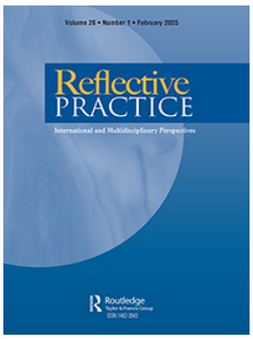

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Critical reflection and global citizenship education: exploring the views and experiences of teacher educators

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ABSTRACT

Reflection and reflective practice are internationally recognised as vital and central dimensions of initial teacher education (ITE) programmes. Despite this, numerous studies have identified issues relating to the process and impact of reflection on pre-service teachers views and practices, with critical reflection frequently remaining elusive. Drawing on in-depth interview data with teacher educators ($n = 5$), this paper explores teacher educators' experience, concerns and understanding of reflection within ITE and the relationship between reflection and Global Citizenship Education (GCE). GCE is UNESCO's response to global inequality and unsustainability and when integrated appropriately and effectively in education settings, can contribute to teaching and learning activities that support learners to explore the wider world and our place within it. Drawing on the data, the paper questions the dominant and persistent approaches to engaging with reflective practice and (critical) reflection within ITE, raising important questions around what reflection is or should be, and explores, through the lens of GCE, some possibilities for future practice.

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Introduction

Reflection and reflective practice play a significant role in teacher education and teacher education programmes (Harford & MacRuairc, 2008; Teaching Council of Ireland, 2020). Newell (1996) describes the essence of reflection as, 'the interaction of experiences with analysis of beliefs about those experiences' (p. 568). It can be used to enable pre-service teachers (PSTs) to address difficulties encountered in their teaching; it can also, at a more critical level, contribute to deeper critical insight and questioning of practices, assumptions, and traditional modes of teaching (McGarr & McCormack, 2014). Reflective practice supports PSTs in developing skills of reflection, moving from mere descriptive accounts of their practices to more critical approaches, where they explore the beliefs and assumptions that underpin prevailing practices (Beauchamp, 2015; McGarr et al., 2019).

Global citizenship education (GCE) remains a complex and contested area, debated from the perspective of neoliberal, market-orientated theories to critical, environmental

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and social-justice orientated theories (Bosio, 2023b; Giroux & Bosio, 2021; Torres & Bosio, 2020). While GCE is a relatively new term, the presence of its associated disciplines and activities, including global inequality, human rights, social justice, and sustainability, can be traced for decades (Bourn, 2020; Tarozzi & Torres, 2018; UNESCO, 2016). Internationally, GCE is UNESCO's response to global inequality and unsustainability, identifying GCE's cognitive, socio-emotional and behavioural learning dimensions (UNESCO, 2015). Indeed, the definition as espoused by UNESCO (2015), as often cited, suggests that GCE comprises the cultivation of 'the knowledge, skills, values and attitudes that learners need to be able to contribute to a more inclusive, just and peaceful world' (p. 15). Central to this, is the learner's ability to engage with critical self-reflection (Andreotti, 2006, 2011; OECD, Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, 2018). Indeed, critical GCE highlights the importance of learners reflecting upon their own knowledge and assumptions, and "exploring the implications of their own ways of seeing and being in the world in relation to power, relationships, and the distribution of labour and resources (Blackmore, 2016, p. 39).

Drawing on the research findings presented in this article, we argue that the approaches to reflection in initial teacher education (ITE) need to be reconsidered if reflection is to be critical in nature and is to support PSTs to identify and challenge inequalities within the world. The findings highlight the strong link between reflection and GCE, particularly critical GCE and presents GCE as a vehicle to empower learners to engage with critical reflection in ITE. While the Irish context is a particularly unique one, in terms of the mandate for reflection and GCE to be included as core elements of all ITE programmes (as per the Teaching Council of Ireland *Céim: Standards for Initial Teacher Education* 2020), this article may be of interest to the national and international teacher education community and GCE practitioners. The article is set out as follows. Firstly, reflection and reflective practice are briefly introduced, followed by a discussion on the links between reflection and GCE. The methodology framing the study is described and findings are presented. Finally, the authors offer some considerations and implications for practice.

Reflection and reflective practice

Dewey (1938) substantiated the relationship between reflection and education, suggesting that experience results from the interplay of continuity and interaction, and through reflection, one can predict consequences of future actions based on previous experiences. According to Dewey (1910/1933, the core principle of reflective thought/practice lies in systematically examining experiences and ideas rigorously, responsibly, and honestly, and thus described reflective practice as a systematic process of decision making comprising three major components. The first component is a process that engages the learner in a systematic way of thinking for the purpose of meaning making. The second component advocates that the learner embody a specific reflective disposition comprising three attitudes, 'open mindedness', 'whole heartedness' and 'responsibility'. It is important that these traits are not passive but come from a place of genuine concern for others and a desire to understand the multiple viewpoints that other people hold. The third component reflects the dialogic dimension of reflective practice, suggesting that reflection requires language and communicating, and is therefore best done in a group setting

with other people (Dewey, 1910/1933). Schön (1983) described the process of 'reflection in action', referring to the ability of professionals to consciously examine what they are doing and why, as they do it, while 'reflection on action' refers to reflection that happens after an event. A. Y. Kolb and Kolb (2005) suggested that 'immediate or concrete experiences are the basis for observations and reflections' (p. 194). They recognised, that from these reflections, emerge new, 'abstract concepts' and 'implications for action' that guide the creation of new experiences (D. Kolb, 1984, p. 194). Simply put, reflection can be thought of as 'a process of turning experience into learning' (Boud, 2001, p. 10).

Building on the seminal work of Dewey (1910/1933) and Schön (1983), contemporary authors have defined reflection in a variety of ways; as conscious thought informed by experiential learning, involving criticality, problem solving and evaluation leading to change (Anderson, 2020); as a way of understanding one's life and actions (Fook, 2015); as a state of mind engaged in assigning coherence to experiences, thus constituting an ongoing component of practice (Bolton, 2010; Clarà, 2015; Ng et al., 2015); as a method of engaging in attentive, critical, exploratory and iterative interactions with thoughts, actions and the self with a goal of change (Nguyen et al., 2014); as a means to make tacit knowledge explicit (Ravanal Moreno et al., 2021); and as a process that enables learning in and from direct experiences (Saric & Steh, 2017). As such, within education, reflective practice can be understood as context-dependant, cyclical, self-analytical and self-critical process whereby educators continually examine, investigate, and analyse dimensions of tacit pedagogical action and decision-making, to translate experiences into constructive changes in their professional practice (Saric & Steh, 2017; Tessema, 2008; Tripp & Rich, 2012). Reflective practice therefore involves thoughtful and systematic action, completed through constant self-inquiry where the learner comprehensively reviews their experiences to inform future practice (Cruickshank, 1996; Jay & Johnson, 2002; Tang, 2002). Critical reflection focuses on questioning and challenging our preconceived ideas, practices and assumptions (Beauchamp, 2015; Brookfield, 2017; McGarr et al., 2019). Therefore, core to critical reflection, is the individual's ability to explore thoughts, feelings and experiences (both past and present); identify, question, and assess deeply-held assumptions and beliefs – about our knowledge, the way we perceive events and issues and apply learning to future experiences or actions (Dewey, 1910/1933; Eyler et al., 1996).

Many authors have proposed models or scaffolds to support and guide reflection, with these frequently forming the basis of reflection within ITE (Brookfield, 2017; Driscoll, 2006; Jasper, 2013; Korthagen, 2001; Moon, 2004; Rolfe et al., 2001; Yost et al., 2000; Zeichner & Liston, 2014). Supporting and developing reflection and reflective practice within and amongst pre-service teachers is an on-going challenge, with critical reflection frequently remaining elusive (McGarr & McCormack, 2014). Burt and Morgan (2014) identified several barriers to reflective practice including workload, incentives, enforcement, and support. Equally, individuals may not want to engage in what they perceive as self-criticism as it may position them as less-than or not enough (McGarr & O'Gallchoir, 2020). Others problematize the use of reflective assessments/assignments (Ball, 2000; Hobbs, 2007; Lindgren & McDaniel, 2012; McGarr & O'Gallchoir, 2020; Ross, 2011); the challenges of allocating and facilitating enough time for reflection and reflective practice processes (Rose, 2013); a lack of confidence regarding reflection and reflective practice (Cavanagh & Prescott, 2010); and finally, individuals may not want to engage in self-criticism and give

honest reflections as this can reduce perceived self-esteem (McGarr & O'Gallchoir, 2020; Preuss & Alicke, 2017).

Reflection, reflective practice and global citizenship education (GCE)

This section briefly introduces the concept of Global Citizenship Education (GCE) and proposes that reflection and reflective practice are essential for critical GCE. As mentioned previously, GCE is a complex and contested area and a relatively new term, where many have argued that GCE and its related traditions including, development education, global education, and education for sustainable development (ESD) have a crucial role to play in tackling injustices and making the world a more just and sustainable place (Andreotti, 2006; Bourn, 2020; Hogan & O'Flaherty, 2022; O'Flaherty & Liddy, 2018; O'Toole & O'Flaherty, 2022; Pashby et al., 2020; Tarozzi & Torres, 2018; UNESCO, 2016). GCE is UNESCO's response to global inequality and unsustainability and when integrated appropriately and effectively in education settings, can contribute to teaching and learning activities that support learners to explore the wider world and our place within it.

Conceptualisations of GCE learning processes vary. For example, building on the seminal work of Freire (1970/1996, Andreotti (2006, 2011) advocated moving away from 'softer' approaches to GCE, where individuals act from a sense of responsibility for another, for the sake of acting, and therefore the desire to effect change in the world is prompted by self-fulfilment. More 'critical' approaches motivate learners to go beyond mere 'compassion for the vulnerable', and rather strive to comprehend the structures that maintain 'asymmetries of power and wealth' (Dobson, 2006, p. 169). Bosio (2023b, p. 3) argues that competition-based and economic-neoliberal conceptualisations of GCE privilege a conceptualisation of GCE "aimed at fostering 'global human resources', rather than 'critical global citizens'. Conversely, GCE pedagogies framed by critical pedagogy reflect a conceptualisation of GCE that values social justice and the development of critical global citizens (Bosio, 2023b). Key to this debate are conceptual and pedagogical choices as elicited by the educator. Others suggest that interpretations of GCE cannot be considered critical if they do not problematize the universality of western knowledge and beliefs (Stein, 2020) or keep current hegemonies in place (de Vries, 2020). The work of the United Nations and many non-governmental organisations have positioned critical GCE with an obligation to question/challenge existing power structures and associated governmental, political, and social activities (Roman, 2003). Critical GCE highlights the importance of learners reflecting upon their own beliefs, values, knowledge and assumptions. Rooted in social justice (Giroux & Bosio, 2021; McLaren & Bosio, 2022), critical GCE invites learners to examine preconceived values and perspectives in both local and global settings and reflect upon their understanding of the world (Bosio, 2020, 2023a). It promotes caring ethics, underpinned by a commitment to human rights; encourages environmental and ecological awareness; and supports learners as agents of social change (Bosio, 2020, 2023a). Blackmore (2016) suggested that the 'signature move' of critical GCE is

> the emphasis on reflection and a focus on examining the self and one's own assumptions, knowledge, and implications [therefore] becoming aware of connections between oneself and others, and the wider socio-political and natural environment (p. 44).

Bourn (2015) also acknowledges that GCE pedagogy comprises a commitment to reflection, dialogue, and transformation. The focus on reflection and reflective practice

is also evidenced across numerous international GCE/ESD (Education for Sustainable Development) competence models and frameworks (Barth, 2015; DeHaan, 2010; OECD, Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, 2018; Rieckmann, 2012; UNESCO, 2017; Wiek et al., 2011, 2016). From an Irish perspective, the focus on reflection, reflective practice and GCE in ITE is reflective of broader policy goals across the continuum of teacher education, and post-primary education (Teaching Council of Ireland, 2015, 2020, 2021).

Bosio (2023b) advocates that GCE practitioners 'must create safe spaces for reflective dialogue where students are empowered to critically examine the reality of social inequalities' (p. 9). Engagement with reflection and reflective practice can facilitate critical thinking and varying value orientations (Eynon & Gambino, 2017; Penny Light et al., 2012; Reynolds & Patton, 2014; Rogers, 2001); and engaging with reflection on the experiences of others may promote empathy and socially-just behaviour (Najmabadi, 2017). GCE, therefore demands a learner-centred, autonomous approach, where learners reflect and build upon their own experiences and social contexts to develop their knowledge and understanding (Leicht et al., 2018). The educator supports the learners 'to ask critical reflective questions, clarify values, envision more positive futures, think systematically, and respond through applied learning' (Tilbury, 2011, p. 29). Embracing these approaches creates space for plurality of perspectives rather than a pre-determined formula for what learners should do or think. Developing these dispositions to learning, and the competences associated with critical GCE, therefore require continued and critical self-reflection (Blackmore, 2016; UNESCO, 2002).

Methodology

This study set out to explore teacher educators' views, understandings and experiences of reflection and reflective practice within ITE and the relationship they saw between reflection and GCE. Using semi-structured interviews with teacher educators ($n = 5$), the study was framed by the following research question: What is the role of reflection and reflective practice in GCE? This study was embedded within the interpretivist paradigm and used qualitative research methods is to generate data from and interviews (Thomas, 2017). Ethical approval was granted by the relevant Research Ethics Committee. Participants' informed consent was obtained, and pseudonyms were used for anonymity.

Participants, methods, and data analysis

Teacher educators (TEs) were purposively sampled. Six TEs were initially invited to participate due to their involvement with GCE and reflection/reflective practice. Information sheets and consent forms were circulated to all participants. Five TEs agreed to be interviewed. Kelchtermans et al. (2018) suggest that the term 'teacher educator' is generally used as a broad overarching term that includes all educational professionals who are involved in and responsible for pre-service and in-service teacher education (including academy and school-based professionals). For the purposes of this study, we limit our definition of teacher educators to those who work in higher education institutes (that is colleges and universities) and who are involved in teaching students registered on a pre-service teacher education programme. The

volunteer interviewees ($n = 5$, two males, three females), varied in role (contributing to foundation disciplines and professional studies), and experience (mean 17 years). Semi-structured interviews were utilised and open-ended questions were included to facilitate flexibility, allowing participants to explore issues as they occurred during the interviews (Bell, 2010; Thomas, 2017). Interviews were conducted online using MS Teams and lasted for approximately 50 minutes. The interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed for later analysis.

The interview data was analysed using Braun and Clarke's (2013) six-phase inductive thematic data analysis framework, which included familiarisation with the data, generation of initial codes, search for themes, review of themes, definition and naming of themes and final report writing. The constant comparative method was utilised for data analysis and meaning making purposes (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). This involved moving back and forth over the data repeatedly comparing elements with other gathered data in the transcripts (Thomas, 2017), identifying emerging themes and patterns and coding to identify and note aspects that related to the research questions (Braun & Clarke, 2013, 2019).

Findings

Framed by the research question: What is the role of reflection and reflective practice in GCE, three themes emerge: Reflection as noticing and taking responsibility; concerns with dominant approaches to reflection; supporting reflection, and reflection in GCE

Reflection as noticing and taking responsibility

Participants did not view reflection as something separate to an individual, that one engages in at particular set times. Reflection '*is not just a once off moment . . . '* (P1). Rather, participants viewed reflection as '*ongoing (P1)* and as *'permeating everything we do'* (P3). Reflection was therefore conceived as being '*a part of who you are as a person'* (P3), or '*a part of the DNA'* (P4). Ultimately, participants viewed reflection, and the reflective process, *'as stance . . . as a way of being in the world'* (P5). A core dimension of this 'stance', according to participants, is '*noticing*' and giving time, space, and support to enable teachers to notice dimensions of the world in which they live. Participants suggested for example that reflection is *'paying attention to what's going on around you'* (P2) and '*is a kind of critical inquisitiveness'* (P5). This is further reflected in the two excerpts below:

> Helping [PSTs] to notice and giving them opportunities to experience that in a kind of intense way under scrutiny . . . developing among pre-service teachers the capacity to notice things. (P2)

> I am going to get my students to stop and notice a bit more. . . . it can be done by getting people to notice things about what some else has written . . . it can be done by getting people to notice from pictures . . . It can be done by provoking people into thinking more deeply . . . making people wide awake to the world through different experiences. (P3)

While '*individuals need to be open to noticing . . . .and to having a certain disposition*' (P1), participants believed that students could be supported to 'notice' by encouraging

curiosity and through asking well-framed questions that draw attention to key issues, thereby giving time and creating space within classes to notice and give attention to critical issues. For example:

> That is why I mentioned Maxine Greene because she talks about noticing and dwelling and responding. You know, what did you notice in this? When you stay with it a bit longer, what comes to you? What's your response to it now? So, asking the right questions to get some of the responses up . . . a pedagogy of slow time. (P3)

Excessive emphasis on 'problem solving' within the reflective process was deemed to result in less space and time for 'noticing'. While participants did not place significant value on 'solving problems' through reflection, they did value reflection as a process through which individuals could take responsibility for their role in society, as citizens in the world. This is particularly true in terms of understanding, exploring and challenging inequality. The following examples, while long, illustrate this:

> Reflection is really about them taking responsibility for thinking more deeply about it, by negotiating with others . . . it really means discommoding one's assumptions, breaking with the standardisation, maybe even the very simple equality idea that everyone should be treated the same – well that's not very equal foe some people . . . so reflection really is about doing that kind of work . . . looking at one's outcomes and finding out how many from a particular group succeeded in education, where are they now? Learning from positive stories and less positive stories and then bringing it back in again to what it is we do now. (P1)

> I think when we look at it, responsibility has to have quite a significant weight to it, because we are quite privileged people in the context of a global world . . . I think when it comes to citizenship. Responsibility has to be very, very high on the agenda because it's the practices that we engage in that result in exploitative behaviours in other parts of the globe. (P5)

This was considered particularly important for pre-service teachers who, some participants felt, didn't notice, or identify inequalities within the education system. Rather pre-service teachers often do not *believe that there is any inequality . . . they believe that they got to where they have on their own merits and not because of any structural inequality . . . they are not aware of the privileges they may have had* (P2). Participants argued that challenging such perspectives was central to reflection.

Supporting PSTs to consider and take responsibility could, according to participants, be achieved through creating opportunities to explore, understand, and question the inequalities that exist within the world; within ourselves and within others. We need, according to Participant 3, '*to look at our own assumptions because no matter how we read anything else, if we don't read ourselves and if we don't know how to read ourselves, we won't know how to read another*'.

Concerns with dominant approaches to reflection

In comparison to the approaches described above, participants raised some concerns regarding dominant approaches to reflection within ITE. Participants questioned what they perceived as the over-reliance on written reflection, as well as the amount of reflection PSTs are asked to engage in. This, according to participants, leads to PSTs developing '*very negative connotations*' (P4) towards reflection, viewing it '*as a chore*' *(P4)*, becoming '*overburdened*' (P3), resulting in '*a resistance to reflection*' (P4). Some

argued that there can be too much emphasis on 'problem solving' within the reflective process, with participants believing this dimension was not always essential to reflection. Participant 3, for example,

> [I have] a lot of problems with the way we do reflection and the way we understand it with pre-service teachers. I think it can be very much seen as a very rational type of approach where you solve a problem . . . sometimes it can make it quite superficial . . . it isn't to reflect to become better, while we can become better through it, but it's to try to become more aware, more open to the things we do or to question ourselves.

The persistent use of models, while providing a scaffold for pre-service teachers, was considered to impact here. Models, for example, '*packages reflection all up . . . this is where you start. This is your problem. This is how you see the problem, and this is what you will do next . . . it becomes tedious*' (P3), potentially limiting and restricting PST's thought processes and creativity. Completing reflections for public consumption, particularly as part of assessment requirements, was a concern for some. Participants felt that PSTs would, for example, frame reflections around '*what my lecturers want to hear me say*' (P4).

Supporting reflection, and reflection in GCE

Participants considered more effective understandings and approaches to reflection that they would like to see embedded within ITE and GCE. Our analysis of the data identified five main suggestions regarding supporting reflection that would enable PSTs to notice and take responsibility for a just and equal society. These related to the self, to others, to teacher educators, to models and modes of reflection, and to the place of experience within reflection.

Firstly, participants believed that reflection and the reflective process should consider 'the self'. Providing time and space for consideration of one's own biases, assumptions and values was regarded as core to supporting reflection and was considered the starting point for one to 'notice' inequalities within the world around us:

> The way I look at it is that this is part of why we are as people. You as a teacher is not separate to who you are as a person. Part of what we want to do as people is to be aware of ourselves, but also be aware of what the world around us it like. Like, have we a fair society, what are we doing to our planet? I think rather than seeing them as something separate to who we are that we have got to address, they have to be addressed from the place of who we are and what are these things. (P3)

Secondly, exploring the views and experiences of others, in terms of peers, was considered vital to any reflective process. Considering the views and experiences of others could potentially broaden and challenge existing assumptions and stereotypes that may exist within an individual. Participant 5, for example, articulated that:

> When you get somebody to critically question and start to think about experiences from other points of view, it reduces the egocentric thinking that exists . . . the more we give people an opportunity to look at and accept other perspectives and other points of views, the less change we have of this kind of further political polarisation that is going on in society.

Related to this, participants positioned effective reflection as a collaborative and shared process that should be negotiated through dialogue, discussion, and questioning. Developing trust, and cultures of care, where the emotive nature of reflection are

acknowledged, was considered important. In this instance, effective reflection was viewed as *'people working together, not individually reflecting but creating something together'* (P3) and creating conditions where pre-service teachers '*trust collaboration, trust the idea of working together, and trust each other, and trust themselves in that space*' (P2).

Thirdly, *two P's* relating to teacher education were advanced. Firstly, participants asked whether teacher educators 'practice what they preach' in terms of reflection. Do they engage in the same processes they require pre-service teachers to do? Do they model effective reflective practices? Or, as P3 asked, '*are we really tuned into their world enough to kind of consider that they are learning from these reflections?*' Secondly, are teacher educators explicitly 'political' in their expression of their values around (in)equality within society. In the absence of this, participants questioned how effective any reflective process with PSTs can be. For example:

> Because of this shift of the student becoming a consumer within higher education, we are actually trying to be very neutral and keep everybody happy . . . why aren't we more political, in a capital P sense, in terms of our values, our own teacher education? What's wrong with that? So, I would say we are not as brave ourselves as teacher educators. (P5)

> I think in teacher education, we are very rushed sometimes. We don't give enough of that kind of time with prompting questions . . . how do you embody it? There is an awful lot of stuff that flies around in lectures and everything and we haven't embodied it all because we haven't had a chance to. We haven't the time to. It's been too fast to embody. We can't catch it'. (P3)

Next, and as noted earlier, the dominant modes and models for reflections, largely through written pieces, was a concern for some. Such approaches were considered to '*box you in too much*' (P3). Participants called for reflections to be more '*creative*' (P2), '*open*' (P4) and '*playful*' (P3), through the use, for example, of stories, artwork, video or audio recordings. Priority was placed here on giving time and space to noticing, questioning, and challenging, rather than on completing written assignments with little thought. One such example follows:

> An example of where we did make a difference in making them see the value in reflection was a small project where students did reflection using digital technology. So, they did a recording, rather than writing. One of the students said that when they had to listen to their own reflection instead of writing it, they could not listen to themselves talking rubbish so their reflections became more real and truthful . . . so id we give them other modes of reflecting their expression that will help them. (P4)

Finally, participants believed that authentic reflection comes from, and should start from, experience and should ideally be linked to practice and action. Reflection, some felt, *'isn't just pondering'* (P1). Rather reflection and action were considered '*to go hand-in-hand*' (P1). Some felt that doing so would make reflection and the reflective process more relevant and meaningful for PSTs, as reflected in the following excerpt:

> Reflection is not going into a room and thinking about something in abstract terms. It is recalling, being in a relationship, being in touch with an issue, being about action, about experience. It has to make that connection. So, when pre-service teachers reflect well, they are really drawing on their experience in those reflexive moments. Reflection and experience go hand in hand really. It's not just about the mind, it's also the mind in situ, in situations, in experience and because it means something to you. (P1)

Discussion

The discourse of 'critical reflection' is often posited as a key facet of the reflective practice process and indeed GCE – yet how is this occurring in ITE at present? Based on our findings and the numerous studies referenced throughout this paper, we need to problematise how we currently 'do' and 'use' reflection and reflective practice. This may require us to reconsider and reconceptualise how we think about, teach, and use reflective practice mechanisms in teacher education. If GCE emphasises the interconnectedness of our world and encourages learners to actively engage in shaping a more just society (Blackmore, 2016), it is hardly surprising that the participants in this study suggest that reflective practice in the GCE context needs to be collaborative, social, and active, and place a strong focus on the self. How can we support PSTs to explore prior experiences and ideas rigorously, responsibly, and honestly? How can we create learning environments where reflective practice modalities incorporate and present a space where students can articulate, clarify and challenge their values and assumptions and those of others? How can we support PSTs and TEs to become more political? To address these questions, the authors posit a number of practice implications, where we problematise reflection and reflective practice in ITE more generally, and GCE specifically. The discussion is framed by three interconnected themes: structures to support reflection and reflection as part of GCE; focus on the self; and the need for dialogue.

Some authors query the facilitation of reflective practice, suggesting that (critical) reflective practice should not be taught through direct instruction approaches (Baird et al., 1991). The perspectives presented in this paper also suggest that reflective practice benefits from a more free-flowing, unstructured approach, which may facilitate the surfacing of unconscious biases, beliefs, and blind spots for examination. This may mean challenging and questioning the continued use of reflective models with ITE – as the research evidence, referenced earlier, clearly highlights their limitations in supporting a positive attitude towards and engagement in critical reflection. While we can appreciate the appeal of reflective models, particularly when time is limited, moving beyond models and giving time and space to question and think more broadly allows for a deeper, more spontaneous exploration of one's professional and personal dynamics, aligning with the view that reflective practice should evolve naturally and be a 'stance', rather than through rigidly structured models. It would also, we argue, move reflection and reflective practice beyond a problem-solving exercise to focus on broader societal structures and inequalities.

Placing explicit focus on the 'self' and self-awareness as a necessary component of reflective practice is an important starting point. While many approaches and models for reflection and critical reflective practice advocate for the lens of self and exploration of the self (Brookfield, 1990, 2017; Fook, 2015; Koh et al., 2022; Lavender, 2003; Nguyen et al., 2014; Sandars, 2009) – we need to find creative pedagogical enactments of how this can be supported in teacher education. Goleman (2006) defines self-awareness as knowing one's internal states, preference, resources, and intuitions. This may relate to concepts of self that are internal, private, and capable of only being truly or fully known by the individual (Schlegel & Hicks, 2011; Schlegel et al., 2009, 2011). This introspective approach is essential for understanding one's role and impact within the context of teacher education and GCE, facilitating a deeper comprehension of how personal perspectives influence

interactions and learning (Blackmore, 2016; UNESCO, 2002). How then, do we support student teachers to explore their understanding of issues of equality and social justice, for example, where they are provided with opportunities to examine prior experiences and ideas rigorously, responsibly and honestly? The challenge here is how do we create safe, non-judgemental, collaborative spaces to facilitate these processes. This form of introspection cannot occur in a space where students or teachers have a fear of being honest and the repercussions that may have for them. Dialogue is a central component to this process (Bosio, 2023b; Bourn, 2015) and as reflected among participants in this study, a prerequisite for critical reflection. We argue that many of the principles of a dialogic approach to reflection- inclusion, active engagement, critical thinking, and respectful interaction- align with the goals of GCE. Supporting collaborative dialogue within a safe and open environment is also key. Alexander (2006) argues that as (teacher) educators, we need to 'rethink' classroom talk to harness its power as a pedagogy by focusing on 'dialogic teaching', drawing upon five principles educators can use to scaffold social and active speaking and listening opportunities for learners. By ensuring that ITE classrooms facilitate talk that is 'collective, reciprocal, supportive, cumulative and purposeful' (Alexander, 2006, p. 28), we can include all voices, share, and consider alternative viewpoints in a supportive environment and build on prior learning to achieve specific learning goals. Collaborative and cooperative strategies can be employed to engage students in dialogue including working in groups or pairs (role-plays, jigsaw, world café to name but a few). Such participatory approaches to learning (Rousell & Cutter-Mackenzie-Knowles, 2020) are at the core of highly effective GCE with the potential to support critical reflection by promoting goals such as critical thinking, engagement, and interconnectedness (UNESCO, 2022). Part of this collaborative endeavour could focus on collective unpacking social justice issues. This requires a level of critical literacy for GCE (Kim, 2019; Tarozzi & Mallon, 2019) where TEs and PSTs can critically explore dominant discourses and perspectives communicated on issues of poverty, equality, justice, and sustainability – learning processes that are characterised by deep connection to self and others (Klussman et al., 2022). Study participants repeatedly argued for more creative approaches to reflection and the literature points to how the process of writing reflections can be a distractor and obstacle for some pre-service teachers. Yet, there is an expectation that students on ITE programmes will record their reflections, and therefore questions arise regarding the implications for the 'products' of reflection then. Could reflections be spoken, co-written, framed as an interview perhaps or 'In conversation with . . . '? Merryfield (1993) uses a 'Tree of Life' activity to scaffold a conversation between peers about their worldviews, an activity creates interest in the process of reflection as well as the learning that comes through collaborative reflection. Crucially, this example also points to how time for thinking, dialogue and reflection need to be considered in task design. Of course, such a participatory pedagogy takes time, something acknowledged by participants in this study, who argue that critical reflection requires '*time to notice, to stop, to think more deeply*'.

While we have outlined key areas of consideration above, we, as teacher educators, are fully aware of the context within which we and our national and international peers work. The ongoing marketisation of higher education and ITE (Furedi, 2010; Whitty, 2017), the continued positioning of students as consumers within education (Furedi, 2010) and sustained demands on programme providers to meet the evolving expectations of

external accreditation bodies (Solbrekke & Sugrue, 2014), can result in limited time, space, and authentic contexts within which to stop and 'notice', to challenge and to question. While ITE programmes can focus on the self, can support collaborative dialogue, and encourage PSTs to begin with their experience, truly critical reflection requires discomfort, challenge, and time – none of which, we would argue, are supported within the current contexts of higher education and ITE. Perhaps though we, as teacher educators, need to listen to the voice of the participants in this study and become 'more political' and braver. Teacher educators can collectively challenge this dominant discourse by, among other things, being explicit about the values that inform our practice and the ITE programme and by challenging dominant and taken-for-granted approaches to ITE. We are reminded of Lynch's (2013) call for universities to become sites of activism. If we don't 'practice what we preach', why should our pre-service teachers? How comfortable are we, as teacher educators, reflecting on ourselves? How open are we to having our views truly challenged? Do we conform to institutional requirements for individual gain and promotion, or do we challenge the status quo? Not only do pre-service teachers need space and time to consider these issues, so do teacher educators. Teachers in Ireland are required to engage in ongoing professional development throughout their career, be it through their ITE programme, induction programme or ongoing continuous professional development (Harford, 2010). The same cannot be said for teacher educators, however, and outside of institutional promotion requirements (which supports competitive individualism rather than collective consideration (Lynch, 2006, 2013)) there is no requirement for teacher educators to engage in professional development (Czerniawski et al., 2018; MacPhail et al., 2019; Van der Klink et al., 2017). Teacher educators can respond to programme accreditation mandates by ignoring their professional needs or by waiting for further mandates from external bodies. Both, we believe, are problematic. Instead, we again argue for 'practising what we preach' and call for collective and 'bottom up' action, where teacher educators themselves identify, respond to, and address their professional development needs (Lynch, 2013) to ensure they are well positioned to support the teachers of tomorrow to 'notice' and take responsibility 'for a more just and equal world'.

Concluding thoughts

Drawing on interview data, this paper explores teacher educators' understandings and experiences of reflection and reflective practice in teacher education, with a particular focus on the role of reflection in GCE. Findings point to the dominant and persistent approaches to engaging with reflective practice and (critical) reflection within ITE. Participants considered approaches to reflection and reflective practice that may support reflection for an equal and just society including consideration of one's own biases, assumptions and values; time to explore the views and experiences of others; reflection as collaborative and dialogical; TEs practicing what they preach and becoming more political in their practice; and beginning from experience, linking practice and action. The data, while drawing on the experiences of a small number of teacher educators, raises important questions around what reflection is or should be and how we, as teacher educators, can support, through the lens of GCE, our pre-service teachers to 'notice' and take responsibility for a just and equal world. It is important to consider practical and social implications of the results of the study. Central to

supporting pre-service teachers to value and engage with reflection in this way is to enable them to 'notice' and question their own pre-conceived ideas and assumptions and the world around them. Providing time and space to ask critical questions, to explore the self and to engage in collaborative and dialogical conversations are key. Questioning and challenging the dominant use of reflective models as the primary scaffold to guide reflection, and the impact of this approach on how reflection is perceived and enacted, is another key finding from this paper. How teacher educators embody, and practice critical reflection themselves is unclear, with the paper calling for teacher educators to become more 'political' in their actions. Consideration also needs to be given to related professional development supports for teacher educators in line with ITE requirements. Reflective of a critical GCE and reflection stance, we call for teacher educators themselves to lead, rather than respond to, this process.

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