



# Let's make a movie: Investigating pre-service teachers' reflections on using video-recorded role playing cases in Turkey

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## ABSTRACT

This study examined the potential consequences of using student-filmed video cases in the study of classroom management in teacher education. Pre-service teachers in groups were engaged in video-recorded role playing to simulate classroom memoirs. Each group shared their video cases and interpretations in a class presentation. Qualitative data collection techniques were used to gather their experiences. Reflection papers written by 97 juniors were analyzed through content analysis and triangulated by group videos and case analysis reports. The results suggest that having pre-service teachers develop and analyze video cases can improve motivation, learning, empathy, and the construction of professional identity.

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## 1. Background and context

One of the requirements for performing teaching functions is to have ample procedural knowledge, which includes knowing how to apply pedagogical principles in teaching situations. Classroom management (CM) is an example of a teacher's functions that entails procedural knowledge. It is the most serious concern of novice teachers and refers to the process of establishing and sustaining an orderly classroom environment that facilitates academic and social-emotional learning (Evertson & Weinstein, 2006). Past research indicates CM-related problems as the main reason for teacher burnout (Browers & Tomic, 2000) and leaving the profession (Ingersoll, 2001). Many novice teachers feel unprepared for dealing with the complexities and unpredictability of classroom realities (Jones, 2006). Such concerns call for improvements in the instruction of CM during pre-service education.

Effective CM requires the mastery of specific affective, conversational, and conflict management skills. The development of such competencies during pre-service years can be greatly fostered by integrating active and engaging instructional activities since it requires the practice of university coursework in a classroom environment. In this sense, it is crucial to support CM instructions along with field experiences in public schools. However, in Turkey, pre-service teachers do not have access to real classroom

experiences while taking the CM course.<sup>1</sup> Being a teacher educator in Turkey, the researcher was faced with this challenge in the previous years and searched for a solution to remedy this deficiency in the CM courses. Thus, this study reports on an instructional activity that was implemented to support pre-service teachers' application of theory into practice within the context of CM.

Inspired by Brophy's (1988) suggestion of using case materials and simulation exercises as substitutes for field experiences, this study deployed a learner-centered video project in which pre-service teachers in groups simulated real classroom incidents that they have previously experienced during their educational lives and discussed them in classroom presentations. Using video cases of classroom episodes is not a new approach in the literature. However, most of the video recordings in the former studies were scripted and shot by professionals. What makes the implementation presented in this study unique was that the video recordings were based on pre-service teachers' own memoirs and personally developed by them as actors, actresses, directors and cameramen. It was expected that utilizing such an approach could actively engage

<sup>1</sup> This course was integrated for the first time in Turkish teacher education curriculum in 1999 as a part of the reconstruction of colleges of education. It is a mandatory and standalone course in all teacher education programs and usually offered in the third year of the study. Students gain field experience by taking "School Experience" course in the first year and then "Teaching Internship" course in the fourth year. The former consists of observation of a classroom setting while the latter involves intensive teaching practice. Therefore, no teaching experience is available during the third year in which the CM course is given.

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them in authentic and meaningful CM contexts that promote meaningful learning. Therefore, the primary purpose of the video project was to provide pre-service teachers with multimedia learning environments in which they could apply theories and principles of CM for simulated classroom realities. In addition, it served as a modeling opportunity to make pre-service teachers aware of how they might use technologies with constructivist teaching methods in their future teaching careers.<sup>2</sup>

This study explores pre-service teachers' reflections with regards to the incorporation of their video recordings of classroom memoirs into the CM course and potential consequences of this project on their learning and preparation for the profession. The paper begins with an explanation of theoretical underpinnings of the video activity followed by a brief review of educational uses of video in teacher education. Subsequently, it presents the research methodology along with the description of video implementation in the CM course. After outlining main findings, the paper concludes with a discussion of salient results within the context of teacher education.

## 2. Conceptual framework and related literature

The theoretical grounding of the study is based on social constructivist theory (SCT) that assumes the occurrence of learning as a result of interaction with social and cultural contexts. It is a blend of Piagetian and Vygotskian premises of cognition with more emphasis on the latter. In her edited book about constructivist teacher education, Richardson (1997) defines constructivism as a descriptive theory of learning assuming that "individuals create their own new understandings based on the interaction of what they already know or believe and the phenomena or ideas with which they come into contact" (p. 3). She states that this view focuses mostly on individual and psychological process of meaning making, and defines SCT as a different constructivist approach that does not "focus primarily on the individual but view the social as instrumental, if not essential, in both the construction and appropriation of knowledge" (p. 7).

SCT is based mostly on Vygotskian premises of cognition. Vygotsky (1986) recognizes that cognitive development is strongly associated with the learner's cultural history, language, and social environment, which provide both the content and means of thinking. What and how to think and learn cannot be isolated from socio-cultural context. People interact with their surrounding social agents by means of words (language) and shared experiences. This dialectical process leads to the co-construction of meaning. Through his well-known concept of "zone of proximal development", Vygotsky (1978) argues that learners, with the assistance of more capable others (e.g., teachers, peers, parents), perform learning tasks that they cannot do on their own. After performing on the social level (interpsychological), they internalize the tasks on the individual level (intrapyschological). Hence, SCT emphasizes the formation of learning communities in which learners can socially interact and support each other for their responsibilities, and share and negotiate on their understandings about the learning tasks (Beck & Kosnik, 2006). The process of knowledge construction or negotiation is influenced by the learners' existing conceptual frameworks, beliefs and experiences, environmental and cultural

factors, social interaction and negotiation with others, and the variety of realistic contexts in which learning is relevant (Ernest, 1995; Wilson & Cole, 1991).

The application of SCT for the video activity in this research is due to its research-based qualifications discussed in the related literature. For example, Brophy (2006) suggests that the optimal use of social constructivist techniques is in those subjects with more procedural knowledge than declarative knowledge. In order to get as much benefit as possible, he also notes that SCT activities should be applied together with transmission methods especially teaching students with minimal prior knowledge. Beck and Kosnik (2006) outline potential implications of SCT for pre-service education based on their extensive research studies. They argue that SCT can help with connecting pre-service courses to the field, sharing ideas and experiences among the members of learning communities formed in teacher education programs, and recognizing the connection between knowledge and all aspects of people's lives. Similarly, in his critical analysis of SCT based on research evidence, Nuthall (2002) states that SCT works best when students study in small-group activities that focus on shared experiences. He goes on to explain that such activities should contain challenging issues related to the course content so that students can engage in exciting analysis and discussion. The CM course in this study covers concepts, theories, and principles for organizing effective classrooms but the transmission of this knowledge base alone does not necessarily imply that pre-service teachers know when and how to use it in their teaching. Therefore, following these research-based suggestions, the CM course was supported with the SCT-based video activity so that pre-service teachers in small groups could mutually experience a simulation of prior classroom phenomena for which they process and apply the content knowledge from the CM course.

As far as the integration of social constructivist principles in teaching is concerned, there is a variety of practical instructional strategies that operationalize these principles in action. Educators use such strategies for developing instructional activities. Within the framework of constructivist learning, they can also utilize technological tools to scaffold appealing and flexible learning activities that facilitate intentional, active, constructive, cooperative, and authentic learning (Jonassen, Peck, & Wilson, 1999). The instructional activity subject to this study is grounded in case-based learning, role playing, and peer collaboration strategies and mediated by video technology. The following subsections provide conceptual information and a brief review of previous research germane to these strategies.

### 2.1. Case-based learning

There is an emerging consensus among the cognitive scientists that situating learning in a purposeful and engaging real world activity facilitates effective and deep learning (Bransford, Brown, & Cocking, 1999; Kolodner et al., 2003). Case-based learning is a constructivist and learner-centered strategy that can be successfully employed to scaffold such a learning experience (Kolodner & Guzdial, 2000). The central idea in the case method is to provide an interesting and motivating context. Jonassen (1999) points out that constructivist learning is contextual and can be driven by an authentic problem, issue, case, or project that allow students to inquiry, discuss, interpret, and apply what they have learned. Cases are usually presented in the written formats and describe fictional or actual situations. Kreber (2001) argues that the application of case in teaching is an effective way of involving students in Kolb's (1984) experiential learning cycles, which can foster greater self-direction, logical reasoning and critical thinking. The discussion of cases in a community of learners brings about various perspectives of teaching practice and awareness in making decisions (Manouchehri & Enderson, 2003).

<sup>2</sup> In Turkey, teacher recruitments for public schools are governed by the Ministry of National Education (MNE) that is the central authority in educational affairs. As a result of reform efforts started in 2005, MNE initiated radical changes in the national curriculum. A notable characteristic of new curriculum is a shift from behaviorist to constructivist principles and an emphasis on the integration of educational technologies. Therefore, teacher education institutions in Turkey have an important mission of preparing teachers who are proficient in these quite new patterns of curriculum.

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