Unforgettable teaching: Memoirs of pre-service teachers’ encounters with good teaching

Hasan Şeker

Department of Educational Sciences, Faculty of Education, Muğla University Kötekli /Muğla, Turkey.

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This study aims to analyze pre-service teachers’ narrations about important teaching experiences, which mostly affected them and which they mostly enjoyed. In the present study, a qualitative research was used. The study was carried out with 214 pre-service teachers in Muğla, Turkey who wrote short memoirs on learning experiences as prompted by a research question. In these memoirs, they shared those experiences, which left the biggest impressions on them. The data were analyzed thematically and, based on the results, re-read through the concept of memoirs, in order to answer the question on how the data might be understood as elements of good teaching applications.

Key words: Course experience, good teaching, memoirs, teaching experience.

INTRODUCTION

We sometimes share our past school memories with families or friends. Usually, we reflect on the environment, atmosphere and ourselves and sometimes on our longings in these situations. Our memories affect us and reflect us. They are often just pieces of our lives but one of them can change or shape the entire course of it. In our memories, our happiness, longings, grievances, and angers are kept. The present study is an attempt to elicit the opinions of pre-service teachers who, through teaching, can observe the education process effectively regarding good teaching applications. The study was initiated out of a desire to ascertain what is missing or what should be included in good teaching applications through analyzing pre-service teachers’ reflections in memoirs on the components of good teaching.

Remembering is an individual process constructed with our personal experiences. ‘It is impossible to say what is real or unchangeable in memories, or how the life lived and the current events have influenced memories about life as a student’ (Kosonen, 1998, Cited in Uitto ve Syrjälä, 2008). What we have experienced is an interpretation rather than an original objective event. As pointed out by Kerby (1991), memoirs are hidden narrations of the past rather than the historically accurate representation of the past (Uitto and Syrjälä, 2008). Within the narrations of people about their pasts, we can catch the feelings and meanings embedded in the experiences. Stories are not seen as fixed or set, but rather as constructed through the relational interactions and negotiations of meaning that are made within the social and political contexts of life (Carey and Russell, 2011). Life can be interpreted as a story, something fundamental to understanding human action and knowledge. Life story or narration or life account: the
narration of a life as the person lived it and/or tells it (Bolivar and Domingo, 2006). What kind of "tool" is the story? It is the kind of tool that enables one to understand how to feel about events. Stories shape experience and knowledge into forms that can uniquely establish their emotional meaning. That is, stories do not simply convey information and describe events; they shape their contents so that we, the readers, will feel good or bad, joyful or sorrowful, as we hear about them (Egan, 2008, 51). In the narrative inquiry, the researcher listens to the practitioner’s story; the practitioner who first tells his or her story. Narrative inquiry is a process of collaboration involving mutual storytelling, and restoring as a research proceeds. Narrative inquiry will help to understand how the students make meaning of their lives (Connelly and Clandinin, 1990). Our narratives capture our lives, and illuminate our joys, worries, intentions and beliefs (Richards, 2011).

Stories, including the narration of information concerning personal experiences, are special tools through which teaching applications and practices can be explained (Gudmundsdottir, 1995 Cited in, Fotlland, 2004). Narrative inquiry provides a means to help pre-service teachers entering the field of education reflect upon their prior constructions and beliefs of what it means to be a teacher (Rushton, 2004). To "learn from experience" is to make a backward and forward connection between what we do to things and what we enjoy or suffer from things in consequence (Dewey, 1959). According to Dewey, experiences obtained from incidences or emotions are the sum of our prior experiences and a part of our future experiences (Cited in Rushton, 2004).

Stories provide a rich backdrop for understanding the contextualized situations in which teachers come to know what they know and make the decisions that they do (Rushton, 2004).

A story involves not only accounts of what occurred, but more importantly our experiences and understandings of what happened. The narrative structure is used to organize events into various kinds of stories such as biographical or autobiographical stories of individuals, and imaginative or fictional stories in the form of novels and fairy tales. These are stories about the self. They are the basis of personal identity and self-understanding and they provide answers to the question "Who am I?" (Polkinghorne, 1991:136). The story is our best tool for helping someone to understand what it is like to be someone else. We can thereby enlarge our understanding of others and enlarge our sympathy (Egan, 2008: 54).

People tell stories, but narratives are from analysis (Frank, 2000, Cited in Richards, 2011). As Frank notes “the researcher’s role is to interpret the stories in order to analyze the underlying narrative that the storytellers may not be able to give voice to themselves (Cited in Richards, 2011). Using pre-service teachers’ reflections in their teaching stories, the present study aims to identify standards for “quality” teaching.

**Standards of quality of teaching**

What should be understood from quality teaching? When the literature concerning quality teaching or quality of teaching is reviewed, the following standards can be seen. Recommending a set of standards on which everybody agrees can be inconvenient because a standard questionnaire and the associated procedures may lack flexibility and be inappropriate for innovative forms of teaching (Kember et al., 2002).

Student surveys (aiming at evaluating teaching quality) have to consider the most valuable factors regarding teaching quality and quality of the lecturer, which consist of knowledge transfer, knowledge evaluation, accessibility of a lecturer, and his/her personality traits. Relationships between students and teachers are an unexpectedly crucial component of teaching quality evaluation. In most cases, relationships are the main drivers that strongly motivate students in their studies, exploration of new materials and own research (Vevere and Kozlinskis, 2011). The criteria included in the quality teaching measurement scales presented in the literature are summarized in Table 1.

Using the classifications given in Table 1, it can be argued that the quality of teaching depends on the subject matter, content design, learning environment, classroom management and personal and professional traits of the teacher. However, the commonly accepted philosophical view argues that these factors are not absolute and may change. For example, in settings where teacher-centered education is widespread, what students understand from good teaching is mostly related to the transfer of information and evaluation. For instance, Zerihun et al. (2012) report that more than half of the students relate good teaching to the provision of information by the teacher rather than organization of learning by the teacher. For the participants in that study, the teacher being punctual and knowledgeable in the subject matter seems to be of great importance. A second issue is that “facilitating student learning” and “encouraging student participation” as measurements could lead to evaluating teaching effectiveness based on student learning. However, these traits were mentioned by a very small number of teachers and students. Zerihun et al. (2012) state that the participants find feedback highly valuable but the feedback given was found to not contribute to the development of students and was usually given through exams. The majority of the students indicated their role during the instructional process as passive, listening to teachers’ presentations. In this respect, “good” learning is related to the philosophy owned and perception of learning theories. “Quality” learning is, on the other hand, related to many factors such as subject matter to be taught and dominant learning.
Table 1. Quality teaching criteria.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criteria</th>
<th>Sub-criteria</th>
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<tr>
<td>Subject-Content Design</td>
<td>Promoting students’ active and maximum participation</td>
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<td>Motivating to help student achieve target skills and understand the subject</td>
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<td>matter interesting and comprehensible</td>
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<td>Flexibility in course syllabus</td>
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<td>Good organization –good preparation and structuring</td>
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<td>Organization and presentation</td>
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<td>Being a good role-model</td>
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<td>Promotion of critical thinking and reasoning</td>
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<td>Meeting students’ future needs</td>
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<td>Motivating students</td>
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<td>Contribution of visual and auditory equipment to quality</td>
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<td>Involvement of students</td>
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<td>Being active</td>
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<td>Relating theory to practice</td>
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<td>Realizing information transfer</td>
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<td>Interaction</td>
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<td>Group interaction, sharing</td>
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<td>Drawing from real life events, actuality</td>
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<td>Classroom management</td>
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<td>Drawing attention, making good transitions, monitoring the class, re-</td>
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<td>arrangement of the tasks, giving feedback for particular behaviors</td>
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<td>Establishing empathetic relations with students</td>
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<td>Motivation/enthusiasm of lecturer</td>
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<td>Respect, sensitivity to students’ problems, friendliness</td>
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<td>Out-of -class time availability of the teacher</td>
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<td>Individual Help</td>
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theory or conceptions of learning theories (Allan and Pilevičkienė, 2010). It is difficult to measure the perception of teaching quality for each student by using a crisp score. A more realistic approach may be to use linguistic assessments instead of numerical values (Lin et al., 2009).

METHODS

Within the qualitative methodological framework of the present study, student teachers’ story of teaching is used. The present study draws on pre-service teachers’ memoirs and reminiscences of good teaching. These are personal stories that usually emphasize what is remembered rather than who is remembering; the author, instead of recounting his life, deals with those experiences of his life, people, and events that he considers most significant to the subject matter. Through educational narratives, in contrast to case studies where specific situations are explained largely objectively, an author reflects more broadly on the personal values, ideological commitments, or spiritual purposes that shape teaching and learning. Narratives of this sort come in a variety of forms, the most common being memoirs and stories that describe some form of professional or personal identity crisis faced by a teacher (Rosiek and Atkinson, 2007). In the present study, in order to elicit reflections related to the learning and teaching process, an experiential narrative approach is adopted. Experiential narrative has two formats -- memoirs and narratives of identity crisis. While memoirs mostly focus on career history and student teacher relationships, narratives of identity crisis mostly focuses on institutional and cultural context (Rosiek and Atkinson, 2007: 512). Qualitative data were collected from participants submitted and
story about most effect teaching event.

**Study group**

The study group of the present study consists of a total of 214 pre-service teachers, 108 of whom are third-year students of the Education Faculty of Muğla University and the remaining 106 students are the graduates of the Faculties of Science and Letters attending the teacher formation program of Muğla Sıtkı Kocman University. Nearly 40% of the participants in the latter group have teaching experience as private tutors or private course instructors. Their mean age is also higher than that of the undergraduate student group. The youngest participant in this group is 23 years old and the oldest is 38. The members of this group are the graduates of nine different universities. Participants included 133 females and 81 males.

**Research process**

What the pre-service teachers with a long career of schooling understand by “good teaching” was a source of wonder in this study. What they reflect on regarding their prior teaching and learning experiences might not necessarily be what they will do in the future; yet, from their reflections, important clues might be drawn about good teaching and components of it. Rather than using long, unguided journals, it was thought that short narrations or stories from the pre-service teachers would serve as a better option in answering the question, “What is the pre-service teacher’s perception of a good teacher?” The pre-service teachers were given a form developed by the researcher. They were asked to narrate a learning-teaching incident which had affected them the most and what had affected them the most in this incident. They were asked to write freely. The pre-service teachers voluntarily shared their memories. They completed writing their memoirs within 3 to 12 min. Of the 214 students, 17 pre-service teachers stated that they did not have anything worth remembering. Additionally, 11 pre-service teachers did not want to respond. As another 11 pre-service teachers wrote about highly general things, their statements could not be organized into themes. Therefore, in the present study, the memoirs of 176 pre-service teachers were analyzed and organized.

**Research questions**

a. What is the educational incident that mostly affected the pre-service teachers during their school lives?

b. What were the components of the incident to which the pre-service teachers during their school lives?

**Data analysis**

Within the framework of the present study, first a general evaluation of the memoirs written by the pre-service teachers was carried out for basic analysis. Then, the memoirs were classified into themes. After themes were determined, the memoirs of the pre-service teachers were re-evaluated and grouped into the themes. In order to determine whether the memoirs were truly related to the themes they had been grouped into, opinions of experts were sought. They were asked to decide into which themes a random selection of memoirs should be organized. In this respect, interrelated consistencies concerning which memoirs were related to which themes were examined and it was found that the consistencies were high.

**RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

It is seen that in works written by some scholars, messages embedded in memoirs and short narrations have important roles. Though, there are some concerns about how correctly these messages can be understood. For example, in the 13th century, Mesnevi (2010: 128-129) points out that as people usually focus on the parts of an event about which they feel curious, the real message may get lost. And he says “…I have been in many societies; I have been a friend with bad people and good people. Everyone has been friend to me in their own way. But, nobody could understand my secrets. My secret is not very distant from my cry, but not every eye and every ear has this divine light.”

Nonetheless, it is indisputable that these memoirs have important messages for life and contain references to their societies, communities and lives that provide insight into understanding the philosophies and environments they represent. In this section of the present study, the memoirs of pre-service teachers are put into themes and their messages are interpreted.

What is the educational incident that mostly affected the pre-service teachers during their school lives?

Based on the pre-service teachers’ responses to this research question, their most significant experiences are presented in themes as follows. The themes are organized from the most preferred to the least.

**Active participation, being involved in incidents of learning**

Active participation and being involved in incidents of learning are important components of the most affective learning experiences recalled by the pre-service teachers in their school lives. Some of the memoirs written by undergraduate students are presented below:

... the teacher divided us into groups and gave each group a thermometer. Then he took the groups outside the class. The groups measured the temperature. Then the groups made short presentations about their measurements.... At the end of the lesson, I perfectly learned how and under which conditions to use a thermometer… (Student teacher Ş.K.).

Though I hated my science course, through a project assigned in this course, I learned perfectly. I had to prepare a periscope. I went to some carpenters and workshops to collect the required materials and then I made the periscope… as I had prepared everything myself, it resulted in permanent knowledge…(Student teacher M.T.).

In some of the memoirs of the pre-service teachers
attending the teacher formation program, active participation and being involved in learning incidents also seem to be considered important components of a good teaching experience. For example:

Our teacher selected two novels and then created a voluntary group to work on these novels. We determined the characteristics, superficial aspects, etc., and then discussed with the other group … For the first time, we as students were in the forefront. We realized that we have broad viewpoints on novels…(Student teacher R.M.)

While I was attending a vocational school to become an optician, the teacher was teaching the number and axle values of glass of glasses and I could not understand anything. In application class, I put a glass on a pachymeter and observed its axle values and numbers, this is the most effective learning experience I have ever had…(Student teacher G.C.)

**Learning by doing**

Learning by doing is regarded as an important component of positive learning experiences by the pre-service teachers. Thirty two of the memoirs written by the pre-service teachers were found to be related to this theme. Some of these memoirs are given below. These are taken from the memoirs of the undergraduate students of the Education Faculty:

While I was in high school, our German teacher was teaching us the names of fruits and vegetables. He wanted us to bring fruits and vegetables to the class. We learned their names, how to write and pronounce them. He let us eat the fruits we brought during the last ten minutes of the class (Student teacher M.S.)

We carried out an experiment about air-pressure when I was a second-year student at university. We connected the pipes and hung them on the wall. We filled the pipes with sour-cherry juice. Then, we blew into the pipe and in this way we demonstrated air-pressure… (Student teacher H.B.).

Selected memoirs written by the pre-service teachers attending the teacher formation program in relation to this theme are included below:

…We used an experiment (acid-base reaction) in geography class that we had learned in our science and technology course. We presented an acid-base reaction as an eruption of a volcano while presenting on the topic of volcanoes. I think we both learned and taught very well …(Student teacher A.B.)

While I was a third-year university student, our teacher brought an instrument to measure radiation. When we brought it closer to the telephone, it generated stronger sound. I have never forgotten this instrument, radiation and matters emitting radiation…(Student teacher T.B.)

**Using an unusual method – using strategies that facilitate recall**

Using an unusual method in the classroom seems to be an important component of good teaching. Twenty eight of the memoirs written by the pre-service teachers were found to be related to this theme. Some of them are presented below:

I went to another teacher to ask about a subject I had not understood in mathematics class. The subject I did not understand was what complementary angles and supplementary angles were. That is, which of the angles, 90 and 180, is complementary and which one is supplementary. He said that we need to decide according to number of syllabus; in this way, I learned how to distinguish these angles… (Student teacher T.S.)

In social studies class, our teacher composed a song from a topic which we had found very difficult to memorize and recall… We found teaching information about political parties through music very interesting and this resulted in easy and permanent understanding… (Student teacher M.E.)

Some of the memoirs written by pre-service teachers attending the formation program also related to this theme.

We learned the English alphabet in the form of a song …(Student teacher I.N.)

Everything we learned in our anatomy course was learned through cadavers and models and also coding models; this resulted in permanent knowledge retention. I can still remember what I learned in this course … (Student teacher A.N.)

**Affective experiences**

Twenty eight memoirs written by the pre-service teachers appear to be related to affective experiences. Some of the memoirs written by the undergraduate students are given below:

When I was a seventh grader, I was walking around in the garden of the school. Instead of throwing the bottle in my hand into bin, I threw it onto the ground. After I took several steps, one of my friends called me, I turned back. At that moment, one of my teachers picked the bottle up and looked at me for a few seconds without telling anything to me, and then threw it into bin. Since that
time, I have been very careful about such issues... (Student teacher C. A.)

I did not know anything about mathematics when I was a second-year student in high school. My mathematics background was very weak... But now our mathematics teacher was teaching us as if he was telling a story. He simplified the subjects and he was joking with mathematics and in this way, trying to show us how easy mathematics was. At first, I had some difficulties. I was not memorizing anymore. He taught us trigonometry through poetry and endeared it to me... (Student teacher M.T.)

The effects of affective experiences on teaching can also be seen in the memoirs written by the pre-service teachers attending the formation program:

I can tell that I have always tried to be ready for the classes of the teachers I liked and have been more open to learning in them. And I think being liked is related to listening to and valuing what students say. My prejudice against mathematics was broken by this teacher... (Student teacher A.K.)

... I drew a tangled picture. When my peers mocked my picture, the teacher told me that it was beautiful. ... I now know that it was a bad picture but the support given by my teacher was of great importance... (Student teacher R.M.)

Relating to real life

It can be seen that 14 of the memoirs written by students are related to this theme. Some of these memoirs are presented below:

...Our teacher invited a traffic warden to the class for a Traffic and First-aid course. After some applications in the classroom, we worked in pairs together with traffic wardens on a street close to the school... (Student teacher H.F.)

... while studying water pressure, we examined the natural water reservoirs around us (places where water naturally accumulates; in rural areas they are used as a source of drinking water and irrigation), and, while doing this, I learned how drinking water comes to our houses... (Student teacher T.J.)

In some of the memoirs written by the pre-service teachers attending the formation program, the effects of relating learning to real life can be seen:

...I do not like Ottoman Turkish. I am not very good at it either. Our teacher, knowing that we did not like it, took me and my four friends to the cemetery one day. He wanted us to read the Ottoman Turkish on the tombs in this cemetery. We first started to clean the tombs like archeologists. We deciphered the writings on the tombs sometimes by reading and sometimes by making guesses from the few words we understood. Do people entertain themselves in a cemetery? That day, we had a great fun there (Student teacher M.Z.)

It is seen from the memoirs of the pre-service teachers from both groups that relating learning to real life and giving examples from real life are among the elements of good teaching.

Drama play

The pre-service teachers in the study felt that drama and play were important components of good teaching. There are nine memoirs mentioning drama and play as important elements of good teaching. These memoirs can be seen in both groups. Some of them are given below:

When I was a first grader in elementary school, our teacher wanted us to write a number from 1 to 20 on a piece of paper and then put it inside a balloon. Then we went to the playground of the school and burst them. Then we got the number inside the balloon and then wrote it as beautifully as we could... those who were able to burst four balloons wrote a problem by using four numbers... (Student teacher B.P.)

When I was in English class in high school, we played a game with the help of a friend who liked English very much; hence, he was very successful in the course. It was like the game Taboo. Without telling the target words, we gave some clues so that our friends could find the target word. It was both useful and fun... (Student teacher K.O.)

Some memoirs from the pre-service teachers attending the teacher formation program:

When I was in high school, our literature teacher used to come to class dressed in different styles when he taught us poets and authors of different eras. He also made use of videos and audio-tapes in order to present the lesson like a play in a theater. These things had a great impact on me and endeared me to literature... (Student teacher T.T.)

We learned the play of Şinasi “Şair Evlenmesi” in class in the form of a drama activity when I was a sophomore at university. Drama method made the messages more clear... (Student teacher Ş.E.)

Use of media-technology

One of the most important components of good teaching
seems to be related to the use of media and technology in class. Eight pre-service teachers mentioned the use of media and technology in their memoirs. A few of them are presented below:

**While we were learning some trends in educational philosophy in an introduction to educational sciences course, we watched the film “Dead Poets Society” in order to see the applications of these trends ... this was a lesson where I learned without memorizing.... (Student teacher Ö.O).**

One memoir from the pre-service teachers attending the teacher formation program is as follows:

The pedagogic content of a movie in which an autistic child has great achievements with the help of his mother and science teacher who use methods of teaching appropriate for this child profoundly affected me...(Student teacher O.T.)

**Repetition and reinforcement**

Repetition and reinforcement are among the components of good teaching but it seems that they are not viewed as being as important as the ones mentioned above by the students. Only 6 undergraduate students mentioned these elements in their memoirs as an indication of good teaching. Some of them are presented below:

Our high school history teacher could find time to revise the subjects of the first week of class even though we were in the last week of the term. Even the weakest student in the class did not forget what he had taught because of the amount of revision. As we did not forget anything even without revising before the exam we could get good marks. While he was leaving class, he used to smile at us...(Student teacher G.H.)

When I was a first grader in elementary school, I tried very hard to get the red ribbon given by the teacher ... (Student teacher K.K.).

**Good teaching in other memoirs**

The themes mentioned regarding good teaching in six of the pre-service teachers' memoirs are different from the ones mentioned above. These themes are inclusion of questions and discussions in the class (two pre-service teachers mentioned this), the importance of education given in a family setting (one pre-service teacher), and the teacher's forcing students to learn and imposing sanctions.

The other themes are the use of the senses and proving theories and ideas. An important component of good teaching seems to be the use of the senses according to the participants. Five pre-service teachers from the teacher formation group mentioned this theme in their memoirs. Proving theories and ideas: The pre-service teachers think that proving the validity and logic of theories and ideas is an important part of effective learning and teaching though not as much as those mentioned previously. Only in two of the memoirs written by the pre-service teachers from the department of classroom teacher education, is mentioned as an important part of effective learning and teaching.

The 175 pre-service teachers were asked “with reference to the memoirs you have just written, which components of those educational experiences have affected you the most?” They were told that they could give free responses to this question or that they could give their responses by marking the related parts on their memoirs. The incidents reported as affecting them the most in terms of good teaching were isolated into undergraduate and graduate pre-service teacher groups and are presented in Table 2.

Taken from the responses given in memoir form to an open-ended question, the experiences, which the pre-service teachers thought, were of great importance for good teaching are presented in Table 2. From these findings, it is seen that the undergraduate pre-service teachers think that “learning by doing” (22%), use of interesting and different methods (15%), active participation in learning experience (11%), and use of films or interesting materials are the most important to good teaching. According to the pre-service teachers in this group, a teacher being impressive, reliable and relaxing, learning in different settings, playing games, drama and role-play are other things important for effective learning and teaching. On the other hand, graduate students attending a teacher certificate program think that the most important component of good teaching is giving practical information that is useful for real life (38%). This is followed by active participation (16%), use of interesting and different method (13%), teachers being impressive, relaxing and reliable (9%), and use of drama and role-play (7%).

When the standards presented in Table 1, concerning how good teaching should be, are compared with the opinions of the pre-service teachers in our sampling, it can be claimed that the pre-service teachers think that learning by doing, experiencing and active participation are more important than the other elements for quality teaching. Moreover, older pre-service teachers (formation program attendants) think that good teaching should provide practical real-life information. When the memoirs mentioning the use of unusual methods are analyzed, it is seen that they primarily refer to alternative learning environments where educational objectives used are demonstrated. Of the memoirs written by the pre-service teachers, 28 are related to this theme. In these memoirs, the pre-service teachers note that it is good for
knowledge acquisition and comprehension to be in a learning environment where the short-term memory can be stimulated using strategies and approaches related to the teaching target. In addition, as can be seen in Table 2, pre-service teachers think that creating opportunities for permanent learning, providing reinforcements and repetition, arousing curiosity, and urging students and imposing discipline in the learning environment are other important components of good teaching. This demonstrates that the pre-service teachers are describing good learning experiences from a behaviorist perspective.

Some closing thoughts

In light of the findings of the present study, it can be claimed that the undergraduate pre-service teachers think that learning by doing, active participation and enhancement of this participation with films and/or other materials and use of teaching methods different from what they are used to are the most important components of good teaching. The more experienced, older graduate students teachers attending the teacher formation program think that the most important thing for good teaching is providing practical information that can be readily applied to real-life. Like the undergraduate pre-service teachers, the formation students also think that active participation and the use of unusual methods are among the components of good teaching. Moreover, when the messages given in the themes mentioned by the pre-service teachers in their memoirs are analyzed, it is seen that “good teaching” is mostly related to the following themes:

1. Being related to real life,
2. Active participation, students being involved in their learning,
3. Learning by doing and experiencing,
4. Providing reinforcement and repetition,
5. Providing affective experiences,
6. Including drama, role play and games,
7. Proving ideas,
8. Use of media and technology and
9. Using unusual methods or using strategies facilitating recall

Moreover, the pre-service teachers think that sometimes for good teaching, the borders of the classroom should
be erased. In this respect, teaching should not be restricted to the classroom. For example, students can learn the traffic rules by observing the traffic outside; they can learn nature by visiting a forest; even cemeteries can be a place of learning. The present study also reveals that certificate program students (they are older than the undergraduate group) attach more importance to the presentation of practical information in lessons. Another remarkable point is that most of the memoirs written by the pre-service teachers are related to the elementary and secondary school years. Good examples recalled by the pre-service teachers occur mostly in elementary school years; moreover, although they are easier to remember as they are closer in time, not many memoirs related to higher education and teacher certificate programs were written. This may indicate a need to review the education given at universities. Memoirs can also be claimed to reflect the pre-service teachers’ beliefs about their prior experiences. Depending on philosophical viewpoint and beliefs about learning theories, memoirs can differentiate. Yet in the memoirs written by the pre-service teachers about good teaching, some elements come to the fore as components of good teaching such as “it should include practical life events”, “settings different from the classroom should be used for various teaching purposes”, and “the teacher should be impressive, relaxing and reliable”. These statements can be used as test items for the purpose of evaluating good teaching.

The opinions of undergraduate and graduate pre-service teachers about “good teaching” are presented in Figure 1.

Learning by doing and experiencing and active participation are not only important for young children but also for adults. The findings of the present study show that concrete experiences, active participation, being involved in learning, and learning practical information are very important for adults.

Standardized questionnaires lack flexibility and they may not be suitable for more innovative pedagogy. Some criteria that can be drawn from the memoirs written in the present study may lead us to think that some items can be suggested for a test to be developed to evaluate quality teaching.

We can tell that changes in the pre-service teachers’ perceptions of good teaching do not happen in a short time. As stated by Sinatra (2002), conceptual change is not sudden but more of a gradual process. It is evolutionary rather than revolutionary. Memoirs written by students can be used as a tool with the potential to affect this change.

The present study has some limitations. Follow-up interviews, which were not conducted in the present study, could be done with pre-service teachers after writing their memoirs in order to confirm or gain additional information or insights. Future studies may look at variables that have the power to affect the content of memoirs in different samplings.
Conflict of Interests

The author has not declared any conflict of interests.

REFERENCES


