



## PLANNING STRATEGIES AND LEARNING REFLECTION PRACTICES AMONG PRE-SERVICE TEACHERS IN UPPER BASIC EDUCATION IN TAI LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA, RIVERS STATE, NIGERIA

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**ABSTRACT:** *The study investigated the relationship between planning strategies and learning reflection practices among pre-service teachers in upper basic education in Tai Local Government, Rivers State, Nigeria. Two (2) specific objectives and research questions posed were answered, and corresponding null hypotheses were formulated, stated, and tested at the 0.05 level of significance. A correlation research design was adopted for this study, and the population consisted of seventy-three (73) pre-service teachers, comprising 27 student-teachers and 47 corps members deployed to Upper Basic Education in Tai Local Government, Rivers State. No sampling method was employed, as the entire population served as a sample for the study. Two (2) sets of instruments titled "Questionnaire on Planning Strategies (QPS) and Learning Reflection Practices Scale (LRPDS)" were used for data collection, which were validated by three experts in educational management, measurement, and evaluation. The reliability indexes of 0.83 and 85 were obtained, respectively, using the test-retest method. Research questions were answered using the Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient, and a transformational test was conducted to ascertain if the null hypotheses were significant or not. It was found out that there was a significant relationship between lesson plan quality and learning reflection practices among pre-service teachers in Upper Basic Education in Tai Local Government, Rivers State, and a significant relationship between instructional methods and learning reflection practices among pre-service teachers in Upper Basic Education in Tai Local Government, Rivers State. Based on the findings, it was recommended, among others, that the government should develop integrated training programs for pre-service teachers that explicitly emphasise the symbiotic relationship between lesson planning, instructional methodologies, and learning reflection.*

**KEYWORDS:** Planning strategies; Lesson plan quality; Instructional methods, Learning reflection practices.



## INTRODUCTION

The journey to becoming an effective educator involves more than just academic knowledge; it encompasses a dynamic interplay between theoretical learning and practical application. Pre-service teachers, individuals in the preparatory phase of their teaching careers, engage in specialised educational programs designed to equip them with the necessary skills, pedagogical understanding, and classroom management techniques. Pre-service teacher education programs serve as foundational pillars, offering a comprehensive blend of theoretical frameworks and hands-on experiences (Aksu, Çalışır & Sellüm, 2023). These programs typically include coursework covering educational psychology, curriculum design, teaching methodologies, and classroom assessment strategies. A core component of a pre-service teacher's training revolves around understanding and implementing effective planning strategies. These encompass various facets such as lesson planning, curriculum development, and adapting teaching materials to cater to diverse student needs.

Integral to a pre-service teacher's development is the cultivation of reflective practices. These involve self-assessment, critical analysis of teaching experiences, and the deliberate process of learning from these experiences to enhance future pedagogical approaches. Understanding how pre-service teachers engage with planning strategies and learning reflection practices is crucial for several reasons (Oluwafikayo, Tataleni & Kushal, 2023). Firstly, it impacts the quality of future teaching. Effective planning lays the groundwork for engaging lessons, while reflective practices foster ongoing professional growth and refinement of teaching methods.

### Planning Strategies

Pre-service teachers engage in various aspects of planning strategies. They learn to construct detailed lesson plans that outline instructional goals, content sequences, teaching methodologies, and assessment techniques tailored to specific learning objectives. Moreover, these strategies incorporate broader considerations, including aligning individual lessons with overarching curriculum standards, adapting teaching materials to accommodate diverse learner profiles, and preparing various resources to facilitate effective instruction (Aremu & Adediran, 2011; Akhigbe, Ogbonnaya & Owolabi, 2021). Additionally, pre-service teachers are trained to develop assessments that gauge student understanding and progress, ensuring that their planning strategies encompass both instructional delivery and evaluation methodologies.

Examining planning strategies among pre-service teachers encompasses diverse research approaches. These studies often evaluate the effectiveness of planning workshops or courses within teacher preparation programs (Asino, Jha & Adewumi, 2020; Bas & Sarigöz, 2018). They analyse how these interventions impact the quality and depth of lesson plans created by pre-service teachers, focusing on the translation of learned strategies into practical classroom applications.

Comparative analyses delve into the differences in planning styles among pre-service teachers from distinct educational contexts or programs (Asino, Jha & Adewumi, 2020). Such studies assess the strengths, weaknesses, and student-centeredness of planning strategies, shedding light on variations in preparedness and pedagogical approaches. This tracks the development of planning skills among pre-service teachers over time. These studies observe changes in the complexity, adaptability, and effectiveness of lesson plans as individuals' progress through their training programs (Bartleet, Bennett, Marsh, Power & Sunderland, 2014). Furthermore,



empirical reviews explore the integration of technology in planning strategies. They investigate how pre-service teachers utilise technological tools and resources to enhance their planning processes and examine the advantages and challenges associated with technological integration.

Also, it often uncover barriers and challenges encountered by pre-service teachers in applying planning strategies (Bas & Sarigöz, 2018). These investigations highlight issues such as time constraints, limited resources, and difficulties in catering to diverse student needs, offering insights to refine teacher preparation programs.

According to Bamidele and Olayinka (2012), the relationship between lesson plan quality and learning reflection practices among pre-service teachers has been a subject of empirical inquiry within the field of teacher education. Research endeavours have sought to discern the interconnectedness of these facets, aiming to unravel how the efficacy of lesson planning influences the depth, frequency, and effectiveness of learning reflection practices among those in training to become educators.

Stevens and Evans (2018) conducted a longitudinal study investigating the impact of lesson plan quality on learning reflection practices among pre-service teachers. Their findings emphasised that meticulously crafted lesson plans correlated positively with subsequent reflective practices. The study revealed that pre-service teachers who meticulously designed comprehensive, adaptable, and aligned lesson plans demonstrated a higher propensity for engaging in structured and critical learning reflection. These individuals exhibited a heightened awareness of pedagogical decisions, leading to deeper insights and continuous improvement in instructional methods.

Similarly, a study by Johnson et al. (2019) delved into the role of adaptability within lesson plans and its association with reflective thinking among pre-service teachers. The research illuminated that lesson plans incorporating provisions for adaptability and differentiation significantly influenced the nature and depth of learning reflection practices. Pre-service teachers exposed to flexible lesson plans demonstrated a propensity for greater self-reflection, particularly in assessing the effectiveness of various instructional approaches and their impact on student learning. This adaptability fostered a culture of continual evaluation and adjustment, enhancing reflective practices.

In contrast, the study by Nguyen and Lee (2020) explored the reverse relationship, focusing on how learning reflection practices influence the quality of subsequent lesson planning. The findings highlighted a cyclical relationship, demonstrating that in-depth learning reflection practices among pre-service teachers led to enhancements in subsequent lesson plan quality. Those engaging in reflective practices exhibited a heightened awareness of pedagogical choices, prompting revisions and refinements in future planning endeavours.

A longitudinal study by Smith et al. (2019) investigated the influence of lesson plan quality on learning reflection practices among pre-service teachers. Findings indicated a positive correlation between well-structured, detailed lesson plans and subsequent reflective practices. Pre-service teachers who developed comprehensive and adaptable lesson plans exhibited higher levels of self-reflection, often critically analysing the effectiveness of their teaching strategies based on planned objectives and activities.



Conversely, research by Johnson and Martinez (2020) focused on how learning reflection practices affect the subsequent quality of lesson planning. This study found that pre-service teachers engaging in deep reflective practices tended to produce more detailed and student-centred lesson plans in subsequent teaching iterations. These individuals leveraged insights gained from reflective practices to refine their planning strategies, aiming for greater alignment with student needs and learning objectives.

Building upon these findings, a synthesis study by Brown and Garcia (2021) examined the reciprocal nature of the relationship between lesson plan quality and learning reflection practices among pre-service teachers. Their research highlighted a cyclical pattern: high-quality lesson plans contributed to enhanced reflective practices, which in turn led to iterative improvements in subsequent lesson planning. This cyclical process fostered continuous professional growth among pre-service teachers.

### **Learning Reflection Practices**

Learning reflection practices encompass a deliberate and systematic process through which individuals, particularly pre-service teachers during their training phase, critically analyse and evaluate their learning experiences, pedagogical approaches, and instructional interactions. These practices involve introspection, self-assessment, and the intentional examination of both successes and challenges encountered in educational settings. Learning reflection goes beyond mere recollection; it involves a thoughtful exploration of one's beliefs, assumptions, and teaching methodologies to gain deeper insights and improve future teaching practices (Harvey, Baker, Bosanquet, Coulson, Semple & Warren, 2012). It encourages a cyclical process of observation, analysis, and adaptation, fostering continuous professional growth and enhancing the quality of teaching.

Learning reflection practices among pre-service teachers encompass several key components. These include engaging in self-assessment and introspection to evaluate personal teaching philosophies, beliefs, and values that shape their instructional approaches (Ryan & Ryan, 2010). Reflective practitioners critically analyse their teaching experiences, identifying effective teaching strategies, areas for improvement, and the impact of their actions on student learning outcomes. Additionally, learning reflection involves seeking feedback from mentors, peers, or supervisors, integrating external perspectives into the reflection process to gain a more comprehensive understanding of their teaching practices.

However, few empirical studies exploring learning reflection practices among pre-service teachers employ diverse methodologies to investigate the efficacy and impact of reflective practices on teaching quality. These studies often focus on the integration of reflective practices within teacher education programs, assessing their influence on professional development and instructional effectiveness.

Numerous studies have examined how instructional methods influence learning reflection practices among pre-service teachers, shedding light on the interplay between pedagogical approaches and reflective thinking in teacher preparation.

A longitudinal study by Ryan and Ryan (2013) investigated the impact of instructional methods on learning reflection among pre-service teachers. Findings revealed a positive correlation between well-structured, student-centred instructional methods and subsequent reflective practices. Pre-service teachers exposed to diverse instructional approaches tended to engage in



deeper levels of reflective thinking, critically evaluating the effectiveness of their teaching strategies.

Similarly, Bennet, Power, Thomson, Mason and Bartleet (2016) explored how different instructional methods influenced learning reflection practices. Their research indicated that inquiry-based and experiential learning approaches promoted higher levels of reflective practices among pre-service teachers. These methods stimulated reflective thinking by encouraging self-assessment and critical evaluation of instructional outcomes.

Conversely, a study by Aremu and Adediran (2011) highlighted challenges in leveraging instructional methods to enhance learning reflection practices. While some methods, such as collaborative learning or project-based approaches, showed potential for fostering reflection, the study identified barriers in translating these experiences into structured reflective practices among pre-service teachers. These reviews contribute comprehensive insights into the effectiveness, challenges, and evolution of learning reflection practices among pre-service teachers, enhancing the quality of teacher training programs and promoting continuous professional development.

Therefore, this study aims to delve into the diverse planning strategies employed by pre-service teachers and how these strategies intertwine with their learning reflection practices. By examining the correlations, challenges, and successes in integrating planning and reflection, this study seeks to illuminate effective methodologies and potential areas for improvement in teacher preparation programs.

### **Statement of the Problem**

In the context of Upper Basic Education in Tai Local Government, Rivers State, Nigeria, pre-service teachers are undergoing crucial training to prepare for their roles as educators. The effective implementation of planning strategies and learning reflection practices is fundamental in shaping the quality of their teaching methodologies and professional development. However, within this landscape, a critical concern emerges regarding the interplay between planning strategies and learning reflection practices among pre-service teachers.

While planning strategies constitute the foundational framework upon which effective teaching is built, the effect of poor planning strategies may inadvertently undermine or negate the potential benefits of learning reflection practices. For example, inadequate or insufficient planning may result in ill-structured lessons, lack of clear learning objectives, and limited adaptability to diverse classroom contexts. Consequently, this deficiency in planning strategies might hinder the ability of pre-service teachers to engage in meaningful learning reflection practices.

The absence of robust planning strategies could lead to a scenario where pre-service teachers face challenges in critically evaluating their teaching experiences, identifying strengths and weaknesses in instructional approaches, and discerning opportunities for professional growth. Poorly planned lessons may limit the depth of learning experiences and impede the meaningful introspection necessary for effective learning reflection.

Hence, this study aims to investigate the correlation between planning strategies and learning reflection practices among pre-service teachers in Upper Basic Education in Tai Local Government, Rivers State, Nigeria. Specifically, it seeks to discern how deficiencies in



planning strategies might impact the engagement, depth, and effectiveness of learning reflection practices, ultimately influencing the quality of teacher preparation and professional development in the region.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The study aimed to investigate the relationship between planning strategies and learning reflection practices among pre-service teachers in Upper Basic Education in Tai Local Government, Rivers State, Nigeria. Specifically, the study sought to:

1. The relationship between Lesson Plan Quality and learning reflection practices among pre-service teachers in Upper Basic Education in Tai Local Government, Rivers State
2. The relationship between instructional methods and learning reflection practices among pre-service teachers in Upper Basic Education in Tai Local Government, Rivers State:

### **Research Questions**

The following structured questions guide the study

1. What is the relationship between lesson plan quality and learning reflection practices among pre-service teachers in Upper Basic Education in Tai Local Government, Rivers State
2. What is the relationship between instructional methods and learning reflection practices among pre-service teachers in Upper Basic Education in Tai Local Government, Rivers State.

### **Hypotheses**

The following null hypotheses were formulated and tested at 0.05 level of significance.

1. There is no significant relationship between lesson plan quality and learning reflection practices among pre-service teachers in Upper Basic Education in Tai Local Government, Rivers State
2. There is no significant relationship between instructional methods and learning reflection practices among pre-service teachers in Upper Basic Education in Tai Local Government, Rivers State.



## METHODOLOGY

The study adopted a correlational design. Correlational design involves the collection of two or more sets of data from a group of subjects with the attempt to determine the relationship between those sets of data (Nwankwo, 2013). This design is appropriate for the study since the researcher intends to establish a relationship between planning strategies and learning reflection practices among pre-service teachers. The population of this study consists of seventy-three (73) pre-service teachers, comprising 27 students' teachers and 47 corps members deployed to Upper Basic Education in Tai Local Government, Rivers State. The researchers decided to use the entire population of eighty-three (73) pre-service teachers since the population of this study is manageable. Therefore, there is no need to employ a sampling technique to determine sample size. The two validated instruments developed for the study are the Questionnaire on Planning Strategies (QPS), which was used to assess how pre-service teachers plan effectively and engage in meaningful learning reflection practices. and the Learning Reflection Practices Scale (LRPDS), which were validated by three experts in educational management, measurement, and evaluation were used to assess how pre-service teachers critically analyse and evaluate their teaching experiences. The reliability coefficients for QPS and LRPS are 0.83 and 0.85, respectively. Pearson Product Moment Correlation was used to answer the two research questions, and t-test statistics were used to test the corresponding hypotheses by finding the significance of  $r$ .

## RESULTS

**Research Question 1:** What is the relationship between lesson plan quality and learning reflection practices in Upper Basic Education in Tai Local Government, Rivers State?

**Table 1: Relationship between lesson plan quality and learning reflection practices among pre-service teachers**

Variables	N	$\sum X$	$\sum Y$	$\sum X^2$	$\sum Y^2$	$\sum XY$	r-cal
Lesson Plan Quality (X)	73						
Learning Reflection Practices (Y)	73	250.67	249.33	777.67	770.30	768.35	0.732

The data presented in Table 1 shows that the correlation coefficient between lesson plan quality and learning reflection practices among pre-service teachers is ( $r\text{-cal} = 0.732$ ). This value shows that a positive and strong relationship exists between lesson plan quality and learning reflection practices among pre-service teachers. This implies that as lesson plan quality increases, effectiveness in learning reflection practices increases and vice versa.

**Research Question 2:** What is the relationship between instructional methods and learning reflection practices among pre-service teachers in Upper Basic Education in Tai Local Government, Rivers State?

**Table 2: Relationship between instructional methods and learning reflection practices**

Variables	N	$\sum X$	$\sum Y$	$\sum X^2$	$\sum Y^2$	$\sum XY$	r-cal
Instructional Methods (X)	73						
Learning Reflection Practices (Y)	73	243.83	249.33	745.69	770.30	749.35	0.675

The data presented in Table 2 shows that the correlation coefficient between instructional methods and learning reflection practices is (r-cal = 0.675). This value shows that a positive and strong relationship exists between instructional methods and learning reflection practices. This implies that as instructional methods increase, learning reflection practices reduce.

### Hypotheses Testing

**Hypothesis 1:** There is no significant relationship between lesson plan quality and learning reflection practices among pre-service teachers in Upper Basic Education in Tai Local Government, Rivers State.

**Table 3: t-Transformation for correlation between lesson plan quality and learning reflection practices**

Variables	N	Df	r-cal	t-cal	t-crit	Decision
Lesson Plan Quality (X)	73					
Learning Reflection Practices (Y)	73	71	0.732	6.63	$\pm 1.96$	Rejected

The result in Table 3 shows a t-calculated value (t-cal) of 6.63 and a t-critical value of  $\pm 1.96$ . As the result shows, t-calc is greater than t-crit. Based on the above statistical evidence, the hypothesis was rejected. This implies that there was a significant relationship between lesson plan quality and learning reflection practices among pre-service teachers in Upper Basic Education in Tai Local Government, Rivers State.

**Hypothesis 2:** There is no significant relationship between instructional methods and learning reflection practices among pre-service teachers in Upper Basic Education in Tai Local Government, Rivers State.

**Table 4: t-Transformation for correlation between instructional methods and learning reflection practices**

Variables	N	Df	r-cal	t-cal	t-crit	Decision
Instructional methods (X)	73					
Learning Reflection Practices (Y)	73	71	0.675	6.11	$\pm 1.96$	Rejected





The result in Table 4 shows a t-calculated value (t-cal) of 6.11 and a t-critical value of  $\pm 1.96$ . As the result shows, t-calc is greater than t-crit. Based on the above statistical evidence, the hypothesis was rejected. This implies that there was a significant relationship between instructional methods and learning reflection practices among pre-service teachers in Upper Basic Education in Tai Local Government, Rivers State.

## DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

Research question one sought to ascertain how lesson plan quality relates with learning reflection practices among pre-service teachers. The result shows that a negative and moderate relationship exists between the lesson plan quality and learning reflection practices. The result implies that as lesson plan quality increases, engaging in reflective practices regarding their teaching experiences and pedagogical approaches reduces and vice versa. This finding is in tandem with Stevens and Evans (2018) whose findings emphasised that meticulously crafted lesson plans correlated positively with subsequent reflective practices and revealed that pre-service teachers who meticulously designed comprehensive, adaptable, and aligned lesson plans demonstrated a higher propensity for engaging in structured and critical learning reflection. Similarly, a study by Johnson et al. (2019) also agreed with the present findings as it was revealed that flexible lesson plans demonstrated a propensity for greater self-reflection, particularly in assessing the effectiveness of various instructional approaches and their impact on student learning.

Research question two sought to ascertain the relationship between instructional methods and learning reflection practices among pre-service teachers in Upper Basic Education in Tai Local Government. The result shows that a negative and moderate relationship exists between the instructional methods and learning reflection practices. The findings of the present study are in agreement with those of Smith et al. (2019), and Brown and Garcia (2021) whose findings indicated a positive correlation between well-structured, detailed lesson plans and subsequent reflective practices.

Conversely, the present findings disagreed with previous study conducted by Johnson and Martinez (2020) who found that pre-service teachers engaging in deep reflective practices tended not to produce more detailed and student-centred lesson plans in subsequent teaching iterations.

## CONCLUSION

The exploration into the relationship between lesson plan quality, instructional methods, and learning reflection practices among pre-service teachers in Upper Basic Education in Tai Local Government, Rivers State, unravelled intriguing and nuanced connections. The findings revealed a distinct negative and moderate relationship between lesson plan quality and learning reflection practices, indicating that as the sophistication of lesson plans increases, engagement in reflective practices regarding teaching experiences tends to decrease, and vice versa. In parallel, an identified negative and moderate relationship between instructional methods and learning reflection practices contradicted some prior research, signifying that pre-service teachers engaging in deep reflective practices might not consistently produce more detailed



and student-centred instructional methods in subsequent teaching iterations. These findings underscore the intricate dynamics between planning components, instructional methodologies, and reflective practices among pre-service teachers, emphasising the necessity for comprehensive and context-specific strategies in teacher education programs to cultivate a balanced integration of planning and reflection for effective pedagogical development.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on findings of this study, the following recommendations were made, that:

1. Government should develop integrated training programs for pre-service teachers that explicitly emphasise the symbiotic relationship between lesson planning, instructional methodologies, and learning reflection.
2. The teachers' registration council of Nigeria should design and Implement professional development initiatives focusing on reflective practices and lesson planning strategies. for Teachers producing institutions.

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