Chapter 5
Discussion and Implications of the Research Finding

5.0 Introduction
This study as discussed in the earlier chapters, attempted to identify the opportunities to develop reflective practice in pre-service teacher education. The study was based on the assumption that there are opportunities to develop reflective practice in pre-service teacher education and use of narratives can maximize reflection. As discussed in Chapter III, the research began with a preliminary study wherein syllabus and curriculum of various universities in India were reviewed, followed by interviews and focus group discussions with teacher trainees and teachers. These interactions with teachers and teacher trainees drew the researcher’s attention towards reflection and reflective practice in pre-service teacher education. Literature in the area was reviewed. Based on the findings from the preliminary study and the review of literature, research questions for the main study were formulated. The main findings of the study from different tools (questionnaires, focus group discussions and informal interviews) were already analysed and presented in Chapter IV. The theoretical background of the study was presented in the first and second chapters. The third chapter presented the research design and in the fourth chapter data was presented and analysed. This chapter discusses the main findings of this study (5.1) and relates the findings to theoretical literature and earlier research on reflective practice in pre-service teacher education and answers the research questions (5.2). Implications behind
the research findings are examined and suggestions are proposed for the
development of reflective practice in teacher trainees (5.3). Significance of the
study and limitations are discussed (5.4) and recommendations made of area that
warrant further research (5.5). The next section begins with a discussion on the
main findings of the study.

5.1 Discussion on the findings of the study

The purpose of this study was to better understand how reflective practice could
be conceptualized and how its development was nurtured and captured in pre-
service teacher education. The research questions this study sought to examine
were:

- 1. What are the opportunities available to develop reflective practice in pre-
   service teacher education?
- 2. How are these opportunities being used to develop reflection in teacher
   trainees?
- 3. How can narratives be used to maximize reflection in teacher trainees in
   pre-service teacher education?

As mentioned in the literature review, it appears that there is more rhetoric
regarding the value of reflective practice than there is information on how teacher
trainees can be helped in developing the skills of reflective practice. Hence, it was
important to know how reflection is fostered in pre-service teacher education. The
first two research questions were set to identify the opportunities to reflect and to
see how those opportunities were being used to develop reflective practice in pre-service teacher education.

The answers for the first two questions came primarily from the questionnaires, however, focus group discussions and interviews provided in-depth information about the opportunities available and their utilization. While the present study focused on reflective practice of teacher trainees, it also presents the pedagogic concerns of the teacher trainees. After careful analysis of the data from three research tools used, i.e., questionnaires, focus group discussions and informal interviews, the findings were grouped under 5 headings:

- Learning to reflect in pre-service teacher education
- Opportunities available for reflection in pre-service teacher education
- Tools used for reflection
- Approaches to reflection
- Digital Literacy

**Learning to reflect in pre-service teacher education**

The results of the study showed that teacher trainees have a broad understanding of reflection and are aware of the benefits that a reflective approach can bring about. Even though they used different words to define reflection, reflection for them is thinking back on their own practice and examining it in terms of what went well and what did not go as they had expected. Teacher trainees and novice teacher stated that they need to engage in reflection in order to improve their performance, become aware of their weaknesses and strengths, and subsequently become better teachers. Teacher educators were in agreement with teachers and
teacher trainees, they said reflection is every teacher’s responsibility and it is an opportunity to improve one’s own teaching performance. While all participants stated that they are reflective practitioners, it is noteworthy, that only 32% of teacher trainees stated that they learnt to reflect in pre-service teacher education. The remaining talked about reflecting on their progress in less formal circumstances, which included individual and personal reflection and reflecting by talking with friends and/or family outside the teaching profession.

Opportunities available to develop reflective practice in pre-service teacher education

In the questionnaires and interviews, teacher trainees were asked whether they had opportunities to review or reflect upon their development as teachers in pre-service teacher education. Almost all teacher trainees (40 out of 42) reported that they had undertaken some form of formally structured opportunity for reflection. Such opportunities for reflection were inclined to take the form of written evaluations or assignments. It is also interesting to note that when teacher trainees talked about opportunities for reflection they tended to talk about assessments and activities which involved evaluating lessons which they had taught during micro teaching or practicum phases. They mentioned narrative forms of reflection like portfolios, lesson plans, diaries, logs and journals. A portfolio, which the teacher trainees were asked to submit usually contained lesson plans, self-reflection diaries, peer evaluations reports, and samples of activities and tests designed. Boud and Walker (1998) are not in favour of such reflective approaches and reflective writing tasks for assessment purpose, they recommend that a climate
favourable for reflection should be developed by encouraging teacher trainees to complete these reflective tasks for learning purposes.

According to Ur (1999), the most important aspect for professional development is teacher’s indulgence in self thought on daily classroom events, which stimulate reflection, through ‘returning to experience’ (Boud et al., 1985: 27) and recalling and understanding “… relevant prior knowledge from long-term memory in their descriptive tale” (Strampel & Oliver, 2007: 975). Teacher trainees reported many opportunities for reflection, and the nature of the reflective tasks they had to accomplish. They stated that there were opportunities for reflection, but a lot of it had to be written; they stated that most often opportunities to reflect were provided through written assessments. Teacher trainees wanted a reduction in the amount of work in the form of various tasks and assignments that they had to do to progress through the course.

It is not surprising to note that teacher trainees perceived reflection to be a onetime activity and did not develop a habit of reflection. While pre-service teacher education provides opportunities to teacher trainees to “shadow” an experienced teacher, none of teacher trainees mentioned it as an opportunity to reflect.

It is important to note that despite the opportunities provided, teacher trainees stated that they were not very good at reflection and only 10% of the population stated that they are good at reflecting on their teaching practices.

**Tools used for Reflection**
As mentioned earlier, teacher trainees are given opportunities to reflect, however, they are mostly in written form. Almost all teacher trainees mentioned that they were given opportunities to reflect throughout pre-service teacher education through assignments. Written narrative forms like journals, diaries, logs etc., were used to foster reflection. However, as teacher trainees seemed to have been more worried about the deadlines and the marks, the activities did not help teacher trainees in developing reflective practice. Boud and Walker (1998: 192) caution against ritualizing reflection and making reflection a “recipe following procedure with a checklists”. Although teacher trainees maintained diaries, logs, portfolios and journals during pre-service teacher education, they stopped using them as soon as they graduated. The reasons given by teachers for not maintaining logs or journals for reflection are lack of time, lack of motivation, lack of supervision, fossilization of habit or/and lack of interest in writing.

A concern that teachers and teacher trainees raised was their dislike towards writing. Since they did not enjoy the act of writing, they did not wish to continue writing journals after the course. For example, one of the teachers explained that although she was aware of the benefits of using journals, she could not keep them because she particularly did not like writing. In a way, this teacher seems to voice the feelings of some of his/her peers.

Teacher trainees mentioned that they got an opportunity to reflect on their peer’s performance during peer teaching and team teaching. Crandall (1998: 4) affirms that “peer observation can be a powerful source of insight and discovery”.
Moreover, peer observation, according to Richards (1998: 146) “should be approached as an opportunity to develop a critically reflective stance to the teacher’s own teaching”. Furthermore, Gebhard (1998) points out that teacher trainees can observe their own teaching in the teaching of others. When teachers observe peers to gain knowledge of self, they have an opportunity to construct and reconstruct their own knowledge. Cosh (1999: 25) asserts that observation of others “stimulates awareness, reflection, and a questioning approach, and it encourages experimentation; it also may make us aware of exciting techniques that we are temperamentally unable to implement”.

It is important to note that teacher trainees and novice teachers mentioned that interaction with colleagues and friends helped them in reflecting on their teaching practice.

Teacher trainees mentioned that they were not given many opportunities as a part of the course to reflect collaboratively, they stated that the conversations they engaged in with peers and friends helped them in identifying their strengths and weaknesses. Teacher trainees stated that they learnt the ‘tricks of the trade’ from the experiential talks of mentors and educators.

**Approaches to Reflection**

It was evident from the data gathered through questionnaires, focus group discussions and interviews that teacher trainees believed in learning from someone’s reflective narratives or stories. Most of the teacher trainees believed that reflection was difficult to practice and writing journals or diaries was not engaging and strenuous. Like Edge (1992: 6) mentioned ‘we learn by speaking: by
trying to put our thoughts together so that someone else can understand them’, novice teachers mentioned that they learnt to reflect by talking to other teachers and by listening to their stories in the staff room.

More than three fourth of the participants stated that sharing experiences helped them in becoming reflective practitioners. Gebhard (1998) states that a solution to a problem can be found by sharing stories and communicating problems with one’s own teaching, or the observed teaching of others, with colleagues and friends.

While there were supporters of written narrative forms like diaries and journals, the participants stated that sharing stories verbally can also foster reflection. Most of the participants stated that reflecting using narrative forms of reflection helped them in learning to make better lesson plans, use different teaching aids and methods, apply learning effectively, and in better preparation and performance.

Digital Literacy

All participants had access to computers and had email IDs. Only a few stated that they participate in webinars and online training programmes. Internet is an effective medium to learn many things through blogs and webinars.

With the wealth of information gathered in the study, an attempt to answer the research questions is made in the next section.
5.2 Research Questions

Based on the findings from the data and their interpretation, the research questions of this study are answered one after another in this section. As discussed earlier, the study sought to answer three research questions. The first question was:

What are the opportunities available to develop reflective practice in pre-service teacher education?

As mentioned already, the data from questionnaires provided the answer to this question, however, interviews and focus group discussion provided in-depth information. While teacher trainees stated that there were opportunities to reflect effectively mostly during and after practicum phase of the course, it was, however, observed that teacher trainees were provided opportunities to reflect throughout the course, from the first day of the course till the end. It is interesting to note that teacher trainees did not consider these as opportunities to reflect, instead they thought they were assignments, and their performance had a direct impact on the grades. Therefore, teacher trainees completed their assignments to get good grades, but did not develop reflective practice.

The findings revealed that there were opportunities to engage in reflection throughout the programme. For example, on the first day of the programme, teacher trainees were apparently asked to introduce themselves as a part of the ice-breaking session and state their reason for ‘wanting to become a teacher’ and on the last day of instruction, teacher trainees were in fact asked to write an essay on ‘their B.Ed journey’. Throughout the course, teacher trainees were given many
assignments and activities which involved reflection; all participants were asked to maintain a journal or diary and were asked to submit it at the end of the course. Hence, it is evident that there are opportunities available to reflect on the course content; on each lesson; during and after community work; during peer observations; before, during and after practice teaching; during feedback sessions and on grades as well. However, it is important to note that teacher trainees did not perceive these as potential opportunities for developing reflective practice. The study also looked at how the opportunities available were being used to develop reflective practice in teacher trainees; the findings answer the next research question:

**How are these opportunities being used to develop reflection in teacher trainees?**

The findings revealed that assessments and activities were being used to foster reflection in pre-service teacher education. All participants stated that they were asked to keep diaries, journals, notes, portfolios, etc. about their practice teaching experience. It was observed that teacher trainees were asked to write reflective essays and submit them towards the end of the course. Most often, written narrative forms like logs, journals and diaries were used to develop reflective practice. However, as mentioned in earlier section, the findings reveal that teacher trainees saw these as assessments and completed the tasks only to get good grades. Despite having maintained a journal or diary; having monitored peers and having written lesson plans, it is interesting to note that only 32% of the teacher trainees stated that they learnt to reflect in pre-service teacher education. Furthermore, only
10% mentioned that they were good at reflecting on their own performance. To reflect was more of a task to the teacher trainees, they wrote creative reports and submitted them during the programme, however, did not develop reflective practice. Pre-service teacher education failed to sow the seed of reflection in teacher trainees as most of the teachers stopped using any of the reflective tools (journals, portfolios, diaries, logs etc) to reflect on their performance in the real classroom. As Boud and Walker (1998, 192) cautioned against, reflective practice has become a mere ritual for most of the teacher trainees. A cause for concern is that the concept reflective practice is being misinterpreted. Ideally, reflection should direct towards reframing dilemmas and generate a change in instructional practice; however, despite of knowing the benefits of reflection, teacher trainees looked at the opportunities provided as assessments only. Many who argue that journals and reflective writing should not be assessed. The following comment from Sister Craig who is a supporter of journals summarizes the concern. 'How can you mark an individual's own personal development? I think it's a right and proper part of education for us to encourage students to express their feelings so that they know it's alright to have those feelings. However, for me to mark those feelings seems inconsistent and incongruent. Marks can also create a barrier or obstacle to the person finding his or her own voice...' (Sister Craig, cited in Dillon, 1983).

The findings revealed that teacher trainees were not very good at reflecting, nor were they comfortable with the concept of reflective practice. It is important to note that even after maintaining journals, diaries, portfolios, logs; and submitting
lesson plans, peer observation reports teacher trainees’ did not improve their ability to engage in reflection. It is evident that reflection does not improve with mere practice, because that makes the reflective practice merely routine.

Teacher trainees were given opportunities to share their experiences with peers and mentors after practice teaching sessions at the schools they were sent to. It is interesting to note that in pre-service teacher education, though only a few opportunities were provided to indulge in collaborative reflection, teacher trainees found the process of sharing stories and experiences therapeutic. Most of the teacher trainees stated that they engaged in actual reflection while sharing their experiences and stories with peers. Teachers stated that they learnt to reflect more in the staffroom at the school than that in the B.Ed classroom by sharing and listening to experiences with peers.

The purpose of this study was to better understand how reflective practice could be developed and nurtured in pre-service teacher education using narratives, which was the third research question:

**How can narratives be used to maximize reflection in teacher trainees in pre-service teacher education?**

Research into the teaching of reflection has typically focused on the content, or what teachers reflect upon, and the process, or how teachers reflect (Jay & Johnson, 2002). Many researchers (Hay, White, Moss, Ferguson and Dixon, 2004; White and Hay, 2005) have acknowledged that use of narratives in teacher education focuses on reflection. Autobiographical recording and biography led to
several important innovations in the pedagogy of teacher education: the study of cases, the writing of personal narratives, use of journals and the like.

However, the use of narratives in teacher education, as discussed earlier, has been limited to writing. Bruner (1990) has written about the importance of narrative in framing human experience. Narrative is a potent method for capturing the complex process of learning to teach (e.g., Carter, 1993; Doyle & Carter, 2003). Witherell and Noddings (1991) elucidate, “Stories invite us to come to know the world and our place in it” (p. 13). Stories divulge how teachers engage in constructing narratives about themselves in the perspective of their classrooms, schools, and communities; and of their teaching and learning to teach process in pre-service teacher education, which is the context of the this study. The findings reveal that many teachers perceive the construction of personal narratives as acts of meaning (Bruner, 1986) through which people create descriptive structures to make sense of their ‘learning to teach’ process through analysis and reflection. These acts of meaning are at the meeting point of the acquisition of knowledge, the growth of emergent identities, and practice.

Clandinin and Connelly (1992) have examined teacher narratives over several years and explained how teachers understand and build curriculum from their personal and professional knowledge. They say that the teachers’ stories about learning to teach illustrate the ways in which they are curriculum makers (Clandinin & Connelly, 1995) rather than merely curriculum implementers. Based on, the discussions and interviews and thereby, the findings of this study, it is
highlighted that Narratives can be used as a potentially powerful tool for rethinking and supporting practices of learning to teach in pre-service teacher education, which can guide teacher trainees to acquire higher level of reflection, and as an outcome teacher trainees are directed towards in-depth learning and development of higher-order thinking skills.

As mentioned earlier, there are opportunities for making sense of experience through collaboratively constructed narratives in pre-service teacher education. A lot of conversations take place between trainee teachers, supervisors and school based mentors after the practice teaching. During this process, narratives are constructed and reconstructed to make sense of the events and, learn from events. That is how teacher trainees form their narratives, in other words like Doyle and Carter (2003) say that is how teacher trainees learn to story the act of teaching. A narrative approach can be used with teacher trainees for encouraging proactive learning. As Phillion (2005) mentioned, a narrative approach to teacher education is based on the thought that all of us make meaning through reflection. Reflection leads to understanding, which then leads to action; in the case of teachers, reflection and understanding can be changed into renewed and refreshed practice.

Sharing narratives presents “the potential to animate the idea of teaching as reflection, generate knowledge about reflective practice, model an inquiry-based approach to pedagogy, provide opportunities for beginning teachers to reflect on learning to teach, and generate rich understandings” that can facilitate professional development (Dinkelman, 2003: 16). Storytelling is the oldest form of
communication that offers means for reconstructing experiences and also constructing inquiry on professional practice in future. Thus, the approach of sharing narratives could provide as an improvement, or enhancement, to other tools used by researchers and teacher educators in promoting reflection on teaching and teacher development. Narratives can promote reflective practice in teacher trainees and provide a substantive conclusion of a teacher education (Binks, Smith, Smith, & Joshi, 2009).

While observing a few training sessions during the preliminary data collection stage, it was noticed that in the preparatory phase of pre-service teacher education, there were opportunities to develop and broaden the thinking skills of teacher trainees by sharing professional experiences and stories. This could have also helped in developing their problem solving skills. And particularly during school visits, the programmes could have provided an environment in which collaboration between school teachers and teacher trainees could have fostered shared knowledge, progressive methods of instruction and professional growth.

During the practicum phase of pre-service teacher education, there were opportunities to develop a problem based professional learning approach in teacher trainees, which would have prepared them for the real classroom environment and would have assisted them to consider the possible challenges as opportunities to learn.

During the post practicum phase, the programmes it was observed that there were opportunities to engage in collaborative discussions with each peers and connect
‘pedagogic knowledge’ with real classroom ‘experiences’, This could have made learning personally meaningful.

If teaching improves through reflection, in collaboration with experienced mentors, and through discussion of the profession with its responsibilities and rewards, pre-service teacher education should be restructured to include these mechanisms. It is important to understand the how teacher trainees take assess professional identities and support them in the process of understanding by not just making them write but by having explicit discussions and colleagueship. If narratives are used not merely for recording, beyond biographical or autobiographical aspects, for ‘critical reflection’, it can be an effective tool for shaping experience. Therefore, it can be identified that narratives can be used in both written and spoken forms throughout pre-service teacher education to maximize reflection.

One concern shared by all stakeholders in this study (teacher trainees, teachers and teacher educators) is the lack of time to practice reflection or include new techniques in a curriculum which is already overloaded. Most of the time the teacher trainees complained about being overloaded with assignments and tasks and not finding time, especially to keep journals.

B.Ed programmes effective 2015-16, as per NCTE norms, will be of two years’ duration instead of one-year. This should to some extent solve the time constraint issues. The next section considers the concerns raised by NCF(2009) about pre-service teacher education and the NCERT guidelines for 2 years B.Ed programme,
followed by the implications of the study, especially regarding some of the findings discussed above, and reflected in the concerns expressed.

### 2 years B.Ed programme

The current concerns of teacher education as described by NCF 2005 are as follows:

- “Experiences in the practice of teacher education indicate that knowledge is treated as ‘given’, embedded in the curriculum and accepted without question; there is no engagement with the curriculum. Curriculum, syllabi and textbooks are never critically examined by the student teacher or the regular teacher.

- Language proficiency of the teacher needs to be enhanced, but existing programmes do not recognize the centrality of language in the curriculum.

- Teacher education programmes provide little scope for student teachers to reflect on their experiences.

- Disciplinary knowledge is viewed as independent of professional training in pedagogy.

- Repeated ‘practice’ in the teaching of a specified number of isolated lessons is considered a sufficient condition for professional development.

- It is assumed that links between learning theories and models and teaching methods are automatically formed in the understanding developed by student teachers.
There is no opportunity for teachers to examine their own biases and beliefs and reflect on their own experiences as part of classroom discourse and enquiry.

Theory courses have no clear link with practical work and ground realities.

The evaluation system followed in teacher education programmes is too information-oriented, excessively quantitative and lacks comprehensiveness.

Apart from conceptual and pedagogical aspects, existing programmes need to develop certain attitudes, dispositions, habits and interests in a teacher. The present evaluation protocol has no place for evaluating these aspects (NCTE 2009).

The council set up a committee to formulate the two-year B.Ed programme corresponding to the emerging vision in teacher education, incorporating inputs as suggested in the NCF-2005. A curriculum framework document was built by NCTE, laying guidelines for all universities in designing curriculum for the 2 years B.Ed course. “This document presents the course structure for the NCTE Two-year B.Ed. Programme and outlines the nature of experiences to be offered to the student-teachers to make them reflective practitioners. The course structure offers a comprehensive coverage of themes and rigorous field engagement with the child, school and community.

The programme includes three broad inter-related curricular areas – I) Perspectives in Education, II) Curriculum and Pedagogic Studies, and III)
Engagement with the Field. All the courses include in-built field-based units of study and projects along with theoretical inputs from an interdisciplinary perspective. Engagement with the Field is the curricular component that is meant to holistically link all the courses across the programme, while it also includes special courses for Enhancing Professional Capacities (EPC) of the student teachers. Transaction of the courses is to be done using a variety of approaches, such as, case studies, group presentations, projects, discussions on reflective journals, observations of children, and interactions with the community in multiple socio cultural environments” (NCTE, 2 year B.Ed curriculum, p.2).

As shown in figure 5.1 below, the framework suggested three broad cyclic curricular areas. They are:

- Perspectives in Education
- Curriculum and Pedagogic Studies, and
- Engagement with the Field

Figure 5.1, Curricular Areas as per the NCTE Curricular Framework
The framework aims at strengthening the confidence of the teacher trainees and developing them as committed professionals and reflective practitioners. Zeichner (1994, 1996) states that reflection is crucial for bringing understanding to the multifaceted nature of classrooms and states that teachers should be trained to reflect on the topic and the thoughtful application of teaching strategies. The new framework provides better scope for growth of knowledge in different areas i.e. knowledge on teaching-learning methodologies, content knowledge, and knowledge on pedagogy of teaching-learning among the teacher trainees. It gives opportunities to teacher trainees to develop a strong knowledge base in content areas, and develop skills to be competent enough to transact the content materials to the students of the school more meaningfully.

The two-year B.Ed. aims to develop commitment, competence, accountability, dutifulness etc. among the trainee teachers towards the profession. It gives emphasis on practical activities like internal assessment, project work, internship in teaching, practice of micro-teaching skills, community work, practical work relating to work experiences and innovative ways for conducting practical activities. The literature on second language teacher education provides examples of approaches and strategies that can be used to facilitate and enhance reflection, such as reflective journals (Smyth, 1991; Dobbins, 1996; Larivee & Cooper, 2006; Larivee, 2008), autobiographical writing (Ross, 1990), Diaries (Jarvis, 1992), reflective interviews (Trumball & Slack, 1991), teaching portfolios (Bullock & Hawk, 2001), action research (Gebhard, 1998), practical experience (Hatton & Smith, 1995), collaborative talk (Farrell, 1999) and self-observation and
observation of other teachers (Farrell, 2003; Gebhard, 1998, 2005; Richards, 1998; Richards & Farrell, 2005). Advanced technologies such as digital audio and video recordings (Coffey, 2014), blogs (Beatson & Larkin, 2010), and electronic portfolios (Levin & Camp, 2002) were also explored. While there are other examples of reflection strategies and approaches, these remain the most commonly used in current studies about reflective practice and teaching.

These approaches and strategies can be used in the new 2 year B.Ed programme. This study made a modest attempt to explore the opportunities available to use narratives in pre-service teacher education to maximize reflective practice in Indian context. The findings of the study recommend that narratives should be used, in a more engaging way, in pre-service teacher education because teachers should be equipped with higher levels of reflection in order to be able to transfer this into their daily practice in the classroom. The findings suggest that narratives as an approach can pose important questions, outline a context for discussion, support teacher trainees to reflect on personal perspectives, and introduce new ideas and concepts. The implications of the findings are discussed in the next section.

5.3 Implications of the study

Interviews conducted with teacher trainees suggested that pre-service teacher education did not provide opportunities to analyse the process of learning to teach through reflection. Instead, teacher trainees were given written assignments which only facilitated superficial reflection on teaching practice. The application and use
of narratives in pre-service teacher education is almost limitless; however, it is usually set aside for reflective writing assignments. Narratives not only serve metaphorical purposes but also humanize content knowledge by establishing teacher trainees’ relationship with the subject matter and audience. By incorporating narrative into reflection assignments, teacher educators create opportunities for teacher trainees to make meaning of their experiences through an everyday communicative act. The suggestion is that pre-service teacher education should support teacher trainees in finding a model of reflective practice which they are comfortable with.

As discussed already, the teacher trainees and novice teachers believed that lack of time was a major barrier for reflection in pre-service teacher education. While teacher educators suggested increase in the duration of the course, teacher trainees instead, focused on the quantity of work that had to be completed. NCF (2005) affirms that pre-service teacher education has to build the ability in the teacher to develop knowledge to deal with different contexts based on understanding and analysis of experience and should provide opportunity to trainees for reflection and independent study without packing the training schedule with teacher-directed activities only. Now that the course duration is increased to two years, the suggestion is that the teacher training institutions and the schools may adapt a work-time balance in the programme, that is, either lessen the amount of work the teacher trainees have to do during the course, in the form of various tasks and assignments, or to provide more time for them to beneficially reflect on their experiences.
Teacher trainee stated that they understand the importance of reflection and the benefits it has to offer; however, despite the opportunities available in pre-service teacher education, only 10% of the population stated they could reflect effectively on their practice. The data from questionnaires indicates that teacher trainees were able to define ‘reflection’ but could not write a reflective narrative. Reflection is conventionally thought of as taking place after something has happened, such a view can tend to make learners as passive respondents to events (Boud, 2001:3). This perspective seemed to be obstructing the formation of more imaginative and creative role of reflection in pre-service teacher education. The most important responsibility of teacher education is to facilitate a reflective, self monitoring practice and to promote such a practice as a significant and dynamic habit that improves the teacher trainees’ pedagogical ability. Therefore, the suggestion is that the concept of reflection should be included more comprehensively and explicitly in pre-service teacher education. The suggestion, therefore, is that teacher trainees should be taught the what’, ‘how’ and ‘why’ (the intricacies) of reflection, before they are asked to actually practice reflection.

Almost all research participants mentioned that they learnt to reflect by listening to others’ experiences and by shared their own experiences. According to Boyer (1990), for reflection on teaching and learning to be effective, it has to be systematic and public, i.e., it is important to making one’s teaching and work accessible for critical peer review and use, by engaging in professional conversations with peers. Such discussions can be constructed on observations of other teachers and reading and writing pedagogical research to aid what Boyer
describes as ‘transmitting’, ‘extending’ and ‘transforming’ knowledge about teaching and learning in general. The suggestion, therefore, is that opportunities should be provided to teacher trainees in pre-service teacher education to engage in professional conversations with peers, mentors, colleagues and reflect collaboratively. Narratives in the form of collaborative talk (Farrell, 1999) may help teacher trainees to learn through creating and articulating their ideas, exchange their opinions, and passing guidance to each other professionally to facilitate confrontation of their beliefs and trigger and aid reflection through being academically close to each other.

Teacher trainees mentioned that they wrote reflective journals to get good grades and teachers mentioned that they no longer reflect on their teaching due to plethora of constraints. Teacher trainees should not consider reflection as a purely cognitive activity; they should not look at reflective practice as something that is done for the course alone. Reflective practice should be conceptualised in pre-service teacher education in a way that promotes critical thinking, which teacher trainees engage in, even after graduating. The suggestion is that pre-service teacher education should incorporate some kind of device to help teacher trainees continue reflective practice.

Teacher trainees should be given examples of students and practitioners theorising on models of reflective practice through narration of experiences and discussions. They may be put into conditions where existing belief structures are challenged. Therefore, the suggestion to policy-makers is to strengthen support for the
professional development of teacher trainees, as well as to ensure that there is sufficient time made available to develop effective reflective practice that is linked to the theory learnt.

Digital images, audio, and videos present mediums for teacher educators to incorporate technology into their teaching methods and provide teacher trainees with relevant and practical skills and experience to explore the metaphoric benefits of narratives. For instance, news media uses narratives to describe events that occur, instructional videos online use narratives to describe various steps in a procedure. Both instances demand knowledge and understanding of how spoken, written, and visual materials effect, and potentially improve the quality of learning. Therefore, the suggestion is that teacher educators can integrate technology in pre-service teacher education using various narratives forms.

All teacher trainees stated that they had access to computers and had email IDs, however, most of them did not explore the possibilities of joining online professional communities. None of them blogged and only a negligible percentage of population participated professional webinars. Hollins (2011) explains that prospective teachers need to be explicitly taught how to join and engage in professional communities, affirming that this engagement can lead to a sense of professional identity. Therefore, the suggestion is that teacher educators should encourage teacher trainees to participate in discussions, webinars and other professional activities online.
Finally, the suggestion is that a narrative curriculum for pre-service teacher education can be developed as proposed by Doyle and Carter (2003). They say that “the knowledge base for teaching resides in the stories of experience as a teacher” (p: 6). They further say that “rather than having the student analyse the syntax of teaching models, a narrative-based curriculum would have students appreciate the grammars of and uncover pedagogical motifs in lesson stories, both well- and ill-structured. Such experiences would at least begin to familiarize them with the pedagogical and curricular issues they must come to terms with as they story their experiences as teachers.” (p: 8). A narrative curriculum with stories of experiences can trigger reflection in teacher trainees. It can improve reflection by making knowledge construction familiar and fluid for teacher trainees instead of impersonal and formal.

5.4 Significance and limitations of the study

With the growing emphasis on reflection in teacher education and the current context, where the duration of pre-service teacher education in India has been extended to 2 years as per the guidelines laid by NCTE to develop reflective practitioners, the research presents important implications for curriculum developers, teacher education institutions and teacher educators. An attempt has been made to identify the opportunities available to develop reflective practice in pre-service teacher education and discover how the opportunities available were being used. The research also examined teacher trainees’ perspective about the opportunities provided and the reflective tools and approaches used. The findings
of the study can be considered while developing a new curriculum and while selecting various tools, activities or assignments for the 2 year B.Ed programme. An attempt has been made to suggest how ‘Narratives’ can be used in pre-service teacher education to develop reflective practice. Therefore, its implications are significant for all stakeholders. It is probably the first research study, in Indian the context, which suggests the use of narratives to develop reflection practitioners in 2 years B.Ed programme. The scarcity of research studies, which have examined reflective practice within similar context, gives this study a degree of authenticity. The study focuses on the reflective practice of teacher trainees of English methods only. The study attempts to propose the use of narratives to maximizing reflective practice in pre-service teacher education, due to time constraint, it does not look at the subsequent actions and changes that reflection using narratives can bring about in teacher’s classroom practices. The study was limited in that it was restricted to only two universities i.e., Osmania University and The English Foreign Languages University in Hyderabad, Telangana.

5.5 Suggestions for further research

Since the study was restricted to a few sample groups, generalisability for the findings can be enhanced if a similar study is carried out on a comparative basis between various universities offering B.Ed programme in different part of India.

All stakeholders agree on the benefits of reflection as a quality of effective teaching; however, additional studies are needed to fill in the gaps in this body of research. Research needs to look into the impact of reflection on teaching practice,
to what level reflection can be promoted using narratives, consequences of reflective teaching, long-term effects of reflective teaching, and the effects of reflection on learning.

Furthermore, research needs to be done to explore the critical conditions like learning support learning resources and learning task; needed in order for narrative sharing to encourage and provide a platform for reflection.

Research studies can also look at actual narratives in practice, to observe activities, tasks and practices that provide environment for reflective practice.