

Teacher as a Reflective Practitioner: An Insight into NCF-2005, NCFTE-2009 and NEP-2020

Nilay Mondal¹ & K. N. Chattopadhyay²

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Abstract

This article analyses the inclusion of reflective teaching practice in the national education policy and curriculum framework and puts major emphasis on the significance and different ways and activities of reflective teaching practice. Reflective teaching practice is a process by which instructors evaluate their instruction in the classroom by revisiting and reassessing their own teaching practices to make better their instructional practices and enhance students' learning. This is a conceptual research work based on document analysis. The researcher includes three important documents on teacher education, i.e., NCF-2005, NCFTE-2005, and NPST for NEP-2020. The analysis summarises that NCF-2005 emphasizes daily, weekly, and monthly reflection for teachers, emphasizing self-reflection during in-service. NCFTE-2009 promotes reflective practices, recommending process-based curriculum, meaningful school internships, and reflective journal writing. The latest Indian framework, NPST, includes four stages of professional development with specific criteria for reflection, promoting reflective practice among teachers.

Keywords: *Reflective practice, NCF-2005, NCFTE-2009, National Professional Standard for Teachers (NPST), NEP-2020*

Introduction

In each teacher education programme, reflective practice is an extremely important component. Engaging in reflective practice is crucial in strengthening the overall competence of teachers (Suphasri & Chinokul, 2021). Reflective practice enhances the professional development of teachers (Mathew *et al.*, 2017). A high-quality education is dependent on the quality of the teaching staff. Therefore, teachers' reflective teaching practice is very essential for quality teacher education programmes as well as quality education.

Currently, the practice of reflective teaching is widely encouraged. As our education system is dynamic, the teacher needs to be ready to adapt to these changing environments and in this respect reflective practice can play a significant role in tackling these changing and challenging situations

(Machost & Stains, 2023). There are some practical strategies for reflective practices for teachers like writing reflective journals, lesson recording, feedback from teacher educators, peers and students, action research, and collaborative learning (Mathew *et al.*, 2017). Impedovo and Malik (2016) conducted a study on the practical application of reflection in the classroom and they found colleagues' feedback was an important strategy of reflection. Saif and Safder (2023) conducted a qualitative case study of teacher educators. They found that participants were widely engaged with different strategies of reflective practice to improve classrooms. The participants mostly used students' feedback, colleagues' support, and self-assessment as strategies of reflection. Another study was conducted by Harford and MacRuairc (2008) on reflective practice among student-teachers. The findings revealed that the student-teachers recognized peer-videoing as a powerful instrument for reflection. Faghihi and Sarab (2016) conducted a mixed-method study on Iranian English teachers and they found teachers' scores on the reflective practice scale were low. The qualitative result also showed that institutional arrangement was the main concern for reflection.

In India too, the implications of reflective practice have been given special importance in teacher education programmes as well as policies. Reflection or reflective practice is mentioned in almost every framework or document related to teacher education programmes as an important criterion or indicator of quality teaching. The researchers analyze the inclusion of reflective practice in the national framework of teacher education. In this article, the researcher includes three important documents: the "*National Curricular Framework-2005*" (NCF-2005), "*National Curricular Framework for Teacher Education-2009*" (NCFTE-2009) and "*National Education Policy-2020*" (NEP-2020). As NEP -2020 specially mentioned "*National Professional Standard for Teachers*" (NPST) as a draft for teacher education, the researchers considered this for the present analysis (NEP-2020, para 5.20). The objectives of this article are to analyze how much importance is given to reflection on these frameworks and what the different ways of reflection for teachers are mentioned there.

Concept of Reflective Teaching Practice

The discipline of reflective practice has garnered significant attention in professional and scholarly circles for several decades. With the push for more professionalization in teaching and teacher education in the 1980s, the idea of reflection and reflective teaching became more common (Farrell, 1999). The beginnings of this can be attributed to the pioneering contributions of Dewey, who explored the intricate processes of thinking and reflection within the context of teaching (Dewey, 1910; 1916). Subsequently, Donald Schön (1983; 1987) furthered the investigation of reflective practice and developed models that strengthened the theoretical basis (Nadhreen, 2020). Throughout the subsequent years, numerous scholars investigated, expanded, and questioned the concept of reflective practice (Glasswell & Ryan, 2017, p. 4).

It's more likely to make things more confusing than clear to try to find a single meaning for

reflective teaching practice. John Dewey (1933, p. 9) defined reflection as “active, persistent and careful consideration of any belief or supposed form of knowledge in the light of the grounds that support it and the further conclusions to which it tends.” According to Dahal (2013), “reflection is a way of observing evaluating and reflecting on one’s own actions in order to bring about change in practice. It involves thinking about and critically analyzing one’s actions with the goal of improving professional practice.” Zeichner and Liston (1996) mentioned that “a teacher cannot be said to be practicing reflective teaching activities if they do not question the values and philosophy that guide their work as well as the presumptions they have about teaching and learning.”

Reflective teaching generally refers to a procedure by which instructors evaluate the efficacy of their instruction in the classroom by revisiting and reassessing their own teaching practices.

Benefits of Reflective Teaching

Reflective practice serves as a mechanism through which educators can enhance their professional performance in order to address the educational requirements of their students adequately. According to Brookfield (2017), reflective practice offers several benefits to educators. These are explained below:

- Reflective practice helps teachers to take informed actions. “By informed actions I mean those that are based on assumptions that have been carefully and critically investigated. Informed actions can be explained and justified to interested colleagues and students and their rationale can be clearly communicated.” (Brookfield, 2017).
- It provides a rationale to teachers for teaching practice. A pedagogical gyroscope acts in a manner very similar to having a rationale that is composed of your fundamental ideas and working assumptions. It assists you in making judgments in challenging circumstances and stabilizes you in times when you feel as though you are being swept away by forces over which you have no control.
- Teaching in the twenty-first century is like riding a roller coaster. Teachers faced various difficulties in teaching larger classes, managing a diverse group of students and controlling the multicultural and multiracial communities. Reflective teaching helps teachers to handle the emotional roller coaster.
- Self-laceration is common among teachers who strive for excellence. If pupils appear to be struggling, they may quickly blame themselves. Brookfield mentioned that reflective teaching practice helps to avoid self-laceration.
- Another important benefit of reflective practices is they enliven the teaching-learning process. Here, teachers give more opportunities for engagement to the students in the classrooms. So, students also think critically.

- Teachers' reflective practices promote democratic impulse in the classroom. "when you show students how you're constantly checking out your own assumptions and looking at your practice through the four lenses you have available, you're modeling a commitment to democracy for them." (Brookfield, 2017, p. 93).
- Smith, G. (2023) mentioned five benefits of reflective teaching practices. These are as follows:
- Reflective practice makes your lesson plans better.
- Reflective practice can help teachers break out of a teaching rut.
- It motivates a teacher to do something new in their teaching practices.
- Reflective teaching practices are a significant component of continuous professional development.
- Teachers get opportunities to share their experiences.

Methodology

Document Analysis:

Document analysis is one of the essential qualitative research methods. According to G. A. Bowen (2009), "Document analysis is a systematic procedure for reviewing or evaluating documents—both printed and electronic (computer-based and Internet-transmitted) material." "Document analysis is a method of systematic examination of communication or of current records or documents." (Singh, A. K., 2021, p. 280).

This strategy places primary emphasis on the contents of documents that have been prepared for the aim of analytic inter-textual analysis. The document analysis process frequently includes both content analysis and thematic analysis as practical components. (Higgins & Goodall, 2021, p. 3-4).

Selection of Documents

The documents that we looked at for this analysis were as follows: "*National Curriculum Framework-2005*" (NCF-2005), "*National Curriculum Framework for Teacher Education*" (NCFTE-2009), and "*National Professional Standards for Teachers (NPST)*" draft for NEP-2020 as it mentioned (NEP-2020, para. 5.20). These draft or frameworks were included because teachers' professional standards and the teacher development programme of 21st-century India were mentioned.

Analysis

NCF-2005 and Reflective Practice

The National Curriculum Framework- 2005 (NCERT) was a significant milestone for the Indian education system. This framework has made a substantial impact on various aspects of the education system, including the teacher education programmes. Reflective teaching practice is one of the crucial

areas of teacher education programmes. Undoubtedly, this curriculum framework has also given some light on the context of reflective practice as it is now a vital element of any teacher development programme.

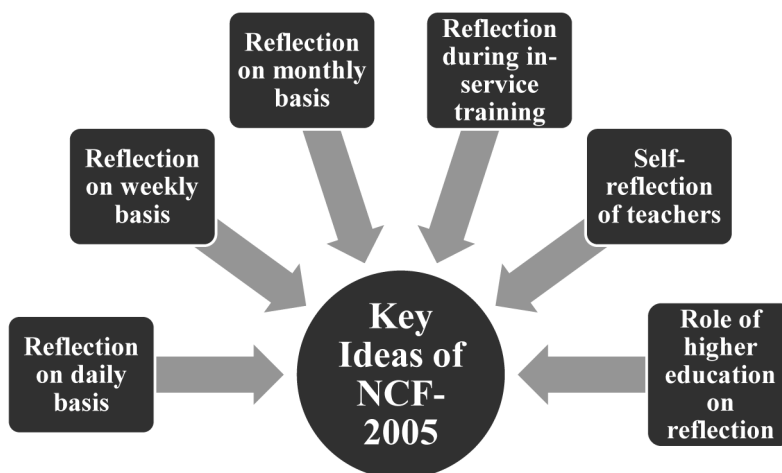


Fig. 1: Key Ideas of NCF-2005 on Reflection

□ Reflection on a Daily, Weekly and Monthly basis:

This framework mentioned specific periods for teachers' reflection over different occasions. *On a daily basis (at least 45 minutes) to review the day, make notes on children to follow up the next day, and organize materials for the next day's lessons (this is in addition to the time that they may need to correct homework)."*(NCF-2005, p. 98-99). So, all teachers are directed to reflect on the daily class activities for at least 45 minutes. NCF-2005 advocated time of reflection on a weekly and monthly basis also. *"On a weekly basis (at least two/three hours) to take stock of learning, to work out details of activities and projects proposed, and to plan a group of lessons (unit) for the coming week."* (NCF-2005, p. 99). Every week, teachers should reflect on their lesson activities for two or three hours and make a plan for next week. *"On a monthly/term basis (minimum of one day) to review their own work, children's learning, and map the contours of the learning activities planned for the groups they teach."* (NCF-2005, p. 99). So, a minimum of one day is necessary for teachers to reflect on their teaching to enhance student's learning. NCF-2005 clearly indicated that teachers need to follow reflective teaching practices, and it provided a precise time framework for teachers. During monthly meetings, teachers of similar subjects and classes from cluster levels share their ideas about the teaching process, and based on that, they can plan for upcoming classes. Teachers can follow the reflection during the monthly meetings.

❑ **Reflection during in-service training:**

“Current in-service training-related time allocation (compulsory 20 days per year) could be partly diverted towards making time available for such reviewing, reflecting and planning.” (NCF-2005, p. 99). So, NCF-2005 focused on reflection during in-service teacher training also. During those compulsory 20 days, the teachers should concentrate on reviewing and reflecting on their current teaching practices and planning for future instructional processes. Reflective practice is the major component of in-service teacher training.

❑ **Self-reflection:**

“Self-reflection needs to be acknowledged as a vital component of such programmes.” (NCF-2005, p. 112). This framework also mentioned self-reflection as an important component of in-service education or training programmes.

❑ **Role of higher education on reflection:**

NCF-2005 mentioned that higher education institutions also have a significant role in the teacher education programme to promote the professional status of both secondary and elementary school teachers. Also, this framework emphasizes on review and restructuring the teacher education programme. *“For the, 'reflective teacher' who possesses the professional competence and orientation that the curriculum framework rests on, it will be necessary to review and restructure teacher education programmes” (NCF-2005, p. 122).* *“Higher education can also provide space for reflection, discussion and debate on educational ideas and practices as well as facilitate the interface between schools and policy makers.” (NCF-2005, p. 122).*

NCFTE-2009 And Reflective Practice

The National Curriculum Framework for Teacher Education 2009 is a document formulated by the government of India with the aim of suggesting necessary modifications and advancements for the National Council for Teacher Education. This council is an entity established by the Indian government pursuant to the National Council for Teacher Education Act 1993 and was inaugurated in 1995.

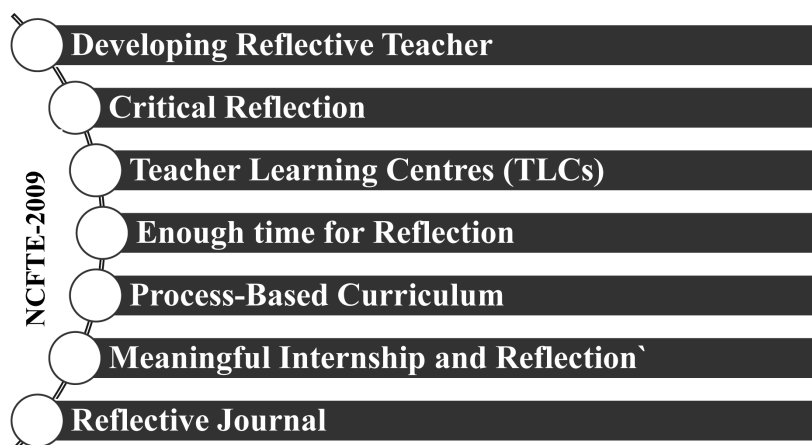


Fig. 2: Key Ideas of NCFTE-2009 on Reflection

❑ Developing Reflective Teachers:

NCFTE 2009 emphasized developing reflective teachers. A reflective teacher evaluates his or her teaching practices to improve the pedagogical practices and enhance the learning process of students. The reflective teacher poses not only cognitive or informational dimensions but also positive attitudes, values and perspectives, along with practical teaching skills. *“The implication of this is to give due emphasis to developing reflective teachers with positive attitudes, values and perspective, along with skills for the craft of teaching.” (NCFTE-2009, p. 15).*

❑ Teacher education as a reflective undertaking:

NCFTE-2009 mentioned the teacher education programme as a reflective undertaking. So, we can understand the significance of reflective teaching practice in teacher education. Moreover, in the context of a pedagogical perspective, reflective practice is one of the prime elements. Another point is that reflective practice is crucial for ground-level teaching. *“Teacher education, it may be seen, is a reflective undertaking that also issues forth in pedagogical prescriptions for carrying out teaching at the ground level.” (NCFTE-2009, p. 15).*

❑ Critical Reflection:

The NCFTE-2009 emphasized critical reflection of teaching practices. Critical reflection involves identifying, questioning, and assessing our assumptions about knowledge, beliefs, feelings and actions (University of Waterloo, n.d.). Teachers should constantly follow the process of reflection to update their pedagogical knowledge to meet the various needs of their learners. *“Pedagogical knowledge has to constantly undergo adaptation to meet the needs of diverse contexts through critical reflection by the teacher on his/her practices.” (NCFTE-2009, p. 19-20).*

❑ **Opportunity to student-teachers for reflection:**

A pre-service teacher education programme is very important for developing good quality teachers. During this period, opportunities for reflection should be given to the pre-service teachers. The teacher educator should create the scope of reflective activities. *“Teacher education should provide opportunity to student-teachers for reflection and independent study without packing the training schedule with teacher-directed activities alone.” (NCFTE-2009, p. 20).* NCFTE-2009 also mentioned that the curriculum should be designed carefully to foster opportunities for reflection for the student-teachers. *“Develop professional skills in pedagogy, observation, documentation, analysis and interpretation, drama, craft, story-telling and reflective inquiry.” (NCFTE-2009, p. 24)*

❑ **Provide enough time for reflection:**

NCFTE-2009 expressed time as a critical factor in the initial teacher training programme. It mentioned that there should be a reasonable duration of time that provides enough opportunities for reflection. *“Any form of initial teacher preparation needs to be of reasonable duration that provides enough time and opportunity for self-study, reflection and involved engagement with learners” (NCFTE-2009, p. 45).* The duration of the pre-service teacher training programme after a bachelor's degree would be two years, and that provides an adequate opportunity for reflection.

❑ **Process-based curriculum to develop reflective teachers:**

To prepare a reflective teacher, NCFTE-2009 proposed a process-based curriculum. It was different from the dominant practice of teacher education. Teacher educators always engage student-teachers with more profound reflection. Student-teachers always maintain reflective journals. *“Teacher educators evoke responses from students to engage them with deeper discussions and reflection. Students maintain reflective journals on their observations, reflections, including conflicts” (NCFTE-2009, p. 52).* A reflective journal is one of the crucial instruments of reflective practice. It is a personal record of teachers' teaching experience. From a reflective journal, one can identify important events in the classroom and improve them. NCFTE-2009 gave special importance to reflective journals during the internship programme. *“School Internship – students teach within flexible formats, larger frames of units of study, concept web-charts and maintain a reflective journal” (NCFTE-2009, p. 52).*

❑ **Training to be Reflective Practitioners:**

The NCFTE-2009 recommended that student-teachers would be reflective practitioners. Moreover, in this regard, all possible training should be provided to them. There should be adequate curricular space and opportunities to observe and engage with students. It also focuses on the development of professional capacities. *“There needs to be adequate curricular space for critical content engagement and the development of professional capacities in pedagogy, ... and reflective enquiry.” (NCFTE-2009, p. 54).* *“Professional opportunities need to include reflection on their own experiences*

.....and reflective analysis of the practice of teaching.” (NCFTE-2009, p. 54). Feedback is another crucial element during the training programme. “Availability, quality, appropriateness and sufficiency of feedback are necessary for learning to be reflective practitioners.” (NCFTE-2009, p. 54).

❑ **Meaningful School Internship and Reflection:**

The school internship programme is a vital phase of the pre-service teacher development programme. During this phase, a student-teacher can experience the school environment and apply their teaching methods practically. A good internship can help to prepare a reflective teacher. “A sustained contact through internship would help teachers to choose, design, organize and conduct meaningful classroom activities, critically reflect upon their own practices through observations, record keeping and analysis and develop strategies for evaluating students’ learning” (NCFTE-2009, p. 54-55).

❑ **Teacher Learning Centres (TLCs):**

Another major recommendation of NCFTE-2009 was to establish Teacher-Learning Centres (TLCs). Its major functions are to provide a hands-on experience with learning materials and meeting with students. It gives opportunities for reflection. “A TLC would be a structural space located within a teacher education institution for providing student teachers with hands-on experience with learning materials, engagement with learners and opportunities for self-reflection.” (NCFTE-2009, p. 55-56). A TLC also focuses on tasks that directly help the teacher's personal and psychological development. “Some of the self-directed learning strategies would include finding answers to deep reflective questions; reflective reading; reflection on observations in the classroom followed by group discussion; identification of issues for further self-study; keeping reflective diaries/journals.” (NCFTE-2009, p. 58).

❑ **Evaluating the student-teachers and Reflection:**

Evaluation of the progress of the would-be teachers is very important for the success of the teacher education programme. NCFTE-2009 mentioned reflection as a crucial element of evaluation. From the perspective of the learner, student-teachers are able to do “reflection on issues regarding students’ learning, expressions, creativity, discipline, influence of varying contexts.” (NCFTE-2009, p. 60). Another aspect is mentioned from the perspective of post-contact discussion report writing: “Quality of discussions, insights, analysis, reflections.” (NCFTE-2009, p. 60). Students are also assessed based on their reflection during internship activities. “Observing and reflecting on classroom practices, ... records of planned units of study and regular daily diary/journal of reflections” (NCFTE-2009, p. 60).

❑ **Reflective Journal:**

Reflective journals are personal notes or records of teachers about what happened during the process of teaching in the classroom. In a reflective journal, a practitioner puts his or her ideas, thoughts,

feelings, and reflections about his or her teaching (Göker, S., 2016). With the help of a reflective journal, we can evaluate the progress of student-teachers. NCFTE-2009 gave special emphasis on reflective journals. *"Each intern would be expected to keep a reflective journal that would help him/her revisit his/her experiences in the classroom over the period of internship."* (NCFTE-2009, p. 61). The content of a reflective journal is also discussed here. *"Evaluation of the journal would mean looking at how the intern has been able to gradually move towards writing reflections rather than merely describing classroom events and processes."* (NCFTE-2009, p. 61).

NEP 2020 and Reflective Practice

The National Education Policy 2020 (NEP-2020) is the latest education policy and the first policy of 21st-century India. It is a comprehensive policy that covers all aspects of education. Reflective teaching practices are related to teacher education programmes. NEP 2020 mentioned that the NCTE will form the *"National Professional Standard for Teachers"*.

The NCTE produced the draft "National Professional Standard for Teachers" to guarantee the excellence of teacher education in the Indian Education System. This draft has established various requirements that align with the fundamental concepts outlined in the NEP 2020. These professional characteristics are essential for an efficient teaching-learning system. The professional standards aim to ensure that teachers at all levels of education possess a high level of competence, have received professional training, and are deeply passionate about their work.

This draft has identified four categories of teachers based on their performance criteria: Beginner teacher, Proficient teacher, Expert teacher, and Lead teacher. In this context, reflection is recognized as a sub-domain of professional development, where various performance criteria are delineated based on the specific types of teachers.

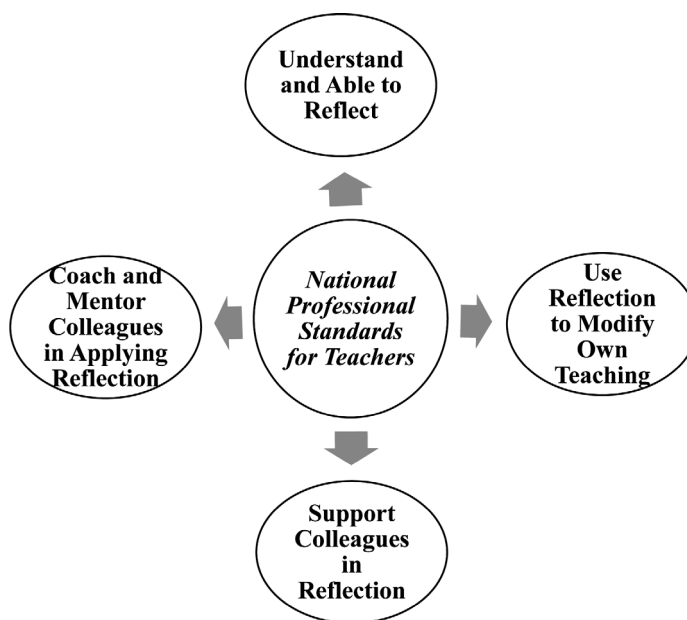


Fig.3: Key Ideas of NPST on Reflection

A beginner teacher has only begun to comprehend the idea and procedure of reflection, and gradually, he or she is able to reflect on his or her own work in actual scenarios. *“Demonstrate understanding of reflective practices and able to reflect on own work” (p.41)*

The next stage of the teaching career is becoming a proficient teacher. Here, the performance/ criteria of a proficient teacher not only reflect their teaching but also, they can able to modify their teaching practice according to learning needs or situations. *“Use reflective practices to modify own teaching practice” (p.41).*

The third stage of teachers’ professional development is Expert teacher. Here, the National Professional Standards for Teaching (NPST) has emphasized the ways in which instructors may support their colleagues in reflective practice. It is, therefore, necessary for him or her to assist his or her colleagues in the process of reflective practice because he or she is an expert educator. *“Support colleagues in reflecting on their teaching practice to improve teaching and learning” (p.41).*

The final stage of teachers’ professional development is Lead teacher. Lead teachers are the teachers with the highest level of expertise. They have already completed the previous three performances. Here, the professors assume the roles of coaches or mentors. They assist their coworkers in implementing reflective practice in actual or pragmatic scenarios. *“Coach and mentor colleagues in applying reflective practices.” (p.41).*

Discussion and Conclusion

This analysis of the position of reflective practice within the frameworks and documents pertaining to teacher education in India shows that, across all of these documents and frameworks, reflection is regarded as an essential component for enhancing the quality of instruction. Ideally, reflective teaching is a process by which instructors evaluate the efficacy of their instruction in the classroom by revisiting and reassessing their own teaching practices to improve their teaching and enhance students' learning. The implications of reflective practice in teacher education programs are very important and gradually we will find its more significance in the near future. Not only in the Indian educational policy framework, but the teachers' reflection is also a mandatory professional standard in many developed countries like the USA, Australia, Singapore, Scotland, England, and New Zealand. Different policy documents related to teacher education in these countries encourage teachers to practice reflective teaching in various ways (Glasswell & Ryan, 2017). Reflective practice improves the quality of both pre-service and in-service training programmes. Pre-service teachers can utilize reflective practice to improve their classroom activities, effective lesson planning and behavioural management, whereas professional development is one of the major areas for in-service teachers (Suphasri & Chinokul, 2021).

In our discussion, we found that NCF-2005 specifically mentioned the time duration for reflection on a daily, weekly and monthly basis. Special emphasis is given to the self-reflection of teachers during the in-service period. Moreover, it is a significant framework for reflective practice. The term reflection is widely mentioned in NCFTE-2009. It emphasized developing reflective teachers. NCFTE-2009 recommended various aspects that promote reflection among preservice as well as in-service teachers. Among them, process-based curriculum is one of the major areas. It also mentioned a meaningful school internship programme, which assists the student-teacher in reflection. Writing a reflective journal is another major activity that would develop a reflective mindset among teachers. NPST, prepared by NCTE, is the latest Indian framework of teacher education. It also emphasized the reflective practice of teachers. It includes four stages of teachers' professional development, and each stage has specific criteria for reflection. To sum up, it is found that reflective practice is essential for teacher education programmes and these curricular frameworks or drafts gave special emphasis on it.

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