Introduction

Darling Hammond (2017) reports how teacher effectiveness has rapidly risen to the top of policy agendas globally. She contends that teacher preparation and development are key building blocks in developing effective teachers. Hall et al (2018) highlight how critical reflection is prioritized as being central to the development of one's competence as a teacher and professional. Reflective practice (RP) is a core element of the learning journey that PSTs embark on through ITE programmes. In terms of the place of RP within the ITE curriculum it is frequently positioned amongst the plan-teach-reflect cycle. However, research has evidenced that it often becomes the more subdued component of this cyclical journey (McGarr & Moody 2010, Bolton 2005). Dewey (1933) describes reflection as a holistic approach to addressing problems in practice rather than a series of steps or procedures to be used by teachers. Zeichner and Liston (1996, p.20) extend on Dewey's work and suggest the social, moral and political aspects of teaching require consideration; "Reflective teaching entails a recognition, examination, and rumination over the implications of one's beliefs, experiences, attitudes, knowledge, and values as well as the opportunities and constraints provided by the social conditions in which the teacher works".

Objective/Purpose

The aim of this project was twofold; to improve PST reflective practice and to enhance practicum relationships in school- university partnership.
The objectives include;

1. Determining what level of critical thinking PSTs display in their reflective writing.
2. Creating an opportunity to hear the mentor teachers', practicum tutors' and pedagogy lecturers' voice regarding their implicit and explicit input into PSTs' reflective process.

Perspective/Theoretical Framework

Understanding the current global climate of ambiguity regarding social cohesion and political stability is important for all educators to consider, particularly in light of their roles as change agents. Such understanding requires PSTs to develop a skill set and find space to engage with critical ideology reflection. Brookfield's (2017) work acknowledges such importance and acts as the guiding theoretical framework for this study. Informed by critical social theory and transformative learning, the framework draws on ideological manipulation, taking account of emotional as well as political dimensions of teaching practices. Brookfield (2017) argues that without high levels of criticality which unearth assumptions and encourage ideology critique, reflective practice can in fact became a platform to reinforce a set of beliefs and values rather than fully critique. To challenge ideology, we need to be aware of "how it lives within us and works against us by furthering the interests of others" (Brookfield, 2009, P.293).

Methods/Techniques/Modes of Enquiry

Ethical approval to conduct the research was granted by the authors' School of Education Ethics Committee. Recruitment for the study was voluntary among PSTs, mentor teachers, practicum tutors (assessors) and pedagogy lecturers. Participants were not obliged to participate and could withdraw at any time without giving a reason and without prejudice.

Stage One: Two cohorts of ITE secondary PSTs, (Cohort 1, n=59 Cohort 2, n=61) were invited to participate in the research. Both cohorts had completed block practicum modules (Cohort 1: 9 weeks, Cohort 2: 15 weeks) prior to the research. PSTs were required to write a 500-word weekly reflection on practicum which was uploaded to the University's virtual learning environment (VLE), Blackboard. Cohort 1 were guided by a reflective framework (Brookfield, 2017) while Cohort 2 did not use a reflective framework. From the PSTs who returned the consent forms, the authors selected 10 participants from each cohort using simple random sampling. The final sample of 20 PSTs included representation of gender and main teaching subjects across both cohorts and gave the researchers access to 100 PST reflective writing submissions (Table 1). The reflective writing submissions were thematically analyzed and coded using Braun and Clarke's (2012) framework for qualitative data analysis. The analysis of the Stage One PST data involved isolating 'significant moments', identifying hegemonic assumptions, and determining the level of critical ideology challenge present in the practicum school placement within descriptive, dialogical and critical levels of reflection.

Stage Two: This stage focused on capturing teacher educators' understanding of the reflective practice process and the role they play within the PSTs' reflective practice. Twelve teacher educators (mentor teachers, practicum tutors and pedagogy lecturers) participated in semi-structured interviews which focused on exploring their perceptions of the importance and role of reflectional practices for PSTs and their own selves. The interviews focused on; understandings of reflective practice by teacher educators, their roles in the process and identifying their continuing professional development needs to support ITE reflective practice.

Data Sources

The findings in this paper refer to the data generated through both Stage One (written reflections) and Stage Two (interview transcripts) of the research project.

Results

Stage One findings revealed a lack of critique in PST reflective writings with 27% of reflections evidencing critical level of reflection. 55% of the writings fell into the dialogical level of reflection whereas the remaining 18% belonged to the descriptive level (Figure 2).

Beliefs and assumptions of PSTs:

Data showed the use of the four lenses for reflection (Brookfield, 2017), viz. the lenses of PSTs' eyes, personal experience, theory and colleagues' perceptions. To some extent, these lenses helped the PSTs to explore their assumptions related to power and hegemony. However, reinforcement of existing beliefs rather than their re-evaluation emerged as a

prominent finding from the data. There were only snippets of re-evaluation of self-beliefs which could lead to critical reflection.

> "I think the apparent chaos of different students working on different things is simply something that I **perceived to be a problem only** because it was different to a regular practical, where **in reality this is how lessons should be** with individual students being challenged differently relative to their ability".

Challenges faced by PSTs:

Written reflections included descriptions of pedagogical and emotional issues faced by PSTs. Concerns over disciplinary classroom issues and struggle to deal with the disruptive behaviour were the recurring issues in the data. Critique for understanding why such issues arose or dealing with such issues remained a missing element in most reflections. This not only affected participants' classroom teaching performance but seemed to have had a great impact on their well-being too. Lower self-esteem and confidence were noted as result of unsatisfactory class control.

> "… I can't control my classes. I felt like a failure."

There was also a commonality in terms of the emotional challenges faced by the PSTs, as described by their feelings of anxiety and disillusionment. Being accepted as a real teacher was a matter of concern in many reflections.

> "I am still struggling to keep my classes contained and prevent students from talking over me or generally being disruptive. In part this may be because all the students know I am a new and young teacher and are trying to see what they can get away with."

Performance grading i.e. the element of assessment emerged as a second major factor for anxiety. Instances below:

> "I panicked and didn't perform as I would've liked."

Despite being challenged by such issues, these PSTs displayed commendable cognitive strength whereby they consistently reminded themselves of their role as change agents for reinforcing confidence and enjoyment for their students' learning. Furthermore, personal as well as professional growth was reported by the participants during the practicum.

Stage Two findings from teacher educator interviews revealed two prominent features;

Ambiguity about the purpose of reflection:

PSTs' reflections, as stated by teacher educators, were devoid of *critique* and *honesty* which signals the disadvantage of such practices as being considered for the grading criteria of the ITE course. On the other hand, some reflections portrayed only the *negative incidents* that take place in the classrooms. The following two contrasting views of the teacher educators provide evidence to the above assertions.

"for students, often times if it's very 'set-in-stone' like requirement, then it can be very daunting and they can feel a certain amount of anxiety of …oh no I am 10% under…. Oh no I am 10% over….I better delete something or I better add in a sentence to try and fill out my argument and it would be, I believe more beneficial to the students if those were taking more like guidelines."

"Student teachers see reflective practices as only concerned with what goes badly, however, it should also be about what goes well and what made that go well…,I don't think they know how to engage with reflective practices"

With such ambiguity in the role of these practices in teachers' development, it may become difficult for the teacher educators to support PSTs in their personal and professional development.

Teacher educators' role in supporting reflective practices:

Among all teacher educators, analysis showed a common realisation of the importance of reflective practices for all teaching personnel. It was also acknowledged that informal reflection (both individual and collaborative) formed a major component of their own teaching practices as compared to formal structured activities for reflection. There emerged a preference for collaborative reflectional activities over individual reflections in terms of pedagogical benefits and each other's suggestions for solutions to many classroom issues.

"So, you can look at more generic things like classroom management and questioning strategies and addressing learning outcomes, addressing learning intentions. So, you forget about the actual subject matter and focus on some other bigger picture things. And what we do after that normally is we have what we call Buddy meeting and so she would sit down with me and I would sit down with her and the basic questions are -Did I do anything that you saw/liked that you might incorporate in your own teaching".

While supporting PSTs in reflecting critically, there emerged a general dissatisfaction among the teacher educators regarding the extent of support they were able to provide. The main factors attributed to this were the lack of time, space and opportunities. For instance, one participant expressed,

"..there is no set period of time to sit down with him (PST*) and actually discuss it. So, I find that that's the kind of an issue. If we had that time, it would be beneficial to him"*

Teacher educators also expressed a willingness to provide more support to student PSTs and expressed a desire for professional training in this regard.

Substantiated Conclusions

The challenge of successfully embedding critical reflective practice with PSTs requires recognition of the flaws of surface level approaches to reflection. If we are to ask PSTs to engage with reflective practice, we need to reimagine how we support critical reflection in teacher education. Johns (2017, p.5) queries if "it is better to swim in the shallow or drown in the rip currents of critical reflection". Brookfield's theories and this study's findings would suggest the shallow approach is problematic as it serves to reinforce traditional teaching approaches. Drowning in the rip currents of critical reflection is also not the way forward. PSTs require significant guidance, support and feedback from teacher educators to move towards the deeper waters of critical reflection. Teacher educators require space and time within the ITE curriculum and through coursework to embed the concept of RP and to operationalize that concept in real and meaningful ways that enables the development of knowledge, understanding and pedagogical practice by PST.

Scholarly Significance

This project captures the voices of PSTs, mentor teachers, practicum tutors and lecturers on the topic of reflective practice. It acknowledges that without critical ideological reflection, the purpose of surface level reflection is questionable. The evidence presented adds to the Hall et al (2018) research and also adds a secondary PST dimension to the Horgan and

Hyland study (2019) which found gaps in primary PSTs' capacity for critical reflective practice and highlighted how classroom management concerns can cause them to adopt more cautious and traditional pedagogical approaches. Globally this study contributes to the bigger debate on RP. It advances West Burns and Badiali argument (2018) that teaching about teaching "requires sophisticated intellectual activity that is situated in practice and in the dynamic contexts of classroom spaces" and adds another complexity to Loughran's (2006) Pedagogy of Teacher Education.

Wordcount 1992 words

Figures, Charts, Tables
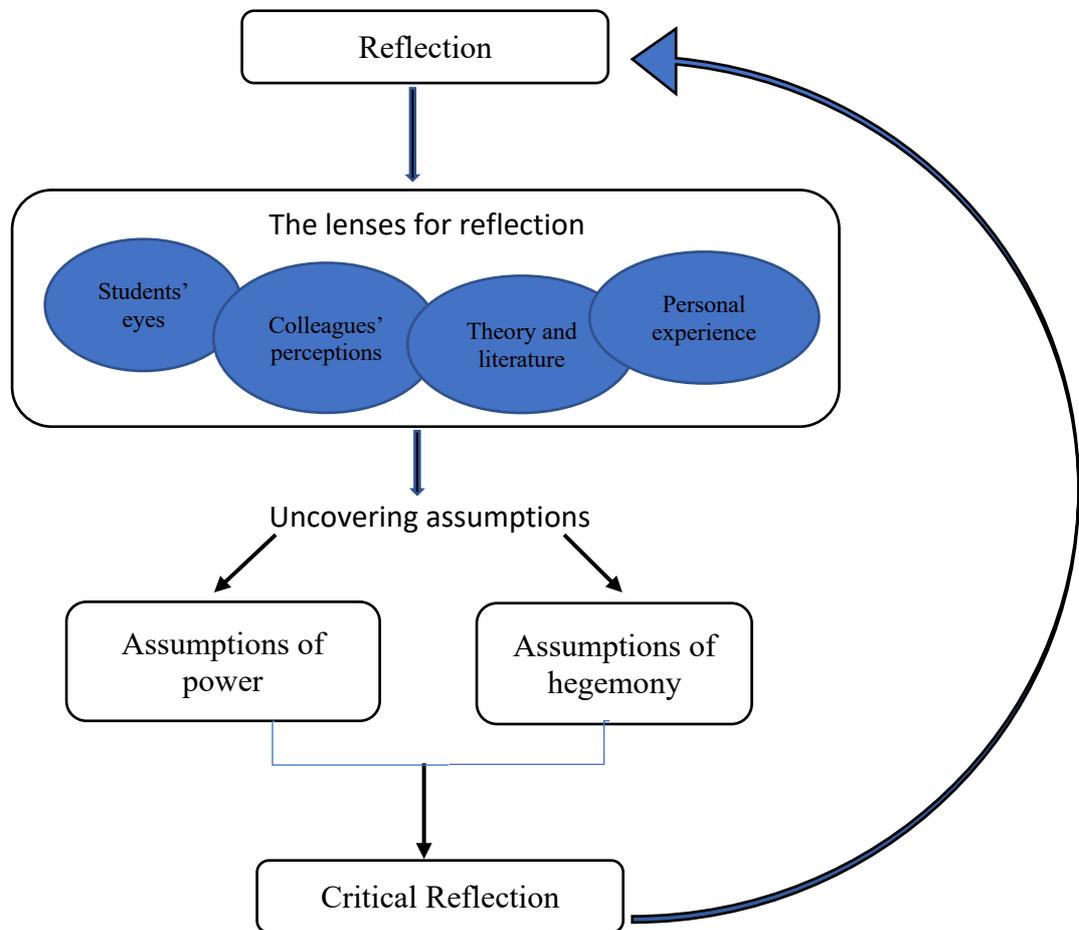
Figure 1 An Overview of Brookfield's (2017) Framework
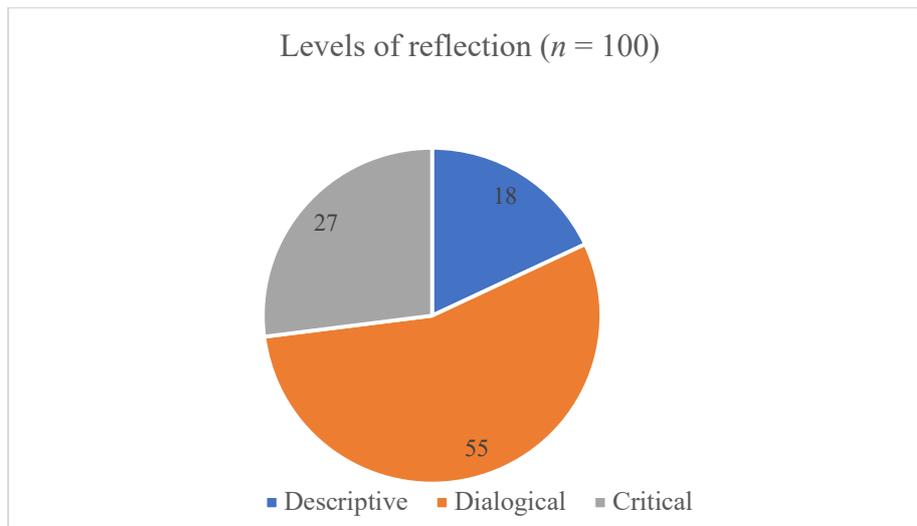
Figure 2 Levels of PST Reflections

Table 1 Code, Gender and Subject of Cohort 1 and Cohort 2 PSTs

Cohort 1 Code	Gender	Subject		Cohort 2 Code	Gender	Subject
1A	F	Science		2A	F	Mathematics
1B	F	English		2B	F	Mathematics
1C	F	Music		2C	F	Science
1D	F	English		2D	M	English
1E	F	Geography		2E	F	Business
1F	M	Mathematics		2F	M	English
1G	F	Mathematics		2G	F	Geography
1H	F	Mathematics		2H	M	Mathematics
1I	F	Geography		2I	F	Geography
1J	M	Mathematics		2J	F	Mathematics

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