



# **REFLECTIVE PRACTICE IN ACTION: INSIGHTS FROM PRESERVICE TEACHERS IN WEST BENGAL**

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## **Abstract**

*The present investigation focuses on examining how preservice teachers in West Bengal engage in reflective practice. Reflective teaching practice is a process where teachers revisit and rethink their teaching practice to evaluate the effectiveness of their teaching in the class. Reflective teaching practice is beneficial for preservice teachers as it enhances teachers' professional development as well as the quality of the teaching-learning process. A total of 107 preservice teachers from various B.Ed. institutions were selected as research participants via a simple random sampling. A standardised and validated tool was employed for data collection. This is a quantitative descriptive survey study. Preservice teachers predominantly selected 'Always' in most reflective practice scenarios. Nevertheless, variability was observed in their responses to specific practices, such as designing activities to assess learning levels, involving students in classroom decisions, and requesting peer evaluations of their teaching. The findings from the independent samples t-test revealed that all four null hypotheses were accepted. No statistically significant differences ( $\alpha \leq 0.05$ ) were found between the mean scores based on gender, locality, stream of study, or type of institution.*

**Keywords:** Reflective practice, preservice teachers, teacher development, learner-centered classroom, West Bengal.

## **INTRODUCTION**

Preservice teachers use a variety of methodological tools to develop their teaching potential, one of which is reflective practice. Reflective teaching practice is widely accepted and regarded as a vital component of teacher development programs. Weshah (2007) mentioned reflective practice as a factor of quality teaching. Beyond aiding teachers in developing their teaching methods, reflective practice also plays a significant role in improving student learning outcomes (Auliya et al., 2020). Although it was previously thought that only experienced teachers could be reflective, researchers now acknowledge that preservice and new teachers can also achieve professional development through reflective practice (Alsuhaibani, 2019). Rooted in constructivism, reflective practice is one of the most effective mechanisms for professional development (Tlali, 2018). Reflecting on their teaching practice is beneficial for preservice teachers, helping them to develop their teaching skills and to more easily manage the difficulties they may encounter at the beginning of their teaching careers (Ong et al., 2020). The practical experience gained through reflective practices supports teachers' professional development and encourages them to strive for better teaching performance (El-Sayed et al., 2021). Past studies have shown that reflective practice among pre-service teachers helps improve their professional development and teaching qualities (Gheith, & Aljaberi, 2018; Tlali, 2018; Kılıç, 2022).

The integration of reflective teaching practices is considered indispensable to the teacher training process in India and has been given special emphasis in various educational policy guidelines (NCF-2005, NCFTE-2009). NCFTE-2009 mentioned "professional opportunities need to include reflection on their own experiences and assumptions as part of the course and classroom enquiry; critical observation and reflective analysis of the practice of teaching". The National Professional Standards for Teachers-2023 (NPST), as a part of NEP 2020, emphasize teachers' reflective practice. It provides a guideline for reflective practice. The present study focuses on the reflective practice among Indian preservice teachers, particularly in West Bengal, exploring how they engage in and implement various reflective teaching activities.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **Reflective Practice in Teaching**

The history of reflection is long, and we find it in Plato's classic philosophical ideas (Kamali & Javahery, 2024). We consider John Dewey to be the pioneer of reflection in modern education and pedagogy, as we find mention of it in his various writings (Asmare et al., 2024). In the words of John Dewey, the reflection is “an active, persistent, and careful consideration of any belief or supposed form of knowledge in the light of the grounds that support it and the conclusion to which it tends” (Dewey, 1933). Building on his work, Donald Schön (1983) significantly expanded, supported, and advanced the use of reflective practice in the field of education. Since then, many other educators and researchers have actively encouraged and promoted the concept of reflection.

The rapidly changing nature of education has brought significant attention to reflective teaching, highlighting its growing importance in enabling teachers to effectively respond to new challenges and modify their teaching strategies (Asmare et al., 2024). Mondal and Chattopadhyay (2024) defined as “the term reflective teaching refers to a process, where teachers revisit, and rethink their teaching practice in order to evaluate the effectiveness of their teaching in the class.” Slade et al. (2019) mentioned that teachers’ reflective practice is essential for the development of a student-friendly, positive classroom environment. Reflective practice can improve teachers’ teaching quality. Reflective practice is an integral part of education today, especially as it plays a significant role in enhancing teachers’ professional development (Bray & Fotheringham, 2022; Weisi & Salari, 2024). Teachers engage in reflective practice in a variety of ways. Farrell (2019) mentioned six important tools of reflective practice for teachers to enhance their professional development: “dialogue, writing, classroom observations, action research, narratives, and team-teaching”.

### **Reflective Practice and Preservice Teacher Development**

Erdemir & Yeşilçınar (2021) carried out a study during preservice teachers’ microteaching process to find the usefulness of three significant tools of reflective practice: “teacher feedback, peer feedback and self-reflection”. The researchers found that teacher feedback and self-reflection as helpful, but peer feedback was criticized. Cadiz (2021) conducted a descriptive-correlational study among pre-service teachers to investigate the relationship between their reflective practice and belief about practicum. The research findings showed a significant relationship between them. Azizah et al. (2018) conducted a qualitative study among Indonesian EFL preservice teachers. From the research, they concluded that EFL teachers should engage more in the reflective practice, using specific tools, as it will help them improve their professional development. A study on the reflective teaching practice of EFL pre-service teachers in Saudi Arabia was conducted by Alsuhaibani (2019). The research findings showed that pre-service teachers consider reflective practice to be an important method for their professional development, but they do not engage in reflective practice in the same way. Güngö (2016) found from his study that video-based microteaching presentations enhance reflective practice among Turkish preservice teachers. In addition, reflective diary and constructive, detailed feedback are also helpful for pre-service teachers’ reflective practice. Asregid et al. (2023) executed a study to explore the impact of feedback by teacher education on reflective practice during microteaching. The researchers found three types of feedback: feed-up, feedback, and feed-forward. The finding showed a clear gap in the feedback mechanism. Scoupe et al. (2024) explored reflective practice among Belgian preservice teachers using portfolios. This study aimed to explore the potential of portfolios, as a reflective method, to foster reflective thinking and employability skills in pre-service Physical Education teachers. They found that portfolios enhanced employability skills, lifelong education, social skills, and self-efficacy. Aksu et al. (2023) carried out research to explore the self-reflection of preservice teachers during microteaching about their strengths and weaknesses. The findings showed that Pre-service teachers self-assessed in three categories: planning, process, and assessment skills. They expressed weaknesses in planning (like time management and activity suitability) more than strengths (good plan structure). Conversely, they highlighted strengths in the lesson process (especially management) despite needing better speaking skills. The assessment received the least feedback.

Analyzing the above review of related literature, we find that there has been little research on reflective practice among Indian pre-service teachers. The researchers found a clear gap in the above literature review and completed their research on that topic.

### **RESEARCH OBJECTIVES AND HYPOTHESES**

The prime objectives of the present research study are to investigate the reflective teaching practices among preservice teachers of West Bengal and to determine if differences exist in these practices based on their gender, locality, stream of study, and types of institutions.

The study addresses the following four null hypotheses:

- H<sub>01</sub>: Reflective practices among preservice teachers do not differ significantly based on their gender.
- H<sub>02</sub>: Reflective practices among preservice teachers do not differ significantly based on their locality.
- H<sub>03</sub>: Reflective practices among preservice teachers do not differ significantly based on their stream of study.
- H<sub>04</sub>: Reflective practices among preservice teachers do not differ significantly based on their institutional types.



## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

### Research Design

The researchers followed a purely quantitative research design for this study. A descriptive survey research method was used to investigate the reflective practice among preservice teachers. Koul (2022) defined it as “survey studies are conducted to collect detailed descriptions of existing phenomena with the intent of employing data to justify current conditions and practices...”. He also mentioned that depending on the nature of the data, the descriptive study can be quantitative or qualitative.

### Participants

A total of 107 preservice teachers were included in this research study from various B.Ed. institutions in West Bengal. Simple random sampling was used as the sampling method to select research participants. All research participants included in this study have completed their teaching internship programs. Therefore, all participants have practical experience of teaching in the classroom. We divided gender into male and female categories, locality into rural and urban categories, stream of study into arts and science categories and institutions into self-finance and government categories. We included govt. aided institutions into govt. category. Table 1 provides a thorough description of the research participants' characteristics.

**Table 1: Participant demographics**

Particulars		Frequency	Percentage (%) (Approx.)
<b>Gender</b>	Male	44	41
	Female	63	59
<b>Locality</b>	Rural	82	77
	Urban	25	23
<b>Study Stream</b>	Arts	65	61
	Science	42	39
<b>Institutions Types</b>	Self-finance	17	16
	Govt.	90	84

### Data Collection Instruments

For the purpose of data collection, the researchers used a standard research instrument developed and validated by Tok & Dolapçioğlu (2013). The research instrument was a five-point Likert-type questionnaire. A total of 28 items were presented in the instrument. To establish the construct validity of the measurement tool, factor analysis was selected as a suitable statistical method. The calculated Cronbach's alpha for the research instrument was 0.91, indicating good reliability.

### Data Collection Procedure

The researchers used both Google Forms and printed copies of the questionnaire to collect the data from the preservice teachers. The researchers used printed copies to collect data from their institution, but used Google Forms to collect data from the participants of outside institutions. The survey Google Forms was distributed through the personal WhatsApp number of the participants. Although some research participants did not complete the questionnaire. 72.9% of responses were collected through Google Forms, and the other 27.1% were collected through offline printed questionnaires.

### Data Analysis

Researchers analyzed the data using methods appropriate for each hypothesis and presented the findings across several tables. Both descriptive and inferential statistics were performed to analyse the data. To measure statistically significant differences among different demographic variables, a t-test was used. The entire data analysis process was completed by computer software (Jamovi, version 2.6).

### Results

This section presents the results of research on reflective practice among pre-service teachers. Findings of descriptive as well as inferential statistics are discussed here.

#### Descriptive analysis

The original scale contained seven dimensions of reflective practice. Here, we discuss the findings of descriptive statistics based on the dimensions.

Dimension 1: Creating learner-centered instructional environments

**Table 2: Mean, S.D., and percentage distributions of learner-centered environments.22**

Items	A (%)	O (%)	S (%)	R (%)	N (%)	Mean	S.D.	Estimate
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"I arrange the teaching-learning process based on the skills and personal needs of students."	61.6	21.5	9.4	7.5	0	4.37	0.937	High
"I provide various activities (tests, homework, meeting with student, meeting with family, etc.) to determine students' learning levels"	32.7	31.7	29.9	4.7	1	3.91	0.947	Moderate
"I evaluate the results of these activities"	45.8	24.3	27.1	2.8	0	4.13	0.912	High
"I give feedback about students' level of learning."	50.4	32.8	10.2	5.6	1	4.26	0.925	High
"I praise students who defend their views freely."	61.6	18.7	14.9	2	2.8	4.35	0.991	High
"I conduct lessons by relating the topics to students' own lives."	56.1	18.7	18.7	4.7	1.8	4.22	1.03	High

A= 'always', O= 'often', S= 'sometimes', R= 'rarely', N= 'never'

#### Analysis:

From Table 2, it can be observed that preservice teachers chose "always" as their response regarding almost every question regarding a learner-centered classroom environment. Most of the participants (61.6% & 21.5%) engaged in arranging instructional processes based on students' needs. The research participants selected always (32.7%), often (31.7%) and sometimes (29.9%) regarding the various activities to identify students' levels of learning. Most of the participants chose "always" regarding evaluation of activities (45.8%), feedback (50.4%), praise for defending students' views (61.6%) and lesson conduct relating to students' lives (56.1%). Preservice teachers generally showed a high level of engagement with the arrangement of teaching based on students' needs (M= 4.37), evaluation of activities (M= 4.13), giving feedback (M= 4.26), praise for defending students' views (M= 4.35) and conduct lesson relating to students' lives (M= 4.22). In the context of providing various activities to identify students' levels of learning, there was a moderate level of agreement (M=3.91).

Dimension 2: Creating a reflective class climate

**Table 3: Mean, S.D., and percentage distributions of reflective class climate**

Items	A (%)	O (%)	S (%)	R (%)	N (%)	Mean	S.D.	Estimate
"I create a classroom environment where students can express themselves freely."	58	14.2	22.3	3.7	1.8	4.22	1.04	High
"I elicit students' views about the problems that emerge during class."	28	32.7	31.8	4.7	2.8	3.79	1.0	Moderate
"I include students in in-class decision making."	35.5	29	31.8	3.7	0	3.96	0.91	Moderate
"I facilitate students to share their feelings with me such as interests, fears, anxieties, worries and enthusiasm related to the topic with me."	53.2	23.3	15	7.5	1	4.21	1.02	High

A= 'always', O= 'often', S= 'sometimes', R= 'rarely', N= 'never'

#### Analysis:

Table 3 presents preservice teachers' activities regarding the creation of a reflective class climate. A strong majority (58%) of participants 'always' create a free environment of self-expression. The responses regarding the elicitation of students' perspectives on classroom problems and students' participation in decision-making are more spread out. A significant percentage of participants chose 'often' (29%) and 'sometimes' (31.8%) regarding students' inclusion in decision-making. Most of the participants ('always' 53.2% & 'often' 23.3%) allowed their students to express and share their feelings. We found mixed responses regarding the preservice teachers' creation of a reflective class climate. Moderate engagement was found regarding the elicitation of students' perspectives on classroom problems (M=3.73) and students' participation in decision-making (M=3.96).

Dimension 3: Valuing criticism

**Table 4: Mean, S.D., and percentage distributions of valuing criticism**

Items	A (%)	O (%)	S (%)	R (%)	N (%)	Mean	S.D.	Estimate
"I enable my students to communicate their evaluation of my instructional processes and teaching attitudes in oral or written form."	31.7	34.6	26.1	6.6	1	3.90	0.96	Moderate
"I change my instructional processes and attitudes based on my students' evaluation."	49.5	26.1	21.5	1.9	1	4.21	0.91	High

"I ask my colleagues to evaluate my instructional processes and teaching attitudes."	30	28	28	12.1	1.9	3.72	1.08	Moderate
"I consider my colleagues' criticism regarding my instructional processes and teaching attitudes."	32.7	24.3	26.2	8.4	8.4	3.64	1.25	Moderate

A= 'always', O= 'often', S= 'sometimes', R= 'rarely', N= 'never'

#### Analysis:

From Table 4, it can be observed that preservice teachers' responses regarding accepting criticism were scattered. The plurality of participants (34.6%) selected 'often' as their response regarding allowing students to communicate about the assessment of their instructions. Nearly half of the participants (49.5%) 'always' changed their teaching practices based on learners' opinions. The responses regarding colleagues' involvement in assessing instructions and criticism in instruction were varied among 'always,' 'often,' and 'sometimes.' Preservice teachers' responses regarding valuing criticism were mostly moderate. The only high engagement was 'changing the instructional process based on students' perspective' (M=4.21).

Dimension 4: Self-evaluation

**Table 5: Mean, S.D., and percentage distributions of self-evaluation**

Items	A (%)	O (%)	S (%)	R (%)	N (%)	Mean	S.D.	Estimate
"I think over and over when deciding on teaching-learning objectives, topics, methods and techniques, evaluation and assessment."	43.9	28	19.6	7.5	1	4.07	1.01	High
"I evaluate my strong and weak points in teaching."	53.3	28	11.2	5.6	1.9	4.25	0.99	High
"I ask myself the question 'do the practices that I conduct benefit my students/yield results in students' learning?'"	45.8	22.4	23.4	8.4	0	4.06	1.02	High
"I constantly review/question my teaching practices."	53.2	23.4	15.9	5.6	1.9	4.21	1.03	High

A= 'always', O= 'often', S= 'sometimes', R= 'rarely', N= 'never'

#### Analysis:

The responses of preservice teachers regarding the self-evaluation are presented in Table 5. 71.9% ('always' and 'often') of the participants repeatedly thought about the objectives, methods, and assessment techniques regarding any lesson. The majority of participants (53.3%) selected 'always', while another 28% selected 'often', regarding their self-evaluation of teaching practices. Nearly half of the participants (45.8%) were concerned about the outcome of reflective practice from students' learning perspectives. Most of the participants (53.2%) indicated that they 'always' review their teaching. The participants showed a high level of engagement regarding various dimensions of self-evaluation. Most highest response was regarding evaluation of strong and weak points of teaching (M=4.25).

Dimension 5: Making decisions about the future

**Table 6: Mean, S.D., and percentage distributions of future decisions**

Items	A (%)	O (%)	S (%)	R (%)	N (%)	Mean	S.D.	Estimate
"I ask myself what changes I can make when I am preparing this lesson in the future."	45.8	28	20.6	3.7	1.9	4.12	0.99	High
"I ask myself the question 'what are the possible effects of the changes I can make?'"	41.1	33.6	19.6	4.7	1	4.09	0.94	High
"I think about the alternative methods and viewpoints."	35.5	32.7	20.6	8.4	2.8	3.90	1.07	Moderate

A= 'always', O= 'often', S= 'sometimes', R= 'rarely', N= 'never'

#### Analysis:

Table 6 presents preservice teachers' responses to future decision-making as a part of reflective practice. Most of the participants (45.8%) selected 'always', while another 28% selected 'often' regarding the changes in future lesson preparation. Preservice teachers' responses regarding their thoughts on the effect of changes were quite



varied. 41.1% selected 'always', and 33.6% selected 'often'. 68.2% of respondents selected 'always' or 'often' regarding consideration of alternative viewpoints, but we found noticeably varied responses. We found mixed responses regarding the making of future decisions. A high level of responses was found regarding lesson plan decision (M=4.12) and thoughts regarding changes effect (M=4.09). A moderate response was seen regarding thoughts of alternative viewpoints (M=3.9).

Dimension 6: Problem-solving

**Table 7: Mean, S.D., and percentage distribution of problem-solving**

Items	A (%)	O (%)	S (%)	R (%)	N (%)	Mean	S.D.	Estimate
"I determine the problems that occur in the lesson (students not understanding the topic, failure to attract interest, communication, etc.)."	47.7	23.3	15.9	8.4	4.7	4.01	1.19	High
"I collect evidence that supports my decisions."	34.5	30.8	23.5	5.6	5.6	3.83	1.17	Moderate

A= 'always', O= 'often', S= 'sometimes', R= 'rarely', N= 'never'

#### Analysis:

Preservice teachers' responses to problem-solving as a part of reflective practice are presented in Table 7. Nearly half of the participants (47.7%) always identified the classroom challenges. However, the responses regarding evidence collection were more varied, with 34.5% selecting 'always', 30.8% 'often', and 23.5% 'sometimes'. High response was found regarding the problem determination during lessons (M=4.01), and moderate response was found regarding the collection of evidence to support decisions (M=3.83).

Dimension 7: Openness to professional development

**Table 8: Mean, S.D., and percentage distribution of professional development openness**

Items	A (%)	O (%)	S (%)	R (%)	N (%)	Mean	S.D.	Estimate
"I identify the areas where I need to develop."	50.5	25.2	16.8	6.5	1	4.18	0.99	High
"I follow professional publications and new developments."	35.5	26.2	21.5	12.1	4.7	3.76	1.2	Moderate
"I discuss what we do in class, why we do this practice, whether these practices are effective with my colleagues."	41.1	32.7	18.8	5.6	1.8	4.06	0.99	High
"I make use of professional publications and new developments."	31.8	28	25.3	11.2	3.7	3.73	1.14	Moderate
"I keep a diary to follow my professional development and see my shortcomings."	35.5	19.6	21.5	10.4	13	3.54	1.4	Moderate

A= 'always', O= 'often', S= 'sometimes', R= 'rarely', N= 'never'

#### Analysis:

Table 8 presents responses about professional development openness. Preservice teachers' responses regarding professional development openness were more varied than other dimensions. Most of the participants (75.5%) selected always or often regarding the identification of development areas. Regarding the following professional publications, 16.8% of participants selected 'rare or never'. 41.1% of respondents always discussed with their colleagues regarding the effectiveness of their teaching practices. Responses regarding the use of professional publications and keeping a diary were the most varied. We found that 10.4% of participants rarely keep a diary for identifying shortcomings, and another 13% of participants never keep one. Mixed responses were found regarding the dimension of openness to professional development. High responses were regarding the identification of needed development areas (M=4.18) and reflective discussion with colleagues (M=4.06). The least response was found regarding keeping a diary for identifying shortcomings (M=3.54).

#### Inferential analysis

**Table 9: t-test for comparing means of reflective practice**

Particular	N	Mean	S.D.	t-value	p-value	df	Decision
Male	44	110	17.3	1.59	0.114	105	H <sub>01</sub> is accepted.
Female	63	115	14.3				
Rural	82	112	16.3	-0.518	0.606	105	H <sub>02</sub> is accepted.
Urban	25	114	13.7				
Arts	65	113	17.7	-0.0747	0.941	105	H <sub>03</sub> is accepted.
Science	42	113	12.3				

Self-finance	17	115	14.7	-0.524	0.601	105	H <sub>04</sub> is accepted.
Govt.	90	112	15.9				

#### Analysis:

We present the independent samples t-test results in Table 9. It reveals that all four null hypotheses were accepted. No statistically significant differences ( $\alpha \leq 0.05$ ) were found between the means from the perspectives of gender, locality, stream of study, and types of institutions.

From the above table 9, we can find that female preservice teachers tend to have slightly higher mean values and less variability than male preservice teachers, suggesting more consistency in practicing reflective practice. Urban participants scored slightly higher averages and were more consistent than rural participants. Both arts and science preservice teachers had similar mean scores, but science teachers were found to be more consistent in practicing reflective teaching practice. Preservice teachers from self-financed B.Ed. colleges scored slightly better than the government B.Ed. colleges, indicating more engagement in reflective practice and slightly more consistency.

## DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The main goal of this study was to find out how much preservice teachers actually engage in reflective practice. The mean scores of the participants indicate a moderate level of engagement in reflective practice. Although we found that female participants scored higher than male participants, the difference in their mean scores was not statistically significant. Similarly, the urban students slightly higher than urban students, the difference in their mean scores was not statistically significant. We did not find any mean difference between the mean scores of arts and science stream students, but science students are more consistent in reflective practice. Preservice teachers from self-financed institutes were slightly more engaged in reflective practice than government institute participants.

Participants demonstrated the highest level of engagement in the 'Creating learner-centered instructional environments' dimension, as evidenced by their frequent selection of 'always' in their responses. Participants show the most variation in their responses in the professional openness dimension. There were numerous negative responses concerning the practice of following and using professional publications, as well as maintaining a reflective diary for self-evaluation.

Preservice teachers should engage in a broader range of reflective practices, which will be beneficial for their in-service professional development. Although it is a small-scale survey study, it has some limitations, like the limited 107 participants included in this study, and only quantitative responses were collected and analysed. The use of qualitative data could provide deeper insights into various aspects of preservice teachers' reflective practices.

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