

*Full Length Research paper*

# Reflective teaching pedagogy as innovative approach in teacher education through open and distance learning

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The reflective teaching methodology involves questioning oneself to bring perfection by asking the following questions: Which teaching model am I using? How does it apply in specific teaching situations? How well is it working? Teacher educator should apply this theory in classroom practice, in order observe and reflects on the results so that the classroom becomes a kind of laboratory where the teacher can relate teaching theory to teaching practice. By adopting reflective teaching pedagogy teacher educator imparts inspiration among teacher trainees, so as to enable them to practice the same in their teaching practice sessions. The paper focuses on the importance of innovative teaching-learning pedagogy to sustain interest among teacher trainees who obtain the teacher training degree through open and distance education. The teacher trainees were trained to adopt the reflective teaching-learning methodology during their teaching practice period.

**Key words:** Reflective teaching, pedagogy, innovative teaching, inspiration and sustainability.

## INTRODUCTION

Reflective teaching means looking at what you do in the classroom, thinking about why you do it, and thinking about if it works – a process of self-observation and self-evaluation. Donald (1983) by collecting information about what goes on in our classroom, and by analyzing and evaluating this information, we identify and explore our own practices and underlying beliefs. This may then lead to changes and improvements in our teaching. Reflective teaching involves recognizing, examining, and ruminating over the way an individual teaches. As individuals possess their own background and experience, bring certain beliefs, assumptions, knowledge, attitudes and values to teach.

It is also seen that teaching takes place in a social setting that has its own unique characteristics, opportunities and constraints. The practice of reflective teaching explores the implications of all these complex factors with the intention of understanding and improving teaching-learning practice. Schon (1993) suggested that reflective teaching practice is a continuous process and involves the learner thoughtfully considering one's own experience in applying knowledge to practice while being taught by

professionals. It helps the individuals to develop their own personality. Gibbs (1988) reflective practice suggests that individuals develop an analysis of feelings, evaluation of experience etc. Jasper (2005) associated reflective teaching practice with lifelong learning resulting in the development of autonomous, qualified and self-directed professionals. Engaging in reflective practice is associated with the improvement of the quality of care, stimulating personal and professional growth and closing the gap between theory and practice. Bartlett (1990) points out that becoming a reflective teacher involves moving beyond a primary concern with instructional techniques and "how to" questions and asking "what" and "why" questions that regard instructions and managerial techniques not as ends in themselves, but as part of broader educational purposes. Asking questions "what and why" gives certain power over individuals teaching resulting in the emergence of autonomy and responsibility in the work of teachers. In reflecting on the earlier asked questions, teachers begin to exercise control and open up the possibility of transforming everyday classroom life. Lieberman and

Miller (2000) pointed out that the practice of reflective teaching, reflective inquiry, and reflection-on practice, results in gaining of the personal and professional knowledge that is so important to being an effective teacher and in shaping children's learning. Han (1995) stated that the process element of reflection emphasizes how teachers make decisions, content stresses the substance that drives the thinking and reflective inquiry may set the stage for learning how to be a good teacher. Galvez-Martin (2000) proposed reflective teaching as the act of creating a mental space in which to contemplate a question or idea, such as, "What do I know now about teaching young children?" This of repeated questioning leads to mental transformation to a time and a situation that leads to a deeper perspective helping students.

### **The role of reflective teaching in teacher education**

Reflective practice is used at both the pre-service and in-service levels of teaching. Coaching and peer involvement are two aspects of reflective practice seen most often at the pre-service level. In a 1993 study of how student teachers develop the skills necessary for reflective teaching during their field experiences. Ojanen (1993) explores the role of the teacher educator as a coach. Teacher educators can most effectively coach student teachers in reflective practice by using the students' personal histories, dialogue journals, and small and large-group discussions about their experiences to help students reflect upon and improve their practices. Kettle and Sellars (1996) studied the development of third-year teaching students. They analyzed the students' reflective writings and interviewed them extensively about their reflective practices. They found that the use of peer reflective groups encouraged student teachers to challenge existing theories and their own preconceived views of teaching while modeling for them a collaborative style of professional development that would be useful throughout their teaching careers. Kettle and Sellars (1996) analyzed the students' reflective writings and interviewed them extensively about their reflective practices. They found that the student teachers by practicing reflective teaching enables them to challenge existing theories and their own preconceived views of teaching resulting in professional development that would be useful throughout their teaching careers. Several research studies have proved that critical reflection upon experience continues to be an effective technique for professional development. Freidus (1997) describes a case study of one teacher/graduate student struggling to make sense of her beliefs and practices about what constitutes good teaching. Her initial pedagogy for teaching was based on the traditions and practices of direct teaching. Her traditional socialization into teaching made it difficult for her to understand that her views of good teaching were being challenged in her practice.

After implementing reflective teaching technique in her classroom enabled her to acknowledge and validate what she was learning. The present paper highlights the importance of practicing reflective teaching pedagogy by teacher trainees during internship, so that they develop a competitive attitude. Hopkins and Antes (1990) suggested that reflective methodology could also be considered as action research as it provides continuous feedback that targets specific problems in a particular school setting. According to Ojanen (1993), reflective teaching could be used in pre-service and in-service training in which teacher educator's role is to act like a coach sharing their personal experiences with student teachers involving dialogue as well as group discussions. Uzat (1998) also suggested the role of a teacher educator as a coach adopting a realistic and systematic approach to ongoing teacher improvement through focused reflection on teaching methods so that it could develop self-efficacy among student teachers. Bailey KM, Nunan D (1996) conducted action research based on reflection methodology in language teaching, where the teacher maintained a teaching diary in which she/he noted down the ideas that could reflect on every basis. The result of this study concluded creation of positive learning environment. Chamot AU (1995) conducted a study implemented The Cognitive Academic Language Learning Approach (CALLA) to teach Math and Science in teacher education program in which the teacher instructs the students to view the content through mental activity by asking students to reflect on their own learning, and develop a strategic approach to learning and problem solving. Edge J, Richards K (1993) focused on developing teacher education program through active learning strategy comprising four stages namely 1. Action 2. Observation 3. Reflection and 4. Planning resulted in the professional development of teachers. Elbaz F (1992) insisted on the conceptualization of moral element in teaching –learning process which could be achieved by reflective teaching methodology. Fanselow J (1997) suggested that teacher development would be possible if the teacher willingly explore his/ her own teaching in a different manner. Freeman D (1992) proposed reflective teaching model for professional development and insisted on experimental knowledge that the teacher gains as the result of reflection on their own teaching experience. Kemmis S, McTaggart R (1982) proposed three types of action research namely technical, practical and emancipatory. In order to develop expertise in teaching all the three types to be followed. EP Han (1995) found the importance of re-evaluation of teaching practices in the classroom and teacher education levels including primary, secondary and higher secondary levels.

### **Objectives of the study**

The aim of this study was to find the effectiveness of the

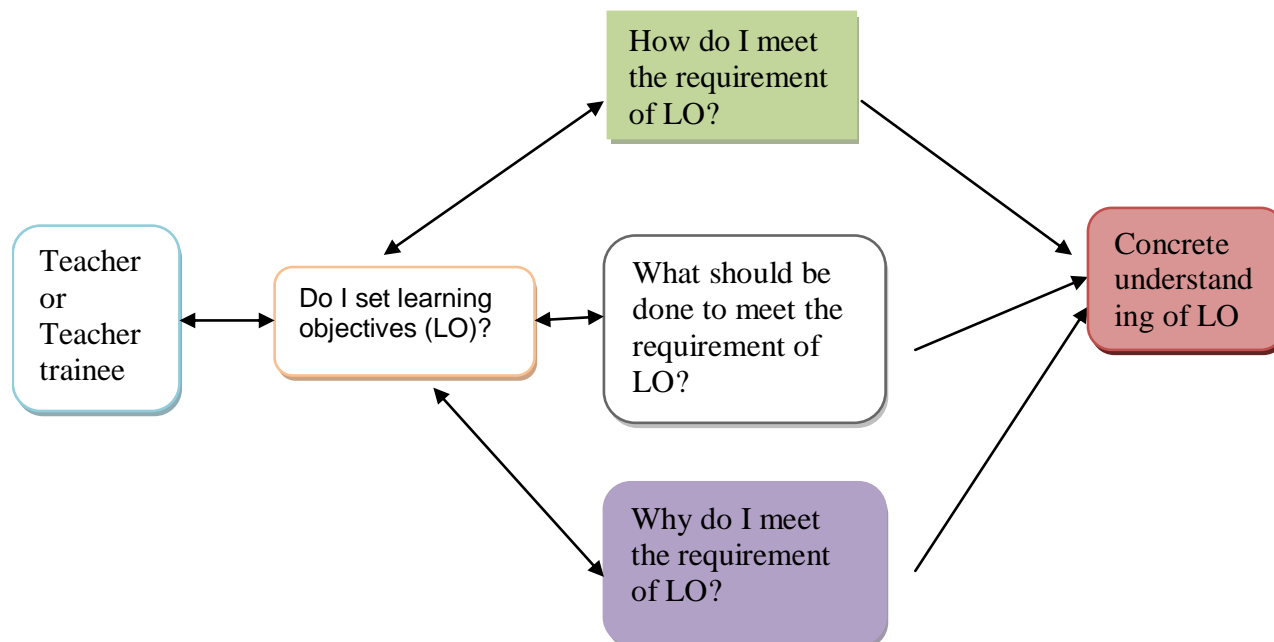


Figure 1. Self inquiry model.

reflective teaching practice in the teacher training programs and the influence of reflective teaching practice on the academic performance of the students.

### Research questions

1. How does reflective teaching methodology help teacher trainees to develop professionalism?
2. Does the reflective teaching methodology meet the specific learning objectives of the topic?
3. Does the reflective teaching develop inquiry urge among teacher trainees?

### Sample

The present study was conducted by choosing 100 teacher trainees enrolled in Bachelor of Education degree through open and distance education in the 23 to 40 age group consisting of men and women (64 women and 36 men).

### METHODOLOGY

As it is evident that reflective teaching is an effective method of practice by the teacher trainees to develop self inquiry urge in them resulting in a reflection of the same attitude among learners. A self inquiry model was designed by the author and the sample was given training in the reflective teaching methodology using a self inquiry model (Figure 1).

The aforementioned model explains the necessity of self inquiry

as one of the important factors for teachers as well as, teacher trainees to make it into a regular practice during the process of teaching-learning. The first step in the model explains the importance of setting specific learning objectives (LO) by teachers in a particular subject topic. The second step involves the beginning of the inquiry process within the teacher about how to meet the set requirement of LO, What are the strategies to apply to meet the requirements and thirdly, Why should an individual in this context and the teacher trainee require to meet the LO. This type of inquiry is two directional between the teacher trainee and his/herself. Such interaction results in the development of concrete understanding of LO, once the need for setting LO becomes clear, the teaching-learning process becomes effective. The teacher trainees were asked to implement the self inquiry model throughout the teaching practice sessions during the teaching-learning process. A repeated practice of self inquiry model enables the teacher trainees to develop professional training in teaching-learning process. A questionnaire consisting of 30 statements evaluating professional efficiency as the result of implementing self inquiry model during the teaching-learning process was given to teacher trainees and they were asked to tick the correct option based on the five-point lacquered scale. The scores thus obtained are subjected to statistical analysis.

### Research instrument

A standardized professional efficiency evaluating questionnaire consisting of 30 statements was used. Out of 30 statements, 1 to 15 evaluate the methodology of reflective teaching methodology and 16 to 30 evaluate professional training. The questionnaire prepared by the author was subjected to standardization by conducting tests and retest method. The reliability and the validity of the questionnaire was found to be 0.865 and 0.748 respectively. The questionnaire helps to find the relationship between reflective teaching methodology and professional training. The minimum score of the questionnaire ranges from one to a maximum of 75.

**Table 1.** Relationship between reflective teaching methodology and professional training.

Variables	Sample	Gender	Co-relation Co-efficient between reflective teaching methodology and professional training
Reflective teaching methodology	64	Men	0.55
professional training	36	Women	0.58

The scores of the questionnaire thus obtained were used to find the correlation coefficient value between the variables reflective teaching methodology and professional training. Table 1

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

There was a significant relationship between reflective teaching methodology and professional training. The reason is that when an individual practices reflective teaching methodology by asking self inquiry questions based on a set of learning objectives it results in refining of the individual's ability leading to professional training. The correlation co-efficient values were almost same for both sexes showing that the practice of reflective teaching methodology holds good in professional training of individuals irrespective of their sex. The finding is supported by the evidence from earlier studies by Canning (1991) explained that reflection is an interpersonal experience leading to insight about individuals as actors in their own worlds. Clarke and Croft (1998) suggested that reflective practice has the broad meaning of being able to look at our own professional behavior and practice with the intention of improving and developing. Hence, this development and improvement involve different areas in our profession, such as our knowledge, skills, attitudes and awareness that we change through reflective teaching. Kemmis (1985) explained reflection is a process which involves an inward examination of our thoughts and thought processes, and an outward consideration of the situation in which individual find their own self. In effect, reflection is a mirror to practice to open-mindedness, responsibility, and wholeheartedness.

## Conclusions

1. Research on reflective teaching over the past two decades has shown that it is linked to the inquiry, and continuous professional growth.
2. Reflective practice can be a beneficial form of professional development at both the pre-service and in-service levels of teaching.
3. It develops critical thinking and promotes experiential learning.
4. It enhances personal growth.
5. It gives freedom to teachers to impose their own methodology enhancing rational thinking.

6. It is a beneficial form of professional development at both the pre-service and in-service levels of teaching. By

gaining a better understanding of their own individual teaching styles through reflective practice, teachers can improve their effectiveness in the classroom.

7. It enriches students' personal reflections on their work and provides insight to refine their teaching practices.

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