Applying a framework for critical reflection in educational psychology practice: views of trainee educational psychologists

A framework to support critical reflection in educational psychology (EP) practice is described. The process of critical reflection and the underlying theoretical ideas are discussed, including the links between critical reflection and action in EP work and their relation to anti-oppressive practice and social justice change. The article reports on a participatory research project with trainee educational psychologists on their experiences of using the framework in practice. Four focus groups were held involving 16 co-researchers; the videos of the focus groups were analysed using a thematic analysis approach by the co-researchers themselves. Themes identified relating to their experience of using the framework are: 'positive experience', 'flexible application', 'facilitating deeper thinking', 'influence of self (reflexivity)'. Themes relating to co-researcher views on how the framework can be developed are related to accessibility and usability. The article concludes with implications of the research for use and development of the framework and for critically reflective EP training and practice.

Keywords: critical reflection; reflective practice; trainee educational psychologists; participatory research

Introduction

The process of becoming a reflective practitioner is central to educational psychology (EP) training and practice. This is reflected in the competencies and proficiencies within professional guidance, including understanding the value of reflection on practice and demonstrating self-awareness and working as a reflective practitioner (British Psychological Society [BPS], 2017, 2019; Health and Care Professions Council [HCPC], 2015; see also Clayton, 2021). Furthermore, BPS competencies and HCPC proficiencies include a focus on anti-oppressive practice, for example, to 'embed principles of anti-discriminatory and anti-oppressive practice in all professional actions' (BPS, 2019, p.17) and to 'understand the power imbalance between

practitioners and service users and how this can be managed appropriately' (HCPC, 2015, p.9).

It is argued here that in order to embed such principles and actions in practice an ongoing

process of critical reflection is required. Critical reflection can be thought of as a process that

involves both individual reflection and broader social critique, with the aims of both

transforming practitioners' perspectives on practice and enabling social action (Mezirow,

1991). This article describes a framework for supporting such critical reflection in EP training

and practice. The article reports the findings from a participatory research project with trainee

educational psychologists (TEPs), which focused on their experiences of applying the framework

in practice, along with examples of its use.

Reflective practice

 Reflection on practice is seen by Schön (1987) as a way in which professionals can bridge the

theory-practice gap, noting that practitioners need support to guide them in reflecting

systematically.   EPs are often faced with unique and ambiguous problems, having to recognise

and negotiate complex ethical and professional issues in practice and, in accordance with this,

Schön highlights the uncertainty principle: the messy, fragmented, complex and shifting world of

practice. In relation to this, Schön critiques the dominance of the epistemological position of

positivism and of 'technical rationality'. Technical rationality in EP professional practice might,

for example, involve instrumental problem-solving with a focus on 'rigour' and on the

application of scientific theory and knowledge. Such a critique does not imply discarding

research-based professional knowledge, but challenges more traditional notions of professional

ways of knowing, acknowledging practice-based experience and the learning that occurs through

dialogue and reflection on one's practice. Schön introduced the concepts of reflection

in action (which happens in the moment) and reflection *on* action (after the event). Building on these ideas, the idea of reflection *for* action, prior to a piece of work, has also been suggested (Plack & Greenberg, 2005).

A critical reflection approach

Critical reflection on practice is a process which is said to have transformative potential, enabling a change in practitioners' worldviews and understandings of themselves (Mezirow, 1991). A critical perspective on EP practice questions the 'gaze' of the EP which can serve to separate and position service users as 'other' and through which EPs may become complicit in constructing individualised problems (Foucault, 1982; Williams et al., 2017). This critical perspective rejects reductionism, for example, reducing phenomena to the level of the individual, and positivist notions of 'normality'. A critical approach highlights the role that interpretation plays in practice, based on value-laden, culturally-biased and ideological assumptions, and rejects the idea of professional neutrality which can obscure the role of personal, institutional and political stakes (Parker, 2015).

The impetus for trainee and experienced EPs to reflect may be a 'disorienting dilemma' (Mezirow, 1981, p.7), a problem or uncomfortable situation which can lead us to 'stop in our tracks' and think deeply. At the same time, the influence of dominant discourses on EPs' thoughts and actions means that an ongoing process of reflexivity, awareness of the influence of one's own assumptions, is also required (Brookfield, 2017; Lazarus, 2018; Rix et al., 2014). The process of perspective transformation involves seeing and understanding situations in a new way and taking action as a result (Mezirow, 1991). It is a process of becoming more aware of the taken-for-granted cultural and psychological assumptions that determine how one thinks, feels

and acts. This process is seen as emancipatory as it frees one from old ways of seeing the world and behaving, becoming critically aware of assumptions and expectations that constrain the way one understands children or young people, school staff, parents and carers, how one makes sense of oneself, one's roles and one's relationships.

The goal of critical reflection is thus not only personal transformation related to individual biases (Smith, 2011) but social justice-oriented goals leading to professional actions and practice that contribute to a more just and equitable society (Liu, 2015; Vera & Speight, 2003).   Such a social justice perspective draws on critical psychology, critical community psychology and decolonising approaches which are critical of more traditional Euro-Western psychological theories that, it is argued, often provide individualised accounts of human functioning, decontextualise individuals and obscure the social and political realities which may also be having an impact (Kagan et al. 2019; Martin-Baró, 1994; Reyes & Torres, 2007). A critical approach recognises that there are hierarchies of power which may limit or constrain people and communities while privileging others (McClelland, 2013) and that all ways of knowing are culturally specific and open to question and challenge (Askew & Carnell, 2011).

Critiques of critical reflection and reflective practice

Critiques of critical perspectives are that broad idealistic social justice goals can be elusive or unworkable in practice, that processes of empowerment can be vague, and that there is a lack of empirical research (O'Toole, 2017). However, it is tentatively suggested in this article that the process of critical reflection can offer one response to translating social justice goals into action. It has also been noted that not every practitioner feels empowered through the process of reflection (Brookfield, 2017) and that the process can be overly introspective and individualistic

(Finlay, 2008). However, it has also been suggested that critical reflection can free practitioners from the negative emotions associated with self-recrimination and guilt through increasing awareness of psychological, structural and cultural barriers and thus potentially enable a new sense of personal responsibility and agency which can lead to transformative action (Brookfield, 2017; Taylor, 2010). A further critique is that imposing an external framework may offer practitioners little scope for their own priorities and values and could appear to contradict the 'artistry' advocated by Schön (1987). The framework presented here, it should be noted, is taught within the context of explicit shared values as well as a supportive and safe environment for learning, with a focus on dialogue.

Models of reflection in professional practice and training

A challenge in teaching reflection on the professional EP doctorate programme is to enable hard-pressed trainees to experience reflection as a meaningful and worthwhile activity. Reflective accounts can at times be descriptive and superficial without evidence of 'second order change' or transformational growth (Gorski & Dalton, 2020; Mezirow, 1991; Smith, 2011).

Process or cyclical models of reflection, such as Kolb's learning cycle (1984) and Gibbs' model of reflection (1988) are helpful in guiding novice practitioners in a range of professional disciplines through a series of stages. The framework for critical reflection discussed in this article aims to support trainees in appreciating which aspects of practice to reflect upon in greater depth and in explicitly encouraging a focus on critical reflection. Korthagen (2014), in the field of teacher education, contrasts 'action-oriented' and 'meaning-oriented reflection'. The former includes a focus on what to do or to do better, which can often involve jumping to a solution; the latter is more oriented toward a

deeper understanding of the meaning of the situation under reflection and the underlying

processes.   At the centre of Korthagen's (2014) model of Core Reflection is the 'mission': what

inspires one and gives meaning to one's work or life. In EP practice this idea of 'mission' can

relate to key values and principles which guide practice, such as social justice, beneficence,

promoting autonomy, and respect for diversity (Fox, 2015; Rappaport, 1977).   Within

the healthcare field, Taylor (2010, p.79) highlights 'meaning-oriented reflection' which

enhances meaningful practice, identifying three complementary types of reflection, based on

'ways of knowing' (Habermas, 1970). In Taylor's model these types of reflection are: *technical*

(for example, the knowledge base, problem-solving processes, evidence-based

practice); *practical* (the lived experience, roles, interactions and communication skills) and

emancipatory (awareness of taken-for-granted assumptions, the operation of power and

oppression, analysis of contextual features and constraints on practice, and developing an

informed consciousness).   It is suggested here that this focus on meaningful practice as well as

on different ways of knowing can offer ways forward in supporting and promoting one's own

critical reflection processes both as trainee and experienced EPs.
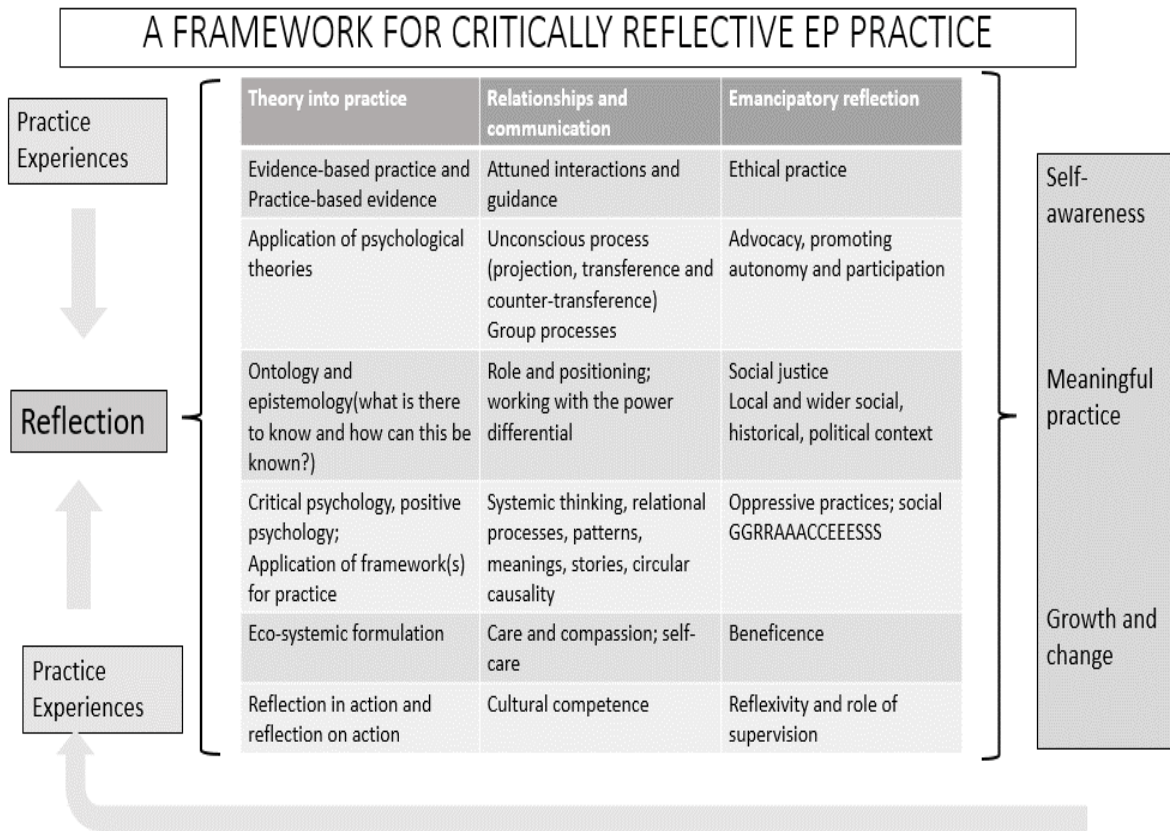
[Figure 1 ABOUT HERE]

A FRAMEWORK FOR CRITICALLY REFLECTIVE EP PRACTICE

Practice Experiences

Reflection

Practice Experiences

Theory into practice	Relationships and communication	Emancipatory reflection
Evidence-based practice and Practice-based evidence	Attuned interactions and guidance	Ethical practice
Application of psychological theories	Unconscious process (projection, transference and counter-transference) Group processes	Advocacy, promoting autonomy and participation
Ontology and epistemology(what is there to know and how can this be known?)	Role and positioning; working with the power differential	Social justice Local and wider social, historical, political context
Critical psychology, positive psychology; Application of framework(s) for practice	Systemic thinking, relational processes, patterns, meanings, stories, circular causality	Oppressive practices; social GGRRAAAACCEEESSS
Eco-systemic formulation	Care and compassion; self-care	Beneficence
Reflection in action and reflection on action	Cultural competence	Reflexivity and role of supervision

Self-awareness

Meaningful practice

Growth and change

Figure 1: The framework for critical reflection in EP practice

The framework for critical reflection in EP training and practice

The framework for critical reflection described in this article is inspired by the structure outlined in Taylor (2010); this has been adapted to adopt further a critical reflection approach and to include psychological ideas used in EP practice (Figure 1). The aim in developing the framework was to provide TEPs with a structured and explicit tool to aid critical reflection, to prompt reflection on power imbalances and wider social issues and to foster TEPs' transformative learning and growth from their practice experiences Thus, it is viewed as a means of scaffolding the reflective process. It may be used as a tool for self-reflection, used in

supervision or group reflection. Examples of ways in which TEPs have applied the framework are discussed in the findings section of this paper and are provided in Appendix B. It is acknowledged that the framework represents an abstraction and a simplification of the messy and shifting world of practice (Schön,1987) and that the areas for reflection within the framework necessarily overlap and interconnect. The framework itself continues to evolve and it is suggested that a useful development may be for trainees and experienced EPs to continue to develop their own individual frameworks or support for critical reflection.

Description of the cyclical process and of domains within the framework

The framework for critical reflection supports a cyclical process; critical reflection on practice experiences may lead to transformational growth, increased self-awareness and critical consciousness, and meaningful practice, which may then inform future practice experiences and action. The arrows within the framework aim to describe this cyclical process. The framework is flexible, and its users may find that not all sections are relevant to the situation upon which they are reflecting: it is not designed to be worked through systematically; practitioners may wish to choose the most salient part relating to a particular practice experience. However, the prompts within the framework may also support practitioners in noticing 'blind spots' and in opening up new areas for reflection that they may not have considered.

The first domain/column of the framework is labelled 'Theory into practice' and focuses on the knowledge, worldviews and discourses underlying aspects of practice, including prompts to reflect on the underpinning psychological theories that are being considered. Users of the framework may wish to reflect upon the influence of discourses associated with normative thinking. They may reflect on the assumptions, worldviews and limitations within any psychological theories applied and to recognise that there are other lenses that could be used in

making sense of the situation which will also have their own assumptions and limitations. Critical psychology is explicitly mentioned, as is positive psychology, which highlights what is already working, strengths, resources and hope (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2014) The as eco-systemic perspective (Bronfenbrenner, 1979) is also mentioned, to prompt alternatives to arguably more dominant (for example, individual difficulty or deficit-focused) perspectives. There is a prompt for critically considering the evidence base; the inclusion of practice-based evidence encourages reflection on what might represent the most useful evidence; for example, whether the views and voices of children and young people, service-users, schools and families are given due weight (Afuape, 2012). The second column has the heading 'Relationships and communication'.   The user is prompted to consider their application of the principles of attuned interaction and guidance (Kennedy et al. 2011), including following the other person's lead and receiving their initiatives, demonstrating attentiveness and being 'present'. The centrality of feelings within the interpersonal space and the influence of prior experiences are reflected in the prompt to think about unconscious processes (Arnold et al., 2021; Kennedy et al., 2018). This includes ways in which one, and those with whom one collaborates, may protect oneself from uncomfortable feelings (for example, by projecting them on to others or by transferring specific feelings about a person from the past) and how one may also come to experience something of the emotional state of the other person (Bartle & Eloquin, 2021). There is a prompt to consider relevant group processes; EPs are often working in groups and teams, thus reflection on developmental group processes (Tuckman, 2001; Wheelan, 1994) and the idea of 'containment' of uncomfortable feelings (Bion, 1963) may be relevant.

When considering relational processes occurring in the 'space between', the user is also encouraged to think about their role and positioning. Positions are viewed as relational processes

that influence the interactions between individuals; the person reflecting may consider how they have positioned themselves within the interaction and how others may have been positioned, with positions leading to certain rights, expectations, privileges, and power differences (Harré et al., 2009). The collaborative 'not knowing' position is promoted in systemic thinking (Dallos & Draper, 2015; Pellegrini, 2009), enabling a co-construction of meanings. The prompt within this area of the framework to consider the 'stories' that are being told relates to narrative approaches in which emphasis is placed on the stories of people's lives. Within this view, meaning is carried in the telling of stories which shape one's understanding of experiences. Stories can be told and re-told in different ways; a focus on strengths and resources shown can offer new possibilities (White & Epston, 1990). Within this section of the framework care and compassion are highlighted; personal narratives of children, young people, families and school professionals affect our emotions, , meaning one allows oneself to deeply connect and care (Afuape, 2012; Watkins & Shulman, 2008).

The third column relates to emancipatory reflection, which is linked to EPs working critically and ethically within their varying spheres of influence as agents of social justice change (Gorski & Dalton, 2020). The user of the framework is prompted to contextualise the situation being reflected upon within the wider social, historical and political context. A key question to ask in practice is 'Who benefits?'; that is, who stands to gain from one's involvement, from this formulation, intervention or way of perceiving and talking about a problem situation? (Vassallo, 2017; Williams et al., 2017). Users of the framework are prompted to examine their positionalities related to power and privilege, for example, through applying the 'social GGRRAAACCEEESSS' (Burnham, 2012) which brings with it a responsibility for addressing relations of power, privilege and oppression. Practitioners may also consider how power is

enacted and being experienced by children, young people, families, school staff, other professionals and TEPs themselves.

Participatory research project on TEPs' experiences of applying the framework for critical reflection

The framework for critical reflection (Figure 1) was initially introduced to cohorts of TEPs in their second year of training. The TEPs had been presented with the framework as it appears in Figure 1 and had been provided with examples of its use by the tutors. Subsequently, through a participatory research project, a group of 16 trainee co-researchers from one cohort and two university tutors explored TEPs' experiences of using the framework in practice.

Aims of the study

The research project had exploratory and emancipatory aims. The purpose was to explore TEPs' experiences of using the framework and a critical realist ontology was adopted in acknowledging that, while the framework exists, reality cannot be separated from the co-researchers' subjective experience of it depending on their constructs, experiences and social history (Guba & Lincoln, 2005; Robson & McCartan, 2016). It was acknowledged that these experiences cannot be fully known and that wider social contexts will impact on the TEPs' meanings (Braun & Clarke, 2013; Willig, 1999). Epistemological considerations of how knowledge is produced are essential to participatory approaches and this research sought to construct knowledge through the TEPs' active role as co-researchers, adopting a social constructivist epistemology as the TEPs would make meaning of the same experience in different ways (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The two research questions devised by the co-researchers were:

- *What are trainee EPs' experiences of using the framework in practice?*

- *How can the framework be translated into a usable model?*

Participatory approach

The emancipatory aim of the research informed the use of participatory approaches which sought to change power dynamics through collaborative processes and through privileging the TEPs' voices in the production of knowledge and meaning-making. Aldridge (2016, p.156) has proposed a participatory framework for researchers to locate their own projects, noting that it is not always possible for research to be solely participant-led and may contain participatory elements. The current research would appear to fit in between the 'participant-led' and the 'participant as actor' domains of Aldridge's model, in that the initial topic for the research was initiated by the tutor researchers; however, the subsequent design, planning, data collection and analysis were participant-led and the dissemination and ownership were jointly shared between co-researchers and researchers.

Research procedure

Ethical approval for the research project was gained from the University's Research Ethics Committee. The entire cohort of Year 2 TEPs was invited to participate and to become co-researchers. 16 co-researchers were involved in the data collection and analysis processes over a period of 10 months, with two university tutors facilitating the process. One trainee opted not to take part. Four meetings with the co-researchers were held, initially in-person and then online due to the Covid 19 pandemic restrictions. At the initial meeting, the topic of the research was introduced by the university tutors and the co-researchers decided on the aims and research questions. The co-researchers agreed to apply the framework for critical reflection as part of their reflection on practice experiences on placement prior to collecting the data. The data were

later collected by the co-researchers through their chosen method of focus groups. Their rationale for choosing the focus group (FG) method was that it would support a collaborative approach to data collection. The co-researchers decided to split into four FGs, all having the same focus. Each of the four FGs were led and facilitated by the co-researchers with a focus on the two research questions. These FGs were held online via MS Teams and were recorded by the co-researchers.

Data analysis

The recordings of the FGs provided the raw data that were subsequently analysed by the co-researchers. The co-researchers within their four online focus groupings watched the video recordings of their own FG discussions. Each of these four groups was facilitated by a co-researcher; another co-researcher recorded the discussion in writing through an online document, sharing their screen. The four focus groups subsequently all met together online to share their group's findings and to agree together on final themes and sub-themes. In order to enable the participatory approach an adaptation of the Braun & Clarke (2006; 2020) approach to thematic analysis was used (summarised in Appendix A). As with the FG procedure, this data analysis meeting was facilitated by a co-researcher, with another co-researcher recording the TEPs' decisions via a shared online document. The thematic analysis took place among the co-researchers 'in the moment'; it was generated from the whole group's conversations, with the group collaborating to notice and refine patterns and themes through their discussion. Some further refinement of the themes for research question two took place with a subgroup of co-researchers following the initial analysis.

Findings

The main themes and sub-themes that were identified and synthesised by the co-researchers relating to each research question (RQ) are shown below in Figures 2 (RQ1) and 3 (RQ2). These are presented in the format and wording provided by the TEP co-researchers themselves. Four main themes (Positive Experience, Flexible Application, Facilitating Deeper Thinking and Influence of Self [Reflexivity]) were identified for RQ1, and three main themes (Background Information, User Guidance and Glossary) were identified for RQ2.

[Figure 2 ABOUT HERE]
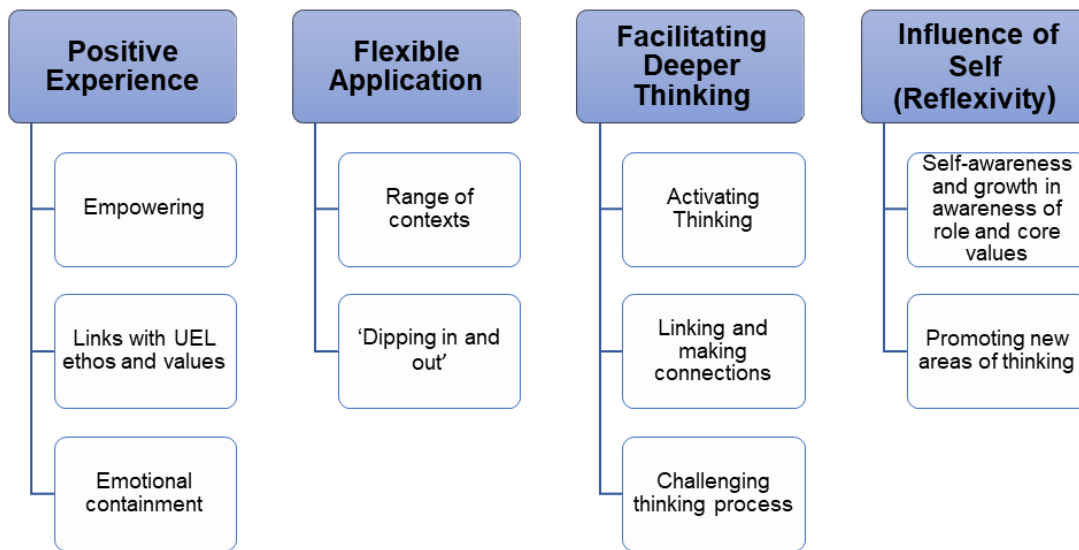
Figure 2. Thematic map of main themes and sub-themes identified by the TEP co-researchers for RQ1: "What are trainee EPs' experiences of using the framework in practice?"
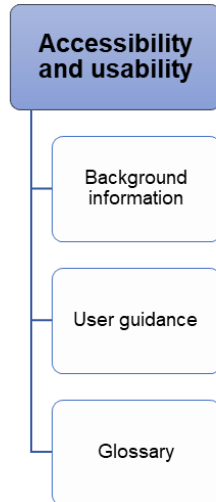
[Figure 3 ABOUT HERE]

Figure 3. Thematic map of main themes and sub-themes identified by the TEP co-researchers for RQ2: "How can the framework be translated into a usable model?"

Research Question 1: What are trainee EPs' experiences of the framework in practice?

Positive Experience. The co-researchers experienced using the framework as positive and empowering: 'empowering us within our learning, our conversations with supervisors and within our future roles' (FG3). They recalled how the framework had facilitated: 'a growth in thinking' (FG2) and provided them with an opportunity to reflect on their learning and development both with respect to their individual casework, as well as their wider development as critically reflective practitioners. The co-researchers found that the framework reminded them of their own core values: 'brings me back to my values and how I am developing' (FG2), and prompted thinking about how their individual values aligned with the University values of autonomy, beneficence and social justice: 'reflected on why we are doing what we're doing' (FG1). Using a structured framework to guide these reflections also supported the co-researchers to feel more

emotionally contained when reflecting on their casework and in turn, more 'comfortable with [the] uncertainty'(FG4) evoked from complex case work.

Flexible Application. The co-researchers used the framework flexibly, noting that they used it both before and after casework, in supervision and to structure assignments; 'prompt our thinking before/after a case, within supervision' (FG2). The co-researchers reported 'dipping in and out' (FG2) of areas of the framework, not using it rigidly or prescriptively, and noted that the framework prompted them to think about areas they might otherwise have neglected. The researchers acknowledged how this flexibility often meant that they engaged with some psychological prompts more than others, referring to how they preferred to 'pick and choose' elements to reflect on (FG3) based on what was deemed most helpful for a given case. Whilst this was considered a core strength of the framework, they recognised how the framework's flexible usage meant they could perhaps be more prone to "avoid[ing] the bits I don't like" (FG2) or perhaps the parts which felt more uncomfortable or psychologically challenging. They further questioned whether this might perhaps perpetuate any possible known or unknown biases: 'your biases can be reinforced, choosing the values that resonate with you' (FG2).

Facilitating Deeper Thinking. Engaging with the framework, the co-researchers considered, offered them space to pause and reflect on their actions and thought processes. The framework acted as a catalyst to begin the process of entering into a critically reflective dialogue, linking and making connections across their practice. The co-researchers articulated how the framework enabled them to reflect on their practice in more detailed, psychological and critical ways. It allowed them to apply theory into practice, reflect on their relationship with others and

themselves, and 'prompt[ed] thoughts around emancipatory practice' (FG4). The framework encouraged reflection on aspects of practice which the co-researchers were less comfortable with, thus allowing for deeper, more purposeful thinking, 'taking ourselves out of our comfort zones' (FG4). The co-researchersreported that activation of 'deeper thinking' (FG3) was not necessarily always a natural process therefore they appreciated the framework for encouraging this process.

Influence of self (reflexivity). The co-researchers felt that the framework functioned to increase their self-awareness: 'takes us further' (FG1). They made reference to a 'growth in thinking facilitated by [the] framework' (FG2), bringing one's self, one's own life experiences, core values and world views to the fore. With greater knowledge of one's blind spots, values and positionality, the co-researchers felt that these discoveries allowed them to '… challenge [them]selves or explore the areas that [they] avoid altogether' (FG4). By activating their thinking processes, some co-researchers considered that this would lead not only to changes in their practice but also to wider transformative action and change for service users.

Research Question 2: How can the framework be translated into a usable model?

Accessibility and Usability: The co-researchers provided ideas for development of the framework to support its translation into a more accessible, usable model. The co-researchers first expressed a need for the provision of background information to introduce TEPs and EPs to the topic of critical reflection more broadly. Suggestions also included developing a user guide to accompany the visual, as the co-researchers wondered whether there was a need for:

'instruction before you use the model' (FG2). Specifically, they considered that it could: 'guide you to think about how to use the model' (FG2) when first engaging with it as novices as part of their EP professional practice. The co-researchers also suggested explaining key constructs as part of a glossary, defining the three overarching column themes, as well as providing an example of trainees' applications of the framework. These were subsequently produced by the co-researchers (Appendices B and C). Although suggestions were made by the co-researchers to make the framework more user-friendly and applicable to everyday EP practice, they simultaneously reflected on the importance of ensuring that the framework did not lose its flexibility nor did it become prescriptive in its use. In particular, they named using it in different ways, for example, using it as a prompt for thinking or in discussions, or annotating it directly as a strength of the framework that they were keen to retain. The co-researchers recognised how the framework inevitably continues to adapt and evolve.

Discussion

The findings generated suggest that the co-researchers experienced using the framework as a positive experience and as empowering. The co-researchers appreciated the links with the course's ethos and values: the framework was experienced as promoting deeper thinking and increased self-awareness. These themes link with ideas of emancipatory reflection as liberating (Afuape & Hughes, 2015; Taylor, 2010) and with the transformative potential of reflection and of developing critical consciousness (Mezirow, 1991; Freire, 1973). The co-researchers also found that the framework reminded them of their core values, linking to the idea of meaningful practice (Korthagen, 2014). They used the framework flexibly, reflecting in, on and for action (Schön,1987; Plack and Greenberg, 2005), noting that they used it both before and after

casework, in supervision and to structure their assignments. The integration of reflection and action links with the idea of praxis (Freire, 1973): 'awareness can lead onto action'(FG1). The co-researchers also reported 'dipping in and out' of areas of the framework, not using it rigidly.

The findings also provide co-researchers' ideas for development of the framework. Related to the critiques of critical approaches noted by O'Toole (2017), suggestions were made by the co-researchers to explain key terms and the idea of critical reflection further and to provide questions to prompt reflection; these suggestions will inform future teaching on the course (as mentioned, an additional guidance document is also being prepared by the co-researchers, including a glossary and examples of trainees' applications of the framework). The findings suggest further explicit teaching of critical reflection on doctoral programmes will be helpful (Smith, 2011) as well as integration with trainee supervisor training. As noted earlier, the framework continues to evolve and users are invited to develop their own versions which are useful to them.

Strengths and limitations of the research

The study addresses an under-researched area in educational psychology practice (O'Hara, 2021). A strength of the research lies in its participatory approach which aligns with social justice and anti-oppressive values, aiming to address power differentials between researchers and participants. The co-researchers devised creative methods to collect and analyse the data. The tutor researchers applied reflexivity to question the extent to which the research was participant-led at each phase. While most phases of the research were participant-led, a critique remains that the overall topic was tutor researcher-led, rather than led by the co-researchers' own priorities (Cornwall & Jewkes, 1995).

The number of co-researchers and use of four focus groups enabled a range of views to be expressed. Regarding trustworthiness (Lincoln and Guba, 1985), the credibility and confirmability of the findings are increased through co-researchers carrying out the data collection, analysis and synthesis of findings themselves. Readers may make a judgement as to whether the findings are transferable to other contexts.

A limitation of the research is that the co-researchers had a relationship with the tutor researchers, and this may have exerted an influence on the positivity of the views expressed. However, the tutors were not present during the focus groups, and no opinions can be linked to any individual co-researcher. The FGs were video recorded (so that the co-researchers could look back at their discussions) and it is possible that being recorded may have had an impact on co-researchers' perceptions of anonymity. However, the tutors did not look back at the video recordings as they were not involved in data analysis. . The co-researchers may also have been inclined to view the framework positively as it was introduced to them as part of their doctoral training and includes ideas integral to their doctoral training and the programme's values; this, in turn, may mean that the ideas within the framework were more accessible to the co-researchers. An additional limitation is that the participatory approach means that the data analysis, which took place collaboratively via dialogue and 'in the moment', may not be as rigorous as in more traditional research methods and that some meanings or views may, therefore, have been missed. Attempts to address this are through the member checking that took place during the co-researchers' synthesis of themes. It is also acknowledged that one trainee opted not to take part. This reflects autonomy on their part, however, it means that they may have missed out on a group experience. The whole cohort, however, had opportunities in

teaching sessions and assignments to develop their critical reflection skills. The findings reflect the views of those that took part, rather than of the whole cohort.

Suggestions for next steps and future research

Next steps for the framework suggested by the co-researchers included refining the visual aspect of the framework as well as developing user guidance. As well as the glossary (Appendix C), the co-researchers are developing a series of prompts and questions to support critical reflection.

Suggestions for future research include collaborating with TEPs to use the framework over a longer period of time and reviewing with them its use in practice. Action research with experienced EPs on their experience of using the framework and views on its application and refinement would also be informative. There is also scope for exploration of supervisors' experiences of application of the framework in supervision with TEPs, as well as the use of the framework as a support for reflection and reflexivity in TEPs' research projects.

Conclusion

This article has described a framework for critically reflective EP practice, designed to support the critical reflections, growth and practice of trainee EPs, and has reported on a participatory research project exploring the experiences of a group of 16 TEP co-researchers of applying the framework in practice. The participatory research process has been explained and critiqued.

The findings suggest that the framework has been experienced as enhancing critical reflection and practice by this group of trainee EP co-researchers , and suggestions for its development have been made, including further explication of the framework's underlying thinking as well as how to apply it.   It has been argued that if EPs and TEPs are to practise in creative, anti-

oppressive, ethical and critical ways to promote social justice-oriented goals there is an ongoing

need for both trainee and experienced EPs to continue to develop their skills in critical reflection.

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Appendix A

Adaptation of Braun and Clarke (2006;2020) to the participatory research process

| Braun and Clarke (2006) 6 steps	Adaptation to enable the participatory research process
1. **Familiarise yourself with the data:** transcribe the data (if necessary), read (and re-read) the data and note initial ideas.	The co-researchers in their 4 groupings watched and re-watched their own focus group video recordings. The videos were paused by the co-researchers at key points to identify important ideas.
2. **Generating initial codes:** the researcher identifies interesting features of the data, collating data relevant to each code	Important meanings/codes being identified by each of the groups were recorded 'in the moment' on an online document by a co-researcher who shared their screen so that focus group members could see the developing initial codes.
3. **Searching for themes**: the codes are collated into potential themes; all relevant data are gathered for each potential theme.	The 4 focus groups met together online. A co-researcher facilitated the meeting; a different co-researcher recorded the discussion in writing via a shared online document. Each focus group in turn reported back the main ideas/codes that they identified from their video analysis discussions (Appendix 4). These were recorded and synthesised 'in the moment' in writing on a shared online document and were adjusted as the discussion progressed.
4. **Reviewing themes**: collating codes into potential themes, gathering all data relevant to each potential theme	The whole group looked at the themes and sub-themes that were being developed from the initial ideas/codes and continued to adjust and refine the groupings.
5. **Defining and naming themes:** the themes are refined and defined, along with potential sub-themes	The whole group discussed and agreed the labelling of the final themes and sub-themes.
6. **Producing the report**: the	The final configuration of themes and

researcher uses extract examples that relate to the themes, research question and literature.	sub-themes was agreed upon by the group and is reported verbatim in the current article. A sub-group of co-researchers collaborated in dissemination activities.

Appendix B: Two examples of the framework as used by TEP co-researchers
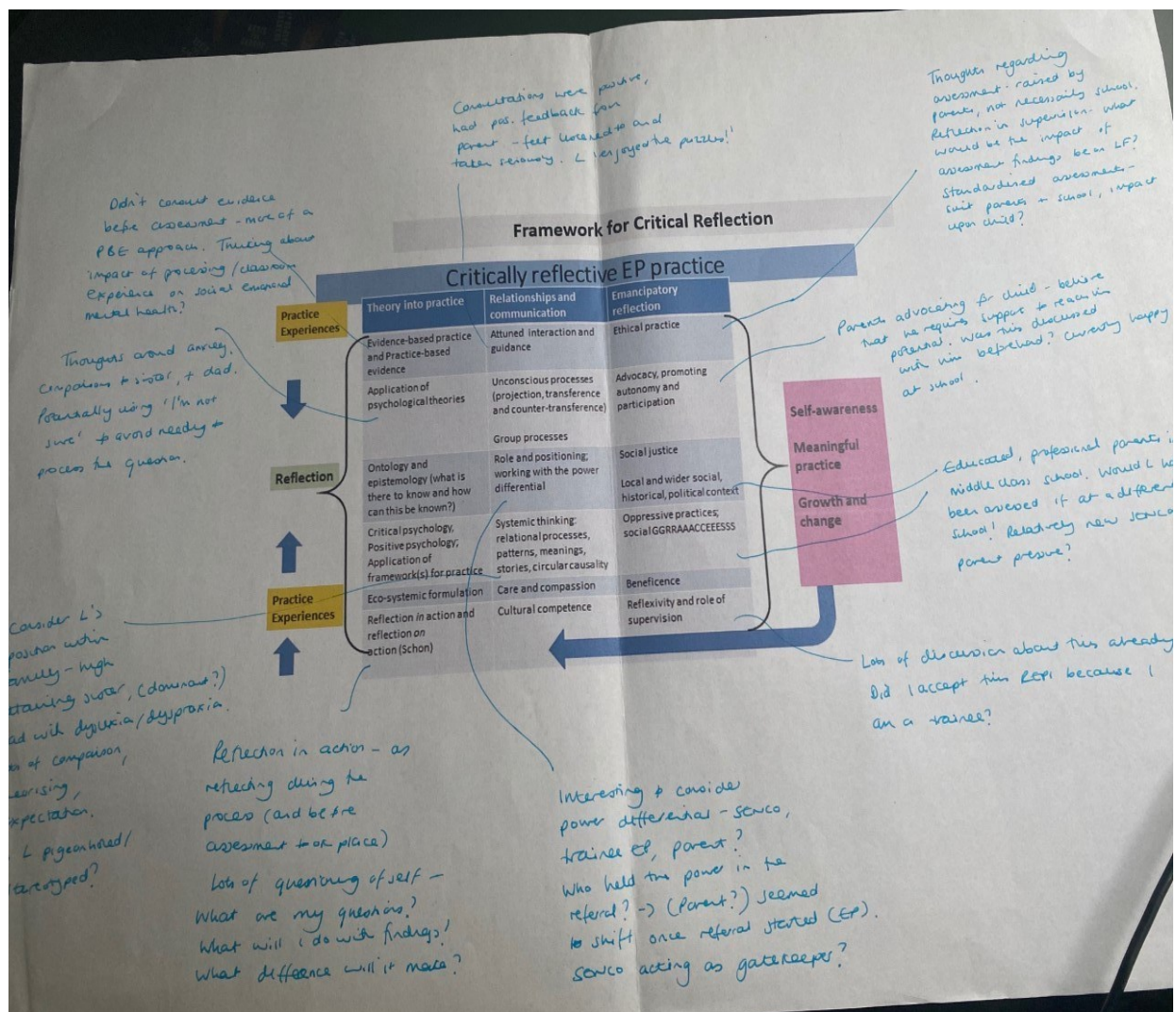
Transcription of annotations clockwise, starting from the top left

- Didn't consult evidence before the assessment, more of a PBE approach. Thinking about impact of processing/ classroom experience on social emotional mental health?

- Consultations were positive, had positive feedback from parent – felt listened to and taken seriously. L 'enjoyed the puzzles!'

- Thoughts regarding assessment – raised by parents, not necessarily school. Reflection in supervision, what would be the impact of assessment findings be on L? Standardised assessments suit parents and school, impact upon child?

- Parents advocating for child – believe that he requires support to realise his potential. Was this discussed with him beforehand? Currently happy at school.

- Educated, professional parents in a middle class school. Would L have been assessed if at a different school? Relatively new SENCo, parent pressure?

- Lots of discussion about this already. Did I accept this REPI because I am a trainee?

- Interesting to consider power differential, SENCo, trainee EP, parent? Who held the power in the referral? (parent?) Seemed to shift once referral started (EP). SENCo acting as gatekeeper?

- Reflection in action – as reflecting during the process (and before the assessment took place). Lots of questions of self – What are my questions? What will I do with my findings? What difference will it make?

- Consider L's position within the family – high attaining sister (dominant?) Dad with dyslexia/ dyspraxia. Elements of comparison, family theorising, expectation. Is L pigeonholed/ stereotyped?

- Thoughts around anxiety, comparisons to sister and dad. Potentially using 'I'm not sure' to avoid needing to process the question.
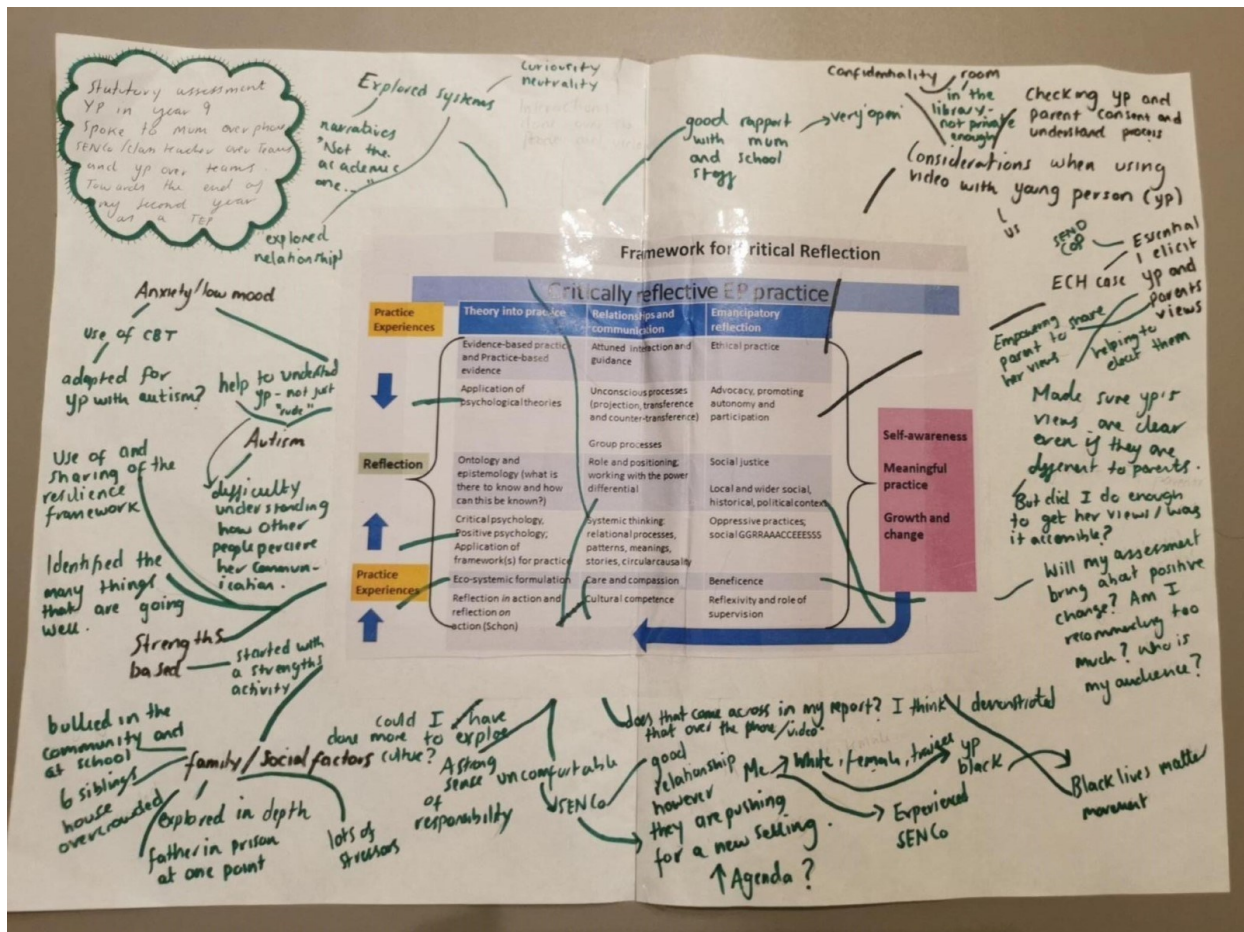
Transcription of annotations clockwise starting from the top left

Statutory assessment: YP in year 9. Spoke to mum over phone, SENCO/class teacher over Teams and YP over Teams. Towards end of my second year as TEP.

Explored systems – narratives "not the academic one…" - curiosity, neutrality. Explored relationships.

Good rapport with mum and school staff – very open.

Confidentiality – room – in the library not private enough

Checking YP and parent consent and understand process. Considerations when using video with young person (YP)

SEND CoP – Essential – elicit YP and parents' views. EHC case: Empowering parent to share her views- helping to elicit them. Made sure YP's views are clear even if different to parent's. But did I do enough to get her views/ was it accessible?

Will my assessment bring about positive change? Am I recommending too much? Who is my audience?

Black lives matter movement

Me – white female trainee, YP black

Experienced SENCo

Good relationship – SENCo - however they are pushing for a new setting – Agenda?

Does that come across in my report? I think I demonstrated that over the phone/video

A strong sense of responsibility – Uncomfortable

Could I have done more to explore culture?

Family/social factors – lots of stressors – explored in depth, father in prison at one point, 6 siblings – house overcrowded – bullied in the community and at at school

Strengths-based : started with a strengths activity. Identified the many things that are going well.

Autism – difficulty understanding how other people perceive her communication

Use of and sharing of the resilience framework

Help to understand YP – not just "rude"

Anxiety/low mood – use of CBT – adapted for YP with autism?

Appendix C: Glossary to support use of framework produced by co-researchers as an action following research project

Advocacy: *The process of empowering individuals to express their thoughts, feelings and opinions.*

Application of Psychological Theories: *Using psychological theories to make sense of real-life contexts.*

Attuned Interactions: *A set of principles that promote positive and responsive relationships between individuals.*

Autonomy: *Respecting one's right to decide how one wishes to act and be treated.*

Beneficence: *The commitment to do 'good'.*

Circular Causality: *A circular interpretation of complex interactions, where A influences B and B influences A bi-directionally, permitting a systemic conceptualisation of the concern.*

Care and Compassion: *Responding deeply and sensitively with genuine concern whilst seeking to alleviate another's distress.*

Countertransference: *The psychologist's response to the client's transference in which they show their own personal feelings towards the client.*

Critical Psychology: *A branch of psychology that opposes the status quo by attempting to promote equal status and positive change for all, not just the privileged.*

Cultural Competence: *Being aware of one's own culture and practising in a way that meets the needs of diverse communities whose belief systems are often different from those of the dominant culture.*

Eco-systemic Formulation: *Seeking to understand behaviour in light of the multiple systems within which the client is emmeshed, such as, school, family, community etc.*

Emancipatory Reflections: *Reflecting on practice through the lens of seeking to facilitate transformative action for children, young people and their families.*

Epistemology: *One's view on how knowledge is acquired.*

Ethical Practice: *Working within the confines of our ethical responsibilities and parameters as outlined by the professional and regulatory bodies for practitioner psychologists.*

Evidence Based Practice: *Professional practice that is informed by research.*

Group Processes: *The behaviours within and between group members which influence group dynamics and task performance.*

Ontology: *One's view of reality that encapsulates beliefs about the world and its existence.*

Oppressive Practice: *Inhumane treatment and marginalisation of individuals and/or groups.*

Positioning: *The various ways in which we are positioned within numerous hierarchies and power relationships.*

Positive Psychology: *Strengths-based psychology that promotes aspirations, flourishing and wellbeing of individuals and society.*

Power: *The ability to influence another's decision making or actions through exercising control over their own and others' resources.*

Practice Based Evidence: *Professional expertise which guides practice.*

Promoting Autonomy and Participation: *Actively encouraging agency and involvement.*

Projection: *A common defence mechanism, wherein the individual attributes their own thoughts or feelings to another person.*

Reflection in Action: *Actively recognising and commenting on an action/situation whilst it is still occurring.*

Reflection on Action: *Actively recognising and commenting on an action/situation after time has elapsed.*

Reflexivity: *The process of reflecting critically on ourselves as practitioners, helping us to come to terms with ourselves and our multiple identifies.*

Relationships and Communication: *The key skills underpinning communication and interactions between individuals and groups.*

Social GGRRAAACCEEESSS: *An acronym that describes different identities which place people at different levels of power and privilege (Burnham, 2012).*

Social Justice: *The provision of fair, equitable and appropriate resources and opportunities informed by a person's needs.*

Supervision: *A space for support, guidance and reflection within a professional relationship*.

Systemic Thinking: *Taking a holistic approach to understanding the behaviour of the systems and how different parts of the systems impact the whole.*

Theory into Practice: *How psychological theories can be applied in practice.*

Transference: *The unconscious redirection of feelings and emotions from one's past onto another in the present.*

Unconscious Processes: *Automatic thoughts and feelings that are taking place beneath the level of consciousness.*