A STUDY TO ASSESS THE EXISTING STATUS IN THE TEACHER EDUCATION COLLEGES REGARDING THE USE OF REFLECTIVE PRACTICES BY THE TEACHER EDUCATORS IN PUNE CITY FOR EXCELLENCE IN TEACHER EDUCATION.

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"The whole purpose of education is to turn mirrors into windows."

"Sydney J. Harris"

The current study set out to find the existing status of use of reflective practices by teacher educators in order to bring excellence in teacher education. With regard to the above mentioned aim, 33 teacher educators participated in the research. Further, in this study, the researchers made use of the following measuring instrument researchers made Self reflection questionnaire to know usage and awareness of reflective practices by teacher educators. Survey method was used and data was collected from 7 teacher education colleges in Pune City. Questionnaire included open and closed ended questions. Closed end questions were analyzed using percentage. Grounded theory was used for interpretation of responses for open end questions. Major findings of the study were that teacher educators always plan their lesson before teaching and mentioned use of reflective practices, but could not list the reflective strategies. However are willing to learn more about reflective practices. They were able to list their qualities as a teacher and did SWOT analysis, but of personal qualities then as a teacher. Theory obtained after performing grounded theory was: Teacher educators are unaware of the new approaches to reflective practices as they mentioned only traditional reflective practices. The teacher educators are aware of their qualities, strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats as a teacher, but lack knowledge of reflective strategies.

Keywords: *Excellence, Reflective Practices & Teacher Educators*

Introduction

"We do not learn from our experiences… we learn from reflecting on experiences"

- John Dewey

Reflective practice is more than a self-awareness process in which we pause and think back after something has happened. The moment we start reflecting upon a situation, we naturally begin to raise questions on 'how that happened?', 'Why it happened that way?', 'Could it be different?'

John Dewey (1993) recognized for the first time that an individual can reflect on things –particularly when there is a real problem or a sense of difficulty – by merely 'thinking' about them. Dewey suggested three steps of reflection: (1) problem definition, (2) analysis, and (3) generalization. He emphasized the distinction between taking action based on reflection, as opposed to impulsive thinking.

Reflective practice in teaching shifts from thinking about a sequence of chronological events to purposeful thinking in order to identify how to improve specific learning situations. It can enable teachers to think systematically about the learning experience of students whose lives they influence in

many visible and invisible ways. Teachers who engage in reflective practice can develop a deeper understanding of their teaching, assess their professional growth, develop informed decision-making skills, and become proactive and confident in their teaching. Professional development through reflective practice can be seen as an opportunity to enter a process of "mental growth stimulated from within" where teachers are supported in seeking their own growth. (Feiman-Namser & Floden, 1986, p. 523)

There are several purposes for reflection. Few of them include:

- ✓ Teacher's self-reflection as a tool for self-knowledge
- ✓ Reflection for professional development
- ✓ Reflection to aid research on teaching
- ✓ Reflection to enhance student learning experience
- ✓ Reflection as a teaching and assessment tool (e.g. reflective journal)

In learning environments and teaching contexts, teachers may encounter situations or episodes where they need to pause, think and make intelligent decisions. Stephen Brookfield (1999) introduces four lenses through which teachers can view these teaching and learning episodes and reflect on their implications. These lenses are: (1) autobiographies as teachers and learners, (2) students' eyes, (3) colleagues' experiences, and (4) the literature on teaching and learning.

There are several modes and frameworks for reflective practice used for the enhancement of students' learning experience and also professional development. David Kolb (1984) has described the 'experiential learning cycle' where he offers four phases of learning process. In the first phase, the learner has a specific experience of learning. In the second phase, the learner observes and reflects on the experience of learning and also responds to it. In the third phase, observations are related to other concepts in the learner's past experience and knowledge. In the fourth phase, the learner figures out the implications for action that can be tested in and applied to different situations. Figure 1 below shows Kolb's experiential learning cycle:
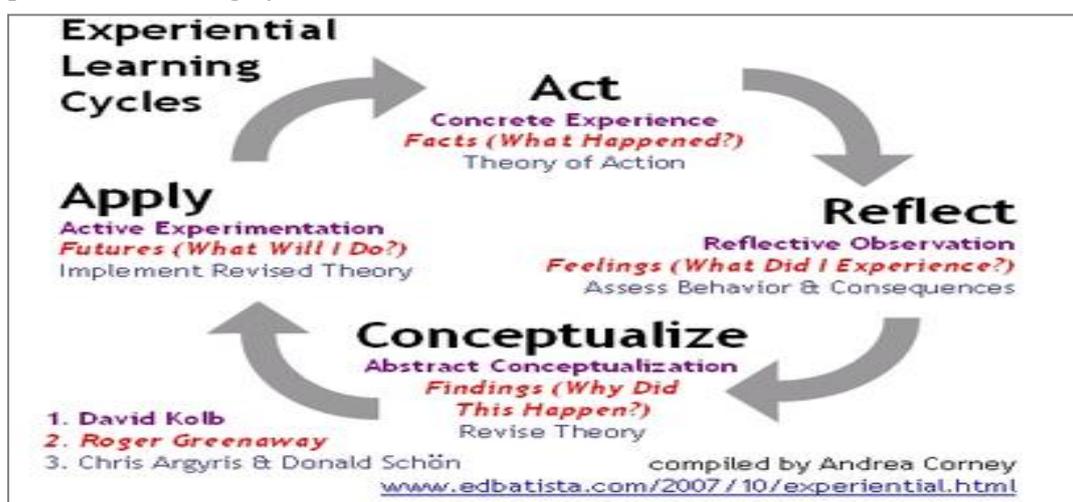

Figure 1: Kolb's Experiential Learning Cycle

Another reflection model offered by Driscoll (1994) has a simple 'what', 'so what' and 'now what' process, which enables us to look at the whole event.
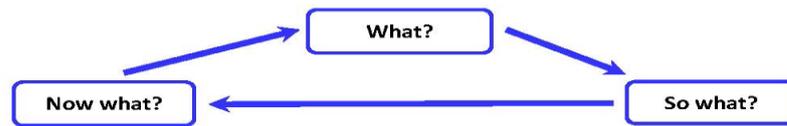
Figure 2: Driscoll Reflection Model

The reflection model developed by Gibbs (1988) can be useful to reflect on something unexpected that happened in the classroom, when something went wrong (or perhaps extraordinarily well) in the classroom that we did not anticipate. Gibb's model is as follows:
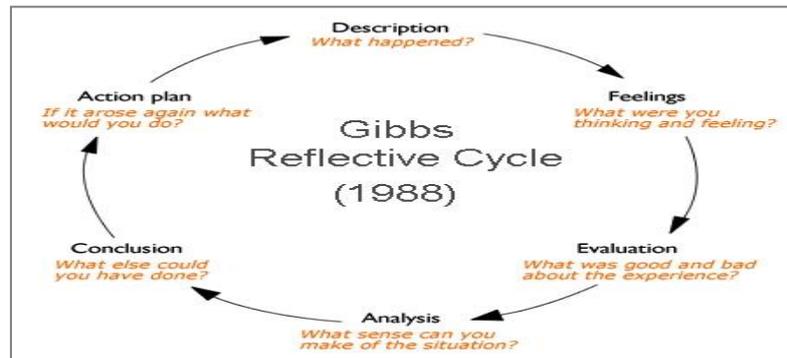

Figure 3: Gibbs Reflective Cycle

Reflective practice is important as it deepens what we – as teachers – think teaching is, and stimulate awareness of our 'real' conception of teaching. Reflective practice challenges our emotionally settled impostor ship that we may develop on different occasions As a result of reflection teachers become more aware of what is the best to happen for students' learning.

Review of the related literature:

➢ A study titled "Developing certain strategies for promoting reflective practices among teacher educands at Secondary Level" was carried out by Johnson, J (2015). On the basis of the findings of the study, it was emphatically stated that the reflective practices performance could be enriched although it does require much energy from the facilitator. Once the teacher educands become empowered in their profession with a good performance in practices, there develops in young learning minds an urge to competence in reflective practices effectively in a reflective mode.

➢ A study titled 'Reflective practices of pre-service teachers in a listening skill course in an ELT department' was taken up by DemetYayli (2009). This study explored both the types of reflection in the reflective journals written by 62 preservice teachers of an English Language Teaching Department of a University in Turkey and their opinions on their engagement with reflective journal writing. The findings of the present study indicated that the pre-service teachers developed a positive attitude toward journal writing and using it in their future teaching but in their journal entries they failed to include dialogic or critical reflection. Explicit instruction and collaborative engagement with dialogic writing may contribute to enhancement of more dialogic and critical thinking.

Need of the Study:

Education in India has undergone various phases of development starting from Vedic age to the post –

independence period. At all stages of development the major concern was of bringing in quality education by reflecting on the practical aspects of education. The great Indian educationists emphasized on developing inner potentials of the individual by reflecting on the unique potential of the individual

NCF 2005 stresses the need of teachers to be reflective practitioner. NCF states that teachers need to identify their self expectations, self perceptions, capacities and preferences. They must view appraisal as a continuous educative process. In the context of change perspective, it is essential to pursue an integrated model of teacher education for strengthening the professionalization amongst teachers. (NCF, 2005. P 107).

NCF 2005 further explains that most of the teacher education programmes provide very little scope for student-teachers to reflect on their experiences and thus fail to empower teachers as agents of change in the teaching learning process. Thus, this shows the need for training student teachers in developing reflective practices.

There is little scope available in the B.Ed. syllabus for pre service teachers to experience reflective practices as most of the teacher educators rarely practice reflections. Reflections are limited to only writing introspections in the space provided in the lesson notes. The writing of reflections is very superficial and not critical. The sad part is that teacher educators give least importance to these reflections or improving ways of writing reflections this may be because they lack the necessary skills needed for writing reflections. Feedback is taken by few teacher educators for improving the practices but little evidence of critical reflections.

This raised the following questions in the mind of the researcher:

- In what way is reflective practices are used in the present teacher education model?
- What reflective practices are used by teacher educators?
- Are teacher educators aware of reflective practices?
- Can reflective practices help in improving excellence in teacher education?

In an attempt to answer all the above questions, the researchers took up the present study.

Statement of the Problem:

A study to assess the existing status in the teacher education colleges regarding the use of reflective practices by the teacher educators, in pune city.

Definition of Key Terms and Phrases:

Conceptual Definitions:

- ✓ **Excellence:** The quality of being excellent. (Cambridge English Dictionary)
- ✓ **Teacher Education**: Training to become a teacher, usually at an institution of higher education (Collins English Dictionary). Any of the formal programs that have been established for the preparation of teachers at the elementary- and secondary-school levels.(Encyclopedia Britannica)
- ✓ **Practice:** The customary, habitual, or expected procedure or way of doing something. (Oxford Dictionary. 2016)

- ✓ **Reflection**: Something that makes other people have a particular opinion about someone or something, especially a bad opinion. (Cambridge English Dictionary)

Operational Definitions:

- ✓ **Reflective Practices**: The methods used by the teacher educators to practice reflections in the teacher education colleges affiliated to Savitribai Phule Pune University.
- ✓ **Teacher Education Colleges:**- All the Teacher Education colleges in Pune City which are affiliated to SPPU.
- ✓ **Teacher Educators:-** The lecturers who work in teacher education colleges and provide formal instruction to pre service teachers.

Objective of the Research:

To assess the existing status in the teacher education colleges regarding the use of reflective practices by the teacher educators, in pune city for excellence in teacher education.

Method of Study: Survey – Cross – Sectional survey design

Population: All the teacher educators teaching Bachelors of Education (B.Ed.) course in teacher education colleges in Pune City affiliated to Savtribai Phule Pune University.

Sampling Method: Purposive Sampling

Sample Size: 33 Teacher educators teaching B.Ed. course in teacher education colleges affiliated to Savitribai Phule Pune University in Pune City.

Scope

The research is concerned with colleges affiliated to Savitribai Phule Pune University, Pune.

Delimitations

- ✓ The study was delimited to teacher educators teaching in teacher education colleges affiliated to Savitribai Phule Pune University within Pune City.
- ✓ The study was delimited to English medium teacher education colleges in Pune City

Limitations

The motivation levels, fatigue, mood, past experience of the teacher educators and pre service teachers which may affect their responses were beyond the control of the researcher.

Tool for Data Collection: Questionnaire to assess use of reflective practices: Details in Table 1 given below:

Sr.No.	Item Number	Type
1	Total 11 items	10 Close ended & 3 Open ended
2	3 to 8 & 11	Close Ended : Options Yes and No

Quantitative Data Analysis of Questionnaire on Reflective Practices:

The survey questionnaire for assessing use of reflective practices amongst teacher educators contained total of 11 items of which 8 items were closed ended and remaining 3 items were open ended items. The quantitative data obtained from the close ended items were analyzed using percentage. The observations from the data are as follows:

- 100% teacher educators plan before their actual teaching.
- 85% teacher educators think about their teaching session after it's over and 76% think what went right and wrong.
- 79% teacher educators blame themselves for student's failure to perform during their lessons.
- 91% teacher educators provide opportunities for the students to give feedback on the teaching sessions.
- 39% of the teacher educators are unaware of the reflective practices.
- 91% of the teacher educators are willing to learn about reflective practices and strategies of reflection.

Interpretation of the quantitative data is as follows:

- Though the teacher educators plan the session before conducting and also collect feedback to improve the session, they are unaware of the reflective practices. However they are willing to learn more about reflective practices.

Qualitative Data Analysis: Figures below shows the axial coding of the qualitative data obtained from the questionnaire on reflective practices.
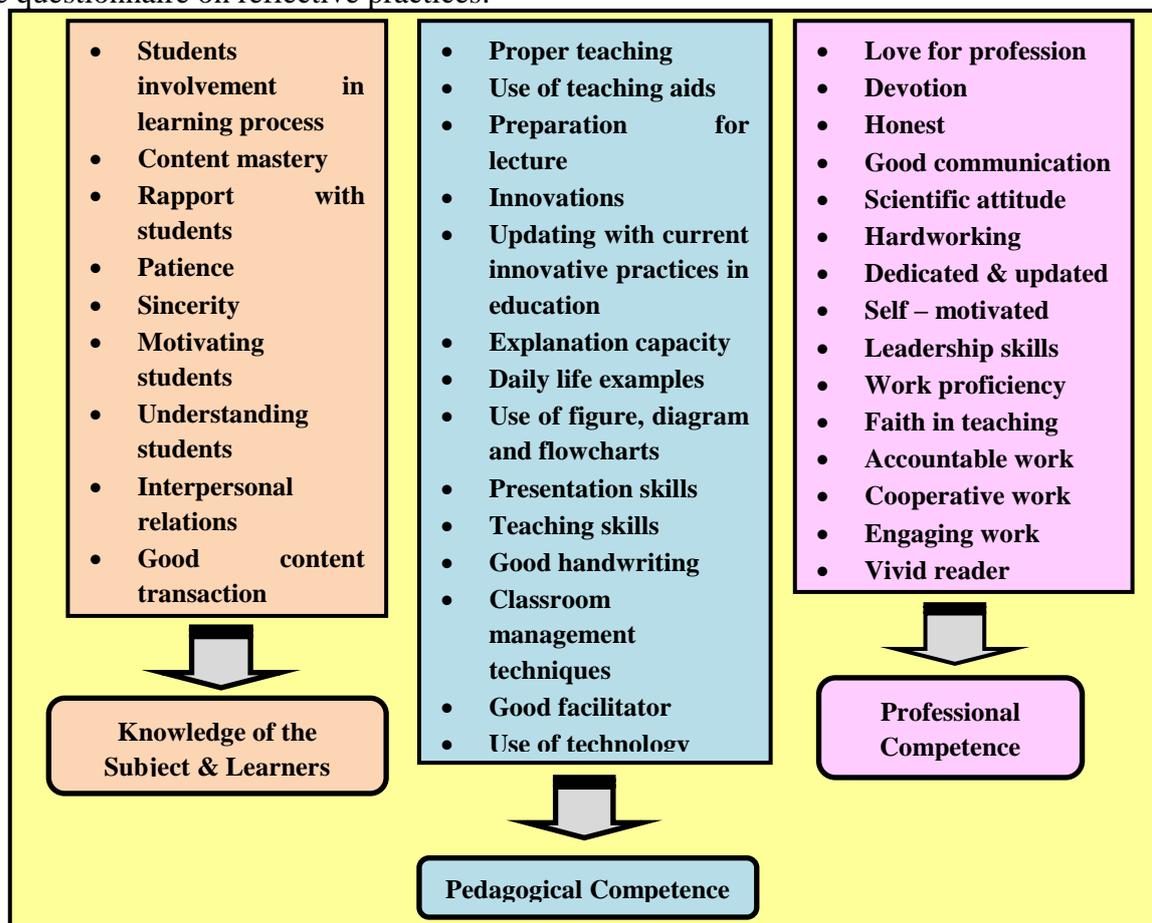

FIGURE 4: Reflections about teacher qualities possessed by the Teacher Educator

Discussion: All the responses were put into three categories: 'Knowledge of the subject & learners', 'Pedagogical competence' and 'Professional Competence'. Responses of the teacher educators revealed that they possess more qualities required for teaching and teaching profession. But few of

them mentioned the qualities related to understanding learners and importance of learners in a teaching learning process. The theme that emerged through Axial Coding was 'The teacher educators were able to reflect on the qualities they possessed as teachers at personal and professional level'.

Axial Coding theme for SWOT analysis of teacher educators using individual axial coding themes of their Strengths (S), Weaknesses (W), Opportunities (O) and Threats (T). Figure 5 shows combined axial coding.
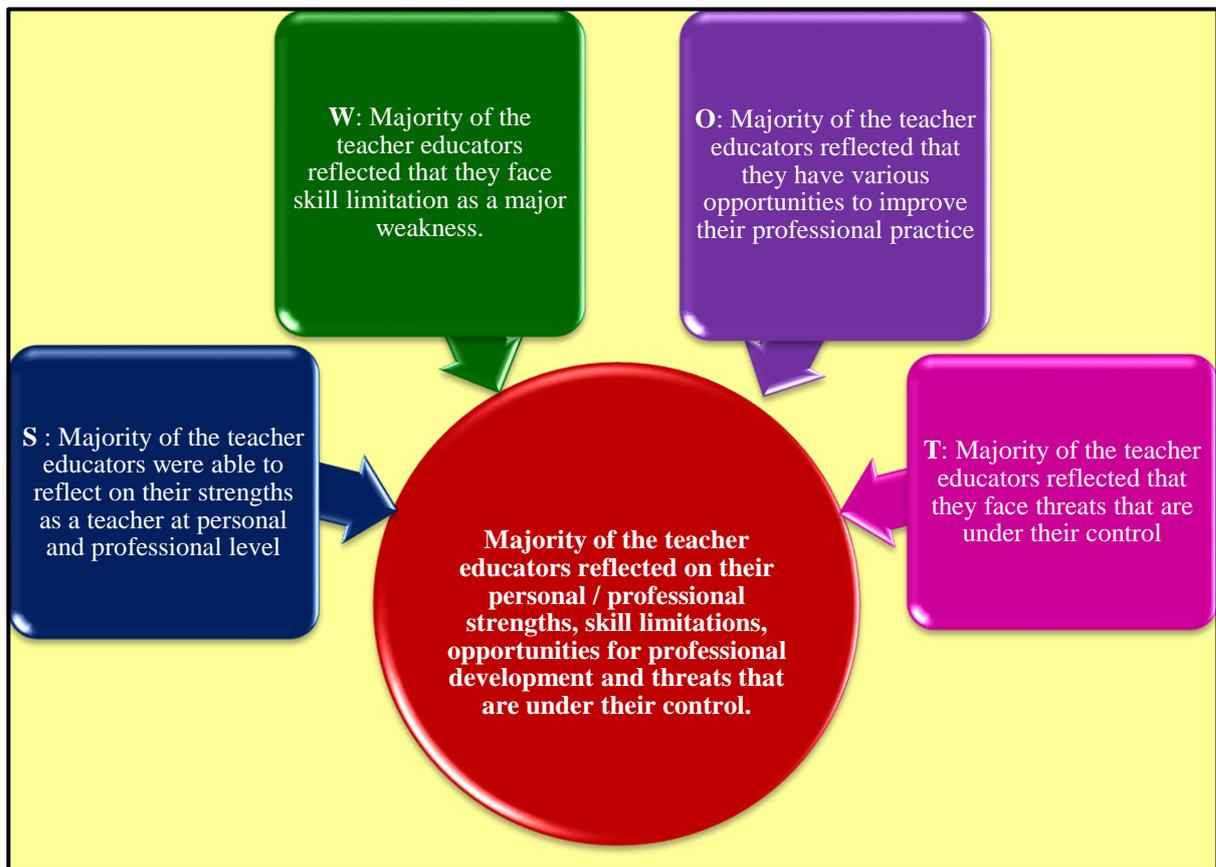

FIGURE 6: Teacher Educators SWOT analysis

Observation:

Axial coding themes of teacher educator's reflections about their strengths (S), weaknesses (W), Opportunity (O) and threats (T) were combined to get a common theme for the SWOT analysis. Figure 6 clearly indicated the theme that emerged from combining SWOT themes is 'Teacher educators reflected on their personal / professional strengths, skill limitations, opportunities for professional development and threats that are under their control'. Major strengths mentioned were being result oriented; task oriented, content transaction and having content knowledge. Major weaknesses mentioned were explanation skills, lack of confidence and presentation skills. Major opportunities cited by them were professional growth, improve academic experience and learn innovative aspects. Threats mentioned by them were that they lack skills in handling of tools and assessments.

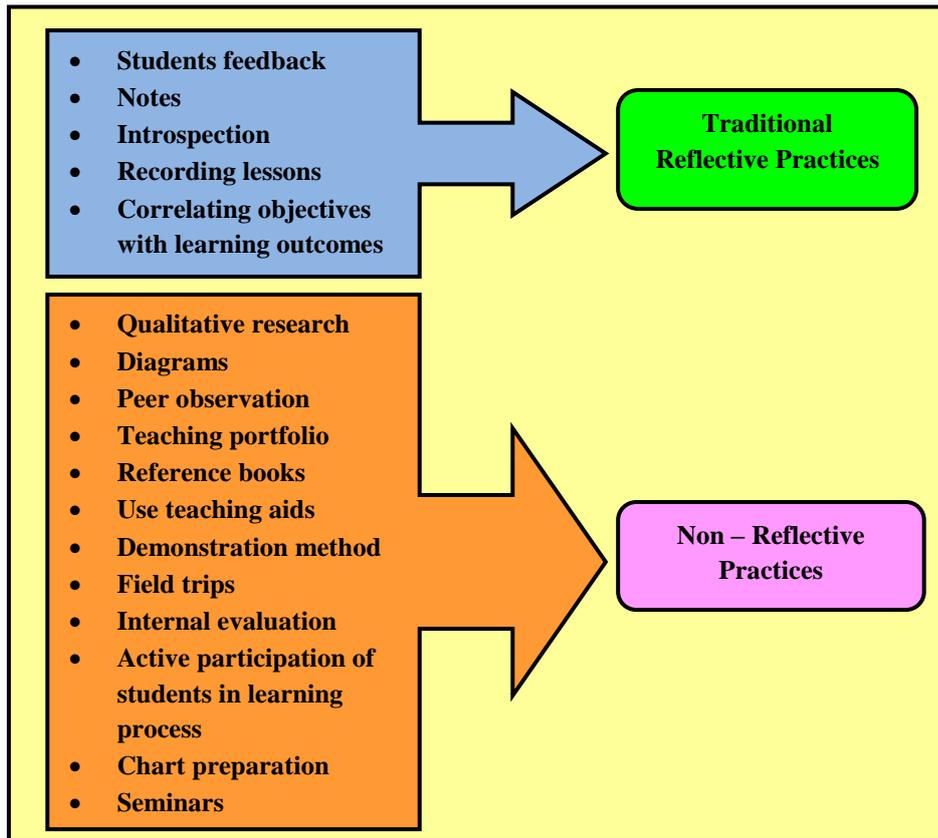**Reflective practices used by teacher educators are as follows:**

FIGURE 7: Reflective practices followed by Teacher Educators

Discussion:

Responses of teacher educators regarding reflective practices were categorized into 'Traditional Reflective Practices' and 'Non- Reflective practices'. The figure 7 shows the theme (using axial coding) that the 'teacher educators are unaware of the new approaches to reflective practices as they mentioned only traditional reflective practices'. Many teacher educators were unaware of the reflective practices as they mentioned irrelevant responses as reflective practices. These traditional practices tell a lot about students understanding but not about teachers teaching. Apart from the traditional reflective practices there are many new practices for reflection like exit cards, sticky notes, sit-stand-crouch, traffic lights and so on. Reflective log were not mentioned by any of the teacher. Teacher instead of reflective practices have mentioned practices for evaluation and teaching.

Axial coding or themes were then converted into a theory using the selective coding. This was the finals step in the grounded theory for analyzing the qualitative data obtained from the teacher educators through their responses given in the questionnaire. Figure 8 shows the process and the final theory reached by the researcher using grounded theory, which was relevant for the next phase of the research.
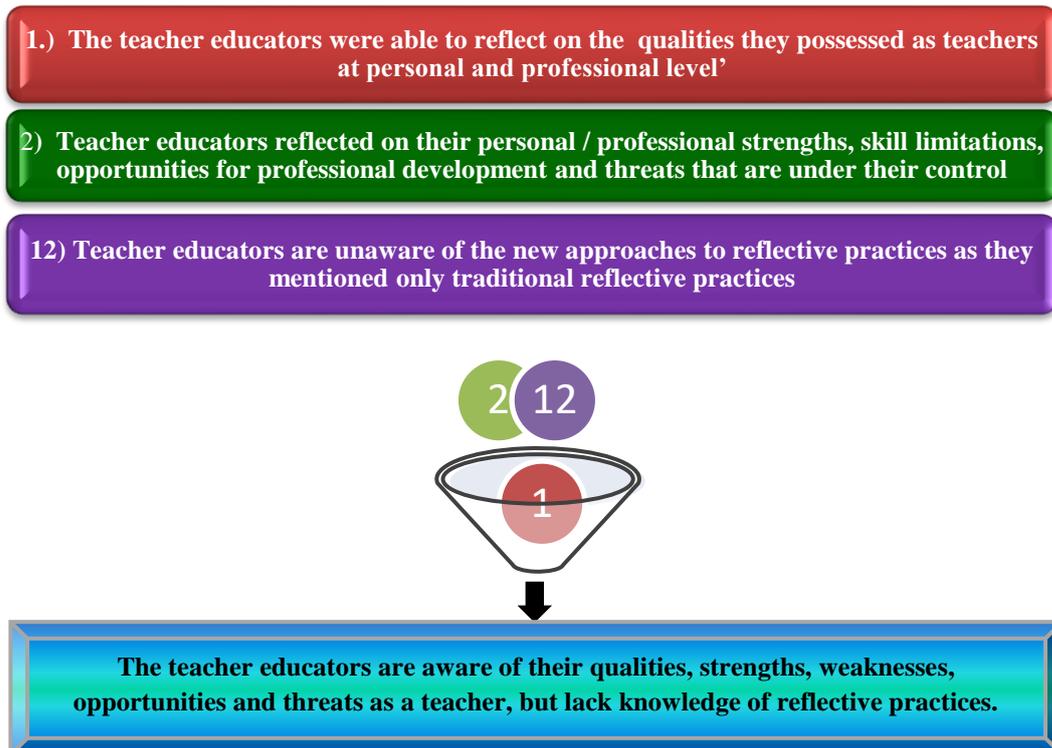
1.) **The teacher educators were able to reflect on the qualities they possessed as teachers at personal and professional level'**

2) **Teacher educators reflected on their personal / professional strengths, skill limitations, opportunities for professional development and threats that are under their control**

12) **Teacher educators are unaware of the new approaches to reflective practices as they mentioned only traditional reflective practices**

2 12

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The teacher educators are aware of their qualities, strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats as a teacher, but lack knowledge of reflective practices.

FIGURE 8: 'Axial Coding' and 'Selective Coding' of the qualitative data

After analyzing the responses using the 'axial coding' the data was put into 'themes'. Figure 8 shows the 'themes' generated and the 'final theory' reached by the researcher using the 'selective coding' phase in Grounded theory. The final theory indicates the 'teacher educators are aware of their qualities, strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats as a teacher, but lack knowledge of reflective practices.

Major Findings of the Research:

✓ Teacher Educators always plan their lessons before teaching and mentioned use of reflective practices, but could not list the reflective practices. However are willing to learn more about reflective practices.

✓ Reflective practices for Teacher educators are limited to only SWOT analysis where they were able to list their qualities as a teacher and did SWOT analysis, but more of personal then as a teacher.

Conclusion:

✓ Major conclusion of the research was that only few teacher educators are aware of reflective practices, mostly traditional methods like SWOT, note taking, but are willing to learn more about reflective practices.

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