VIEWS OF PRE-SERVICE TEACHERS ON BLOG USE FOR INSTRUCTION AND SOCIAL INTERACTION

Assist. Prof. Dr. Abdullah KUZU

**Faculty of Education
Department of Computer Education
and Instructional Technologies
Anadolu University
Eskisehir, TURKEY**

ABSTRACT

Rapid development of technology and unique characteristics of the creative society require a shift from traditional teaching concepts to student centered learning in education. One of the methods to provide this change is creating teaching environments enriched by Internet.

Blog (weblog) service offered to learners and teachers through Internet is an important instrument to provide learners with effective activities and social interaction. Blog technology provides the users with opportunities to create web pages without any design knowledge, write their ideas on these pages, and add comments on the pages. The current study presents the views of pre-service teachers regarding "Information Technology in Education-I" course blog along with the facilities that trigger learning and social interaction.

Keywords: Weblog; blog; social interaction; web supported learning.

INTRODUCTION

The 21st century has witnessed significant social and technological innovations for human beings. Technological, social and economic changes based on notions like global activity, democratization, computerization and communication lead to the advance of the information age.

Among significant discoveries that have been provided by the information age is undoubtedly the advance of Internet. The Internet technology which has been cheap to obtain and which led people to communicate regardless of the time and place, has gained an increasing popularity among individuals and institutions. In the last decade emphasize the use of information as much as access to information. This might be the reason of the shift from information society to knowledge society. The future, then, holds a premise for creative thinking and action but not for how much knowledge one got (Resnick, 2002).

As far as creative thinking and action are important in creative society, teacher training is one of the areas where information and communication technologies should be used intensively. In order to train individuals who are equipped with skills regarding lifelong learning, there is an increasing need for educators who serve as efficient models in using information and communication technologies. Moreover, the need for learner-centered approaches which are integrated with sound technological infrastructures is increasing constantly.

In this respect, Internet technologies serve as platforms where individuals can access knowledge and interact with other individuals wherever and whenever they want.

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If such a powerful technology can be applied with appropriate pedagogical approaches in distance education, it can be used as an effective tool to trigger student accountability and social interaction.

Internet technologies make use of several synchronous and asynchronous tools to sustain social interaction in online learning. Potential of online or virtual communities to facilitate interaction is evaluated in different circumstances. Teacher educators must benefit from online environment for many instances of professional development. However, developing an online environment is not about using technology but rather about designing, building and supporting a structure and a process that are purposeful and fluid in nature and in teachers (Lock, 2006).

Thus, the current study investigates pre-service teachers' views on blog use for supporting instruction and sustaining social interaction to create a meaningful way to future professional development opportunities.

What does blog refer to?

Weblog, a.k.a. blog, is a web-based technology which has been used extensively for instructional purposes recently. Considered as a Web 2.0 application, blogs are believed to have been used firstly by John Berger in 1997 (Rachael, 2005). They can be defined as tools which help individuals with elementary computer knowledge to create interactive web pages. Blogs are same as web pages for standard users. However, they have a unique place for bloggers (i.e. blog writers). They help bloggers to share their opinions, experiences and everything they want to share with their readers. Besides, readers can add comments to contents of a blog which could be followed in a chronological order. Such a structure creates a virtual interactive environment.

It is possible to classify blogs with regard to their contents, purposes, and publishing environments. Altun (2005) classifies blogs with regard to their purposes as follows:

> ➢ Personal blogs
> ➢ Group blogs
> ➢ Press blogs
> ➢ Project management blogs
> ➢ Library blogs
> ➢ Institutional blogs
> ➢ Instructional blogs

Blogs can be used as asynchronous tools in web-based training. Blog pages allow users to create their own blogs through their ready templates and user-friendly management tools. Thus, they can be created and updated easily without having information on web editing tools or web-design languages such as HTML (i.e. Hypertext Markup Language).

Blogs also have the facility to provide readers with the opportunity to interact with the page, which is not a common feature of standard web pages. Readers become the co-authors of blogs through adding their opinions and comments. Blogs, as new tools for interaction, overcomes the two tensions put forward by Wenger (2005). The first tension, separation in time and space, is overcome by the togetherness created by the continuity.

The second tension, relationship between communities and individuals, is overcome by creating a meaningful participation via interest groups such as pre-service teachers of a certain faculty.

Literature on web based training provides a comparison of blogs, web pages, and forums with regard to their technical and instructional capacities (Table 1). These tools have similar technical capabilities and characteristics in the way that they are all asynchronous.

However, blogs have some advantages over other tools. First of all, they can be created without any knowledge on HTML or similar web design tools. Thus, anybody with basic computer and Internet knowledge can create his own blog. Second, blogs allow users to display the contents in a chronological order.

Finally, they allow readers to add their own comments and serve as co-authors to the contents of blog pages. All types of multimedia tools can be embedded in blog pages as well.

Table: 1
Communication capacity of forums, web pages and weblogs (Wijnia, 2004)

Communication capacity / Communication channel	Selectivity	Interaction	Richness of Stimulus	Complexity of tasks	Complexity of information	Preserving security	Control
Chat	+	+	-	0	-	+	0
Forum	0	0	0	-	0	+	-
Web page	-	-	+	-	+	0	+
Weblog	-	0	+	-	+	0	+

With their unique interactive structures, weblogs combine web pages into forum environments. Thus, they can serve as efficient mediators which can transfer classroom activities to virtual environments. Recent applications reveal that weblogs are used as alternative web-based training tools by educators. They are basically used for social interaction, entertainment and instructional activities (Rachael, 2005).

Blog Use for Instruction and Social Interaction
The notion of the creative society and the constant demand for education increase the need for efficient and technology assisted instruction. Educational activities realized in a traditional classroom setting are not efficient anymore in meeting the educational needs of the current century. Conventional education is realized beyond the borders of the classrooms as well. Modern educational approaches and changing roles of educators put new responsibilities on both teachers and learners. The traditional view of education, where teachers serve as the source of knowledge while learners serve as passive receivers, has been outdated. In this respect, information and communication technologies provide powerful equipment and facilities to transform teacher-centered instruction to learner-centered and interactive learning environments (UNESCO, 2002). Among these facilities, blogs are considered as indispensable tools since they can enrich the instruction and social interaction among individuals through transferring in-class activities beyond the classroom.

Instructional activities supported with blogs provide democratic environments where learners can present their opinions and comments freely. In traditional instructional settings, negative implications stemming from the attitudes of teachers, course contents, student characteristics and number of students interfere with students' ability to deliver their ideas efficiently. Gülbahar (2005) claims that students prefer the virtual environment in order to pose their questions and comments, as they consider in-class discussions insufficient. In this respect, blogs can be used as interactive tools where individuals have equal opportunity to share their ideas and experiences, and present themselves to the social environment efficiently.

Instructional blogs can be used as tools to provide students with constant feedback outside the classroom. Feedbacks concerning students' in-class activities include significant messages which could affect students' future learning endeavors. Since blogs are independent of time and place, they serve as efficient tools to provide students with feedback outside the classroom as well.

Another important feature of blogs is their structure enriching social interaction among teachers and students. According to many cognitive learning theorists, assigning meaning to information is efficiently realized through individuals' interaction with the social environment.

For instance, Vygotsky claims that social environment has a significant role in cognitive development (Vygotsky, 1978; Kearsley, 2005). According to Piaget, one of the factors affecting cognitive development is social interaction, which is also a prerequisite for intellectual development (Piaget, 1973; Charles, 2003). The father of socio-cognitive theory, Bandura, maintains that learning occurs through constant interaction among individuals, behaviors and the environment (Bandura, 1989; Senemoğlu, 2004). These theories reveal that interaction among peers, and the interaction between learners and teachers have a crucial impact on the learning process in instructional settings. Learners have the chance to observe a social and interactive setting through face-to-face communication in classroom. However, such an interaction mostly depends on the place where it occurs and the time when it occurs. Pursuing the interaction among students and teachers beyond the boundaries of the classroom can be realized through instructional settings which are supported with information and communication technologies. In this respect, instructional uses of blogs allow social interaction to occur through providing a collaborative environment where students and teachers can share their ideas and experiences (Altun, 2005; 56).

Relevant Research

Research related to blogs shows a distribution on two main fields as; attitude or view surveys or the effect blogs bring to instruction or medium. Below are given, chronically, some of the related research to shed a light for understanding the applications carried out in blog use.

Concerning the beliefs and attitudes towards blog use, Weller, Pegler and Mason (2004) used four Internet-based technologies (i.e. blog, tele-conference, instant messaging, Rotisserie) in an online course and sought for student views on their learning experiences. Students mostly had positive attitudes toward using blogs in their courses. However, they reported that they liked synchronous tools such as instant messaging and tele-conferencing in comparison to blogs, which carry features of asynchronous communication technologies.

In a similar study, Barbosa and Serrano (2005) investigated views of both learners and teachers on instructional use of blogs. Students mostly reported that they found blogs interesting and easy to use.

Besides, they maintained that receiving their peers' comments on their postings carried utmost importance for them.

Also Xie and Sharma (2004) conducted interviews to investigate the views of nine doctoral students on the use of weblogs in instructional settings. Negative and positive ideas regarding blog use were classified under different themes. Among positive themes, blogs were considered helpful for learning and thinking, provided students with a group identity, and allowed them to discover a new technology. Nevertheless, students who had never used blogs demonstrated hesitation in using blogs since they were not confident while using them. Besides, students were uncomfortable with the fact that their views and comments would be available to everybody in the classroom which gave them a feeling of insecurity.

Shoffner's (2006) dissertation, on the other hand, also focused on the importance of blogs in reflecting learners' ideas. In the study, blogs were used as an interactive ground where pre-service teachers reflect their ideas on learning. Through analyzing logs of learner interactions and focus group interviews, it was found that pre-service teachers considered blogs as a potential to reflect their ideas appropriately. Participants maintained that this potential was also empowered by blogs' ability to be accessed through Internet, and their efficiency to support interpersonal communication. Considering the effect of blogs, Dickey (2004) conducted an action research on effects of blog use in web based training. Participants consisted of prospective k-12 teachers. Findings revealed that blog use facilitated socialization, interaction and peer dialogue in small groups.

Students sought for support and help, delivered their ideas and experiences, and shared their feelings through blogs. Besides, it was found that perceptions of isolation and alienation in web-based distance-learning environments were reduced through blogs. Finally, students compared the learning management system they used (i.e. Blackboard) with weblogs and maintained that blogs were user-friendlier and faster tools than Blackboard.

In another study, Williams and Jacobs (2004) investigated the blog use in higher education, and maintained that blogs could transform the way instructional technology is applied. Researchers collected data from 102 voluntary participants who were exposed to weblogs in two different classes. The data were collected through questionnaires. Findings revealed both positive and negative themes like the findings of Xie and Sharma (4004). Sixty-six percent of participants who did not participated in blogs maintained that they did not find the activity worth participating, or they were not sure whether the activity would help them. On the other hand, 66 percent of participants who participated in blogs maintained that they regarded blogs as environments to facilitate learning. Seventy-seven percent of students considered blogs advantageous in terms of social interaction while 57 percent claimed that they wanted blogs as an instructional tool in their class activities.

Wang and Fang (2005) conducted a study to determine the benefits of weblogs for collaborative learning with 55 students who were administered a 20-question survey. Findings revealed that use of weblogs increased students' confidence in learning. Students also maintained that the efficiency of their group works and social skills increased through blog use. They claimed that they were happy to use blogs as communication tools. However, 91 percent of students added that face-to-face interaction occurring in class helps them attaining their learning goals as well.

Perschbach's (2006) doctoral dissertation supportingly also focuses on the effectiveness of blogs in instruction. The study aimed to demonstrate evidence regarding the contribution of blogs to critical thinking and reflection; and used both quantitative and qualitative data collection methods. Findings revealed that almost all students improved their critical thinking skills through using blogs. Besides, most students maintained that they interacted with each other through blogs.

Purpose

Theoretical framework discussed so far revealed that blogs support instructional endeavors in the web environment. In order to scrutinize on instructional and communicative effectiveness of blogs further, there is a need for studies which investigate and analyze instructional and social dimensions of blog use.

In this respect, the current study aims to investigate views of pre-service teachers regarding "Information Technology in Education-I" course blog which was created to support instruction and sustain social interaction.

Within the scope of this primary purpose, the study focuses on the following research questions:

1. What are the views of pre-service teachers regarding instructional use of blogs?
2. What are the views of pre-service teachers regarding the use of blogs for social interaction?
3. What are the views of pre-service teachers regarding the use of blogs for interacting with the course instructor?

METHOD

The following section explains the methods and procedures of the study. The course blog, participants, materials and procedures used to collect data are introduced. A detailed description of the data collection and analysis procedures is given as well.

Course Blog

"Information Technology in Education-I (ITE-1)" course blog was created on November 8, 2005 and was used till January 22, 2006. The primary purpose of the course blog was to support classroom instruction and increase social interaction among students taking the course.

Participation was limited to students taking the course so that they could feel secure using the course blog.

Figure: 1
ITE-1 Course Blog

The ITE-1 course has a 14-week syllabus. First eight weeks of the syllabus was supported with the course blog which covered;

> ➢ **Introduction to computers**
> ➢ **Hardware**
> ➢ **Windows**
> ➢ **Internet**
> ➢ **MS Word**
> ➢ **MS Excel**
> ➢ **MS PowerPoint**
> ➢ **New technologies in education**

Along with these subjects, some extracurricular subjects were added to the course blog such as Internet ethics. Introduction of course blog to students was realized at the fifth week of the course schedule after the unit on Internet was completed. Since students did not have sufficient familiarity with the Internet, the introduction was purposefully realized in the fifth week. The course blog consisted of instructor's postings and student comments. The course instructor produced 17 records under different titles each enriched with student ideas and comments.

Participants
Participants can be examined under two headings: those who participated in blogs and those who participated in the study. Participation in the course blog was on a voluntary basis.

Thirty students of the Department of Computer Education and Instructional Technologies at Anadolu University who were registered to the ITE-1 course in the 2005 fall semester constituted the participants of the course blog. Among 30 participants, 15 were males and 15 were females.

The number of comments left by students ranged from 0 through 17. At the beginning of the semester, students maintained that this was first time they met with a course blog.

At the end of the semester, it was observed that 18 of 30 students created their own blogs. The sample providing the data of the study consisted of 10 students. While structuring the sample group, purposeful sampling was adapted in line with the requirements of qualitative data collection and analysis methods (Patton, 2002). Gender, number of comments made in the course blog, and having a personal blog were the main concerns while selecting the participants.

Data Collection Tool

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with each participant to scrutinize on the research question of the study. Drafts of questions prepared by researcher were examined by experts, which lead to further revisions on the questionnaire format.

The interview questions are as follows:

> ➢ What can you say about discussing course subject in the course blog?
> ➢ What can you say about the influence of the course blog on your interaction with your peers?
> ➢ What can you say about the influence of the course blog on your interaction with the course instructor?

Data Collection Procedure

Before the interview, researcher meets with participants of the study and informed them about the study. Since the participation was on a voluntary basis, students' approval to use their comments for scientific inquiry was taken. Meeting schedule was determined according to time slots suggested by participants.

During the interviews, a verbal approval was also taken along with the written permission which was taken beforehand. Interviews were conducted through asking interview questions and audio-taping responses which lasted 7 to 15 minutes.

After the interviews were completed, audio-taped data were transferred to computer. Index cards were prepared for each question and the data were made ready for further descriptive analyses.

Analysis and Interpretation of the Data

Descriptive analysis of quantitative and qualitative data was particularly helpful in data analysis. In descriptive analysis, data are summarized or interpreted in line with pre-determined themes or categories.

Through this method, data are first described in a logical and meaningful way. Then, cause-and-effect relationships were scrutinized and some conclusions were drawn accordingly.

In order to reflect participants' ideas properly, direct quotations are also made (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2000). The descriptive analysis in the current study was realized as follows (Miles & Huberman, 1994; Yıldırım & Şimsek, 2000):

Transcription of data

Audio-taped data was transformed to text by researcher in accordance with the interview sheet. Transcribed data was read by researcher with the help of an expert which evaluated the quality of transcription. The expert also provided his opinions whether the transcribed document was consistent with the audio-taped data.

Creating the interview coding sheet
Researcher examined the whole dataset and determined the themes under which the data would be examined and interpreted. Based on this examination, an interview coding sheet was created.

Coding the transcribed data to coding sheet
Researcher and an independent expert read all responses and checked relevant themes in the coding sheet accordingly.

Comparison of coding sheets and reliability
After coding sheets were prepared for each individual, the consistency between the researcher and the independent expert was investigated.

To examine reliability, the formula suggested by Miles and Huberman (1994; pp.64) was applied (i.e. reliability=number of agreements/total number of agreements + disagreements).

The findings revealed after the application of this formula are provided in Table: 2 below:

Table: 2
Consistency between coding sheets

Question	Percent (%)
1	78
2	81
3	85
Overall	81

The findings revealed better than 70 percent inter-coder reliability for each question and for overall evaluation suggesting that coding procedure was reliable.

Description of findings
Data, which were coded in accordance with the coding sheet and which were proved reliable, were described in accordance with the research questions. Direct quotations were made whenever it was necessary.

Interpretation of findings
Described findings were further elaborated on, connected with the research questions and interpreted accordingly.

FINDINGS

Views of Pre-service Teachers Regarding Instructional Use of Blogs
Pre-service teachers' views regarding instructional use of blogs were primarily positive. Among 10 students participated in the study, eight (80 %) reported positive comments regarding instructional use of blogs while two students (20 %) made negative remarks regarding blogs.
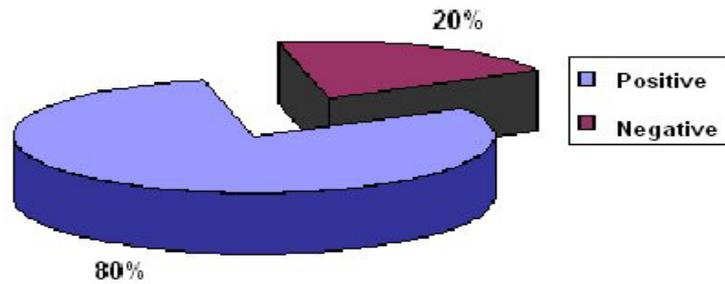
Figure:

Pre-service teacher views regarding instructional use of blogs

The data provided by students revealed a total of 27 positive opinions which were summarized under four themes. The themes, frequencies and percentages are provided in Table: 3:

Except for responses for the first question such as 'it was beneficial for me', most responses focused on peer-to-peer or learner-to-instructor interaction. Students provided 16 comments on interaction which constituted 59 percent of all responses provided for the first question.

By interaction, researcher means the interaction realized to pursue course contents and assignments rather than social interaction. Students considered blogs as a platform to present their ideas freely.

Table: 3
Positive themes regarding instructional use of blogs

Themes	Frequency (f)	Percent (%)
Interaction	**16**	**59**
We had the opportunity to communicate with the course instructor		
We had the chance to communicate with each other		
We delivered our ideas without hesitation		
We had the opportunity to discuss what we covered in class		
We had the opportunity to ask what we did not understand in class		
Instructional Support	**6**	**22**
It is nice that subjects were provided online before we speak about them in class		
Class subjects can be supported in this environment		
This environment complements the classroom activities		

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We used the time allotted for the course more efficiently		
We experienced a different learning environment		
Access to supplementary materials	**4**	**15**
Course instructor provided us with supplementary materials		
Our friends provided us with supplementary materials		
Learning extracurricular subjects	**1**	**4**
I learnt things which I did not know and which I did not learn in class either		
Total	**27**	**100**

They also considered blogs beneficial for inquiring what they did not understand in class. Below some quotations regarding this theme are provided:

> *"I think this was really beneficial for us. That is because we discussed what we learnt in class, what we covered, what we learnt, what we could not learn. We find the opportunity to discuss all these."* **[AA]**

> *"I could ask what I did not understand in class as well. When I'm stuck....Because we did not have that much time in class. It is a limited time. In this respect, it is quite beneficial."* **[HA]**

The second most frequent subject mentioned by pre-service teachers regarding instructional use of blogs was instructional support provided by blogs, which constituted 22 percent of all comments. A total of six comments were made on this subject. Participants mentioned that accessing the subjects online before it was covered in class was beneficial, which made them use the allotted time more efficiently.

> *"...discussing course-related subjects in course blogs was really good for us...because we only have five hours for this course. If two hours of this time were used for lecture and three for practice, we have no time to practice what we learnt with peers."* **[HK]**

Participants also maintained that they had the opportunity to consolidate what they learnt in class through course blog. Thus, they think that the course blog complements the course. Another positive response was that participants considered weblog as a different learning environment:

> *"...It was a good example for us where we could share what is told in class in a different environment... different than class conversations and books we used in class."* **[LB]**

Participants further maintained that the course blog was particularly helpful since they shared course materials with their peers and with the course instructor. This issue was summarized under the title of 'access to supplementary materials'. Four comments regarding this theme were provided by the participants, which constituted the third category with 15 percent of comments. Sample responses regarding two sub-categories of this theme are provided below:

> *"...before the class, for instance we are going to cover Word or Excel, it was good for us that the subjects were provided in the course blog before the class."* **[HK]**

> *"...for instance, some friends uploaded interesting materials to their personal weblogs related to Internet, I mean computers. When I checked them, it was really beneficial for me."* **[HA]**

The fourth and least frequent theme was learning extracurricular subjects. Only one comment was on this theme, which constituted 4 percent of total responses. Two students who provided negative comments regarding blogs mentioned that they preferred face-to-face learning to blogs:

> *"...I think if you do this activity by showing, or if I ask you this in a face-to-face environment, I can work out what is necessary to learn through using your gesture, posture, intonation, and solve the problem more easily"* **[HK]**

Views of Pre-service Teachers Regarding Use of Blogs for Social Interaction

The number of students who maintained that blog use empowered their social interaction with their peers was eight. Only one student provided negative comments regarding blog use. One student was neutral about this subject. Figure: 3 provides the distribution of comments on this question:
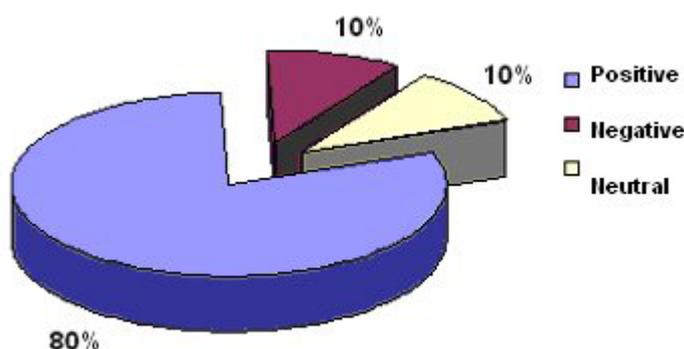

Figure: 3
Pre-service Teacher Views Regarding Interactive Effectiveness of Blogs

Participants provided a total of 14 positive comments which were categorized under two themes. The themes, frequencies and percentages are provided in Table 4:

Table: 4
Positive responses regarding social interactive use of blogs

Themes	Frequency (f)	Percent (%)

Meeting new people
  I knew people I did not know through the course blog
  It was beneficial in terms of meeting new people
	8	57

Interaction
  It is an atmosphere where we could deliver our ideas
  It was beneficial in terms of interaction
	6	43

Total	**14**	**100**

All participants providing positive responses mentioned that they met with their classmates, whom they did not know, through the course blog. These comments constituted 57 percent of all comments provided by the participants for the second question. Sample opinions are provided below:

> *"For example I had a friend whom I did not know. I entered his blog and send him a message. So, we had a chat in class the other day. We were regretful not to talk to each other for two months."*[EÖ]

> *"I can say that through blogs, we started chatting with people we did not talk to, and then we met in class."*[LB]

Six students emphasized the interactive features of blog use and defined blog as a platform where they could deliver their ideas. Below are samples from this category:

> *"I believe that it encourages us socially, because we find the opportunity to deliver our ideas a little bit and we feel more secure in that environment."* [AA]

> *"This blog was beneficial for us in getting on with each other, learning each other's ideas, interacting socially. I mean it helped us to have things to share, things to talk about each other."*[AO]

The participant who responded negatively to this question mentioned that offering extra credits to those who participated in the course blog made an artificial increase in interaction:

> *"...It seemed artificial to me. Since there was a grade concern, it seemed artificial to me."*[SY]

One participant claiming that blog use neither promoted his interaction with his peers and the course instructor nor interfered with their interaction was considered as a neutral respondent.

Views of Pre-service Teachers Regarding the
Use of Blogs for Interacting with the Course Instructor
Participants mentioned that the course blog was contributive to their interaction with the course instructor. Seven students (70 %) provided positive responses towards use of blogs for interacting with the instructor and two students (20 %) provided negative responses.

One participant provided responses which were considered neutral toward using blogs for interacting with the instructor.
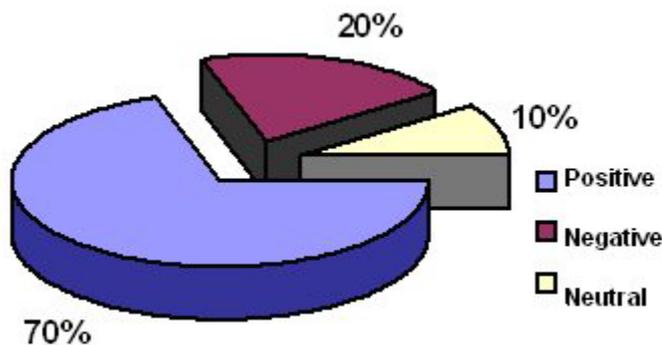
Figure: 4
Pre-service teachers' views regarding the use of blogs
for interacting with the course instructor

Students provided a total of 15 positive responses which were categorized under two themes. The themes, frequencies and percentages are provided in Table: 5.

Table: 5
Positive responses regarding the use of blogs
for interacting with the course instructor

Themes	Frequency (f)	Percent (%)
General communication	8	53
We communicated with the instructor		
We shared our ideas with the instructor		
Our communication with the instructor increased		
Interaction regarding the course	7	47
We asked questions in course blog which we could not ask in class		
I could get answers to my questions		
It was comfortable to access the instructor outside the classroom		
Total	**15**	**100**

The first theme regarding the use of blogs for interacting with the course instructor was determined as general communication. Students provided eight responses for this theme which constituted 53 percent of the responses. Within this theme, students mentioned that they interacted with the instructor in the course blog, and exchanged ideas which empowered their communication with the instructor:

"...along with speaking with the course instructor face-to-face in class, you can communicate by writing which makes you feel closer to the instructor. You share your ideas with the first-hand source simultaneously with everybody. You just ask question everybody wants to ask just once. It is a sample for everybody." **[LB]**

The second theme determined for this question was interaction regarding the course. Participants maintained that they were able to ask questions they could not ask during the class:

"...we asked questions we could not ask in class. Then we shared our problems. I mean, instructor addressed those problems as well." **[AO]**

"I talked to my instructor in the course blog constantly. Anyway, the instructor talked to us a lot, he guided us, he contributed to us. I mean we were in interaction." **[HK]**

Another response was that participants compensated their problems of not being able to access the course instructor outside the classroom:

"It had a psychological comfort. Even though we do not see the instructor in his room, we send our inquiries through the course blog. That comfort is very important, I think." **[EÖ]**

CONCLUSION

Instructional use of information and communication technologies provides teacher trainers with opportunities to train the teachers of the creative society. Blog technologies have been considered among these opportunities, since they are user friendly and flexible enough to support instruction and social interaction. However, there is an increasing need for studies scrutinizing on the instructional use of blogs so that they are used more efficiently for instructional purposes.

Web-based instructional environments have a more flexible and independent structure in comparison to traditional face-to-face learning environments. However, dealing with problems occurred in such environments is relatively more difficult than dealing with the problems of face-to-face instruction. Thus, instruction supported with blogs should be meticulously planned and well-prepared. Resources to be used, arguments to be proposed and interpersonal interactions to be employed should be planned cautiously beforehand. More specifically, precautions regarding the problems that could occur during the instruction should be taken in advance.

Analyzing the students and determining the student profile in advance are preliminary steps to sustain an efficient blog supported instruction. Students' previous experiences with Internet and blogs, whether they have constant access to Internet, their readiness for technology supported instruction and their attitudes towards such an instruction should be examined beforehand so that the instructional plan can lead to a fruitful learning atmosphere.

Increasing the attractiveness of using blogs, which can lead to more interest and participation, is another step in instructional use of blogs. In this respect, teachers have the primary role in planning and implementation of blog activities. Teachers need to make decisions regarding more efficient, flexible and interesting uses of blogs in their course syllabi.

For instance, teachers might select moderators for the course blogs rather than moderating the blog themselves. Such an attitude may lead students to generate a more powerful ownership towards blogs.

Another precaution to increase participation in blog activities is to provide students with interesting and up-to-date subject matters which are integrated into the course content in an educated way. No matter how attractive the novel instrument is following the same manner of instruction might lead to a monotonous pattern in learning. In this respect, maintaining high interest in blog activities can only be realized through sound learner analysis which will help instructor know students' changing needs and interests. Use of information and communication technologies in instructional settings is a problematic issue for Turkey since we still have deficiencies both in terms of pedagogic and technical infrastructure. Thus, it is necessary to place more emphasis on technology supported applications in teacher training institutions, so that pre-service teachers learn technology and its applications for curriculum through educated and efficient practices.

BIODATA and CONTACT ADDRES of the AUTHOR

Assist. Prof. Dr. Abdullah KUZU is a faculty member at the Department of Computer Education and Instructional Technologies at Anadolu University. He has a Ph.D. in educational technology.He conducts action research on web-based training and offers courses on qualitative research design and multimedia learning.

Assist. Prof. Dr. Abdullah Kuzu
Department of Computer Education and Instructional Technologies
Anadolu University, Yunus Emre Campus
90.222.3350580 x. 3519
Eskisehir, TURKEY
Email:akuzu@anadolu.edu.tr
URL:http://home.anadolu.edu.tr/~akuzu

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