EFL PRE-SERVICE TEACHERS' ATTITUDES TOWARDS USING A BLOG-BASED INSTRUCTIONAL STRATEGY IN THE TEACHING PRACTICUM COURSE AT AL-QUDS OPEN UNIVERSITY IN PALESTINE

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Abstract

This research aimed at identifying the attitudes of pre-service teachers of English as a foreign language towards using a blog-based instructional strategy in the Teaching Practicum Course at Al-Quds Open University in Palestine. The population consisted of all (179) EFL pre-service teachers enrolled in the EFL Teaching Practicum Course (5419) in the second semester 2013/2014 at the 21st University branches in the West Bank and Gaza in Palestine. The number of participants was (46) EFL pre-service teachers out of three University regions/branches: North (Jenin), Middle (Ramallah) and South (Hebron & Bethlehem) in the West Bank in Palestine. A questionnaire, which consisted of three main themes and (25) items, was administered to investigate the participants' attitudes towards the effect of using the blog-based instructional strategy on their: instructional support, development of life-long learning skills and social interaction. The research main hypothesis was: There are no statistically significant differences (α =0.05) in the means scores of Palestinian EFL pre-service teachers' attitudes towards learning through the blog-based instructional strategy BBIS attributed to the educational /region branch (North, Middle, South).The validity of the tools was verified and the reliability coefficient was (0.91). The results indicated a good degree of positive attitudes towards the blog-based instructional strategy and there were no significant differences in the means scores of the participants' attitudes towards the blog-based instructional strategy BBIS attributed to the educational region /branch (North, Middle, South).

Key words: *blog-based instructional strategy, EFL pre-service teachers, teacher education programs, attitudes.*

1. Introduction

Information and communication revolution has dramatically impacted, among many others, the education system in higher education institutions. Computers and technology have increasingly become indispensable from the educational process as a whole (Carrier, 1997; Dudeney, 2000; Warschauer & Healey, 1998; Zorko, 2009). ICT instruments can be employed to achieve the desired level of competence in EFL or ESL teacher education programs (Wildner, 1999; Johnson, 2006; Kuzu, 2007).

The shift from teacher to student- centered learning, traditional to modern methods of instructions, and accordingly development in styles and procedures of material delivery have been witnessed recently in the light of the new demands and realities of a world changing at an accelerating rate. Due to that, a heavy burden of responsibility have been imposed over educationists' shoulders to search for and adopt better engaging learning environments in response to the new needs and requirements of the information age. Computer-mediated programs are widely-used in higher education institutions around the world as a supporting tool to provide more quality in the educational processes as well as in the products. Many attempts have been witnessed to integrate the first and second generation of the web tools in teaching and learning. Weblog is one of these tools, which has been considered a useful technology-based environment to be integrated in all educational systems as well as in EFL pre-service teacher education programs in particular to develop better competency for EFL pre-service teachers. Stapleton & Radia (2010) called teachers and researchers to investigate the potential of these technologies that can be conducive in EFL teaching and learning contexts.

EFL teacher education programs should be carefully designed and implemented to produce teachers equipped with the 21st century skills and competencies, and who are capable to act appropriately and creatively in their careers as future EFL teachers.

The 21st century EFL teachers should be provided with opportunities to facilitate the development of the current century competencies as well as the knowledge economy skills among them, namely reflective thinking, self-directed and life-long learning. These skills can best be refined through integrating blogs as a vivid space for practicing reflection on daily basis.

1.1. Statement of the Problem

In the light of the different alternatives of methods of instruction, many calls have been proposed by stakeholders and decision makers to improve the quality of the modes of delivery in teacher education programs in general and EFL teacher education programs in particular. Due to that, several educational movements for reform and development have been witnessed in this field to raise well-qualified EFL teachers, equipped with the 21st century skills and competencies. Taking into consideration the fact that these teachers will be the prospective educators for the upcoming generations and future teachers of the most widely-spread language; that is, English as a lingua franca, raising the quality of training that EFL PSTs receive at their tertiary education institutions becomes an urgent necessity. Achieving a high level of quality in EFL pre-service teacher education programs entails reconsidering the current teaching and learning methods and substituting them with the state-of-the-art and innovative ones.

The current study can be considered as one of the ambitious attempts that employed a useful method of instruction in EFL pre-service teacher education programs, represented by the blog-based instructional strategy (BBIS) that might have the potential to help them develop solid pedagogical content knowledge, formulate good teaching beliefs and good teaching practices, acquiring life-long learning skills and grow as reflective practitioners. The attitudes, either positive or negative, could be one of the indicators for the success or failure of this attempt.

1.2. Significance of the Study

The study significance lies in the fact that it contributes in proposing an educational model for blog-based instructional strategy to be adopted in teacher education programs at the teritiary education institution in Palestine for the sake of providing the new emerging genrations of EFL teachers with the adequate qualification and training to be able to deal with the requirements and needs of the 21st century.

1.3. Study Purpose, Question and Hypothesis

This study aimed at investigating EFL pre-service teachers' attitudes towards integrating the blog-based instructional strategy in the Teaching Practicum Course (5419) at Al-Quds Open University. The study main question was: What are the attitudes of the Palestinian EFL pre-service teachers towards the blog-based instructional strategy? The study main hypothesis was: There are no statistically significant differences (α =0.05) in the means scores of Palestinian EFL pre-service teachers' attitudes towards learning through the blog-based instructional strategy attributed to the educational region /branch (North, Middle, South).

1.4. Limitations of the Study

As part of a great dissertation research project, the study was restricted to a convenient sample of participants from Palestinian EFL PSTs studying in the Teaching Practicum Course in three educational regions (North, Middle, South) at Al-Quds Open University in the West Bank in the

second academic semester 2013/2014.Therefore, the study findings might be particularly and primarily generalized on Al-Quds Open University EFL pre-service teachers.

1.5. Operational Definitions

Al-Quds Open University (QOU): a Palestinian higher education institution which adopts the philosophy of Open Education to deliver knowledge to all segments in the society**.**

Blog-based instructional strategy (BBIS): An instructional strategy which was integrated in the Teaching Practicum Course (5419).It implies that the EFL pre-service teachers who were trained by this strategy had their own blogs to reflect on their teaching experiences on daily basis on certain topics, issues and situations relevant to pedagogical content knowledge along the course, and exchange them with their peers.

EFL pre-service teachers (EFL PSTs): The undergraduate student teachers enrolled at Al-Quds Open University in the section of English Language and its Methodologies specialization and studying towards the Bachelor of Arts in this field to be English as a foreign language teachers at schools after graduation.

Teachers' Attitudes: mental positions, feelings or emotions that a teacher has with regard to a certain fact, idea…,etc.

2. Theoretical Framework

The term blog or weblog was first introduced by Jorn Barger in 1997. It refers to a website powered by a software that simplifies publishing, organizing, and syndicating a web containing regular entries of commentary, descriptions of events, or other material such as graphics, videos or links, called posts. (Weshah, 2012).

Blogs, as shown in many studies, have many advantages. They have been assumed a convenient venue where pre-service teachers inquire about their real practices, engage in discussion, practice reflection, acquire analytical skills, and achieve deeper learning and knowledge construction (Ferdig & Trammel, 2004; Williams & Jacobs, 2004; Eastment, 2005; Johnson, 2006; Farmer, Yue, & Brooks, 2008; Sim and Hew, 2010; Bangou,201l; Bangou and Fleming 2010). Blogs, therefore, help them succeed in synthesizing knowledge and formulating good teaching beliefs in their attempts to make meaning of their future profession as teachers. Blogs can serve as a premise for creating a relatively learner-centered environment where learners engage in learning at their own pace (Efimova & Fiedler, 2003; Godwin-Jones, 2008).

Oravec (2003) pointed out that blogs enhance the frequency and intensity of knowledge conceptualization, foster reflective learning, and knowledge generation through social interaction and meaning making. Stiller & Philleo (2003) indicated that pre-service students' awareness of the complexities and sophistications of teaching was enhanced through reflective activities in blogs.

Another effective role of blogs implied in the fact that they are designed to provide a simple way for individuals to post ideas to the internet, providing the opportunity and function for others to read and post comments on the site (Hernandez, 2004).

Among many other social media, blogging has been considered the most popular (Kang, Bonk, & Kim, 2011). Kuzborska (2011) confirmed the fact that encouraging teachers to reflect on their existing beliefs and behaviors could help them become more receptive to alternative perspectives and be prepared to modify their knowledge and work in ways that are consistent with their developing views and research-based standards.Moreover, blogs are not just a one-way presentation of one's own ideas and thoughts, they can also be collaborative and interactive. The notion of blogs and its pedagogical

use, therefore, is underpinned in constructivism, especially in that of Vygotsky's work concerning his theory of social constructivism, interaction and scaffolding in the sense that students can deliver posts and comments on other peers' blogs, and so they engage in deep knowledge sharing and collaboration. (Pinkman, 2005) advocated the contribution of blogs in improving EFL skills and providing the potential for promoting interaction among learners.

3. Review of Related Literature

After reviewing previous pertinent literature, it has been found that blogging is widely used in pre-service teacher education programs in general and in English language pre-service teacher education programs in particular to assess its value and the extent of its contribution in the professional growth and development of pre-service teachers, with references to a variety of variables.

Kuzu (2007) aimed at investigating the views of pre-service teachers regarding the employment of an instructional blog along the course with the facilities that trigger learning and social interaction. Thirty students of the Department of Computer Education and Instructional Technologies at Anadolu University in the 2005 fall semester constituted the participants of the study. They were (15) males and (15) females. A semi-structured interview was conducted with the participants to collect the data concerning their perspectives towards the instructional blog. Results of the study revealed that most of the student teachers' responses were positive concerning the blog's role in supporting their learning and promoting social interaction among their colleagues and supervisor.

Yang (2009) investigated the use of blogs as a reflective platform in training pre-service teachers of English language as a foreign language enrolled in a teaching practicum course. Forty-three pre-service teachers from two teacher education programs at two science and technology institutions in Taiwan constituted the sample of the study. The blog was used in this study as a discussion forum where the student teachers (pre-service teachers) engage and express their reflections. The data, that consisted of pre-service teachers' posts, messages and comments, were analyzed qualitatively. The pre-service teachers' perceptions towards this experience were also surveyed. The results of the study indicated that the whole experience is successful, as the pre-service teachers actively discussed learning theories and their implications. Their perceptions towards this strategy were also positive.

Sun (2010) conducted a study to explore the possibilities and challenges of integrating blogs in English language teacher-education programs in Taiwan. The sample of the study consisted of 12 participants. The triangulation method of data collection was used including: collecting the shared posts in blogs, a semi-structured interview to evaluate the contribution of blogging on knowledge sharing, transformation and generation, and the third one was a survey to assess the participants' perceptions towards the role of blogs in goal attainment, self-efficacy, and the blogging experience. The study indicated a positive effect for blogs in encouraging pre-service teachers' active and reflective engagement in knowledge sharing and generation. The pre-service teachers themselves also held positive attitudes towards the act of blogging as a medium for supporting their professional growth and development.

Ozkan (2011) tried to invetigate the potential of blogs in a teaching skills course for pre-service teachers of English as a second language. The sample of this study consisted of 130 third-year pre-service students (98 females and 32 males) who received a course of teaching language skills at the English Language Teaching (ELT) Department at University of Cukurova in Turkey. The selected participants were asked to make comments and reflections in a blogging platform on the ideas discussed and presented alone this course as well as reflecting on their blogging experience. The study revealed that the benefits of this experience were significantly higher than the negative aspects,as the participants perceived it a as critical experience. The study recommended that those negative aspects should seriously be considered in designing blog-based courses for pre-service teachers of English as a second language.

Okan and Taraf (2012) investigated the effectiveness of using blogs in a 6-week course for preparing prospective ELT teachers. The sample of the study consisted of (20) ELT pre-service teachers at Necmettin Erbakan University in Turkey. Three instruments were used in this study to gather data: participant information form, follow up evaluation reports and a questionnaire. The findings of this study revealed positive perceptions of ELT pre-service teachers towards blogs as a useful tool that caters to their needs and helps them improve their skills as future teachers.

Al-Hebaishi (2013) aimed at identifying ELT pre-service teachers' percepetions towards blogging. An interview as well as a questionnaire were administered to a sample consisted of (38) student teachers enrolled in a blog coures to negotiate some issues related to the Principles of Curriculum and Construction course at Taibah University in Saudi Arabia.The study findngs showed that ELT pre-service teachers had positive attitudes towards towards blog as a effective tool in higher education.

Al Waely & Aburezeq (2013) explored pre-service Arabic language teachers' perceptions of using the blog as a learning tool. Fourteen pre-service teachers constituted the participants of the study. To collect the data, semi-structured interviews and analysis of postings on the course blog were used to identify the positive and negative aspects of using the instructional blog. The results the study showed that the instructional blog was perceived as a powerful tool to enhance learning and strengthen interaction. Nevertheless, there was a number of challenges and defecits.

Based on the previous studies, it can be seen that integrating blogs was effective and most of the student teachers' reposnses towards them were postive.

3.1. Methods and Procedures

The current study is part of a dissertation titled," The Effect of *Using a Blog-Based Instructional Strategy on Developing EFL Pre-Service Teachers' Pedagogical Content Knowledge and Reflective Thinking in Palestine and their Attitudes Towards the Strategy*". The methodology used in this study was the quantitative analytical.

3.2. Participants

The participants in this study were selected intentionally, namely a convenient and purposive sample. They consisted of (46) EFL pre-service teachers enrolled in the Teaching Practicum Course (5419) at Al-Quds Open University in the second semester of the academic year 2013/2014 in three different educational regions/branches in the West Bank (North, Middle, South). This course was conducted through the learning management system (LMS) MOODLE, where learners establish and initiate their own blogs, practice reflection and share their ideas and knowledge with peers and tutors on their daily teaching experiences in the light of certain guidelines proposed by the researcher concerning topics,such as EFL learning theories and methods,teaching pronunciation, teaching vocabulary, teaching grammar, teaching the four skills (the receptive: reading and listening,and the productive: speaking and writing), lesson planning, classroom procedures, teaching aids, and language testing and evaluation.

Table (1) shows the distribution of participants:

Table (1)

Sample Distribution in the University Branches

Region	Branch	Total
North	Jenin	15
Middle	Ramallah	18
South	Bethlehem	10
	Hebron	3
Total	**46**	

Source: Admission and Registration Deanship
2014 , Al-Quds Open University

Table (2) shows the distribution of the population:

Table (2)

Population Distribution of the Teaching Practicum Course Students on University Branches

Branch	North				Middle							South										Total
	Jenin	Tulkarm	Qalqilya	Tubas	Nablus	Salfeet	Bedya	Ramallah	Jericho	Jerusalem	Ezareyya	Dura	Yatta	Hebron	Bethlehem	B. Sahour	Gaza	N. Gaza	M. Gaza	Rafah	Khanyunis	21
N*	31	25	16	4	12	5	3	22	2	0	1	7	10	10	10	1	10	4	4	2	0	179
T*	76				45							58										179

Source: Admission and Registration Deanship 2014 , Al-Quds Open University
N= Number , T= Total

3.3. Instrument

A four-point Likert scale consisted of (3) main dimensions with (25) items, was used and subsequently coded as shown in table (3) below:

Table (3)

Rating Scale for EFL Pre-Service Teachers' Attitudes

Rating Score	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
Coding	**4**	**3**	**2**	**1**

The scale was administered to the (46) EFL pre-service teachers enrolled in the Teaching Practicum course (5419) in the three regions/branches (North, Middle, South) to measure their responses and attitudes towards using the blog-based instructional strategy (BBIS). The instrument validity was verified and judged by a jury of referees whose feedback and comments were taken into consideration and included in the instrument. Reliability of the instrument was calculated by using Cronbach Alpha equation; it scored (0.91).

3.4. Design and Statistics

This study has one dependent variable which is the EFL Pre-Service teachers' attitudes in addition to two independent variables which are the blog-based instructional strategy and the educational branch/region. Descriptive statistics, such as percentages, frequencies, means, and standard deviations were calculated to answer the study main question. One-way ANCOVA was used to test the study hypothesis.

4. Findings & Results

The findings of the study main question, *What are the attitudes of the Palestinian EFL pre-service teachers towards the blog-based instructional strategy?* have been summarized in table (4), (5) and (6) respectively:

Table (4)
Descriptive Analysis of EFL Pre-Service Teachers' Attitudes Towards the BBIS

N.	Instructional Support	Mean	S.D	%
1.	I think that the instructional blog reinforced my ability to connect between theory and practice in teaching.	3.05	.733	76.3
2.	I think that the instructional blog helped me consolidate what I learnt along the course.	3.08	.428	77.0
3.	I think that the instructional blog let me experience a unique learning environment.	3.08	.632	77.0
4.	I think that the instructional blog let me move from the state of knowing that to the state of knowing how.	3.08	.632	77.0
5.	I think that the instructional blog reinforced my self-expression skills.	3.16	.638	78.9
6.	I think that the instructional blog helped me develop my writing skills.	3.05	.613	76.3
7.	I think that the instructional blog helped me to synthesize a solid teaching knowledge base.	3.21	.474	80.3
8.	I think that the instructional blog made my teaching experience interesting.	3.08	.632	77.0
9.	I believe that the instructional blog consolidated Higher Order Thinking skills (HOTS), such as evaluation, synthesis, and analysis.	3.08	.749	77.0
10.	I think that the instructional blog encouraged me to pose questions and comments more than in reality.	3.08	.539	77.0
	Total	**3.09**	**.34**	**77.4**

Table (4) above summarizes the findings of EFL Pre-Service teachers' attitudes towards the BBIS in providing instructional support. Based on these results, it can be inferred that BBIS provided good and adequate instructional support for the EFL- Pre-service teachers, as the total means scores were (3.09) with a standard deviation (.34) and a percentage of (77.4). Amongst the 10th items in this dimension, item (7) *I think that the instructional blog helped me to synthesize a solid teaching knowledge base*,scored the highest mean score (3.21) and a percentage (80.3). The second item that scored higher than item (7) was item (5) *I think that the instructional blog reinforced my self-expression skills*, as its mean score was (3.16) with a percentage of (78.9%). The residual items scores, however, had approximately similar results which fall in the range between (76.3%)-(77%).

Table (5) below summarizes the findings of EFL Pre-Service teachers' attitudes towards the BBIS in developing life-long learning skills:

Table (5)
Descriptive Analysis of EFL Pre-Service Teachers' Attitudes Towards the BBIS

N.	Development of Life-long Learning Skills	Mean	S.D	%
1.	I think that the instructional blog helped me develop the sense of self-directed learning, self- administration, self-monitoring and self-regulation.	3.08	.587	77.0
2.	I think that the instructional blog developed my sense of how to be a reflective practitioner.	3.03	.545	75.7
3.	I think that the instructional blog helped me develop my research skills.	2.97	.753	74.3
4.	I think that the instructional blog improved my ability to take correct teaching decisions.	3.05	.462	76.3
5.	I think that the instructional blog improved my ability to solve problems.	3.11	.649	77.6
6.	I think that the instructional blog helped me to practice creativity and innovation.	3.03	.592	75.7
7.	I think that the instructional blog improved my ICT skills.	2.97	.636	74.3
8.	I believe that the instructional blog helped me to manage time efficiently.	2.87	.704	71.7
	Total	**3.02**	**.40**	**75.4**

Table (5) above summarizes the findings of EFL Pre-Service teachers' attitudes towards the effect of BBIS on developing life-long-learning skills. It can be noticed that BBIS provided a room for development of life-long learning, as the total means scores, standard deviations and percentages were (3.02), (.40) and (75.4%) respectively. The results indicated that items scores range between (71.7%)-(76.3%).

Table (6) also shows that the BBIS also provided a space for social interaction among the pre-service teachers as the average of the mean scores, standard deviations and percentages were (3.14), (.42) and (78.6%) respectively.

Table (6)
Descriptive Analysis of EFL Pre-Service Teachers' Attitudes Towards The BBIS

N.	Social Interaction	Mean	S.D	%
1.	I think that the instructional blog developed my communication skills.	3.11	.727	77.6
2.	I think that the instructional blog developed my negotiation skills.	3.13	.623	78.3
3.	I think that the instructional blog provided me with better chance to get informed about peers' various teaching experiences.	2.97	.592	74.3
4.	I think that the instructional blog provided me with a fruitful feedback from course peers and supervisor.	3.18	.512	79.6
5.	I think that the instructional blog helped me to express my teaching experiences and share my ideas and thoughts freely and openly.	3.34	.627	83.6
6.	I think that the instructional blog helped me to share the course material with the course peers and supervisor.	3.18	.652	79.6
7.	I think that the instructional blog let me live a warm social interactive atmosphere with course peers and supervisor.	3.08	.539	77.0
	Total	**3.14**	**.42**	**78.6**

The highest mean score was for item (5), as it scored (3.34) with a percentage of (83.6 %). The rest of the items have similar means scores as they range between (74.3%-79.6%).This indicates that the BBIS is a good instructional strategy to be used to enhance social interaction among learners, especially among open education learners who rarely meet each others in campus or in classes.

In sum, table (7) below shows the grand total for the means scores, standard deviation and percentage for the scale three dimensions: Instructional Support, Development of Life-Long Learning Skills and Social Interaction:

Table (7)
Grand Total of Means Scores , Standard Deviation and Percentages of EFL Pre-Service Teachers' Attitudes Towards The BBIS

N.	Three Dimensions	Mean	S.D	%
1.	Instructional Support	3.09	.34	77.4
2.	Development of Life-Long learning Skills	3.02	.40	75.4
3.	Social Interaction	3.14	.42	78.6
	Grand Total	**3.08**	**.35**	**77.1**

It can be noticed that the general attitudes seemed to be positive, as the means accumulatively scored (3.08) with a standard deviation of (.35) and a general percentage of (77.1%). Amongst the three dimensions, *Social Interaction* registered the highest mean score (3.14) with a percentage of (78.6%). Dimension number (1) *Instructional Support* came next with a mean score of (3.09) and a percentage of (77.4%) followed by dimension number (2*) Development of Life-long Learning Skills* whose mean score and percentage were (3.02) and (74.4%) respectively.

As far as the study hypothesis is concerned, and based on the results indicated in table (8),it can be noticed that EFL pre-service teachers' attitudes towards the role of BBIS in providing instructional support in the three educational regions have also approaching means scores, standard deviations and percentages. They were respectively: North (3.15), (.41) and (78.8%), Middle (3.13),(.27) and (78.2%), and South (2.98), (.39) and (74.5%).

Table (8)
Differences in the means Scores of EFL Pre-Service Teachers' Attitudes Towards the BBIS Attributed to the Educational Branch (North, Middle South)

N.	Instructional Support	North			Middle			South		
		Mean	S.D	%	Mean	S.D	%	Mean	S.D	%
1.	I think that the instructional blog reinforced my ability to connect between theory and practice in teaching.	2.80	.92	70.0	3.22	.55	80.6	3.00	.82	75.0
2.	I think that the instructional blog helped me consolidate what I learnt along the course.	3.10	.57	77.5	3.11	.32	77.8	3.00	.47	75.0
3.	I think that the instructional blog let me experience a unique learning environment.	3.20	.63	80.0	3.17	.62	79.2	2.80	.63	70.0
4.	I think that the instructional blog let me move from the state of knowing that to the state of knowing how.	3.30	.67	82.5	2.89	.58	72.2	3.20	.63	80.0
5.	I think that the instructional blog reinforced my self-expression skills.	3.60	.52	90.0	2.89	.58	72.2	3.20	.63	80.0
6.	I think that the instructional blog helped me develop my writing skills.	3.40	.52	85.0	2.89	.58	72.2	3.00	.67	75.0
7.	I think that the instructional blog helped me to synthesize a solid teaching knowledge base.	3.20	.42	80.0	3.33	.59	83.3	3.00	.00	75.0
8.	I think that the instructional blog made my teaching experience interesting.	3.00	.82	75.0	3.22	.55	80.6	2.90	.57	72.5
9.	I believe that the instructional blog consolidated Higher Order Thinking skills (HOTS), such as evaluation, synthesis , and analysis.	2.80	.79	70.0	3.44	.51	86.1	2.70	.82	67.5
10	I think that the instructional blog encouraged me to pose questions and comments more than in reality.	3.10	.57	77.5	3.11	.47	77.8	3.00	.67	75.0
	Total	**3.15**	**.41**	**78.8**	**3.13**	**.27**	**78.2**	**2.98**	**.39**	**74.5**

Concerning the attitudes towards the effect of BBIS on developing life-long learning skills, table (9) also showed approaching results in means scores, standard deviations and percentages among the three regions.

Table (9)
Differences in the means Scores of EFL Pre-Service Teachers' Attitudes Towards the BBIS Attributed to the Educational Branch (North, Middle South)

N.	Development of Life-Long Learning Skills	North			Middle			South		
		Mean	S.D	%	Mean	S.D	%	Mean	S.D	%
1.	I think that the instructional blog helped me develop the sense of self-directed learning , self- administration, self-monitoring and self-regulation.	2.90	.74	72.5	3.28	.57	81.9	2.90	.32	72.5
2.	I think that the instructional blog developed my sense of how to be a reflective practitioner.	3.20	.63	80.0	3.11	.47	77.8	2.70	.48	67.5
3.	I think that the instructional blog helped me develop my research skills.	2.90	.99	72.5	3.17	.71	79.2	2.70	.48	67.5
4.	I think that the instructional blog improved my ability to take correct teaching decisions.	3.10	.32	77.5	3.17	.51	79.2	2.80	.42	70.0
5.	I think that the instructional blog improved my ability to solve problems.	3.20	.42	80.0	3.17	.79	79.2	2.90	.57	72.5
6.	I think that the instructional blog helped me to practice creativity and innovation.	3.20	.42	80.0	3.00	.59	75.0	2.90	.74	72.5
7.	I think that the instructional blog improved my ICT skills.	2.80	.42	70.0	3.11	.76	77.8	2.90	.57	72.5
8.	I believe that the instructional blog helped me to manage time efficiently.	3.30	.67	82.5	2.89	.58	72.2	2.40	.70	60.0
	Total	**3.08**	**.38**	**76.9**	**3.11**	**.40**	**77.8**	**2.78**	**.33**	**69.5**

They were respectively: North (3.08), (.38) and (76.9%), Middle (3.11), (.40) and (77.8%) and South (2.78), (.33) and (69.5%).

As for the EFL pre-service teachers' attitudes towards the effect of the BBIS on improving social interaction, data in table (10) revealed that the North region scored the highest percentage (81.5%) with a mean score of (3.26) and a standard deviation of (.55). The second region, with a slight difference, was the Middle as it scored (79.5%) with a mean of (3.18) and a standard deviation of (.39)

Table (10)
Differences in the means Scores of EFL Pre-Service Teachers' Attitudes Towards the BBIS Attributed to the Educational Branch (North, Middle South)

	Social Interaction	North			Middle			South		
		Mean	S.D	%	Mean	S.D	%	Mean	S.D	%
1.	I think that the instructional blog developed my communication skills.	3.20	.79	80.0	3.17	.71	79.2	2.90	.74	72.5
2.	I think that the instructional blog developed my negotiation skills.	3.00	.67	75.0	3.39	.50	84.7	2.80	.63	70.0
3.	I think that the instructional blog provided me with better chance to get informed about peers' various teaching experiences.	3.00	.67	75.0	3.17	.51	79.2	2.60	.52	65.0
4.	I think that the instructional blog provided me with a fruitful feedback from course peers and supervisor.	3.40	.70	85.0	3.17	.38	79.2	3.00	.47	75.0
5.	I think that the instructional blog helped me to express my teaching experiences and share my ideas and thoughts freely and openly.	3.70	.48	92.5	3.22	.73	80.6	3.20	.42	80.0
6.	I think that the instructional blog helped me to share the course material with the course peers and supervisor.	3.30	.67	82.5	3.11	.68	77.8	3.20	.63	80.0
7.	I think that the instructional blog let me live a warm social interactive atmosphere with course peers and supervisor.	3.20	.79	80.0	3.06	.54	76.4	3.00	.00	75.0
	Total	**3.26**	**.55**	**81.5**	**3.18**	**.39**	**79.5**	**2.96**	**.31**	**73.9**

In sum, it can be inferred that the general attitudes across the regions: North, Middle, South seemed to be positive,especially in the North and in the Middle.
Table (11) summarizes the grand total for the scale three dimensions across the three regions: North, Middle and South:

Table (11)
Differences in the Means Scores of EFL Pre-Service Teachers' Attitudes Towards the BBIS Attributed to the Educational Branch (North, Middle South)

N.	Three dimensions	North			Middle			South		
		Mean	S.D	%	Mean	S.D	%	Mean	S.D	%
1.	Instructional Support	3.15	.41	78.8	3.13	.27	78.2	2.98	.39	74.5
2.	Development of Life-Long Learning Skills	3.08	.38	76.9	3.11	.40	77.8	2.78	.33	69.5
3.	Social Interaction	3.26	.55	81.5	3.18	.39	79.5	2.96	.31	73.9
	Total	**3.16**	**.44**	**79.0**	**3.14**	**.30**	**78.5**	**2.91**	**.31**	**72.6**

It can be inferred that the North region recorded the highest scores in means and percentages; they were: (3.16) and (79.0%) respectively. The second degree was occupied by the Middle region; the means and percentages were (3.14) and (78.5%) respectively. The least degree was occupied by the South region; the means scores and percentages were (2.91) and (72.6%) respectively. This indicates that all the educational regions have good degree of positive attitudes towards the BBIS with a slight variation among them.

Therefore, the results in table (12) indicated no statistically significant differences at (α =0.05) in the means scores of Palestinian EFL pre-service teachers' attitudes towards learning through the blog-based instructional strategy attributed to the educational branch (North, Middle, South):

Table (12)
One Way ANCOVA for the Means Scores of EFL Pre-Service Teachers' Attitudes Towards the BBIS Attributed to the Educational Branch (North, Middle South)

Source of Variation		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Squares	F-Value	Sig.
Instructional Support	Between Groups	.182	2	.091	.773	**.469**
	Within Groups	4.117	43	.118		
	Total	4.299	45			
Development of Life-Long Learning Skills	Between Groups	.776	2	.388	2.699	**.081**
	Within Groups	5.032	43	.144		
	Total	5.809	45			
Social Interaction	Between Groups	.505	2	.253	1.444	**.250**
	Within Groups	6.120	43	.175		
	Total	6.625	45			
Total	Between Groups	.439	2	.220	1.851	**.172**
	Within Groups	4.155	43	.119		
	Total	4.595	45			

The null hypothesis is, therefore, accepted. Based on this result, it can be inferred that EFL pre-service teachers in the three educational regions: North, Middle and South underwent similar fruitful learning experiences which in turn formed their final positive attitudes towards the BBIS.

5. Discussion, Conclusion & Recommendations

As the overall study results indicate, EFL pre-service teachers have had a satisfying learning experience along the course and held general good attitudes towards learning through blogs. Based on the EFL –pre-service teachers' positive attitudes towards the BBIS, the general results revealed the fact that integrating blogs have had a good potential for providing adequate instructional support, development of life-long learning skills and competencies as would-be future EFL teachers and enhancing social interaction among them. This result came in line with Oravec (2003) findings in the sense that blogs ensure knowledge construction, foster reflection, collaboration and meaning making. The results of the study also agreed with Hernandez (2004) and Pink (2005) concerning the important role of blogs in establishing a platform of knowledge sharing, collaboration and interaction, and above all consolidating Vygotsky's theory of social interaction. The findings of the study concerning the positive attitudes held by the learners were in line with that of Kuzu (2007), Yang (2009), Sun (2010), Ozkan (2011) and Al-Waely & Aburezeq (2013).

The results concerning the study hypothesis indicated no statistically significant differences in the means scores of the EFL pre-service teachers attitudes towards the BBIS attributed to the educational branch/region: North, Middle and south. This might be interpreted taking into consideration the fact that these students who receive their open education in the three educational branches have similar learning economic social conditions which in turn make them crystallize approximately similar attitudes towards the BBIS.

In conclusion, it has been found that EFL pre-service teachers' attitudes towards the BBIS, across the three educational regions: North, Middle and South were almost positive. Blogs can be regarded as a useful technology as well as a promising tool in promoting the would-be EFL pre-service teachers' 21st knowledge, skills and competencies. The study, therefore, recommends the following:

- Despite its implementation on a small scale, as only (46) students took part in this study, the potential for using blogs should be considered in EFL instruction for the optimistic experience that EFL pre-service teachers have had along the course.

- More studies should be conducted to investigate other potentials of blogs in EFL pre-service teacher education programs as well as in other educational contexts.

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Appendix

EFL Pre-Service Teachers' Attitudes Towards the Instructional Blog

Dear student teacher,

The researcher has been conducting a doctoral dissertation titled "**The Effect of Using a Blog-Based Instructional Strategy on Developing Pedagogical Content Knowledge and Reflective Thinking of Palestinian EFL Pre-Service Teachers and their Attitudes Towards the Strategy**."

You are kindly requested to fill in this questionnaire by ticking (✔) the box that best applies to you. Please be also informed that the data you provide will be used for research purposes only.

Thanks for your cooperation.

Please indicate your University educational branch by a circle.

University Educational Branch:

- **(Middle) Ramallah**
- **(North) Jenin**
- **(South) Bethlehem & Hebron**

NO.	EFL PSTs' Attitudes	Strongly agree 4	Agree 3	Disagree 2	Strongly disagree 1
A)	***Instructional Support***				
1.	I think that the instructional blog reinforced my ability to connect between theory and practice in teaching.				
2.	I think that the instructional blog helped me consolidate what I learnt along the course.				
3.	I think that the instructional blog let me experience a unique learning environment.				
4.	I think that the instructional blog let me move from the state of *knowing that* to the state of *knowing how*.				
5.	I think that the instructional blog reinforced my self-expression skills.				
6.	I think that the instructional blog helped me develop my writing skills.				
7.	I think that the instructional blog helped me to synthesize a solid teaching knowledge base.				
8.	I think that the instructional blog made my teaching experience interesting.				
9.	I believe that the instructional blog consolidated Higher Order Thinking skills (HOTS), such as evaluation, synthesis, and				

	analysis.				
10.	I think that the instructional blog encouraged me to pose questions and comments more than in reality.				
B)	***Development of Life-Long Learning Skills***				
1.	I think that the instructional blog helped me develop the sense of self-directed learning, self- administration, self-monitoring and self-regulation.				
2.	I think that the instructional blog developed my sense of how to be a reflective practitioner.				
3.	I think that the instructional blog helped me develop my research skills.				
4.	I think that the instructional blog improved my ability to take correct teaching decisions.				
5.	I think that the instructional blog improved my ability to solve problems.				
6.	I think that the instructional blog helped me to practice creativity and innovation.				
7.	I think that the instructional blog improved my ICT skills.				
8.	I believe that the instructional blog helped me to manage time efficiently.				
C)	***Social Interaction***				
1.	I think that the instructional blog developed my communication skills.				
2.	I think that the instructional blog developed my negotiation skills.				
2.	I think that the instructional blog provided me with better chance to get informed about peers' various teaching experiences.				
3.	I think that the instructional blog provided me with a fruitful feedback from course peers and supervisor.				
4.	I think that the instructional blog helped me to express my teaching experiences and share my ideas and thoughts freely and openly.				
5.	I think that the instructional blog helped me to share the course material with the course peers and supervisor.				
6.	I think that the instructional blog let me live a warm social interactive atmosphere with course peers and supervisor.				
	Total				