



## THE IMPORTANCE OF GUIDING QUESTIONS IN REFLECTIVE JOURNALING

### YANSITICI GÜNLÜKLERDE YÖNLENDİRME SORULARININ ÖNEMİ

Canan Perkan ZEKE\*

**ABSTRACT:** A study of student teachers' experiences of the journal writing was carried out. Participants were the 15 student teachers enrolled into the EDUC 420 – Practice Teaching course. The aim of the study was to examine student teachers' experiences of journal writing based on their perceptions and views to develop insights into reflection and reflective practice. A qualitative paradigm was used wherein an interpretive methodology was adopted. Semi-structured interviews and end-of-the-semester reflection essays were used as data collection methods. Content analysis method was used to analyse the qualitative data. Student teachers indicated that journal writing created awareness of the self as a teacher in terms of weaknesses and the strengths; however, they also reported on the lack of depth, diversity and perspective in guidelines provided in the journals and reports. In most of the perceptions, the role and lack of the focus and guiding questions were underlined.

**Keywords:** journal writing, reflection, guiding questions

**ÖZET:** Öğretmen adaylarının günlük yazma ili ilgili deneyimlerini içeren bir çalışma gerçekleştirilmiştir. Araştırmanın katılımcıları EDUC 420 – Öğretmenlik Uygulaması dersine kayıtlı 15 öğretmen adayından oluşmaktadır. Bu çalışmanın amacı öğretmen adaylarının günlük yazma deneyimleriyle ilgili algılarını ve görüşlerini inceleyerek yansıtıcı düşünce ve yansıtıcı öğretim üzerine anlayışlar geliştirmektir. Araştırmada nitel yaklaşım kapsamında yorumlama yöntemi kullanılmıştır. Yarı yapılandırılmış mülakat ve dönem sonu yansıtıcı kompozisyonlar araştırmanın veri toplama araçlarını oluşturmaktadır. Nitel veriler, içerik analizi yöntemiyle kategorize edilip temalara ayrıştırılmıştır. Öğretmen adayları, günlük yazmanın adaylarda zayıf ve güçlü yanlarıyla ilgili farkındalık yarattığını belirtirlerken; günlüklerdeki yönergelerin derinlik, çeşitlilik ve bakış açısı içermediğini bildirmişlerdir. Birçok öğretmen adayının görüşleri, mevcut günlüklerdeki odaklanma ve yönlendirici soruların eksikliğini ve önemini vurgulamaktadır.

**Anahtar sözcükler:** günlük yazma, yansıtıcı düşünce, yönlendirme soruları

## 1. INTRODUCTION

### 1.1. Reflection and Teacher Education

Over the past two decades, reflection and reflective practice have been regarded as standards towards which teachers and teacher educators must strive (Gore & Zeichner, 1991; Laboskey, 1994; Rodgers, 2002; Orland-Barak, 2005). Korthagen (2001) sees reflection as a condition for 'growth competence', the ability to steer one's own development as a teacher after initial teacher education. This is one of the reasons why reflective practice is increasingly being recognized as being essential to good teaching and having a central role in the learning life of the effective teacher (Day, 1993, p.83). The assumption is that since teaching and learning are complex processes and since there is not necessarily one right approach (Loughran, 1996), deliberating among competing versions of good teaching and recasting past understandings and current practices (Grimmet et al, 1960 cited in Leitch & Day, 2000) are likely to lead improvement. Without a capacity to evaluate assumptions, teachers will be more inclined to remain prisoners of their programs (Argyris & Schön, 1976, cited in Leitch & Day, 2000). The second is that engaging in reflective practice is a means of helping individuals towards greater self-knowledge and self-challenge – 'a useful way of achieving personal development' (Johnston and Bradley, 1996 p.5) through, for example, an analysis of the personal values and theories that underlie teaching. Teacher education institutes increasingly focus on the experiences of the student teachers themselves because of the gap student teachers perceive between the theory offered by the university and their teaching practice. In particular, attention is paid to the perception of these experiences by student teachers. Reflection is seen as an important way to make explicit these often tacit conceptions, also called 'subjective theories', and to restructure them, if necessary, using 'objective theories' from scientific insights (Borko & Putnam, 1996; Korthagen, 2001). Therefore, the notion of reflective

practice becomes an element to be gained by the novice teachers during their pre-service teacher education because this will continuously contribute to their personal development.

### **1.2. Dewey and Reflection**

One of the basic criteria Dewey (1910) offers for reflection is that reflective thought is consecutive, not merely a sequence. He elaborates on the idea as “reflection involves not simply a sequence of ideas, but a consequence – a consecutive ordering in such a way that each determines the next as its proper outcome, while each in turn leans back on its predecessors”. (pp. 2-3) Rodgers (2002) elaborates on this criterion of Dewey defining reflection as “a meaning-making process that moves a learner from one experience into the next with a deeper understanding of its relationships with and connections to other experiences and ideas; it is the thread that makes continuity of learning possible and ensures the progress of the individual” (p.845). ‘Experience’ is the key notion in this meaning making process and needs to be understood very clearly in order to understand Dewey’s criterion of “Reflection as a consequence”. Dewey claims that experiences alone, even educative ones, are not enough. What is critical is the ability to perceive and then weave meaning among the threads of experience. Experience is not primarily cognitive, Dewey further asserts. That is, an experience is not the same as thought. Rather, it is the meaning that one perceives in and then constructs from an experience that gives that experience value. An experience exists in time and is therefore linked to the past and the future. Therefore, the function of reflection is to make meaning out of experiences: to formulate the relationships and continuities among the elements of an experience, between that experience and other experiences, between that experience and the knowledge that one carries, and between that knowledge and the knowledge produced by thinkers other than oneself (Rodgers, 2002). Therefore we make sense of each new experience based on the meaning drawn from our past experiences through reorganization and reconstruction of experiences.

### **1.3. Reflection and Reflective Journaling**

Therefore, in order to enable student teachers make meaning out of their experiences, we need to provide the essential scaffolds for them to reflect on their experiences. Reflective Journaling has become one of the important means used in pre-service teacher education programmes for encouraging students to reflect on their professional practice (Clarke, 2004; Chitpin, 2006; Minnot 2008). The underlying idea in all the research done on reflective journaling indicate that engaging in the process of writing reflective journals encourages the improvement and development of reflective teaching and practitioners. The idea of teacher thinking is intertwined with reflection, reflective teaching and journaling. Farrel (2001) considers reflection as thinking critically about what you do, which involves recall, consideration, and evaluation of experiences. Doucet and Wilson (1997) support this view indicating that reflective journaling provides means for students to scrutinize their own learning experiences. Learning is likely to occur since journaling connects students with ‘self’, school context and the education system (Minnot, 2008). However, research reveals that reflection level in pre-service teachers’ journal writing was primarily descriptive or technical rather than critical or transformative (Hatton & Smith, 1995; Pultorak, 1996; Risko, Roskos & Vukelich, 1999). Not all journal writing is to achieve the interaction and the continuity in making sense out of experiences. Hence, the researcher in this study aims to examine the weaknesses of the currently used reflective journal writing processes in the Practice Teaching course focusing on the process of journal writing so as to develop more reflective ways of designing journal writing. The study specifically aimed to develop insights into reflection and reflective practice by examining student teachers’ experiences of journal writing based on their perceptions and views.

## 2. METHOD

### 2.1. Methodology

In this study, a qualitative paradigm was used wherein an interpretive methodology was adopted. The interpretive methodology emphasizes the understanding of the social world through an examination of the interpretation of that world by its participants. The interpretivist claims that “it is the job of the social scientist to gain access to people’s ‘common-sense thinking’ and hence to interpret their actions and their social world from their point of point” (Bryman, 2004). Schutz (1962 cited in Bryman, 2004) expresses a commitment to viewing events and social world through the eyes of the people that they study. The social world must be interpreted from the perspective of the people being studied which is in tune with interpretivism and which requires an understanding of the direct lived experiences of the participants of that social world.

### 2.2. Participants, Data Collection and Data Analysis

This study focused on the EDUC 420 Practice Teaching course which is a 5-credit, fourth-year course in B.A in English Language Teaching (ELT). This practicum course is offered to student teachers in their final year in the last semester just before they graduate. The course is scheduled for 3 hours per week for 14 weeks at the university. It offers student teachers 10-12 weeks of field experiences, comprising 4 hours of observations, and 10 hours of formal teaching opportunities in actual language classes in secondary schools. The Practice Teaching course aims at promoting the reflective practice of the student teachers through feedback sessions held after all their teaching experiences to share and discuss their teaching experiences and through having them write 10 reflective journals after each formal teaching experience considering the four points given to them as guidelines. This study aimed at providing understanding of the 15 student teachers’ (enrolled into EDUC 420 during Spring 2010) lived experiences of their journal writing in their Practicum course. The meaning of the student teachers’ journal writing experiences was interpreted through semi-structured interviews and end-of-the-semester reflection essays. The data was collected right after the completion of the course and even after the submission of the letter grades so as to ensure that they were frank and honest about their opinions. As Martin (2005) emphasized the timing of data collection is particularly important because students should not have the fear of assessment influencing their opinions. The qualitative data gathered from the interviews and end-of-the-semester reflection essays were analysed through content analysis method. Content analysis involves identifying, coding, categorizing, classifying and labelling the primary patterns/occurring themes in the data (Miles & Huberman, 1994; Patton, 2002). While analyzing the qualitative data, Straus and Corbin’s (1990 cited in Bryman, 2004) three types of coding practice as open coding, axial coding and selective coding was used. The study focused on the following research question: What do the student teachers report on the process of journal writing they go through right after their actual teachings at schools?

## 3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Student teacher’s perceptions were classified as benefits and weaknesses of the journals as given below:

### 3. 1. Category 1: Benefits of journals and reports (BofJ/R): Self-awareness

Theme 1: Created awareness of the self as a teacher in terms of weaknesses and the strengths

Student teachers reported about the benefits of the processes involved regarding the currently implemented journal writing as in Bayrak & Usluel’s (2011) study. They found the journal writing

process effective since it created self-awareness in terms of weaknesses and strengths as stated by the student teachers below:

*ST2: "According to my feelings to my experience of journal writing are that I could see my weak points and strong points easily from the reports...Reflective reports enabled me to evaluate myself. I could easily identify about my areas which I was strong and weak but in the journals there could be more specific items for evaluating our teachings"*

*ST7: "The journals helped me to bring out my problematic areas about my teaching but it didn't help me develop solutions."*

Although student teachers indicated that their awareness improved regarding their weak and strong areas, they expected to provide some solutions and put those into action to evaluate the results as well. Student teacher 2 considers the portfolio insufficient in terms of the questions or points given for guidance since she claims that more specific items are essential for a better evaluation of their teaching. The quotations and excerpts above give the impression that student teachers perceived self-awareness as becoming aware of weaknesses and strengths. On the other hand, some student teachers associated self-criticism, self-assessment and self-reflection with being aware of strong and weak points as indicated below:

#### Theme 2: Associated self-criticism with being aware of weaknesses and strengths

*ST6: "This process helped me to gain the ability to criticize myself. How much I can criticize myself; I think I was improving in that area. With the help of the feedback that I got from my cooperating teacher helped me see myself from a different perspective.... It helped me to self-critique towards my weaknesses and strengths. After criticizing myself in terms of teaching, I can handle the problematic parts of my teaching"*

*ST9: "I had a chance to self-critique my teaching performances. I thought about my teachings when I came home and evaluated myself by jotting down the aspects that were good and weak about my teachings."*

Student teachers indicated that they gained the skill of self-criticism since they were given the opportunity to write and speak about their weak and strong points. On the other hand, seeing the weak and strong aspects of one's teaching can also be perceived as doing self-analysis as reported below:

#### Theme 3: Associated self-analysis with being aware of weaknesses and strengths

*ST15: "To be honest, the process of journal writing contributed to my development of teaching only in a way that I analyzed my experience by seeing my weak and strong points"*

Student teachers perceived themselves as performing different skills only by recognizing their weak and strong aspects which could be interpreted as thinking about one's performance at first level. The research by Mansvelder-Longayroux et al. (2007) reported 6 learning activities involved in producing journals which included recollection, evaluation, analysis, critical processing, diagnosis and reflection. Analysis requires one to examine which different aspects of an experience can be distinguished and what underlying processes played a role in an experience or development by examining the factors that played a role in that experience. Critical processing involves comparing one's own opinion with the opinions and beliefs of others such as theory, mentor, fellow student, supervisor and formulating your opinion on the basis of different arguments. However, the explanations in the transcriptions and excerpts do not go from 'recognizing the weaknesses and strengths level' further. Moreover, self-critique and self-analysis skills requires the student teacher spot the weak or problematic areas and to define and do some reasoning over the problematic areas to

see the underlying reasons or affecting factors for the problematic areas. Solutions and suggestions need to be produced and these need to be grounded on the beliefs of others as theoretically and practically before any action is taken. Reasoning over the consequences of formulated and implemented actions need to be thought and evaluated. Therefore, more stages and further levels of thinking patterns are required for reflective practice.

### 3. 2. Category 2: Weaknesses of Journals and Reports (Wof J/R): Guidelines in the journals and reports

The student teachers indicated that the points given in the journals and reports for consideration has not been effective in promoting their awareness, self-critique, self-assessment and reflective thinking skills because the guidelines provided were weak in many respects. Firstly, they lack depth; thus, they couldn't enable student teachers to think from different perspectives with a diversity as given below:

#### Theme 1: Lack of perspective, diversity and creativity

Diversity is an important aspect of self-examination and self-understanding since it provides multiple perspectives to look at oneself and one's own teaching (Fanson et al., 2003). Student teacher 1 reports about the deficiency and weakness of the journals in guiding student teachers to look at their teaching performance from a diverse perspective as shown below:

*ST1: "The journals didn't provide any specialization such as classroom management, methods etc. I just evaluated myself generally and I wrote what I had in my mind, it didn't guide me to write different and new points about my teaching. I wish I was able to discover new aspects of myself as a teacher"*

The structure of the journals and reports in the portfolio provided a general outlook towards one's teaching since they did not stimulate student teachers to analyze their lesson in terms of stages and important aspects of teaching such as classroom management and methods. Student teachers expected to analyse their teaching practice from various angles wishing to discover different aspects of themselves as teachers. Lack of discovering different aspects of one's own teaching might have been caused by the type of guiding questions in the journals as indicated by the student teacher 5 below:

*ST5: "The journal writing process wasn't a good experience for me because it hasn't been very effective for me and I didn't make use of it because of redundancies; there were the same type of questions so I couldn't give response from different perspectives and my perspective didn't broaden. I always turned around the same points"*

Not being able to examine one's own teaching from different perspectives is attributed to the limitation of the same type of questions which caused repetition and redundancy in responses with a narrow perspective. Martin's (2005) and Kuter's (2009) studies support this stating that more focused questions need to be incorporated into the reflective process. The excerpt from the student teacher 10 below confirms lack of diversity in questions which prevented the opportunity for creativity as well:

*ST10: "It wasn't beneficial in promoting my self-assessment and reflective thinking as I expected because there was not enough diversity type of questions, different ways of evaluating myself and no opportunity for creativity. I just learned my weaknesses and strengths but it didn't require me to do reasoning, questioning and analysis"*

Student teacher 10 attributes self-assessment and reflective thinking skills to diverse type of guiding questions which provides an opportunity for different ways of evaluating oneself and for creativity. Reasoning, questioning and analysis are also considered to be important elements for

improving self-assessment and reflective thinking skills. Student teachers expect to be involved into those levels of self-examination rather than remaining at the level of weaknesses and strengths as also confirmed by the student teacher 11 below:

*ST11: "Actually, there are some questions or points for us to follow but we only provided answers to those points on a surface level but I don't think that we managed to go deeper on the problematic issues we faced"*

Theme 2: No opportunity to suspend judgment on weaknesses and solutions to improve those weaknesses

The 'attitude of suspended conclusion' (Dewey, 1910), 'framing/reframing the problem' (Schön, 1987), 'reframing through clarifying the problem' (Pugach & Johnson, 1990), 'making a judgment' (Eby & Kujawa, 1994) and 'problem definition/reframing' (Lee, 2000) all suggest that one must never accept suggestions uncritically and must always suspend judgment during the necessary period of inquiry. Student teacher 7 below also states that the journals should stimulate her to carry out reasoning and questioning on the reasons for weakness and solutions rather than only asking for the problems and solutions for those problems. Reasoning, questioning and analysis should be integrated into the thought process of the student teachers as they examine their teaching practices. Challenges and contexts should also be created for developing those skills since the current journaling has only created an awareness regarding the importance of reflective thinking skill rather than providing opportunities for the improvement of those skills:

*ST7: "My awareness of my professional development has partly been heightened by the journal writing process. Instead of asking the problems and the ideal ways to solve the problems, these journals must have made me think about why I had these problems and then the ideal ways to correct them, to put them into action. What are my reasons for such solutions? Actually, the portfolio of EDUC 420 course only helped me to understand the importance of being reflective. It didn't create challenges for me to develop these skills"*

The quotation from the student teacher 12 below also supports the deficiency of questioning in the journals in terms of enabling student teachers in producing solutions for their problems:

*ST 12: "The experience of writing journals enabled me to partially self-critique my teaching performance as I could be aware of my inefficient points after; however, it didn't facilitate me to produce any solution as a prospective teacher. For instance, I had time management problems in most of my teachings but the journal writing didn't include any question about that matter such as 'why I couldn't tackle with it when I faced with it' and 'How I could manage to do it'. It didn't question my weaknesses deeply"*

The student teacher 12 expected from the journal writing to be able to guide him in questioning his weakness at a deeper level through why and how questions.

Theme 3: Lack of awareness on the integration of theory into practice (no guidance or stimulation for the integration of theory into action)

Some student teachers indicated the importance of integrating theory into their practice and reported that the journal writing was ineffective in providing opportunities for the integration of the theory into their practice as expressed by the student teacher 3 below:

*ST3: "I had little chance to compare the theory that I have been exposed for four years in ELT department with the practice in my journals. I couldn't really analyze whether I could put theory into action in my classes or not. If the journals had asked me to provide creative theoretical supports for my practices, I could have been aware of my deficiencies and their reasons easily"*

Being able to integrate theoretical knowledge into one's teaching is considered to be an important aspect of effective teaching; however, a considerable amount of variation can be observed in the way the student teacher 3 perceives 'theory-practice' relationship which offers some important elements in this respect. She perceives it as being able to compare one's own practice on the ground of the theory one has learnt; as being able to analyse to what extent one can put theory into practice in one's own teaching and as being able to explain one's own deficiencies with reasons via theoretical supports. Orland-Barak (2005) also indicated that establishing meaningful connections between theory and practice provides a rationale for action. On the other hand, student teacher 8 perceives 'theory-practice' relationship as implementing theory into teaching, and reporting on the consequences of the implemented theory as given below:

*ST8: "The journals didn't ask my theoretical knowledge, which theory I put into action, whether it was beneficial or not, what the result of the implemented method is. I evaluated the situations just from one perspective"*

Student teacher 8 considers the absence of putting theory into practice and the lack of evaluating its effectiveness as a lack in the perspective as well since she reported her analysis to be only from one perspective when not looked from a theoretical perspective. The generation of a variety of alternative suggestions from theories or research findings is an important factor in good thinking (Dewey, 1910; Copeland, 1993) since it enables one to see the same event from different perspective through 'framing and reframing' the problem for better solutions (Schön, 1987; Pugach & Johnson, 1990; Lee, 2000; Loughran, 2006). Student teachers need to relate their present teaching to the theoretical knowledge produced by thinkers in order to make meaning out of it and is changed by it (Dewey, 1910).

Student teacher 13, on the other hand, associates creativity with the 'theory-practice' relationship as reported below. Lack of creativity is attributed to the lack of opportunity for combining and using theory with practice in the reports since it could broaden their perspective to their teaching performance by providing multiplicity of voices from others.

*ST13: "The weakness of the whole process is lack of creativity. It didn't give us a chance to create by using theory and practice that we learnt. We couldn't use the theoretical knowledge learnt in previous methodology and education courses. Portfolio didn't ask to combine theory and practice in our reports, but only my supervisor reminded us to do it"*

#### Theme 4: Lack of opportunity for monitoring progress – lack of bridging between previous and present performances

The student teachers had difficulty to monitor their progress since the components of the portfolio did not provide them with the opportunity to see and compare their previous performances with their present performances and determine action for the future based on the past and present as stated by the student teacher 9 below:

*ST9: "In each report, I wrote about the same things. Instead, it could have led me to evaluate myself as a performer for each next step. The components of the portfolio haven't got a development in itself. For example, after I finish with my first reflective*

*report, it could have asked me to evaluate my performance by providing a section to compare between reflective reports of my previous and next teachings”*

Reflection involves not simply a sequence of ideas, but a consequence – a consecutive ordering in such a way that each determines the next as its proper outcome, while each in turn leans back on its predecessors. The successive portions of the reflective thought grow out of one another and support one another. Thus, student teachers need to be provided with an opportunity and guided to build a bridge between their past and present performances in order to take intelligent action for the next. Reflection is a meaning making process happening consecutively along a continuum (Copeland, 1993; Rodgers, 2002) so the meaning of experience cannot be perceived if it is not related and connected to other experiences continuously on a thread to ensure the progress of the individual. As indicated by the student teacher 15 below, he could not follow up his progress since the portfolio has been ineffective in displaying the differences between the past and the present performances. There was also no analysis and awareness regarding how his development occurred.

*ST15: “From the view of progress, the portfolio asked me the areas I have developed myself in. However, the portfolio didn’t show me the differences in progress or it didn’t ask me how I developed or improved myself in those areas. What were the factors that helped my development? I could not figure out how my development occurred”*

#### 4. CONCLUSION

The most frequently mentioned aspect of the journals was the lack of the guiding questions and ineffectiveness of the existing points for consideration. The tasks, activities and the questions (consideration points) in the portfolio did not help student teachers to specify, to single out the problems/weaknesses they experienced and to work on them systematically to produce solutions for them. It didn’t provide a framework for the student teachers to provide theoretical or personal justification of their solutions, to implement their solutions and observe the consequences of these solutions in the follow up lessons. It didn’t provide them with the opportunity to compare and contrast their previous performances with their following performances. There was no questioning for the deeper analysis of weaknesses and for concrete solutions, as well as for personal and theoretical support and application of solutions.

The questions asked for guidance in the reflective reports were general and not considered different stages of lesson planning. Hence, this has not stimulated student teachers to reflect on different phases of the lesson from different aspects. General questions limited their way of thinking and did not broaden their perspectives in looking at their performances so they continuously repeated their ideas and couldn’t examine their performances at different levels from different perspectives.

Journals are expected to enable learners to act and learn autonomously within a self-directed view of learning with increased motivation and responsibility. Within this self-directed view of learning, guiding questions are desirable elements to be given within the journals. In order to examine and analyse their own experiences at different levels from different perspectives and take actions for improvement, student teachers need instructional scaffolds with focused questions at every stage during the writing process of their journals. Journal writing process could also be supported with the continuous supervision which involves ongoing guidance and feedback with the supervisor, partner peer and the mentor teacher both separately and collaboratively. During these feedback sessions, reasoning, commenting and analysis of the teaching practices should also be supported with the focus and guiding questions. Hence, reflective thinking process should be carried out both written via journal writings and oral via feedback sessions.



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## Genişletilmiş Özet

Son 20 yılda yapılan çalışmalar, yansıtıcı düşünme becerisinin öğretmen yetiştirme alanında çok önemli olduğunu ve eğitimcilerin bu konu üzerinde çaba harcamaları gerektiğini göstermektedir (Gore & Zeichner, 1991; Laboskey, 1994; Rodgers, 2002; Orland-Barak, 2005). Yansıtıcı düşünme becerisini kazanarak yetişmenin, öğretmen adayının mesleki yeterliğe (güçlü ve zayıf yanlarına) ilişkin farkındalığını artıracığı kuramsal ve ampirik olarak belirlenmiştir (Johnston and Bradley, 1996).

Yansıtıcı düşünme becerisinin, kişisel özellikleri açığa çıkarma ve deneyimleri yeniden yapılandırma gibi konularda öğretmen adaylarına ışık tutup yardımcı olduğu saptanmıştır (Borko & Putnam, 1996; Korthagen, 2001).

Öğretmen adaylarının sınıf deneyimleri sonrasında yazacakları günlüklerin ise yansıtıcı düşünme becerisini geliştirebileceği bazı ampirik çalışmalarla desteklenmiştir (Clarke, 2004; Chitpin, 2006; Minnot 2008). Doucet and Wilson'un (1997) araştırma bulgularına göre, günlük yazmanın öğretmen adaylarının kendi öğretim deneyimlerini sorgulamalarına ve eleştirmelerine olanak sağladığı görülmüştür. Ancak her günlük yazma deneyiminin yansıtıcı düşünme becerisini geliştirmediği, hatta öğretmen adaylarının yazma deneyimlerinin betimleyici ve teknik düzeyde kaldığı saptanmıştır (Hatton and Smith, 1995; Pultorak, 1996; Risko, Roskos and Vukelich, 1999).

Bu bağlamda, araştırmanın amacı öğretmen adaylarının, günlük yazma deneyimlerine ilişkin algılarını betimlemektir. Ayrıca, öğretmen adaylarının günlük yazma deneyimlerini yansıtıcı bir deneyime dönüştürebilmek için ileri sürdükleri görüşleri belirleyip yorumlamaktır. Araştırmanın problem cümlesi şöyledir: "Öğretmen adayları, her ders anlatımı sonrasında not tuttıkları günlük deneyimleriyle ilgili neler anlatmışlardır?"

Araştırmada nitel yaklaşım kapsamında yorumlama yöntemi kullanılmıştır. Yorumlama yöntemine göre, sosyal dünya, o dünyayı oluşturan bireylerin gözünden ve bakış açılarından yorumlanmalı ve anlaşılmalıdır (Bryman, 2004). Bu nedenle, günlük yazmanın öğretmen adaylarının yansıtıcı düşünme becerilerine olan katkısı ve eksikliğini belirlemek için onların görüşlerine yer verilmiştir.

Araştırma, Doğu Akdeniz Üniversitesi 2010 öğretim yılı bahar döneminde İngilizce Öğretmenliği bölümünde EDUC 420 -Öğretmenlik Uygulaması- dersine kayıtlı 15 son sınıf öğrencisi ile yürütülmüştür. Araştırmanın verileri, EDUC 420 – Öğretmenlik Uygulaması dersi kapsamında oluşturulan ürün dosyaları çerçevesinde toplanmıştır. Öğretmen adayları, uygulama yaptıkları sınıftaki öğretimlerinden sonra, kendi deneyimleriyle ilgili günlük yazmakla yükümlü olmuşlardır.

Sözü edilen günlük ödevi ile öğretmen adaylarının yansıtıcı düşünme becerilerini geliştirmeleri hedeflenmiştir. Yarı yapılandırılmış görüşme formu ve dönem sonu yazılan yansıtıcı kompozisyonlar araştırmanın veri toplama araçlarını oluşturmaktadır. Araştırmaya veri sağlayacak katılımcıların günlük deneyimleriyle ilgili nesnel veri oluşturabilmeleri için, dersle ilgili not değerlendirmelerinin resmi olarak tamamlanması beklenmiştir (Martin, 2005). Araştırmadaki öğretmen adayları hiçbir not kaygısı olmadan ve gönüllü olarak araştırmaya katılmışlar, görüşlerini aktarmışlardır. Nitel veriler, içerik analizi yöntemiyle kategorize edilip temalara ayrıştırılmıştır (Miles and Huberman, 1994; Patton, 2002). Veriyi oluşturan belgeler birçok kez okunup, Straus ve Corbin'in (1990) önerdikleri açık kodlama, eksen kodlama ve seçici kodlama türleri temel alınarak kategori ve temalar oluşturulmuştur (Bryman, 2004).

Araştırma sonucunda nitel veriler, günlük yazmanın faydaları ve zayıf yanları diye iki kategoride toplanmıştır. Öğretmen adayları, günlük yazmanın zayıf ve güçlü yanlarına ilişkin farkındalıklarını artırdığını belirtmişlerdir. Ayrıca güçlü ve zayıf yönlerini tanımanın kendi kendini eleştirebilme ve analiz edebilme becerileriyle ilişkili olduğunu ortaya koymuşlardır.

Günlük yazmanın zayıf yönlerinden bahsederlerken ise, günlüklerdeki yönergelerin derinlik, çeşitlilik ve bakış açısı içermediğini bildirmişlerdir. Deneyimlerini yüzeysel düzeyde ele aldıklarını ortaya koymuşlardır.

Temalardan biri ise, öğretmen adaylarının zayıf yönlerini bulup, bu yönlerini gidermek adına çözümler üretilmede mantık yürütme sürecinin yaşatılmadığı ile ilgilidir.

Günlüklerdeki yönergelerin kuramları uygulamaya dökme farkındalığı ve fırsatı yaratmadığı görüşü ileri sürülmüştür. Ayrıca günlük yazma deneyiminin kendi kendini ve gelişimini gözlemleme fırsatı yaratmadığı, eski deneyimlerle yeni deneyimler arasında da köprü kurulamadığı görüşü paylaşılmıştır.

Birçok öğretmen adayının görüşü, mevcut günlüklerdeki odaklanmayı sağlayan ve yönlendirici soruların eksikliğini ve önemini ortaya çıkarmıştır. Her temada bahsedilen zayıf tarafın, yönlendirici soruların yetersizliğinden ve azlığından kaynaklandığı ileri sürülmektedir. Mevcut soruların derinlik, çeşitlilik ve bakış açısı içermediği böylelikle de ortaya çıkan günlük içeriklerinin eleştirelden öte betimleyici olduğu saptanmıştır. Yeni yetişen öğretmen adaylarının yansıtıcı düşünme becerisiyle donanımlı, öz denetimli ve öz yönetimli yetiştirilebilmeleri için günlük yazma ve dönüt verme süreçlerinde yönlendirici sorularla desteklemenin önemli olduğu vurgulanmıştır. Günlük yazma deneyimi, uzman öğretmen ve uygulama öğretmenin de bir arada olacağı dönüt verme toplantılarıyla desteklenmelidir. Dönüt verme toplantıları, odaklanma soruları ve yönlendirici sorularla öğretmen adaylarının kendi deneyimlerini analiz etmelerini, eleştirmelerini ve yorumlamalarını sağlayacak şekilde biçimlendirilmelidir.