HOW DOES BLOGGING ENHANCE PRE-SERVICE ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHERS' REFLECTIVITY IN PRACTICUM?

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Approval of the Graduate School of Social Sciences

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ABSTRACT

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This was a case study which aimed to examine how blogging enhanced reflection among pre-service English language teachers in Practicum. 12 pre-service English language teachers enrolled in the undergraduate program of English Teaching Education in the Department of Foreign Language Education at Middle East Technical University participated in the study which comprised a 12-week time span in the 2007-2008 spring term.

Data collection consisted of archival records of participants' blog posts and comments, pre- and post-study interviews with each pre-service teacher, and field notes taken by the researcher throughout the study. All the blog content was archived and available on the Internet throughout the study. Recurring patterns in

pre-service English language teachers' blog postings were used as a measure of their reflectivity. Earlier and later blog postings were compared to check evidence of change in the level of the pre-service teachers' reflective thinking.

Results indicated that: (1) the pre-service English language teachers frequently discussed their personal theories of teaching, the problems that they formulated based on their practicum observation, and topics related to their self-awareness in their blog postings; and (2) they were reflective in their blog postings, to a certain extent, although there were individual differences in the degree of reflectivity in the identified categories.

In this respect, this blogging experience provided a different approach to develop reflectivity in Practicum. Therefore, this study may be an example to investigate the effectiveness of blogs in language teacher education, especially in a Turkish context where English is learned and taught as a foreign language.

Keywords: Blog, Reflection, Pre-service Teacher, Teacher Education

ÖZ

UYGULAMA DERSİNDE BLOG KULLANIMI YABANCI DİLLER EĞİTİMİ BÖLÜMÜNDEKİ ÖĞRETMEN ADAYLARININ YANSITICI DÜŞÜNMELERİNİ NASIL GELİŞTİRİR?

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Bu çalışma uygulama dersinde blog kullanımının Yabancı Diller Eğitimi Bölümündeki öğretmen adaylarının yansıtıcı düşünmelerini nasıl geliştirdiğini incelemeyi amaçlayan bir durum çalışmasıdır. Çalışma örneklemi Türkiye'de bulunan Ortadoğu Teknik Üniversitesi Yabancı Diller Eğitimi Bölümü İngilizce Öğretmenliği Programı'nda lisans eğitimi alan 12 öğretmen adayıdır. Araştırma 2007-2008 bahar döneminde 12 haftalık bir dönemi kapsamaktadır.

Öğretmen adaylarının yansıtıcı blog yazıları ve yorumlarından oluşan arşivsel kayıtları, çalışma-öncesi ve sonrası yapılan görüşmeler ve araştırmacı tarafından çalışma süresince tutulan gözlem notları bu çalışmanın veri toplama yöntemlerini

oluşturmaktadır. Araştırma boyunca elde edilen tüm blog içeriği kaydedilmiştir ve bu içeriğe Internet üzerinden ulaşılabilmektedir. Yabancı Diller Eğitimi Bölümündeki öğretmen adaylarının blog yazılarında tekrarlanan örüntüler yansıtıcı düşünmelerini saptamada ölçek olarak kullanılmıştır. Öğretmen adaylarının yansıtıcı düşünmelerindeki değişimi tespit etmek için katılımcıların araştırmanın başındaki ve sonundaki blog yazıları karşılaştırılmıştır.

Araştırmanın sonuçları: (1) öğretmen adaylarının blog yazılarında çoğunlukla kendi kişisel eğitim kuramları, uygulama dersine dayanarak saptadıkları sorunlar, ve kişisel farkındalıklarıyla ilgili konuları tartıştıklarını; (2) belirlenen kategorilerde yansıtıcı düşünme açısından bireysel faklılıklar olmasına rağmen araştırmaya katılan öğretmen adaylarının tamamının blog yazılarında bir ölçüye kadar yansıtıcı olduğunu göstermiştir.

Bu bağlamda, bu blog deneyimi uygulama dersinde yansıtıcı düşünmeyi geliştiren farklı bir yaklaşımı ortaya koymaktadır. Bu nedenle, bu araştırma blogların yabancı dil öğretmen eğitiminde, özellikle İngilizce'nin yabancı bir dil olarak öğrenilip öğretildiği Türkiye bağlamında etkililiğini inceleyen bir örnek teşkil edebilir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Blog, Yansıtıcı Düşünme, Öğretmen Adayı, Öğretmen Eğitimi

To my parents,

Kaya and Suzan KORKMAZGİL

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ABBREVIATIONS

CALL   Computer Assisted Language Learning

CMC   Computer Mediated Communication

EFL   English as a Foreign Language

ICT   Information and Communication Technology

RSS   Rich Site Summary / Real Simple Syndication

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.0. Presentation

This chapter introduces the background to the study, the purpose of the study, the research questions with an overview of the methodology employed in the study, followed by the significance of the study, and the definition of terms.

1.1. Background to the Study

Reflection has been one of the concepts widely examined and discussed in the literature of Second Language (L2) teacher training and education in general. Reflective thinking encompasses the process of linking theory and practice to make informed and logical decisions concerning the educational issues, and then assessing the possible consequences of these decisions which may cause a change in behavior (Taggart & Wilson, 2005). Teachers need to engage in continued knowledge development which will guide their actions in their practice. Thus, self-inquiry and professional development are important components of reflective practice. Teacher education programs, therefore, seek to find ways to promote reflective thinking among pre-service teachers because it is assumed that a reflective teacher:

> …examines, frames, attempts to solve the dilemmas of
> classroom practice; is aware of and questions the assumptions
> and values he or she brings to teaching; is attentive to the

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institutional and cultural contexts in which he or she teaches; takes part in curriculum development and is involved in school change efforts; and takes responsibility for his or her own professional development. (Zeichner & Liston, 1996, p. 6)

Those who promote reflective practice in teacher education argue that reflective teachers have the capacity to reflect on their teaching practices and their actions by taking wider historical, social and political contexts into consideration; to make informed decisions; to change their practices accordingly; thus, they can take the responsibility of their teaching. However, "to be unreflective…results in a teacher who is merely a skilled technician, i.e. one who has limited ability to make good decisions; to consider the consequences of their actions; and, to alter their actions" (Braun & Crumpler, 2004, p. 60).

The benefits of reflective practice have spurred teacher educators to develop reflective activities for pre-service teachers. Gelter (2003) argues that reflection is not a spontaneous activity, and reflective capacity has to be learnt. A number of tools or techniques – such as journal writing, personal narratives, portfolios, peer observation, analysis of critical incidents, microteaching and other supervised practicum experiences, structured curriculum tasks and audio or video-recording of lessons – have been employed in order to enhance teachers' ability to reflect critically. Of varying reflective approaches, journal writing, often cited with positive outcomes, is the most widely used technique in studies into reflective practice. However, Stiler and Philleo (2003) note that with the traditional journals "the outcomes were considered to be inadequate. Students wrote sparse, descriptive summaries with few examples of heightened levels of awareness and little indication that these practices promoted a continuing routine of reflective practice" (Stiler & Philleo, 2003, p. 789). Of the other problems related to hard-copy journals or diaries are "the legibility of handwritten documents, instructor response time, record-keeping concerns, and the transportation of …written student journals" (Stiler & Philleo, 2003, p. 789).

Despite the widespread emphasis on reflection, research into the reflective practice yield disappointing results. Studies show that the pre-service teachers have difficulty achieving higher levels of reflection (Hatton & Smith, 1994; Galvez-Martin, Bowman & Morrison, 1998; Liou, 2001) or reflecting on wider contexts of

teaching and learning other than immediate concerns of instruction such as classroom management and control (McLaughlin & Hanifin, 1994). Furthermore, Gelter (2003) states that reflective thinking is uncommon among the practitioners in education. Although reflective tasks have mostly been assigned in the university education, it is apparent that reflective practice cannot turn into a professional skill or behavior. Furthermore, there is little research evidence to show whether the strategies used are effective or not. "Merely providing preservice teachers with opportunities to reflect and activities that encourage reflection does not guarantee that reflection will occur" (Mewborn, 1999, p. 317). However, few teacher educators and researchers can disagree with the idea that teachers should be encouraged to engage in some kind of reflection in order to develop into better professionals. Then, the question needs to be answered is "how". How can we make the practitioners more reflective? How can we ensure that reflective thinking will occur when teachers are struggling with their workload in their busy lives?

In order to enhance reflectivity among pre-service teachers, teacher educators should explore multiple opportunities (Bean & Stevens, 2002) and more authentic reflective tools. With the advance of information and communication technology (ICT), new opportunities have been created in terms of learning, teaching and assessment. The growth of interest in the use of Internet for educational purposes makes teaching and learning go beyond the boundaries of classrooms and let people all around the world be only one-click away from each other. The knowledge is generated not individually, but collectively. This ever-growing flow of information, and interactive and more authentic communication tools have made significant implications for education. Thus, the integration of educational technology in teacher education programs can support the teaching of reflective capacity. Teacher educators have recently employed asynchronous communication tools to enhance reflective practice in teacher education programs (Shoffner, 2006). One of these emerging technological tools for reflection is the technology of weblogs which is mostly regarded as a new genre of web-publishing tool or an online journal. Being one of the second generation Internet tools (Web 2.0), blogs can make it possible for people not only to share their ideas with the rest of the world, but also to get feedback from others. "The features of real audience, collaborative environment, and feedback make the Web an authentic environment"

(Kennedy, 2003, http://www.techlearning.com/db_area/archives/TL/2003/02-/blogs.-php) which may turn out to be something different in the hands of teachers and students.

One of the characteristics that make educational tools successful is whether they have *a low threshold and a high ceiling* (Myers, Hudson & Pausch, 2000). The threshold refers to how difficult it is to learn how to use a system and the ceiling refers to how much can be done using that system. Therefore, it is possible to assert that an ideal educational technology should be relatively easy to comprehend and use, and at the same time should provide wide ranging application to its users. Blogs, mostly regarded as a new genre of web-publishing tool or an online journal, have a wide range of application; from personal online journals or diaries to their use for journalism, politics, knowledge sharing, or as news filters. In education, blogs can also be used for varying purposes, such as providing communication channels among teachers and students or resource center (Oravec, 2002), self-publishing (Kajder & Bull, 2003; Stiler & Philleo, 2003), supporting in-class discussion and interaction (Wang & Hsua, 2008; Wassell & Crouch, 2008) or as learning spaces in a higher education context (Martindale & Wiley, 2005; Williams & Jacobs, 2004). Both this wide ray of blog application in educational contexts and the fact that anyone can create his or her blog in a few minutes and manage their blogs without any HTML or other programming languages due to the free blog hosting services on the Net ensure that this technology has a low threshold and a high ceiling. This is one of the reasons why blogs were chosen as the instrument for the current study.

The instructional benefits of blog use to enhance learning have been noted by many studies (Bartlett-Bragg, 2003; Brescia & Miller, 2006; Martindale & Wiley, 2005) mainly based on the assumption that blogs can facilitate critical thinking and knowledge construction (Kajder & Bull, 2003; Oravec, 2002). In order to formulate their response to others on the Web students are required to consider different viewpoints in the light of their conceptions, and then defend their own opinions. Oravec (2002), therefore, clearly points out that "the weblog has many dimensions that make it well suited to students' unique voices" (p. 618), empowering them, and thus, encouraging them to become more critical and analytical in their thinking.

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Since blogs provide students both with a high level of autonomy and opportunities for interaction with peers, they are considered to have the potential to be *a transformational technology* for teaching and learning (Williams & Jacobs, 2004).

Taking the requirements of reflective thinking into consideration, it is possible to suggest that the use of this transformational technology, namely blogs, may be well suited to the aims of teaching reflective capacity to pre-service teachers. Shoffner (2005) argues that "weblogs offer an alternative to the traditional journal format, while retaining many of the more positive aspects" (p. 2096). The electronic availability; archiving the entries; the public nature of weblogs allowing readers to leave comments; including hyperlinks to outer resources via the Web; the sense of ownership, and the opportunity of having a personal space to deliberate thoughts and ideas are only some of the benefits of blogging experience which help pre-service teachers broaden the discussion and learning outside the classroom (Kennedy, 2003; Shoffner, 2005; Shoffner, 2006). Although the use of blog for reflective practice is a new phenomenon in education, a few recent studies suggest that blogs may promote reflective practice among practitioners (Ray & Hocutt, 2006; Shoffner, 2005; Suzuki, 2004; West, Wright, & Graham, 2005).

In this study blogs are explored as a reflective tool to enhance the reflective practice among pre-service teachers. It is believed that weblogs can provide a non-threatening but moderately challenging environment where pre-service teachers can reflect on their ideas and feelings, and generate knowledge in collaboration with the multiple perspectives.

1.2. Statement of Purpose

This study is inspired by the need to understand the role and function of blogs in promoting reflective practice among pre-service English language teachers. The purpose of the study is to examine to what extent blogging enhances reflectivity among 12 pre-service teachers enrolled in a practicum course in the undergraduate program of English Teaching Education in the Department of Foreign Language Education at Middle East Technical University (METU), Turkey The secondary

purpose of this study is to introduce to the pre-service teachers the pedagogical and learning benefits derived from the integration of such social sharing technologies. Utilizing a qualitative research framework, this study seeks to examine blogging experience of this group of students and their development over time assuming that this investigation may reveal significant implications concerning the inclusion of blogs into the teacher education programs.

1.3. Research Questions

This study aims to investigate how the integration of blogging in a practicum course promotes reflective practice among pre-service English language teachers.

The following research questions guide this study:

1. What are the recurring patterns in pre-service teachers' blog postings?
2. What is the level of reflection demonstrated in the blog postings which are distributed based on the categories of topics derived out of the study? Is it descriptive or critical?
3. What is the difference between blog posts and comments in terms of the level of reflectivity?
4. How does reflectivity change over time through blogging?

1.4. Overview of Methodology

In order to answer these questions case study research was employed in this study. It is believed that such an inquiry may allow for an in-depth description of the reality which is dynamic and complex in nature. The researcher identified her case as the development of pre-service English language teachers' reflective thinking through blogs. In order to obtain rich and detailed data embedded in context, numerous data sources such as archival records of pre-service teachers' reflective blog posts and comments; pre- and post-interviews with pre-service teachers and field notes taken during the study were used to collect and triangulate the data.

These will be examined to develop a set of assertations related to using blogs as support to pre-service teachers' reflectivity.

1.5. Significance of the Study

Almost all teacher education programs around the world seek ways to promote reflection among pre-service teachers since reflective thinking spurs self-inquiry and professional development when it turns into a habit for the teachers. Several reflective approaches and techniques have been employed in order to expose pre-service teachers with reflective processes earlier in teacher preparation. However, research into the reflective practice yields disappointing results. Gelter (2003), for example, notes that reflective thinking is uncommon among pre-service teachers. In addition, there is little research evidence to show whether the strategies used are effective or not. At this point, there appears a need for teacher education programs to explore reflective tools that are more authentic and meaningful to promote reflection among pre-service teachers. This study, therefore, can be seen as a significant attempt to explore both the potentials and efficacy of weblogs as relatively new reflective devices.

Another significance of the present study is that the investigation of the process of weblog inclusion into a practicum course can yield important insights into how these technologies can be integrated into educational settings since the use of blogs in education is relatively new and the efficacy of educational blogging untested (Ray & Hocutt, 2006; Tan, 2005). There is only little research into the applications of blogging in educational contexts, and no concrete evidence supporting that integrating such social software into the education enhances learning. Therefore, this case study may also contribute to the body of knowledge on exploring effective ways to integrate technological tools into educational settings.

This study is also significant because of its emphasis on integration of technological tools into teacher education programs. Technological advances as well as the growing interest in the Web have altered the prevailing understanding of teacher competencies. Since today's pre-service teachers will be the teachers of

tomorrow's *digitally native children* (Prensky, 2001), they need to be encouraged to use the CMC tools in teacher preparation programs.

1.6. Definitions of Terms

Reflection: Reflection is an on-going mental process in which experiences are analyzed by taking into consideration the prior knowledge in order to formulate one's own meaning that will lead to new knowledge and alternative ways (Dewey, 1933). Reflection in teaching refers to teachers learning to subject their understandings of teaching and learning to a critical analysis considering social, political and historical context the teaching takes place as well as the educational knowledge, practices, and the possible consequences (Schön, 1983; Zeichner & Liston, 1987), and thus learning to take responsibility for their practices (Korthagen, 1993).

Reflective practice: Reflective practice is a continuous and a self regulated process which involves the practitioner considering critical incidents in his or her teaching and determining what works best for his or her students (Schön, 1983). It is "a turning back on oneself to consider, questioningly, the validity and principles of the practice" (van Halen-Faber, 1997, p. 52).

Pre-service teacher: a person who is presently attending a teacher education program; who has not yet completed student teaching procedures; and who has not yet started with his/her profession career.

Practicum: Practice oriented courses in a teacher education program designed to give pre-service teachers supervised practical application of the theoretical knowledge that they attain in the program. Thereby, they can experience authentic teaching and learning environment.

Weblog (or blog): A weblog, generally referred to as a blog, is a self-publishing online tool which allows individuals to instantly publish "unedited personal reflections, thoughts, and ideas on the Web" (Wang, Fix & Bock, 2005, p.1). The

entries, displayed in reverse chronological order, are generally text-based. A typical blog combines text, images, and links to other blogs or Web pages. The ability for readers to leave comments in an interactive format is an important part of many blogs. The word *Blog* can also be used as a verb, meaning *to maintain* or *add content to a blog*.

1.7. Summary

As support to the structured reflective practice, pre-service teachers need additional opportunities that encourage them to "reflect on their practice in meaningful way…and develop habits that will stay with them" (Ward & McCotter, 2004, p. 244). Blogs, an emerging medium in teacher education, may offer a space for self-publishing online journaling that enhances reflection and interaction. This study explores the impact of blogging on the pre-service English language teachers' reflectivity.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

2. 0. Presentation

The definition of reflection, various approaches to reflective teaching, numerous tools to promote reflection in education and criticism on the views of reflection in the literature and then reflection in electronic environments are discussed in this chapter, and a model of promoting reflection through blogs is introduced at the end.

2. 1. The Rise of Reflective Movement in Teaching

Reflection has been a widely examined concept in L2 teacher training literature and education in general. Besides its conceived benefits for professionals in all occupations, some emerging trends and movements such as post method era and feminism contributed to the rise of reflective practice in the last two decades. According to Akbari (2007), the post method debate (Kumaravadivelu 1992; Kumaravadivelu 1994; Kumaravadivelu 2001; Kumaravadivelu 2003; Kumaravadivelu 2006), for example, can be seen as one of the reasons for the rise of reflective teaching in ELT. The widespread, long-felt dissatisfaction with the conventional concept of method as the organizing principle of L2 teaching and learning has produced what Kumaravadivelu (1994) has called a *postmethod condition*, which can potentially reshape the character and content of L2 teaching, teacher education and classroom research. According to Kumaravadivelu, a need to look beyond the notion of method has emerged out of the inherent contradictions

between method as conceptualized by theorists and method as actualized by practitioners. In the method era, theoretical knowledge was assigned much more value as compared to practical knowledge, however the prescribed solutions would not account for the dissatisfaction the practitioners feel in the classrooms. It was apparent that teacher qualifications had soon been questioned and changed depending on the emerging need which called for the practical knowledge on the foreground. The post method pedagogy had been discussed when language teacher education was in such *a state of crisis* (Akbari, 2007).

The Postmethod Pedagogy imposes an extraordinary degree of responsibility on all the participants, particularly the teacher and the teacher educator. "Teacher autonomy is so central that it can be seen as defining the heart of Postmethod pedagogy" (Kumaravadivelu, 2001, p.548). The postmethod teacher is required to build and implement his own theory of practice which is sensitive to the realities of their educational contexts by taking into consideration the possibilities of their sociopolitical condition. It does not prescribe any way of teaching; on the contrary, it describes the current condition of language teaching and learning and similarly encourages teachers to be aware of the realities of their teaching and learning environments and discover, learn and improve all aspects of his classroom through self-motivated research. Eventually, teachers are likely to turn into professional decision-makers developing their own personal theories depending on their *location-specific* and *context-sensitive* knowledge (Kumaravadivelu, 2001). This can only be achieved if the teachers engage in reflective thinking about their practice.

According to Fendler (2003), another trend which has contributed to the development of reflective movement is feminism. As Fendler (2003) points out, it is assumed that research methods and expert knowledge are not only constructed and controlled by "masculinist ways of thinking" (Fendler, 2003, p.19), and also privilege masculine mechanisms, which may have concluded in the subordinate role given to women. Reminding us of the inequality between predominantly male academics and female teachers who outnumber the males (Pennycook, 1989) in language teaching and also in mainstream education in general, Akbari (2007) states that "reflection on knowledge generation mechanisms and subverting those

mechanisms to give more voice to women, or more feminine approaches can be viewed as a force behind the rise of the reflective movement in education" (p.195). Reflective movement has assigned much more value to the knowledge generated by practitioners compared to the knowledge generated by the academicians. Since most of the practitioners in education are female, feminists hope that the rise of reflective movement may well provide the female with a chance to make their voice be heard louder, which makes "the balance tilted in favor of women" (Akbari, 2007, p.195).

Teacher educators seem to agree that teachers should be encouraged to engage in some kind of reflection in order to develop into better professionals. Many attempts have been made to empower teachers to become more reflective and efficient practitioners. However, reviewing the literature, one may well discover that the concept of reflection / reflective teaching is not clearly defined. Since, it has been largely affected by many trends and philosophies both historically and theoretically, it is possible to see that the term reflection has been identified and interpreted in many ways. There is almost no consensus not only as to the definition of reflection and but also as to the strategies used to promote reflectivity (Hatton & Smith, 1994). Therefore, "a plethora of different approaches with sometimes confusing meanings have been pushed in teacher education programs". (Farrell, 1998, http://draft.eca.state.gov/Forum/vols/vol36/no4/p10.-htm). If it has been so difficult to even identify this concept, one may imagine how hard it would be to teach it. However, we need to investigate the relevant literature in detail since "in its complexity lies its worth" (Jay & Johnson, 2002, p. 73). In order to get a more comprehensive view of reflection, it is necessary to trace back to its origin and follow the discussion throughout the literature.

2.2. Reflection Redefined

Although the roots of the term reflection are traced back to Aristotelian age (Birmingham, 2004) or Socratic questioning and dialogues (Şanal-Erginel, 2006), the conceptualization of reflection articulated by two prominent scholars, John

Dewey and Donald Schön, has largely influenced the application and understanding of reflective practice in teacher education. Dewey (1933) defined reflection as "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.9). Conceptualizing reflection as a rational process, Dewey (1933) distinguishes reflective action from impulsive or routine action. Impulsive action is based on trial and error, while routine action is "based largely on authority and tradition … undertaken in a passive, largely unthinking way" (Griffiths, 2000, p.540). Reflective thinking, on the other hand, is a rational process which is triggered by an individual's need to solve a problem or an issue. Furthermore, the process that an individual goes through when engaging in reflective thinking is much like the one that is followed in scientific inquiry whose stages can be summarized as follows: Define the question, gather information and resources (observe), "formulate a hypothesis, devise a way to test the hypothesis, conduct your test, form conclusions based on your findings, and communicate what you have found" (Bransford & Donovan, 2005, p. 397). This process resembles the process of reflective thinking conceptualized as a disciplined way of thinking by Dewey.

Since reflective thinking, in this sense, refers to a mental activity triggered by an individual's need to solve a problem, this systematic way of thinking should be apparently of great significance to any development program. Therefore, it is quite understandable how this conceptualization might have influenced the teacher education programs whose primary goal is to make teachers efficient practitioners. Reflection in teaching refers to teachers learning to subject their understandings of teaching and learning to a critical analysis, and thus learning to take responsibility for their practices (Korthagen, 1993). Reflective teaching is, therefore, closely related to teacher inquiry and development. This understanding owes much to Donald Schön who has brought "reflection into the centre of an understanding of what professionals do" (Smith, 2001; www.infed.org/thinkers/et-schon.htm).

Schön (1983; 1987) makes a distinction between *reflection-in-action* and *reflection-on-action*. Reflection-in-action is the reflection that teachers engage in when they confront a problem in the classroom. In order to reflect on the problem,

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the practitioner resorts to his/her prior knowledge or theories s/he has developed so far. Since this kind of reflection is likely to emerge when practitioner experiences "surprise, puzzlement, or confusion in a situation which he finds uncertain or unique" (Schön, 1983, p.68), the role of emotions in reflection is undeniable. Reflection-in-action, therefore, "involves looking to our experiences, connecting with our feelings, and attending to our theories in use" (Smith, 2001, www.infed-.org/thinkers/et-schon.htm). "Rather than applying theory or past experience in a direct way, professionals draw on their repertoire of examples to reframe the situation and find new solutions" (Griffiths, 2000, p.542). As Schön (1983) states, the practitioner "carries out an experiment which serves to generate both a new understanding … and a change in the situation" (p.68).

Reflection-on-action, on the other hand, refers to that kind of reflection which occurs on practice or after the practice is completed. "Reflection-on-action deals with thinking back on what we have done to discover how our knowing-in- action may have contributed to an unexpected action" (Farrell, 1998, http://draft.eca-.state.gov/Forum/vols/vol36/no4/p10.htm). It is this kind of reflection which is mostly encouraged and practiced in higher education, universities and any other academic circles, and "unlike reflection-in-action, which is an individual activity, reflection-on-action is normally exercised collectively and in groups" (Akbari, 2007, p. 194).

Killion and Todnem (1991) expanded Schön's model of reflection to include the notion of reflection - for - action which differs from the models of reflection mentioned above because "it is proactive in nature" (Farrell, 1998, http://draft.eca.-state.gov/Forum/vols/vol36/no4/p10.htm). According to Killion and Todnem (1991), reflection-for-action is the desired outcome of both reflection-in-action and reflection-on-action; however they "undertake reflection, not so much to revisit the past or to become aware of the metacognitive process one is experiencing…but to guide future action" (Killion & Todnem, 1991, p. 15).

Although conceptualization of reflection articulated by both Dewey and Schön has widely been shared by the educationalists or researchers engaging in reflective thinking, many attempts have been made to define the concept of reflective

practice based on the level of reflectivity the practitioner engages in. van Manen (1977), for example, regards reflection as consisting of three levels: the technical rationality, practical reflection and critical reflection. Valli (1997), on the other hand, has developed a five-level-hierarchy of reflection each level of which was examined in terms of content for and quality of reflection (See Table 2.1). At the lowest level, we have technical reflection which requires "directing one's actions through a straightforward application of research on teaching" (Valli, 1997, p. 76).

Table 2.1 Types of Reflection in Teaching Preparation (taken from Valli, 1997, p. 75)

Type	Content for Reflection	Quality of Reflection
Technical reflection	General instruction and management behaviors that are based on research on teaching	Matching one's own performance to external guidelines
Reflection-in and on-action	One's own personal teaching performance	Basing decisions on one's own unique situation
Deliberative reflection	A whole range of teaching concerns, including students, the curriculum, instructional strategies, the rules and organization of the classroom	Weighing competing viewpoints and research findings
Personalistic reflection	One's own personal growth and relationships with students	Listening to and trusting one's own inner voice and the voices of others
Critical reflection	The social, moral, and political dimensions of schooling	Judging the goals and purposes of schooling in light of ethical criteria such as social justice and equality of opportunity

Reflection -in and on-action, the second level of hierarchy, values practical knowledge and personal experience. Knowledge derived from the experience constitutes the content for reflection and the quality of reflection is determined by "the teacher's ability to make and justify good decisions based on his or her own situation and experience" (Valli, 1997, p. 76). Deliberative reflection, the next level in the hierarchy, requires the practitioner to weigh the completing claims coming from different sources of knowledge including research, personal experience or opinions of others in order to justify their decisions (Valli, 1997, p. 77). At this

stage, "multiple voices and perspectives are heard" (ibid.). Personal growth and the ability to empathize identify the fourth level of the hierarchy, that is, personalistic reflection. "Teachers reflecting in a personal way would consciously link their personal and professional lives" (Valli, 1997, pp. 77-78). Valli (1997) regarded the critical reflection as the highest level of reflection because it requires the practitioner to not only consider social and political implications of teaching, but also to be aware of the potential consequences of their decisions in improving or reforming these socio-political circumstances.

Since "critical reflection raises teachers' awareness about teaching, enables deeper understanding, and triggers positive change" (Liou, 2001, p. 199), critically reflective teachers are believed to "see the connections between what they do in the classroom, other schooling practices, and the broader social and political contexts surrounding their work" (Dinkelman, 2000, p. 199). Therefore, advocates of reflective training are likely to regard pre-service teachers as researchers who not only investigate themselves as learners, but also questions their perspectives and understandings to improve their teaching, which means that in the end they may hopefully develop into *lifelong learners* (van Halen-Faber**,** 1997, p. 52). In van Halen-Faber's (1997) words:

> Intentionally thoughtful teachers consider themselves lifelong learners for whom teaching experiences and learning experiences are so tightly interwoven as to be one. Critical reflection and transformative learning are the tenets of reflective practice. For intentionally thoughtful teachers, reflecting on transformative learning leads to reflective practice, and becomes a means by which they reflect on the practice of reflecting. Reflective practice is a turning back on oneself to consider, questioningly, the validity and principles of the practice (Lather, 1991). (van Halen-Faber, 1997, p. 52).

Criticizing the models of reflection widely discussed in the literature, Liston and Zeichner (1990) argued that few of these conceptual approaches "identify meaningful criteria for discerning what counts as good reasons for educational actions" (p. 236). Placing the notion of giving good reasons for educational actions at the center of any reflective attempt in teaching, these scholars suggested that "teacher education ought to aim directly at developing teachers who are able to

identify and articulate their purposes…choose the appropriate means,… know and understand the content to be taught,…who can be counted on for giving good reasons for their actions" (Liston & Zeichner, 1990, p. 236). The belief that reflection should take into consideration the social, moral, and political aspects of teaching and schooling has also been articulated by Liston and Zeichner (1990). They assert that reflective teaching not only entails teachers learning to reflect on their actions and purposes, but it should also take into account the social, moral, and political aspects of the educational context in which the teaching takes place. Thus, it is of great importance for teacher educators to encourage pre-service teachers to examine and reflect on their values, beliefs and concepts, and then to subject these values and beliefs to a critical analysis with the larger social, moral and political context of teaching in mind (Liston & Zeichner, 1990; Yost, Sentner & Forlenza-Bailey, 2000).

A more recent typology designed to guide teacher educators in teaching reflection to pre-service teachers comes from Jay and Johnson's (2002) research. The typology they provided consists of three dimensions of reflective thought: descriptive, comparative, and critical. The descriptive reflection, the first dimension of their typology, is the problem-setting stage. The problem mentioned here may be either explicit or implicit and may reveal itself either on intellectual or emotional level. During this stage the practitioner determines the aspect of his or her practice which constitutes the core of his or her reflection. The comparative reflection, the second dimension of Jay and Johnson's (2002) typology, is the stage during which the practitioner engages in "thinking about the matter for reflection from a number of different frames or perspectives" (Jay & Johnson, 2002, p.78). Since there are no ready-made solutions to the problems and each situation or problem is unique, we may need other people's opinions, especially those which may be incongruent to ours. Others' points of views may help us extend the limits of our thinking and understanding, and thus we may discover multiple layers of meaning "we might otherwise miss" (Jay & Johnson, 2002, p.78). The practitioner sets the problem, recognizes the salient features, reframes the problem in the light of other perspectives during the first two stages, and thus obtains a more comprehensive understanding of the teaching practice and context. Then comes the third dimension of reflection in the typology Jay and Johnson (2002) proposes,

which is the critical reflection. At this stage, the practitioner evaluates the material in several ways and makes a choice among alternatives or "simply integrates what one has discovered into a new and better understanding of the problem" (Jay & Johnson, 2002, p. 79). As Schön (1983) states, the practitioner "carries out an experiment which serves to generate both a new understanding … and a change in the situation" (p.68). However the reflection process doesn't end with a solution to an immediate problem, it may give birth to new questions or new inquiries since "critical reflection implies making a decision through careful deliberation, whether that decision is to act or to continue the cycle of reflection" (Jay & Johnson, 2002, p. 79).

It would appear, then, that reflection is an on-going mental process which has consequences in behavior. Therefore it has been considered essential to teacher change and development (Farrell, 1999; Pennington, 1995). When a teacher confronts something new and feels a need to try new things, he or she is likely to reflect on the consequences and decides to adjust his or her practice according to the results s/he gets out of his or her reflective process. Pennington (1995) also mentions this reflective cycle. She considers teachers' awareness of a need to change as a prerequisite for their change and development. According to her, teacher development can be defined as "a metastable system of context- interactive change involving a continual cycle of innovative behavior and adjustment to circumstances" (Pennington, 1995, p. 706). In her article she proposes a model of a teacher change cycle. As the model suggests, there are two components of change: innovation and critical reflection. In her study, she investigated what changes eight bilingual English teachers underwent when they adopted an innovation, *the process writing*, in their classrooms. The results showed that the change cycle these participants moved through was congruent with the model. Having analyzed the data gathered out of a one-year time span, Pennington (1995) pointed out that "through increasingly deep reflection, teachers were able to reconsider their previous notions of teaching and reconstruct a teaching framework to incorporate the previously contradictory elements" (p. 725).

Based on the same assumption that reflective process gives rise to opportunities for teachers to develop into professional educators, Farrell (1999) also presents a

language teacher development model which has derived from his study with three experienced EFL teachers in Korea. He believes that formation of teacher development groups is one of the effective ways of promoting reflective practice. The teachers in the study came together in weekly meetings to reflect on their teaching. Data was gathered out of weekly group meetings, individual meetings, class observation and regular journal writing. Having concluded that all three teachers were reflective, to a certain extent, to their teaching, Farrell (1999) suggested valuable implications for teachers reflecting in a collaborative approach. According to the model he presents (Farrell, 1998; Farrell, 1999), in order for teacher development groups to provide enriching opportunities for teachers to develop into professionals, they are to incorporate the following five core components: (Farrell, 1998, http://draft.eca.state.gov/Forum/vols/vol36/no4/p10.-htm)

- Provide different opportunities for teachers to reflect through a range of different activities (such as *group discussions, observation, journal writing, critical friends*).
- Build in some ground rules to the process and into each activity.
- Make provisions for four different kinds of time, that is, *individual, activity, development, period of reflection*.
- Provide external input for enriched reflection.
- Provide for low affective states

Liou (2001) reached similar results in his study which was a partial replication of Farrell's (1999). In order to provide a description of pre-service teachers' reflective practice, Liou examined twenty students' observation reports and twenty practice teaching reports over a six-week period of a practice teaching course. The pre-service teachers were again found to be reflective, to a certain extent. However, they did not seem to develop much in their ability to reflect critically over the period of research. In order to help pre-service teachers develop reflective skills, Liou (2001) agrees with Farrell's (1999) aforementioned suggestions. According to Liou (2001), "interventions such as reflective training or teacher development group meetings may need to be incorporated into teacher education curriculum in order to trigger the development" (p. 197). Many other scholars (Braun &

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Crumpler, 2004; Lee, 2007; Spalding & Wilson, 2002) have also suggested that pre-service teachers ought to be taught the capacity to be reflective at earlier points of their teacher development. For example, Braun and Crumpler (2004) believe that "the implications of developing reflective skills at an earlier stage could lead to changes in the rate at which students adjust to classroom life as they make the transition from student to teacher" (p. 74). Spalding and Wilson (2002) also argue that pre-service teachers are generally assigned reflective assignments without being explicitly taught how to reflect. Depending on their teaching experiences, they suggest that teacher educators "must actively teach and model reflective skills in a variety of ways … to demystify reflection" (Spalding & Wilson, 2002, p. 1393). In addition, Lee (2007) questions why pre-service teachers have to wait in order to learn to reflect until the practicum since they may have difficulty linking theory and practice when they confront the realities of their teaching practice. Therefore, as Lee (2007) suggests:

> it is important that teacher educators help student teachers develop reflective thinking as soon as the teacher learning process starts, so that they can experience success in the classroom when they practice teaching in the classroom both as teacher learners and later as practitioners (p. 322).

2.3. Criticisms of Reflective Practice

Although reflective practice is highly praised in the second language teacher education research and in mainstream education in general, a number of scholars have also questioned the applications of reflective practice in education. (Akbari, 2007; Farrell, 1999; Farrell, 2001; Hatton & Smith, 1994). Hatton and Smith (1994, pp. 2-4) have emphasized four main problematic issues in relation to reflective practice. The first issue that Hatton and Smith (1994) identified is about "distinguishing reflective thinking from reflective action" (p.2). When the scholars discuss the concept of reflection and design approaches to enhance reflection among practitioners, they are likely to get a clearer understanding of its relation to thought process about the action or the action itself.

The second issue that Hatton and Smith (1994) have mentioned is concerned with "immediate versus extended time frames for reflection" (p.2) and which one is the most suitable for reflective practice. Other scholars in the literature have also criticized the traditionally perceived and studied times of reflection (Akbari, 2007; Boud, 2001; Conway, 2001). When we examine the literature on reflection dealing with the teacher education, it is possible to state that most of the emphasis has been on reflection-on-action, or in other words, what practitioners have experienced in the past. The fact that the retrospective reflection-on-action has been mostly valued in the literature has shaped the way the teacher education programs approach the reflection and the tools designed to study it. Conway (2001) states that "teacher education currently concentrates on memory with the result that little attention is paid to imagination" (p.104). Too much emphasis on practitioners' past experiences with little attention to imagination or creativity may consider "learners as passive respondents to events" (Boud, 2001, p.12) and it may reveal nothing new but what is already known (Fendler, 2003). However, in order to get prepared to the problems they face in the classroom, teachers need to engage in anticipatory reflection. This kind of reflection has an indispensible role in making the teachers autonomous and independent in their classroom decisions (Akbari, 2007). Therefore Conway (2001) suggests that "teacher educators might consider conversations and activities designed to promote imaginative/prospective reflection" (p. 104). For example, when practitioners write traditionally used paper-based journals, they get feedback only from the teacher educator. Since the only feedback channel is the teacher educator, they can only engage in what has happened before. Thus, retrospective reflection-on-action is encouraged by these traditional reflective tools. Preferring immediate versus extended time frames for reflection has, therefore, important implications for the approach that one chooses to engage in the reflective practice.

Another problem that Hatton and Smith (1994) have mentioned is about the content/focus for reflection. Whether or not the reflection is limited to the need to find a solution to the real problems encountered in the classroom should be identified. If problem-solving is considered to be at the centre of the reflection, then, the nature of some of the widely used reflective techniques including journal

writing and group discussion will have to be changed accordingly since they are not problem-solving (Farrell, 2001, p. 25).

The last issue mentioned in Hatton and Smith's (1994) study is about the critical reflection and its development (p.3), in other words, how critical one gets when reflecting on his or her teaching needs to be questioned (Farrell, 2001, p. 25). Being critical, here, entails taking into account the wider political, cultural, and historic beliefs and values while organizing and reorganizing one's own circumstances to get an understanding of what is going on and to decide one's actions accordingly. Such a perspective calls for the examination of the political and social agendas and politics that the individual lives in.

In addition to the aforementioned issues, few instances of critical reflection have been noted in the literature dealing with the research into the programs particularly designed to promote reflective approaches in the initial teacher education (Hatton & Smith, 1994). However, this discontent as to the results of the efforts to encourage reflectivity didn't prevent the researchers or educationalists from searching for the possible reasons and alternative ways to foster reflective practice among pre-service teachers. The following section will present some of the widely employed reflective approaches and techniques with a brief description of both their potentials and limitations.

2.4. Processes for Reflection

The way reflection is defined somehow determined the way it is dealt with. Therefore the aforementioned types of reflection can also be accepted as different approaches to reflective practice teaching. However, different understandings of the subject have resulted in different interpretations and applications, so one may well encounter numerous approaches which are claimed to facilitate reflection in the literature. Hatton and Smith (1994, p.4), however, identified four broad approaches seeking to promote reflection: Action Research Projects (Campbell & Tovar, 2006; Liston & Zeichner, 1990), Ethnographic and Case Studies (Alger,

2006; Farrell, 2008), Microteaching and other Supervised Practicum Experiences (I'Anson, Rodrigues & Wilson, 2003), and Structured Curriculum Tasks.

A plethora of other more specific techniques have been suggested to make prospective teachers reflective. These include *diary or journal writing* (Bailey, 2001; Bain, Mills, Ballantyne & Packer, 2002; Cole, Raffier, Rogan & Schleicher, 1998; Ewald, 2006; Fielden, 2004; Gebhard & Nagamine 2005; Ho & Richards, 1993; Hoban, 2000; Langer, 2002; Lee, 2007; McDonough, 1994; Paton, 2006; Pedro, 2005; Pennington; 1995; Spalding & Wilson, 2002; Srimavin & Darasawang, 2004; Uline, Wilson & Cordy, 2004); *autobiographical writing* (Braun & Crumpler, 2004); *peer observation, critical friendship* (Golby & Appleby, 1995); *the analysis of critical incidents* (Cordona, 2005; Farrell, 2008); *reflective dialogue* (Tsang, 2007); *teacher-group discussion* (Bailey, Curtis & Nunan, 1998; Farrell, 1999; Farrell, 2001); *portfolios* (Mansvelder-Longayroux, Beijard & Verloop, 2007; Orland-Barak, 2005); and *audio or video recording of lessons* (Harford & MacRuairc, 2008; Lee, 2007; Song & Catapano, 2008). Other genres such as *student metaphors for teaching* (Hoban; 2006), *personal narratives* (Alger, 2006) and *various versions of fiction and non-fiction* (van Halen-Faber; 1997) may also be used to promote reflective teaching.

Since blogs, mostly considered as a new genre of web-based journal writing, have been used as a tool to promote reflective practice in this study, the following section presents a brief discussion of journal writing in order to get a comprehensive view of what benefits blogging could suggest for scholars and educationalists interested in enhancing the reflective practice in the teacher education programs.

2.4.1. Reflective Journals

Journaling and other types of reflective writing assignments are used in a number of ways to encourage reflective thinking. Many studies in teacher education have noted the use of journals both as a learning tool and as a vehicle for teacher development (Bailey, Curtis and Nunan, 1998; Brock, Yu and Wong, 1992; Lee, 2007; Spalding & Wilson, 2002). In its simplest definition, "a journal is a record of

happenings, thoughts and feelings about a particular aspect of life, with a particular structure" (Cordona, 2005, p. 394). The power of writing itself provides us with an opportunity to review and clarify our thoughts to get them out of our minds onto the page. When it is used as a learning tool or a tool to stimulate reflective thinking, journaling allows students to keep track of their own learning, reflect on what they think, how they feel, what they have done in the classroom, and why they did so (Valli, 1997). A number of claims are made as to the benefits of journals in teacher education. Brock, Yu & Wong (1992) summarize these as follows:

1. They provide an effective means of identifying variables that are important to individual teachers and learners.
2. They serve as a means of generating questions and hypotheses about teaching and learning processes.
3. They enhance awareness about the way a teacher teaches and a student learns.
4. They are an excellent tool for reflection.
5. They are simple to conduct.
6. They provide a first-hand account of teaching and learning experiences.
7. They are the most natural form of classroom research in that no formal correlations are tested and no outside observer enters the classroom dynamic.
8. They provide an on-going record of classroom events and teacher and learner reflections.
9. They enable the researcher to relate classroom events and examine trends emerging from the diaries.
10. They promote the development of reflective teaching (Brock, Yu & Wong, 1992, p. 295).

As for the underlying pedagogical motivation for maintaining journals in teacher education programs, Cole et al. (1998) suggest three current educational paradigms: "a focus on process, a focus on the learner, and a focus on reflection" (p. 557). Writing process enables one to organize one's own thoughts and feelings, relate the newly acquired knowledge to the existing ones, make connections, and change their ideas or generate new ones. Thus, the act of writing may allow for the discovery of meaning. The emphasis on learner centeredness is another point Cole et al. (1998) mention as one of the paradigms that encourage journal writing. Congruent with the idea that the learner is at the center, individual's experiences and beliefs are attached great importance. Learners are not passive recipients of knowledge, but are actually considered to be active participants in learning, which

makes them responsible for their own learning. Thus, "journal writing provides a place for learners to develop an awareness of their own discovery processes … journals can provide opportunities to heighten self-awareness and engage writers in a process of critical thinking" (Cole et. al, 1998, p. 557). Lastly, Cole et. al (1998) consider reflection as a justification for the use of journals. Since journals are tools which provide the practitioners with opportunities to write about the issues they encounter, and ideas they explore in their daily practices, when used within a reflective teaching model, "teacher trainees are encouraged to become actively engaged in their search for meaning" (Cole et. al, 1998, p. 557) since "they are constructing personal meaning in light of their experiences and beliefs" (ibid). Lee (2007; pp. 321-322) summarizes the commonly used journal types in teacher education as follows: *teaching journals*; *response journals*; *dialogue journals* and *collaborative / interactive group journals*.

Teaching journals are written reflections concerning classroom teaching or practicum (Lee, 2007). Bailey, Curtis and Nunan (1998) have noted that "writing regular reflections in a teaching journal provides a place for questions to accumulate, like taking the jumbled pieces of a puzzle out of a box and arraying them on a table" (p. 549). Through journaling teachers can become more aware of their goals, successes and failures "so that each situation can become an opportunity for growth" (Valli, 1997, p. 83).

While response journals record students' feelings, thoughts and reactions to the issues raised in the teacher education programs, a dialogue journal is "a series of collaborative, ongoing reflections between a teacher and a student, interacting in a forum of written, informal 'conversation'" (Ewald, 2006, p. 37). Lee (2007) conducts a study which explores how dialogue and response journals can be used to enhance reflection among pre-service teachers. Although Lee finds that these tools provided opportunities for pre-service teachers to engage in reflective thinking, he mentions some problems as to the application of these tools. First of all, it was difficult to sustain interest in maintaining journals, and when they were in need of help or when they sought to get advice from the instructor, they were more eager to write journals. It is a common point for most journal studies since the only reader of these journals is generally the instructor. As time passes, "some

pre-service teachers may perceive journal writing as a means of getting advice from the teacher educator rather than a tool for developing individual reflection" (Lee, 2007, p. 327). In order to encourage individual reflection, Lee (2007) suggested that teacher educators should reconsider his or her role in this process, and "gradually make his or her role redundant by reducing input / feedback and by letting student teachers take greater responsibility for learning" (p. 328). Lee made some recommendations such as forming journal partners or group journaling so that the pre-service teachers could have an audience to interact with, and even exchanging the pre-service teachers' journals with the learners during their teaching practice so that the pre-service teachers "not only engage in a dialogue with themselves but also listen to the voices of their learners" (Lee, 2007, p. 328).

The Collaborative / interactive group journal (Cole et al., 1998; Gebhard & Nagamine, 2005) is another way of employing journal writing in the teacher education. As the collaborative / interactive group journals require a group of students to write and exchange among group members, they provide a space for these students to interact and share their reflections. This type of journal, therefore,

> takes the idea of reflective practice and merges it with social interaction by recording active dialogue among peers in a journal format… wherein personal, academic, and professional growth is as boundless as the collective energies, creativity, and insights of its contributors (Cole et. al, 1998, pp. 556-557).

Some researchers (Hatton & Smith, 1994; Spalding & Wilson, 2002) note that pre-service teachers should prepare for reflective thinking process before they are given reflective writing assignments. Spalding and Wilson (2002) conducted a study in order to identify pedagogical strategies which helped pre-service teachers improve their reflective thinking via journal writing. They provided thirty-four pre-service secondary teachers with an explicit instruction of reflection. The students in the study wrote and submitted to instructors weekly reflective journals during the 1st semester of a yearlong professional program. Journal was the major component of the course and each journal entry was evaluated and graded. In order to teach the pre-service teachers the characteristics of reflective writing different from narrative writing, the researchers first used models of reflective writing from published

authors. The students were encouraged to discuss and reflect on the characteristics of reflective writing. Then, the researchers introduced Valli's typology (1997) as a teaching tool which would be used as a reference point during the term. While one researcher received hard-copy journals and wrote comments on them, the other researcher received journals via email and responded the journals via email. Both of the researchers used peer sharing of journals. Brief cases of four pre-service teachers who majored in English and history were presented in their study. Having analyzed the journals, Spalding and Wilson (2002) have found that "no single pedagogical strategy was best and that students responded differently to different strategies…Overall, personalized feedback on their journals and their relationships with their instructors were most important in helping them grow" (p. 1393). Depending on their teaching experiences, Spalding and Wilson (2002) suggested that teacher educators "must actively teach and model reflective skills in a variety of ways … to demystify reflection" (p. 1393).

Although journal writing has mostly been encouraged both as a learning tool and a tool for professional development in teacher education, teacher educators have difficulty evaluating the content and the quality of reflection in the journals because the criteria for reflection are not well-defined (Hatton & Smith, 1994). To this end, frameworks to evaluate levels of reflectivity have emerged (Hatton & Smith, 1994; Ho & Richards, 1993; Valli, 1997; Van Manen, 1977). Hatton and Smith (1994), for example, present a framework identifying four levels of reflectivity found in pre-service teachers' journals. The first level, descriptive writing, is not reflective at all, but only describes events in the classroom practice. Descriptive reflection, on the other hand, presents some attempts to provide reasons or justification for events. Dialogic reflection is the third level of this framework where the students are in search for possible reasons while engaging in a dialogue with themselves. The fourth level in the framework, critical reflection, requires the student to provide reasons or justifications for his or her actions or the events in the classroom practice by taking into consideration the wider historical, social and/or political contexts.

In a study with 10 teachers enrolled in an in-service TESOL teacher education in Hong Kong, Ho and Richards (1993) provide a five-level-classification to evaluate

the content of the reflective journals. First category includes theories of teaching; the second category includes approaches and methods used in the class; the third one includes evaluating teaching; the fourth one includes teachers' self-awareness of their teaching; and the last category includes questions about teaching and asking for advice. The teachers in the study maintained teaching journals during the 10-week semester. The topics they chose to write about have been identified and coded by the researchers. Having analyzed the journal entries according to the topics they wrote, Ho and Richards (1993) concluded that the teachers mainly reflected on the approaches and procedures they used in the classroom and teachers in the study showed differences in their level of reflectivity. However, the researchers have noted little change in the degree of critical reflectivity that the teachers engaged in over time. Farrell (1999) and Liou (2001) employed Ho and Richards' (1993) framework to analyze the content of the journals, and thereby evaluate the reflectivity in the journals. Likewise these studies reached the similar conclusion with Ho and Richards' (1993) that the participants in the studies didn't seem to develop much in their ability to reflect over time. Ho and Richards' (1993) framework will be discussed at length in the next chapter since it was employed in this study to analyze the data gathered out of the written reflections on the blogs in order to determine the levels of reflectivity among participants.

As outlined previously, numerous strategies have been employed especially in teacher education programs to make the prospective teachers reflective. However, all are not necessarily appropriate for facilitating reflection and there is little research evidence to show whether they are effective or not. The factors regarded as hindering the success of these reflective approaches and techniques are discussed in the following section.

2.5. Criticism to Reflective Approaches

Despite the widespread emphasis on reflection in teacher education, research into the reflective thinking in pre-service teachers has often noted little indication of deeper, critical and personal student reflection. Studies show that the pre-service teachers have difficulty achieving higher levels of reflection (Hatton & Smith, 1994; Galvez-Martin, Bowman & Morrison, 1998; Liou, 2001) or reflecting on

wider contexts of teaching and learning other than immediate concerns of instruction such as classroom management and control (McLaughlin & Hanifin, 1994). Hatton and Smith (1994) have observed a number of "barriers which hinder the reflective approaches" (p. 11). These barriers are as follows:

• Reflection is not generally associated with teacher's work; rather seen as an academic exercise. Akbari (2007) also regards the tension between the knowledge generated by the academicians and the knowledge generated by the practitioners as one of the conceptual problems of reflective teaching. Although teachers are encouraged to reflect on their practice, to relate the newly gained knowledge with their previous knowledge in order to generate a new understanding, to theorize what they practice and practice what they theorize (Kumaravadivelu, 2001), it is ironic that "the roots of reflection…are found in academic circles, not in real contexts of practice" (Akbari, 2007, p.196).

• Teachers need time, opportunity and modeling to develop reflective capabilities.

• Student may have different reactions to demands for reflective approaches. Their individual differences and the role of emotions should be anticipated since exposing oneself in a group of strangers can lead to vulnerability.

• Since critical reflection requires taking account of historical, social and/or political contexts, structure and ideology of total programs the teachers prepare for need to be addressed.

The reason why Stiler and Philleo (2003), for instance, decided to experiment with alternative reflective activities is this discontent they had with the traditional journaling activities used by teacher education faculty (p. 789). Exploring many types of journaling including the use of supplemental workbooks, hard-copy journals or diaries, they came to realize that "students wrote sparse, descriptive summaries with few examples of heightened levels of awareness and little indication that these practices promoted a continuing routine of reflective practice" (Stiler & Philleo, 2003, p. 789). Of the other problems related to hard-copy journals or diaries are "the legibility of handwritten documents, instructor response time, record-keeping concerns, and the transportation of …written student journals" (Stiler & Philleo, 2003, p. 789).

2.6. Using Technology to Promote Reflection

With all this criticism in mind, it is possible to assert that new technological tools might offer new possibilities to researchers and educationalists that traditional reflective tools mentioned above mostly fall short of. In order to have a better understanding of their potentials in promoting reflective practice, the next section will deal with a brief history and applications of such social software technologies in education.

2.7. Educational Technology

The term *Educational Technology* is generally used synonymously with *Instructional Technology* which simply refers to the application of technology in instruction. Merrill et. al (1996) state that "instruction is a science and that instructional design is a technology founded in this science… a technology for the development of learning experiences and environments which promote the acquisition of specific knowledge and skill by students" (pp. 5-6). Solomon (2000) defines Instructional Technology as "a confluence of many disciplines including education, communications, the arts and sciences" (p. 4). When the wide varieties of applications of different technologies in these disciplines are considered, it becomes easy to understand "the differing orientations that have emerged in the field, such as behaviorism, cognitivism and constructivism" (Solomon, 2000, p. 4). Just as "every significant shift in educational values, goals or objectives has led to diverse technologies of instruction" (Saettler, 2004, p. 4), the tools used have also been influential in introducing new ways of thinking, acting, speaking or even feeling**.**

Ever since the early cultures invented pictographs or sign writing to record and transmit their knowledge, new technologies in every age have been used for educational purposes (Saettler, 2004). However, there has been a tremendous technological change since the beginning of the last century. The 20th century has witnessed significant advancements in instructional technology from the development of educational radio, television, film or Skinner's teaching machine

(Saettler, 2004) to the digital technologies, computers and eventually the advent of the Internet and the World Wide Web (Kelly, 2008). Consequently, these advancements have changed not only the tools we use, but also our understanding of learning, society, knowledge, and even the meaning of learning (Spohrer, 2000). As Karagiorgi and Symeou (2005) states, "today, learning is approached as a constructive, self-regulated, situated, cooperative, and individually different process" (p. 24). The environments provided by the prevailing digital technologies support and necessitate this kind of learning (Carroll, 2000). Recent research has been investigating the impact of these technologies on various aspects of teaching and learning in educational settings including teaching and learning activities, learning outcomes, teachers' and learners' perceptions, learner motivation, technology uptake or professional development (Bennett & Lockyer, 1999).

2.7.1. Technology and Language Learning

The use of technology in language learning, especially in second or foreign language learning has a long history. Before the advent of computers, audio technologies had been predominantly used in language learning. With the advancement in computer technologies, new ways to facilitate language learning have been emerged. Warschauer (1996) categorized the history of Computer Assisted Language Learning (CALL) in three phases; *behavioristic CALL*, *communicative CALL*, and *integrative CALL*. Each phase has characterized by the prevailing theories of language teaching and learning. In the era of behavioristic CALL, mostly marked by Skinner's *teaching machine* (Saettler, 2004), computer programs were designed to provide language learners with opportunities of making drills and practices which were focused mainly on receptive skills. During the 1970s and 1980s, the prevailing language teaching approach, that is, the communicative approach necessitated more communicative tools, which gave way to the emergence of communicative CALL. The acquisition of communicative skills was in the foreground. Moreover teaching language in context has gained importance. Therefore, storyboards, text reconstruction and cloze exercises were among the examples of communicative CALL. The advent of multimedia

computers and the Internet gave way to the emergence of the integrative CALL which has brought about significant applications to language learning and education in general. "For the first time, language learners can communicate directly, inexpensively, and conveniently with other learners or speakers of the target language 24 hours a day, from school, work, or home" (Warschauer, 1996, http://www.ict4lt.org/en/warschauer.htm). The Internet made the interaction and communication possible among the people all over the world.

2.7.2. CMC and Language Learning

Computer Mediated Communication (CMC) is any form of communicative transaction occurring between two or more people through networked computers. CMC tools can be divided broadly into two types: synchronous and asynchronous. In synchronous mode all participants are online at the same time. Video, audio or text chat, instant-messaging tools such as MSN Messenger, Yahoo Messenger, and Skype, whiteboard, Web-phone can be given as examples to synchronous CMC tools. Asynchronous type of CMC, on the other hand, occurs without time constraints. Among asynchronous communication tools are e-mail, discussion forum, bulletin board, wikis, blogs and listserv.

Through CMC tools – whether they are synchronous or asynchronous – people all over the world began to interact and communicate, which has led many educationalists especially in foreign or second language learning to search for ways to integrate these tools in their teaching to stimulate online collaboration and sharing among web users. Thanks to the advances in information and computer technologies, in the last decade we were introduced to the second generation web services (Web 2.0), in other words, social software technologies. These new tools which emphasize online collaboration and sharing (Akbulut & Kıyıcı, 2007) attract the educationalists and researchers' attention for their instructional benefits.

2.8. Social Software Technologies (Web 2.0) in Education

Social software, which has gained popularity over the past few years, encompasses a "range of applications that augments group interactions and shared spaces for collaboration, social connections, and aggregates information exchanges in a web-based environment" (Bartlett-Bragg, 2006, p. 3). These second generation web services (Web 2.0), as Boyd (2005) states, offer support for conversational interaction between individuals or groups, social feedback and social networks which help people build new relationships. The application of social software technologies is growing rapidly and the most commonly used applications are briefly outlined below:

- **Collaborative spaces**

Weblogs or blogs can be considered to be the most popular application of social software technologies. They have developed into powerful personal publishing spaces that allow their users – bloggers – to organize and publish on the net in order to share their feelings and ideas with the rest of the world (Bartlett-Bragg, 2006). The interactive nature of blogs through the features of getting comments from the readers, linking to other resources on the net and the use of syndication tools to get updates have spurred the educationalists and researchers' interest in searching ways to integrate them in educational contexts. The features of blogs together with the potential instructional benefits of blogging will be discussed in the following section.

- **RSS – syndication & aggregation**

RSS, standing for *Rich Site Summary* or *Real Simple Syndication,* is firstly originated in weblog software, and then now used in many other web sites such as news and journal sites. Weblogs (and other RSS-enabled web sites) have a code in a programming language called XML. This code is generally referred to as a feed, and these feeds can be received by right-clicking the symbols - such as RSS, XML or 🔊 - in the web sites. In order to use a feed, one has to install a software tool known as an aggregator or feed reader – such as Bloglines, Google Reader or

Pageflakes – on his or her computer. By just copying the feeds to the aggregator, readers can subscribe to the content of either a weblog or a web site they are interested in. Figure 2.1 shows a screenshot of Google Reader. Suppose that you have found 20 or 30 web sites interesting enough to track their content, but it is likely to be difficult to find adequate time to regularly click through all those sites. However, thanks to RSS, the content comes to you instead of you going to it. RSS makes it easier to "filter and track the ever-growing number of resources coming online each day" (Richardson, 2004, http://www.infotoday.com/MMSchools-/jan04/richardson.shtml). For instance, if you are a researcher who wants to keep in touch with the latest research in teacher education or CALL, just copy the related feeds provided by the journals – i.e. ProQuest, and paste this feed to your aggregator and any time anyone publishes an article about that topic you will automatically be notified. Or you can subscribe to the news about global warming that will be published on The New York Times. Thus, RSS may offer invaluable instructional benefits, for one may well say that RSS has been one of the social software technologies that is likely to redefine the way students find, manage and use information (Richardson, 2004) and enhance their level of network literacy (Parry, 2006).
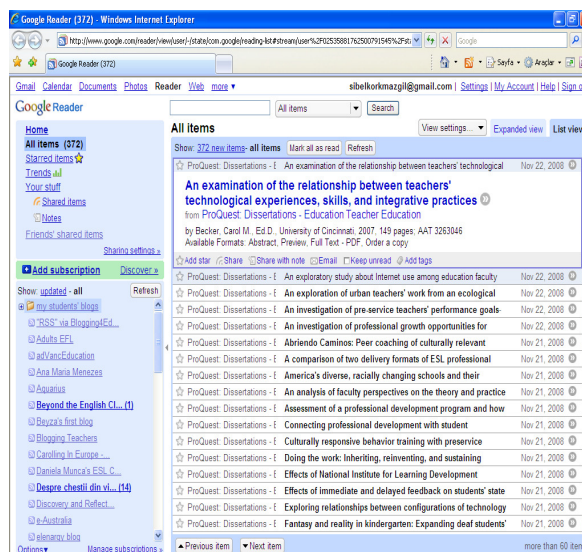
Figure 2.1 A Screenshot of Google Reader

- **Tagging and Social Bookmarking**

Social bookmarking is similar to a favorites list in a browser, except that it is not stored on a specific computer, rather you can access your favorites list together with the lists of other people with the same interests from anywhere with an internet connection. It allows users to create lists of bookmarks to store these on an account not on a specific computer and to share them with other users. The users are encouraged to tag these internet bookmarks with keywords. Such tags are referred to as folksonomies which establish a social tagging system. Social bookmarking services can be used as powerful research and resource gathering tools in education. For example, a group of students working together in a project can share their resources by establishing a network via bookmarking services and each group member will be able to be aware of what the others in the group have found and read on their own. The concept of tagging has been expanded beyond website bookmarking, and today social sharing services such as YouTube, Flickr or Odeo allow different forms of multimedia to be socially tagged. Popular social bookmarking sites include Delicious (http://delicious.com/), Reddit (http://www.reddit.com/), and Digg (http://digg.com/). Figure 2.2 illustrates a screenshot of an account in Delicious.
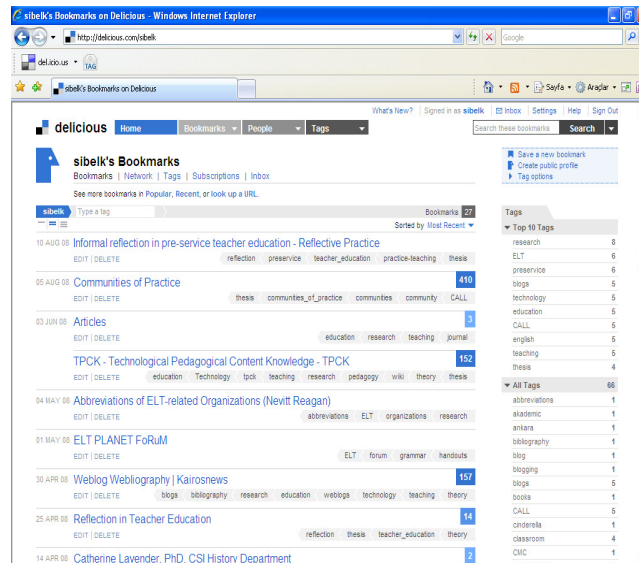
Figure 2.2 A screenshot of an account in Delicious

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- **Social sharing**

The idea behind the Web 2.0 tools is that web users are not just consumers but they actively contribute to the production of Web content. Well-known multimedia sharing examples include YouTube (video), Flickr (photographs) and Odeo (podcasts). Millions of people today share and exchange these media forms they produced. In addition to the fact that these multimedia sharing services cause interaction and communication among people from different cultures, they also provide invaluable authentic materials for language teachers.

- **Social networking**

Social networking services allow users to create a personal page which presents their profile to other users. By linking others as friends, users can establish new social networks. Depending on the technologies provided by the services used, people can employ other Web 2.0 tools such as blogs, social tagging, or video- or image-sharing. Popular social networking services include MySpace and Facebook.

2.9. Integrating Social Software into Language Teacher Education

The aforementioned social software technologies are already being used by many teacher education students in the world. In fact, the students of these prospective teachers will be engaging in these social networks. These tools provide authentic materials and opportunities of interaction with different cultures, which offer invaluable instructional benefits especially for language teachers.

In order to make pre-service teachers confident enough to integrate such technologies into their teaching, they should be introduced in the teacher education programs. In addition to the instructional benefits these environments provide, these have other advantageous for prospective teachers such as providing the establishment of professional support communities or tools for life-long learning (Kessler, 2007; Pope & Golub, 2000; Yurkiw, 2006).

Research on CMC focuses mainly on the social effects of different CMC technologies. More research is needed to explore the best practices on how to utilize these technologies in education. Being the core of the increasing popularity of the social software technologies (Bartlett-Bragg, 2006), blogs have recently been the object of educational research because of the promising educational opportunities and benefits they provide for teaching, learning and networking.

2.10. The Blogging Phenomenon

Blogs have become a global phenomenon. The Blogosphere is growing in size and influence, and "the phenomenon known as blogging, or weblogging, is sweeping the Internet" (Downes, 2004, p. 16). From 2004 to 2008 the number of the blogs on the web has increased at a very rapid rate. As one indicator of the increase in the number of blogs, a search for "blog or weblog" via Google in November 2004 returned approximately 9,400,000 results (Martindale & Wiley, 2005), while 2,980,000,000 results in November 2008. This increase has also been shown in the annual reports of Technorati, a real time search engine which maintains updated information on blogs. While Technorati (See http://www.technorati.com/blogging/-state-of-the-blogosphere) was tracking over 7.8 million blogs in March, 2005, and 27.2 million blogs in January, 2006, this number grew up to approximately 70 million in April, 2007. According to the Technorati's State of the Blogosphere 2007 report (See http://www.sifry.com/alerts/archives/000493.html), approximately 120,000 new blogs are created worldwide each day, which means that 1.4 blog are created every second of every day. While number of edubloggers is increasing day by day, there is a small but growing body of research about the use of blogs in educational contexts.

This section presents blogs as a promising tool in enhancing reflective practice in teacher education programs. This section begins with a definition of blogs, and an explanation of different blog types. It is followed by a discussion of the use of blogging in education. This section ends with a review of research dealing with the use of blogs as a reflective medium in educational settings.

2.10.1. The Blog – The definition

A weblog, generally referred to as a blog, is a self-publishing online tool which allows individuals to instantly publish "unedited personal reflections, thoughts, and ideas on the Web" (Wang, Fix & Bock, 2005, p.1). The entries, displayed in reverse chronological order, are generally text-based. However, web-based blog providers have, for some time, allowed images, audio- or video-forms to be integrated into the blogs (Tan, 2005). The users do not need to know any programming language since publishing a post in a blog is as easy as sending an email. Figure 2.3 illustrates a screenshot of a blog. Using free software such as Movable Type (http://www.movabletype.org), WordPress (http://wordpress.org/) and Blogger (http://www.blogger.com), users can set up a free account and create their own blogs.
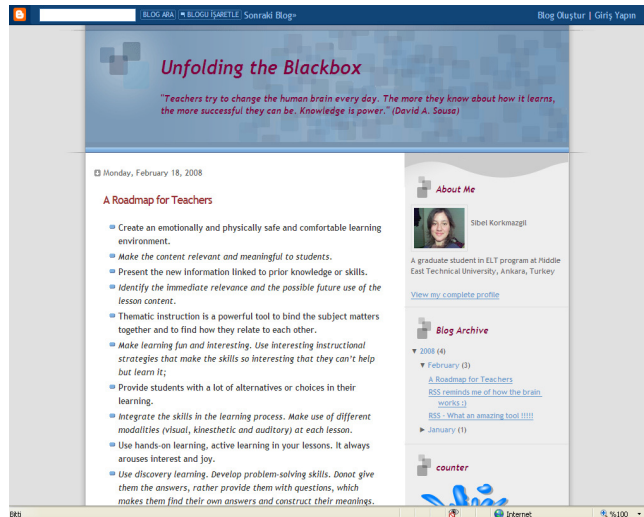
Figure 2.3 A screenshot of a blog.

A typical blog generally has the following features:

- The name of the blog which gives the general theme of the blog content
- Reversely chronological entries: Each entry has a headline, a time- and date-stamp.

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- A section under each entry which allows readers to leave comments.
- A section called "Blog Archive" which shows the past entries.
- A "blogroll" – a list of other blogs read by the owner of the blog.
- Links to other resources on the web – identified by the owner of the blog.
- The RSS feed of the blog which allows the other users to subscribe to the blog content.

Depending on the blog software used, it is possible to add many other features or widgets. However, what makes blogs distinctive is its collaboration and communication features (Kennedy, 2003). Since blogs invite comments from readers all over the world, they provide many-way conversation and collaboration opportunities. If a blogger, or one who blogs, turn *trackback* on in his or her blog, he or she will be able to know when other people are linking to his or her blog from their blogs. Furthermore, appropriate use of *tags* – labels or categories in some blog software – will reveal one's blog to other people who search for blog posts on topics of interest to them through blog search engines such as Technorati or Google Blog Search. What interests someone might be of great interest to someone else. It is also possible to subscribe to the content of an on-going discussion developed around a specific entry via RSS feeds. Therefore, no matter what topic the blogs are about, the blogging experience allows the blogger to find that other person, other people and discover and communicate with a small but dedicated group.

2.10.2. Types of Blogs

Blogs may differ not only in what they contain, but also in the way their content is delivered or published. The analyses of the blogs as an emerging genre on the web have showed that the types of blogs show variation from blogs which can be identified as personal online journals concerned mainly with the bloggers themselves, to *filter blogs* (Herring, Scheidt, Wright & Bonus, 2005) which focus largely on providing useful information or links to resources on the web, to topical blogs where almost all the discussion is centered on a specific topic, to community blogs through which many-way communication and collaboration among

participants with a shared interest (Herring, Scheidt, Wright & Bonus, 2005) can be made possible. Krishnamurthy (2002) classified blogs into four types according to two dimensions: personal vs. topical, and individual vs. community. The participant blogs in this study can be considered to be *enhanced column blogs* (Krishnamurthy, 2002) since they are individual and topical in nature.

Blogs and notion of community constitutes another area of recent discussion in the literature. Blogs may also be distinguished in terms of the community they form. White (2006) examined emerging patterns of blog-based communities in order to explore how blogs might engender and support the development of online communities, and proposed three blog community forms: *The Single Blog/Blogger Centric Community*, *the Central Connecting Topic Community* and *the Boundaried Community*. The Topic Centric Community, which emerges from blogs linked by a common passion or topic, is relevant to this study since the pre-service teachers in this study blog about their reflective practices. In this type of blog communities "both power and identity is distributed across the community….the rich network of perspectives allows the readers many views on an issue" (White, 2006, p. 4). As supportive to the formation of topic centric communities, White (2006) suggested using other technologies such as *blogroll* which allows access to the blogs in the group via RSS, or *a shared tag* which can mark the posts of the group members as relevant to a community.

As White (2006) states, "community is alive and well in the blogosphere. It is emerging in a variety of patterns and manifesting in all sizes and types of communities" (p.14). As more and more people come to realize the potentials of blogging, the purposes blogs are used for become more diverse, including the use of blogs in education. "In the hands of teachers and students, blogs become something more again" (Downes, 2004, p. 18).

2.10.3. Blogs in Education

Although blogging is a new phenomenon, there has been a growing interest in blog use within learning environments. Owing to the advantages of their easy-to-use

interface, financial feasibility, interactive and collaborative nature, blogs can provide invaluable instructional benefits for teachers and students to enhance teaching and learning process. Teachers, for example, can use blogs as communication channels among themselves and students, or resource center (Oravec, 2002). They can help their students create their blogs to record their reflections (Kajder & Bull, 2003; Stiler & Philleo, 2003), or demonstrate their finished products on their own blogs. Teachers can also incorporate blogs into their teaching to engage students in discussing course materials (Wassell & Crouch, 2008), or to expand in-class discussion (Wang & Hsua, 2008). Faculty can also employ blogs as learning spaces in a higher education context (Martindale & Wiley, 2005; Williams & Jacobs, 2004).

Since blogs provide students both with a high level of autonomy and opportunities for interaction with peers, they are considered to have the potential to be *a transformational technology* for teaching and learning (Williams & Jacobs, 2004). Many studies note the instructional benefits of blog use to enhance learning (Bartlett-Bragg, 2003; Brescia & Miller, 2006; Martindale & Wiley, 2005) mainly based on the assumption that blogs can facilitate critical thinking and knowledge construction (Kajder & Bull, 2003; Oravec, 2002). Oravec (2002) points out that "the weblog has many dimensions that make it well suited to students' unique voices" (p. 618), empowering them, and thus, encouraging them to become more critical and analytical in their thinking. The idea behind this view is that in order to respond to others in the Web, students are to carefully consider the different viewpoints and formulate and then defend their opinions. As Kennedy (2003) clearly states that "unlike most web sites, which generally combine static and dynamic features, a blog is produced with an active writer in mind, one who creates in an online writing space designed to communicate an identity, a personality, and most importantly, a point of view" (http://www.techlearning.com/db_area-/archives/TL/2003/02/blogs.php). Publishing their writings online motivates them to develop and maintain their own voice by taking into consideration the reactions of the potential audience on the Net (Mortensen & Walker, 2002).

Brescia and Miller (2006) conducted a research through which they examined the instructional advantages of blogging in college settings. Instead of analyzing

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students' reports about blogging, these researchers aimed to reach a consensus among the experts who use blogging in their courses at college level about the instructional benefits of blogging. Therefore, the researchers asked other researchers in the field to participate in the three-round survey procedure via email. The participants were all experts who published academic articles about blogging and used it as supplementary to college level student learning. Brescia and Miller asked the participants to identify up to five characteristics that make blogging an effective instructional tool. Results of the study showed that the experts participated in the study "find the greatest benefit of weblogging to be the opportunity for self-expression and perhaps the *self-reflection that accompanies considerations*" (Brescia & Miller, 2006, p. 49, italic original). "The reinforcing of course engagement and the repetition of exposure to coursework" (Brescia & Miller, 2006, p. 44) are among the most valuable benefits of blogging that the participants agreed upon.

Based on her practices in blogging, Bartlett-Bragg (2003) believed that blogging can be used as learning journals through which students can achieve progress towards self-directed and deep learning. She developed a five-stage process as a pedagogical strategy which will help educators incorporate blogs into their practices. Through these five stages, the students are introduced to the blogging process. At the first stage, *Establishment*, the students set up their blogs and are encouraged to share their emotions and thoughts about the learning events. However, according to Bartlett-Bragg (2003), they are more likely to write only for the instructor at this stage and unaware of the unlimited number of audience the blogging can provide. At the second stage, *Introspection*, a fifteen-minute discussion at the start of classroom sessions dedicated to blogging and structured questions are introduced as a guide for students to engage in introspection. Then, students begin to become more reflective about the learning events. However, they mostly reflect on and thus write about themselves. That is why Bartlett-Bragg (2003) calls this stage as *Reflective Monologue*. At the fourth stage called *Reflective Dialogue*, the students are encouraged towards a deeper reflective process, and asked to take into account their writing style, the intended audience, and the publication of their thoughts. At the last stage called *Knowledge Artifact*, they are expected to become aware of themselves as both writers and readers in the

blogosphere. They are reflecting on the knowledge learned, and reading each others' blogs while sharing their opinions via comments.

Another blog use in education deals with facilitating and developing the instruction of writing skills (Godwin-Jones, 2008; Kelly, 2008; Kennedy, 2003). Providing a free writing space, "blogs have the potential to enhance writing and literacy skills while offering a uniquely stylized form of expression" (Kennedy, 2003). Wang and Hsua (2008) argue that when students become aware of the fact that their writings may be read by unlimited number of audience on the Net, they might be more motivated to write well so that their writing quality might increase. Kelly (2008), in her dissertation, explored the impact of blogging on the instruction of academic writing among eighteen second language undergraduate students. He found out that blogging experience for these students promoted positive affective conditions, that is, higher sense of class community and self-efficacy, and lower level of writing apprehension were observed. In short, the results suggest that blogs can facilitate and enhance the instruction of academic writing.

What students write on their blogs may attract others' attention, and they invite the audience outside the classroom to read and reflect upon what they have blogged about (Godwin-Jones, 2003). When readers comment on their posts, students respond to those comments. Then, RSS feeds and aggregators help people follow the on-going discussion around the topic. Thus, the owner of the blog would have been connected to a broader audience with interests in the same topic, which may result in the emergence of an often small but a dedicated community. This interactive nature of blogs may allow educators to design collaborative activities which go beyond the physical boundaries of classrooms "reaching out into virtual and professional communities for collaborative opportunities" (Kennedy, 2003, http://www.techlearning.com/db_area/archives/TL/2003/02/blogs.php).

Herring et. al (2005) conducted content analysis methods for 203 randomly selected English-language blogs in order to identify structural and functional characteristics of the blogs in the corpus. The results of their research do not support the general claim for the expectation of "blogs as interlinked, interactive and oriented towards external events" (Herring et. al, 2005, p. 163) since most of

the blogs in their corpus are found to be "individualistic, even intimate, forms of self-expression, and a surprising number of them contain few or no links" (ibid.). However, this does not mean that, as Herring et. al (2005) suggest, the potentials of blogging can be underestimated. Their research also reveals that as an evolving internet genre, blogs can and probably will serve a wide range of purposes in the future due to its dynamic and user-friendly format which provides the bloggers with many technical possibilities.

2.10.4. Blog as a Reflective Device

Teacher education programs all over the world seek ways to promote reflection among pre-service teachers since reflective thinking which helps them identify, analyze and deal with the complex issues (Spalding & Wilson, 2002) spurs self-inquiry and professional development. Teacher educators are, therefore, "perpetually challenged to get the students to reflect on their practice in meaningful ways, to consider the effect their teaching has on student learning, and develop habits that will stay with them" (Ward & McCotter, 2004, p. 244). Several reflective approaches and techniques have been employed in teacher preparation, and traditional pen-and-paper journal type was among the most common reflective approaches used to promote reflective skills among pre-service teachers in the literature. However, blogs, one of the emerging technologies, may be a promising tool to promote reflective practice. Table 2.2 illustrates the main similarities and differences between these traditional paper diaries and blogs.

Comparing the blogs to the paper diaries, Suzuki (2004) identified three main advantages of blogs over the previous forms of diaries: firstly, the unlimited numbers of audience that a blog offers; secondly, the interactive and collaborative nature of blogs which enhances the sense of community; and lastly, immediacy feature which makes instant publishing and sharing possible. Thus, it is possible to assert that blogs offer an alternative to traditional paper-format journaling while retaining most of its positive features. Aware of the possibilities that blogs may offer, some researchers have already begun to use them to enhance reflective

practice among teachers (Ray & Coulter, 2008; Ray & Hocutt, 2006), and pre-service teachers (Stiler & Phileo, 2003; Shoffner, 2007; Shoffner, 2008; Yang, 2005).

Table 2.2 Comparison of diaries vs. blogs
(*Taken from Suzuki, 2004 http://tesl-ej.org/ej29/int.html*).

	Logs, Journals, Diaires	**Blogs**
Data Entry Modes	pen on paper, word processor, audio-recording	computer keyboard, typing online into webpages /e-mail entries
Writing Style	casual, informal, reflective	casual, informal, reflective
Archiving	entered by date, newest entry last	entered by date, newest entry first
Accessibility	Limited by edition number. Delayed time access only.	Unlimited visitor access real time/delayed time by computer
Collaborative features	personal/collaborative	personal/collaborative/ interactive (comments)
Publication	edited prior to publishing	instant publishing (editing possible)

Ray and Hocutt (2006) examined 12 teacher-created language arts blogs to determine whether randomly chosen entries demonstrated reflection on professional practice of middle school teachers. The researchers created a rubric to measure both the amount and depth of reflective practice. The same rubric was employed by another research conducted by Ray and Coulter (2008) where the researchers again examined 21 randomly selected teacher-centered blogs to determine whether they were useful in promoting reflective practice. The rubric employed by these studies consisted of a 5-point scoring system, where a rating of 4 indicated evidence of meta-reflection, ratings of 3, 2 or 1 indicated decreasing levels of reflection, and a rating of 0 showed no evidence of reflection. The entries were analyzed and scored by the researchers and the data were analyzed

quantitatively. Both studies reached similar results. The selected bloggers engaged in some level of reflective writing and the entries ranged from casual reflection to meta-reflection. According to Ray and Hocutt (2006), the fact that blogs are used for several other purposes may account for the low reflective scores reported in the study.

Stiler and Phileo (2003) conducted a research not only to investigate the use of weblogs as an online journaling tool among pre-service teachers, but also to assess the use and the efficacy of Blogger. Pre-service teachers from two different courses are asked to set individual blogs via Blogger and write reflections as reactions to the content of their courses. At the end of the semester a pre-service student-user survey was conducted and the participants were asked to evaluate their use of Blogger in terms of relative satisfaction, ease of use, suggested changes and implications for further applications. Student evaluation of Blogger revealed that they were predominantly positive towards the aforementioned elements. However, when they were asked whether they would use it in their own teaching in the future, majority of the students responded negatively, that is, either they would not or unsure. When the researchers analyzed the student entries on Blogger by comparing them to those of the prior semester, the entries were found to be more analytical, evaluative and reflective. Therefore, Stiler and Phileo (2003) suggest that the students' use of Blogger appeared to positively affect the depth and quality of their reflectivity.

Another researcher Shoffner (2008) conducted a qualitative research study examining the use of weblogs in pre-service teacher reflection. Nine pre-service teachers from a one-year masters program maintained individual weblogs as a reflective journal during eight months and participated in both individual and focus group interviews about the experience. Participants were allowed to control what they would write and how often they write. No restriction was made as to whether they read or leave comments on others' weblogs. No guideline was given related to the content or form of the postings. Designing such a framework, Shoffner aimed to provide the participants in the study with an environment where they would feel free to reflect informally upon the topics they chose. The results of the study supported the use of weblogs for enhancing reflective practice among pre-service

teachers. According to Shoffner (2008), "weblogs as reflective space offer the flexibility, personalization and informality to support pre-service teacher informal reflection" (p. 132). More importantly, Shoffner (2008) asserts that the research revealed an individual approach to reflection, which she has then termed as *informal reflection.* Based on the established views of reflection conceptualized by Dewey (1933) and Schön (1983; 1987), she argues that

> informal reflection rests on the elements of practical theory, flexible structure, communal interaction and personal expression. Working together, these elements create a reflective approach that assists in bridging the divide between university-structured and individually-initiated reflection (Shoffner, 2008, p. 124).

Another research into how blogging may promote reflective practice among pre-service teachers was conducted by Yang (2005). Yang aimed to explore how a group of English pre-service teachers made use of blogging to critically reflect on their learning processes and its impact on teachers' growth. The participants in the study were twenty-eight EFL pre-service teachers in a teacher education program at a science and technology institution in Taiwan. They met weekly to learn language teaching methodology in the first half of the semester and practice teaching in the second half of the semester. After every class meeting and practicum teaching, participants were required to go online to write a reflection on the blog. The reflections were then analyzed by using modified categories from Ho and Richards' (1993) framework. The results showed that all of the participants were reflective, but only some attained a critical level of reflection and gave comments. Many participants tried to avoid being too critical in case they hurt others' feelings. This is a particularly interesting finding given the fact that they were found to be more critical toward themselves instead of others. This phenomenon may account for the lower level of reflection and interaction.

Chan and Ridgway (2006) reached similar results with Yang's (2005) study. In this study forty-seven teacher candidates in the University of Macau were asked to write journals through blogs. Blogs were introduced as a tool for students to improve their communicative and reflective skills. Results show that blogs were

adopted as a tool to communicate with the tutor but not with the peers. The majority of the students in the study were found to respond to their friends' posts just because they were required to. "There was inconsistent evidence to claim that blogs helped communication among students". The researchers showed the Eastern cultural attributes as a possible reason for this situation since they suggested that the student might not consider the interaction with the peers as a part of their educational tradition. They concluded that the existence of a collaborative tool, in this case *blog,* did not ensure the collaboration among the students.

2.11. Initial Teacher Education in Turkey

There are 15,351,849 students receiving education in 66,097 schools in Turkey, and the number of teachers is 679,373 (MNE, 2009). This increasingly growing number of students calls for a need to train well-qualified teachers. Faculties of education have been responsible for the initial teacher education in Turkey since the 1981 higher education reform (Çakıroğlu & Çakıroğlu, 2003). Until 1998 these faculties did not follow a standardized curriculum for teacher education programs. The fact that there were inconsistencies among the teacher education programs in different universities and that some drawbacks occurred due to the lack of practice within the programs brought about new searches regarding initial teacher education in Turkey (Ağaoğlu & Şimşek, 2006). Between 1994 and 1997 the Higher Education Council, World Bank and the Ministry of National Education cooperated in the restructuring of faculties of education, and one of the most important achievements of this cooperation was the Faculty- School Collaboration Model (Azar, 2003) aiming at making pre-service teachers "effectively, reliably and productively apply the field knowledge and occupational knowledge they acquired and share their duties and responsibilities for their own development" (Ağaoğlu & Şimşek, 2006, p. 175). In this regard, reflective practice has been gradually attached more and more importance in teacher education programs. There is a growing body of research on pre-service teacher education which deals with the current practices, the problems and expectations regarding pre-service teachers' practicum experiences.

Azar (2003), for example, conducted a case study in which he investigated the teacher educators', mentor teachers' and pre-service teachers' perceptions about the effectiveness of School Experience I, School Experience II and Practicum courses. 12 teacher educators, 42 mentor teachers and 46 pre-service teachers participated in the study. The results revealed that these three groups of participants agreed on the usefulness of the courses in question. However, it was also suggested that more effective coordination among all of the parties should be established in order to accomplish the objectives of these courses.

Similar results have been articulated by some other recent studies (Gürbüz, 2006; Kiraz, 2002; Üstünel, 2008). Ekiz (2006) pointed out, the pre-service teachers experienced many practical difficulties most of which were related to "the classroom discipline, time management, and the practical culture of teaching" (p. 45). Additionally, Kiraz (2002) argued that the pre-service teachers in his study had some difficulty communicating with the mentor teachers in the schools they were assigned to. The study revealed that the mentor teachers were not able to contribute to the professional development of pre-service teachers as they were expected to do so. Kiraz concluded that a more functional modern guidance approach was needed in teacher education programs.

Gürbüz (2006) investigated teacher educators', mentor teachers' and pre-service teachers' own perceptions of pre-service English language teachers' strong and weak areas with regard to teaching English during practicum, and attempted to reveal how the views of these three parties might differ. 6 university-based supervisors, 30 pre-service teachers and 14 mentor teachers participated in the study. In the open-ended questionnaires, all of the three groups of participants were asked to list the weak and strong areas of pre-service English language teachers during their practicum. Having analyzed the data, Gürbüz (2006) pointed out that all the three parties seemed to share similar perceptions with regard to the strengths of pre-service English language teachers. They were perceived to be good at material preparation, establishing good rapport with students, and motivation. However, these groups differed in their perceptions with regard to the weaknesses. The most frequently cited weakness both by supervisors and mentor teachers was pre-service teachers' poor language skills. Strikingly enough this was not among

the weaknesses uttered by the pre-service teachers. They were concerned more about dealing with problem students, and being unable to take immediate decisions. However, they seemed to be unaware of their language-related weaknesses. The results of this study might have implications for the feedback sessions in teacher education programs. Furthermore, Gürbüz (2006) pointed out that "teacher educators might be encouraged to question the effectiveness of feedback sessions … and to improve them to provide teacher trainees with a more realistic picture of what they can and cannot do well" (p. 46). More importantly, her study indicates that "it can be worthwhile to give a chance to all parties involved in such programmes to reflect on and compare their perceptions" (Gürbüz, 2006, p. 46).

Üstünel (2008), in her study, investigated how far pre-service English language teachers' views on classroom management and motivating especially young learners in a positive teaching environment were reflected in their classroom practices. The reflective model was used in the study. Qualitative data was collected from 65 pre-service English language teachers and 10 mentor teachers over one and a half academic year. The results revealed that the pre-service English language teachers who had more teaching experience were found to be more successful in reflecting their views in classroom practice. Üstünel (2008) suggested that "the reflective model should be valued in teacher training as it enables the successful practice of three-way teacher-centered collaboration among teacher trainees, mentors at the placement schools, and teacher trainers at the university" (p. 339).

Ekiz and Yiğit (2006) also investigated which teacher education model was supported by the student teachers from different teacher education programs in Turkey. 352 pre-service teachers from the programs of Primary Teacher Education, Social Science Teacher Education, Science Teacher Education, and Mathematics Teacher Education responded to the 36-item survey developed by the researchers. Among the three widely used teacher education models, competence-based, applied science, and reflective, reflective teacher education model was favored by the participants from different programs. According to Ekiz and Yiğit (2006), descriptive qualiative studies might be conducted in order to explore the reasons

underlying the student-teachers' preference for reflectice model. In fact, there is a growing body of research into the reflective practice in initial teacher education in Turkey.

Şanal-Erginel (2006), in her doctorate dissertation entitled *Developing Reflective Teachers: A Study On Perception And Improvement Of Reflection In Pre-Service Teacher Education,* examined pre-service teachers' improvement in reflection by focusing on several methods to promote reflectivity. 30 pre-service EFL teachers at Eastern Mediterranean University in North Cyprus participated in the study. Data was gathered out of weekly guided journal entries, tape-recorded reflective interactions and interviews, assignments on videotaped microteaching, questionnaires and observations. This case study revealed that collaboration was perceived to have an important role in promoting reflection, and that the reflective process the pre-service teachers had undergone enhanced their self-awareness towards their teaching. Furthermore, it was found that the participants needed guidance through this reflective process. They focused primarily on the instructional processes, motivation, and on classroom management while reflecting on their experiences. This case study indicated significant implications regarding the use of journals as support to reflective process. Although some pre-service teachers expressed some reservations about the reflective method employed, journals were found to promote reflectivity throughout the process.

Köksal and Demirel (2008) examined the effects of the development of the pre-service teachers' reflective thinking skills in their Practicum experiences. 12 pre-service classroom teachers at Hacettepe University participated in the case study they conducted. These participants were divided into two groups, one of which was exposed to the reflective thinking program while the other to the traditionally employed routine program. Data collection procedure consisted of participants' journals, lesson plans, video recordings of the lessons, self-evaluation forms, interviews and observation notes. Having analyzed the groups, Köksal and Demirel (2008) found that reflective thinking training provided positive contribution to the pre-service teachers' planning, implementation and the evaluation process of teaching.

A handful of researchers have attempted to make use of recent advances in instructional technology in pre-service teacher education. Asan (2003), for example, conducted a research study in which he investigated the effectiveness of an interactive and self-paced multimedia tutorial program on pre-service teachers' learning experiences. 45 pre-service teachers at Karadeniz Technical University enrolled in a School Experience course participated in the study. Two methods of information delivery, traditional lecturing and multimedia, were employed in the study. According to the research design, both methods were implemented to activate the principles of situated learning such as supporting, coaching, clarifying and scaffolding the development of learning. The reflective written reports submitted weekly by both of the groups throughout the one-semester long study were analyzed by using a checklist including the following criteria: depth of understanding, accuracy, rich supporting detail, organization, scope, and reflection. The results of the study revealed that participants who were exposed to the multimedia treatment were found to develop deeper understanding related to the real-life school environment which resulted in better learning. According to Asan (2003), the results suggested that "using multimedia in teacher education enriches pre-service teachers' learning and provides them with an opportunity to view and critique various teaching methods and classroom activities collectively" (p.21)

Baran (2007), in her dissertation research, investigated the dynamics of two online communities of practice (oCoP) in pre-service teacher education. Twenty-eight pre-service teachers from three different universities in Turkey participated in an online course as a part of an undergraduate course. At the beginning of the research, she developed a portal called *Professional Development Circle (PDC)*. Using this portal, the participants discussed different video cases recorded in real classroom environments, and designed new lesson plans for the lessons they watched during the semester. In the following stage, these pre-service teachers kept discussing issues related to mathematics teaching with others including pre-service teachers, academicians and teachers in a different online environment. Written reflection reports, observations and interviews were the data collection methods employed in the study. This case study revealed significant implications regarding the use of oCoP environments in pre-service teacher education. According to Baran (2007), these online environments might be used in teacher education for several

purposes such as teaching how to apply some aspects of learning theories to real educational settings, creating a novel discussion environment where pre-service teachers can reach different viewpoints and ideas, or making them test their ideas and beliefs related to teaching and learning issues through this collaborative and interactive environment (pp. 221-222). Baran (2007) also examined the motivators and barriers to be active in oCoP environments. The motivators she identified in her research were getting more responsibility, self confidence, sociable personality, altruism, sincerity in the environment, and quality of materials. On the other hand, the factors such as lack of time, seeing discussions a form of fight, being afraid of misdirecting others, the idea of max benefit minimum effort resulted in less participation, Internet access and computer availability were described as the barriers that prevented pre-service teachers to be active in such online environments.

Koçoğlu, Akyel and Erçetin (2008) investigated the effects of portfolio development on the progress of five Turkish EFL pre-service teachers' reflective thinking capacity. The participants developed pen/paper portfolios during the first semester, and electronic portfolios during the second semester of their senior year. The results of this case study revealed that these five pre-service EFL teachers generally favored pen/paper portfolios over electronic ones. Although the participants stated that pen/paper portfolio development took much more time, they approached positively to this kind of portfolio development mainly because of the support and collaboration they received from their peers throughout the process, and because of its contribution to their professional development in terms of reflective thinking and self-confidence. On the other hand, the process of preparing an electronic portfolio did not enhance reflective thinking since the participants were found to be more worried about the technical issues and the layout of their portfolios rather than the content of their reflections. Therefore, the level of reflection on electronic portfolios was found to be mostly descriptive. This kind of experience, on the other hand, increased pre-service teachers' technological knowledge. Koçoğlu, Akyel and Erçetin (2008) stated that portfolios – whether paper-based or electronic - might be used as an effective tool to enhance critical reflection in pre-service teacher education. Furthermore, they pointed out that:

The limited success of electronic portfolios in promoting critical reflection can be overcome, particularly if portfolios are part and parcel of continuing professional development, not just a one-off project in teacher training (Koçoğlu, Akyel & Erçetin, 2008, p. 17).

Kuzu (2007) investigated pre-service teachers' views on blog use for supporting instruction and sustaining social interaction among the classmates. He created a class blog for *the Information Technology in Education-I* course, and invited the pre-service teachers to contribute to this blog during one-semester long study. 30 pre-service teachers enrolled in the Department of Computer Education and Instructional Technologies at Anadolu University participated in the study. Although the participants were all unfamiliar with blogging at the beginning of the study, it was found that 18 pre-service teachers created their own blogs at the end of the semester. Descriptive analysis of the semi-structured interviews conducted with each participant revealed that most of the pre-service teachers found blogs useful for supporting instruction. The participants appreciated the opportunities that the course blog provided to them such as accessing the subjects online, having a chance to consolidate what they have learnt in class, or sharing course materials with their peers online. With regard to the blog use for social interaction, most of the participants stated that such an experience empowered their social interaction, and that they met their classmates they had not known before. Furthermore, the pre-service teachers mentioned that the class blog contributed to their interaction with the course instructor since they were able to communicate with him online, exchange ideas and seek help from the instructor outside the class. Discussing the positive outcomes of his research study, Kuzu (2007) suggested that teacher educators might utilize blogs to support instruction and social interaction in pre-service teacher education. Furthermore, he pointed out that much more importance should be given to technology supported applications in teacher education programs since there were still deficiencies in terms of both pedagogic and technological infrastructure in Turkey.

Looking at the afore-mentioned studies conducted in Turkey, it is possible to assert that recent research has focused on the current practices not only to determine the

issues, but also to investigate how to improve educational practices and reflective practice in teacher education. Some Internet technologies such as electronic portfolios or multimedia tutorial programs have begun to be used in enhancing pre-service teachers' reflectivity. However, there is a lack of research in the Turkish context in this area, and it is hoped that this study can provide implications with regard to the blog use as support to reflective practice in pre-service teacher education.

2.12 Summary

This chapter has presented a review of literature which informs this research study. It has been demonstrated how reflective practice is essential to teacher change and development. It has also been outlined in the chapter that numerous strategies have been employed to make the prospective teachers reflective, but all are not necessarily appropriate for facilitating reflection, and that there is little research evidence to show whether they are effective or not. Thus, it has always been a challenge for teacher educators to provide the pre-service teachers with opportunities that develop a habit of reflection that will accompany them through their profession.

Considering the advances in ICT, new opportunities have been created in terms of learning, teaching and assessment. The integration of educational technology in teacher education programs can support the teaching of reflective capacity. Blogs, as an emerging online journaling, may offer a space that supports reflection and communal communication. Taking the requirements of reflective thinking into consideration, it has been demonstrated in the chapter how the use of this Web 2.0 tool might be well suited to the aims of teaching reflective capacity to pre-service teachers. As the related literature has shown, blogs may provide a non-threatening but moderately challenging environment for personal reflection and communal interaction where the pre-service teachers can create their own meaning, find their own professional voice while hearing the others'.

Despite the potential benefits of blogging, research to date does not yield satisfying results. Therefore, more research is needed to grasp a clear understanding into how such technologies can be successfully incorporated in teaching and learning process. In this regard, this study aims to contribute to the literature by exploring the blogging experience of 12 pre-service English language teachers enrolled in a teacher education program in Turkey. The next chapter describes in detail a methodology based on these considerations.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3. 0. Presentation

This chapter presents a detailed description of the qualitative methodology employed in this study. Selected research methodology, research design, data collection methods, process of data analysis, researcher's role and trustworthiness of the study will be presented.

3.1. Selected Research Methodology: Qualitative Research

As compared to other ways of knowing and searching, qualitative research methodology yields a more holistic understanding of the phenomenon being investigated. Several disciplines, fields and concepts including "the traditions associated with foundationalism, positivism, postfoundationalism, postpositivism, poststructuralism, and the many qualitative research perspectives, and/or methods connected to cultural and interpretive studies" (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005, p. 2) have been contributed to development of the qualitative research methodology.

Due to a shift in paradigms, qualitative research methodologies have gained wider adoption in social sciences (Guba & Lincoln, 2005; Yıldırım & Şimşek, 1999). While quantitative research seeks to reveal explanatory and universal laws for the assumingly *static* reality, qualitative research allows for an in-depth description of the reality which is assumed to be *dynamic* and *complex* in nature. Guba and Lincoln (2005) describe this paradigm shift as to the perception of reality as follows:

The assumption that there is no single "truth" … leads us ineluctably toward the insight that there will be no single "conventional" paradigm to which all social scientists might ascribe in some common terms and with mutual understanding. Rather, we stand at the threshold of a history marked by multivocality, contested meanings, paradigmatic controversies, and new textual forms. At some distance down this conjectural path, when its history is written, we will find that this has been the era of emancipation: emancipation from what Hannah Arendt calls "the coerciveness of Truth", emancipation from hearing only the voices of Western Europe, emancipation from generations of silence, and emancipation from seeing the world in one color. (p. 212)

The increasing emphasis on multivocality and dynamic reality in nature (Guba & Lincoln, 2005) has led many researchers to employ qualitative research designs. Educational research does not constitute an exception. New technologies are continually being developed in education, and the complex and dynamic nature of learning and teaching processes peculiar to these emerging environments calls for qualitative research methodologies (Savenye & Robinson, 2004).

Since blogs are used in this study to promote pre-service English language teachers' reflective thinking, it is essential to investigate their beliefs, knowledge and feelings in order to fully grasp their perspectives and viewpoints. Therefore, the nature and purpose of this study necessitate an in-depth description and analysis of pre-service teachers' blogging experiences. When a new technology – such as blogs – is integrated into the teacher education programs, a close investigation of what is really going on can yield new insights into the adoption of such technologies. Therefore, qualitative research methodology is employed in this study.

There are five approaches to qualitative research – narrative research, phenomenology, grounded theory, ethnography, and case study (Creswell, 2007). Since this research study is a case study, the following section will present information about case study research.

3.1.1. Case Study Research

Yin (2003) defines a case study as "an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident" (p.13). For Creswell (2007), a case study is "an issue explored through one or more cases within a bounded system like a setting or a context" (p. 73). As the aforementioned definitions suggest, "a case study is both a process of inquiry about the case and the product of that inquiring" (Stake, 2005, p. 444). Then, what is a case? Cases can be individuals, groups, programs, critical incidents or, in other words, anything that can be identified as a "specific, unique, bounded system" (Stake, 2005, p. 445). Merriam (1998) states that "if a phenomenon you are interested in studying is not intrinsically bounded, it is not a case" (p. 27). Therefore, the investigator in case study research, "explores a bounded system (a case), or multiple bounded systems (cases) over time, through detailed, in-depth data collection involving multiple sources of information… and reports a case description and case-based themes" (Creswell, 2007, p. 73).

This study is a case study. First of all, the case in the study is a specific, unique and bound system. In this study the researcher identifies her case as the development of pre-service English language teachers' reflective thinking through blogs. The case in the present study is bounded by time and space since there is a limit not only to the number of people involved in the study, but also to the duration of data collection period. The context is the undergraduate teacher education program of English language teaching in the Department of Foreign Language Teaching at Middle East Technical University (METU). 12 pre-service English language teachers attending the practicum course in this program participate in the study, and the data is collected during one-semester time-span. Furthermore, as the case study research necessitates, multiple sources of information - such as observations, interviews, or blog posts are employed in the study.

3.2. Research Site & Participants

3.2.1. Institution

The study was conducted in METU, one of Turkey's most competitive universities. Each year students with higher scores at the National University Entrance Examination are admitted to METU. The medium of instruction at METU is English. The Department of Foreign Language Education at METU offers a B.A. program in English Language Teaching. Students take courses in five different disciplines, namely, the English language, English literature, methodology, educational sciences and linguistics. The graduates are expected to work as qualified teachers of English especially in secondary schools.

3.2.2. Course

The specific course chosen for this study is a practicum course entitled *Practice Teaching*. The pre-service English language teachers take this course in the last semester of their undergraduate education. Prior to this course, they take pedagogical and English Language Teaching methodology courses including *School Experience* which allows the pre-service teachers to conduct field visits mainly for observation for ten weeks. The course upon which this study focuses involves guided classroom observations in either private or public secondary and high schools. The course is traditionally composed of two stages: supervised field experiences, such as school observations and microteachings, and on-campus seminars. The pre-service teachers taking this course are both required to conduct field visits in pre-assigned schools and to attend on-campus seminars. In the school observations they are expected to follow and fill in structured observation tasks given in the course pack which is prepared by the course instructor, and write a report for each of these observations. The pre-service teachers are also required to do a microteaching in the assigned school classrooms they observe. Furthermore, for weekly discussion in the seminars the course instructor identifies different themes in order to engage them in instructional issues such as classroom management, classroom interaction and integrating skills. Thus, the course mainly

aims to develop pre-service teachers' professional knowledge and practice in language teaching by providing them with opportunities to challenge their views and thoughts, and evaluate the nature and processes of foreign language teaching through direct and indirect experiences. Therefore, the nature of this course is likely to be well-suited to the purpose of the current study focusing on the development of the reflective skills through blogging.

3.2.3. Participants

A section of the Practice Teaching (FLE 404) course in the Department of Foreign Language Education at METU in Ankara/Turkey was selected as the sample for this study for its convenience and size, as well as for the benefits blogging might offer to these students. 12 pre-service teachers (9 females and 3 males) participated in the study which was conducted during the 2007-2008 spring term. Thus, the study had a 12-week time span. At the beginning of the study, all 12 students agreed to participate in the study. Other participants included commentators to the blogs, the instructor of the course and the researcher, all of whom were defined as the "anonymous contributors" in the study.

3.3. The Design of the Study

3.3.1. Participants' Blogs

Prior to the study the researcher examined the relevant literature and discussed with the instructor of the course to determine what role the blogs would best serve the pre-service teachers. It was decided that the blogging activity would not be a compulsory component of the course meaning that the participants would not be graded either for their participation or for their end-products, that is, their reflective blog postings. One of the reasons behind this decision was the instructor's unwillingness to assign the pre-service teachers to using the blogs, and thereby overburden them with additional work. More importantly, this research design

would best suit to the purpose and nature of the study. Furthermore, there are studies in the literature (Shoffner 2006; Shoffner, 2008; Yurkiw 2006) which support this design for blog research. If the pre-service teachers had been graded for their blogging, they might have written to please the instructor. Since blogs offered the participants a flexible and practical environment where they could informally share their ideas and thoughts, it might be better to make them responsible for their own participation. This allowed the pre-service teachers to have the ownership of their blogs, and the responsibility to initiate the activity and discussion on their blogs.

Which blog-hosting service would be used in the study was another point determined prior to the study. Among several blog-hosting services available on the Internet, Blogger was chosen because it was popular, free and very user-friendly that any of the participants in the study could easily manage to use. Another reason to choose Blogger was that the participants might be interested in using for their own future teaching when they became used to such a popular blogging tool in the study. The use and efficacy of Blogger were also supported by Stiler and Phileo's (2003) research where they investigated the use of blogs as an online journaling tool among pre-service teachers. Participants in the study evaluated their use of Blogger in terms of relative satisfaction, ease of use, suggested changes and implications for further applications. The results revealed that they were predominantly positive towards the use of Blogger. At the end of the study, Stiler and Phileo (2003) suggested that the students' use of Blogger appeared to positively affect the depth and quality of their reflectivity.

It was also decided that the owner of the blog was to be the sole author of that particular blog, that is, participants could publish posts only on their own blogs and they would not let others to initiate posts in their blogs. Additionally, these individual blogs were planned to be open to public on the Internet. Any reader could leave comments on any of the blog posts in the study. This publicly available nature of blogging might be supported due to several reasons. First of all, participants could share their reflections with the rest of the world. This allowed them to reach the professional community all over the world, and thus have a professional voice. Furthermore, the fact that anyone can read any of the postings

and comments the participants publish on their blogs may lead them to focus on the issues that might attract others' attention on the Internet and initiate discussions that people are willing to participate, which possibly enhances the quality and the quantity of their writing.

At the beginning of the semester, the researcher arranged a meeting with 12 pre-service English language teachers. At this initial meeting, blogs were introduced as a potential medium for reflection. The researcher provided the participants with a brief overview of her research interest on the use of blogs for reflection, and outlined the purpose and the requirements of the current study. At that meeting the pre-service teachers were informed that those who voluntarily participated in the study were required to maintain an individual weblog as a reflective journal till the end of the semester, and to participate in both pre- and post-study interviews about their blogging experience. All 12 pre-service English language teachers agreed o participate in the study.

Reviewing the relevant literature, it is possible to assert that reflective journal writing has been one of the most widely employed reflective approaches in teacher education (Bain, Ballantyne, Packer, & Mills, 1999; Francis, 1995; Spalding & Wilson, 2002; Yost, Sentner, & Forlenza-Bailey, 2000). Students are generally required to respond to a set of guided questions or write their reflections on assigned topics in their journals. However, pre-determined structures may censor alternative ways of approaching reflection either because pre-service teachers may view journal writing only as responding to the assigned questions (Srimavin & Darasawang, 2004) or because pre-determined assigned topics or guided questions may seem to advocate teaching of "only one right way to reflect, usually a particular format determined by particular hierarchies and evaluated against particular levels" (Shoffner, 2008, p. 2410). Therefore pre-service teachers were neither assigned topics for reflection nor provided with a set of guided questions to answer. This type of design was chosen to provide them with a flexible environment where they could analyze and deal with complex issues that might arise in their classroom observations while questioning their established conceptions. Although they had control over what and how they would write, they were required to focus on issues of English language teaching and learning, which

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might be drawn from their classroom observations, class discussions or personal experiences. Furthermore, the pre-service English language teachers were encouraged to publish a post on their own blogs at least once a week and leaving comments to their classmates' blogs twice a week throughout the study.

Following that initial meeting, a second meeting was held between the participants and the researcher. However, due to the technical unavailability, the meetings had to be held in the researcher's office. Therefore, the participants were divided into four groups, and each meeting lasted about thirty minutes. At these meetings, the researcher demonstrated the groups how to set up an account at Blogger, and gave a brief description about publishing a post or a comment, or subscribing to the posts or blogs via RSS, and answered their technical questions. Since creating a blog was almost as simple as getting an email account, they seemed very confident about setting their own blogs. The pre-service teachers were also informed of the issues of privacy and disclosure of personal details on the Internet. The pre-service teachers easily set up their blogs and emailed URLs of their blogs to the researcher.

Since all the participants in this study blogged about their practicum experience, they shared a common topic and this common passion or topic led to the formation of what White (2006) called *a topic centric community*. In this type of blog communities "both power and identity is distributed across the community….the rich network of perspectives allows the readers many views on an issue" (White, 2006, p. 4). Furthermore, this study employed some other technologies White (2006) considered as supportive to the formation of topic centric communities. First of all, all the participants in this study linked to other participants' blogs via *blogroll*. The blogroll used in their blogs allowed for access not only to the blogs themselves, but also to the updated content via RSS. Furthermore, the participants in this study attached a shared tag, *begin2blog*, to all of their blog posts, which could mark their posts as relevant to a community (White, 2006). Additionally, a yahoo email list among the participants was maintained as adjunct to keep information organized or communicate informally.

3.3.2. Class Blog

The researcher set up a class blog named *Reflective Practicum* where pre-service teachers' blogs were displayed as links (Figure 3.1). This blog acted as the central blog for online communication. Facilitative activities were posted on this blog and participants in the study were invited to post entries on their own blogs or to publish comments on the class blog. Furthermore, this blog was used for other purposes such as informing pre-service English language teachers of the relevant conference events, useful resources and recent news in education.
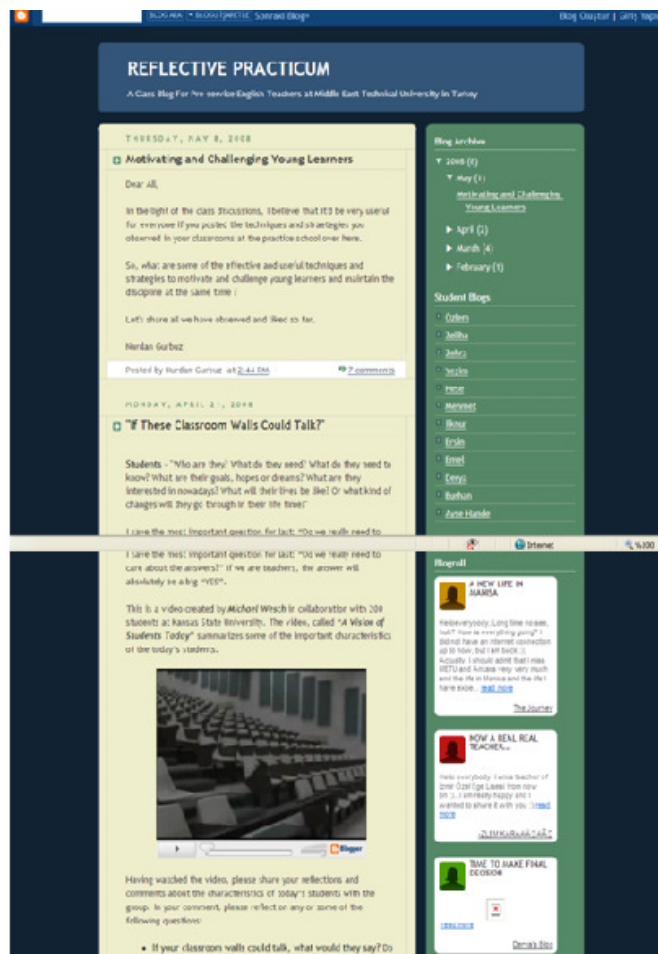
Figure 3.1 A screenshot of class blog

3.3.3. Facilitative Activities

In order to familiarize the pre-service teachers with blogging and initiate discussion and participation on the blogs, facilitative activities were planned. At the beginning of the study, pre-service teachers were asked to post entries which included five things about themselves that their friends did not know. The interviews and the number of the comments left to each post showed that this activity initiated a substantial amount of discussion and interaction among the participants. They became used to blogging, and began to personalize their blogs by using different templates and adding several widgets to their blogs.

Towards the middle of the study, another facilitative activity was posted on the blog. A video entitled *If These Classroom Walls Could Talk* (http://www.youtube-.com/watch?v=dGCJ46vyR9o) was attached to the blog post. The video created by Michael Wesch in collaboration with 200 students at Kansas State University summarizes some of the important characteristics of today's students. Having watched the video, pre-service English language teachers were invited to share their reflections about the issues arising out of the data. Towards the end of the study, the researcher was planning to incorporate another facilitative activity to initiate discussion. However, the instructor of the course published a post inviting the participants to discuss how to motivate young learners. Since this spontaneous activity best suited to the researcher's intent to initiate and facilitate discussion, this blog post was regarded as the last structured facilitative activity in the study.

In addition to these activities, pre-service teachers were encouraged to blog not only about the issues of teaching and learning, but also about their social and private lives. In this way they could inform their friends and other bloggers of the social events or conference notices, or share, for instance, their travel photos. However, they were informed that these blogs were mainly created to have a professional tone.

3.4. Data Collection Procedures

Qualitative research methods were employed in this study in order to obtain rich and detailed data embedded in context. Numerous data sources such as archival records of pre-service teachers' reflective blog posts and comments; pre- and post-study interviews with pre-service teachers and field notes taken during the study were used to collect and triangulate the data.

3.4.1. Blogs

The participants created their individual blogs at the second week of the semester and maintained their blogs over the duration of 2007-2008 Spring Semester. Anonymous contributors contributed to the blogs during the study. All the online content of the participants' blogs and the class blog was archived and coded in coherent with the analysis procedure at the end of the study.

3.4.2. The Interviews

The interviews were administered at the beginning (Appendix A1 & A2) and at the end of the study (Appendix B1 & B2) with each participant in the study. Pre-study interviews were conducted in order to have general information about their use of Internet, their familiarity with such technologies and their views on integrating technology in language teaching and learning. Post-study interview protocol was administered in order to learn about their blogging experience, the challenges and complaints with using blogs and their views about integrating such technologies in their future teaching.

For the validity of the pre-study interview questions, the instructor piloted the interview questions with three pre-service teachers from different sections who shared similar characteristics with the participants in the study. Using the feedback obtained from the pilot interview group, the researcher revised the questions before

interviewing the participants. However, this kind of pilot study could not be conducted for the post-study interview questions since these questions were about the blogging experience. Instead, the researcher took expert opinions from a teacher educator and a research assistant in the department for the validity of the post-study interview questions. All the interviews were audio-taped and coded according to the data analysis procedure.

The interviews conducted in this study were consistent with the views articulated by Kvale (1996). According to Kvale (1996), "the qualitative research interview is a construction site for knowledge…an inter-view, an inter-change of views between two persons conversing about a theme of mutual interest" (p. 14). Since the overall purpose in interviewing is to reveal "descriptions of the lived world of the interviewees with respect to interpretations of the meaning of the described phenomena" (Kvale, 1996, p. 30), it is important that the qualitative research interview be "neither strictly structured with standardized questions, nor entirely non-directive" (p.31). In order to allow for the exploration of emergent and novel themes and ideas rather than rely on "ready-made categories and schemes of interpretation" (ibid.), semi-structured interviews were conducted in this study. The researcher had prepared a set of questions to ask all respondents in a similar order. However, the interviewing was flexible enough to let the interviewer formulate impromptu questions during the interview where she found necessary so that the interviewees could be encouraged to share their views and experiences, and novel and unexpected phenomena could be obtained.

3.4.3. Observation / Field Notes

Conducting in-depth interviews with the participants might yield insights into their ideas, opinions and their experiences. However, observing the whole experience while they take place can provide not only a more accurate indication of those activities but also an opportunity for the researcher to explore new and unexpected phenomena about the particular case. In this regard, the instructor kept an observation log during the semester. She took notes and reflections about how the

participants experienced this blogging phenomenon and what problems or challenges occurred while using their blogs. The researcher observed the activities not only in the participants' blogs, but also in the yahoo email group that she created in the study. Observing the email exchanges among the participants provided information about what challenges they experienced when they blogged. It was planned that the logs the researcher kept would be used when the data was analyzed and interpreted.

3.5. Data Analysis

In qualitative research tradition it is believed that everything the qualitative researchers study is context-bound. In order to ensure transferability of the results, the researchers should present as much detailed context-relevant information as possible so that "others can see the setting for themselves" (Gay, Mills & Airasian, 2009, p. 375). Therefore, the general characteristics of participants as well as their blogs are described by using the information gathered out of the pre- and post-study interviews conducted with each participant and field notes taken throughout the study. .

There are different categories of qualitative data analysis that are ethnographic analysis, narrative analysis, phenomenological analysis, the constant comparative method, content analysis, and analytic induction (Merriam, 1998). In this study, content analysis was employed to analyze the archival records of blog postings. To this end, all the blog postings the participants initiated during the duration of the semester were coded by using a priori framework. Consulting existing studies in the literature investigating a similar phenomenon with the relevant study has been supported in the literature (Constas, 1992). In a study with ten teachers enrolled in an in-service TESOL teacher education in Hong Kong, Ho and Richards (1993) provide a five-level-classification to evaluate the content of the reflective journals. The framework they provided was also used by some studies in the literature as a basis for data analysis (Farrell, 1999; Liou, 2001; Yang, 2005). Despite their different reflective approaches, these studies investigated the same phenomenon,

that is, the levels of reflectivity among either teachers or pre-service student teachers. Sharing the same research interest through a different research design, the current study utilized a modified version of Ho and Richards' (1993) categories as a priori framework for data analysis (Appendix C) in order to be able to determine the recurring patterns occurred in pre-service English language teachers' blog postings.

All the blog postings were coded according to these six general categories. Categories 1 through 4 refer to the general issues relating to teaching and learning: (1) theories of teaching; (2) approaches and methods used in foreign language teaching and learning; (3) evaluating teaching; (4) pre-service teachers' self awareness of their strengths and weaknesses. Category 5 refers to the questions developed by the participants in their blog postings. This category is divided into two sub-categories: (1) questions about the reasons; (2) asking for advice and suggestions. The interactive and dynamic nature of blogs as well as the fact that bloggers can reach a devoted and interested community of audience may have stimulated the participants to discuss topics other than issues related to teaching and learning in general. While two investigators were coding the data, they realized that it was necessary to include new codes which could correspond to the topics that arose out of the interactive nature of blogs. Having discussed the codes they devised, the investigators reached a consensus. The newly devised codes were gathered under the Category 6 and added to the categories identified by Ho and Richards (1993). This new category was mainly about the disclosure of personal interests and divided into three sub-categories: (1) sharing personal information; (2) informal support; (3) career plans. However, Category 6 was not taken into account to measure the level of reflectivity among pre-service English language teachers.

Examining the literature dealing with the characteristics of critical reflection, Ho and Richards (1993) reorganized the categories and distinguished them as descriptive or critical. The distribution of the categories illustrating either descriptive or critical reflection was presented in the Appendix D. These revised categories were used to answer the second and third research questions of this

study which dealt with the level of reflectivity. Having identified the recurring patterns in the participants' blog postings, the level of reflectivity was determined.

In order to answer the fourth research question which investigated the development of reflectivity over time, this study utilized a modified version of seven traits of critical reflectivity articulated by Ho and Richards (1993). Ho and Richards (1993) developed these seven traits in accordance with the initial five general categories: (1) Theories of teaching; (2) Approaches and Methods; (3) Evaluating Teaching; (4) Self-awareness; and (5) Questions about Teaching.

The traits of critical reflection proposed by Ho and Richards (1993) were modified by examining the general patterns of each participant's blog postings. These traits are: (1) engaging in a greater variety of types of reflectivity over time; (2) being more able to discuss their personal theories of teaching; (3) being more able to reflect through experiences of teaching; (4) being able to go beyond the classroom to the broader context; (5) being more able to evaluate both positively and negatively; (6) being more able to discuss problems and come up with their own solutions; and (7) being more able to ask more questions about teaching. The early and later blog postings of the participants were then compared in order to understand whether there was any development of the above seven traits.

3.5.1. The Coding Procedure

The researcher first read all the texts and coded the data by using a modified version of Ho and Richards' (1993) framework. As for the parts of data that necessitated new codes, the researcher categorized the sets of those parts of the data and grouped them into similar dimensions, and named them. Then the researcher established common themes or patterns among these particular sets of data, and use direct interpretation. A second rater followed a similar approach with coding the data by using the same categories and adding new codes to the ones described in the framework. The second rater did not analyze the whole data. Rather, he analyzed and coded 20% of each participant's randomly selected blog postings. The analyses conducted by two raters were compared. It was observed

that almost 90% of the codes assigned by two coders matched. The coders discussed the parts of the data they had coded differently, and reached a consensus about them.

3.6. The Researcher's Role

The researcher arranged facilitative activities to encourage participation and interaction among pre-service teachers. Since the class blog where the facilitative activities were conducted had been actively used in the study, as the owner of this blog, the researcher was expected to participate in the ongoing discussion and the interaction among participants. Considering that these blogs were all public meaning that anyone with an Internet connection could read blog postings and leave comments to them, and also considering that the participants were not going to be graded according to their contribution to this study, it was believed that the researcher's active role might not harm the validity of any findings within the study. The researcher did not contribute to the blogs in a predetermined order. Rather, she left comments to the postings that took her attention as any other anonymous contributors on the Web did since she did not want the participants to find her contribution artificial. Nonetheless, the researcher contributed to the interaction and discussion on the blogs as a typical blog reader.

In addition to the blogs, the researcher also communicated with the pre-service English language teachers via yahoo group emails. Her participation on this part tended to give technical support about blogging by assisting them in personalizing their blogs or adding some widgets to their blogs, or help those with technical problems. This kind of participation did not harm the validity of the findings as well. Since this study is a qualitative study, it is impossible for the researcher to alienate herself from the study. On the contrary, this kind of observation provided the researcher with opportunities to have insights into how these pre-service teachers experienced this blogging phenomenon.

With all this in mind, the researcher is also aware that "researcher bias tends to result from selective observation and selective recording of information, and also

from allowing one's personal views and perspectives to affect how data are interpreted and how the research is conducted." (Johnson, 1997, p. 284). Thus, it is anticipated that the researcher's own perspectives, personal views and background might have an effect in how she formulates the design of the study or present the findings in a particular way. In order to prevent any potential bias and ensure trustworthiness of the study several strategies were employed.

3.7. Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness refers to the validity of the qualitative research. Four main characteristics help researchers establish trustworthiness of their research: the credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability (Guba, 1981). The following strategies which were adapted from Guba's (1981) classical discussion related to the criteria for validity of qualitative research were used in order to ensure the trustworthiness of this qualitative study:

➢ **The researcher's prolonged participation:**

The researcher's role in this study was described in the method section. She prolonged her participation in the study in order to overcome distortions generated by her presence, and it was thought that such participation might provide the researcher with an opportunity to test her biases and perception.

➢ **Persistent observation**:

In order to have a more comprehensive understanding of the case, the researcher observed the whole process.

➢ **Reflexivity:**

In addition to the advantages that observing might yield to the study in terms of identifying characteristics of the case, it also helps the researcher reveal her own underlying assumptions and biases that may lead her to formulate and present findings in a particular way. Therefore, in order to ensure

reflexivity, the researcher kept an observation log throughout the study in which she recorded her reflections on a regular basis.

➢ **Presentation of data collection and analysis procedures:**

Various data collecting techniques were used in this study, and they were described in the method section in detail. The interviews conducted with the participants were audio-recorded, and transcribed at a later date. The written artifacts of the study, the participants' blog postings, were archived and available on the Web throughout the study.

The data were coded by two different coders. Having finished coding procedure, two coders discussed and reached a consensus for the parts that they had coded differently. Referring to the views of a competent colleague helped the researcher ensure the credibility of the research findings.

➢ **The detailed description of the context:**

The researcher provided detailed description of the context, the participants and the study in the method section. Moreover, she presented descriptive, context-relevant information so that others reading this case study could identify with the setting. This helps ensure transferability of the findings of the study.

➢ **Triangulation:**

Triangulation is one of the most common strategies to ensure credibility and confirmability of the qualitative research (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003; Patton, 2002; Stake, 2003). Triangulation, or the process of using multiple methods, data collection strategies, and data sources, "reflects an attempt to secure an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon in question (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003, p.8), and serves to "clarify meaning by identifying different ways the phenomenon is being seen (Stake, 2003, p. 148). Rather than relying solely on one data collection method, different data collection methods including the blog postings, pre- and post-study interviews and observation have been

employed in this study in order to ensure the trustworthiness and credibility of the research findings.

3.8. Ethics

For the ethical consideration, the researcher took permission from the Ethical Committee of Middle East Technical University. Moreover, all the pre-service teachers participated in the study signed the consent form (Appendix E). They were also informed that there would be no harm to their psychological or physical state, and instead of their names, pseudonyms would be used in the study. Great care was given to ensure the confidentiality of research. It was expected that these would reduce the violation of participants' rights.

3.9. Summary

This chapter presented a discussion of the methodology employed in the present study. The rationale for using case study research methodology was discussed in the chapter. Detailed descriptions of the research site and study participants were also presented. The researcher discussed the issues related to data collection and analysis as well as her considerations for these procedures. It was also discussed how the threats to the validity of the study might be overcome. Trustworthiness of this research study was established by clearly delineating the researcher's role, providing detailed descriptions of the data collection and analysis procedures, and using different data collection methods for triangulation.

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

4.0. Presentation

This chapter firstly presents general characteristics of the participants. Then descriptive statistics as to the participants' blog use metrics throughout the study are given. It is then followed by the results relating to the research questions given in the introduction chapter. These results are addressed sequentially in this section.

4.1. General Characteristics of the Participants and the Blogs

4.1.1. Participants

It is important to provide as much detailed information about the participants as possible since the case in this study is to examine how blogging enhances their reflective practice. Pre-study interviews were conducted with each participant at the beginning of the study in order to have information about their general characteristics including their age, internet using habits and purposes, their views on integrating technology into foreign language teaching and learning, their expectations and suggestions for the Practicum course, and their preferences for working in groups or individually.

Of the 12 participants, 9 were female while 3 participants were male. Their age ranges from 19 to 21. Since the participants were all the senior students in the Department of Foreign Language Education at METU, they had similar educational backgrounds.

Internet using habits of the participants were one of the factors that might affect the results of this study. The pre-study interviews with the participants revealed that four of the participants, Zerrin, Bora, Ekin and Mert, did not have computers at their homes. They could have access to Internet either at Internet cafes or computer labs on-campus. On the other hand, the other 8 participants lived in dormitories and had access to Internet only in the university. The relatively limited access to Internet might have limited the duration of their Internet connection throughout the study, which could be one of the factors affecting their engagement in blogs.

For what purposes the participants use the Internet is another point investigated at the pre-study interview. Of the varying purposes the participants stated, the purpose of doing research and seeking information to do their homework was mentioned by all of the participants. Other mostly cited purposes were chatting with their friends especially through MSN and checking their email accounts. Furthermore, of the 12 participants, 4 participants stated that they used the Internet for reading news and 3 participants told that they could explore employment possibilities when they were online. Only 1 participant mentioned the purpose of searching for authentic materials on the Net. What was striking about the results was that although only 2 participants told that they read forums on the Net, none of them actively engaged in forums nor were they members of any discussion lists. This revealed that they had not used the Internet to access professional or social forums.

The participants' views on integrating technology into foreign language teaching and learning are another point investigated at the beginning of the study. Almost all of the participants stated that technology was indispensable for language education. However, their examples with regard to the technology integration in teaching and learning were mostly limited to using technological equipments in classrooms such as using computers, projectors, video- or audio-recorders. All of the participants told that using either Power-points or Word- documents could motivate the learners and eventually facilitate learning. Again it was striking that neither of them mentioned using, for example, social software applications or Web 2.0 tools to support foreign language education. When they were asked whether they heard of Web 2.0 tools such as blogs and wikis, only 3 participants stated that they had been

taught about them. These participants, Ece, Bora and Mert, had taken a course the previous term which aimed at informing them about the technological tools that they could use in instruction. They were actually required to create blogs in that course. As these students stated, they established their blogs; however, they did not continue to blog when the course was over.

What these students do consider about blogging after this study as well as the other participants do is of great importance to the implications of this current study on integrating such technologies into teacher education programs, and will be discussed in the next chapter.

4.1.2. Participants' Blogs

At the beginning of the study, meetings were held with the participants in order to inform them of the purpose of the study and the researcher's interest in the blogging phenomenon. At the initial meetings, they were also informed about what they were required to do during the course of the study: to create a blog at Blogger and to publish at least one post and two comments per week about the teaching and learning issues in general. Of all the 12 participants, only 3 participants, Bora, Ece and Ekin, had been taught about blogs the previous term, and they created blogs as a course requirement. On the other hand, the other 9 pre-service English language teachers had not heard of blogs or other Web 2.0 tools before. In order to introduce them with blogging the researcher provided a brief demonstration about how to set up a blog and to publish posts or comments. Then, they were told that they could seek help from the researcher any time they needed for technical support about blogging either by email or at face-to-face meetings.

The participants seemed to easily comprehend the basic skills needed to manage a blog, and they were easily able to create their own blogs after a brief introduction about the technical and structural features of blogging. All of the participants stated that they had no difficulty in using blog features throughout the study. This might prove the user-friendliness of Blogger as a blog-hosting service. In Zeynep's words (one of the participants in the study), publishing a post or a comment on a blog was

found to be as simple as sending an email. The ease of use is an important factor since blogs were used in this study to support the participants' reflectivity. If they had experienced some difficulty in using blogs, this may have affected their reflectivity. Stiler and Phileo's (2003) study also reached similar results that the participants' positive attitude towards the use of Blogger appeared to positively affect the depth and quality of the participants' reflectivity in their study.

Since most of the participants were inexperienced at blogging, the researcher posted some links to professional blogs on the class blog at the first week of the study and invited the participants to take a look at what the others on the Net were doing. As time passed, the participants began to differ in the way they utilized and developed their blogs. Looking closely at the structural features of the participants' blogs and the characteristics of participants as bloggers might reveal significant insights into how the pre-service teachers in this study personalized their blogs, and thereby to what extent they adopted this blogging phenomenon. Table 4.1 illustrates the features of the participants' blogs. Percentage of each feature is calculated based on the fact that there are 12 participants' blogs in the study.

As Table 4.1 illustrates, there are some blog features that are common to all blogs in the study: (a) All of the participants provided the archives of their blog posts on the first page; (b) In accordance with the study design, comments on posts were allowed; (c) all of the posts in the blogs provided information about the date they were posted; (d) all of the posts were tagged with related labels.

There were also some differences with regard to blog features. Firstly, participants did not seem to have the same attitude towards the issues of privacy and disclosure of personal details on the Internet. At the beginning of the study, they were told that they were free to determine whether or not they would use their names on the blogs, or to what extent they share personal details on the Internet. When blogs were analyzed, it was seen that most of the participants (83.3%) used their real names on their blogs. However, when it came to the disclosure of personal details, the percentage decreased to the 50%, meaning that only half of the participants chose to share personal information through their blogs.

Table 4.1 The Characteristics of the Participants' Blogs
(*Adapted from Herring et. al, 2005*).

Features	Frequency	Percentage
Blogger name on first page	10	83.3
Other personal info. on first page	6	50.0
Archives	12	100.0
Images	10	83.3
Comments on posts allowed	12	100.0
Labels	1	8.3
Counter	3	25.0
Calendar	3	25.0
Poll	2	16.7
Ads	2	16.7
Updated content (RSS) to other blogs	2	16.7
Links from home page		
To websites by others	2	16.7
To the participants' blogs	10	83.3
To news sites	2	16.7
To other blogs	5	41.7
Applications (Quote of the day, This day in history, Article of the day, In the News, etc.)	2	16.7
Games (Spelling Bee, Hangman, Match up)	2	16.7
Chatbox	1	8.3
Online Dictionary	1	8.3
Information contained;		
Header		
Date	12	100.0
Title	12	100.0
Footer		
Time	12	100.0
Author's name	9	75.0
Comments	12	100.0
Date	12	100.0
Labels	12	100.0

Another mostly used page element that was provided by the Blogger is the feature of linking to other resources, websites or blogs on the Internet. Most of the participants (83.3%) provided links to the participants' blogs on their own blogs. What was interesting was that the second mostly linked sites were again blogs, other blogs on the Internet meaning that they preferred to direct their readers to the blogs they followed. Linking to other blogs is important since it may help establish social networks of people with common interests. On the other hand, linking to external links such as websites or news sites had very low percentages. This result seems to be congruent with the literature since most of the blogs in Herring et. al's (2005) corpus are found to be "individualistic, even intimate, forms of self-expression, and a surprising number of them contain few or no links" (p. 163).

Some of the participants in the present study benefited from the dynamic nature of blogs. They downloaded some interesting applications on their blog layouts. The applications varied widely ranging from *Poll* and *Labels* to the other third-party applications that the Blogger did not supply such as *Calendar, Counter, Quote of the day, This day in history, Article of the day, In the News* and games such as *Spelling Bee, Hangman* or *Match up*. On the other hand, the number of participants utilizing these applications was very low. However, the motives underlying their usage still need consideration. When these participants were asked in the post-study interview to tell the reason why they included these applications, they stated that they tried to enrich their blog format so as to attract the others' attention to their writings. One may also well assert that in order to attract others' attention to contribute to their blogs, bloggers should pay attention not only to the content they share on their posts, but also to the design of their blogs. They should be as creative as possible to make their blogs visually attractive. The frequencies of posts and comments published on the blogs will be described in the next section. However, for the time being it is possible to say that blogs enriched with such applications received much more post and comment traffic than the blogs with plain layouts did. Nonetheless, most of the participants tried different templates and layouts that the Blogger provided during the course of the study. This helped them personalize their blogs.

4.2. Blog Use Statistics

The descriptive statistics of the blog posts and comments published throughout the study provides an insight into how much blogs are used in the study. Table 4.2 illustrates the distribution of the posts per week published by the participants while Table 4.3 shows the distribution of the comments per week left by both the participants and the anonymous contributors on the Web throughout the study. Over the duration of 12 weeks, there were 119 total posts published on the blogs and 367 total comments associated with those posts. There was a mean of 9.92 posts/week, a mean of 30.58 comments/week, and a mean of 3.08 comments/post.

Table 4.2 Posts by Week

	Weeks	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
Posts													
Participants		21	15	5	6	3	9	10	18	6	10	9	7
Total		21	15	5	6	3	9	10	18	6	10	9	7

Table 4.3 Comments by Week

	Weeks	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
Comments													
Participants		12	39	4	21	10	27	32	33	16	25	20	23
Anonymous contributors		6	4	5	-	-	6	11	38	20	6	1	8
Total		18	43	9	21	10	33	43	71	36	31	21	31

119 blog posts were published by 12 pre-service teachers, who participated in the study since it was planned that readers were not allowed to publish posts in the participants' blogs. Of the 367 total comments, 262 were posted by the participants and 105 were posted by anonymous contributors on the Web, including the researcher and the instructor of the course. These 105 comments were left to the participants' blog posts by 29 different people. As for the participants'

engagement, the results revealed that each participant published an average of 9.92 blog posts and 21.83 comments during the12-week time span.

Considering the distribution of the posts throughout the study, it is possible to state that there is

- a high proportion of posts published by pre-service teachers at the beginning that decreases towards the end of the study.
- a leap in posts from weeks 6 to 8, followed by a significant drop in posts at week 9.
- a gradual decline in posts at the end of the study.

Looking at the overall distribution of the posts per week, the highest number of posts was found to be at the first week with 21 posts (17.65 %). At the first week the participants created their blogs and they were first supposed to publish an introductory post stating briefly what their blog was about. Of the 12 participants, only 1 participant did not post a welcoming post. Among the other 11 students who published an introductory post, 6 participants clearly stated the purpose underlying their blogging while providing personal information on their first posts and invited comments to their blogs.

For example, Oya wrote:

> Hello :)
>
> I am a fourth year student of the Department of Foreign Language Education. I would love to hear about your experiences and knowledge on 'Foreign Language' , 'Education' , 'Foreign Language Education' or some other subjects that I will be adding to my blog time to time... I would also love to have your comments on my articles. Thank you all for your interest... (3.05.2008)

Another pre-service English language teacher, Ipek, reinforced her message with a related image:

Hi my dear colleagues :)

As prospective teachers of the near future, which would be together with recent technological devices and mostly computers, this blog will be very useful for us to use technology in our job. So, thanks to Sibel hoca, we will learn a lot about this blog in order to use it in ELT. Besides, we will have fun too:)) Let's enjoy and share our ideas and opinions about our future job. FUN :))))) (March 8, 2008)

However, the other 5 participants did not specifically mention the purpose they were blogging for. Furthermore, their first posts revealed either little or no personal information.

Zerrin wrote:

Hello Everyone

I believe that these blogs will be very useful for all of us. Please do not hesitate to write comments. We will improve ourselves by the help of each others' comments on our writings. See you... March 4, 2008

Deniz wrote:

WELCOME

Finally I have a blog :) (3.3.08)

In addition to the introductory posts the participants published, the first facilitative activity designed by the researcher might be shown to account for the high proportion of the posts and comments initiated by the pre-service teachers at the first two weeks of the study. According to the activity designed to familiarize the

participants with blogging and initiate discussion and participation on the blogs, they were asked to publish posts including five things about themselves that their friends did not know. This activity initiated a substantial amount of discussion and interaction among the participants. All the participants shared five things that they wanted their friends to know about themselves at the first week. The subsequent week, week 2, with 39 comments has the highest proportion of comments by the participants. When they were asked to evaluate this activity at the post-study interview, similar results emerged. They stated that this activity motivated them to blog. Furthermore, the number of the comments each posting received showed that this activity initiated a substantial amount of discussion and interaction among the participants. They became used to blogging, and began to personalize their blogs by using different templates and adding several widgets to their blogs.

At week 8, another facilitative activity was posted on the blog. Having watched the video entitled *If These Classroom Walls Could Talk* (http://www.youtube.com/-watch?v=dGCJ46vyR9o) which was attached to the post on the class blog, the participants were asked to share their reflections about the issues arising out of the data. Participants responded positively to this activity. Consequently, there was a sharp increase in both posts (18 posts, comprising 15% of the posts) and comments (33 comments by the participants, comprising 12.5% of the overall comments by the participants) at week 8.

Considering the distribution of the comments published by the participants throughout the study, it is possible to state that there is

- a sharp increase in comments by the participants at week 2,
- a precipitous decrease in comments at weeks 3 and 5; followed by a gradual increase in comments between weeks 6 and 8.
- a relatively homogenous distribution of comments at the last four weeks.

Congruent with the design of the study, participants allowed anonymous readers on the Web to leave comments to their posts. With this feature it was hoped that the participants might get insights into others' views all around the world, which helped them reflect upon issues related to teaching and learning a second language,

thereby they might gain a professional voice. 29 different people including the researcher and the instructor of the course contributed to the posts initiated by the participants throughout the study. Compared to the comments by the participants, the proportion of the comments left by the anonymous contributors was much lower. Furthermore, the distribution of the comments by the anonymous contributors throughout the study did not show a regular pattern. Rather, they fluctuated significantly during the study. The posts on the participants' blogs received very few comments from anonymous contributors during the first three weeks of the study, resulting in an absence of comments by the anonymous contributors between the weeks 4 and 5. However, there was a gradual increase in comments between the weeks 6 and 9. Especially at week 8, the participants received the highest number of comments by the anonymous contributors to their posts. This appeared to have stimulated the participants to engage in blogging because the same pattern was seen in the participants' comments at this period of the study. The posts initiated a substantial amount of discussion and interaction since half of the comments published both by the participants and the anonymous contributors during the 12-week study was left between the weeks 6 and 9. This suggested that the more they interacted with others, the more they participated in the blogs.

Examining the weekly distribution of posts and comments on participants' blogs could give a general idea about how blogging was adopted by pre-service teachers in the study. However, it did not yield insights into who was exactly contributing to the blogs. Furthermore, the overall purpose of this current study was to examine how blogging enhanced the reflectivity among the pre-service English language teachers. Looking closely at the individual blog use might help us not only understand how engaged each pre-service teacher was in blogging, but also investigate their attitudes as well as the underlying motives and barriers towards blogging.

Table 4.4 illustrates the frequencies of posts and comments published by the participants in the study. As it was planned, the pre-service teachers were not allowed to let others publish posts on their blogs. Thus, the posts of each blog were posted only by the owner of the blog. However, anyone could leave comments to

any blog posts. Therefore, the frequencies of the comments by each pre-service teacher in the study correspond to the comments left by them to all of the blogs including participants' blogs and the class blog. Considering the frequencies of posts and comments by the pre-service teachers, one may well say that those who published posts most were again those who contributed to the blogs most. Except Yonca and Alev all the other participants left more comments than the posts they published on their blogs. Furthermore, considering the fact that each participant published an average of 9.92 blog posts, it was apparent that half of the participants, namely Nur, Zeynep, Ece, Deniz, Mert and Zerrin published posts above the average. As for the comments, the study reached an average of 21.83 comments. Only four participants, Nur, Zeynep, Ece and Deniz, left comments above the average.

Table 4.4 The frequencies of posts and comments published by the participants in the study

Participants	Frequencies of POSTS participants published on their own blogs	Frequencies of COMMENTS participants published to the blogs
Nur	14	56*
Zeynep	15*	51
Ece	15*	34
Deniz	12	29
Oya	9	21
Mert	10	15
Zerrin	12	17
Bora	9	15
Ekin	4	8
İpek	6	7
Yonca	7	5
Alev	6	4
Total	119	262

As the table 4.4 illustrates, participants significantly differ in their contributions to the blogs. The reasons behind this variation need investigating and clarifying. Although almost all of the participants responded positively towards the blogging activity when they were asked in the post-study interview, the views of the participants, especially of those whose contribution remains below the average may shed light on the possible explanation for this situation. As for the factors accounting for why they were contributing to a lesser extent, the participants indicated several reasons in the post-study interviews including their search for finding a job, the heavy workload or the forthcoming national examination that they were required to pass to get an occupation in state schools.

Although the frequencies of posts are relatively lower (see Table 4.4), participants seemed to be more engaged in contributing to the blogs through leaving comments to the related posts. So far the descriptive analyses were given based on the performance of each participant. However, looking at the blogs in order to see who were actually contributing to them may help reveal whether there are any tendencies in the comments these blogs received. Table 4.5 illustrates the frequencies of posts and comments once more, but this time in terms of their distribution to the blogs in the study.

Frequencies of comments are given in three categories: the frequencies of comments published by (a) the owner of the blog; (b) the other 11 participants and (c) anonymous contributors meaning that the readers other than the participants on the Internet. As the table 4.5 shows, there is a regular pattern among the distributions of the posts and comments per blog that the higher the frequency of the posts a blog has, the higher the frequency of the comments that particular blog receive. It supports the general expectation that greater involvement in one's blog may result in greater interaction among the blogger and his or her audience. Furthermore, taking into consideration the distribution of the comments by each participant to the blogs in this study (See Appendix F), it is possible to say that the one who contributed most to a blog was the owner of that blog. When the participants were asked the reason why they had published more comments to their blogs than they did to the other participants' blogs in the study, they provided similar responses. They posted comments to their own blogs mainly because they

wanted to clarify their point, and initiate discussion, or because they wanted to thank people for their support and interests.

Table 4.5 Frequencies of Posts and Comments per Blog

Participants' Blogs	Frequencies of POSTS by the owner of the blog.	Frequencies of the COMMENTS			
		by the owner of the blog.	by the other 11 participants	by anonymous contributors	Total
Nur's Blog	14	18	26	17	61
Zeynep's	15*	17	25	9	51
Ece's	15*	2	20	7	29
Deniz's	12	8	10	8	26
Oya's	9	5	15	7	27
Mert's	10	6	18	4	28
Zerrin's	12	5	10	6	21
Bora's	9	3	12	10	25
Ekin's	4	2	12	6	20
İpek's	6	2	13	11	26
Yonca's	7	3	8	6	17
Alev's	6	1	6	7	14
Class Blog	8	1	15	6	22

The participants seemed to appreciate the dynamic and interactive nature of blogging since all of them stated in the interviews that they were looking forward to getting comments as soon as they published a post in their blogs. Knowing that they had an enormous number of audiences made them excited about sharing their views and ideas online.

In this section descriptive statistics of the blog activity as well as the characteristics of the participants were presented in order to provide as much detailed context-

relevant information as possible as the case study research necessitates. Thereby, the findings relating to the research question could be more accurately interpreted.

4.3. Development of Reflection through Blogging

This study aimed to enhance reflective practice among 12 pre-service English language teachers through blogging. The participants' reflectivity will be discussed based on the research questions presented in the previous chapter. The results of the research questions will be addressed sequentially in the following sections.

4.3.1. Research Question I: What are the recurring patterns in pre-service teachers' blog postings?

The recurring patterns in the blog postings were grouped under the categories of topics, and these topics with relevant frequencies are presented in Table 4.6.

Taking the distribution of the frequencies per categories into consideration, it is seen that the most frequent topics written about in the blogs belong to the Category 6 (351 references) which includes topics related to the participants' disclosing their personal details. On the other hand, the distribution of topics through Category 1 to 5 is of great importance to the interpretation of the findings of the study since they contain topics related to teaching and learning issues. Of these categories, the most frequent topics belong to the theories of teaching (233 references), followed by descriptions of the approaches and methods the participants observed in the assigned school in the Practicum course (166 references), evaluation of teaching (143 references), self awareness of their strengths and weaknesses as a prospective teacher (133 references). Of the questions formulated by the pre-service teachers in their blog postings, the majority of them contain questions asking for advice and suggestions (69 out of 75).

Table 4.6. The Topics that the pre-service teachers wrote about in their blog postings (*Adapted from Ho and Richards, 1993*)

Topic Category	Sub-category	Frequency			Frequency of categories of topics that the pre-service teachers wrote in their blogs.											
		Total	Category total	Average (Mean)	Zeynep	Zerrin	Yonca	Oya	Nur	Mert	Ekin	Ipek	Ece	Deniz	Bora	Alev
Theories of teaching	Theory	219		18.25	21*	20*	15	14	34*	16	12	12	29*	32*	10	4
	Application	4	223	0.33	3*	-	-	-	1*	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Approaches & Methods	Approaches & Methods	40		3.33	1	1	-	9*	7*	-	-	-	7*	11*	3	1
	Content	14		1.17	-	2*	-	1	6*	1	1	-	2*	1	-	-
	Teacher's knowledge	26	166	2.17	1	2	-	4*	-	2	1	-	3*	11*	1	1
	The learners	40		3.33	4*	2	1	5*	6*	7*	1	1	1	10*	2	-
	School Context	46		3.83	4*	1	5*	4*	6*	8*	3	4	3	4*	3	1
Evaluating teaching	Evaluating	65		5.42	7*	6*	1	11*	14*	3	4	1	8*	8*	1	1
	Problems	48	143	4.00	11*	8*	-	7*	4*	-	5*	2	4*	2	2	3
	Solutions	30		2.50	4*	3*	-	4*	6*	2	-	1	5*	3*	-	2
Self awareness	Perception of self as a teacher	20		1.67	2*	2*	-	-	4*	-	-	3*	5*	2*	-	2*
	Recog. of personal growth	31	133	2.58	1	-	3*	2	4*	1	2	4*	2	6*	3*	3*
	Setting personal goals	82		6.83	11*	2	6	4	13*	3	3	3	16*	13*	5	3
Qs about teaching	Asking for reasons	6		0.50	3*	1*	-	-	1*	-	-	-	-	-	1*	-
	Asking for advice & sug.	69	75	5.75	12*	9*	4	4	8*	2	2	3	14*	5	4	2
Disclosure of the personal int	Sharing personal info.	143		11.92	25*	9	6	10	23*	5	4	7	15*	18*	13*	8
	Informal Support	136	351	11.33	27*	7	4	8	32*	5	1	5	20*	19*	4	4
	Career plans	72		6.00	16*	6*	1	4	14*	2	-	-	8*	11*	7*	3

* Asterisked Numbers ≥ Frequency Mean

A closer look at what they were engaged in each category might reveal the following conclusions:

➢ **Theories of teaching**

Pre-service teachers in the study were mostly engaged in discussing their personal theories of teaching rather than citing and evaluating theories of teaching they had been exposed to in their education, or applying them to classroom practice. In a few incidents, participants referred to experts' views about language or described a theory to justify their points of view.

➢ **Approaches and Methods**

Blog postings in this category mostly focused on contextual factors such as school context and learners' characteristics. Considering the fact that all of the participants in the Practicum were attending to a private school which may have differed in many aspects from the state schools where all of the participants had completed their education might have stimulated them to pay more attention to the contextual factors they were unfamiliar with. There were many references in the blog postings which went beyond the classroom setting to the broader contexts of teaching and learning. In many cases participants were found to compare state and private schools in terms of the learners' characteristics or the available facilities.

Participants were also engaged in discussing teachers' pedagogical knowledge and experience rather than describing the content of the lessons they observed in the school.

➢ **Evaluating teaching**

Participants blogged more frequently about the positive or negative evaluation of both the lessons they observed, and the assessed teaching they were required to accomplish during the Practicum. They diagnosed problems that arose in the lessons and sometimes offered solutions to the relevant problems. One interesting finding related to this category was that participants mostly discussed problems in

the blog posts that they published on their blogs, but generally provided solutions in the comments that they left to the blog posts.

> **Self-awareness**

This category contains almost as many references as the previous category does. With respect to the topics grouped under this category, it was seen that most of the postings focused primarily on participants' goals as a prospective teacher. Their Practicum experiences urged them to identify aspects of their teaching to work and develop in the future. Since they were not professional teachers, it was difficult for them to describe the strengths and weaknesses of their teaching. Therefore, the sub-category called *Perception of Self as a Teacher* received the least frequency in this category.

> **Questions about teaching**

Most of the questions in the blog postings were formulated to ask for advice or suggestions. Very few questions sought underlying reasons. The feature of having comments to the posts made it possible for the bloggers to communicate with their readers. When the participants were asked why they used the questions in their blog postings, they talked about different functions of questions. For most of the time, they referred to questions when they were in need of others' opinion and suggestions due to a problem they were facing. However, some of them told that they utilized questions more like a strategy to take others' attention and motivate them to leave a comment to their posts. According to them, ending their posts or comments with a question would invite others to contribute to the post either by starting or sustaining the discussion around that post.

> **Disclosure of personal details**

With respect to the distribution of the frequencies of topics in this category, the participants were found to be most frequently engaged in sharing personal information in their blog postings such as sharing important events in their lives, personal photographs on their posts or providing personal details about themselves. As most of the participants stated, this helped them personalize and maintain their

blogs. However, not all of the participants had the same opinions about sharing their private information on the Internet. Therefore, participants were seen to disclose their private information at different levels. On the other hand, even the most reluctant participants in sharing personal details on the Internet engaged in sharing some personal information on their blogs. Furthermore, the participants published many comments in order to display their support for their classmates. Besides, they left many comments in order to thank the others for contributing their opinions. Even though these posts seemed to be posted because of their social manners, the participants admitted that they appreciated them and getting such comments would motivate them to keep contributing to those blogs.

Their career plans have also been one of the mostly discussed topics during the study. Since this was their last term at the university, they were looking for the employment opportunities. In their blog postings they shared what they had gone through the job interviews they participated as well as some tips for others willing to attend such interviews, and sometimes made announcements related to the important events or conference notices of some well-known colleges. Towards the end of the study, most of the participants found their jobs and informed their readers about the school where they would work.

What has been discussed so far can yield only general tendencies related to the topics that 12 participants blogged about. However, different participants were seen to write about different topics at different frequencies. For example, Nur who had the most frequent comments in the study was found to have supported the other bloggers either by confirming her friends' opinions or by thanking them for their comments. She seemed to personalize her blog by sharing her photos or other personal information. With respect to the Categories 1 through 5, it was seen that she frequently blogged about her personal theories of teaching. In her postings, she discussed contextual factors that might have affected teaching and learning process, and the approaches and methods used in the lessons as well. She was also engaged in evaluating both her own and her friends' assessed teaching processes. The problems that might have arisen out of their practice seemed to attract her attention. She also had many blog postings where she discussed her professional

goals for the future. She posed many questions, most of which were formulated to ask for advice and suggestions especially when she was designing her lesson plan.

Zeynep, like Nur, blogged about almost every topic identified throughout the study. She referred to her personal theories of teaching with reference to how the theories could be applied. This is interesting that only 2 participants, Nur and Zeynep, blogged about how classroom experience changed their theories of teaching in their blogs. Like Nur, she included many questions asking for advice and suggestions. However, unlike many other participants, she posed questions asking underlying reasons for certain issues.

Zerrin, however, was more interested in the problems that arose in teaching than solutions to those problems. She had many posts in which she was evaluating the lessons she observed. In these posts she went beyond the boundaries of the classroom setting and reflected on the broader context of teaching in Turkey. Therefore, the problems she identified in her posts were not only related to the teaching of school they attended to, but also to the general issues experienced by a wider population of teachers in Turkey. Since her questions mostly addressed to general issues, she did not refer to the solutions in her posts, rather she invited others to discuss them through the questions she formulated at the end of her posts.

Yonca, on the other hand, blogged mainly about her own theories of teaching. Furthermore, two topics became conspicuous. First of all, she seemed to be more engaged in evaluating the school context, and went beyond this particular school setting to compare private and state schools in terms of the facilities they could provide and how these facilities might affect the quality of teaching. The other topic she was found to be more enthusiastic about was setting personal goals. What she had observed and reflected might spur her to reflect upon the aspects of her teaching that needs improving in the future. However, she blogged neither about the problems that arose in teaching, nor about the solutions. Besides, she did not evaluate the approaches and methods used in lessons, or teachers' pedagogical knowledge.

4.3.2 Research Question II: What is the level of reflection demonstrated in the blog postings which are distributed based on the categories of topics derived out of the study? Is it descriptive or critical?

Table 4.7 illustrates the extent of critical reflection in blog postings. As the table 4.7 illustrates, the most frequent traits of critical reflectivity belonged to the personal theories of teaching (202 references), followed by reflections about the evaluation of teaching (143 references), self-awareness (133 references) and approaches and methods the participants reflected upon (112 references). The participants were found to formulate very few reflective questions in their blog postings throughout the study (6 references) compared to the other types of questions asking for advice and suggestions. The frequencies of the traits of critical reflection in each sub-category are presented in the Appendix G. With respect to the extent of critical reflection in each category, the following conclusions can be drawn:

➤ **Theories of teaching**

Participants were found to reflect critically on their personal theories of teaching rather than reflection on how the theories were applied in their lessons.

➤ **Approaches and Methods**

The critical traits of reflection in this category centered on the evaluation of school context and the characteristics of learners that may affect the design and implementation of teaching process. Participants were also engaged in teachers' experience and knowledge about both the demands of the class task and classroom management.

➤ **Evaluating Teaching**

The participants seemed to reflect more critically on evaluating the lessons they observed, and their assessed teaching experiences either positively or negatively. Most of the participants shared their opinions before and after their assessed

Table 4.7 The extent of critical reflection in blog postings.

Topic Category	Frequency		Frequency of the traits of critical reflection that the participants were engaged in.											
	Total	Mean	Zeynep	Zerrin	Yonca	Oya	Nur	Mert	Ekin	Ipek	Ece	Deniz	Bora	Alev
1. Theories of teaching	202	16.83	19*	19*	11	14	34*	15	12	7	27*	30*	10	4
2. Approaches & Methods	112	9.33	9	5	6	13*	12*	17*	5	5	7	25*	6	2
3. Evaluating Teaching	143	11.92	22*	17*	1	22*	24*	5	9	4	17*	13*	3	6
4. Self awareness	133	11.08	14*	4	9	6	21*	4	5	10	23*	21*	8	8
5. Qs about Teaching	6	0.5	3*	1*	-	-	1*	-	-	-	-	-	1*	-

Asterisked Numbers ≥ Frequency Mean

teaching. Some of them asked for suggestions and advice while they were designing the lesson plan, some blogged about the feedback they received from their mentor teacher and classmates who observed their assessed teaching, or some suggested some tips for others a well-prepared assessed teaching while analyzing theirs. Furthermore, participants were found to be more problem-oriented than reflecting upon solutions. The problems that they referred to in their blog postings primarily focused on classroom management.

➢ **Self-awareness**

Critical traits of reflection in this category were mostly gathered around setting personal goals. It was found that every participant in the study reflected on the aspects of their teaching that needed improving in the future. Congruent with the fact that they were pre-service teachers, they had had very little teaching practice in a real setting so far. Thus, it was found that they reflected less on their perception of themselves as a teacher.

➢ **Questions about teaching**

The participants were found to formulate very few reflective questions in their blog postings throughout the study compared to the other types of questions asking for advice and suggestions. Instead of asking for reasons, they preferred to speculate and discuss possible reasons underlying some deeper issues in their blog postings. Thus, it was possible to say that blogs provided the participants much room for self expression.

As the table 4.7 illustrates, participants were found to be engaged in different levels of critical reflection. Nur, Zeynep, Deniz, Ece, Oya and Zerrin were seen to have a far greater number of traits of reflectivity than Ipek, Yonca, Mert, Alev, Bora and Ekin. With a closer look at the traits of reflectivity illustrated in Appendix G, it is possible to state that there are individual differences regarding the extent of critical reflection. Zeynep, for example, reflected more about the problems that arose in teaching than the other participants in the study. The problems she formulated generally focused on the relationship between students and the teacher, and the

classroom management. In one of her blog posts, she mentioned the problem of a student:

> i think i have caught a good point in the class i have been observing, and i think that it will go on like a serie :) the title is "Akant's Affairs"…he is a lazy boy, does not do his homework... but our mentor teacher is getting too much angry with him and she is teasing with him throughout the lesson which makes him more silent. the question is whether Akant will go on to be a lazy boy because of this attitude of the teacher or in contrast will he get motivated and start studying? the answer will come in the following weeks :)) (March 23, 2008)

This initiated discussion among the participants. Some of the participants including Nur and Oya suggested that the teacher should have used reinforcements whenever this student did something right such as doing his homework or attending to the lessons with enough care, and should have ignored the unwanted or improper behavior instead of having teased the student. However, Zeynep opposed this view when she commented that:

> …I do not think that ignoring him will solve the problem, because if the teacher ignores him he may think that the teacher does not care about it and go on not doing his homework, I have seen instances like this ☺ (Zeynep, March 26, 2008)

The comments that were published relevant to this post led to another discussion on the efficiency of reinforcements in dealing with problematic student behaviors. An anonymous contributor enlivened the discussion when she said:

> What about enhancing internal motivation? I'm not of the same idea with you girls, about giving presents from time to time. I don't think it works. Considering what I've gone through in previous years of teaching, I can suggest you to make him both feel they are special especially in one thing that many others are not and also think they can learn. I believe that there must be something that that student is afraid of. If I were you, I'd try to know him better and uncover what is hidden. (April 14, 2008).

In response to this comment, Zeynep published a comment saying that:

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actually, as far as we have learned from our mentor teacher, the reason of Akant's behavior is that his mother is not with him all the time, and this makes him untidy and careless about school works. thanks for your opinions ☺ what can be done now?? (April 16, 2008).

It can be inferred that the interaction between the anonymous contributor and Zeynep might have encouraged her to look for possible reasons underlying this particular student's behavior. She continued observing him, and reflecting on this topic in the following posts:

> Akant is doing his homework and attending the lesson actively... hurraayyyy ☺ but I do not know what led to this behavior change, yet our teacher still does not give positive reinforcement. As I have learned from our mentor teacher, Akant's mum has not been by him for some time and this might have caused the laziness in him, I think. Another thing I want to mention about the relationship between the students and the teacher. I do not think that a teacher should form too strong a relationship with his/her students but I also do not think that it is necessary to mention that you are not their mum to the students. our mentor teacher, out of anger, told the students that none of them was her own child.. can I take your opinions on this issue plz ☺ (April 7, 2008)

As it was seen in the aforementioned post, Zeynep extended the discussion from considering one incident of interaction between a problem student and his teacher to reflecting to a wider context of what kind of a relationship should exist between students and teachers. This post received comments from the other participants which revealed their personal theories relevant to their perception of selves as a teacher. For example, Ekin, commented that:

> a statement like that would be ok. to create a funny atmosphere; however, a teacher stating such a statement out of anger must really be bored with "teaching" i think because I remember one of my teachers' saying " the school is the factory I m working, I just mind the money I m earning", and i know that he/she was really bored with it. (April 7, 2008)

In her comment in response to Zeynep's post, İpek said:

> …I think your mentor teacher is somehow right with her statement, however she could be much relaxed and state it

in a good manner. I also believe that a teacher and the students should not have a relationship which is too informal because teacher is the teacher who does her/his job:)As one of my dear instructors at METU stated that "as a teacher, you should behave your students friendly, but do not be a friend of them!" ☺ (April 8, 2008).

Ece shared her reflections on this theme when she commented that:

I agree with you in that a teacher should not have personal relations with his/her students especially if the case is not a nice one. On the other hand, I believe I should have a positive relationship with my students no matter how serious problems occur. Especially in the class we should not show our anger to the students- certainly it does not work. What really work in the class a piece of smile, a large amount of encouragement, a bit understanding, etc. (April 10, 2008).

Zeynep continued reflecting on this theme on the following posts. Having described some incidents showing the indifference of Akant's friends and his teacher to his questions in her post that was published on May 1st, 2008, "it seemed" to Zeynep "as if he (Akant) was trying to express his feelings" (http://zegoksu.blogspot.com-/2008/05/need-for-attention.html). What made her confused was the teacher's attitude towards this situation. As Zeynep narrated in her blog, the mentor teacher expressed to her students in the lesson that she was not their mother. It seems that this statement made Zeynep think about the role of the teacher from a different point of view. She invited her colleagues to share their opinions about the role of the teacher and the extent a teacher should show affection to his or her students in the classroom. In the comments, Zeynep and Nur elaborated the issue and shared the same opinion that teachers did not need to be somebody's mother to answer his questions, and it was a part of their job to pay attention not only students' educational needs but also all other kinds of needs.

Looking globally at what Zeynep reflected critically, she was found to focus especially on the problems rather than the solutions related to the teaching and learning issues, and describe her personal theories of teaching. This is also relevant to the reflectivity that was observed in Zerrin's posts. Like Zeynep, Zerrin was problem focused as well. She seemed to be concerned not only with the immediate problems that arose in teaching but also with the problems generally faced by the

teachers in Turkey, such as the uncertain future awaiting the prospective teachers or political context including the currently regulated retirement conditions.

Another interesting finding is that the same topic, the use of reinforcements in teaching, – which was discussed in Zeynep's blog – was almost simultaneously discussed in Zerrin's blog when she described some examples from the lessons she had observed in one of her blog posts. Zerrin approached the issue from a different angle by reflecting upon its effect on the students:

> There is a boy in 2nd grades and he is a naughty student. Our mentor teacher uses reinforcements such as chocolate, pencil sharpener, etc to motivate him. Actually it works. He has started to keep silent during the lesson and to participate in the activities. I believe that reinforcements are the only way to motivate such students. However, I have doubts about his future. In the future, he may want reinforcements for each and every good behavior. When he cannot see any, then he can give up appropriate behaviors. Great Dilemma:) Do you agree with me? (April 21, 2008).

Through the comments that were posted relevant to this post, the participants in the discussion, Nur and Zerrin, came to a common point where they felt that the inefficient use of reinforcement could cause harm to the students. Especially the contribution of a Brazilian educator in Key West helped elaborate their thoughts more clearly. In her comments Carla, the experienced Brazilian educator, said that:

> Little prizes can help, but they can also become negative reinforcement. The kid might act badly just to get the chocolate! I'd take a different approach by using the student to help with class chores, making him responsible for some things in the class. By doing that, he'd feel he belongs, he's important in the class flow. He'd have responsibilities. (April 23, 2008)
>
> The sense of belonging and care is much more important than any material gain. Of course kids love to get candies and chocolate, and it's no crime giving them some treats. However, if this becomes a pattern to stop misbehavior, then instead of solving the problem, you're creating another one. (April 26, 2008).

Nur and Zerrin were of the same opinion about what consequences the negative reinforcement could cause. Zerrin emphasized the role of enhancing the sense of belonging and responsibility among the students when she commented that "he *(the*

student) should feel that he can do what others do at least… By the help of a sincere relationship with the teacher, he can feel he has an identity in the class" (Zerrin's blog; April 26th, 2008).

Another participant, Ekin, seemed to be problem focused as well. Although during the course of the study he published only 4 posts and 8 comments – both of which were under the average of the study, he critically reflected upon a wide range of topics. It was understood from his postings that he liked the school he was required to attend in the Practicum course. Appreciating the attitudes of the administrative in that school as well as comparing state and private schools in this respect, he reflected on how administrative approach or school policies might affect the teachers' attitudes. As for the problems he formulated in the blog postings, it was seen that he was more focused on the difficulties students had with particular grammar items. For example, in one of his posts, he diagnosed such a problem with possible explanations by saying that:

> this week I witnessed a clear example of negative transfer regarding young learners. I think you all are familiar with their common "I can see a..." type of overgeneralization. As I had stated they were always starting their sentences with this expression. For example, they say "I can see a blue eyes" while their teachers expect them to say "I have got blue eyes" by showing the picture. So as you all agree the item learnt beforehand was a hindrance to learn a second structure. fortunately, after too much effort the teacher managed to teach them this new structure. However the following week this time they were expected to say "I can see a lion"(in the picture) but they said "I have got a lion". forgetting the previously learnt favourite structure "I can see a ..." ☺ I'm really curious how they will be able to distinguish between the structures. (April 20, 2008).

However, the comments by both Carla and Oya approached the issue from a different viewpoint. While Ekin thought that negative transfer might have been considered to explain this problem, the other commentators challenged this view by suggesting that the students might have been testing how they could use language and trying to figure out how language worked. Surprisingly enough, instead of writing his reflections related to these comments, Ekin sent an email to the researcher in which he elaborated his ideas about the issue. Although the researcher advised him to publish these on his blog, he did not prefer to do so. What could be

derived from the email he sent to the researcher was that the ideas articulated in the comments made him question his views on this issue and approach the problem differently. It is important to note here that when the frequencies of blog posts and comments published throughout the study are taken into account, Ekin is found to be one of the participants whose blog use remains below the average. The factors or motives that prevent him from blogging more actively may account for his reluctance toward further sharing his opinions relevant to this topic. Participants' reaction to blog use will be discussed in the next chapter.

The participants Yonca, Bora, Mert and Alev, on the other hand, were found to reflect critically to a lesser extent than the pre-service teachers discussed above. Their reflective blog postings were generally concerned with evaluating school context as well as taking into account the learners' needs and characteristics. These participants referred to several applications that they observed in the private school to which they attended in the Practicum course such as the fruit hour during which the students were required to eat the pre-determined fruit of the day or the efficient use of computer labs in the school. However, the blog postings relevant to these topics were not limited to their descriptions. Through the comments the participants extended the discussion to a reflective level where they reflected on the rationales behind these applications, and why and how these could be used in teaching. Furthermore, they frequently compared state and private schools by taking into account these topics, and reflected on how the state schools could be improved accordingly.

What was common to almost all of the participants' blog postings was that the topics introduced in the blog postings were frequently discussed in the comments left by the readers of that post from different reflective viewpoints, which initiated the emergence of new topics as well as discussions. Thus, the difference between blog posts and comments published on the participants' blogs during the study needs to be explored.

4.3.3. Research Question III: What is the difference between blog posts and comments in terms of the level of reflectivity?

Considering the opportunities of interaction and communication that the blog posts and comments provided in the study, it was possible to state that they had different features in nature. Therefore, it is important to explore the extent of critical reflection the participants are involved in each situation. Table 4.8 illustrates the extent of traits of critical reflection the participants are engaged in the blog posts while Table 4.9 shows the extent of critical reflection they are involved in the blog comments.

As the table 4.8 illustrates, the most frequent traits of critical reflectivity belong to the personal theories of teaching (76 references), followed by reflections about the evaluation of teaching (72 references), approaches and methods the participants reflected upon (69 references), and self-awareness (50 references). Only 4 reflective questions are formulated in the blog posts during the study. Taking the distribution of the frequencies of the traits of critical reflectivity in the comments according to the initial five general categories (see Table 4.9), the most critical category is found to be again the personal theories of teaching (126 references). However, there are differences as to the ranking of the other categories in terms of the level of reflectivity compared to the results discussed above. The reflections on the personal theories of teaching are followed by descriptions of the self awareness topics (83 references), evaluating teaching (71 references) and approaches and methods (43 references). In the comments left by the participants to the blogs, there are very few reflective questions (2 references).

Looking globally at these tables, the following conclusions can be drawn:

➢ Participants reflected most critically on their personal theories of teaching both in their posts and comments.
➢ They were more reflective in their comments than they were in the posts they published on their own blogs.

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Table 4.8 The extent of critical reflection in blog posts.

	Topic Category	Frequency		Frequency of the traits of critical reflection that the participants were engaged in their posts.											
		Total	Mean	Zeynep	Zerrin	Yonca	Oya	Nur	Mert	Ekin	Ipek	Ece	Deniz	Bora	Alev
1.	Theories of teaching	76	6.33	5	8*	10*	5	9*	6	4	4	10*	12*	2	1
2.	Approaches & Methods	69	5.75	4	4	4	8*	5	11*	2	3	4	18*	4	2
3.	Evaluating Teaching	72	6.00	12*	8*	1	15*	7*	1	4	3	5	8*	2	6*
4.	Self awareness	50	4.17	3	1	6*	2	4	2	3	5*	7*	8*	3	6*
5.	Qs about Teaching	4	0.33	2*	1*	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-

Asterisked Numbers ≥ Frequency Mean

Table 4.9 The extent of critical reflection in blog comments.

	Topic Category	Frequency		Frequency of the traits of critical reflection that the participants were engaged in their comments.											
		Total	Mean	Zeynep	Zerrin	Yonca	Oya	Nur	Mert	Ekin	Ipek	Ece	Deniz	Bora	Alev
1.	Theories of teaching	126	10.50	14*	11*	1	9	25*	9	8	3	17*	18*	8	3
2.	Approaches & Methods	43	3.58	5*	1	2	5*	7*	6*	3	2	3	7*	2	-
3.	Evaluating Teaching	71	5.92	10*	9*	-	7*	17*	4	5	1	12*	5	1	-
4.	Self awareness	83	6.92	11*	3	3	4	17*	2	2	5	16*	13*	5	2
5.	Qs about Teaching	2	0.17	1*	-	-	-	1*	-	-	-	-	-	-	-

Asterisked Numbers ≥ Frequency Mean

- The participants were found to be more problem oriented in their posts. They reflected on the rationale behind lessons, and discussed reasons that gave rise to specific problems. However, the range of solutions possible was pointed out in the comments relevant to these posts.
- In the comments the participants published to the blogs, participants were seen to be more engaged in reflecting on their self awareness of their strengths and weaknesses as prospective teachers. While interacting with the others through the comments, they evaluated some aspects of their teaching that needed to be developed in the future and more frequently commented on their professional goals.

Some significant results emerge out of the individual differences as for the level of reflectivity among the posts and comments. First of all, the participants Nur, Zeynep, Ece and Deniz who reflected more critically in their posts did so to a greater extent in their comments. Therefore, it is possible to assert for those who blogged much more that the more they interacted with others, the more they reflected on the teaching issues. For most of the time, the discussions held through the comments spurred the participants to further discuss them on their following posts. However, it is not relevant to the least reflective pre-service teachers in the study. The interactive nature provided through the comments did not seem to contribute to the reflectivity of the participants, Ekin and Bora. On the contrary, Alev, Yonca and İpek considered blogs rather as a place of self-expression since they were more reflective in their posts. However, they showed no traits of critical reflectivity in their comments that had frequencies above the mean.

With all this in mind, it can well be argued that the more the participants interacted with others, the more they became reflective. Thus, it will be beneficial to explore the level of reflectivity on the comments left by the anonymous contributors to the participants' blogs since such an analysis can shed light on the nature of the interaction between the participants and their anonymous readers on the Net.

It was found that 105 comments were left by 29 different people to the participants' blog posts during the 12-week time span. Table 4.10 illustrates the frequencies of

both the topics that the anonymous contributors blogged about in their comments and the traits of critical reflectivity in these comments.

Table 4.10 Frequencies of topics and the traits of critical reflectivity in the comments by anonymous contributors

	Topic Category	Frequencies of the topics they blogged about	Frequencies of the traits of critical reflectivity in their comments
1.	Theories of teaching	78	68
2.	Approaches & Methods	18	11
3	Evaluating teaching	38	38
4	Self awareness	14	14
5	Qs about teaching	16	1
6.	Disclosure of personal details	121	—

When the topics that the anonymous contributors blogged about were taken into consideration, it was found that many of the anonymous contributors left comments either to display their appreciation or to encourage the participants to further discuss the subject. Moreover, they disclosed personal information such as their names, occupation or the URLs of their blogs or websites. As for the other categories, it was seen that personal theories of teaching were again one of the mostly cited topic in the comments coming from the audience of the blogs (78 references), followed by descriptions of the evaluation of teaching (38 references), approaches and methods used in teaching (18 references), self awareness of their strengths and weaknesses as teachers (14 references). Of the questions formulated by the anonymous contributors in their blog postings, the majority of them contained questions asking for advice and suggestions (15 out of 16). When the frequencies of topics both by participants and by anonymous contributors were compared, the anonymous contributors were found to focus more on the solutions

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to relevant teaching problems mentioned in the participants' posts. In 30 out of 38 references in the category of evaluating teaching they offered their own solutions and suggestions. There were few references related to the positive or negative evaluation of the lessons (6 references).

As the table 4.10 illustrates, the most frequent traits of critical reflectivity again belonged to the personal theories of teaching (68 references), followed by reflections about the evaluation of teaching (38 references), self-awareness (14 references) and approaches and methods the anonymous contributors reflected upon (11 references). Only 1 reflective question was found in their comments.

With the afore-mentioned results in mind, it is possible to assert that most of the comments by the anonymous contributors were critically reflective. Referring especially to their teaching experiences, they frequently came up with their own suggestions and solutions, reflected upon their strengths and weaknesses as a teacher, and the challenges that they were facing in the classroom.

When the participants were asked about their feelings towards getting comments from the anonymous readers on the Internet, it was found that almost all of them appreciated this multivocality achieved through blogging. The post-study interviews with the participants revealed the fact that what motivated them most about blogging was the expectation of getting response to their blog postings. However, when they posted something and got no response, most of them stated that their engagement to blogs got disturbed. This requires careful consideration while designing to incorporate blogs into teaching and learning process.

4.3.4. Research Question IV: How does reflectivity change over time through blogging?

The findings related to the development of the pre-service teachers' reflectivity over time are illustrated in the Table 4.11. Overall it seems that almost all of the participants began to display their personal theories of teaching. Moreover, they were more able to discuss problems and offer their own solutions. Then, they

became better problem solvers. However, they did not ask more reflective questions.

The overall impression derived from the analysis was that the pre-service teachers changed their focus of critical reflection in varying degrees throughout the study. Pre-service teachers who were classified as utilizing blogs more frequently were found to be the most critically reflective participants in the study (Zeynep, Nur, Ece and Deniz). When the reflectivity of these participants was analyzed, it was seen that their level of reflectivity developed significantly in almost all of the seven traits over time. Some pre-service teachers' later blog postings showed a slight increase in the kinds of critical reflectivity they employed. Since no clear patterns of development or change was observed, the results relevant to those traits remained unclear of mixed. On the other hand, some pre-service teachers who were found to be relatively less reflective in their blog postings (Bora, İpek, Ekin and Yonca) began to indicate some traits of critical reflection in their later postings. However, they did so not to an extent that demonstrated a significant development in their reflection. It is important to note that identifying some traits as showing no signs of development in critical reflection did not mean that these participants did not show any evidence of critical reflection in that specific trait. On the contrary, all of them were found to reflect critically in all of these aspects in varying degrees. However, they did so when they began blogging, and keep reflecting in the same way throughout the study.

Table 4.11 The development in the level of critical reflections as shown in the blog postings. (*Adapted from Ho and Richards, 1993*)

Traits of development in critical reflection	The development in the degree of critical reflection											
	Zeynep	Zerrin	Yonca	Oya	Nur	Mert	Ekin	Ipek	Ece	Deniz	Bora	Alev
Engaging in a greater variety of types of reflectivity over time	+	+	–	+	+	–	–	–	+	+	+/–	–
Being more able to discuss their personal theories of teaching	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+/–
Being more able to reflect through experiences of teaching	+	+	–	+	+	–	–	–	+	+	–	–
Being able to go beyond the classroom to the broader context	+	+	+/–	–	+	+/–	–	+	+	+	–	–
Being more able to evaluate both positively and negatively	+	–	–	+/–	+	–	+	–	+	+	–	–
Being more able to discuss problems and come up with their own solutions	+	+	–	+	+	–	–	+	+/–	+	+/–	–
Being more able to ask more questions about teaching	+	–	–	+	–	–	–	–	+	–	–	–

– , shows no sign of development; **+/–**, mixed or unclear; + indicates signs of development

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4.4. Summary

This research study was grounded on an assumption that blogging might provide pre-service teachers with a non-threatening but moderately challenging environment which might support their personal reflection and communal interaction. In order to ensure the transferability of the results of this case study, the researcher presented as much detailed context-relevant information as possible. The results revealed that blogging supported the pre-service teachers' reflectively positively. All of the pre-service teachers were found to be reflective to a certain extent in their blog postings. However, there were differences in the degree of reflection that the pre-service teachers in the study engaged in. Furthermore, it was found that blogs were also utilized for other purposes such as disclosing personal details, their career plans and concerns, and announcing social events, news and educational conferences. The results revealed that blogging was associated with positive conditions and behaviors that might result in such a communal interaction and support empowering the participants' sense of belonging and their autonomy as learners. On the other hand, it was found that participants needed guidance and facilitative, structured activities which might engender active participation in blogging.

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION

5.0. Presentation

This chapter presents an overview of the study and discussion of the findings with reference to the existing literature, followed by a description of the participants' reaction to blogging.

5.1. The Overview of the Study

In an attempt to contribute to our understanding of how reflective practice might be encouraged and developed among the pre-service teachers, this current study aimed at examining how blogging might be employed to enhance the reflectivity of a group of pre-service English language teachers. Many educators all over the world share the belief that reflection helps the practitioners identify, analyze and deal with the complex issues that they encounter in teaching, and that such an engagement can spur self inquiry and professional development. Thus, this research was based on a belief grounded in the literature that more authentic reflective approaches should be implemented in order to encourage teachers to engage in many way conversations with and within themselves, and that blogs as a transformational technology for teaching and learning can facilitate critical thinking and knowledge construction through interaction and collaboration with others with a shared interest. This study sought to examine whether the use of blogs as support for reflective practice in a Practicum course could enhance the

level of critical reflection that the pre-service English language teachers were involved in.

The results of this study, as discussed in the previous chapter, indicate that blogging supports the pre-service teachers' reflectively positively. All of the pre-service teachers are found to be reflective to a certain extent in their blog postings. However, there are differences in the degree of reflection that the pre-service teachers in the study engaged in. Pre-service teachers with negative attitudes towards technology contribute to a lesser extent in the study than the ones who wish to integrate such tools in their future teaching. Additionally, participants use blogs for other purposes such as disclosing personal details, their career plans and concerns, and announcing social events, news and educational conferences. This social sharing and interaction among the participants is found to empower their sense of belonging to a community and their autonomy as learners.

When the research questions posed in the present study are taken into consideration, these results reveal specific evidence that contribute to our understanding of how blogging might be incorporated as to support for reflective practice in teacher education programs. The results of this study will be discussed in the following section with reference to the existing literature.

5.2. The Discussion of the Findings

The findings of the study revealed that the pre-service English language teachers blogged mostly about their personal theories of teaching, the problems that they identified related to teaching issues, and consequently their professional goals for the future. These three topics generated a lot of discussion in the blogs. Therefore, they are discussed in detail in the following sections.

5.2.1. Personal Theories of Teaching

Pre-service English language teachers in the study were found to be frequently engaged in narrating their own approaches and views related to teaching a foreign language. Most of the discussion through blogs has centered on personal opinions. This is congruent with the findings of Herring et. al (2005) study revealing that most of the blogs in their randomly selected corpus are found to be "individualistic, even intimate, forms of self-expression" (p. 163). Being a self-publishing tool, one of the most valued characteristic of blogging is its potential of providing the bloggers with the opportunity for self-expression and perhaps the "self-reflection that accompanies considerations" (Brescia & Miller, 2006, p. 49). Thus, the pre-service teachers in the study often discussed their theories of teaching with reference to what they had been observing in the school they went as a requirement of the Practicum course.

Some interesting conclusions can be drawn when the related literature is examined. Farrell (1999), for example, indicated that the three experienced EFL teachers in his study were more interested in talking with their theories of teaching and the problems that they faced in teaching just like the results of this current study did. Furthermore, the pre-service teachers in Liou's (2001) study were more concerned about evaluating teaching of the teacher they were observing in the practice teaching course especially in terms of the classroom teaching approaches or methods he or she used. Comparing his results to Farrell's (1999), Liou (2001) discussed that the instrument he used – that is, the written reports – may have inhibited the student teachers' reflectivity. He suggested that providing a lower affective state may be helpful to trigger the development of reflectivity for teaching. What these two studies suggest is significant in the light of the findings of this study. First of all, compared to the traditional pen-and-paper journals or reports submitted only to the instructor, the blogs used as the instrument of this study provided a non-threatening but moderately challenging environment where pre-service teachers could reflect on their ideas and feelings, and generate knowledge in collaboration with the multiple perspectives. Moreover, they provided the pre-service teachers with unlimited number of audience to interact when compared to the fact that the three teachers in Farrell's study (1999) had only

themselves to share their opinions. Therefore, it might be possible to say that practitioners are more likely to go beyond just stating their evaluation of what happens in a particular lesson to discuss their personal opinions and theories of teaching when they are given opportunities to interact and collaborate.

For example, teaching grammar either implicitly or explicitly was one of the hot topics about which the participants shared their own personal opinions. They seemed to have conflicting ideas related to grammar teaching. First of all, during the course of their university education they were encouraged to teach grammar in a communicative and meaningful way. However, what they had experienced as a student learning English in an EFL context was the grammar teaching focused on memorizing mechanical rules and drills. For example, Nur described this in one of blog posts as follows:

> Our mentor teacher teaches the grammar topics in a very effective way that I really appreciate her. I always thought that teaching grammar inductively would be too difficult although I am sure that it would be effective. However, our mentor teacher manages it perfectly; she teaches inductively in a very simple and natural way and I begin to think that I can manage it, as well. She simply creates an environment where the students can only use that structure and she gives chance to every student to speak. Now I do not think that teaching grammar inductively would be that difficult. (April 18, 2008).

This post received 9 comments from the participants and the anonymous contributors. The pre-service English language teachers Ece and Zeynep, for example, stated that they were of the same opinion with Nur. Although they believed that it was the most effective way to do, they found teaching grammar inductively a little bit challenging. Nonetheless, they pointed out their ideas related to how the grammar could be taught inductively. On the other hand, the comments by the anonymous contributors comprised more detailed explanations. For example, addressing to Nur, Carla, a Brazilian English teacher from Florida talked about her experiences in her comment that:

> I guess there's no formula. I generally teach grammar very inductively, but the most important aspect of it is to make it relevant to students, letting them use language in a meaningful and contextualized way. Sometimes, just by giving a simple plain grammar explanation might help instead of battling to

show a concept to students. However, in general, I truly believe in the power of letting students realize what we are talking about with the teacher's guidance. What do you think? (April 23, 2008)

Nur did not remain indifferent to this comment, and she approached the topic in a similar way. There appeared an exchange of ideas between Carla and Nur on the issue, followed by again Carla's comment confirming what Nur had said before:

Right,N.., If you can motivate them with engaging tasks, then they will be hooked and totally involved in the learning process. Of course, not all of them will engage in the tasks in the same way due to their own learning styles. So, we also need to consider the aspect of variety to tap into those different styles. (April 24, 2008)

This topic was addressed in other participants' blogs as well. Participants kept discussing this topic in other blog posts and comments. For example, after leaving a comment to Nur's aforementioned blog post about grammar teaching, Ece continued contemplating on the issue on her own blog. Instead of stating her opinion about grammar teaching directly, she elaborated the topic through the descriptions of how particular grammatical subjects could be taught. She posted 5 successive posts elaborating her opinions about teaching grammar. It was possible to see the gradual progress in her reflections. In her first two posts, she described some of the techniques that her mentor teacher applied in vocabulary teaching. Having described a follow-up activity for vocabulary teaching in which students were required to create a story in groups by accomplishing individual parts on their own, Ece reflected upon the possible advantages of that activity:

…At the end of the activity, there was a full story that the students themselves created using the target vocabulary items. As you see our mentor teacher gives her students some "autonomy" in their learning. Or you may call this "responsibility", too. The students have the responsibility for their learning. They realize that when they do not participate in the activity, there will be no learning on the part of them. Thus, the teacher also aims to keep the students' attention on the activity and creating their own products. Another advantage of this activity is that the teacher helps the students internalize the newly- learnt items in a meaningful task. So my dear friends, it is all about the activity. What do you think? Does it make sense to you? Can it work in your class? Do you want to add some more aspects to it if it is not efficient in your own opinion? (April 21, 2008).

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This post initiated a substantial amount of discussion. Especially the anonymous contributors, Carla and Randi, suggested other activities in this respect. For example, an EFL teacher educator from Israel, Randi wrote in his comment:

> I really enjoyed your blog posting. When kids create their own stories, even the weakest learner can read at least his or her own sentence! This is a great way to have kids meet with success. Here are some suggestions to build on this activity. Why not write the story on tagboard or on a large flipchart if one is available? Then you can begin a collection of stories. As the school year progresses, learners realize how much English they've learned! Another suggestion is to copy the story and either photocopy it for everyone, or put it online. You can use it for anything from reading comprehension to looking for aspects of phonics (e.g., have kids circle all of the words with a silent 'e') to drawing comic strips of the story.It sounds like you're having a wonderful experience! I'd love to hear more. From an EFL teacher educator and consultant in neighboring Israel! (April 24, 2008)

This was followed by Carla's comment in which she further gave some other suggestions as to the vocabulary teaching:

> Dear E…,
> Randi has just given you some great ideas for vocabulary development. You wrote to me: *" I think that my mentor teacher is an effective one and I am observing every steps that she takes during the lesson. I am also taking note of such activities in my notebook and I like sharing them with my dear friends. I will be waiting for your suggestions as to online activities. Thanks for your nice compliments..."* The first suggestion I'd give is working with these students in the computer lab and have them create their digital stories. Digital stories are an engaging way to learn and retain new vocabulary because students can manipulate their texts and illustrate their stories and they can have a real audience worldwide besides their classmates and teachers. To start exploring digital stories possibilities, take a look at http://cogdogroo.wikispaces.com-/StoryTools . There's plenty to explore!!! Let me know what you think and how you would apply the idea in the classroom you're observing. Cheers from Key West. (April 24, 2008)

Having reflected upon the techniques that her mentor teacher used in teaching, Ece suggested other kinds of activities indicating her approaches in the following three posts in her blog. These posts were entitled *A Roadmap for Teachers*, *Conducting an Explicit Teaching…the steps*, *Reading Skill with a Grammar Point*. When she was asked about the motives underlying these posts, it was understood that the

relationship between her readers and herself motivated to formulate and further express her own ideas on her blog. Especially getting comments by educationalists from different parts of the world and even forming some kind of a shared bond between these people urged her to feel confident about her opinions. In addition to Nur and Ece, other participants such as Deniz, Zeynep and Zerrin also discussed grammar teaching on their blog postings. Each of the participants approached the issue from different angles. While Deniz focused on relating her opinions about communicative language teaching, Zerrin, for example, compared the current methodological views with those of the time she began to learn English when she was a little child by taking into account the wider, social and political perspectives.

The discussion going around the topic of grammar teaching was given a more detailed explanation so that this might illustrate how the participants leveraged their blogs. It was seen that one topic chosen by a blogger might trigger a similar discussion on another blog. Furthermore, the fact that blogs make it possible for their owners to share their emotions and thoughts with the interested people on the Internet motivates the bloggers, and helps them generate their knowledge through this interaction.

5.2.2. Problems

The pre-service English language teachers in the study were frequently found to be problem-oriented in their blog postings. They described the problems they faced in the Practicum course on their blogs. The problems they emphasized on their blogs were mainly about classroom management techniques, and pedagogical difficulties that students had in understanding certain grammatical subjects. When the related literature is examined, it is seen that practitioners are mostly concerned with these issues (Liou, 2001; Farrell, 1999; Yang, 2005). Since they were going to graduate and take responsibility of teaching in their own hands very soon, it was apparent that they were afraid of the unexpected. Although they had acquired sufficient pedagogical or methodological knowledge, they had not had enough experience in

teaching. When they got suggestions from professionals or other colleagues on the Internet, it seemed that they felt more relaxed and secure.

For example, in one of Oya's blog posts entitled *I have a problem*, she described problematic behaviors of a student in her class, and told that no matter what she had done, nothing changed. She did not know what to do and how to handle this problem. She finished her post by saying "*everbody, what should I do with him? I need your help*" (April 6th, 2008). This post received 14 comments, the highest number of comments that a blog post had during the current study. The commentators including both the participants and the anonymous contributors on the Internet made suggestions and provided helpful advice about her problem. It was interesting that when participants mentioned a problem in their posts and sought help and suggestions from the readers, they received more comments. Getting comment is crucial to initiate a discussion on one's blog. When participants were asked in the post-study interviews to tell what motivated them to publish a blog post on their own blogs during the study, almost all of them told that they wrote on their blogs especially when they were in need of others' help or suggestions, or in other words, when they had a problem. This was one of the reasons that made them write about mostly the problems on the blogs. Since they knew that they could get others' opinions when they had a problem, and that this would attract readers' attention, their reflections became more problem-focused over time.

The problems mentioned in blog posts were found to initiate a substantial amount of discussion and interaction. Furthermore, when the blog postings in the study were analyzed, it was seen that participants also engaged in different types of reflectivity when they discussed either the factors contributing to the problem, or possible solutions related to the problem. Therefore, the problems that the participants mentioned in their blog posts were found to facilitate reflection and critical thinking among the participants.

5.2.3. Self-awareness

As it was described in the previous chapter, pre-service English language teachers blogged about several topics relating to teaching and learning issues. However, it was interesting that no matter what they discussed in their blog postings, the discussion almost always came to a point where they reflected upon their views of what it was like to be a teacher. Their practicum experiences spurred them to identify aspects of their teaching to work and develop in the future. Congruent with the fact that they had had little teaching experience in a real setting so far, it was found that they reflected less on their perception of themselves as a teacher, but more on their professional goals. Therefore, most of the participants focused primarily on participants' goals as a prospective teacher.

When the related literature is examined, it is seen that studies in which the participants are required to keep traditional pen-and-paper journals note few entries related to participants' self-awareness (Ho & Richards, 1993; Farrell, 1999; Liou, 2001). On the other hand, the results of Yang's (2005) study are similar to the results of this current study in this respect. Self-awareness was found to be one of the two topic categories that pre-service teachers were critically reflective in Yang's (2005) study.

Unlike pen-and-paper journal writing, blogging seems to facilitate critical thinking and increase self-awareness. But why is this so? This question needs careful consideration. The implications of the current study make it possible to trace the possible explanations to this question on two different domains; one is related to the communicative and collaborative characteristics of blogging, and the other is about the kinds of reflection the participants are involved in through their blogs.

First of all, one may well assert that the collaborative and interactive nature of blogging engender this kind of reflectivity among the pre-service teachers. As it was described in the chapter of literature review in detail, with the characteristics of the electronic availability, archiving the entries, allowing readers to leave comments, including hyperlinks to outer resources via the Web, the sense of ownership, and the opportunity of having a personal space to deliberate thoughts

and ideas, "weblogs offer an alternative to the traditional journal format, while retaining many of the more positive aspects" (Shoffner 2005, p. 2096).

As it was described in the chapter of literature review, studies which employed the pen-and-paper journal writing as a tool to facilitate reflection revealed some problems such as lack of ideas in journals (Lee, 2007) or difficulty in sustaining interest in writing journals (Ho & Richards, 1993; Lee, 2007; Liou, 2001). When the instructor is the only reader of the students' journals, it is quite normal that students may consider journal writing as a way to communicate with the instructor or as a kind of assignment rather than a tool to facilitate reflection.

Why do we have to confine ourselves to interacting only with the people from the immediate context considering the unlimited number of audience that blogging may offer to us? The blogs provided the pre-service teachers in the study with a chance to share their feelings and thoughts with the rest of the world. Although the rapidly growing number of blogs all over the world makes it difficult to trace what people are blogging about, it is still encouraging to find that other person and discover and communicate with a small but dedicated group. 29 different people from all over the world including English teachers, teacher educators and students have left comments to the participants' blog posts and some continued blogging and interacting for a while. This played a role in enhancing the level and depth of the participants' reflectivity. As opposed to the afore-mentioned studies in the literature that noted little journal entries about self awareness, the pre-service teachers frequently reflected upon their strengths and weaknesses as a teacher as well as their goals for the future. This interactive and friendly atmosphere encouraged them to share their very sincere feelings on their blogs. Ipek, for example, in one of her blog posts entitled *I am confused* ☹ stated that she was not sure about being a teacher any more. She asked help and understanding by saying:

> hi my dear colleagues!!
>
> I want to state one of my problems about being a teacher ☹
> Our mentor teacher tries to be beneficial for us as possible as she can be. On Wednesday, she gave us some assignments of the students in order to check them. She explained how we should check them; what the criteria we should consider into, which symbols we should use to show the wrong things, etc.

All these are fine..While checking the assignments in the evening, I feel like a real teacher who studied at her home also. This is my problem ☹ I feel the burden on the teachers that their work does not finish in the school, but goes on at their home and in their free times. So I feel a bit depressed and already bored with my future occupation. I really wonder whether you have this kind of negative feelings about being a teacher or not.. Am I the only one who depressed about her future job at the very beginning of it?!! (Ipek's Blog, April 8th, 2008)

Ipek received 12 comments to this post; 5 comments by the other participants in the study, 7 by the anonymous contributors. Almost all of the comments comprised understanding and encouraging messages. Furthermore, the pre-service commentators approached the issue by reflecting the reason why they really wanted to be a teacher. Ipek's post seemed to make them think about how they could handle with the workload in the future. The teachers approached this more cautiously since they knew what was awaiting these prospective teachers. One of the anonymous contributors left a comment as follows:

Great question! I think teaching is really about being passionate about it and its possibilities and how you can impact in very subtle ways your students' lives. No, the work is not reduced ever! In fact, as years pass by, you can even spend more hours related to your profession because it's not just your classroom, you always need to look for professional development and getting better in what you do. Maybe teaching is for you, maybe not. You need to see if that's what you really want to be doing for the rest of your life or if there's something else that drives you, that really makes you happy and willing to do your best. What do you see yourself doing in 10 years that would make you happy? Cheers from a passionate Brazilian educator in Key West, FL. (Ipek's Blog, April 23rd, 2008)

Another anonymous contributor, an English teacher in France, suggested an online conference and some tips for dealing with the hard workload and burnout:

I do recommend the online conference http://exeteronline.britishcouncil.org/mod/resource/view.php?id=144 "What Keeps Teachers Going" Obviously, like any job, it's more difficult at the beginning - but then, in case you don't have time to listen to the whole lecture, here's one of Susan's slides: Constructive approaches to dealing with burnout
Working smarter instead of working harder
Setting specific, realistic goals rather than noble, abstract ones
Doing the same thing differently, while changing what can be

changed
Breaking away
Taking things less personally
Accentuating the positive
'Knowing thyself'
Rest and relaxation techniques
Making a real transition between work and home each day
A life of one's own
And, when necessary, changing jobs
With best wishes from an English teacher in Grenoble, France
(*Ipek's Blog* April 26th, 2008)

The other comments that Ipek received relevant to her post seemed to make her reconsider her feelings and thoughts about the issue since she published a comment in response to the comments indicating that she changed her mind:

> thank you all for your precious comments:)) now I am not desperate about my future job beacuse of its workload, on the contrary I feel ready to work hard and to do my best in my future career as a teacher. I can work everywhere even after my work finishes at the school because I am too young and full of energy to work in my dreamy job "a teacher foreign language" ☺ (Ipek's Blog, May 4th, 2008).

Ipek was asked in the post-study interview about this specific incident. Whether or not she really changed her mind, and if so, how come she did so was examined. Her following utterances revealed to what extent she attached importance to the support and collaboration blogging might engender:

> Bu çok olumsuz bir yazıydı. İnsanlar özellikle hani sen yaparsın gibisinden destek olmaya çalıştılar. Çok hoşuma gitti yorum almak özellikle yabancılardan, ya dedim Türkiye değil bu dışardan geliyor yorumlar, çok hoşuma gitti. Onlar sanırım bu işi yapan insanlar, senelerdir yapıyorlar. Bize karşı çok olumluydular, teşvik edicilerdi. Yorumlar motivasyonumu kesinlikle artırdı. Hepsi bak şöyle olur yapabilirsin dediler. Hepsi bana o an görmediğim bardağın dolu tarafını göstermeye çalıştı. Düşüncemin okunması dikkate alındığını gösteriyor, ve bunun hakkında bi de yorum yapılması hani sana hem katkı sağlamaya çalışıyor, o karşıdaki kişi de kendi fikrini paylaşıyor seninle, hani bir de alışveriş oluyo bilgi alışverişi aramızda güzel oluyor. Asıl beni etkileyen yalnız olmadığımı anlamaktı. Önemsenmek çok güzel bir şey cidden. (Ipek, Post-study interview)

> It was really a nasty piece of work. People especially tried to encourage me by saying you can do this and that. I liked getting feedback especially from those who are not living in Turkey. I said to myself these feedbacks are from overseas. I

> really really liked that feeling. I guess they are doing such
> things all the time. Their attitudes were quite positive and
> encouraging. Their comments definitely influenced me in a
> good manner. Their critical views have contributed much to my
> further studies since they showed me some points that were not
> totally clear to me. This shows that they really put effort and
> spent time on my comments and read them carefully. In short
> their comments show that they really took me seriously. What
> influenced me most was the time when I felt I am not alone. It
> is really great to feel what I am saying is important for some
> people. (Ipek, Post-study interview)

This collaborative and communicative nature of blogging seems to contribute to the participants' reflectivity towards themselves. In addition to this, the results of this study reveal that the pre-service teachers are involved in different kinds of reflection, which helps them increase their self-awareness. When we examine the literature on reflection dealing with the teacher education, it is possible to state that most of the emphasis has been on reflection-on-action, or in other words, what practitioners have experienced in the past. The traditionally perceived and studied times of reflection have been criticized in the literature by some scholars (Akbari, 2007; Boud, 2001; Conway, 2001; Hatton & Smith, 1994). Conway (2001) states that "teacher education currently concentrates on memory with the result that little attention is paid to imagination" (p.104). Too much emphasis on practitioners' past experiences with little attention to imagination or creativity may consider "learners as passive respondents to events" (Boud, 2001, p.12) and it may reveal nothing new but what is already known (Fendler, 2003). When the pre-service teachers write traditionally used paper-based journals, they generally get feedback only from the teacher educator. Since they submit their journals to their instructors, they engage in either completing the tasks on their course pack or responding to guided questions designed to make them observe what has happened in the classroom. Thus, retrospective reflection-on-action is encouraged by these traditional reflective tools. However, in order to get prepared to the problems they face in the classroom, teachers need to engage in anticipatory reflection. This kind of reflection has an indispensible role in making the teachers autonomous and independent in their classroom decisions (Akbari, 2007).

Blogging in this study seemed to encourage imaginative prospective reflection since the participants were found to engage in not only reflection-on-action, but

also reflection-for-action which might enable the practitioners to "undertake reflection, not so much to revisit the past or to become aware of the metacognitive process one is experiencing…but to guide future action" (Killion & Todnem, 1991, p. 15). In their blog postings, the participants most of the time set their professional goals for their prospective career by considering the possible working conditions and teaching contexts awaiting them in the future. For example, in one of the blog posts published on May 2nd, 2008, Zeynep asked her colleagues to imagine what it was like to teach in a situation where the technological tools they were accustomed to were unavailable.

> hi everybody, i have a question: what would you do if you had no visual or technological aid available at your class? i have heard from a friend of mine in the other section that their mentor teacher was in that condition. yet what surprised me is that he has been teaching in this way for many years (he is an old teacher) but his students even deal with phonetic transcriptions of the words. although he does not bring any visual aid to the class he teaches vocabulary items very effectively as my friend says. how can he do that? can you make a guess? or how would you do that if you did not have any pictures, printer, computer or projector? (is it too hypothetical to ask that question? if so just let me know) warm hugs, Z… (Zeynep's Blog, May 2nd, 2008).

Some of the participants and the anonymous contributors left comments relevant to this post. In these comments they discussed the issue from different angles; from the attitudes of the administrative to the activity suggestions as to what could be done when there was no technological tool available. An anonymous contributor suggested the following practical methods:

> Hello Z…Collecting pictures cut out of magazines and bringing them into class, or collecting postcards or printed photos and bringing them in too helps to add color to a low-tech classroom. You can also ask the learners to close their eyes and imagine and use a 'visualization' task, where they 'visit' a place they like very much, a place they remember well, etc. And asking learners to draw simple comics, using 'stick' figures can be fun too. Some thoughts from an 'old' teacher in Poland. Melanie (Zeynep's Blog, May 6th, 2008)

In her response to the comment given above, Zeynep thanked Melanie and said that she decided to collect postcards and pictures in case she would need them in her teaching.

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5.3. Participants' Reaction to Blogging

Although the participants varied in the degree of their blog use, all of them approached the blogs positively, and stated in the post-study interviews that they liked being a part of it. Especially the participants who were seen to leverage their blogs more frequently found blogs very useful and enriching. At the post-study interviews the participants were asked about their blogging experience, the challenges and complaints with using blogs and their views about integrating such technologies in their teaching.

All of the pre-service teachers stated that blogs were very user-friendly since they had no difficulty in managing their blogs and enriching their blog content and templates through many additional widgets. Furthermore, almost all of the participants appreciated the fact that blogs provided them with the freedom to post what they would like to. This flexible environment allowed them to discuss several teaching and learning issues, and choose what to contribute to. Additionally, the asynchronous nature of communication through blogs was also welcome by most of the participants. Comparing these features to classroom interaction, one participant stated that:

> Zaman ve mekan açısından blogların çok yararı var, istediğin zaman konuşabiliyorsun…Haftada 2 saat practice dersimiz vardı. Onun haricinde tabi biz de yaşıyoruz…Derste bir defa söz hakkın geldiğinde task hakkında konuşuyorsun. Ama bloglarda istediğin her konuyla ilgili tartışabiliyorsun ve gelişimin devam edebiliyor. …kendini geliştirmek adına arkadaşlarının yazdıklarından örnek alarak ders çıkararak öğrenebiliyorsun. Zaman açısından öğrenmen sadece derste kalmıyor ayrıca sınıfta da kalmıyor, okulun ve sınıfın dışına çıkabiliyorsun (Post-study Interview).

> In terms of time and place such bogs have quite a lot writers…you can get started a conversation whenever you want…we had two hours practice teaching classes in a week. …when it is our turn to say something we prefer talking about the given tasks. But in such blogs you can talk about any subjects you like and you constantly improve yourself. You can take others sharing's as good morals and learn a lot. You are not supposed to learn only in the classroom settings. You can learn whenever you want and outside of the classroom (Post-study Interview).

The pre-service teachers loved the idea of being able to share their ideas and thoughts with the interested people on the Internet. This opened up "a new means of communication", "another form of interaction" or "a platform for discussion" that did not exist before. Furthermore, they liked that blogs enabled them to archive all of the blog postings. As one pre-service teacher describes:

> Herşeyden once bir şeyler yazıyorsunuz ve yorum alabiliyorsunuz, o özelliği çok güzel. Hani siz bir şeyler yazıyorsunuz ama başkaları ne düşünüyor o konu hakkında onları öğrenebiliyorsunuz. İletişimi sağlıyor, hani o yazılı kalıyor orda. Bi msn gibi değil, msn den de konuşuyoruz ama iki kişi arasında kalıyo kimse görmüyor başka, kimse okumuyo ama hani burda yazdığımız süekli kalıyor falan hani seneler sonra bile dönüp bakabileceğiz falan, kişisel bir tarih oluşuyor neredeyse, mesleğe ilk başlarkenki görüşlerimize her zman dönüp bakabilme şansımız olcak.

> The first but not the least you can write something and get response, this is the best part. You are writing something and you can learn what others might think about the same issue. It makes communication possible and what you write remains there. It is not just like something you share in msn. You can also communicate via msn but it is just between two correspondences and no one else can read it. Compared to this, what you write in a blog can remain there for many years and soon you can find and read the same thing. It is just like a kind of personal history. After many many years you will have the chance of looking back to your past. You can go and find what you were thinking once just at the beginning of your career (Post-study Interview).

Through this collaborative and interactive atmosphere where the participants felt at ease while they were asking for help and advice from their friends and colleagues on the Internet most of the participants began to enjoy others' contribution to their progress. One pre-service teacher clearly stated how blogging altered her point of view on this as follows:

> Sadece bloglarla da sınırlı kalmadı iletişimimiz, bloglar bizi daha da çok görüşmeye itti…Görüş almazdım ben eskiden kimseden, ders anlatacaksam mesela kendim hazırlardım gerekenleri ve o gün mesela msn nimde kapalı olurdu, hiç bir şey açmazdım, hani sırf ders hazırlamaya yönelirdim. Ama blogda yazmaya başladığım zaman…başkalarının yorumları geldikçe daha güzel şeyler çıkıyor onu görüyorsun. Ondan sonra ne bileyim artık hani artık ders hazırlarken falan msnyi de açıyorum blogları da açıyorum... Daha çok fikir almaya yöneliyorum onu farkettim. Eskiden bu kadar çok fikir

almıyordum. Kendi kafamdan kendi bildiğim gibi yapmaya çalışıyordum. Şimdi fikir almak da güzelmiş hakkaten onu gördüm ben (Post-study Interview).

The interaction among us was not limited to blogs. Blogs stimulated us to see each other more frequently. .. I did not use to take others' opinions. Suppose that I had to lecture on a subject, I used to prepare what was necessary on my own, my MSN account would be close that day, I opened nothing, just focusing on preparing my work. However, when I began blogging… as you get others' comments, you realize that better things come out of it. After a while, I do not know how to say it but, as I am studying, I am opening MSN, getting online on my blog ever after...I have realized that I am more eager to take others' opinions. I did not use to take others' opinions that much. I used to do so my own way. I now realize that taking others' opinions has been really good (Post-study Interview).

Of the participants who used blogs more effectively, most of them commented that blogs helped them identify and discuss teaching issues, and that they were useful for the Practicum course. One of the participants reflected on the benefits of being able to discuss teaching issues on her blog:

Bloglara yazı yazmaya başladıktan sonra staj dersi içinde daha böyle bi dikkatlice gözlem yapmaya başladım, neler yazabilirim diye düşünmeye başladım. Böyle ilginç olayları yakalamaya çalıştım. Hocamızın taktiklerini anlamaya çalıştım. Daha böyle bi dolu dolu bir gözlem oldu. Teaching açısından da mutlaka katkısı oldu. Dediğim gibi kendimiz öğretmeye başladığımız zaman daha bi gerçekçi olacak yazdıklarımız sorularımız o zamana çok katkısı olacağına inanıyorum (Post-study Interview).

After I started writing on the blogs, I began to observe with more care for the Practicum course, and began to consider what else I could write about. I tried to catch interesting points, and figure out our mentor teacher's tactics. It became a good and satisfying observation. It absolutely contributed a lot to teaching. As I have stated, what we write and speculate about will be more real when we begin to teach in the future. I believe that it will be more beneficial then (Post-study Interview).

It was seen that they were looking for getting comments as soon as they published a blog post on their own blogs. However, the desire to have comments to their blog posts was found to be so strong that sometimes getting no response from the readers had a demotivating effect on the participants. Some of the participants stated that when they posted their reflections on their blogs or asked for

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suggestions and advice through their blogs, and got no response, it resulted in a lack of motivation and a difficulty in sustaining interest in maintaining their blogs. This has to be taken into consideration when the blogs are to be implemented in a teaching and learning environment.

Another benefit derived from the post-study interviews is that the blogs, to many, served as a place where they could disclose their personal details. Most of the participants frequently used their blogs to announce social events, to inform others of educational news and conferences or to discuss their career plans. Thus, this blogging experience contributes to the bond among the participants. They began to feel closer to each other as they were sharing their feelings and ideas on their blogs. As one participant stated:

> Bloglara özellikle sık kullananlarla aramızdaki ilişki arttı. Daha öncede birbirimizi tanıyorduk biliyorduk ama bu kadar yakından değil. Sonuçta herkesi her an göremezsin ama online olarak çoğunlukla onlara ulaşabilirsin, ve sürekli bir fikir paylaşımı olabilir aranızda (Post-study Interview).

> The interaction among especially those of us who frequently used the blogs increased. We had known each other beforehand but not that closely. All in all, it is not possible to see everybody all the time but you can reach them online most of the time and thus, a continuous exchange of ideas can be possible among you (Post-study Interview).

Another participant reflected on this issue as follows:

> Bilmediğim özelliklerini öğrendim, staj hakkında düşüncelerini öğrendim. Aramızdaki bağı geliştirmede mutlaka bir faydası oldu. Birbirimizden öğreneceğimiz çok şey var çünkü (Post-study Interview).

> I discovered their characteristics I had not known before and I learnt their thoughts about teacher training practice. It certainly improved the bond among us because there are a lot we can learn from each other (Post-study Interview).

Most of the participants agreed that teacher education programs could benefit greatly from integrating blogs as supplementary to classroom interaction. Especially for literature courses many emphasized the potential advantageous of using blogs to let the students "to share their interpretations", "to discuss course

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material", "to continue class interaction" and "to bring up issues that they could not find time or opportunity to mention in class".

Pre-service teachers were also asked to state the differences in their perceptions between writing an assignment and writing to their blogs. It is interesting that most of the participants responded to this question in a similar way. Their responses emphasized the fact that blogging helped them refine their thoughts and articulate them in a more organized manner as compared to the writings that they turned in. It was understood from the interviews that this online platform enabled them to feel comfortable but at the same time careful about what they were publishing on the blogs. The following excerpts from the post-study interviews illustrate their conceptions related to this issue:

> Direk aklına geleni söylemiyorsun, düşüncelerini ölçüp biçiyorsun, araştırıyorsun belki düşüncelerini daha derli toplu bir şekilde ifade ediyorsun (Post-study Interview).

> you do not say directly what comes to your mind, you ponder your thoughts and ideas, maybe you do research on them, you express your thoughts in a better organized and more orderly way (Post-study Interview).

> Çoğu kişinin okuyacağını bilerek daha özenli davrandım bloga yazı yazarken (Post-study Interview).

> Knowing many people would read, I behaved with more care/ more painstakingly while I was writing in the blog (Post-study Interview).

> Yanlış anlaşılmamak için ve daha net düşüncelerimi ortaya koymak için daha özenli davrandım bloga yazı yazarken (Post-study Interview).

> I behaved more painstakingly while I was writing in the blog not to be misunderstood and to put forth my ideas more clearly (Post-study Interview).

> Bloglara hiç bir zaman zorunluluktan yazmadım, yazmak istediğim için yazdım. Bir başlık bulurken bile nasıl etkileyici olur insanlara diye düşündüm. Her açıdan ilgi çekici olsun istedim (Post-study Interview).

> I never wrote in the blogs out of obligation, I wrote since I wanted. Even while I was trying to find a title, I thought about

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how impressive it could be to the people. I wanted it to be impressive in every aspect (Post-study Interview).

Furthermore, almost all of the participants stated that blogging enhanced their writing skills. It is interesting to note that referring to the fact that they were in an EFL context some of them admitted that they had hardly used English outside the classroom before participating to this study. The following quotation describes how happy they were since they were given this opportunity:

> İngilizceyi sadece derste kullanıyorduk şimdiye kadar. Mesela bi GS şampiyonluğunu kutlarken hiç İngilizcemi kullanacağım aklıma gelmemişti. O hani farklı oldu çok uzun bi şey değildi ama yine de farklı oldu benim için, daha çok ani sosyal yaşamda kullanabildim ingilizceyi. Çünkü EFLdeyiz dili sadece ders için ve akademik konuları tartşmak için kullanıyoruz. Bloglar dili bu anlamda kullanmam için yani eğlenmek için kendim için kullanmak adına bir alan sağladı bence (Post-study Interview).

> Up to now, we have used English only in the classroom. For example it had never occured to me that I would use my English to celebrate the championship of Galatasaray. It was different, It was not that long but it was different for me anyway, I could use English more in a social life. Because we are in EFL, we use English just for the course and to discuss academic subjects. To me, the blogs have provided a space where I can use the language in this sense, namely, a space to use language just for fun, for myself (Post-study Interview).

> Çok rahat yazıp geçtim. Görmediğim kalıpları gördüm bloglarda, ve kullanmaya başladım. Karşılıklı konuşur gibi yazmak çok rahat yazmama neden oldu (Post-study Interview).

> I wrote with great comfort. I saw the patterns I had never seen before and I started to use them. Writing as if we were speaking face to face enabled me to write with much more comfort (Post-study Interview).

When the participants were asked whether or not this blogging experience contributed to their professional progress, almost all of them responded positively.

> Kendimizi geliştirmek için çok gerekli bence. Aklımıza takılan herşeyi sorabildik tartışabildik. İlerde daha yararlı olacak eminim (Post-study Interview).

> As for me, it is necessary to develop ourselves. We were able to ask and discuss anything that came to our mind. I am sure it will be more beneficial in the future (Post-study Interview).

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Mesleki açıdan özellikle bilmediklerini öğreniyorsun, başkalarının neler yaşadığını öğreniyrsun, ben de yapabilirim bunları diyorsun, insanın kendine güveni artıyor (Post-study Interview).

You learn what you do not know about teaching profession, you learn what others have experienced in their practices, You think `I can also do/apply them`, one's self-confidence increases in oneself (Post-study Interview).

Pre-service teachers were also asked whether they would like to use blogs in the future. The responses to this question were generally positive. Especially the ones who contributed to the study more and used their blogs more efficiently were found to respond to this question more enthusiastically. For example, one of the participants described:

Mutlaka devam etcem bloguma. Arkadaşlarla ayrılacağız artık, hem onlarla iletişimime devam etmek için blogu kullanabilirim, hem de gerçek bir ögretmen olduğumda daha çok observationa dayalı şeyler olcak…gitttiğimiz okullarda başka ingilizce öğremenleri de olsa, onlarla paylaşamayacağımız şeyler olacaktır…. Aktivite için olmasa bile, normalde öğrenciler günlük hayatlarını bile anlatsalar öğrencilere blog açtırmayı düşünüyorum. Böylelikle bu dili kullanabilirler (Post-study Interview).

I will absolutely maintain my blog. We will separate from our friends soon. I may use my blog not only to keep in touch with them, but also to disclose things based on my observation when I become a real teacher. ..Even if there will be other English teachers at schools we are assigned to in the future, there will be things that we cannot share with them…I am planning to make students create blogs not necessarily for activities, but maybe just to let them use the language to describe their daily lives. In this way they will be able to use that language (Post-study Interview).

Another participant stated that:

sınıf blogu açabilirim mesela. Internette oyun oynayacaklarına …ben onlara sınıf blogunda bir aktivite veririm ve mesela bir hikaye başlatırım ve devam ettirmelerini isterim. Zaten interneti seviyorlar, farketseler de farketmeseler de dili öğreneceklerdir bu yolla öğrenciler (Post-study Interview).

For example I may create a class blog. Instead of their playing games on the Internet… I may provide them with an activity on the class blog, and suppose that I initiated a story there and wanted them to develop it. They already love the Internet. In

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this way, they will learn the language whether or not they realize.

The following utterances by another participant dealt with other possible applications of blogging:

> İletişimi artırmak için kullanabilirim ilerde. Mesela öğrenci derstte bir şeyi anlamadı. Soru sormaya da çekinebilir sınıfta. Zaten yabancı dil öğrenirken erkadaşlarının arasında konuşmak çoğu için challenging bir şey. Sınıf bloguna bir mesaj atarak sorabilir mesela çekingen öğrenciler, yada ne bileyim anonim mesajlar atarak beni eleştirebilir bir öğretmen olarak. Sonuçta bu özgürlüğü vermek güzel bir şey (Post-study Interview).

> I may use this to increase the communication in the future. Suppose that a student did not understand something in the lesson. S/he might hesitate to ask about it in the classroom. It has been already a challenge, to many, to speak among their friends while learning a foreign language. Timid students, for example, might ask about it by posting a message to the class blog, or they might criticize me as a teacher by publishing, let's say, anonymous messages. All in all, it is good to allow that freedom (Post-study Interview).

In addition to the afore-mentioned benefits, the participants described some problems or concerns related to their blogging experience. Almost all of the participants said that this study must have started at earlier stages in their university education. Since this was their last term before graduation, they were more interested in searching for jobs on the Internet, applying for some job interviews and preparing for a forthcoming examination which they were required to pass as soon as they graduated in order to work at state schools. The heavy workload as well as their concerns for the future might have harmed their commitment to the study. Furthermore, 4 out of the 12 participants, Zerrin, Bora, Ekin and Mert, did not have computers at their homes. They could have access to Internet either at Internet cafes or on-campus. On the other hand, the other 8 participants lived at dormitories on campus and had access to Internet only in the university computer labs. The relatively limited access to Internet could limit the duration of their Internet connection throughout the study, which could be one of the factors affecting their engagement in blogs.

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All of the participants also stated that they could have been more reflective on their blog postings if they had been assigned to different schools in the Practicum. They did not want to blog about the topics relevant to in-class discussion. As a requirement of the Practicum course, they had to prepare a portfolio in which they were expected to fill in structured observation tasks given in the course pack which was prepared by the course instructor, and write a report for each of these observations. Furthermore, they frequently had the opportunity to discuss these topics on the weekly held on-campus seminars. Since the class number was very small and all the 12 pre-service teachers were assigned to the same private school, they did not want to discuss similar topics on their blog postings. In order to attract other participants' as well as other readers' attention to their blog postings, they tried to find interesting topics to write about. This engendered significant consequences related to the study. Since the private school they were going to might be considered above the average in terms of the level of the instruction and the available facilities, they admitted that they had difficulty finding interesting topics to blog about. This was one of the factors that might have limited their reflectivity.

Of the other problems mentioned in the post-study interviews, there were privacy issues and their attitudes towards technology. 2 of the participants, Ekin and Alev, mentioned that they did not like to disclose their personal details on the Internet. Ekin further explained that he wanted to have a career in the private school that they were assigned to in the practicum course, and that this was why he could not reflect critically about the school context that much. Although the participants were informed at the beginning of the study that they could use pseudonyms on their blogs, it is apparent that still some may have felt some concerns about the privacy issue. Furthermore, their attitudes toward using such technologies played a role in the degree of their contribution to the study. For example, Alev described that she did not want to spend time using computers or surfing on the Internet unless she was required to do so. She was found to publish the least number of the blog postings in the study. Her attitude toward technology integration might be one of the factors underlying this result.

With respect to the topics which the pre-service teachers blogged about most, the following arguments can also be discussed:

They shared their problems, and sought help from others through their blog posts. In doing so, they knew that this would attract the others' attention. More significantly, this affected the depth and the variety of the reflection on the blogs since they were aware that reflection at a procedural level did not engender any discussion or interaction among the blogger and his or her readers. There is no point in depicting what has happened at a particular setting unless you left some room for others to contribute to.

Additionally, these participants were the senior students. The study was carried out during their last term before they became professional teachers. They had taken many pedagogical and methodological courses since then. During the course of their university education, they were exposed to different theories and methodologies related to the teaching English as a foreign language. While discussing these theories and applications in class, they may have come up with contradictory views about teaching issues. Furthermore, the Practicum course provided them with an opportunity to observe and evaluate what was going on in a real language classroom. It can be drawn out of their blog postings indicating their personal theories of teaching that what they were observing and evaluating in the Practicum urged them to test their views of teaching and reformulate their opinions accordingly. They frequently found themselves questioning what kind of a teacher they were, how they would behave if they were in such a situation, or how they would handle with such problems. For example, as described in the previous chapter, an utterance Zeynep has heard from her mentor teacher in the classroom saying that she was not their mom made her question what kind of a relationship should exist between a teacher and her students in the future. She discussed this topic in her blog with her colleagues and came up with the idea that she did not have to be somebody's mother to take care of his or her needs. It was teachers' duty to be interested in the students' psychological and social needs as well as pedagogical needs.

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Furthermore, the aforementioned blog postings and interview excerpts help us understand the kind of interaction and communal support going through the participants' blogs. First of all, it was found that a discussion around a blog posting frequently triggered the emergence of similar discussions on other blogs in the study; e.g. their discussions on grammar teaching in different blogs. Owing to the RSS feeds, the participants were always informed of the updated content of the other participants' blogs. What they read on a blog may have stimulated them to pursue that topic in their own blogs. The interviews revealed how much they appreciated others' contributions to their blogs. They generated their knowledge and reflection in collaboration with the multiple perspectives. The blogging experience seemed to allow the bloggers to discover and communicate with a small but dedicated group.

5.4. Summary

In this study blogs were used as an educational tool to support pre-service English language teachers' reflective practice. The results revealed that blogging supports the pre-service teachers' reflectively positively. All of the participants were found to be reflective to a certain extent in their blog postings. However, there were differences in the degree of reflection that the pre-service English language teachers in the study engaged in. They blogged mostly about their personal theories of teaching English in a country where English was considered a foreign language, the major issues related to teaching and learning and their strengths and weaknesses as a prospective teacher.

Participants approached blogging positively, and used their blogs for other purposes such as disclosing personal details, their career plans and concerns, and announcing social events, news and educational conferences. This social sharing and interaction among the participants was found to empower their sense of belonging to a community and their autonomy as learners.

Taking into consideration the high level of autonomy and interaction opportunities that blogs provided, it was possible to assert that the use of blogs might be well suited to the aims of teaching reflective capacity to pre-service teachers.

CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSION

6.0. Presentation

This chapter presents the concluding remarks with regard to the results of this case study which is followed by the discussion of the limitations of the study, implications for practice and suggestions for the further research.

6.1. Conclusion

Russell, McPherson & Martin (2001) point out that beginning teachers experience some inconsistencies between what they learn in their university education and what expected from them to be successful in schools. In order for them to be able to cope with those difficulties or the challenges they face in their daily practices, they should be encouraged to take risks and learn from their experiences (Yurkiw, 2006). This can only be achieved through cultivating ability to reflecting on one's actions since reflective thinking which helps the practitioners identify, analyze and deal with the complex issues (Spalding & Wilson, 2002), spuring self-inquiry and professional development (Farrell, 1999; Pennington, 1995). Many teacher education programs incorporate journaling in order to equip the pre-service teachers with reflective skills. However, studies show that the pre-service teachers have difficulty achieving higher levels of reflection (Hatton & Smith, 1994; Galvez-Martin, Bowman & Morrison, 1998; Liou, 2001) or reflecting on wider contexts of teaching and learning other than immediate concerns of instruction such as classroom management and control (McLaughlin & Hanifin, 1994),

supporting Gelter's (2003) suggestion that reflection is not a spontaneous activity for teachers.

This study might be, therefore, a response to a call for new reflective tools derived out of the discontent with widely used traditional reflective approaches. Therefore, the current study aims at exploring whether the blogging experience enhances the reflective practice among pre-service English language teachers. The answer is yes. The results suggest that blogs might offer new possibilities to researchers and educationalists that traditional reflective tools mostly fall short of while retaining many of the more positive aspects.

With regard to the results of this case study, following conclusions can be drawn:

• Blogging in this study supported the pre-service English language teachers' reflectivity. The participants leveraged their blogs mostly to discuss their personal theories of teaching, the problems that arose from teaching practices and their personal goals for the future. The categories that the pre-service teachers blogged about were used as a measure to determine their reflectivity. In this regard, all of the participants were found to be critically reflective to a certain extent although they varied in their degree of reflectivity according to the topic categories.

• They were more reflective in their comments supporting that the more they interacted with others, the more they became critical in their reflections.

• The more they used their blogs, the more they became reflective. The analysis of the structural features of the participants' blogs also supported this argument since the more they personalized their blogs and enriched their blog format, the more they felt the ownership of their blogs. The more they did so, the more they received comments from others, which affected the depth and quality of their reflection.

• Furthermore, pre-service English language teachers approached blogging positively. They appreciated many of the characteristics of blogging including the electronic availability, archiving the entries, allowing readers to leave comments,

including hyperlinks to outer resources via the Web, the sense of ownership, and the opportunity of having a personal space to deliberate thoughts and ideas.

• Participants stated that blogs contributed to the bond among their classmates. Moreover, most of them told that blogging improved their writing skills. They felt more comfortable with getting their message across in a foreign language, and many of them expressed their willingness to use blogs in their future teaching. Mostly because of these positive outcomes, they agreed that teacher education programs could benefit greatly from integrating blogs as supplementary to classroom instruction and interaction.

• The pre-service English language teachers in the study used their blogs for other purposes such as disclosing personal details, their career plans and concerns, and announcing social events, news and educational conferences.

• However, participants need guidance and facilitative, structured activities which might engender active participation in blogging. Therefore, when blogs are to be integrated in a curriculum, much more care should be given to the design of such integration.

With all this in mind, it is possible to assert that "weblogs as reflective space offer the flexibility, personalization and informality to support pre-service teacher informal reflection" (Shoffner, 2008, p. 132). Blogs as a flexible, professional reflective tool make it possible for pre-service teachers not only to interact with others, but also to actualize their unique voices in a non-threatening but encouraging atmosphere. This may spur self-inquiry, lifelong learning and professional development. Lortie (1975) referred to teaching as the egg carton profession since the walls of the classroom establish boundaries that separate teachers from each other. The collaborative, friendly and non-threatening atmosphere of blogging opens up a new channel for pre-service teachers through which they can go beyond the confines of their classrooms and stop engaging in teacher development in such isolation.

6.2. Limitations of the Study

This is a case study exploring 12 pre-service teachers' blogging experience as support to their reflective practice in a practicum course. Compared to the quantitative research studies, it might be argued that the sample size of this study was very small, and that the results of this study cannot be generalized to the other contexts. However, it is not the generalizability but the transferability of the results that matters in qualitative research. In order to establish the transferability of the results of this study, the researcher provided as much detailed context-relevant information as possible so that "others can see the setting for themselves" (Gay, Mills & Airasian, 2009, p. 375).

Researchers are not independent of the qualitative research process. The researcher's thinking, her personal views, her bias, her background, and the way she interacted with the participants inevitably influenced the direction and the results of this study. The researcher tried to minimize this effect by reflecting upon the nature of interaction, observing the participants, and conducting both pre- and post-study interviews with each participant. Furthermore, the researcher asked one of her colleagues who was an expert in the field to code the data. Thus, the data in this study were coded by two coders in order to minimize the researcher's potential effect in the process and maximize the trustworthiness of the results.

The sample was limited to 12 pre-service teachers attending to a practicum course. 4 out of 12 participants did not have computers at their homes. They could have access to Internet either at Internet cafes or on-campus. On the other hand, the other 8 participants lived in dormitories on campus and had access to Internet only in the computer labs. The relatively limited access to Internet could have limited the duration of their Internet connection throughout the study, which could be one of the factors affecting their engagement in blogs. Furthermore, 9 participants were found to have never heard of blogs before the study began. Although this might not be considered to limit what could be done, the fact that most of the participants in the study had low technology use skills might have limited their participation to the study.

6.3. Implications for Practice

Considering the results and the related literature on reflective teacher preparation, the following implications were drawn for the incorporating blogs as support to pre-service teachers' reflective practice in teacher education programs.

The pre-service teachers' beliefs and understandings are important since they will guide their future actions and decisions. Therefore, their notions and feelings need to be examined during their university education. Teacher educators often use certain structures such as predetermined tasks or questions to guide pre-service teachers' reflective practice (Yost, Sentner & Forlenza-Bailey, 2000). However, this may censor alternative ways of approaching reflection (Shoffner, 2008) instead of revealing the pre-service teachers' feelings and understandings since they may perceive that there is only one right way to reflect. It is nearly impossible to expect from this kind of approach to spur self-inquiry and professional development. Teacher educators need to create and develop opportunities which allow for growth and change in individual understanding. Blogging provides such a flexible and professional environment which enables the bloggers to find and develop their own unique voices, progress on their own pace and take responsibility of their learning and participation.

Blogging, as Oravec (2002) states, empowers the students and thus, encourages them to become more critical and analytical in their thinking. Being aware of the fact that their writings might be read by an unlimited number of the audience, the bloggers are more likely to formulate and articulate their thoughts with enough care. A collaborative atmosphere is crucial in a reflective course. Due to the collaborative and communicative blogging atmosphere, in order to formulate and defend their responses the students need to consider others' viewpoints before stating theirs. This helps them generate knowledge through multiple perspectives. Therefore, teacher educators need to make use of this multivocality in order to go beyond the confines of their classrooms.

Pre-service teachers can only be encouraged to participate, share and exchange their ideas and experiences when they are provided with a collaborative, friendly,

non-threatening, non-evaluative but moderately challenging atmosphere (Mewborn, 1999). The findings of this study imply that providing the pre-service teachers with such a friendly atmosphere where they can interact with the interested people or colleagues from different parts of the world enhances their reflective capabilities. It is seen that the supportive and critical interactions with the other bloggers and anonymous contributors on the Internet stimulate the pre-service teachers to "negotiate their meaning and, by so doing, to extend and reframe the ways in which they look at their own practice. (Bailey, Hawkins, Irujo, Larsen-Freeman, Rintell & Willet, 1998, p. 537). Furthermore, understanding that they are going through similar problems, and sharing similar expectations with those from different parts of the world, or understanding that completely different or extraordinary educational realities may exist in the world can help the bloggers see their problems and the issues being discussed in a new light. As Bailey et al (1998) clearly articulate, "the act of decontextualizing an issue is a powerful one as it enables all the members to gain ownership of the discussion and helps limit the constraints of our own ways of viewing the situation" (pp. 543-544). Therefore, teacher educators should pay enough care to prepare blogging tasks and activities which may enable the pre-service teachers to interact with the others, and generate knowledge through multiple perspectives.

In addition to the communication of ideas through blogging, the act of writing itself was found to promote thought through reflection. As Beed et. al (2005) point out, "by articulating our rationales for actions through writing, by uncovering our beliefs and examining our actions in light of those assumptions, we engage in inquiry or knowledge-generating" (p. 163). Likewise, the results of this study imply that blogging might increase the quality of the students' writing when the power of writing combines with the awareness of the fact that the unlimited number of audience could read them anytime on the Internet. For example, Kelly (2008), in her dissertation, explored the impact of blogging on the instruction of academic writing among eighteen second language undergraduate students. He found out that blogs can facilitate and enhance the instruction of academic writing especially by promoting positive affective conditions such as higher sense of class community and self-efficacy, and lower level of writing apprehension. It is interesting that while the mere act of writing can engage the writer in critical

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reflection, the need to negotiate one's meaning through the collaborative and friendly blogging environment may increase the quality of that writing. Blogs, therefore, can be used as an authentic tool especially in EFL contexts to engage the students in reflective writings.

Using blogs for academic purposes is a novel idea for many pre-service teachers. In order to help them develop a predilection for using blogs to reflect on their profession, it is crucial to introduce reflective blogging at early stages of teacher preparation. If we want to cultivate a habit of reflection among pre-service teachers, as Lee (2007) states, "there is no reason why learning to reflect should wait until the practicum" (p. 322). It is essential to create opportunities for teacher learners to engage in blogging in the other courses either to enhance instruction or to social interaction (Giacoppo, 2007) so that they can get accustomed to sharing and formulating their ideas and thoughts through such social softwares. They can discuss course material, post their assignments, share resources on the Web or disclose their personal details. Moreover, this can contribute highly to their conception of integrating such technological tools in teaching and learning a foreign language.

In addition to many other benefits of blogging, blogs allow the bloggers to reread and review what they have written about since the first post published on their blogs. Archiving of all the blog postings makes it possible for them to trace their own development, which encourages independent individual reflection (Lee, 2007; Shoffner, 2008).

Furthermore, when the problems of "the legibility of handwritten documents, instructor response time, record-keeping concerns, and the transportation of …written student journals" (Stiler & Philleo, 2003, p. 789) are taken into consideration, using blogs as online journaling may give teacher educators practical advantages over the ones using traditional pen-and-paper journaling.

With all this in mind it is possible to say that blogs with a low threshold and a high ceiling (Myers, Hudson & Pausch, 2000) can be used for many purposes in educational setting including reflection development. However, it is essential to

understand that blogs are just tools, and "it is not the technology per se that is effective or ineffective but the particular ways in which the technology is used" (Kern, 2006, pp. 188-189). As Mewborn (1999) states, "merely providing pre-service teachers with opportunities to reflect and activities that encourage reflection does not guarantee that reflection will occur" (p.317). Likewise, incorporating blogs into a practicum course does not ensure that this enhances the pre-service teachers' reflectivity. In this respect, a successful implementation of blogs necessitates taking into consideration a number of factors including the specific ways in which the blogs are used, by whom, in what contexts and for what purposes. Learner characteristics, their needs and goals should be taken into consideration before establishing the designing such environments. Moreover, pre-service teachers need guidance and facilitative structured activities which help them be accustomed to using blogs effectively.

Teacher educators who wish to implement blogs in their courses should also take into account some practical considerations such as available facilities, access to computers and the Internet. Problems related to such conditions may limit or even prohibit what can be derived out of the application. In order to overcome some possible technical problems, reliable sources of technical support such as online documentations about the use of the selected blog hosting service, tech-support personnel or colleagues should be provided to the students.

6.4. Suggestions for Further Research

The current study is a case study which attempts to explore the blogging experience of 12 pre-service English language teachers during a semester-long study span. Such a period of time is not sufficient to assert that this blogging experience might help them nurture an ability or habit of reflection. Therefore, a follow-up should be conducted in order to explore whether this blogging experience has resulted in the development of reflective capabilities. Longitudinal studies are also recommended to investigate how this group of pre-service English language teachers will utilize blogging when they become practitioners.

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Blogs can be used in several courses simultaneously to encourage the pre-service teachers to reflect on teaching and learning issues. As it is also suggested in the previous section, researchers might explore how blogging might affect pre-service teachers' reflectivity if it is introduced at earlier stages of their teacher education. In addition to reflection development, such integration might result in a number of instructional benefits. The impact of blog integration in the teacher education programs on instructional practices could be further investigated. Such inquiry will need to focus on the decision-making processes of the novel teachers, who have experienced blogging in their teacher education.

In this study blogs were used as online self-publishing journals to support the pre-service teachers' reflectivity in a practicum course, and the effectiveness of the blogging on the participants' reflectivity was examined. Although the results cannot be generalized, the study identified many other contributions that blogs might make. It is apparent that the rapidly evolving social software technologies have begun to question and change the ways we learn, use and teach languages. Blogs, being one of the promising and emerging Web 2.0 tools, open up new forms of discourse, new forms of literacy or authorship, and new ways to establish and maintain professional networks or learning communities. In order to explore these changes, future research related to the instructional benefits of blogging should extend into different and varying learning communities.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A1 - PRE-STUDY INTERVIEW (in Turkish)

1.   Interneti hangi amaçlar için kullanıyorsunuz?

2.   Interneti ne sıklıkla kullanıyorsunuz?

3.   Teknolojinin yabancı dil öğretiminde kullanılması konusundaki fikriniz nedir?

4.   (Eğer destekliyorsanız) Ne tür uygulamalar yada aktiviteler düzenlenebilir?

5.   Geçen dönem aldığınız Okul Deneyimi dersinde ödevlerinizi hazırlarken kimlerden dönüt aldınız?

     Bu dönütler sizce yeterli oldu mu?

6.   Okul Deneyimi dersi ile ilgili değiştirmek istediğiniz noktalar var mı?

7.   Geçen dönem arkadaşlarınızın görüşlerinden ve deneyimlerinden faydalanabilmeniz için ortamlar yaratıldı mı?

8.   Sizce arkadaşlarınızın görüşlerinden ve deneyimlerinden yararlanmak önemli mi?

9.   Grup çalışmasını mı yoksa bireysel çalışmayı mı tercih edersiniz?

10. Kendinizi bir gruba ait hissedebiliyor musunuz?

11. Bu dönem ki Practice Teaching dersinden beklentileriniz nedir?

APPENDIX A2 - PRE-STUDY INTERVIEW (in English)

1.   For what purposes do you use the Internet?

2.   How often do you use the Internet?

3.   What do you think about the integration of technology in foreign language teaching?

4.   If you think that it is necessary, what kinds of activities or applications may be developed?

5.   From whom did you get feedback while you were completing the tasks and assignments in the School Experience course the previous term?

     Do you think that that feedback was adeaquate and satisfying?

6.   Is there anything that you would like to change about the School Experience Course?

7.   Were you given any opportunity to benefit from your classmates' ideas and experiences the previous term?

8.   Is it important for you to benefit from your classmates' ideas and experiences?

9.   Do you prefer working in groups or individually?

10. Do you feel that you belong to a group?

11. What kinds of expectations do you have about the Practicum course this term?

APPENDIX B1 - THE POST-STUDY INTERVIEW (in Turkish)

1. Bu dersi birlikte aldığınız arkadaşlarınızla aranızdaki ilişkiyi nasıl değerlendiriyorsunuz?

   a) Sizce birlikte ders alan özellikle hizmet öncesi öğretmenlik eğitimi alan öğrenciler arasında bir bağ oluşması önemli midir?

   b) Uygulama dersini aldığınız dönem boyunca grubunuzdaki arkadaşlarınızla aranızda ortak bir bağ oluştu mu? Kendinizi bir gruba ait hissedebildiniz mi?

   c) Yukaridaki soruya yanıtınız evet ise, aranızda oluşan bu bağa ve paylaşıma bu dönem uygulanan blog ortamının sizce katkısı oldu mu?

      • Olduysa, hangi açılardan ve ne derece katkıda bulundu?

      • Hayırsa, bunun sebepleri sizce nelerdi? Bu grubun iletişiminin daha etkili olması için neler yapılabilirdi?

   d) Uygulama grubu içinde birbirinizin deneyimlerinden, kaynaklarından ya da görüşlerinden yararlanabildiniz mi?

      • Evetse, ne ölçüde yararlandınız?

      • Hayırsa, bunun sebepleri sizce nelerdi?

2. Sınıfta paylaşamadığınız ya da ders dışında aklınıza gelen herhangi bir konuda ya da herhangi bir sorunda blog aracılığıyla yardım istediniz mi?

      • Evetse, bu ortamda aldığınız desteği nasıl değerlendiriyorsunuz?

3. Bloglardaki yazıları ve yorumlarda yapılan tartışmaları düşündüğünüzde online ortamın yüzyüze deneyimlerinizden ne tür farklılıkları oldu?

4. Genel bir değerlendirme yaparsanız blogların hizmet öncesi öğretmen eğitiminde kullanılması hakkında ne düşünüyorsunuz?

5. Kendi blogunuzdaki aktivitenizi nasıl değerlendirirsiniz?

   a) (Pasifse), sizi daha az yazı yazmaya ya da yorum yapmaya iten sebepler nelerdi?

   b) (Aktifse), blogların hangi özellikleri sizi yorum yazmaya teşvik etti?

   c) Daha aktif bir "blogger" olmanızı sağlayacak etkenler nelerdir?

6. Blogunuza ne tür konularda yazı yazdınız?

7. Blogunuza yazı yazdıktan sonra bir beklentiniz oluyor muydu?

8. Blogunuza gelen yorumları düzgün olarak takip edebildiniz mi?

   a) Yazılarınıza yorumda bulunulmuş olması sizde nasıl bir duygu uyandırıyordu?

b) Hangi yorumlara cevap verme ihtiyacı hissettiniz?

9. Arkadaşlarınızın blogunuza olan ilgisini nasıl değerlendirirsiniz?

10. Hangi yazılarınızın ilgi çektiğini düşünüyorsunuz?

11. Tanımadığınız insanlardan yazılarınıza yorum geldi mi?

    a) Evetse, bu konuda neler hissettiniz?

    b) Onlarla iletişiminiz devam etti mi?

12. Yazılan yorumların sizin gelişiminize katkısı oldu mu? Evetse, hangi açılardan katkısı oldu?

13. Arkadaşlarınızın bloglarındaki yazıları/yorumları düzgün olarak takip ettiniz mi?

    a) Evetse, en çok hangi yazılar ve yorumlar dikkatinizi çekti?

    b) Yazılarda gelişen tartışmalara ne oranda katıldınız?

14. Blog kullanırken teknik açıdan zorlandınız mı?

15. Blogların ne tür olanaklarından yararlandınız? (video, resim, linkler, takvim, sayaç, anket, vs.)

16. Grup dışında başka bloglarla ilgilendiniz mi?

17. Bu blog uygulamasının mesleki gelişiminiz için yararlı olduğunu düşünüyor musunuz? Evetse, hangi açılardan kazanımlarınız oldu?

18. Bu uygulama sırasında öğrendiğiniz başka internet araçları oldu mu?

19. Blog deneyiminizi düşündüğünüzde en çok beğendiğiniz/hoşlandığınız özellikleri nelerdi?

20. Beğenmediğiniz/hoşlanmadığınız özellikleri nelerdi?

21. Sizce bloga yazı yazma ile geleneksel anlamda derslerde tuttuğunuz günceler arasında ne tür farklılıklar var?

22. Sınıftaki tartışmalara katılıp fikirlerinizi paylaşmakla blogda yazmak ve tartışmak arasında nasıl farklılıklar var?

23. Blogunuza yazı yazmaya devam etmeyi düşünüyor musunuz? (Evet ya da hayırsa), neden?

24. Blogları ilerde İngilizce öğretiminde kullanmayı düşünür müsünüz?

    a) (Evetse) hangi dil becerileri için kullanmayı düşünürsünüz?

    b) Blogları derslerinize nasıl entegre etmeyi düşünüyorsunuz?

25. Uygulama dersindeki blog kullanımı ile ilgili belirtmek istediğiniz başka birşey varsa lütfen belirtiniz.

APPENDIX B2 - THE POST-STUDY INTERVIEW (in English)

1. What do you think about your relationship with your classmates?

   a) Do you think that it is important to form a bond among pre-service teachers?

   b) Has there been a shared bond between you and other pre-service teachers in your group during the Practicum course this term? Did you feel that you belonged to a group?

   c) If yes, did blogging contribute to that bond and sharing?
      - If yes, then for what aspects and to what extent did it so?
      - If no, then why it did not contribute to the bond among the classmates? What might have done in order to facilitate the communication within this group?

   d) Did you and the other group members in the practicum course benefit from each other's experiences, resources or ideas?
      - If yes, then to what extent did you do so?
      - If no, what are the reasons for that?

2. Did you seek help through blogs when you had a problem outside the class or when you had something in your mind that you could not share in the classroom?
      - If yes, how do you feel about the support that you receieved on this environment?

3. When you consider the on-going discussion on the blogs, what can you say about the differences between online and face-to-face discussions?

4. If you consider your blogging experience, what do you think about using blogs in pre-service teacher education?

5. How do you feel about your activity on your own blog?

   a) (If s/he is passive) what were the motives or reasons that made you publish fewer posts or comments?

   b) (If s/he is active) Which characteristics of blogs urged you to leave comments?

   c) What factors do you think can make you a more active blogger?

6. What topics did you write about in your blog postings?

7. Did you have any expectation after you published a post on your blog?

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8.   Could you follow the comment traffic on your blog regularly?

    a) How did you feel about getting response from others to your writings?

    b) To which comments did you feel a need to respond?

9.   How do you feel about your friends' interest in your blog?

10.   Which postings do you think attracted others'attention?

11.   Did you get comments from anyone that you did not know?

    a) If, yes, how did you feel about it?

    b) Did you keep in touch with them?

12.   Do you think that the comments you received contributed to your progress? If yes, in what ways?

13.   Did you follow your friends' blog postings on a regular basis?

    a) If yes, which postings attracted your attention most?

    b) To what extent did you participate in the discussions on the blogs?

14.   Did you have any technological problem or difficulty in managing your blog?

15.   What blog features did you use? (video, picture, links, calendar, counter, etc)

16.   Were you interested in other blogs?

17.   Do you think that his blogging experience has contributed to your professional development? If yes, then in what ways?

18.   Did you learn other Internet tools during this application?

19.   When you consider your blogging experience, what blogging charateristics did you like most?

20.   What blogging charateristics didn't you like?

21.   In your opinion, what are the differences between keeping an online journal through your blog and keeping a traditional pen and paper journal?

22.   What kind of differences are there between participating in in-class discussions and communicating through blogs?

23.   Do you think that you continue blogging in the future? Why or Why not?

24.   Would you like to use blogs in your future teaching as support to English language teaching?

    a) If yes, for which skills you would like to use them?

    b) How would you integrate blogs in your lessons?

25.   Please state if you want to tell anything about using blogs in practicum.

APPENDIX C Categories for Data Analysis (*adapted from Ho and Richards, 1993*)

Topic Category	Sub-category	Illustrative Examples
1. THEORIES OF TEACHING (a) Theories/beliefs about teaching and learning	• A belief / conviction • An expert's view • A justification • A personal opinion	• what constitutes good language teaching • referring to Krashen's views about language • describing a theory to justify something the teacher did • expressing an opinion about the value of classroom observation
(b) Applying theories to classroom practice	• How a theory was applied • Contradictions between theory and practice • How theories changed	• trying out a questioning strategy described in a lecture • describing why a classroom incident does not support a theory • how classroom experience changes the teacher's theories
2. APPROACHES AND METHODS	• Approaches and methods in teaching • The content of the lesson • The teacher' knowledge: pedagogical and experience • The learners • The school context	• the teacher's approach to the teaching of reading skills or the procedures used during a listening lesson • a description of the content of a grammar lesson • knowledge about the demands of class task; or pointing out how his or her teaching has become more student-focused • pointing out that students have little opportunity to practice English outside classroom • how administrative constraints or school policies affect teaching

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3. EVALUATING TEACHING	• Evaluating lessons • Diagnosing problems • Solutions to problems	• *Positive evaluation* e.g. commenting that the lesson went well since students were active in it; or *negative evaluation* e.g. pointing out that the lesson failed to achieve its goals. • *Students' problems* e.g. difficulties student had with particular grammar items; *classroom interaction* e.g. a planned grouping arrangement did not work because of problems students had interacting with each other; or teacher's problem e.g. the teacher did not have time and energy to mark the students' homework • *Alternative ways of presenting lesson* e.g. beginning a lesson in a different way; *deciding on a plan of action* e.g. deciding to use role play activities more often; or *seeking solutions from the tutor* e.g. asking for ways for overcoming particular difficulties
4. SELF-AWARENESS	• Perception of self as a teacher • Recognition of personal growth • Setting personal goals	• describing the style of teaching s/he feels more comfortable with, such as a teacher-centred style • describing how the teacher is less affected by problems that arise from teaching than before • identifying aspects of his or her teaching to work on in the future
5. Qs ABOUT TEACHING	• Asking for advice • Asking for reason	• questions about what should be done; asking for information; or asking how to do things • asking for reasons e.g.asking why planned lessons may be no more successful than unplanned ones
6. *DISCLOSURE OF THE PERSONAL INTERESTS*	• Sharing personal info. • Informal Support • Career plans	• Disclosing information about their personal life, family; or sharing their photos online. • Thanking people in response to their comments. • Describing what should be done on a job interview.

APPENDIX D

Differences between descriptive and critical reflection (*adapted from Ho and Richards, 1993*)

Reflection Category	Descriptive	Critical Reflection
1. THEORIES OF TEACHING		
(a) Theories/beliefs about teaching and learning	• A belief / conviction • An expert's view	• A justification
(b) Applying theories to classroom practice	• How a theory was applied	• A personal opinion • Contradictions between theory and practice • How theories changed
2. APPROACHES AND METHODS	• Approaches and methods in teaching • The content of the lesson • The learners • The school context	• The teacher' knowledge: pedagogical and experience • Sociopolitical context
3. EVALUATING TEACHING	• Solutions to problems by seeking solutions from experts	• Evaluating lessons: positive/negative • Diagnosing problems: e.g. students/class interaction; teacher problems • Solutions to problems • Alternative ways of presenting lesson • Deciding on a plan
4. SELF-AWARENESS	_____	• Perception of self as a teacher • Recognition of personal growth • Setting personal goals
5. QUESTIONS ABOUT TEACHING	• Asking for advice	• Asking for reason

APPENDIX E Consent Form

Gönüllü Katılım Formu

Bu çalışma daha önce de belirtildiği gibi ODTÜ Yabancı Diller Eğitimi Bölümü öğretim üyelerinden Yrd. Doç. Dr. Nurdan Gürbüz yürütücülüğünde ve araştırma görevlisi Sibel Korkmazgil tarafından yürütülen bir tez çalışmasıdır. Çalışmanın amacı, öğretmen adaylarının blog kullanımından ne ölçüde yarar sağladığının tespit edilmesidir. Bu amaçla bu çalışmaya katılanlar kişisel bloglar oluşturacaklardır.

Çalışmaya katılım tamamıyla gönüllülük temelinde olmalıdır. Çalışma boyunca, sizden kimlik belirleyici hiçbir bilgi istenmemektedir. Bloglarda yazılan yazılar ve yorumlar sadece araştırmacılar tarafından değerlendirilecektir; elde edilecek bilgiler bilimsel yayımlarda kullanılacaktır.

Katılım sırasında herhangi bir nedenden ötürü kendinizi rahatsız hissederseniz çalışmayı yarıda bırakmakta serbestsiniz. Böyle bir durumda çalışmayı gerçekleştiren kişiye çalışmayı tamamlayamayacağınızı söylemeniz yeterli olacaktır. Çalışma sonunda, bu çalışmayla ilgili sorularınız cevaplanacaktır. Bu çalışmaya katıldığınız için şimdiden teşekkür ederiz. Çalışma hakkında daha fazla bilgi almak için Yabancı Diller Eğitimi Bölümü öğretim üyelerinden Yrd. Doç. Dr. Nurdan Gürbüz (Tel: 2104087; E-posta: nurdano@metu.edu.tr) ya da araştırma görevlisi Sibel Korkmazgil (Tel: 2104085; E-posta: sibelk@metu.edu.tr) ile iletişim kurabilirsiniz.

Bu çalışmaya tamamen gönüllü olarak katılıyorum ve istediğim zaman yarıda kesip çıkabileceğimi biliyorum. Verdiğim bilgilerin bilimsel amaçlı yayımlarda kullanılmasını kabul ediyorum. (Formu doldurup imzaladıktan sonra uygulayıcıya geri veriniz).

İsim Soyad   Tarih   İmza

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APPENDIX F. Distribution of the comments per blog

Blogs \ Participant	Nur	Zeynep	Ece	Deniz	Oya	Mert	Zerrin	Bora	Ekin	Ipek	Yonca	Alev	Anony. contributors	Total
Nur's Blog	18	9	5	4	4	1	1	0	2	0	0	0	17	61
Zeynep's	13	17	3	2	2	0	2	0	1	2	0	0	9	51
Ece's	5	7	2	3	0	0	3	1	0	0	1	0	7	29
Deniz's	2	2	2	8	1	0	1	2	0	0	0	0	8	26
Oya's	4	1	2	2	5	2	1	0	2	1	0	0	7	27
Mert's	4	4	2	2	2	6	0	3	1	0	0	0	4	28
Zerrin's	3	2	3	0	1	0	5	0	0	1	0	0	6	21
Bora's	0	2	4	3	1	1	0	3	0	0	0	1	10	25
Ekin's	1	2	1	0	4	3	0	1	2	0	0	0	6	20
Ipek's	0	2	3	0	0	1	2	2	0	2	1	2	11	26
Yonca's	2	0	1	2	0	0	1	1	0	1	3	0	6	17
Alev's	1	1	1	1	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	7	14
Class Blog	3	2	5	2	0	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	7	22
Total	56	51	34	29	21	15	17	15	8	7	5	4	105	367

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APPENDIX G. Extent of the critical reflection in the blog postings

Topic Category	Sub-category	Frequency			Frequency of the traits of critical reflection in the blog postings											
		Total	Category total	Mean	Zeynep	Zerrin	Yonca	Oya	Nur	Mert	Ekin	Ipek	Ece	Deniz	Bora	Alev
1. Theories of teaching	Theory	199	202	16.58	17*	19*	11	14	33*	15	12	7	27*	30*	10	4
	Application	3		0.25	2*	-	-	-	1*	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
2. Approach. & Methods	Teacher's knowledge	26		2.17	1	2	-	4*	-	2	1	-	3*	11*	1	1
	The learners	40	112	3.33	4*	2	1	5*	6*	7*	1	1	1	10*	2	-
	School Context	46		3.83	4*	1	5*	4*	6*	8*	3	4*	3	4*	3	1
3. Evaluating teaching	Evaluating	65		5.42	7*	6*	1	11*	14*	3	4	1	8*	8*	1	1
	Problems	48	143	4.00	11*	8*	-	7*	4*	-	5*	2	4*	2	2	3
	Solutions	30		2.50	4*	3*	-	4*	6*	2	-	1	5*	3*	-	2
4. Self awareness	Perception of self as a teacher	20		1.67	2*	2*	-	-	4*	-	-	3*	5*	2*	-	2*
	Recognition of personal growth	31	133	2.58	1	-	3*	2	4*	1	2	4*	2	6*	3*	3*
	Setting personal goals	82		6.83	11*	2	6	4	13*	3	3	3	16*	13*	5	3
5. Qs about teaching	Asking for reasons	6	6	0.50	3*	1*	-	-	1*	-	-	-	-	-	1*	-

Asterisked Numbers ≥ Frequency Mean