2013). As emphasized by Deng and Yuen (2013), in the current study, in-class meetings where class discussions took place acted as sources of a sense of community. In addition, the class meetings were crucial especially at the very beginning while introducing the tool and dealing with upcoming tool or assignment related issues. The blog environment contributed a complementary space where students could share their practicum experiences in a more detailed, organized, and personalized way. In this way, as previous stated by Sharma (2010), writing became a method of learning from experience. Several participants reported that they wanted to make their friends read their posts, so they gave importance to the style and layout in their entries. Multimedia additions to text and less formal writing style made the entries more personalized and more attractive to read.

Encouraging pre-service teachers to read their peers' blogs and to exchange feedback is another factor in promoting reflection. Although blogs are personal spaces, they facilitate online interaction among learners (Ellison & Wu, 2008); learners can visit their peers' blogs and leave comments through blogs' transparent nature, which prevents isolation in a web-based learning environment (Dickey, 2004) by creating a sense of online community (Trammell, 2004; Williams & Jacobs, 2004; Yang, 2009; Halic, Lee, Paulus, & Spence, 2010). However, in order to create a sense of blog community, as previously claimed by Top (2009), instead of just asking students to complete and post an assignment for a course grade, interactivity among them needs to be promoted. In the

current study, participants were encouraged to read their peers' blogs, to give feedback and exchange experiences, ideas or information. The benefit of learning from peers was usually emphasized by the participants of the current study as well as in other studies (Wassell & Crouch, 2008; Top, 2009; Sharma, 2010). The findings indicated that online feedback in the form of blog comments might have influenced the depth of pre-service teacher reflection. The fact that 80% of the comments were reflective with an average of approximately medium level reflection (2.6) according to framework analysis showed that the pre-service teachers engaged in reflection while writing comments as well. This was in line with Hatton and Smith's (1995) findings that the participants who wrote their reflections following a dialogue with a critical friend demonstrated higher levels of reflection. Furthermore, in the current study, consistent with the findings of Luehmann and Tinelli (2008), participants engaged in academic discussions on blogs by using the comment function of blogs. As Williams and Jacobs (2004) highlighted in their study, blogging encouraged knowledge exchange among the bloggers. Du and Wagner (2007) also claimed that blogs could enhance reconstruction of meaning via sharing knowledge which was carried out among peers in the current study. The source of feedback was peers on the blogs and all the participants stated that they eagerly read all the comments addressed to them. Similar to the finding of Wolf (2010), most of the participants mentioned that reading the comments written for them was more enjoyable than writing peer comments. The participants claimed that peer comments encouraged them to evaluate their strengths and weaknesses as teacher candidates. Some comments even led to questioning pre-service teachers' practice theories and reconstruction of teaching beliefs. One concern about comments was their emotional effect on the pre-service teachers. Most participants revealed that if the comments were not well-adjusted they

could have been hurt emotionally. However, compatible with the finding of Xie, Ke and Sharma (2008) about the importance of the type of feedback given to the pre-service teachers, in the orientation period of the current study, the participants had been reminded and modeled to be constructive in their comments. Moreover, they already knew each other personally; so they were careful in choosing their words. This familiarity might have led to subjectivity in giving feedback. To prevent subjectivity, guidelines were established to the effect that both positive and negative aspects should be included in a comment.

Notably no privacy concerns were mentioned by the participants although the blogs were open to public. In spite of the suggestion of the course instructor to use pseudonyms on their blogs, almost all the participants chose to reveal their names. Similar to Scaletta's (2006) finding, they viewed their readers as a small group of their classmates although their blogs were open to online public access. Yet, as previously claimed by Kajder and Bull (2004), having an audience in addition to the instructor was reported to be a factor leading the participants to careful consideration while writing. The participants stated that they checked their writing before they posted it online because their peers would read it and comment on it. Most students stated that they read several posts before writing their own in order to better understand what was expected of them in the activity, which might have made them consider multiple perspectives. Additionally, compatible with the finding of Kajder and Bull (2004), participants reported that their writings were more purposeful and useful because they thought a peer could read them and maybe learn something from them. Additionally, similar to the finding of Tan (2006), students could keep on blogging after the course finished if they

wanted or they could still own an online copy of their practicum experiences which they could reach with ease by means of an open access blog.

Participants made positive remarks regarding the efficiency of the tool except for some of its features. Initially, consistent with the findings of Stiler and Philleo (2003), participants stated that it was easy to set up and use a blog, and they added that blogs provided them with an individual space to express themselves as previously stated by Ferdig and Trammell (2004) and had easy access to others' spaces. They individualized their blogs and blog entries by selecting themes, fonts, by writing their own titles, biographies or adding personal photos, using various emoticons, videos, links, pictures, different colors, and different layouts, which might have contributed to their sense of ownership (Chuang, 2008; de Andres Martinez, 2012). They even uploaded their personal photos on their blogs. In the study by Farmer et al. (2008), voicing their own opinions for others to read and online interactivity with other students were regarded as the most valuable aspects of blogging. Likewise, when the participants reported that they read other posts before they made their own, some stated that they showed effort to say something of their own while writing their posts. Furthermore, a personal online space for each participant provided keeping entries of each participant separately. As previously claimed by Herring et al. (2005), if only one class blog or an online forum had been used in the study, individual entries would have been mixed and it would have been very challenging to follow one's progress. On this matter, one participant commented that it would be a collaborative voice rather than their individual voice if they had used platforms such as forums or wikis or a group page on a social networking site. Since the blog component of the practice teaching course constituted three fourths

of the total course grade, having an individual space enabled observation and evaluation of each participant's work separately. It should also be added that rule-governed labeling of the entries (based on the number of the blog activities) explained to the participants during the initial workshop made it possible to revisit the entries and score them. During the initial workshop participants were asked to follow both the course blog and each other's blogs, which made navigation easier with the gadgets offered by the blog hosting site to list followed blogs. Another efficiency of the tool was its asynchronous nature; after examining the time stamps of the entries related to the blog entries, one could conclude that the participants benefited from time independence of posting online and chose various times to make a posting. Compatible with the finding of Black (2005), the asynchronous nature of blogging provided them the opportunity to take time to organize their thoughts while composing posts. In this blog environment, the participants had at least a week to organize their thoughts and engage in reflective thinking. On the other hand, due dates of the blog activities and comments encouraged participants to post on a regular basis. Given that the participants who were pre-service teachers were busy with completing their practice teaching along with other senior-year university courses, they might not have allocated time to reflect on their practice teaching experiences. In the traditional design of the course, students were expected to hand out their journals and reflective papers at the end of the semester; however, with the process-oriented design of the blended course, pre-service teachers were encouraged to engage in reflection throughout the semester by means of respective blog activities. In this way, the participants reported that they were able to own a step by step written online record of their practicum.

All the participants stated that they preferred blog activities to pen and paper based activities as part of the practice teaching course due to several advantages such as having access to other participants' entries related to course activities, having more interactivity, being easier to organize, share and present, and being more process-oriented. Additionally, they could express themselves by making use of multimedia in the form of photos, videos, and links to support their ideas in one fifth of all the entries (n = 102). Another advantage mentioned was environmental friendliness. When they wrote digital assignments, they were able to save a lot of paper and avoid extra workload to print, file and hand in assignments biweekly. On the other hand, the survey and the interviews indicated a consensus on the inefficiency of the blog-hosting site in terms of video uploading which caused negative thoughts about the tool.

As reported in the interviews and compatible with Maag's (2005) finding, participants were able to witness not only their own experiences and reflections but also the other seventeen pre-service teachers' in their class. Similar to the findings of Betts and Glogoff (2004), the fact that students were able to make their own posts and comment on their peers' posts promoted collaboration and interaction. By sharing their practicum experiences, the participants reported that they were able to actually learn from each other. As Freidman and Freidman (2013) pointed out, a key reason for integrating blogs was to encourage students to learn from each other as much as they did from their instructors. Most participants revealed that they read at least three posts before they wrote their own; and one participant said that she learned how to write a journal after reading others' posts. In addition, they claimed that having more than one perspective on something broadened their points of view. As Betts and Glogoff (2004)

previously stated, blogs could provide a more active and productive type of learning. The participants mentioned that reading others' posts provided them with new teaching methods and strategies regarding classroom management and English teaching, and they learned some methods and some student profiles they had not observed in their practice teaching schools but in peers' student teaching videos. As discussed in the literature review, peer teaching and learning in a community are valued by socio-constructivist theory. The participants especially focused on the benefits of sharing their student teaching videos and teaching activities, and practicum related concerns with other participants who went through similar experiences. One participant expressed that she benefited from the blog in seeing that she was not alone in what she had been experiencing. Although they were already a part of the same class, the current online platform enabled them to share more of their practicum experiences on a regular basis as an addition to their sense of community. The participants mentioned they received support from each other whenever they wrote in a blog entry that they did something wrong or felt inadequate as a pre-service teacher. On the other hand, two participants talked about the novelty effect of the blogging tool expressing that it took time to get used to blogging online. One of these participants did not complete most of the required blog entries except for three. During the interview, she expressed that she could not fulfill most of the course requirements due to her personal reasons. The other participant who completed half of the required entries revealed that she could not adapt a process-oriented lesson design at the beginning and she had not been able to catch up with the due dates. However, after some reminder e-mails from the course instructor and after some time and she managed to make a total of nineteen entries. Although all the participants made it clear that they had been familiar with blogs at the initial survey,

considering that the novelty effect of the tool might have been a negative factor on the depth of reflections, the average reflection level of the first four blog entries was checked and found to be at level four, which indicated a high reflection level according to the selected framework. This result indicated that the participants were able to deal with the novelty effect of the tool and adapt to the blended design of the course at once.

Both in-class sessions and practice teaching experiences in cooperating schools had their own roles in encouraging participants to become better reflective teachers such as providing hands-on teaching experiences, providing necessary content knowledge and reflective discussions as a class. When it comes to the online platform, it served as an alternative space where discussion and reflection of topics covered in class were extended and as complementary to face-to-face sessions which were limited to two hours a week. To conclude, blog activities along with blog comments promoted individual and collaborative reflection in a structured way among the participants. A total of 457 entries with a medium level reflectivity on average demonstrated that pre-service teachers extended their academic participation and reflective thinking on the online platform.

5.3 Implications for teacher education

This study demonstrated the potential of integrating a blogging technology into a practice teaching course. It exemplified that blogging could be an alternative method that could be used to promote reflection among pre-service teachers. Findings from this research project revealed the benefits of providing an online space for pre-service teachers where they could voice their thoughts and feelings, and interact with others.

Blogs were also used by the participants to share their concerns about being unsuccessful at teaching and to give or receive emotional support. While doing so, a non-threatening friendly atmosphere in the blog environment was very helpful in terms of encouraging participation and increasing the quality of the shared content. The findings emphasized the value of having an audience comprised of interested parties and exchanging feedback so long as the comments from their peers were constructive in nature.

All participants except one were familiar with several educational technologies, specifically blogs. All were comfortable expressing themselves in English given that English was a foreign language in the context, and they had easy access to computers and the internet. This familiarity of blogs, mastery in language and easy access to technology seemed to have been beneficial for the participants. One participant revealed that she could not adapt to the pace of blogging at the beginning of the study but eventually she wrote many entries with medium or high level reflection. Furthermore, the average reflection level of the later entries of the participants, entries related to self-related blog activities, was even higher, which signaled a reflective progress. At the end of the study, when they were asked if they would prefer the blended design of the practicum or the traditional design, all the participants selected the blended design which incorporated blogs. These findings suggest that getting used to a technological tool may take time, yet when users become more comfortable with the tool, the tool is used more efficiently. Additionally, the current study can exemplify the steps to follow when a non-traditional design of the course is to be introduced. Explaining the aims and requirements of both in-class component and online component of the course clearly is

the first step and the following steps are introducing the tool (blogging) in a workshop at the very beginning and dealing with complications immediately to set up a working system, guidance while blog activities are being done and transparency with expectations.

While trying to promote reflection, this study implicated the significance of focusing on both content and depth of reflection. To be able to do that, blog activities were organized in such a way to enhance depth of reflection via prompts and to enhance the content variety via selecting different topics in the field of teaching as the main concern of the activities. As a matter of fact, even merely writing about their practicum led pre-service teacher to engage in inquiry and self-evaluation. When this writing activity was enriched with the blogging tool, pre-service teachers could learn from others' writings and encounter other perspectives. This might have a positive effect in the depth of reflection and might increase the quality of their writing.

As prospective teachers, when pre-service teachers use an educational technology tool for themselves, they can get used to incorporating technology in their own future classes. In this way, use of educational technologies may be promoted and others will benefit the affordances of these tools. However, if more satisfying results are desired with blogging or other tools, it is important that these tools are introduced to students in advance, preferably in their earlier years of education and the same goes for reflection as well. It would be better if reflection could be incorporated into student teachers' education long before they start their senior-year practicum. Long-term familiarity with incorporation of educational technologies and the concept of reflection may create much better results when the quality of student teacher reflection is

considered. It is significant to note that blogs are only tools at our disposal.

Incorporating blogs into a practicum does not guarantee that this will promote reflection among the pre-service teachers. It is necessary to guide pre-service teachers with structured prompts with rich content to help them use blogs more effectively.

To accomplish a successful implementation of blogs, it is essential to consider many factors. Those who plan to incorporate blogs in their courses should also take into consideration some practical issues. In the current study, although class size ($n = 18$) was manageable, time and effort required to integrate blogging into the practice teaching course and set up a functioning online community was considerable. The rigorous process of adaptation or design of the blog activities and integrating them within the course syllabus had already been completed by the beginning of the semester. Although data gathered from the initial survey revealed that the participants had already been familiar with blogs and had already used different types of Web 2.0 tools for educational purposes, the first two weeks of the semester were dedicated to set up a small online community of bloggers where members knew their way around. Whenever they had a blog related problem, they could get technical help by e-mail or in person. By the third week when the first activity was assigned all the participants had already personalized their own blogs, followed fellow bloggers and made a few posts. Other than that, the participants were given significant guidelines for blogging (e.g., how to insert multimedia in a post, how to label posts for easy access, how to use pseudonyms when talking about specific schools or students so as not to violate their privacy rights). Furthermore, transparency was achieved by explaining the blog activities, the grading system, the evaluation criteria, and other requirements at the very beginning. Similar to

other studies (Stiler & Philleo, 2003; Wopereis et al., 2010) addressing the amount of effort to set up and maintain a working system, the present study showed that class size can be a factor that teacher educators should attend to when incorporating blogs into practice teaching courses.

5.4 Limitations of the current study

The participants were 18 pre-service English language teachers. This research adopted a case study design and the case being explored was a practicum. The sample size of the study was too small to generalize the results and gender was not examined. However, the aim of the research was not generalizability but transferability of the results. In order to provide the transferability of the findings, participant characteristics, the context of the study, the processes, and data collection, data analyses were explained comprehensively and excerpts from data provided a clear understanding.

The researcher was involved in every step of the study, so researcher bias might have influenced the direction of the study. In order to minimize this circumstance, the researcher asked another expert to take part in rating and coding of the data. Statistical measures were utilized at some stages of the study to establish objectivity of the data analysis. The thesis advisor was consulted extensively throughout the study. Data were triangulated by using three different data collection methods. The researcher tried to make observations in the setting of the study so as to have a better understanding of the phenomenon being explored and the participant characteristics.

Another limitation of the study was its duration. The research lasted for a semester comprised of sixteen weeks. Considering that becoming a reflective teacher is a

process, if the aim was to explore the reflective progress of the participants, a longitudinal research should have been conducted (Wopereis et al., 2010; Hernandez-Ramos, 2004). However, in the current study, the aim was not to examine the reflective progress of the participants but to explore the level of reflection they engaged in while completing the course assignments on their blogs. To sum up, sample size, researcher bias and duration were listed as the prominent limitations of the current study.

5.5 Suggestions for future research

A longitudinal study could shed more light on the effects of completing blog activities on the development of reflective capabilities of the pre-service teachers since the duration of the study was not long enough to talk about reflective progress of the participants. In addition, the effect of reflective blogging could be further studied by including in-service teachers.

A further suggestion involves a different design, that is, an experimental study in which one practicum is taught in the blended design and the other one is taught in the traditional design. With this design method, differences between the traditional and experimental designs can be identified more clearly with quantitative measures.

On the online platform, the source of feedback was the participants. Peer feedback was welcomed and appreciated by the participants. In addition, it was found that one of the factors which might have promoted reflection was peer feedback. On the other hand, as a suggestion for further research, course instructor can also be more involved with feedback; in this way, the effect of different kinds of feedback on reflection can be explored.

In instructional technology integration studies, technical issues should be dealt with maximum care. One problem faced during the study was the difficulty of uploading the student teaching presentation videos of the participants on their blogs. This circumstance caused some inconvenience which might have been avoided if the free version of the blog hosting site had not been used in the first place.

The effects of integrating blogs in teacher training programs for instructional purposes can be further explored. In order to explore instructional benefits of blogs, blogging can be further investigated with different learner profiles in different settings with different blog activities.

5.6 Conclusion

Novice teachers experience challenges when linking their theoretical knowledge to their daily teaching practices. They face many challenges within classrooms especially in the beginning of their careers. They need to be encouraged to deal with these difficulties and learn from their experiences. If they gain the habit of reflective thinking during their teacher training and practicum, they can continue to engage in reflection and learn from their experiences throughout their professional lives. However, studies show that pre-service teachers need systematic guidance and promotion to engage in higher levels of reflection. So as to promote reflection among pre-service teachers, this study incorporated blog activities into a practicum. The study aimed to explore the effectiveness of using blog activities to enhance reflection. This study was an attempt to combine traditional methods of promoting reflection during practicum with the affordance of the blogging tool. It should also be noted that blogs were only the means

to an end to provide an appropriate platform to engage in reflection, not the main focus of the study. As for the final remarks, reflection is not only valuable in professional life but also in personal life, and having a reflective view on life can provide positive impacts on both. I believe, if practiced regularly, reflection can be a way that leads to wisdom in both in professional life and in personal life.

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APPENDIX A
COURSE REQUIREMENTS

For Teacher Candidate

FLED 416 SEMINAR ON PRACTICE TEACHING IN EFL COURSE

In-class work (25%)

- | | |
|---|-----|
| 1- One reaction paper on one FLED article | 5 % |
| 2- Individual presentation | 10% |
| 3- Participation in professional development activities | 10% |

(Attending seminars or workshops
accompanied with a reflection paper on the activity)

Professional blog (75%)

- | | |
|---|-----|
| ACTIVITY 1: Critical Incident Analysis Activity | 5% |
| ACTIVITY 2: Video-Critique Activity | 5% |
| ACTIVITY 3: Reflection on the Classroom Management Tool | |
| Activity | 5% |
| ACTIVITY 4: Reflection on the Designed Activity | 10% |
| ACTIVITY 5-10: Video Upload & Peer Feedback (5) | 30% |
| ACTIVITY 11-12: Self Evaluation Entries (2) | 10% |
| ACTIVITY 13-14: Journal entries (2) | 10% |

TOTAL	100%
-------	------

APPENDIX B
COURSE SYLLABUS

SEMINAR ON PRACTICE TEACHING SPRING 2013 COURSE SYLLABUS

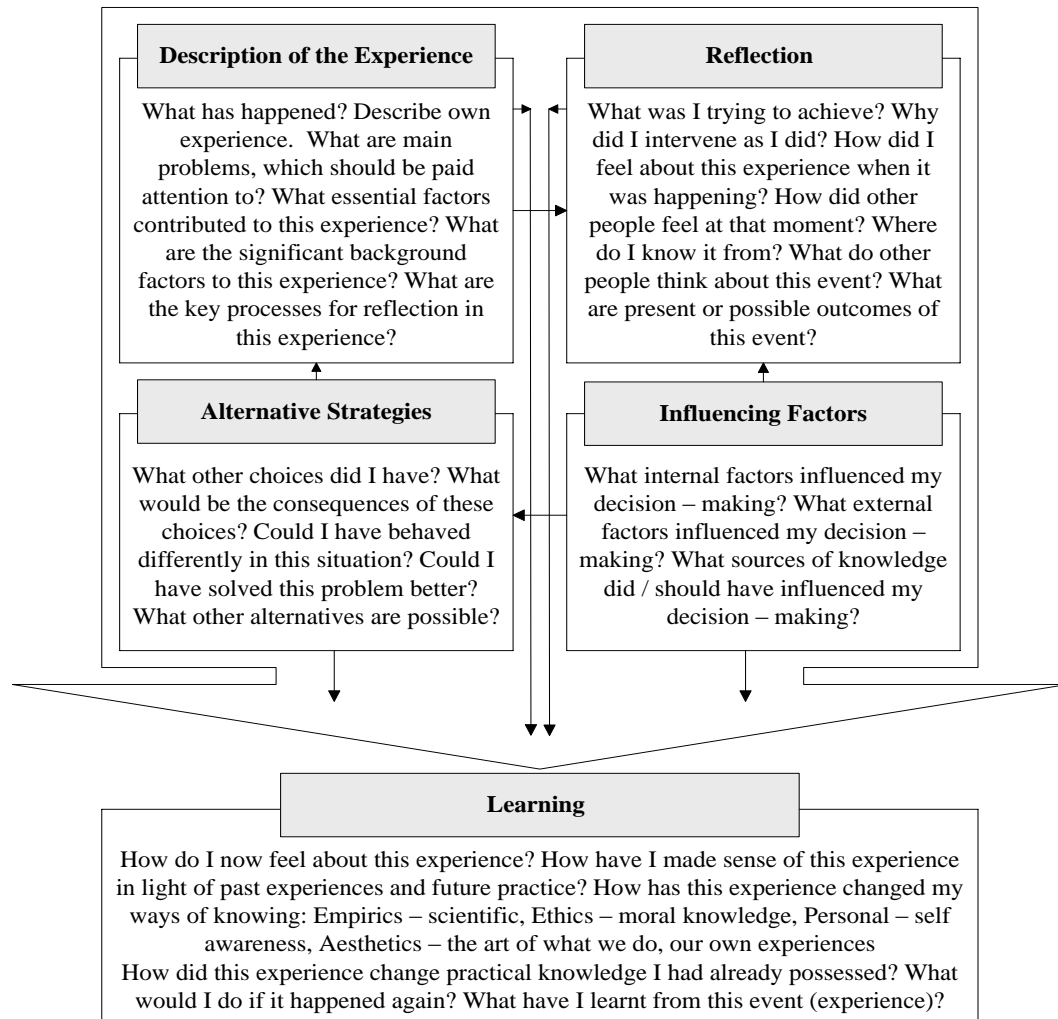
Class time: Thursday 13:00-15:00

Instructor: Assist. Prof. Sibel Tatar

WEEK 1: February 21	Introduction and orientation
WEEK 2: February 28	Teachers' beliefs and reflective teaching
WEEK 3: March 7	Technology in TEFL
WEEK 4: March 14	Job interviews and novice teachers (Interpreting interviewers' questions, responding at interviews)
WEEK 5: March 21	Lesson planning & Classroom language
WEEK 6: March 28	Nature of language learning activities
WEEK 7: April 4	Native and non-native English speaking teachers
WEEK 8: April 11	Native and non-native English speaking teachers
WEEK 9: April 18	Interaction in the classroom
Week 10: April 22-28	Spring Break
WEEK 11: May 2	Plagiarism and academic writing
WEEK 12: May 9	Plagiarism and academic writing
WEEK 13: May 16	European Language Portfolio (ELP) and IB Programs
WEEK 14: May 23	Intercultural communicative competence for language teachers and ELT in Turkey

APPENDIX C

MODEL OF STRUCTURED REFLECTION BY JOHNS, 2004



Source: [Johns (2004), as presented by Bubnys and Žydžiūnaitė (2010)]

APPENDIX D

INSTRUCTIONS FOR THE BLOG ACTIVITIES

Activity 1: Critical incident analysis activity, due: March 7

Description: Think back on your experiences as a pre-service teacher in the first semester. Did anything outstanding happen? Analyze an event of your choice critically and reflect on it. Post this to your blog. Visit your classmates' blogs; choose two peers' posts related to this activity and comment on them.

Activity 2: Video-critique activity, due: March 14

Description: Watch the teaching video uploaded on the course blog.

Evaluate the teaching performance in terms of

- i. teaching methods/techniques
- ii. class management
- iii. activity types
- iv. teacher-student rapport
- v. student engagement
- vi. pedagogical content knowledge of the teacher

What was the teacher good/bad at?

How would you do things differently if you were the teacher in that context?

Post your comment to your blog. Visit your classmates' blogs; choose two peers' posts related to this activity and comment on them.

Activity 3: Reflection on the classroom management tool activity Due: March 28

Description: Design a classroom management tool considering one of your training classes as the target group. Describe and evaluate this tool on your blog. Take feedback from the cooperating teacher of the target class about the effectiveness of your tool and mention it in your post.

Include answers to these questions within your post:

- Why is your tool appropriate, effective and functional?

- What kind of problems would you anticipate if you applied this tool in class? How would you deal with them?
- How do you plan to reflect on your classroom management when you start teaching?

Activity 4: Reflection on the designed activity, due: May 2

Description: Choose the students in one of your training classes as a target group. Create a class activity for the target group and apply this activity in one of your official presentations. Then, make a posting describing and evaluating this activity. What went well/wrong? Why? What could have been done better? What would you change if you could do it again?

Visit your classmates' blogs; choose two peers' posts related to this activity and comment on them.

Activity 5: Video upload activity, due: April 18

Description: Video-tape your official presentations, upload a 15-25 minute section of the most active part of your lesson to your professional blog. Along with this, include a short description of the context. Who are the learners? How many students are there? What type of school is it? What is the grade level? This description should be informative enough so that your peers in class can comment.

-Make sure you do not use any school, teacher, student names in your blogs.

-Make sure your blog is not accessible through search engines.

Activities 6-10: Peer evaluation activities, due May 9

Description (Peer feedback): A critical evaluation of the videos of the official presentations of five peers. Two peers should be your partner and the other three from class, someone you haven't observed before. You can find reflection questions to guide these entries in the front pages of your reading package. Make sure you follow up on the comments you received from your peers.

Activities 11-12: Self-evaluation activities, due: May 20

Description (Self-evaluation): You will be reflecting on two of your official presentations of your own choice. This should be a critical evaluation. What were the strengths and weaknesses? What could have been done differently? Do you have any suggestions for others? What did you learn? Make sure you integrate the feedback you received from others. Post this on your blogs.

Activities 13-14: Journal entries, due: end of semester

Description: A personal diary summarizes what you learn in the classroom observations. You can find reflection questions to guide these entries in the front pages of your reading package. You are responsible for writing two entries. Post this on your blogs.

APPENDIX E
INITIAL SURVEY

1- Full Name:

2- Gender: M / F..... 3- E-mail:

4- Nationality: 5- Age:.....

6- This year I am doing my practice teaching at a public school / at a private school.

7- Did you take a course about computer skills? Yes / No

If yes, the name of the course:

8- Did you take a course on educational technologies? Yes / No

If yes, the name of the course(s):

9- I use computers or internet about..... hours a day.

10- I am familiar with the following web 2.0 tools:

- Wikis: Yes / No
- web quests: Yes / No
- blogs: Yes / No
- podcasts: Yes / No
- others:

.....

11- I have / had a personal blog: Yes / No

My blog is /was about:

12- I would rather use pen and paper /computers while doing a written assignment.

13- I have the means to videotape my official presentation: Yes / No

14- I know how to ask for a video camera from our department/from my training school. Yes / No

15- I have taken a blended course (online component + in-class meetings) before.
Yes / No

16- In this course, what kind of activities can help you better evaluate and utilize your teaching experience as a pre-service teacher?

.....
.....
.....
.....

Thank You

APPENDIX F

A SAMPLE PARTICIPANT BLOG



Source: [hialpracticeteaching.blogspot.com.tr]

APPENDIX G
INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1-

- a. When was the first time you heard the term reflective teacher?
- b. Can you tell me a quality of a reflective teacher?
- c. Do you think it is important to be a reflective teacher? Why?

2-

- a. How can we promote reflective thinking of practice teachers?
- b. For what purposes did you use your professional blog?
- c. What do you think of using blogs the way you did in this course? What are the benefits and drawbacks?
- d. How is it different from the traditional ways?

3-

- a. Did you get any online feedback? How did the comments affect your thought processes?
- b. How did the comments affect your feelings?
- c. What are the benefits and drawbacks of online comments?

4-

- a. How did the online assignments go?
- b. How did they affect your learning?
- c. Did they add you anything that you wouldn't achieve with paper-based assignments?

5-

- a. How do you feel about sharing your own posts/ideas with your peers about professional matters?
- b. How does having a relatively larger audience affect your writing process?

6-

- a. How do you consider having two different platforms (online and face-to-face) for this practice teaching course? Any benefits/drawbacks?

APPENDIX H
FINAL SURVEY QUESTIONS

- 1- For what purposes did you use your blog during the Fled 412 course?
- 2- Did engaging with the blog tasks affect your view about your practice teaching experience or not? How?
- 3- a. What is your opinion about posting your tasks to your blog where there was an audience?
b. Approximately, how many posts of your peers did you read for each task?
c. Did reading your peers' posts affect you or your own posts? How?
- 4- a. How many of the comments you received did you read?
b. Did receiving comments and writing comments affect your learning? How?
- 5- a. How did you feel about using blogs as part of this course?
b. Do you think that a blog was an appropriate platform or not in order to think critically on your teaching experience during practicum?
- 6- a. What can you say about the technical issues related to blogging?
b. Was it easy or difficult for you to adapt and continue blogging within this course?
- 7- a. Would you prefer to do paper based activities or blog activities within this course?
b. Can you share if you think one is superior to the other with the reasons?
- 8- a. During the Fled 412 course did you think back on your and your friends' practice teaching experience? If yes, what helped you?
b. Does thinking on your practicum experience help you or not; how?
- 9- During blogging, have you felt as part of a community or not? Why/why not?
- 10- Do you think that blogging helped you make progress or not in terms of being a reflective teacher?

APPENDIX I

HANDOUT FOR THE INTRODUCTION TO BLOGGING

FLED 412-416, Spring, 2013

This semester, you are invited to develop your own professional blog as part of a blog study where you will be asked to fulfill 75% of your Fled 416 course requirements online. This professional blog of yours is intended to be an individual space where you will be able to share your teaching experiences with your classmates, think back on them together and understand your strengths and weaknesses better among many other contributions. You may question your teaching beliefs and you may rebuild them.

Your contributions to your blog site will include the following:

Online Requirements:

Along with fulfilling the in class requirements, you are supposed to

1. keep a professional blog where you can reflect on and share your professional experiences, ideas, links, media (photos, videos) related to your understanding of being a foreign language teacher.
2. post your required class assignments on your blog within the due dates so that your peers will have enough time to comment on them.
3. help your classmates' improve their teaching repertoire via your comments on their posts.

Optional posts in FLED 412-416 Blog:

You are the owner of this blog. It is a personal professional space where you can share your own voice in teaching. Besides the required posts, you can personalize your blog with your own choice of posts related to being a prospective English language teacher. For example you can share photos of your teaching experiences or news about upcoming events, conferences about foreign language teaching. You are free to choose the media form of the posts (written, audial or visual). It is highly appreciated if you visit as many as your friends' blogs and share your thoughts with them in order to experience the advantages of being part of a learning community.

Summary of the required tasks and posts in FLED 412-416 Blog:

- 1- Critical incident analysis activity and two peer comments
- 2- Video-critique activity and two peer comments
- 3- Classroom management activity and two peer comments
- 4- Uploading two official presentation videos.
- 5- Reflection on the designed activity and two peer comments
- 6- Peer feedback on two peers' official presentation videos and two follow ups; self-evaluations of two official presentations of yours.
- 7- Posting two journal entries

Guidelines for Blogging and Commenting:

- 1- Use only your first name on your blog. Don't use any last names, school names (never mention your training school's name), or personal information. You can use pseudonyms if you want.
- 2- If you own another blog, don't link that blog to this one.
- 3- Check for spelling and grammar before making a post.
- 4- You are free to post any links, media, information, etc. about foreign language education to your blog. However, this is a class project; keep your posts within the allowances and requirements of this class.
- 5- It will be highly appreciated if you enrich your posts via using different forms of multimedia.
- 6- Always, make sure you give credit to all
 - pictures
 - videos
 - information which you use in your blog.
- 7- Try to be constructive rather than offensive in your comments and posts.
- 8- Edit your official presentation videos before uploading to your blog. Never post any videos longer than 10-15 minutes.
- 9- Label your required postings as accordingly.
- 10- Use captions for images or multimedia posts.

Process:

- 1- Sign up for the blog hosting website and create your blog.
- 2- Select a blog title in accordance with the course goals.
- 3- Add a short description of the purpose of your blog/yourself and some useful links.

- 4- Follow the course blog and all your classmates' blogs in order to form an online community.
- 5- Follow the tasks and the due dates on the course blog and make your posts by the assigned date, by midnight.
- 6- Check every link or video you posted twice to see if they work.
- 7- If you have any technical difficulties please contact either the instructor or the assistant.

The criteria for evaluation of blogs, scoring guide:

1. Promptness: Do you make your required postings on time? Are you careful about due dates?
2. Reflective quality: Do you reflect on your teaching practices and teaching theories critically?
3. Content: Do your postings deal with the assigned task from many aspects? Do you address all the issues about the subject?
4. Depth: Do your postings and comments deal with issues in depth or superficially?
5. Originality: Do you have your own ideas, voice or style in your postings?
6. Clarity: Do you make your point clear in your postings?
7. Use of images, graphics and multimedia: Do you use alternative forms in your postings? Do you use them appropriately? How high are their qualities (sound quality, visual quality)?
8. Rules: Do you follow the blog rules, comment rules and activity requirements when making your posts?
9. Overall: Is it easy to navigate on your blog? Does it look like a professional teacher candidate's blog? Do you organize your titles, labels, and captions regularly?

APPENDIX J

A VIEW OF THE COURSE BLOG

The screenshot shows a web browser window with the address bar displaying "seminaronpracticeteaching.blogspot.com.tr/2013/02/guidelines-for-blogging-and-commenting.html". The page title is "FLED 412-416 SEMINAR ON PRACTICE TEACHING". Below the title, there is a sub-header: "This blog is a part of Fled 412-416 course. Here, you can find the course assignments, notifications, and detailed information about tasks." There are two buttons: "Home" and "About". The main content area is dated "Wednesday, February 20, 2013" and titled "Guidelines for Blogging and Commenting". It contains a list of 9 guidelines for posting on the blog. To the right, there is a "1 Follow" section listing several blogs followed by the user, including "SeminaronPracticeTeaching", "New Horizons from a Prospective Teacher", "Hells Yelit - Seminar on Practice Teaching", "Learn how to teach! Teach how to learn", "Sevencan is in ELT world", and "Last year as a teacher trainee". The Windows taskbar at the bottom shows the date and time as "20:27 11.4.2015".

FLED 412-416 SEMINAR ON PRACTICE TEACHING

This blog is a part of Fled 412-416 course. Here, you can find the course assignments, notifications, and detailed information about tasks.

Home About

Wednesday, February 20, 2013

Guidelines for Blogging and Commenting

- 1- Use only your first name on your blog. Don't use any last names, school names (never mention your training school's name), or personal information. You can use pseudonyms if you want.
- 2- If you own another blog, don't link that blog to this one.
- 3- Check for spelling and grammar before making a post.
- 4- You are free to post any links, media, information, etc. about foreign language education to your blog. However, this is a class project; keep your posts within the allowances and requirements of this class.
- 5- It will be highly appreciated if you enrich your posts via using different forms of multimedia.
- 6- Try to be constructive rather than offensive in your comments and posts.
- 7- Edit your official presentation videos before uploading to your blog. Never post any videos longer than 10-15 minutes.
- 8- Label your required postings as "required".
- 9- Use captions for images or multimedia posts and acknowledge the sources.

Posted by Fled 412-416 at 4:58 PM

Labels: guideline posts

1 Follow

- SeminaronPracticeTeaching**
Bir yıl boyunca kişisel gelişmelerinizi mini birer!
7 months ago
- New Horizons from a Prospective Teacher**
JOURNALS BYTES
1 year ago
- Hells Yelit - Seminar on Practice Teaching**
Journal Entries
1 year ago
- Learn how to teach! Teach how to learn**
Peer Feedback and Self Evaluation
1 year ago
- Sevencan is in ELT world**
Journal Entries
1 year ago
- Last year as a teacher trainee**
Journal Entries

Source: [seminaronpracticeteachingblogspot.com.tr]

APPENDIX K
SAMPLE CODING CHART

N	Themes	Data Sources	Related Interview Questions (IQ)	Related Final Survey Questions (FSQ)	Example Excerpts
4	Efficiency of the tool	i. Interview Question 2. c, 2. d ii. Final Survey Question 6	IQ2. c. What do you think of using blogs the way you did in this course? What are the benefits and drawbacks? d. How is it different from the traditional way (journal writing)?	FSQ5. a. How did you feel about using blogs as part of this course? b. Do you think that a blog was an appropriate platform or not in order to think critically on your teaching experience during practicum? FSQ6. a. What can you say about the technical issues related to blogging? b. Was it easy or difficult for you to adapt and continue blogging within this course?	“It was easy because the tasks were not too difficult or time consuming except the last two tasks, so I was be able to continue blogging easily.” “I think it is the best platform to think critically. There is almost no other platform that facilitates sharing and commenting on experiences without getting interrupted by other internet elements.” “It wasn't difficult, there was nothing unusual. It was like just using the internet.” “It is hard to upload a video; not possible to do it if the video is bigger than 100 MB, so that is a minus point. “

APPENDIX L

MEASURES OF KAPPA AND RHO

Measure of Cohen's Kappa

		Value	Asymp. Std. Error ^a	Approx. T ^b	Approx. Sig.
Measure of Agreement	Kappa	.798	.029	23.992	.000
N of Valid Cases		457			

a. Not assuming the null hypothesis.

b. Using the asymptotic standard error assuming the null hypothesis.

Measure of Spearman's Rho

		rater 1	rater 2
rater 1	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.910**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	457	457
	Spearman's rho		
rater 2	Correlation Coefficient	.910**	1.000
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	457	457

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).