



# Teachers' Reflection on Meditation Practice in Basic-Level Classroom Instruction

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## Abstract

This study explored the teachers' reflections on the meditation strategies used during the training sessions for teaching and learning mathematics. The meditation practice was conducted among 88 basic-level teachers who participated in the physical or the online mode of training in the teachers' professional development (TPD) training program organized by government of Nepal. All the participants were asked to write their reflections by incorporating the learning and perceptions of meditation stories presented during teaching and learning mathematics. Four of the participants from each cohort, out of all participants, were asked to express their feelings on the meditation strategy on the basis of the process, content, and method of delivery of the content and recorded them. The data were then transcribed and linked with the written form of reflection. The themes were developed. The analysis of data suggests that the meditation strategy ensures focus and concentration with playful learning. It helps developing critical and creative thinking, with memory and understanding of any content through service learning and integrated learning. Participants teachers have shown commitment in applying meditation strategies their classroom instruction.

**Keywords:** Contextualization, meditation, soft skills, strategy, teaching

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## Introduction

We noticed that the students of the alpha generation have a short span of retention when teachers deliver lessons. The teachers share that it is very difficult to manage the classroom to create a learning environment. This situation can be the result of the development of different technological and social media and globalization. Because these innovations added high level of stress and distraction to the students as well as the teachers (Liu et al., 2022). We can observe changes in lifestyles as people prefer to use technology. The diversity of skills required for a job can be a burden. There are various factors in being easily distracted. The burden and diversity of the working area and knowledge have been facing obstacles by students in concentration and engagement in their daily activities according to priority (Das, 2019; Liu et al., 2022). The academic and professional pressure, interpersonal communications, scarcity of resources of life and stress have been distracting the mental health of teachers and

learners (Hagaman & Casey, 2018; Zarate et al., 2019). Meditation is one of the solutions for improving from such a situation. According to neuroscience the meditation help lower down the depression, anxiety, and stress, and in a relaxed state, the brain can absorb more information and retain it in memory (Matos Machado & Costa, 2015).

Mindfulness is considered as a mental state that focuses awareness on the present moment. It is a specific practice used to concentrate on the individual's attention through meditation, yoga, breathing, telling and listening stories, and focusing on pinpointing for wellness in small groups (Broderick & Jennings, 2012; Leland, 2015; Wisner, 2014). Mindfulness is a few minutes of quiet meditation at the beginning of the lesson works as the lesson for learners to enter a different mindset. Ordiway (2016) explained mindfulness as the conscious awareness of the present moment and the learning environment to fit into. The mindfulness activities are the strategies of changing brain structure and inhibiting the effect on

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the amygdala with a clinically proven method of self-regulation and non-judgmental concentration (Baranski & Was, 2019; Esch, 2013). Mindful meditation has a positive impact on students' mental health and enriches academic performance by recalling and reconstructing their experiences with connecting surrounding and inside thoughts (Leland, 2015; Napoli et al., 2005). Mindfulness plays a key role in the development and establishment of a positive emotional and social environment with physical and cognitive activities. The connection among the academic, social, and emotional learning with self-awareness and self-management is the competencies of mindfulness (Armstrong, 2019). Meditation is one of the most vital tools for mindfulness.

The meditation may differ according to the context, content, and the participants who are engaged in meditation. Meditation is perceived differently as the names suggest mindful meditation, concentrative meditation, Metta meditation, body scan meditation movement meditation, and guided visualization or visualization meditation (Bhajanandana, 1981). The maintenance of non-judgmental awareness focusing on thoughts, emotions, and sensations of the present moment are components of mindful meditation. Practically, mindfulness meditation increases self-regulation and concentration while reducing anxiety. The mindfulness meditation helps in increasing students' focus on subject matters by managing stress and emotional resilience (Zenner et al., 2014). The meditation with focusing single point, like as breath, a word, or an object, is called concentrative meditation. The mental discipline, attention span, and inner calm are included in it. This helps learners to develop strong cognitive control and academic persistence (Brown, 1977).

Meditation through cultivating unconditional affection and compassion towards others and own through visualizations and words is Metta meditation. The bullying reduction, peer relation development among classmates with an inclusive classroom atmosphere can foster empathy and emotional healing (Salzberg, 2011). In case of body scan meditation helps in reducing anxiety and physical tension by helping students by sensitizing the sensory organs with emotional sensitivities which helps to develop self-awareness and wellbeing among students (Taren et al., 2017). The physical activities, like walking, yoga, and mindful awareness, are connected through meditation to reduce restlessness and increase engagement with balancing emotions with cognitive functions is movement meditation (Jensen et al., 2012; Jensen & Kenny, 2004).

The meditation in which people create mental pictures of different scenes and experiences they have, along with the facilitators or any audio guidance, is termed as guided visualization. Guided by facilitators, helps to enhance creativity, relaxation, and motivation in learners (Yamabe, 2021). Visualization with imagination develops the positive mindset and readiness for the students and improves concentration, retention, and problem-solving skills through cognitive enrichment and emotional support. It includes

feelings, hearing, smelling, and testing with engaging all sense organs. Through form visualization meditation, we can achieve the goals and boost our confidence in our task. Visualization meditation promotes creativity, boosts confidence and self-image, helps to relieve stress and anxiety, and helps to cope with depression through learning (Aksu & Ayar, 2023; Frick et al., 2020). The safe place visualization exercise runs with finding a comfortable position, close your eyes and breathe, visualizing your safe place, engage your senses, feel safety and relaxation, stay in the moment, and return to reality. In a parallel sense, guided imaginary meditation (Wilmot, 2023).

Nowadays, the students, teachers, and parents have been distracted from their tasks and functions due to the development of different technological devices and the pressure of different tasks. That is why the students, as well as the teachers, are unable to concentrate on their tasks, causes a decrease in their results and efficiency in their tasks. To prevent such a result and increase efficiency in their task the concentration as well as active engagement in most important. For concentration and engagement, meditation is one of the important strategies. The teachers will use the meditation strategy, mainly the guided visualization meditation in the classroom that is why the students can focus on their class and lesson and can achieve better performance. The teachers and the staff of academic institutions may gain more efficiency in their functions and responsibilities.

## Methods

This qualitative study aimed to identify the thoughts and reflections of the basic level teachers after participating in meditation activity during training sessions. It also searched the commitment of teachers to implement the meditation strategy in classroom teaching and learning. Three groups, one of 28 participant teachers and two groups of each of 30 basic-level teachers and in total 88 in three groups taking Teachers Professional Development (TPD) training from Educational Training Center (ETC), were selected as the sample of the study. Among them, one group was participated in physical mode and rest two were in online mode of training. Among the samples, 20 participants from physical and 30 participants from online training responded to the question of their reflection on the meditation strategy in classroom instruction in written form. During the sessions, the facilitator conducted about five-minute short meditation activities by presenting the stories of Nepali language related to topics of mathematics at basic level including the contexts of basic operations. The participants were requested to play role of students as directed by the story. After that, the participants were requested to write their reflection regarding the meditation story, its effect in teaching and learning with incorporating the process of the learning, content used during the story, the pedagogy of the story, and application of the meditation in teaching and learning. The views from the respondent teachers were sorted and organized. After sorting the main ideas and key words they expressed I have finalized eleven teachers'

different and distinct views regarding the reflections and included them as teachers' number in discussion. Finally, the reflections were thematized on the basis of code generation and then analyzed by generating the themes from different codes.

## Discussion and Reflection

Since the sources of data were written responses from the teachers who participated in meditation activity during the training, there are different aspects and perceptions about meditation and its implications in teaching and learning. Regarding data, it was instructed to write their perception about the process of meditation, the content covered in the story of meditation, as guided meditation, and the pedagogy used for the delivery of the content. Based on the response to the open question "write your reflection and perception about the meditation conducted in your class based on process, content, and pedagogy". The responses were sorted, organized, coded, and after that thematized for meaning making. The themes generated are meditation as an alternative method of teaching and learning, meditation as a social value, meditation for creative and critical thinking, meditation as a tool for concentration and goal-oriented thinking, meditation as an integrated learning, and meditation as a means for developing life skills.

### Meditation as an Alternative Method of Teaching and Learning

The recent discourse in education increasingly explores alternative methods of teaching and learning that diverge from conventional teacher-centered pedagogies. The alternative methods are shifting to innovative methods such as cooperative and critical thinking, flipped learning, and others which basically reconfigure the roles of instructors and learners by empowering learners to create knowledge with active process (Bonk & Graham, 2006; Hmelo-Silver, 2004). There is a focus on conceptual understanding that leads to metacognition and self-realization. The connection of content with the event or any real-life situation is also necessary for the betterment of learning. Regarding these concerns, the participants' views are presented in the following narrations.

*This method is funny about the different content matter that helps to develop the concept of different topics by integrating them in a sequential order. (Teacher 1)*

*The meditation stories connect the context and real situation which makes the learning sustainable and the teacher feels at ease. (Teacher 3)*

*The meditation helps to activate mental activities with motivational thinking. The emotional attachment with the environment is also felt by the students during the meditation. (Teacher 4)*

*It is the alternative method of teaching and learning that we have been practicing in our classroom.*

*It makes the boundary of the learning wider and more critical. (Teacher 2)*

*It will help to raise awareness about different hazards and opportunities and teach the capacity to solve different obstacles.*

*The happiness of the students during the activities of sharing with friends helps in learning about different contextual things. (Teacher 5)*

Meditation stories are meaningful alternative methods of teaching and learning that diverge from traditional, subject-isolated instruction with affective engagement through context integration. This method weaves a coherent and sequential narrative of multiple content with exploring diverse concepts such as numeracy, social and environmental awareness, and problem solving within a single story. The meditation stories anchor learning with contextual as well as relating the situation to enhance relevance, sustainability, and internalize knowledge, both memorable and applicable. It encourages critical awareness of real-world challenges and nurtures resilience through practical problem-solving with holistic and interdisciplinary learning through mindfulness, empathy, and contextual understanding. Meditation not only exemplifies how alternative methods can democratize learning but also reduce teachers' stress, cultivates joyful, capable, and conscious learners in this era.

### Meditation for Developing Social Values

Learning to live together is one of the four pillars of 21st-century education. Learning is not only gaining knowledge but also acquiring the social skills to develop social values and norms (Ojha et al., 2023). Meditation strategy in learning is essential for the development of social values of learners. Similarly, the participant teachers expressed that,

*During the meditation, the students can experience the different social individual activities and roles in society. (Teacher 2)*

*During the meditation, I have deep focus on the social task, along with the culture of the distributive, along with the communication with the elders and others, with a happy life. (Teacher 6)*

The learners foster empathy, patience, and emotional regulation through cooperation, kindness and responsibility, and shared well-being social interaction (Hazaimeh et al., 2024). The meditation in the mathematics classroom helps students in holistic development through connecting different social norms in education and different educational activities such as assessment and decision making (Lippman, 2024). The mediation strategies not only recall the content knowledge of the students but also help in acquiring the social responsibilities and cultures. It also helps students to play their role in society. Engert et al. (2023) explained that meditation spreads positive influence through personal actions, improving cognitive functions for collective response to social challenges.

## Meditation for Creative and Critical Thinking

Critical thinking lies at the heart of many intellectual pursuits, where students learn to identify or formulate an argument, utilize evidence to back it up, reach logical conclusions, and apply information to address problems. In a parallel sense, critical thinking abilities include inferring, hypothesizing, assessing, clarifying, ordering, reasoning, and generalizing (Anderson et al., n.d.; Krathwohl, 2002). Similarly, creative thinking enables students to acquire the ability to produce and implement novel concepts of particular subject matter. Also, the students analyze and merge different elements to create something new based on the learned experience. The representation, explorations, performances, and creation distinguish ideas are the main skills of creative thinking (Australian Curriculum Assessment and Reporting Authority [ACARA], 2016). Regarding the creative and critical thinking, teachers expressed that,

*Meditation can help to teach different content and concepts while controlling the class, although the class size is large. The students can link their thinking with the content and contextualize and learn the content. (Teacher 1)*

*It makes the classroom environment quiet and develops the thinking and listening skills effectively, my concentration, and deep understanding. (Teacher 2)*

*Meditation stories connect the students with real situations and help to develop application skills, thinking skills, with critical and creative thinking with collaboration in an funny way. The stories for counting and basic operations for the basic level help to develop the different concepts with a single story that helps the students to make the learning effective with multiple skills (Teacher, 7)*

According to the cognitive theories of learning (Huitt & Hummel, 2003) the learning takes place by developing a mental map through interaction. The interaction will be both personal, with thinking differently and thinking alternatively, and among peers. Meditation helps the students think about the concept and content presented in the story. Furthermore, it helps in developing the integrated thinking on subject matter with thematic order.

## Meditation for Concentration and Goal Oriented Thinking

By concentrating and focusing attention the learners minimize distractions to enhance productivity and learning by fostering deeper engagement (Goleman & Davidson, 2017). Locke and Latham (2019) suggest that clear and measurable objectives raise the inspiration and determination in learners. In academic sessions, different techniques of mindfulness concentration practice help to achieve the intended goals (Jha et al., 2020). Furthermore, goal-oriented practice not only strengthens natural pathways but also enhances cognitive control in learners.

Based on this theme, the participant teachers expressed the following benefits.

*Meditation helps students to learn the subject matter with deep concentration. The meditation stories connect the students with real situations and help to develop application skills, thinking skills. (Teacher 1)*

*Meditation helps the student to sit in discipline with concentration on the subject matter. Students can link their thinking with the content and contextualize and learn the content in relaxed and disciplined environment. (Teacher 2)*

*Meditation is more useful for warm-up activities to motivate the students, to maintain classroom discipline. Furthermore, the emotional attachment to the environment was also felt by the students during the meditation. (Teacher 3)*

*It makes the classroom environment quiet and develops the thinking and listening skills effectively, my concentration, and deep understanding. (Teacher 4)*

*We can teach the content by easily motivating the students with active concentration for effective understanding and connecting the context and real situation, which makes the learning sustainable and the teacher feels easy. (Teacher 5)*

*We can find different mountains to climb if we climb a mountain properly. So, Meditation opens the eye of learning by concentrating on the subject matter with functional thinking and predictive thinking on the basis of the concept and schema in our mind. (Teacher 6)*

Learners' concentration is the most important part for learning in a proper way. The teachers are the environment creators for the learning, and the learners create the knowledge with cognitive interaction (Moore, 2011). Students' level of thinking depends upon how the learner is motivated for the teaching and learning and knowledge development. According to Ryan and Deci (2017) the meditation opens gateways for concentration and motivation with different types of skills and ideas. Concentration not only creates ideas but also links different ideas with other stabilized ideas in the respective subject area and content.

## Meditation in Integrated Learning

The learning that combines multiple disciplines and creates a holistic educational experience to foster different soft and life skills by connecting them with real-world problem-solving is integrated learning. The integration may be disciplinary and interdisciplinary according to need and the nature of the subject matter (Kunwar et al., 2024). The meditation story integrates different disciplinary and interdisciplinary subject matter in a single scene, which helps in developing disciplinary and interdisciplinary knowledge in depth.

The content matter of different topics is presented sequentially, which helps to learn different knowledge simultaneously by connecting them to each other with appropriate integration. So, it is useful. (Teacher 4)

Meditation can help to teach different content and concepts while controlling the class, although the class size is large. The students can link their thinking with the content and contextualize and learn the content. (Teacher 5)

We can integrate different concepts and subject matters in a single story and use it in classroom teaching, which is very interesting, develops the thinking skills, and helps the students to present their understanding with the help of meditation and reflection. (Teacher 6)

It will help to raise awareness about different hazards and opportunities and teach the capacity to solve different obstacles. (Teacher 7)

This approach allows for the simultaneous acquisition of diverse knowledge by explicitly linking topics together, making the learning process more useful for students. The pedagogical strategy highlights the integration of different concepts and subject matters in a single story is more powerful in learning. Integration is seen as a method to significantly increase student participation and engagement in learning in an interesting way. It helps to foster higher order thinking skills and enables students to articulate their knowledge through practices like meditation and reflection. These reflective practices are further detailed as useful tools for classroom management, particularly in large settings, allowing students to link their thinking with the content and contextualize and learn the material effectively.

### **Meditation for Developing Soft Skills**

The main achievement of integrating specific pedagogical strategies in classroom instruction is developing life skills, including soft skills and hard skills. The conceptual understanding and experiential learning demand active participation, which includes teamwork and communication, and students' mental activities. The reflective practice of events and strategies allows the students to internalize their learning, assess their own strengths and weaknesses, and develop essential self-awareness and emotional intelligence for personal growth (Pashchenko et al., 2024) Regarding this theme, the teachers' views are;

Meditation increases and develops the skills of thinking critically, with understanding the context of any event to increase the understanding of learning while developing the feeling of learning. (Teacher 4)

It makes the classroom environment quiet and develops the thinking and listening skills effectively,

my concentration, and deep understanding. (Teacher 5)

Meditation can help to teach different content and concepts while controlling the class, although the class size is large. The students can link their thinking with the content and contextualize and learn the content. (Teacher 9)

Meditation is more useful for warm-up activities to motivate the students, to maintain the classroom discipline, to develop thinking skills, and to teach the content with thematic order, as in an integrated curriculum. (Teacher 10)

The meditation strategy helps not only the content matter but also with the process and different life skills and soft skills, which are more essential for the student for their academic, social, and cultural life. It will help to raise awareness about different hazards and opportunities and teach the capacity to solve different obstacles. (Teacher 11)

The data show meditation as a multifaceted tool that goes far beyond simple relaxation in order to optimize the academic environment and development of soft skills. Developing the capacity in depth for contextual understanding of an incident changes the learning from rote memorization to meaningful understanding. The cognition will be accompanied by notable attention gains since meditation is crucial for classroom management that facilitates the creation of a calm learning environment, allowing teachers to manage classes with a variety of students. Also, the meditation through the subject-specific stories assesses the student's ability to connect concepts.

### **Contextualization of the Content**

The process of placing ideas, events and information within their appropriate background or territories to hence the deeper understanding is contextualization. The presentation of relevant historical, cultural and social stories allows for deeper interpretation of the knowledge. The connection of isolated facts or concepts to them to their wider environment helps to make the content more meaningful and relatable (Matleena, 2023). Regarding this concept the teachers' views are;

It helps students to learn the subject matter with deep concentration. The meditation stories connect the students with real situations and helps to develop application skill, thinking skills, with critical and creative thinking with collaboration and funny way. (Teacher 4)

The students become more curious for learning in meditation since the teacher connects the subject matter with context and real-world situation with help of story. It develops the skills of patience and discipline with listening and thinking. (Teacher 8)

*The students can recall and memorize different mathematical concepts and the content with active listening the story from meditation and connecting them with real context. And respectful environment will be created with the class. (Teacher 9)*

Mathematics is a key subject of daily life. It helps to solve the different problems related to life. Also the contextual mathematics teaching is the requirement of present competency-based curriculum (Curriculum Development Center [CDC], 2021; Stek et al., 2025). It is seen that the learning is directly proportional to the context-based teaching and learning. The meditation strategy directly connects the content to the context by developing the stories with suitable contextual content matter. The socio-cultural concepts not only connect the content matter to the society but also helps students to make the learning permanent. Since the meditation stories connect the social issues and events to the content through stories the learners easily obtain the goals.

## Conclusion

Meditation is a transformative pedagogical tool to enhance not only cognitive skills but also the learning environment. The development of critical, creative, and sequential thinking with deep contextual understanding, moving learning beyond rote memorization in students is the core benefit of meditation in teaching and learning. The boosting of student focus, developing concentration, active listening, and a deep understanding of subject matter are the crucial aspects of meditation. The meditation technique is highly effective for proper classroom management, establishing a quiet, disciplined, and respectful environment in heterogeneous classes. It actively motivates the students and ensures they are ready for effective learning. By integrating content into real-world stories and situational examples, meditation makes learning sustainable, connects abstract concepts without the need for immediate formal exam, and makes subjects more interesting and applicable. This teaching approach facilitates the integration of different concepts of subject matters by continuously developing necessary life skills such as patience and active listening, interpersonal and personal skills, emotional skills, and the capacity for solving obstacles. Furthermore, meditation is proposed as a vital, alternative teaching method that Borden the boundaries of learning that activates learners' cognitive processes in an effective way.

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## Conflict of Interest

The authors declare there is no conflict of interest.

## Data Availability

Date supporting this study are available from the first author

upon reasonable request due to ethical consideration.

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