

# A Study of the Effectiveness of Reflective Teaching Practices on the Professional Competency of Pre-service Teachers in Teacher Education

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## **Abstract:**

Reflective teaching has become one of the primary constructs in teacher education as it helps pre-service teachers to bridge the gap between the theory and the practice in the classroom, analyze their own choices, and constantly enhance the professional competence. The current research paper will focus on whether reflective teaching practices can be used to promote the professional competence of pre-service teachers in teacher education programmes. The theoretical findings used in the paper include reflective thinking of Dewey, reflective practitioner theories of Schon, reflective teacher education of Zeichner, and realistic approach to teacher preparation of Korthagen. The research hypothesizes that those systematic reflective practices, including reflective journals, peer discussion, lesson analysis, mentor feedback, and post-practicum self-evaluation, have the potential to support the development of such critically important areas of professional competency as instructional planning, classroom management, and communication, pedagogical decision-making, and self-efficacy. The relationship between reflective teaching practices and the development of competencies in pre-service teachers throughout practicum and coursework experiences is proposed to be investigated with the help of a quantitative descriptive-correlational design. The information can be gathered using standardized questionnaires and reflective practice inventories which is backed by a focus group discussion and document analysis to triangulate the information. It is the thesis of the paper that reflective teaching is not just an additional activity, it is a transformative professional practice that enhances reflective judgment, professional identity and adaptive teaching capacity. The research also adds value to teacher education by providing a conceptual and methodological model of evaluating the possibility of enhancing teacher readiness with the help of reflective practice. It also gives some practical implications to the curriculum planners, teacher educators, as well as the institutions that aim at producing competent, considerate, and context-responsive future teacher. Theorists such as Dewey, Schon, Zeichner, Larrivee, and Bradbury et al. all agree that the essential qualities of a teacher include curiosity and inquiry (Dewey, 1933; Schon, 1983; Zeichner, 1991; Larrivee, 2008; Bradbury et al., 2020).

**Keywords:** reflective teaching, pre-service teachers, professional competency, teacher education, practicum.

## **1. INTRODUCTION**

The goal of teacher education is to equip pre-service teachers with the practical and professional skills in teaching that go beyond theoretical teaching knowledge. Reflective teaching has been gaining popularity in the modern education discourse as a fundamental part of teacher preparation since it makes student

teachers evaluate the classroom experience critically and enhance the action in the future through systematic thinking. Dewey (1933) theorized the concept of reflection as active, continued, and cautious thinking about beliefs and practices. It is based on this that Schon (1983) proposed the concept of the reflective practitioner in which reflection-in-action and reflection-on-action were highlighted as key to professional learning. These concepts subsequently influenced teacher education scholarship which made reflection a gap between theory and practice (Zeichner, 1991; Korthagen, 2001).

Reflective teaching practices can be used in pre-service teachers such as writing journals, evaluating lesson teaching, discussing with peers and mentors, assessing student feedback, and re-evaluating teaching decisions after teaching experiences. These practices are likely to make new teachers more conscious of their strengths, weaknesses, assumptions, and professional roles and duties. According to the research, reflective processes correlate with the enhanced pedagogical reasoning, improved classroom decisions, and deeper practicum learning (Clarke, 1995; Farrell, 2012; Bradbury et al., 2020). Simultaneously, researchers observe that reflection in teacher education is apparently superficially addressed unless it is mediated by structured dialogue, standards, or guided supervision.

The area of professional competency in teaching comprises an extensive set of skills: lesson planning, classroom management, communication, assessment, ethical behavior, collaboration, and responsiveness to the diversity of learners. Because these competencies are developed during experience and self-reflection, reflective teaching can be a strong indicator of professional development in pre-service teachers. The aim of the current study is thus to explore the impact of reflective teaching practice on professional competency of pre-service teachers in teacher training with the aim of making contributions to the research, policy and practice on teacher preparation.

## 2. RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

1. To examine the level of reflective teaching practices among pre-service teachers.
2. To assess the level of professional competency among pre-service teachers in teacher education programmes.
3. To determine the relationship between reflective teaching practices and professional competency.
4. To compare professional competency across different levels of engagement in reflective teaching practices.
5. To propose pedagogical recommendations for strengthening reflective practice in teacher education.

## 3. RESEARCH HYPOTHESES

**H1:** There is a significant positive relationship between reflective teaching practices and the professional competency of pre-service teachers.

**H2:** Pre-service teachers with higher levels of reflective teaching practice demonstrate significantly higher professional competency than those with lower levels of reflective practice.

**H3:** Reflective teaching practices significantly predict professional competency among pre-service teachers.

## 4. LITERATURE REVIEW

The philosophical and pedagogical ideas of Dewey (1933) are the foundations of reflective teaching as Dewey considered reflection to be a disciplined investigation of experience. Dewey stated that educators needed to go beyond ordinary action and form habits of critical thinking. Schon (1983) tore out the philosophical foundations by stating that professional learning takes place in the form of reflection-in-action, when practitioners think during action, and as reflection-on-action, when practitioners think about

the course of action afterward. This framework justified teaching as a reflective and inquiry-based practice instead of an activity of technical nature in teacher education.

Zeichner (1991) also developed further the concept of reflective teaching in pre-service teacher education by correlating the concept of reflection with that of action research and democratic professional practice. He contended that reflective teaching was not to be confined to mechanical classroom problems only, but also to moral and social, as well as contextual aspects of education. This expanded perspective is significant since pre-service teachers usually require some assistance in relating classroom performance to more significant educational intentions. On the same note, Clarke (1995) established that practicum settings offer rich experiences that help a person to grow through reflection, but reflection depends on situational factors like supervision and school culture, as well as quality of mentoring.

The realistic nature of teacher education by Korthagen is the belief that professional learning must start with specific teaching situations and then proceed to theory as opposed to the other way around. The model is particularly pertinent in the case of pre-service teachers since it focuses on real classroom issues and encourages systematic reflection about practice. Also, Korthagen and Vasalos pointed at deeper levels of reflection, including beliefs, identity and mission, and argued that reflective development is cognitive and personal. In this way, reflective teaching aids in not only technical competence but also professional self-understanding creation.

Larrivee (2008) made some contribution to the literature by conceptualizing degrees of reflection practice and coming up with a tool to evaluate reflective practice in teachers. Her contribution is significant as it has separated surface reflection and critical reflection to mean that not all reflective activity has the same professional outcome. Farrell (2012) also reexamined Dewey and Schon by pointing out that reflection ought to be systematic, evidence-based and futuristic so that they can make informed decisions in the future. These understandings imply that teacher education institutions need to create deliberate reflection structures instead of hoping that it will come naturally.

The more recent scholarship supports the practical relevance of guided reflection among pre-service teachers. Bradbury et al. (2020) demonstrated that, with the help of professional standards and structured reflective conversations, pre-service teachers could be engaged in becoming more reflective practitioners. Casale and Thomas (2019) also discovered that pre-service teachers engage in reflection throughout field observation even though other critical issues like diversity and equity might not be fully explored unless they are supported. The literature suggests that reflective teaching has the power to enhance planning, responsiveness to instruction, self-assessment and professional confidence. Nevertheless, the quality of scaffolding, practicum environment and dialogue and feedback opportunities determine the effectiveness of reflective practices. This research is a continuation of that work, except that in this study; attention will be paid to the impact of reflective teaching in pre-service teachers, in terms of their professional competency in teacher education institutions.

## 5. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

### Figure 1. Conceptual Model of the Study Reflective Teaching Practices

- reflective journals
- lesson analysis
- peer reflection
- mentor feedback
- self-evaluation after practicum

**Leads to****Professional Competency**

- instructional planning
- classroom management
- pedagogical decision-making
- communication skills
- assessment competence
- professional ethics and confidence

The framework assumes that sustained and structured reflective teaching practices improve the professional competency of pre-service teachers by promoting awareness, adaptation, and evidence-based instructional judgment (Schön, 1983; Korthagen, 2001).

**6. METHODOLOGY**

In this study, the research design could be descriptive-correlational to explore the correlation between reflective teaching practice and professional competency in pre-service teachers. The quantitative method is suitable as it enables to measure both variables and analyze their relationship with the help of statistical methods. A few qualitative elements, including open-ended responses or discussion group, can be added to enhance interpretation.

**Population and Sample**

The focus group is the pre-service teachers attending B.Ed. or other teacher education courses (especially those in school internship or practicum). Stratified random sampling can be used to sample up about 150-250 pre-service teachers so that year levels and subject specializations get a representation.

**Tools for Data Collection**

Two structured instruments may be used:

1. **Reflective Teaching Practices Scale** measuring frequency and depth of reflective activities.
2. **Professional Competency Scale** assessing instructional planning, classroom management, communication, assessment, collaboration, and professional attitude.

The competency domains align with common teacher competence frameworks that treat teaching quality as multidimensional and developmental.

**Procedure**

The researcher can also conduct questionnaires under practicum or professional coursework after the institutional permission. The research would explain the nature of the research, confidentiality, and voluntary participation of the participants. Triangulation of self-reported data by reflective journals and mentor feedback records may also be reviewed, where available.

**Statistical Analysis**

Mean and standard deviation are examples of descriptive statistics that can be applied to establish reflective practice and professional competency levels. Pearson correlation can test the relationship between the two variables. The independent samples t-tests or ANOVA can be used to compare the competency scores between the groups whose level of reflective engagement was different. The regression analysis can help establish whether reflective teaching is a predictor of professional competency.

**Ethical Considerations**

The research must give informed consent, anonymity, confidentiality, and the right of withdrawal. Caution must be taken since the participants will be student teachers and the evaluation of academic performance should be separated to research participation.

**7. Table 1. Summary of Major Literature**

Author(s)	Year	Main Focus	Key Contribution to Present Study
Dewey	1933	Reflective thinking	Established reflection as disciplined inquiry
Schön	1983	Reflective practitioner	Introduced reflection-in-action and reflection-on-action
Zeichner	1991	Reflective teacher education	Linked reflection with action research and critical teacher development
Clarke	1995	Practicum reflection	Showed practicum conditions shape reflective growth
Korthagen	2001	Realistic teacher education	Connected classroom experience with structured reflection
Korthagen & Vasalos	2005	Core reflection	Emphasized beliefs, identity, and deeper professional growth
Larrivee	2008	Levels of reflection	Distinguished surface and critical reflection
Farrell	2012	Revisiting reflection	Clarified reflection as systematic and future-oriented

**8. Table 2. Indicators of Professional Competency**

Dimension	Illustrative Indicators
Instructional Planning	Clear objectives, lesson sequencing, learner-centered activities
Classroom Management	Time management, behavior support, learning environment
Pedagogical Decision-Making	Adaptation of methods, responsiveness to learners
Communication Skills	Clarity of explanation, questioning, interaction
Assessment Competency	Use of formative assessment, feedback, evaluation
Professional Attitude	Responsibility, ethics, punctuality, openness to feedback

**9. ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION**

Following the reviewed scholarship, one can reasonably expect that pre-service teachers who use more and deeper reflective teaching practices will be better functioning in professional competency. Reflective journal, lesson review and discussion with mentors compel novice teachers to experience recurrence of classroom events, strengths, weaknesses, and develop solutions. This process aids in professional decision-making and assists the student teachers to cease habitual performance and begin to act in a rational way. The frameworks of Dewey and Schon propose that this type of learning plays a major role in the formation of a professional since only through the critical analysis of experience can one become competent, not through repeating certain practices.

One of the probable results of the study would be positive correlation between the reflective teaching practices and overall professional competency of moderate to a strong nature. This meaning can be compared with previous research claiming that guided reflection enhances planning, self-awareness, and practicum learning (Bradbury et al., 2020; Farrell, 2012). Regular reflecting pre-service teachers have higher chances of changing instructional strategies, comprehending student needs, and addressing classroom challenges with greater confidence. They can also be more professional responsible since through reflection they are more likely to own practice.

The other likely consequence is that not every kind of reflection plays an equal role. Shallow reflection- This is, perhaps, in describing what occurred in class, and may not exert much influence on competency. However, criticism reflection, which involves asking questions, analyzing responses of the learners, and strategizing what one can do other than what they are currently doing is more likely to lead to professional development. Such a difference fits into the scheme of reflexivity levels as defined by Larrivee and further model of reflection with beliefs and identity as formulated by Korthagen. In this way, teacher education programmes can go beyond compliance-based journal writing and develop dialogic, evidence based and scaffolded reflective habits.

Important implications of the discussion to the teacher educators are also implied. Practicum seminars, peer observation, microteaching and mentor conferences should contain reflective practice. The provision of rubrics, prompting questions, and guided feedback by the institutions should ensure that pre-service teachers are taught to be analytical in their reflection. Reflection activities can be designed to address professional standards to assist students to bridge the gap between experience and competency expectations. Reflection can be actively supported, which not only helps in the immediate performance in the teaching but also in the longer run, in the professional identity and lifelong learning.

## 10. ILLUSTRATIVE GRAPH: EXPECTED RELATIONSHIP PATTERN

**Figure 2. Expected Mean Professional Competency by Level of Reflective Practice**

Reflective Practice Level	Expected Mean Competency
Low	2.8
Moderate	3.5
High	4.2

This graph template illustrates the expected trend that higher engagement in reflective teaching practices corresponds with higher professional competency scores.

## 11. EDUCATIONAL IMPLICATIONS

The research has immediate implications on the teacher education institutions. To begin with, reflective practice ought to be entrenched in the curriculum and not within personal choice. Second, mentor teachers and supervisors need training on how to engage in reflective dialogues. Third, teacher education programmes are supposed to measure reflective development and instruction performance. Lastly, there should be a connection between reflective practice with professional standard to make pre-service teachers grasp competency as a developing and evidence-based process.

## 12. CONCLUSION

Reflective pedagogy is an important tool in helping pre-service teachers grow professionally. The literature is unanimous that reflection aids student teachers in bridging the gap between theory and practice and responding to the instructional experiences in distinct ways and gaining professional competency at multiple levels. Through Dewey and his notion of reflective thought, through the reflection practitioner of Schon, and the realistic teacher education of Korthagen, reflection has become a fundamental part of the teacher learning process. In the case of pre-service teachers, journals, peer conversation, mentor feedback,

and lesson analysis can be structured to enhance planning, classroom management, pedagogical reasoning, communication, and confidence. The suggested research is thus validating the argument that reflective teaching indeed is a good practice of enhancing the professional competency of future educators. When teacher education programmes are designed deliberately with reflective structures built in, then it is more probable to continue to have competent graduates, adaptive and professionally responsible.

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