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PREPARING NEWSPAPER ARTICLES AS AN ACTIVE LEARNING ACTIVITY IN THE TEACHING PROCESS

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Abstract:

Students' active participation in a lesson—both mentally and physically—in alignment with the learning objectives positively influences their level of learning. Active participation is essential for helping students construct meaningful knowledge and establish a foundation for future learning. In this study, teacher candidates enrolled in the Faculty of Education were asked to prepare newspaper articles as an activity designed to support active learning. In this context, the teacher candidates were asked the question: "If what you learned in this course were to appear as a news story in a newspaper, what kind of story would it be?" Data were collected from the participants' reflections on the contribution of this activity after they had prepared their newspaper articles. In this qualitative research design, the opinions of the prospective teachers were analyzed using content analysis. The views of participants were grouped under 30 different codes. This activity was observed to be effective mostly in reinforcing the subject matter, enhancing comprehension, and increasing retention. Additionally, the teacher candidates evaluated it as an enjoyable activity that supported their use of prior experiences and their research and communication skills. The opinions of the teacher candidates were organized under cognitive, affective, and skills-related themes, each reflecting dimensions that support active learning.

Keywords: active learning, effective participation, newspaper preparation, constructivism, taxonomy

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1. Introduction

Throughout history, numerous learning theories have been developed to explain how learners acquire knowledge and skills. Early perspectives, grounded in behaviorist traditions, conceptualized learning as a permanent change in observable behavior resulting from repeated experiences or stimulus–response associations. Subsequent theoretical shifts, influenced by social learning theory, emphasized that learning could also occur through observation and modeling, even in the absence of direct experience. Learning has sometimes been considered as the individual's creation of meaning through insight, and sometimes as the production of a response by processing stimuli acquired from the outside through the senses in the mind. Today, however, with the discovery of the nature of the brain, more emphasis is placed on the change in neurons in the brain and, consequently, on neurocognitive processes.

In contemporary educational research, advances in neuroscience have further expanded this understanding by highlighting the neurocognitive mechanisms underlying learning, particularly the role of neural plasticity and changes in synaptic connections. These developments have deepened the theoretical foundation of learning by linking cognitive processes with biological structures. The diverse theories proposed to explain how learning occurs have informed the design and implementation of instructional environments, leading to the development of a variety of teaching models. These models emphasize the centrality of instructional quality in shaping learning outcomes. Among the approaches that have gained prominence in recent years is active learning, which positions learners as cognitively, emotionally, and behaviorally engaged participants in the learning process. Active learning is widely recognized for its potential to enhance instructional quality and to promote deeper, more meaningful learning experiences.

2. Literature Review

Active learning positions the learner not as a passive recipient in the instructional process but as an active participant who constructs knowledge through engagement with learning materials and tasks. In contemporary conceptions of learning, individuals have broad access to information and are expected to acquire the knowledge they need and to construct meaning independently. Huggett and Jeffries (2021) describe active learning as an umbrella term encompassing both a general pedagogical orientation and a range of specific strategies designed to promote learner engagement in classroom and lecture environments. Active learning has two central aims: the first is to shift the instructional focus from teacher-centered to learner-centered practices; the second is to promote higher-order cognitive processes through active engagement with course content.

Within active learning environments, knowledge is regarded as the cumulative result of experiences that learners generate through purposeful activities. According to Pardjono (2002), the fundamental task of students in active learning is to construct their own knowledge through classroom participation. Similarly, Silberman (1996) argues that

the acquisition of knowledge, skills, and attitudes occurs through inquiry processes in which learners assume an investigative stance rather than a reactive one. During this process, students seek answers to questions posed by the instructor or formulated by themselves. In essence, strategies that support active learning encourage learners to engage cognitively, emotionally, and behaviorally with the material.

Learning environments characterized by active learning display several defining features. Bonwell and Eison (1991) emphasize that active learning reduces one-way information transmission and increases opportunities for skill development, positioning students as participants rather than listeners. It is also expected that students' participation in higher-order thinking processes (analysis, synthesis, evaluation) will increase. By taking part in activities such as reading, discussing, and writing, learners deepen their understanding and become more aware of their own attitudes and values.

Ensuring learner engagement is one of the most crucial stages of the teaching-learning process, and this can be achieved through the systematic use of active learning strategies. Examples include guided discussions, case analyses, simulations, peer-designed assessments, and flipped classroom applications (Gosavi & Arora, 2022). Ferns and Duffy (2019) specifically identify the following strategies as effective: minute papers, team papers, case studies, four corners, think–pair–share, and jigsaw.

In this context, Ün Açıkgöz (2011) highlights the instructional tasks embedded within teaching methods and techniques, noting that these tasks constitute the core of active learning practices. Learners' level of engagement in these tasks directly contributes to the quality of the learning experience. A wide range of tasks—such as poster preparation, slogan development, advertisement design, poem writing, headline creation, puzzle development, and letter writing—can be incorporated into active learning environments. One of the instructional tasks examined in this study is the preparation of newspaper articles. In this activity, learners create a newspaper article aligned with the learning objectives of the course and share it with their peers, thereby supporting active learning. Bonwell and Eison (1991) argue that interdisciplinary in-class writing activities enhance productivity by encouraging learners both to perform tasks and to reflect on their actions.

The purpose of this study is to examine pre-service teachers' views on preparing newspaper articles aligned with course learning objectives. Accordingly, the study aims to identify the educational contributions of preparing newspaper articles as an innovative active learning practice. The literature indicates that newspaper articles are commonly incorporated into classroom instruction and aligned with instructional goals (Rhoades & Rhoades, 1980; Yahşi & Keleş, 2013; Street, 2002; Segall & Schmidt, 2006; Aiex, 1991; Temur, 2022; Topçu, 2020; Kabapınar & Baysal, 2004; Yaşar & Ünlüer, 2011; Simons, Smits & Janssenswillen, 2020; Kariyeva, 2025). In these studies, newspapers have been used as tools within diverse teaching methods, including brainstorming, questioning, and discussion. Taking a different approach, Claes and Quintelier (2009) introduced young people to current events through a project that made newspaper reading accessible by providing each student with a free newspaper package containing various national newspapers. However, in this study, newspaper articles student-prepared serve as

learning products aligned with instructional outcomes. The limited number of studies examining such student-generated newspaper tasks highlights the need for further research into their educational impact. In this regard, preparing newspaper articles makes a valuable contribution to active learning.

3. Material and Methods

This study was designed using qualitative research methods. Unlike quantitative approaches that present data in numerical form, qualitative research aims to examine phenomena in depth and understand the meanings individuals attribute to their experiences. Qualitative inquiry seeks to understand and interpret human and social behavior as it is lived by participants in a particular social setting. It is an intensely personal kind of research, one that freely acknowledges and admits the subjective perceptions and biases of both participants and researcher Ary, Jacobs & Sorenson, 2010). In this study, the contributions of students who prepared newspaper articles as an active learning activity were examined through their reflections on the learning process. For this reason, a phenomenological research design—commonly used to explore individuals' lived experiences, perceptions, and the meanings they ascribe to a particular phenomenon—was adopted.

3.1 Study Group

The research was conducted at the Faculty of Education of a public university. The study group consists of 30 teacher candidates who volunteered to participate and were enrolled in the second year of the Social Studies Teaching and Turkish Language Teaching programs. Participants were selected using convenience sampling, a type of purposive sampling that provides researchers with ease of access and flexibility during the study. Students took part in the activity voluntarily, and they were informed beforehand that the activity would not be graded.

3.2 Data Collection Tool

The data of the study were collected through a semi-structured, open-ended questionnaire developed to elicit teacher candidates' in-depth views of the activity. The questionnaire invited participants to evaluate the extent to which preparing a newspaper article contributed to their learning. The implementation took place over eight weeks during the fall semester of the 2024–2025 academic year in the course "Teaching Principles and Methods." The learning objectives for Week 8 were: (1) "Recognizing teaching strategies" and (2) "Planning the instructional process in accordance with teaching strategies and learning objectives". After the instructor completed the instructional component of the lesson, teacher candidates were asked to carry out the activity according to the following explanation and to share their views. The following information was provided to students in the open-ended questionnaire:

"If today's lesson and what we learned in class were to be featured in a newspaper article, what kind of article would it be? Create a newspaper article based on the learning objectives of today's lesson. Then, how would you evaluate the preparation of a newspaper article related to the learning objectives of this lesson? Write down your thoughts on how it affected you."

3.3 Data Analysis

The qualitative data obtained from the research was first reviewed by the researchers. The data were then analyzed using content analysis. In the analysis process, a frequency table was initially generated to summarize the distribution of participant responses. Subsequently, the data were categorized under thematic headings. These themes were supported by illustrative examples from participant statements, accompanied by direct quotations to ensure credibility and deepen interpretation of the findings.

3.4 Validity and Reliability

Several strategies were employed to ensure the validity and reliability (trustworthiness) of the research. The scope and phrasing of the items in the data collection tool were reviewed by an external expert to strengthen content validity. Participants were selected from different teacher education programs to enhance the diversity of perspectives. In addition, the findings were supported by direct quotations from participants, contributing to the credibility of the results. Teacher candidates participated voluntarily in the work and were not evaluated with an activity grade.

4. Results and Discussion

The findings derived from the teacher candidates' responses are presented below using tables and figures.

Examination of the teacher candidates' views (Table 1) indicates that the activity provided experiences supporting development across academic and other domains. During this process, participants reported the need to reconsider the lesson content and reorganize it in alignment with different disciplines. When examining the most frequently expressed views of teacher candidates, it was revealed that they repeated the content in line with the learning objectives of the lesson, utilized their research skills, and created an impactful effect on increasing the retention of the subject matter.

Initially, teacher candidates expressed their experiences as follows: "It's a difficult assignment; I felt nervous, excited, and panicked, thinking about what I should do, and at first, I found it strange to be asked to do such a task." These statements reflect the prominence of negative emotions at the outset. However, after completing the activity, participants indicated that they continued working with a sense of responsibility and found the activity enjoyable.

Table 1: Teacher Candidates' Views on the Newspaper Article Preparation Activity

Views	Frequency
Reviewing the subject	10
Comprehending the lesson	9
Improving research skills	8
Increasing retention	8
Finding the activity enjoyable	8
Written communication skills	7
Integrating theoretical knowledge with practical context	4
Critical thinking	4
Experiencing difficulty	4
Making the lesson more engaging	5
Ensuring the transferability of knowledge to real life	4
Reinforcing the topic	3
Feeling surprised	3
Thinking skills	3
Feeling panicked	2
Interpreting from different perspectives	2
Creativity	2
Activating the brain	2
Feeling doubtful	1
Sense of responsibility	1
Manual/creative hands-on skills	1
Decision-making skills	1
Sense of strangeness	1
Gaining experience	1
Excitement	1
Curiosity	1
Better understanding of individualized learning	1
Explaining the topic in my own words	1
Productivity	1
Feeling uneasy	1

This suggests a positive shift in the students' emotional responses over the course of the application. Teacher candidates also emphasized that the activity primarily engaged their research skills. Furthermore, it provided an opportunity to apply theoretical knowledge from a different disciplinary perspective in a practical context. According to participants, the activity enabled the development and utilization of various skills, with written communication skills being the most frequently highlighted.

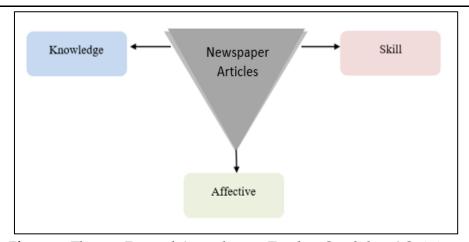


Figure 1: Themes Formed According to Teacher Candidates' Opinions

An analysis of teacher candidates' opinions (Figure 1) reveals that the responses are organized into three main themes: knowledge, skills, and affective aspects. The identification of these three categories is considered meaningful because learning objectives in the literature are similarly classified into three primary domains: cognitive, affective, and psychomotor (Sözer, 2003). The themes identified in this study align with this established classification. In naming the themes, common expressions within each group of responses were used to generate corresponding codes.

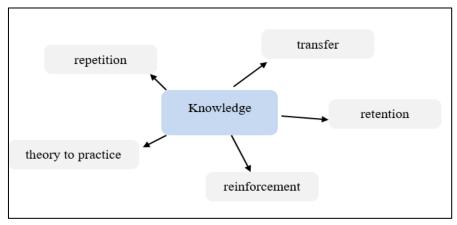


Figure 2: Knowledge Theme

The first theme is knowledge. The subcategories that emerge within this theme are theory-to-practice, repetition, transfer, reinforcement (comprehension), and retention. These subcategories are considered key elements that support learning processes. Many learning theories emphasize the repetition of what has been learned, the transfer of knowledge to different areas, and the importance of not just memorizing information but truly understanding it. Facilitating the transfer of knowledge from theory to practice is considered a fundamental learning principle that also enhances retention. Bransford, Brown, Cocking, Donovan, and Pellegrino (2018) highlight the role of memorization in numerous classroom activities; however, transfer is central to learning through understanding. Similarly, the American Psychological Association (2015) states that long-term acquisition of knowledge and skills largely depends on practice. An examination of

students' views indicates that they repeat learned material when preparing newspaper articles and transfer that knowledge to other contexts. These practices support understanding-based learning within the knowledge domain. The perspectives of teacher candidates regarding the knowledge theme are illustrated below through direct quotations:

Ö23: "It enabled me to explain the information I learned in my own words."

Ö28: "It was a different experience for me because it was the first time I prepared a newspaper." First, it helped me understand the lesson better.

Ö17: "By writing a column, we had the opportunity to reinforce what we learned and put it into writing."

Ö14: "It stayed in my memory longer and helped me remember the information."

Ö7: "Since I don't have the habit of regular repetition, I realized once again the importance of repetition."

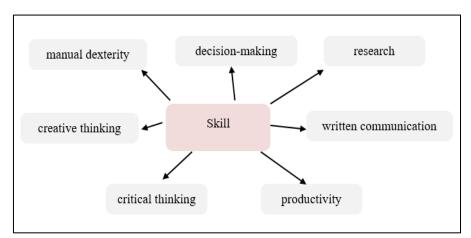


Figure 3: Skill Theme

The second theme is the skill theme, which encompasses both psychomotor and higher-order thinking skills. The subcategories emerging within this theme are productivity, manual dexterity, decision-making, research skills, critical thinking, creative thinking, and written communication skills. Overall, the newspaper-preparation activity, which might have been perceived merely as an out-of-class assignment or performance task, contributed to learning from multiple perspectives. While preparing newspaper articles, students felt the need to address questions such as what to do, how to do it, which information to use, and what headline to select. Gülveren (2020) emphasizes that thinking skills are particularly engaged in such situations.

Active learning processes not only increase student participation but also foster the development of skills such as critical thinking, problem-solving, collaboration, and self-regulation (Chi, 2009). Harari (2018), in 21 Lessons for the 21st Century, notes that today individuals are exposed to an overwhelming amount of information. He argues that the last thing teachers should provide to students today is additional information. Rather, schools should focus on teaching four essential skills: critical thinking, communication, collaboration, and creativity.

An examination of the subcategories derived from teachers' opinions indicates that the activity contributed to students' engagement in both physical and mental domains. The research demonstrated that skills, such as written communication and manual dexterity, were developed during the newspaper preparation process. By actively applying their cognitive and manual skills to produce a tangible product, students enhanced their productivity. Similarly, the American Psychological Association (2015) identifies actions such as creating, inventing, discovering, imagining, and predicting as activities that foster students' creativity. In this study, the instruction provided at the outset—"If this lesson were a newspaper article..."—served as guidance that closely aligned with this principle. The perspectives of prospective teachers regarding skill development are illustrated below through direct quotations.

- S25: "When writing the news, I combined the information with what was already available, using organized, accurate, and understandable language."
- S13: "I examined various newspaper articles to answer the question 'How to write a newspaper article?'"
- S5: "Using this distribution, we implemented both systematic learning and the teaching strategy through research."
- S12: "Writing in newspaper format allowed me to make the topics more engaging by using original texts and adding headlines."
- S20: "The task of writing a newspaper article made me feel more creative and productive because it offered me the opportunity to put theoretical knowledge into practice."

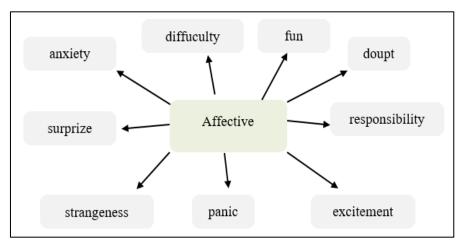


Figure 4: Affective Theme

The third theme is labeled "effective". The subcategories identified within this theme included anxiety, difficulty, fun, responsibility, surprise, strangeness, doubt, excitement, and panic. An analysis of these subcategories revealed that when teacher candidates encountered a learning situation that they had not previously experienced, they initially experienced predominantly negative emotions, such as anxiety, panic, strangeness, doubt, and surprise. These reactions are consistent with principles of brainbased learning, as the perception of uncertainty naturally evokes negative emotional and cognitive responses. However, further examination of students' opinions indicates that

these initial negative emotions were gradually mitigated and shifted toward positive emotions, such as enjoyment and excitement, during the implementation process.

Opportunities for students to express their emotions during the learning process are typically limited. In knowledge-centered programs, the primary focus is knowledge transfer. In contrast, student-centered approaches emphasize the individual, bringing students' emotions to the forefront. In this respect, the teaching experience provided prospective teachers with an opportunity to engage with and better understand a learner-centered approach. While emotions are most prominent in the affective dimension, the subcategory of responsibility emerged as a particularly notable value. This finding can be interpreted in relation to three principles of brain-based learning proposed by Caine and Caine (1997). First, individuals actively seek meaning in the learning process. Second, emotions play a critical role in learning. Third, learning is facilitated by mentally challenging activities and inhibited by perceived threats. An Examination of students' affective experiences indicates that the initial tension caused by uncertainty gradually transformed into a learning-focused orientation by the end of the process. The perspectives of teacher candidates on the affective theme are illustrated by the following quotations:

S20: "Being asked for such an assignment initially made me feel both excited and responsible."

S24: "Initially, I was surprised to be asked to write a newspaper article. I was uncertain how to proceed. To the best of my knowledge, I prepared the newspaper article."

S19: "It was challenging for me. I panicked at first because I didn't know how to do it."

S30: "I'd never done this kind of assignment before" It was a unique experience for me."

S16: "Preparing a newspaper article was more fun than I thought."

The transformation of educational paradigms in the 21st century has also been reflected in teaching processes. There has been a shift toward dynamic, student-centered interactive methods rather than traditional approaches that rely primarily on transmitting preprepared information (Prince, 2004). Research demonstrating significant increases in student achievement in learning environments employing active learning techniques confirms that these methods enhance learning effectiveness (Michael, 2006). In this context, it is essential for teacher candidates to gain practical experience with a range of methods, techniques, and instructional tasks that promote active learning during their training.

The evolving role of the student in the learning process and the adoption of learner-centered environments underscore the need to train teacher candidates in the competencies required to design, implement, and evaluate active learning processes. Integrating learning activities based on practice and "learning by doing" will further contribute to the development of this understanding.

5. Recommendations

Several recommendations can be made based on the findings of this study. The newspaper report-writing activity used in this research could be implemented as a

longer-term study. For process evaluation, students may be asked to create a portfolio—individually or in groups— by preparing a newspaper that reflects what they have learned during the semester. Such portfolios would provide comprehensive data. For instance, single-group or experimental studies could examine correlations between the development of writing skills and various factors, such as creativity and critical thinking. When prospective teachers first encountered this learning task, they experienced uncertainty because they did not know how to proceed. In similar studies, providing students with clear instructions, effective feedback, and guidance could help reduce anxiety and achieve higher-quality outcomes. While this study relied on qualitative data, future research could also incorporate quantitative measures. Additionally, content analyses of student products could further enrich the data collected.

6. Conclusion

This study implemented an activity designed to support students' active learning during the instructional process. It examined the contributions of preparing newspaper articles to students' knowledge, skills, and affective development. The findings indicated that the activity helped teacher candidates better comprehend course content, particularly within the cognitive domain; enhanced retention; supported research skills; and stimulated critical thinking, creativity, productivity, and written communication skills. Initially, students perceived the activity as challenging, which elicited negative emotions. However, over the course of the implementation, the activity was ultimately perceived as enjoyable and was found to foster a sense of responsibility and enhance productivity. The newspaper-article preparation activity effectively supported active learning by placing students at the center of the learning process and providing opportunities for engagement in learning-focused activities beyond the classroom.

Ethical Statement

Throughout the planning, data collection, analysis, and reporting phases of this research, all ethical principles and guidelines were strictly adhered to. All responsibility for the content of the study rests with the authors.

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Conflict of Interest Statement

The authors contributed equally to the study. The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

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