Using the Case Story Method in a Teacher Education Practicum: Affordances and Constraints

Hande Serdar Tülüce[1]
İstanbul Bilgi University

Abstract

This case study explored the implementation of the case story method in practicum from the perspective of pre-service English language teachers. Twenty-one senior pre-service teachers were engaged in writing case stories based on their practicum observations and reflecting on those case stories collaboratively. The data obtained from the post-course reflection papers and a focus group interview were analyzed through a thematic analysis. The findings showed that pre-service teachers reported several personal and social affordances of using the case story method in practicum. Compared to the perceived affordances, pre-service teachers emphasized a smaller body of perceived constraints for the implementation of the method with respect to resources and management. In this study, the findings are discussed thoroughly regarding their potential implications for pre-service teacher education.

Keywords

Pre-service teacher education • Case story method • Practicum

1 **Correspondence to:** Hande Serdar Tülüce (PhD), English Language Teacher Education, İstanbul Bilgi University, Silahtarağa Elektrik Santrali No: 2/13 Eyüp, İstanbul 34060 Turkey. Email: hande.tuluce@bilgi.edu.tr

edam

It has now been established that novice teachers feel a "reality shock" (Veenman, 1984) or "praxis shock" (Flores & Day, 2006) when the ideals that they formed during their initial teacher education are often challenged or changed by the realities of classroom life as they begin to teach in a school (Farrell, 2008). Novice teachers can be better prepared for the reality shock only if the pre-service education that they receive is in line with classroom reality. There is no doubt that the learning opportunities that pre-service teachers have during their departmental studies need to be comprehensive enough to provide them with solid foundations and circumstances for relating theoretical knowledge with practical skills. When learning to teach is considered, practicum lies at the heart of pre-service teachers' knowledge building experiences and professional development (Tang, 2004), as pre-service teachers observe real teaching/ learning contexts, carry out reflective tasks, and practice micro and macro teaching. Thus, practicum has the potential to provide opportunities for preparing for the reality shock. However, the related literature indicates that, in most cases, practicum is far from sufficient to link theory with practice and the expectations of pre-service teachers are barely met (Korthagen, Lougran, & Russell, 2006; Seferoğlu, 2006).

There has been a consensus within teacher education programs on "preparing teachers who can learn *from* teaching, as well as learning *for* teaching." However, "there has been much less discussion about what goes on within the black box of the program inside the courses and clinical experiences that candidates encounter" (Darling-Hammond, 2006, p.11). Given that much of the contact with real classroom life takes place during practicum, what goes inside practicum—especially the methods that are applied—deserves close attention due to its potential to minimize the reality shock that novice teachers may feel when they begin their teaching career. Researchers and teacher educators are in the position of examining the impact of the methods they employ in practicum and looking for alternative methods and techniques that may be incorporated into practicum to better prepare pre-service teachers.

Case-based methods have been employed by teacher educators for representing the simulations of real classroom situations to improve pre-service teachers' professional learning (Harrington, 1995; Merseth, 1996; Schulman, 1992). The popularity of using case-based methods has resulted in different implementation of cases. Cevik (2011) categorizes these into four groups: (1) teacher candidates must record and analyze their own teaching practices (Rich & Hannafin, 2008; 2009); (2) teacher candidates must analyze cases that exemplify knowledge and skills of teaching (Kim & Hannafin, 2009); (3) teacher candidates must study cases to solve authentic teaching problems (Powell, 2000; Santagata & Angelici, 2010); and (4) teacher candidates must develop and analyze their own reflective narratives (Ackerman & Maslin-Ostrowski, 1995; Hsu, 2004; Youngs & Bird, 2010).

The case story method, a combination of the case study method with story writing or story telling (Ackerman & Maslin-Ostrowski, 1995), is one of the case-based methods put forward as a pedagogical tool to improve teacher education. The case story method has been situated in reflective learning theory that rests on the works of Dewey (1933; 1938), Kolb (1984), and Schön (1983). In this theory, reflection is defined as learning that rests on gaining new insights into the self and/or practice (Mezirow, 1981). Dewey (1933) postulated that an experience—an interaction between an individual and his environment—should be more than participation in activities. Thus, the act of experience does not necessarily lead to learning. Reflection is the key needed for channeling the experience to learning. Kolb (1984) proposed an experiential learning model that illustrates the four phases of learning from observation: concrete experience, reflective observation, abstract conceptualization, and active experimentation. Schön (1983), on the other hand, was more interested in how and when reflection is used and he proposed two processes that add to the development of any kind of expertise: reflection-in-action and reflection-on-action. The former is defined as reflection generated while an individual is engaged in the experience and the latter is defined as reflection generated by an individual after the experience.

Communication has been identified as one of the major components of reflection. Effective communication between peers during reflective processes has been reported to create a supportive interactive environment for professional growth (Glazer, Abbott, & Harris, 2004). Teachers, as claimed by Schön (1983), need to possess practical knowledge situated in the context of time and place. A case story is an appropriate tool to document experiences and generate reflections, because telling and writing stories is linked with facilitating, sharing, reflecting and establishing a social atmosphere within which a collective sense of experiences is established (Hunter & Hatton, 1998). Therefore, the case story method, which involves writing and sharing stories based on observations and experiences, has been recognized as a potential method to be used in teacher education.

Surprisingly, a review of the related literature shows that there have not been many studies on the case story method in teacher education. Ackerman and Maslin-Ostrowski (1995) investigated the use of case stories in educational administrator training. For the purposes of their study, they followed a case story implementation through which participants did free writing, developed case stories, told these stories to peers, and carried out small group and whole group reflection sessions. Analysis of the data elicited from a survey and interviews indicated that participants considered case stories to be effective in contributing authenticity to the classes, fostering involvement, reconciling theory with practice and illuminating discourse. The results also showed that the participants found case-based methods helpful in encouraging skill development and reflection on practice. Wilson and Williams (2001) carried

out a similar study using reflective stories written by pre-service physical education teachers on their practicum experiences. After the pre-service teachers had written their stories, the teacher educators edited those stories, developed discussion questions to address each story's dilemma and transformed the stories into case studies. According to the results of the study, the pre-service teachers appreciated that they were able to document their practicum experiences and reflect on them, and highlighted that through the sharing of the case stories they had the opportunity to compare their decisions on cases and find alternative solutions. Recently, Koç (2011) examined the role of using student-filmed video cases in teacher education. In his study, pre-service teachers role-played and video recorded their class memoirs. The analysis of data obtained from reflection papers demonstrated that using student-filmed video cases has the potential for fostering motivation, learning, empathy, and professional identity construction.

There has been detailed research carried out to examine the case-based methods in teacher education. However, it is surprising that researchers have devoted scant attention to the implementation of the case story method in practicum, which has the potential to increase the repertoire of teaching techniques followed in practicum. To fill the gap and investigate that potential, this study attempted to explore the implementation in practicum from the perspective of pre-service English language teachers. The research was guided by the following research question: How do pre-service teachers perceive the case story method in their learning to teach during practicum?

Method

Research Design

This research is a qualitative case study that explores the thoughts of pre-service English language teachers on the implementation of the case story method in practicum. Case study methodology enables researchers to focus on a phenomenon, event, case or groups within their contexts through an in-depth analysis (Yin, 2009). In accordance with the aim and design of the study, data derived from a focus group interview and post-course reflection papers were analyzed through thematic analyses.

Context and Participants

The study was carried out during a 14-week practicum course in an English Language Teaching Program of a university in Istanbul, Turkey during the spring semester in the 2014–2015 academic year. The participants in this case study were 21 senior pre-service English language teachers (17 female, 4 male) who voluntarily shared their thoughts on the integration of the case study method into the practicum course through post-course reflection papers and a focus group interview. The

convenience sampling technique, a type of non-probability sampling method, was employed in determining the participants. Two faculty members, one of who was also the researcher in this study, carried out the implementation of the case story method into the practicum course they offered.

Implementation

A case story is, in Ackerman and Maslin-Ostrowski's (1995) words, a combination of "the case study method with the tradition, artistry, and imagination of story writing and storytelling" (p. 3). Case stories written in this study were narratives detailing a significant episode of pre-service English language teachers' school-based practicum observations. These stories focused on any aspect of learning and teaching practices, interaction with students, cooperating teachers or the school environment that pre-service teachers depicted. The case stories were also coupled with at least two discussion questions that addressed the central dilemma of the stories.

The practicum course in which the case story method was implemented had five components: (1) carrying out observations in cooperating schools; (2) performing supervised teaching experiences; (3) attending seminar hours; (4) writing case stories; (5) submitting a portfolio. Specifically, during the 14-week practicum, pre-service teachers had to complete 30 hours of observation and carry out three supervised macro-lessons in their cooperating schools. They were also required to attend seminars in the university every week for 135 minutes (Mondays 2–5 p.m.) to share and discuss the case stories they wrote (five in total). At the end of their practicum, they were expected to submit a portfolio involving their case stories, lesson plans and materials used in macro-lessons, reflection papers, and administrative documents such as signature lists and evaluation sheets.

Figure 1 below depicts the implementation of the case story method incorporated into practicum. Before employing the case story method, pre-service teachers attended a pre-writing seminar given by the faculty members who implemented the method. In this seminar, pre-service teachers were informed about what constituted a case story and how practicum observations could be a rich source of cases. They were also given an example of a case story. In this article, instead of sharing the exemplary case story given in the seminar, a case story written by one of the pre-service teachers was given as an example to enable readers to have a better understanding of how pre-service teachers channeled their practicum observations into case stories (see Appendix 1). Once pre-service teachers began their practicum observations, they were also expected to begin noting down anecdotes that would be transformed into case stories. The pre-service teachers were invited to write only one case story per 2-week period because they needed some time to write and edit their case stories. The pre-service teachers also attended seminar hours in the form of group discussions
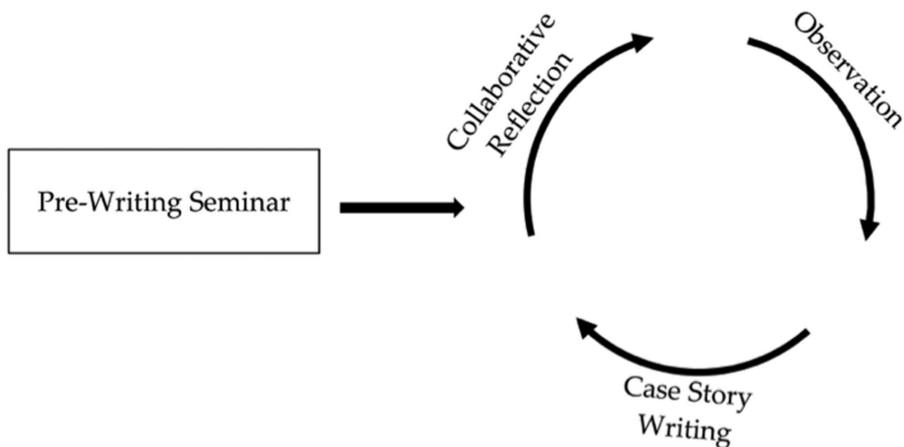
Figure 1. The Implementation of the Case Story Method

during which they shared their case stories with their peers. In this way, the group discussions enabled pre-service teachers to make collaborative reflections. The discussion questions addressing the central dilemma of the cases were used as guides to lead these collaborative reflections.

Data Collection

Post-course reflection papers and a focus group interview were used to explore pre-service English language teachers' thoughts on the implementation of the case story method in practicum. The details of data collection tools and procedures are as follows.

At the end of the semester, pre-service English language teachers were asked to write a post-course reflection paper (minimum 750 words) about their perceptions toward the overall effect of the case story method on their learning during practicum. The papers were written in English and sent to the researcher via email. The pre-service English language teachers were informed that these papers would not be evaluated in terms of their content or language. They were encouraged to write freely on the topic without a consideration of the faculty members' expectations with the perceived post-course outcomes. After submission of post-course reflection papers, pre-service English language teachers were invited to a focus group interview held during the last seminar hour scheduled for the practicum course.

The focus group interview was conducted using a semi-structured form comprising some open-ended questions to elicit pre-service English language teachers' thoughts on the integration of the case story method into practicum; specifically, the open-ended questions were directed to elicit how they view their learning experiences about using the case story method during practicum. Two faculty members who were offering practicum course developed the form collaboratively based on a literature

review. The interview was held under the supervision of the researcher. The duration of the focus group interview was approximately 75 minutes. The pre-service English language teachers were informed about the audio recording and the aim of the focus group interview before it was held, and that if they could not properly understand the interviewer's questions, they would be welcome to ask additional clarifying questions.

Ensuring Trustworthiness of the Study

Trustworthiness of a qualitative study is defined in terms of credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability rather than internal validity, external validity, reliability, and objectivity (Guba, 1981). The following steps were taken in order to ensure trustworthiness of the present study.

In order to increase credibility (internal validity), triangulation was achieved through the use of different data sources, i.e., post-course reflective papers and a focus group interview. In this way, both written and oral self-commentary reports were elicited from the pre-service English language teachers. To carry out simultaneous member checking, the researcher repeatedly restated and summarized the data elicited during the interview. Additionally, the transcription of the focus group interview was sent to some of the pre-service English language teachers to be checked. Moreover, some strategies were used to ensure honesty of the pre-service English language teachers in reflecting what they genuinely think of the matter under investigation. These strategies involved the following: (1) informing the pre-service teachers that there were no right or wrong answers to the questions; (2) informing them that no expectations were held by the researcher; (3) letting pre-service teachers know that they had the opportunity to withdraw their data from the study any time they wanted to. They were not required to give an explanation to the researcher about their decision on whether to participate in the research. By doing so, the researcher aimed to obtain data from the pre-service teachers who were willing to contribute to the research and genuinely offer the data. It should also be noted that this study was presented at an international congress when the analysis phase of the study was over. The study received supportive criticisms from academicians who helped the researcher to refine the potential implications of the case story method for pre-service teacher education. In this respect, the study was subjected to peer scrutiny, which is one of the most important factors in achieving credibility in research.

In order to address transferability (external validity), the applied procedures were reported in detail. Specifically, the study's research design, its participants and context, the data collection procedures and analysis were described in detail through tables and excerpts. In-depth description of methodology also ensured dependability (reliability) of the study as detailed reporting of the research process enables others to replicate the study in other contexts. In order to establish the inter-rater reliability

rate, a faculty member was asked to independently code the themes. To estimate the inter-rater reliability rate, Miles and Huberman's (1994) formula (Reliability = Agreement / Agreement + Disagreement) was used. As a result of this calculation, 96% agreement related to themes was achieved. In order to establish confirmability (objectivity), the limitations of the study were admitted and reported by the researcher.

In qualitative research, the researcher should acknowledge their positionality in the study. Rather than having a strict insider or outsider role, the researcher had what Dwyer and Buckle (2009) coined as "the space between." The researcher was not a complete outsider because she had a pre-existing knowledge of the research context and he/she had already known the pre-service teachers in person because she had taught some of their departmental courses in the previous years. Therefore, the researcher experienced no difficulty in gaining access to the research context and in developing trust in our relationships. However, the researcher was not a total insider because she did not share the participants' social and professional status.

Data Analysis

Thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006) was used to analyze the data obtained from post-course reflection papers and a focus group interview. The first stage of the analysis was to get familiar with the data set. In this stage, the researcher transcribed the focus group interview data verbatim. The researcher also read post-course reflection papers several times to get a general understanding of ideas mentioned by the pre-service English language teachers. The second stage involved generating initial codes. In this stage, the researcher revisited the data set to note down interesting features of the data in relation to the research question in a systematic way. In the third stage, the researcher gathered all of the initial codes together in the form of excerpts and collated them into potential themes. The next stage involved drawing a thematic map of the analysis to check whether the extracts coded work in relation to the potential themes. In the fifth stage, the researcher refined the definitions and names of each theme. The final coding scheme emerged in the data set after the analysis is shown in Table 1.

Table1

Final Coding Scheme: Themes and Sub-themes

Perceived Affordances	
Personal	Social
Reflect on practicum observations and prior learning experiences	Interact and collaborate with peers
Foster involvement in practicum observations	
Develop real and self-written cases	
Perceived Constraints	
Resources	Management
Time allocated to seminar hours	Turn-taking practices during seminar hours
Number of pre-service teachers	

The entire dataset was exported to a computer program, Dedoose Version 5.3.22, to revisit each theme to check whether they were wide enough to include the relevant data and restricted enough to exclude the irrelevant data. In the last stage, the researcher selected vivid excerpts from the data set to be reported in relation to each theme that emerged. The use of the computer software program enabled the researcher to store the data and retrieve the selected excerpts to be reported easily. It should be noted that during the focus group interview, each pre-service teacher was addressed by their first name but a number was assigned to each one of them while analyzing and reporting the data obtained from the interview. The same numbers assigned were also used while analyzing and reporting the data elicited from the post-course reflection papers.

Findings

Through an in-depth analysis of data gathered from post-course reflection papers and a focus group interview, two major themes emerged: (i) perceived affordances; (ii) perceived constraints. These two major themes are described and illustrated with supporting quotes taken from the data below.

Perceived Affordances

A body of evidence which emerged from the data showed that pre-service English language teachers commented mostly on their positive experiences and perceptions toward the implementation of the case story method in practicum. These positive experiences and perceptions were the qualities of the case story method that made it a particularly effective method to be implemented in practicum from the perspective of pre-service teachers. In this vein, the pre-service teachers' accounts of positive experiences and perceptions toward the case story method are grouped into a single theme of perceived affordances that encompass two sub-themes, i.e., personal and social.

The first major personal affordance of the case story method was to engage pre-service teachers in reflection. The pre-service teachers achieved a consensus that during the implementation of the method there were two areas on which their reflections focused: practicum observations and prior learning experiences. A typical point emphasized by pre-service teachers was that in order to write case stories, they had to reflect on what they observed during practicum. They argued that reflection was a natural component of the case story method because they needed to make sense of what was going on in classes to be able to develop case stories as well as acknowledge why the cases narrated in stories arose and how they could be resolved. Some pre-service teachers only highlighted developing case stories as a means to encourage reflection upon their practicum observations whereas some others particularly appreciated the discussion questions coupling the case stories. These pre-

service teachers reported that the discussion questions which addressed the central dilemma of the stories helped them to get more from the case stories as they posed key areas for reflection:

> While writing the case stories, we got the chance to reflect on the problem such as what might cause that specific situation and how to deal with that. Since we got to think about the cases especially about the problems and reasons behind them, it got us more reflective, which is very important. (Reflection Paper, P5)

> I think the discussion questions we asked after each case story were important. We asked several questions after sharing what happened in the form of a story. What would you do? Who are agents in this story? What are the consequences of different solutions? Through these questions we learned how to analyze classroom stories. (Focus Group Interview, P18)

Similarly, the majority of pre-service teachers pointed out that the case story method encouraged them to look back and reflect on their prior learning experiences; as they were observing real teaching/learning contexts to narrate case stories, their prior learning experiences came back. Thus, the case story method did not only help pre-service teachers to reflect on what they experienced as a teacher candidate during their practicum observations but also on what they had experienced before as a student. For example, one pre-service teacher explained as follows:

> Observing classes to narrate cases reminded me of what I experienced as a student. I had some moments when all my memories came alive. Those moments got me thinking of my very own learning. It's a strange feeling, like déjà vu! (…) I think those were the most precious moments I had during the observation. While I was writing about this particular case story, I did not just write about what I observed in the class but I reflected and thought about my own experiences even if that was not my intention. (Reflection Paper, P12)

Some of these pre-service teachers also suggested that the case story method fulfilled a professional purpose, which is a must for teacher development. These pre-service teachers were aware of the fact that prior experiences should be revisited as they pose both problems and opportunities for professional development. They emphasized that critical awareness of prior learning experiences lies at the foundation of professional growth. In this vein, they reported the critical role the case story method played in their professional development through revisiting memories and extricating what factors had an impact on their current beliefs. For instance, one pre-service teacher commented as follows:

> Teaching is a profession in which you are nourished by your past. If we did not go back to our memories, we would not be developing ourselves. We would stay where we are. We need to remember and analyze those memories. With the help of case stories, we travelled to our past. We reflected on our past. (Focus Group Interview, P3)

Another major personal affordance of the case story method expressed by the pre-service teachers was fostering involvement in practicum observations by making the task more meaningful and motivating. While commenting on the positive impacts of the case story method on their learning to teach, a high number of pre-service teachers identified the case story method as engaging them in observation, because the method gave them a reason to observe the classes in their cooperating schools, thus making practicum observation more meaningful and motivating. They also reported that the method enabled them to notice things going around in the observed classroom they might not otherwise have noticed. For instance, one pre-service teacher remarked as follows:

> To be able to write case stories, one has to pay attention to the classroom environment. Paying conscious attention helps me to focus on things happen in class and makes the whole observation period rewarding. It is quite similar to real life. Everybody tries to find a purpose in life to have a reason to get out of bed every morning. The case stories became the purpose of observation for me. (Reflection Paper, P12)

The most emphasized reason behind the perceived motivation for carrying out practicum observations was that pre-service teachers felt motivated to elicit and narrate good examples of cases happening in their cooperating schools. Almost all pre-service teachers reported that the case story method allowed them to be more motivated to carry out practicum observations because they were engaged in finding cases worth writing about and sharing in class. For example, one pre-service teacher emphasized that due to the case story method, she became more engaged with observation:

> In order to come up with a case story, I was being more attentive in the classroom as I was trying to find something to write about. Instead of just sitting around and filling observation forms, I was asking myself whether a case of that I observed was worth writing about because I wanted to write stories that would lead to class discussions. (Reflection Paper, P15)

Interestingly, pre-service teachers compared the observation they carried out during the spring semester practicum in which the case story method was integrated, with the observation they had done during the fall semester practicum in which they were asked to carry out structured observation with the help of some observation tools. As a result of this comparison, the pre-service teachers appreciated observing the classes to narrate stories more than observing the classes to carry out structured tasks as they believed the former gave them a more meaningful reason to observe and helped them to be more attentive to the learning and teaching context than the latter. For instance, one pre-service teacher claimed as follows:

> The most important thing about writing case stories is that it enabled us to observe the lessons more carefully. During the first semester, we had been observing and focusing on just some of the points that were relevant to our tasks, such as error correction, teacher talk

etc. However, when we were asked to write case stories, we focused more and more on the whole lesson not just on the limited areas. (Reflection Paper, P8)

One of the most elaborated personal affordances of the case story method generated by the pre-service teachers was to develop real and self-written cases. A strong consensus existed among the pre-service teachers that the impact of the case story method on their learning was profound because the cases were self-written and based on their own practicum observations. They emphasized that the case stories stemming from their own experiences increased their interests because they considered reflecting on cases about real contexts through narration of their peers to be a more relevant and valid activity than reading and reflecting on hypothetical cases or real cases narrated by unknown writers. In this vein, pre-service teachers compared the case story method with other case-based methods in which the pre-service teachers were not expected to develop cases themselves. The general tendency among pre-service teachers was that the case story method had more impact than the other case-based methods because composing the cases was a part of their learning as well. Some of the pre-service teachers' remarks concerning this matter are as follows:

> All events, all issues, and all questions we discussed in the classroom were real experiences. Reality was important because we did not discuss possibilities or hypothetical situations so this method was very effective. (Reflection Paper, P10)

> We discussed cases in classroom management course, too. How many of those cases do we remember now? You learn more when you construct these cases from your observations. (Focus Group Interview, P16)

A number of the pre-service teachers who viewed developing stories based on practicum observations as a component of their learning explained that the case story method supported them in getting ready for their future teaching careers. They argued that while writing the stories, they had the opportunity to notice and think on both what happened in the real teaching field and what might happen in the future. Particularly, they mentioned the positive impact of real and self-written cases on their readiness to tackle with problems that may occur when they begin their actual teaching careers. For example, one of the pre-service teachers reported the following:

> I had the opportunity to understand what I might face in the real teaching field when I begin my teaching career. It helped me to identify many solutions to possible problems I might face in the future. (Focus Group Interview, P6)

Although pre-service teachers generated various ideas on the personal affordances of the case story method, they reported one major social affordance of the method, i.e., interaction and collaboration with peers. Some of the pre-service teachers stated that practicum observation is an individual task because a pre-service teacher has the

opportunity to observe limited number of teachers in a limited number of cooperating schools. These pre-service teachers argued that through case stories they shared during the seminar hours, they had the opportunity to overcome the fact that they were carrying out observations in a limited context that only involved classes of a cooperating teacher in one cooperating school. They explained that sharing case stories that encapsulated lived experiences of their peers in other teaching contexts enabled them to learn about those contexts, gain different perspectives about teaching related issues and brainstorm on solutions to problems encountered during practicum. For example, one pre-service teacher explained the following:

> The case story method enabled us to have some knowledge about our peers' observations because we shared our observations through stories. As I was observing the same classes in the same school, my observations were limited to the same setting. However, my observations expanded beyond the limits thanks to the case stories from different classes and schools. (Focus Group Interview, P7)

The pre-service teachers used the concept of sharing several times in their reflections on the implementation of the case story method. A number of pre-service teachers particularly emphasized the role of seminar hours during which case stories were collaboratively discussed. They reported that these discussions created a stress free environment in which peers learned from one another through building upon each other's case stories and being engaged in collaborative reflection. In this vein, they viewed the case story method as a powerful tool to encourage interaction and collaboration between peers. For instance, one pre-service teacher commented as follows:

> Another good thing about case stories is that we have discussed those case stories in class. Everyone shared his or her own experiences regarding the issue. The ones who are less experienced on teaching, like myself, have had the opportunity to see how more experienced ones approach the problems. (Reflection Paper, P15)

Perceived Constraints

Compared to the perceived affordances of the case story method, a smaller body of evidence emerged from the data with regard to the perceived constraints of the case story method. A few of the pre-service teachers commented on the limitations and negative experiences related to the implementation of the case story method in practicum. These negative experiences and limitations, namely the qualities of the case story method that should be improved, encompassed two sub-themes: resources and management.

Although the pre-service teachers found the case story method helpful in many ways, a few of them reported that the time allocated to seminar hours was inadequate and that they needed more time to share and reflect on the case stories. They explained

how unhappy they felt when their case stories were not shared in class due to lack of time. The perceived constraint of insufficient time was coupled with another resource limitation: the number of pre-service teachers using the case story method; a few of them complained that the time was not sufficient to discuss their case stories and therefore suggested that the number of pre-service teachers using the method should have been fewer. These pre-service teachers were not satisfied with the fact that although they wanted to contribute to the discussion of the case stories, they did not get the chance because their turn did not come due to the number attending the seminar hours. It was suggested that the number of pre-service teachers using the case story method was limited:

> It would be better if there were fewer students in the course. Sometimes my turn in discussions came very late or did not come at all. More importantly, we could not analyze everybody's case stories. (Focus Group Interview, P14)

Some pre-service teachers were highly critical that not all case stories were shared during the seminar hours. They considered that the seminar hours could have been managed better if the there was a clear-cut turn-taking procedure followed. Specifically, a few were not happy with the way the discussion hours were managed and suggested not sticking to a topic for such a long time during collaborative reflections. For example:

> The disadvantage about the implementation of the method is management. I had many observations to share but sometimes I could not express them because I waited for so long to get the floor because we got stuck to some topics. (Reflection Paper, P8)

Discussion

The findings of this case study provide useful information gathered from the perspective of the pre-service English language teachers about the implementation of the case story method in practicum. The most crystalized finding of this study was that the pre-service teachers commented mostly on affordances, i.e., their positive experiences and perceptions toward the implementation of the case story method in practicum. Among the affordances of the case story method, the pre-service teachers mostly reported the opportunities of reflection the method created. This finding is in line with the related literature as the case-based methods were found to be highly effective in triggering reflection (Celik, et. al., 2012; Hunter & Hatton, 1998; Levin, 1995; Lundeberg & Yadav, 2006; Merseth, 1996; Santagata & Angelici, 2010).

Reflection, which is considered to be a key attitude for professional practice (Schön, 1983), can be defined as revisiting and re-assessing prior experiences through the current context and learning to support and improve future practice (Boud, 1985).

There were two areas on which pre-service teachers' reflections focused: practicum observations and prior learning experiences. Thus, the case story method enabled pre-service teachers to reflect both on their current practicum observations and their prior learning experiences. The method triggered a critical look at the prior experiences of pre-service teachers as they remembered instances from their apprenticeship of observations that were similar or related to the case stories. Looking back on prior learning through addressing assumptions about the content of the problem, the procedures adopted in problem solving, or the inferences based on the problem is defined as ex post facto reflection (Mezirow, 1990). In this vein, the case story method enabled pre-service teachers to have ex post facto reflection by creating a space for reflection on and mediation of those memories with the pedagogical knowledge they gained from their teacher education. Considering that reflection is a highly valued component of pre-service teacher education (Akcan, 2010; Betil-Eröz, 2013; Hamiloğlu, 2014; Seferoğlu, 2006) due to its stimulating effect on the development of teachers (Loughran, 2002), the case story method implemented in practicum proved itself to be worthy of attention as it promoted pre-service teachers' reflection both on the knowledge accumulated over the years of apprenticeship of observation and current practicum observations.

As the literature suggests, reflection can take place at an individual or a collaborative level. Whereas the former involves self-inquiry, the latter involves interaction between peers to exchange experiences, discuss perspectives and work toward common solutions (Prilla et. al., 2012). Collaborative reflection is considered to be a step further than individual reflection because it involves not only self-inquiry but also an external dialog with others such as the teacher or peers (Clarke, 2003; Hawkes & Romiszowski, 2001) to reach a mutual understanding and build meaningful knowledge together (Yukawa, 2006). The findings of this study showed that the pre-service teachers consider the case story method effective not only in providing opportunities of personal reflection but also in encouraging collaborative reflection between peers. They listed the benefits of collaborative reflection to be learning about other contexts, gaining different perspectives about teaching related issues and brainstorming on solutions to problems encountered during practicum. What became evident was that the case stories served as a medium of interaction through which pre-service teachers were exposed to multiple contexts and perspectives. Therefore, the findings of the study confirm both the previous research that views collaborative reflection as a reciprocal critical thinking process through which individuals develop professional knowledge together (Morris & Stew, 2007; Yang, 2009, Yoon & Kim, 2009; Yukawa, 2006) and the large body of research that indicates the potential of using the case-based methods in improving pre-service teachers' realization of multiple perspectives and negotiated solutions in analyzing classroom situations (Ackerman & Maslin-Ostrowski, 1995; Edwards & Hammer, 2006; Koç, 2011;

Lundeberg & Levin, 2003). However, collaborative reflection has the drawback that the reflective tasks last longer as multiple people engage in reflection (Loo & Thorpe, 2002). A small body of evidence emerged from the data with regard to constraints of the implementation of the case story method in practicum. The pre-service teachers referred to the same drawback while commenting on those constraints. They suggested that there should be fewer pre-service teachers using the method and/or more time allocated to the discussion of case stories because they did not get the chance to share and discuss all case stories and sometimes they could not contribute to the discussion due to lack of time. They also suggested that there should be a clear-cut turn-taking procedure followed in order to manage seminar hours so that the method may open more windows of opportunity to collaborative reflection.

The pre-service teachers highlighted the importance of the case story method in relation to fostering involvement in practicum observations by making the task meaningful and motivating. While commenting on this issue, they brought up the role of the case story method in raising their awareness of potential issues that they might face in their future professional lives. Their opinion was that the case story method supported learning about different contexts and seeing multiple perspectives. These findings are in line with the related literature which documents the positive impact of the case-based methods on pre-service teachers' growth and development through raising their awareness of potential issues and teaching strategies that they may encounter in their future professional lives (Edwards & Hammer, 2006; Koç, 2011; Schrader et. al., 2003; Wilson & Williams, 2001).

Within the related literature, "the problem of which stories to tell" has been raised, because "whatever stories we select conveys a particular conception of teaching" (Carter, 1993, p. 10). In this study, the pre-service teachers' self-written stories based on their practicum observations were used as cases to be reflected on collaboratively. Thus, some of the findings were directly related to the fact that the case stories were self-written and real accounts of practicum observations. The pre-service teachers considered these two features of the case story method, i.e., real and self-written, to be particularly effective in enhancing their learning, increasing their interest on the cases and practicum observations. Similar to the findings of Ackerman and Maslin-Ostrowski's (1995) study, the pre-service teachers reported that the process of writing case stories was itself a rewarding task. The case story implementation, which involved observation, writing and reflection, encouraged them to begin making reflections right from the writing stage. Later, when pre-service teachers shared these stories in class and reflected on them collaboratively, they had the opportunity to learn about what happened in other teaching contexts that they would not otherwise have had access to. Similar to the findings of Wilson and Williams (2001), the findings of this study indicated that the case story method brought real life to the classroom,

which made the reflection process more relevant to the needs of pre-service teachers and created a motivation toward observation and reflection.

Some practical implications can be drawn from the findings of the study. The findings showed that the participating pre-service teachers were highly receptive to the case story method and its affordances. Given the fact that many teacher educators seek to find new ways of maximizing learning opportunities they offer during practicum, incorporating the case story method into practicum can be suggested; namely, having pre-service teachers write case stories based on their practicum observations and collaboratively reflect on these case stories. It should be noted that the participating pre-service teachers were familiar with making self and peer reflections as they were given the chances of practicing and reflecting almost in all departmental courses. Therefore, caution must be exercised when using the method with pre-service teachers who are unfamiliar with reflective practices. It should also be acknowledged that some of the pre-service teachers expressed their criticisms toward two areas i.e., resources and management. Based on the constructive suggestions offered, teacher educators need to pay utmost attention to the number of pre-service teachers using the method, the time allocated to seminar hours and management issues especially turn-taking procedures in order to maximize the learning opportunities afforded by the implementation of case story method in practicum.

It is worth mentioning limitations of the study as well as suggestions for further research. This study focused on the issue only from the perspective of pre-service teachers. If further research can probe the issue from the perspective of teacher educators, a more complete picture can be provided. This study only provided a snapshot of the pre-services teachers' thoughts on the implementation of the case story method in practicum. Therefore, no contextual analysis was carried out in order to explore the case stories written by the pre-service teachers. Further research may be conducted to explore the topics covered by the case stories to get an in-depth understanding of practicum observations of pre-service teachers.

In conclusion, this study adds value to the field of pre-service teacher education in two aspects. First, there are rare examples of implementing the case story method in practicum. This study provided evidence for personal and social affordances of the case story implementation in practicum from the perspective of pre-service teachers. Second, very few studies have required pre-service teachers to engage both in individual reflection and collaborative reflection during practicum. This study makes a practical contribution that the case story method proved itself worthy of attention as a method promoting pre-service teachers' individual and collaborative reflection on their practicum observations.

References

Ackerman, R., & Maslin-Ostrowski, P. (1995, April). *Developing case stories: An analysis of the case story method of instruction and storytelling in teaching educational administration*. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association, San Francisco, CA.

Akcan, S. (2010). Watching teacher candidates watch themselves: Reflections on a practicum program in Turkey. *Profile, 12*(1), 33–45.

Betil-Eröz, T. (2013). Reflective feedback sessions using video recordings. *ELT Journal, 67*, 175–183.

Boud, D. (1985). *Reflection: Turning experience into learning*. London, UK: Kogan Page.

Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology, 3*(2), 77–101.

Carter, K. (1993). The place of story in the study of teaching and teacher education. *Educational Researcher*, *22*(1), 5–12.

Celik, S., Çevik, Y. D., & Haşlaman, T. (2012). Reflections of prospective teachers regarding case-based learning. *Turkish Online Journal of Qualitative Inquiry*, *3*(4), 64–78.

Cevik, Y. D. (2011). *Examining preservice teachers' reasoning and decision making in three case-based approaches* (Doctoral dissertation, Iowa State University). Retrieved from http://lib.dr.iastate.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1033&context=etd

Cherubini, L. (2009). Exploring prospective teachers' critical thinking: Case-based pedagogy and the standards of professional practice. *Teaching and Teacher Education, 25*, 228–234.

Clarke, M. (2003, December). *Reflections: Journals and reflective questions a strategy for professional learning*. Paper presented at NZARE/AARE Conference, New Zealand.

Darling-Hammond, L. (2006). *Powerful teacher education*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey Bass.

Dewey, J. (1933). *How we think: A restatement of reflective thinking to the educative process*. Boston, MA: D.C. Heath.

Dewey, J. (1938). *Experience and education*. New York, NY: Mac Millan.

Dwyer, S. C., & Buckle, J. L. (2009). The space between: On between an insider-outsider in qualitative research. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods, 8*(1), 54–63.

Edwards, S., & Hammer, M. (2006). Laura's story: Using problem based learning in early childhood and primary teacher education. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, *22*, 465–477.

Farrell, T. S. C. (2008). *Novice language teachers: Insights and perspectives for the first year.* London, UK: Equinox Publishing.

Flores, M. A., & Day, C. (2006). Contexts which shape and reshape new teachers' identities: A multi-perspective study. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, *22*, 219–232.

Glaser, C., Abbott, L., & Harris, J. (2004). A teacher- developed process for collaborative professional reflection. *Reflective practice*, *5*(1), 33–46.

Guba, E. G. (1981). Criteria for assessing the trustworthiness of naturalistic inquiries. *ERIC/ ECTJ Annual Review Paper*, *29*, 75–91.

Hamiloğlu, K. (2013). *Turkish student teachers' reflections on their professional identity construction and reconstruction process during the practicum* (Doctoral dissertation, University of Leicester). Retrieved from https://lra.le.ac.uk/bitstream/2381/29135/1/2013_HAMILOGLU_EdD%20pdf.pdf

Harrington, H. L. (1995). Fostering reasoned decisions: A case-based pedagogy and the professional development of teachers. *Teaching and Teacher Education, 11*(3), 203–214.

Hawkes, M., & Romiszowski, A. (2001). Examining the reflective outcomes of asynchronous computer-mediated communication on inservice teacher development. *Journal of Technology and Teacher Education*, *9*(2), 283–306.

Hsu, S. (2004). Using case discussion on the web to develop student teacher problem solving skills. *Teaching and Teacher Education, 20*(7), 681–692.

Hunter, J., & Hatton, N. (1998). Approaches to the writing of cases: Experiences with preservice master of teaching students. *Asia-Pacific Journal of Teacher Education*, *26*(3), 235–245.

Kim, H., & Hannafin, M. J. (2009). Web-enhanced case-based activity in teacher education: A case study. *Instructional Science: An International Journal of the Learning Sciences, 37*(2), 151–170.

Koc, M. (2011). Let's make a movie: Investigating pre-service teachers' reflections on using video-recorded role playing cases in Turkey. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, *27*(1), 95–106.

Kolb, D. A. (1984). *Experiencing learning: Experience as the source of learning and development*. New Jersey, NJ: Prentice Hall.

Korthagen, F., Loughran, J., & Russel, T. (2006). Developing fundamental principles for teacher education programs and practices. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, *22*, 1020–1041.

Levin, B. B. (1995). Using the case method in teacher education: The role of discussion and experience in teachers' thinking about cases. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, *11*(1), 63–79.

Loo, R., & Thorpe, K. (2002). Using reflective learning journals to improve individual and team settings. *Team Performance Management: An International Journal, 8*(5/6), 134–139.

Loughran, J. J. (2002). Effective reflective practice. *Journal of Teacher Education, 53*(1), 33–43.

Lundeberg, M. A., & Levin, B. B. (2003). Prompting the development of preservice teachers' beliefs through cases, action research, problem-based learning, and technology. In J. Rath, & A. C. McAninch (Eds.), *Advances in teacher education series* (pp. 23–42). Greenwich, CT: Information Age.

Lundeberg, M. A., & Yadav, A. (2006). Assessment of case study teaching: Where do we go from here? Part II. *Journal of College Science Teaching*, *35*(6), 8–13.

Merseth, K. (1996). Cases and case methods in teacher education. In J. Sikula (Ed.), *Handbook of research on teacher education* (pp. 722–744). New York, NY: MacMillan.

Mezirow, J. (1981). A critical theory of adult learning and education. *Adult Education*, *32*(1), 3–24.

Mezirow, J. (1990). How critical reflection triggers transformative learning. In J. Mezirow (Ed.), *Fostering critical reflection in adulthood* (pp. 1–20). San Francisco, CA: Jossey Bass.

Miles, M. B., & Huberman, A. M. (1994). *Qualitative data analysis*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Morris, L., & Stew, G. (2007). Collaborative reflection: How far do 2:1 models of learning in the practice setting promote peer reflection? *Reflective Practice*, *8*(3), 419–432.

Powell, R. (2000). Case-based teaching in homogeneous teacher education contexts: A study of preservice teachers' situative cognition. *Teaching and Teacher Education, 16*, 389–410.

Prilla, M., Degeling, M., & Herrmann, T. (2012). Collaborative reflection at work: Supporting informal learning at a healthcare workplace. *Proceedings of the 17th ACM International Conference on Supporting Group Work*, 55–64. http://dx.doi.org/10.1145/2389185

Rich, P., & Hannafin, M. J. (2008). Decisions and reasons: Examining preservice teachers' decision making through video self-analysis. *Journal of Computing in Higher Education, 20*(1), 62–94.

Rich, P., & Hannafin, M. J. (2009). Scaffolded video self-analysis: Discrepancies between preservice teachers' perceived and actual instructional decisions. *Journal of Computing in Higher Education, 21*, 128–145.

Santagata, R., & Angelici, G. (2010). Studying the impact of the lesson analysis framework on preservice teachers' abilities to reflect on videos of classroom teaching. *Journal of Teacher Education*, *61*(4), 339–349.

Schön, D. A. (1983). *The reflective practitioner*. New York, NY: Basic Books.

Schrader, P., Leu, Jr., D., Kinzer, C., Ataya, R., Teale, W., Labbo, L., & Cammack, D. (2003). Using internet delivered video-cases to support pre-service teachers' understanding of effective early literacy instruction: An explanatory study. *Instructional Science*, *31*, 317–340.

Seferoğlu, G. (2006). Teacher candidates' reflections on some components of a pre-service English teacher education programme in Turkey. *Journal of Education for Teaching, 32*(4), 369–378.

Shulman, L. S. (1992). Toward a pedagogy of cases. In J. H. Shulman (Ed.), *Case methods in teacher education* (pp. 1–30). New York, NY: Teachers College Press.

Tang, S. Y. F. (2004). The dynamics of school-based learning in initial teacher education. *Research Papers in Education*, *19*, 185–204.

Veenman, S. (1984). Perceived problems of beginning teachers. *Review of Educational Research*, *54*, 143–178.

Yang, S. H. (2009). Using blogs to enhance critical reflection and community of practice. *Educational Technology & Society*, *12*(2), 11–21.

Yin, R. K. (2009). *Case study research: Design and methods*. Thosand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Yoon, H. G., & Kim, M. (2009). Collaborative reflection through dilemma cases of science practical work during practicum. *International Journal of Science Education*, *32*(3), 283–301.

Youngs, P., & Bird, T. (2010). Using embedded assessments to promote pedagogical reasoning among secondary teaching candidates. *Teaching and Teacher Education, 26*(2), 185–198.

Yukawa, J. (2006). Co-reflection in online learning: Collaborative critical thinking as narrative. *International Journal of Computer-Supported Collaborative Learning*, *1*(2), 203–228.

Wilson, S., & Williams, J. A. (2001) Student-created case studies for teacher education. *Journal of Physical Education, Recreation and Dance, 72*(2), 49–53.

Appendix 1

A Sample Case Story Written by a Pre-service Teacher

Ignorance

Educational Psychology is one of the greatest fields a teacher needs to be focused on, as education and psychology are considerably intermingled with each other. Only knowing the related terminology makes no sense. This is somewhat similar to wisdom gained by experience. Experience is of great importance especially in education. Attitudes of a teacher might differ as the years pass. However, the significance is that a teacher should behave appropriately in a necessary situation. It is one of his or her main responsibilities. Ignorance, for instance, might be the appropriate behavior in some situations for some students. What makes it a valid or invalid behavior?

This week, one of my mentor teachers, Mr. Nice[2], was wandering around the class to control whether each student was doing the fill in the blanks exercises in their course books. He was walking among the desks silently while the students concentrated on the task. He tried to give some tips if necessary. Pay attention to this fact! He was not providing them with the answers directly. He scaffolded them as much as possible. All of a sudden, two female students attracted my attention. Miss Clever[3] took Miss Silence's[4] book and was busy with copying the answers into her book. It was very apparent that Miss Silence involuntarily gave her book to Miss Clever. I was just an observer who was waiting for the storm. Mr. Nice was about to pass, but surprisingly the storm lost its way. He was there to give Miss Clever's pen back (he had taken it at the beginning of the lesson to sign the class notebook). Although he saw this copy-paste process, he did not utter even a word. He just ignored her and walked away. Thus, I did not weird out the fact that Miss Opportunist[5], another female student, wanted the answers from Miss Silence afterwards.

Q1: Since not every student shares the same characteristics trait, seemingly invalid behavior sometimes turns into a valid behavior according to the context (appropriate student and situation). Do you agree with this statement? Why or why not? For example, is a teacher ignoring a student who is very aggressive and has disruptive behaviors a valid behavior?

Q2: If you were Mr. Nice, would you behave similarly so as not to ruin the flow of the lesson? Considering the context, was it a valid or invalid behavior? If not, what might be your suggestions? For instance, do you really think that an appropriate warning might avoid an on-going process of copying answers?

---

2   Pseudonym
3   Pseudonym
4   Pseudonym
5   Pseudonym