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Huntsley, Jennifer and Brentnall, Catherine (2021) Generative critical conversation: A method for developing reflexivity and criticality. Journal of Small Business Management, 61 (6). pp. 2788-2817.

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**Generative Critical Conversation – a method for developing reflexivity and criticality.**

**Abstract**

In this paper we introduce a novel method – Generative Critical Conversation (GCC) – which we propose can develop educator and researcher reflexivity and enhance criticality in enterprise and entrepreneurship education (EEE). We ground this method in literature from the field of educational research and reflexivity scholarship. We hybridize three methodological elements - the self-study strategy of **reflecting on recorded material**; **exploring lived experiences through co-generative dialogue,** and a focus on **critical questioning -** to facilitate the development of educator-researcher reflexivity. We use illustrations, from our own conversations, to show how GCC opens up space over time to access and move between levels of reflexive interpretation. We suggest enabling conditions which support GCC and its potential as a method for developing educator-researcher reflexivity across EEE, initial teacher education, and other fields of research.

**Key words:**

**Reflexivity, criticality, enterprise & entrepreneurship education.**

## Introduction

In this paper, we introduce a novel method – Generative Critical Conversation – which we propose can help develop the reflexive capacity of educators and researchers in Enterprise and Entrepreneurship Education (EEE). The method was developed when we - a senior lecturer in university-based initial teacher education and a business advisor from a university

enterprise support team - worked together to develop an EEE intervention for primary teacher trainees. Primary schools are a noticeable target in enterprise education policy pronouncements in England (Young, 2014; Department for Education, 2017; Hinds, 2019). However, in EEE, trainee teachers are simultaneously identified as having the opportunity to develop enterprise from the beginning of their careers yet lacking the conceptual understanding to do this (Lepistö & Ronkko, 2013; Deveci, 2016; Tiernan, McCracken & Matlay, 2016).

Inducting pre-service teachers to view enterprise as extra-curricular *schemes* (Holman, 2014), which can be outsourced to providers, some of whom will provide activity for free (Hanson, Hooley & Cox, 2017), follows a well-trodden route likely to grow the *quantity* of enterprise education in schools. However, *from our first meeting*, we both agreed that we wanted to offer the primary trainee teachers we worked with a critical introduction to enterprise education and provide space for them to question EEE, its purposes and practices.

As our professional work developed, we became more curious about *why* we were both inclined towards this critical approach. To explore this, during the process of planning, delivering, and evaluating the intervention, we began to record our conversations, capturing our personal and professional experiences and what we thought was influencing our practice. We would listen back to these recorded conversations separately and then, at our next meeting, make new recordings, reflecting on our previous conversations and expanding the conversation in new directions. Through using our recorded conversations as artefacts for reflection (Bullough and Pinnegar, 2001), we generated a deeper understanding of our motivations and assumptions and experienced moments of self-critical illumination (Schön, 1991). Furthermore, listening to ourselves forced us to recognise the self - our *i*nterpretations and internalised discourses - a necessary step in developing reflexivity as an educator or researcher (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2018). Through this process, and emerging from our

practical experience, the possibilities of purposeful conversation to develop reflection and reflexivity became more apparent. This is particularly important in EEE, where the field is said to lack, and need to develop, criticality (Fayolle, 2013). We will argue that reflexivity is a pre-requisite to criticality, and therefore methods that develop educator-researcher reflexivity are needed to help strengthen criticality in EEE. We propose that Generative Critical Conversation (GCC) is such a method and offers an innovative and practicable route for educators and researchers to explore and reflect upon their practice and actions and develop reflexive insight.

Our paper unfolds in the following steps. First, we summarise recent calls for criticality in the field of enterprise and entrepreneurship education. Then, we consider the significance of reflection and reflexivity in supporting the development of criticality in the field of educational practice. Following this, we describe the emergence of Generative Critical Conversation out of our practical experience working together to develop an enterprise education intervention for primary trainee teachers. Next, we lay the theoretical groundwork for GCC, drawing from literature in educational research and reflective practice to explore terms such as criticality and reflexivity, and suggest that reflexivity is a necessary pre-cursor for criticality. We introduce a framework by reflexivity scholars which describes levels of reflexive insight which we later use as a lens through which to (re)view our conversations. We ground GCC as a method, hybridizing from three methodological approaches in teacher education - self-study, co-generative dialogue and critical questioning. Then, we illustrate, through three conversational excerpts, how GCC facilitated us to develop reflexive insight within and between conversations. We discuss enabling conditions that facilitate GCC, and its potential transferability. We conclude by underscoring the potential GCC has to practically address calls for greater educator-researcher reflexivity, and, as a result, strengthen critical capacity in, and beyond, EEE.

The contribution of this paper to the special issue is in how it offers an innovative qualitative method – Generative Critical Conversation – which *practically addresses* the issue of educators and researchers lacking criticality and/or needing to develop reflexivity. In addition, by drawing from the world of education to theoretically ground this method, our approach also contributes to efforts to better connect the world of EEE with the world of education.

**Calls for criticality in the field of EEE**

In the following section we provide a narrative literature review (Grant & Booth, 2009), to support the need for criticality in the field of EEE and to contextualise the usefulness of GCC. We start by pointing to long expressed issues about the contested and problematic nature of EEE in relation to schools, the setting we practice in, which implicitly require the development of educators and their reflective capacity. We then turn to summarising more recent and explicit calls for greater criticality in the field of EEE.

In the seminal paper 'Schools and Enterprise', Jamieson (1984) asserted "There can be few school activities which raise quite so many educational, organisational, political, and economic questions." (p. 20). For schoolteachers, enterprise education raises questions regarding the relationship between enterprise related knowledge and subject knowledge, the usefulness of knowledge gained through an enterprise activity and the pedagogy needed in order for students to gain practical wisdom and skills through an activity (Jamieson, 1984, p. 26). Whilst Jamieson concluded optimistically that the spirit of enterprise could be a "radical irritant" to traditional assumptions in education (Jamieson, 1984, p. 27), other authors started to identify assumptions *within* enterprise education that could hold back its development. Authors discussed issues such as the problematic and contested meanings of enterprise education (Gibb, 1987; Grant, 1986), the potential to reproduce corporate hegemony and

education for capitalism (Crompton, 1987), and ethical concerns re the development of negative entrepreneurial profiles (Caird, 1990). The engagement and training of educators and staff to be aware of, and work with, these issues was considered a crucial strand in effective policy programming (Gibb, 1987, p. 36). Teachers were seen as central to the design and delivery of enterprise education in order to encourage an "*educational* response to social and economic changes" (Crompton, 1987, p. 10, emphasis added). Acknowledging these issues also meant acknowledging that enterprise education did not (and does not), lend itself to value free study (Gibb, 1987, p. 12).

In terms of primary schools in academic literature, they were seen responding to the calls to develop enterprise in education, with case studies offering examples of the benefits and challenges (Crawshaw 1996; Raven-Hill, 1996; Iredale, 1996; Bishop, 1997). However, reviewing the progress of enterprise education in schools, many years later, Gibb (2008) was still arguing that teachers should "own" the development of enterprise, for example, familiarising themselves with concepts and outcomes, designing experiments and innovation and evaluating successes and failures (Gibb, 2008, p.11). His ongoing concern was that there was limited exploration of the meanings of enterprise education, and its link (or not) to broader educational goals, which hindered its development (Gibb, 2008, p. 14). These discussions persistently underscore the role of teachers in the development of EEE, and the need for them to be involved in debating it as a concept and designing and reflecting on it in practice, *implicitly* articulating the importance of informed and critical educators.

Recently however, there have been more *explicit* calls for criticality in the field of EEE, and more direct illustrations of the issues which arise when educators and researchers lack criticality. First, EEE has been called a taken-for-granted professional domain, where practices and assumptions are handed over with little questioning or reflection (Fayolle, 2013; Fayolle & Loi, 2018; Berglund & Verduijn, 2018). This can be seen in research, where

instructor narratives of pedagogies are often based in implicit assumptions, with little reflection and a "less-than-convincing" critical stance (Fayolle, Verzat & Wapshott, 2016, p. 2). This is then compounded by a lack of criticality in research approaches, where researchers in EEE tend not question their unconscious philosophies and practices; therefore, they do not borrow concepts or methods from other fields. Such borrowed concepts or methods could help explain contradictory results of interventions or explore research issues that require out-of-the-box thinking (Fayolle, 2013). This lack of criticality limits the legitimacy of the field (Fayolle, 2013; Fayolle et al, 2016). Over time, this lack of criticality can be argued to have contributed to the 'McDonaldization' of EEE, (Hytti, 2018), where adoption of highly standardized practices (such as drafting business model canvasses, pitching exercises and competitions) means provision is oblivious to questions of gender, class and ethnicity and important axiological debates about 'why?' are silenced. In this scenario, educators and researchers risk conveying the message that structures and context do not matter, and unintentionally and unreflectively, becoming tools of top-down agendas which have been left unexplored (Berglund & Verduijn, 2018; Hytti, 2018).

Reflection and reflexivity are both identified as a route to countering the taken-for-granted in entrepreneurship education (Fayolle et al, 2016; Kyro, 2015; Berglund & Verduijn, 2018; Hytti, 2018). Reflective practices can help challenge the normative reproduction of beliefs and values that evangelise and cult-ify the field (Farny, Frederiksen, Hannibal & Jones, 2016). Indeed, increasing reflectiveness on the use of concepts and conceptualisations is the way we might better understand *others'* views on the meaning of EEE, as well as identifying our own view and understanding (Kyro, 2018). Within education literature and research, concepts of reflection, reflexivity and criticality are well-developed. In the next section, we explore these ideas, before presenting a method – Generative Critical Conversation – that may practicably support educators in EEE developing criticality.

**Developing criticality through reflection and reflexivity in education practice**

Teachers in the UK are required to be critical practitioners; it is said they should both think critically and enact criticality in the classroom, scrutinising and evaluating claims made in education literature and through education practice (Door, 2014). Reflection and reflexivity are established in education literature as routes to developing criticality (e.g., Bulman, 2013; Door, 2014; Bolton & Delderfield, 2017). Teacher educator and scholar of critical practice Door asserts that "reflexivity is a prerequisite to criticality" (2014, p. 45), and that reflexivity and criticality are essential dispositions that underpin effective teachers' practice. The notion of the 'reflective practitioner', first coined by Schön in 1983, has been particularly influential in a broad range of professional fields, including initial teacher education. Schön's work is underpinned by that of philosopher John Dewey (1910), who developed the notion that learning is brought about through experience and reflection. Hofer suggests 'reflection and reflexivity are central to professional growth as educators' (2017, p. 299). As such, and in response to the call from this special issue, it is relevant to connect the fields of educational research and EEE. The qualities of an effective educator in EEE are likely to be aligned with the qualities of effective educators in other fields. To learn more about these qualities, in this section, we explore conceptualisations of key terms 'criticality', 'reflection' and 'reflexivity' proposed in educational research.

***Exploring criticality in educational research***

In educational research, criticality has been defined as a "human disposition of engagement where it is recognised that the object of attention could be other than it is" (Barnett, 1997, p. 179). This has close links to Dewey's belief that "uncertainty is the hallmark of the search for knowledge" (Hofer, 2017, p. 301). It may be inferred that through practising criticality, understanding might be deepened or expanded through being willing to

think from different and sometimes uncomfortable perspectives. Both Door (2014) and Barnett (1997) draw distinctions between criticality related to formal knowledge or theory and criticality related to practice. Barnett describes the former as *critical reason* and the latter as *critical action*. He identifies a further third domain of criticality as *critical self-reflection:* "that form of criticality which finds expression in being directed towards the self" (1997, p. 179). More recent authors reinforce this, saying that a key quality of being critical is being able to: "[consider]… an issue from multiple perspectives, even when these involve self-critique" (Banegas & Villacañas de Castro, 2016, p. 455). In teacher education, it has been argued that asking critical questions should be central to teachers' development and curriculum making (McNiff, 2009). Criticality is perceived as a transformative act; by asking such questions as 'What are we doing?', 'Why are we doing it?', 'What difference are we trying to make?', *generative transformational capacity* is developed, that is, the ability of any thing "to transform itself into a more developed form of itself" (McNiff, 2009, p. 5). This previous work in the field of education demonstrates that calls to strengthen criticality within the field of EEE may be addressed by exploring the established routes to criticality through reflection and reflexivity in the field of education.

***Exploring reflection and reflexivity***

In conceptualising reflexivity, we may first examine reflection. Scholar of critical thinking and higher education Moon (2006), suggests that authors writing about reflection come from a range of disciplines and backgrounds, but rarely move beyond their own field, which gives rise to multiple definitions and crossover in meanings. Conceptualisations of reflection are both many and competing; a commonality among much of the literature in teacher education is the recognition that there is a lack of an ultimate definition of terms in this area (e.g., Ryan 2013; Rogers 2001). Within teacher education literature, multiple terms are used to describe reflective processes (Rogers, 2001) and educators and/or researchers

bring personal interpretations to the terms ‘reflection’ and ‘reflective practice’ (Russell, 2014). Russell and Martin (2017) argue that this implies a lack of understanding as to how or why reflective practice may be valuable for trainee teachers – a situation that may extend into other fields and scenarios, such as and including EEE.

Recognising the multitudes of definitions of the term, teacher educator Ryan (2012) broadly encapsulates *reflection* as “making sense of experience” and “reimagining future experience” (p. 208); a sense of first looking back and then looking forward. Rogers’ work agrees but expands these ideas; he suggests that reflection is triggered by a specific event and that it is a transformative process through which new understanding emerges (2001). These aspects of reflection have strong resonance with Barnett’s definition of criticality. Making sense of the triggering specific event may be seen as the “object of attention” and through re-imagining it as “other than it is”, new understanding may emerge (Barnett, 1997, p. 179). Further support for this link is apparent in Barnett’s description of critical thought as “potentially emancipatory for individuals” and “educationally radical” (1997, p. 4).

Building on this, *reflexivity* may be defined as a process of “critical self-reflection", where one must be simultaneously both “*involved* and *detached”* (Bates, 2014, p. 227). It involves recognising “the ways in which one may affect and be affected” (Cole and Masny, 2012, in Attia & Edge, 2016, p. 35). One adopts a reflexive position through “interaction and interpretation” by imagining “the other’s viewpoint into one’s sense of self” (Zienkowski, 2016, p. 4). While *reflection* might be seen as examining one’s own experiences and reimagining them for the future, *reflexivity* could be seen as both one’s own interpretation and *the lens through which one views* those interpretations. Through reflexivity, the researcher “takes responsibility for one’s own situatedness within [research and practice] and the effect that it may have” (Berger, 2015, p. 220).

Scholars of reflexivity suggest that it is closely entwined with *interpretation* (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2018). Through *acts of interpretation*, they suggest that *we as researchers* construct both *research objects* and *ourselves* socially. Alvesson and Sköldberg (2018) describe four aspects or levels of interpretation: (see Table 1).

| Aspect/level of interpretation | Focus |
|---|---|
| Interaction with empirical material | Accounts in interviews, observation of situations and other empirical materials |
| Interpretation | Underlying meanings |
| Critical interpretation | Ideology, power, social reproduction |
| Reflection on text production and language use | Own text, claims to authority, selectivity of voices represented in the text |

Table 1. Levels of Interpretation from Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2018, p.331

The first level is the point at which the initial data is constructed, where researchers "make preliminary interpretations…where the degree of interpretation is relatively low or somewhat unclear to the researchers themselves" (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2018, p. 330). The second level is "guided by ideas that can be related to academic theories (scientific paradigms) or to other frames of reference (cultural ideas or taken-for-granted assumptions, implicit personal theories, and so on)" (2018, p. 331). The empirical material is likely to inspire, develop, and reshape theoretical ideas; at the same, the researchers' own interpretative repertoires will define the scope of possible interpretations to be made. Shifting to the third level, critical interpretation, the researchers' focus moves from considering the underlying meanings of the empirical data to noticing the presence of ideologies, power and social reproduction. The fourth level, reflection on text production and language use,

represents interpretations that are the furthest away from the original interaction with the empirical material. Here, researchers are concerned with their own text, they question their and others' claims to authority in an informed manner, and they recognise the selectivity of the voices represented.

These levels are not a hierarchy, nor something to be 'worked through in a linear manner; there is no 'best' level of reflexive interpretation. Rather, Alvesson and Sköldberg suggest that reflexivity is developed by the researcher paying attention to their movement *through and between* these levels. Reflexivity arises in the "relations" and "interfaces" between these levels (2018, p. 330), it is in these moments that researcher recognises the ways in which *they may affect and be affected.*

In relation to EEE, authors have offered ways of thinking about reflexivity in entrepreneurial learning (Higgins, Smith & Mirza, 2013), and developing student reflexivity in entrepreneurship education (Achtenhagen & Johannisson, 2018). Thus, whilst reflexivity is positioned as an important concern for educators and researchers, it is less clear how they might go about developing it in a practical sense. Our contribution is in providing a method - Generative Critical Conversation – which aims to support educators and researchers in the field of EEE to develop reflexivity and criticality.

Whilst our paper and this method responds to the call for deeper criticality in EEE, we ground its theoretical underpinning in existing practice from the field of education relating to critical reflection and theory from scholars of reflexivity. By doing so we simultaneously contribute to calls from Fayolle (2013; 2019) that EEE better reflect and connect. We offer a way that educators and researchers in EEE can critically *reflect* upon and question their practice, as well as *connecting* this method with research and practice from the field of education and reflexivity scholarship. Having set the scene by outlining calls for criticality in

EEE and exploring key terms and conceptualisations from education and reflexivity scholarship, we will now describe the method of GCC and how it emerged from our practice.

**The emergence of Generative Critical Conversation**

Generative Critical Conversation was developed while planning and implementing an intervention - *A Critical Introduction to Enterprise Education* - for primary trainees in a School of Education in a university in northern England. The purpose of, and reflections regarding, the intervention itself have been presented elsewhere ([Authors], 2019), therefore, the purpose of this paper is to set out the method which emerged from that process – Generative Critical Conversation – and which holds potential more broadly as a route to developing educator-researcher reflexivity and criticality in EEE.

Whilst developing the intervention for primary trainees we enjoyed a rich dialogue between ourselves and shared our work and thoughts with colleagues within and beyond the institution where we were working. Following a suggestion from a colleague - "*you should record your conversations*" (Higgins, 2019) - we took the leap and made an audio recording of one of our meetings.

Once we recorded our conversation (using the audio recording function on a smart phone and sharing the file via WhatsApp), we listened back to this conversational artefact separately. Then, when we met again, we reflected on what we remembered and what struck us about the previous conversation. We discussed what was painful, what was valuable, what insight we had gained into ourselves and each other. We recorded this conversation, and again, we listened to it separately. This (re)listening allowed us to reflect on our original conversation and probe further into elements that might otherwise have been forgotten: "*…when you said… it made me think about….".* It prompted us to delve into a comment in

greater detail because the tone of speech changed, or because we heard a pause or perceived some other conversational sign. Perhaps there was moment of shared laughter, an indication of some deeper agreement we could explore. Or there was an extended pause, or an '*mmm…'* that indicated confusion, uncertainty or dissonance between us, our experiences, values and beliefs.

These conversations were not just a personal exploration, they were connected to a practical and professional context. Initially, the purpose of our conversations was to develop an intervention for primary trainees; following this, the purpose was to reflect on our motivations, experiences and sense-making of the intervention (the focus of the aforementioned 2019 paper); more recently our purpose shifted to constructing *this* journal article. As such, each conversation was strongly linked to considering *what we were doing in practice* and *why*. We came to recognise the potential of this approach to spark critical thought, uncertainty and the prompting of thinking multiple perspectives and sought to define it.

We developed the term *Generative Critical Conversation* (GCC) to describe this process. The conversations, the subsequent (re)listening, the subsequent conversation and joint reflection were generative (McNiff, 2009), in that they had a transformative impact on our thinking or practice, and they were critical (Banegas & de Castro, 2016), in that they also broadened, challenged and questioned our individual viewpoints on literature, practice and the wider world. We explore the terms generative and critical further in the next section. Having summarised how GCC emerged organically from our practice, we theorise GCC as a method connecting it to existing practice in reflective educational research and reflexivity scholarship.

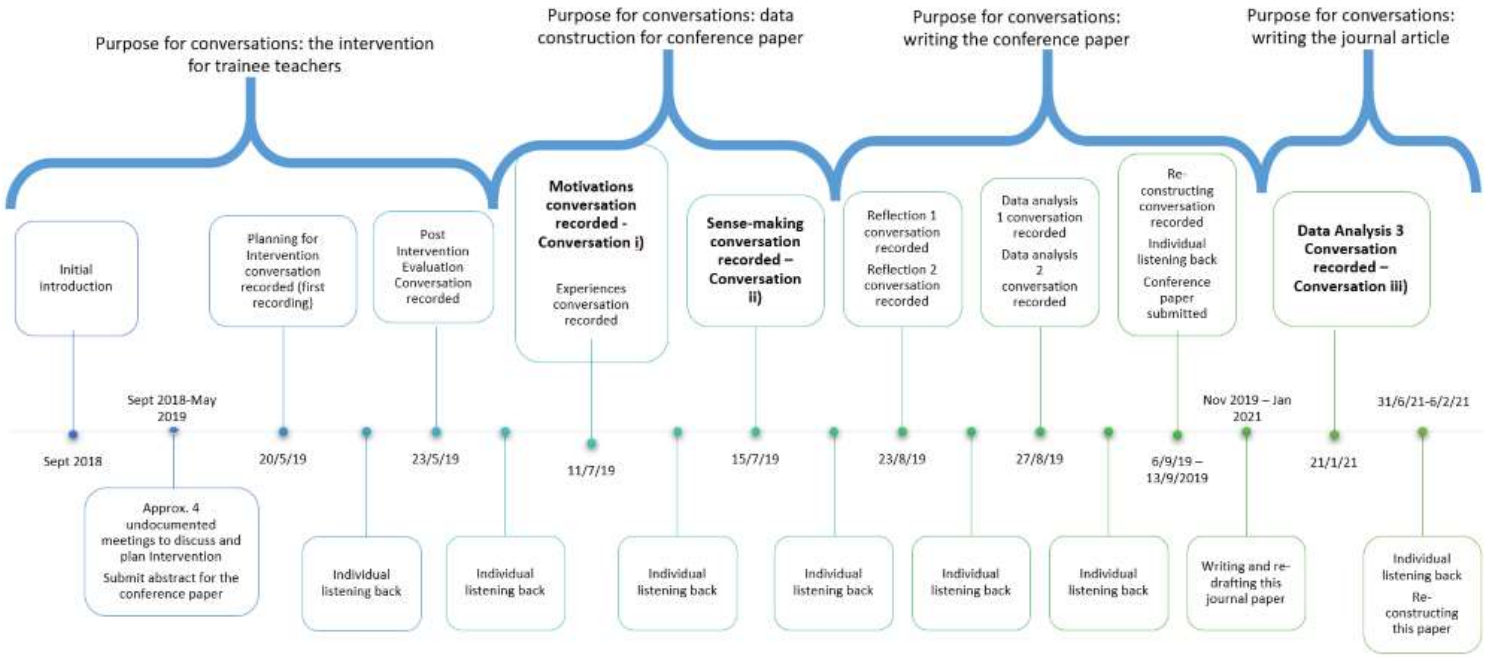


Figure 1. Timeline showing our recorded conversations, individual listening back and purposes for meeting

**Connecting GCC to educational research and reflexivity scholarship**

In this section, we draw from literature from the fields of educational research and reflexive scholarship to theorise GCC. We introduce existing practices from educational research to ground GCC in existing approaches and we introduce a framework of reflexive interpretation which will be used to illustrate how reflexivity is developed through GCC.

Through the course of our interactions and interpretations, in the process of our Generative Critical Conversations, we noticed how the opportunity to *reflect* on previous conversations (looking back and looking forward), enabled us to be more *reflexive* (recognising the ways in which one may affect and be affected). We began communicating about our communication, our "discourse" bending back on discourse (Zienowski, 2016, p. 3). In doing so, we found that we were questioning ourselves and the worlds to which we were connected, considering issues from different perspectives and starting to recognise the different and competing discourses at play in our conversations and contained within our utterances (Bakhtin, 1986). Using Alvesson and Sköldberg's *levels of reflexive interpretation* as a lens through which to (re)view our conversations, we could see that we were moving between the levels both within and between our conversations. Thus, we suggest that GCC is a method that develops reflexivity by enabling researchers to become more aware of their own movement between levels of reflexive interpretation. Later in the paper we provide excerpts from our recorded conversations to illustrate moments where we notice the relations and interfaces between the levels of interpretation. Next, we provide the theoretical grounding for GCC, hybridizing existing methods in educational practice and then summarising the terms 'generative', 'critical' and 'conversation'.

***Grounding GCC – hybridizing from existing methods in educational research***

We now ground Generative Critical Conversation (GCC) in existing methods from the field of education. GCC blends the self-study approach of **reflecting on recorded material** (Bullough & Pinnegar, 2001), and the spirit of **exploring lived experiences in co-generative dialogue** (Roth, Lawless & Tobin, 2000), with a focus on **critical questioning** of McNiff (2009). We identify these as *the three methodological elements* of GCC. The process itself provides a practicable framework for developing educator and researcher reflexivity, and therefore offers a method to help strengthen criticality, of individuals and the field more generally. To connect our method to existing examples in education, we draw on self-study, co-generative dialogue, critical reflexivity and dialectical reflectivity to lay the theoretical ground for GCC.

*Self-study*

Self-study is a methodology often associated with teacher education, where researchers examine their own practices. Methods are mainly qualitative, the most common forms of data being correspondence and **recorded conversations** (Bullough & Pinnegar, 2001). The process is interactive and reflective and is closely tied to exploring and developing teacher educators' sense of identity (Loughran, 2018). The researcher records their responses to that which is being studied; returning to this record, they examine their initial processes at a deeper level. In this, self-study draws on the autobiographical, historical and cultural aspects of the subject-researcher's life (Hamilton & Pinnegar, 1998). Loughran (2018) asserts that a strength of *collaborative* self-study is that it facilitates the "questioning of taken-for-granted assumptions" and "the detailed analysis of alternative perspectives on pedagogical experiences" (p. 4). Self-study encompasses a drive for personal transformation - those engaging in self-study should seek to improve their practice (LaBoskey, 2004). But it also has a moral dimension, that of gaining understanding necessary to make interactions between self and other "increasingly educative" (Bullough & Pinnegar, 2001, p. 15).

*Co-generative Dialogue*

Co-generative dialogue describes encounters where stakeholders "equitably participate in conversations about curriculum practice that they have enacted together" (El Kadri & Roth, 2015, p. 44). It provides a forum in which the lived experience of successes, failures, and (failed) opportunities are raised and analysed (Roth, Lawless & Tobin, 2000, p. 7).

Within **co-generative dialogue**, there are some fundamental assumptions about the purpose and position of educators, for example, that human beings live in (and under) certain conditions that determine their actions but they also have "power-to-act" and change these conditions (Roth, Lawless & Tobin, 2000, p. 4). The purpose of inquiry is not just to understand the world, but to change it (for the better). The wider world, therefore, becomes part of the conversations about curricula and education. It is expected that stakeholders in such conversations have different experiences of the same (curricula) event, and that this provides in-roads to critically interrogate and understand differences as the result of biography and social and societal location. The act of sharing lived experiences provides "a common resource" from which shared explanations and new understandings can be forged (Roth, Lawless & Tobin, 2000, p. 7).

*Critical Questioning*

We include two concepts under the heading critical questioning. First, *dialectical reflectivity* relates the individual experience of the researcher to the broader socio-cultural context, whilst *critical reflexivity* is concerned with interrogating and questioning the self (McNiff, 2011). Teacher educator McNiff uses these terms to describe how educators and researchers might critically reflect upon and **critically question** both the historical, political *contexts* in which they work and *their own thinking*. McNiff (2009) asserts that we must "interrogate and transform our own epistemologies: our theories of what we know and how we came to know

it" (p. 4). For McNiff, critical questions are central to educators' development and curriculum making. This is a strategy for exploring their values and experiences, by continually asking: What are we doing? Why are we doing it? What difference are we trying to make?

In Table 2 we provide a summary of terms to encapsulate the focus of 'generative', 'critical' and 'conversation', informed by the three methodological elements discussed above.

| Generative | Critical | Conversation |
|---|---|---|
| Gaining and deepening understanding to improve practice and make interactions between the self and others increasingly educative. | Questioning the self, others, the wider world and objectivity itself to reveal assumptions and consider alternative perspectives. | Equitable conversation where successes and failures are analysed and critically interrogated in relation to personal and social contexts. |
| Helps to develop reflexivity, which supports criticality. | | |

Table 2. Summary of Terms

Now we have grounded GCC as method and provided a summary of terms, in the following section we explore how the methodological elements of GCC support the development of reflexivity.

**Noticing the three methodological elements within our conversations**

In this section, we present three excerpts from our recorded conversations. In each, we notice the presence of the three methodological elements of GCC: the *self-study strategy of recording on reflective material, sharing lived experiences in co-generative dialogue* and *critical questioning*.

The first and second conversational excerpt are from relatively early in our GCC timeline, 11th & 15th July 2019 respectively. During the first excerpt, we are discussing our

motivations for designing and delivering the EEE intervention for trainee teachers. In the second excerpt, we have listened back to the first conversation individually, and we share our reflections from this. The third excerpt is taken from a conversation recorded in the process of preparing *this* paper, 21st January 2021, where we start to recognise some of the discourses present in our earlier conversations. For the sake of brevity and relevance, we present each excerpt as a combination of transcripts and summaries. Alongside each excerpt, we indicate where we notice the three methodological elements and discuss them below.

Additionally, we indicate where we notice Alvesson and Sköldberg's (2018) different levels of reflexive interpretation (R-L1, R-L2, R-L3 and R-L4). These are discussed in the next section.

***Presentation of Conversation (i)***

Here we present an excerpt from the conversation (Table 3), recorded on 11th July 2019, where we are discussing our motivations for designing and delivering the intervention. In this excerpt, we hear JJ and CC lost in conversation, a moment of shared understanding where both question the effectiveness of the school Enterprise Week. Such themed weeks are a common practice for delivering EEE in primary settings (Kashefpakdel, Rehill & Hughes, 2018), and prior to the intervention for trainee teachers, were JJ's only experience of EEE.

| Conversation Extract | Interplay between methodological element and levels of reflexive interpretation |
|---|---|
| CC: …what were your experiences of enterprise, as a teacher?<br><br>JJ: Err, enterprise fairs, enterprise weeks, make something and at the enterprise fair, a local | ***Co-generative dialogue*** **-** equitable participation and lived experiences/ the wider world becoming part of the conversations.<br><br>***Self Study*** – examining own and colleagues practice. |

| | |
|---|---|
| business comes to judge…and it tends to be a vehicle for middle leaders to show what they've led in school, that kind of thing, y'know- | **R-L1** - Interaction with empirical data – an account of previous experience of EEE. |
| CC: Right | |
| JJ: So it was always 'make a bookmark', 'make a water carrier', sell it to your parents because no one else is going to buy your water carrier! (*Both laugh).* It was just like an add-on, it was really… 'this looks good,' y'know, 'let's do this,' kind of thing, and um, it was *never ever* embedded. I tried to embed it and it was really complicated because I thought we'll do some maths around working out our profits and explaining the difference between price and cost as different things, to the children – these are 9-year-olds – they really struggled…I was like 'surely…?'- I did not appreciate how much they would struggle with the idea that the price of something isn't necessarily the cost of something- | ***Critical questioning*** - interrogating practice<br><br>**R-L2** - Interpretation – use of word 'embed' and 'embedded' - a significant (and loaded) word in JJ's primary setting.<br><br>***Self-study*** – examining own practices.<br><br>***Critical questioning*** – critically reflecting on own practice and thinking. |
| CC: (*enthusiastically agreeing*) Yeah, yeah, yeah – | |
| JJ: And y'know, to me I was like, 'well, you know that it cost this much to make so if you sell if for this much, you make so much profit' | **R-L1** – observation of personal experience. |
| CC: (*encouraging*) Mmmm! | |
| JJ: And they [the pupils] were like '….what?!', y'know, and they had no…I just…it really made me realise it's quite complicated in what can- I just questioned 'what are we getting out of this [the school enterprise week]?' | ***Critical questioning*** – what are we trying to achieve? What difference is it making? |

Table 3. Presentation of Conversation (i)

***The three methodological elements of GCC in Conversation (i)***

There are aspects of self-study in this conversation; through interrogating our motivations, we are seeking to improve our practice and make our interactions with students increasingly educative (Bullough & Pinnegar, 2001). However, the main aspect of self-study that GCC draws upon is *reflecting on recorded material*, something we had not yet started to do consistently. Self-study is discussed to a greater extent in Conversation (ii).

A key element of *co-generative dialogue* is equitable participation of both parties. We see indications of equitable participation in Conversation (i) in various places. In the above excerpt, JJ is sharing her prior experiences of EEE in primary schools; listening to the full conversation, we hear CC doing the same. There is strong sense of 'balance' in the conversation, a back-and-forth, where both researchers appear comfortable to share their motivations for taking part in the intervention. In addition to this openness to sharing, there are also indications of active listening – for example, CC agrees enthusiastically, or with an encouraging tone of voice.

Another key element of *co-generative dialogue* is that lived experience and the wider world become part of the conversation. In Conversation (i), we talked about our motivations for designing a *critical* introduction to enterprise education. Although we started by considering our motivations, we quickly started to naturally make links to the wider world – for example, JJ brings in her experiences of EEE as a primary teacher. In other parts of the conversation CC recalls meetings with Head Teachers or school partnerships where she felt she was 'selling' enterprise and the discomfort that generated.

These ideas are closely linked to *critical questioning*. JJ's criticism of EEE practice in primary schools implies that she is starting to question both the context in which she worked and her own thinking. An indication of this questioning might be the way JJ seeks affirmation

from CC (‘*y’know?*’). Indeed, at one point, JJ remembers the question she asked herself as a teacher*, ‘What are they [the children] getting out of this?’*; this draws a close parallel with McNiff’s assertion that educators should critically question themselves and their practice by asking *‘What difference am I trying to make?’* (McNiff, 2009).

***Presentation of Conversation (ii)***

Next, we present an excerpt from the conversation recorded on 15th July 2019 (Table 4). We had each listened back to the full recording of the conversation above and we were sharing our reflections.

Table 4. Presentation of Conversation (ii)

***The three methodological elements of GCC in Conversation (ii)***

The process of *self-study* frequently involves listening back to recorded conversations and is closely tied to the researcher’s sense of identity. Here, the transcribed discussion grows from CC’s *reflection on recorded material.* Listening back to recorded conversations is essential for GCC as it enhances the participant's memory of what was said and how they felt; their interpretations of past conversations are therefore likely to be deepened and expanded than if they were based on memory alone.

Similarly, we summarise above how JJ notices the discomfort she experiences when *reflecting on the recorded material*. At various points in all the conversations, JJ and CC note their discomfort when listening back, questioning the validity or relevance of their own contributions. Had we been working alone, this may have been a barrier to developing reflexivity. However, we were able to overcome this because of the way the process of GCC

unfolded. We listened back individually (safely) and experienced the uncomfortable emotions alone. When we met again for the next conversation, we often laughed about how uncomfortable we felt at listening to our own reflections, which went some way to dissipating the discomfort. Further to this, we both articulated how much we saw in *each other's* reflections, which served to reassure and encourage us in future conversations.

Aspects of *co-generative dialogue* are also present in the conversation. JJ interrogates CC to build joint understanding around CC's experiences of listening back to Conversation (i). Similarly, CC makes links to the wider world, drawing on her own experiences of other EEE projects. Notably, when listening back (and re-living) the excerpt from Conversation (ii), JJ and CC have very different experiences; JJ feels intense discomfort whereas CC appears to articulate some criticism regarding, or discomfort about EEE practice.

*Critical questioning* is evident during this conversation, particularly in CC's dialogue. She repeatedly questions the legitimacy of EEE projects, struggling to decide on their purpose and meaning, and suggesting that a focus on enterprising skills and competencies often takes precedence over learners gaining an understanding of *'basic economic principles*'. Later, at end of the conversation, CC starts to consider her pre-occupation with '*all the cognitive science people*' and '*what they [the trainees we were providing the intervention for] will remember*.' Within this conversation, CC is grappling with both her experiences of practice and her own preoccupations with the nature and focus of learning (as remembering content, concepts and knowledge or the development of skills and competencies).

The 'spark' of CC's critical questioning first emerged *in-between* conversations when she was listening back to recorded material. However, it was in the next conversation, through the co-generative dialogue with JJ, that her critical questions were voiced explicitly and explored in more depth. Hence, the excerpts from the above conversations provide an

example of how this method gives rise to conversation that is both *critical* and *generative*. It is *critical* because it facilitates the questioning of taken-for-granted assumptions and reveals alternative perspectives. It is *generative* because it deepens understanding and makes interactions between the self and others increasingly educative.

***Presentation of Conversation (iii)***

Here we present the third excerpt (Table 5), from a conversation recorded on 21st January 2021. This was a significant time after the above conversational excerpts (although we had recorded and reflected upon several conversations within this time). As shown on the timeline, the reason we met was to discuss the development of this paper.

Table 5. Presentation of Conversation (iii)

***The three methodological elements of GCC in Conversation (iii)***

The practice of self-study is evident in this conversation as we refer back to our previous recorded conversations; indeed, before we recorded Conversation (iii), we both had returned to listen to some of the earlier conversations. Aspects of co-generative dialogue are apparent in that we are interrogating and seeking to understand our practice as educators, questioning our earlier shared assumption that learning must involve either the demonstrable acquisition of knowledge *or* the demonstrable acquisition of skills. Inherent throughout the conversation is a sense of critical questioning of ourselves and our practice. However, we noticed more significant reflexive moments in this conversation, and we now turn to these.

**Developing reflexivity through GCC**

This section explores how Generative Critical Conversation can support the development of reflexivity. Over time our conversations created space and opportunities for us to move between the reflexive levels of interpretation set out by Alvesson and Sköldberg (2018), including accessing levels of interpretative reflexivity we consider more difficult to access, such as critical interpretation and reflection on text production and language use.

Alongside the above excerpts, we indicate where we notice the different levels of reflexivity. For the sake of clarity, we use the following abbreviations (Table 6):

Table 6. Abbreviations and Levels of Reflexive Interpretation (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2018, p. 330)

The numbers are not intended to imply the 'value' of the levels, or that they exist as 'steps', we use them simply to aid us in noticing the levels within each conversation. The conversations have not been systematically coded for the reflexive levels; such an endeavour would be at odds with the interpretative methods that inform GCC. We used the levels to review our conversations and think about where we could see their presence. In doing this, we are able to discern that it is reflexivity that is happening, as opposed to simply reflection. Finally in this section, we present an abstracted figure of GCC, illustrating how the three methodological elements contribute to developing reflexivity, which is evidenced by noticing the levels of reflexive interpretation.

***The levels of reflexive interpretation in Conversation (i)***

In Conversation (i), how do we notice ways that we are affecting and being affected? JJ is giving an account of her own experience – underlying meanings are implied, but not fully realised. This indicates first level of reflexive interpretation (*interaction with empirical material*). This account was prompted by exploring motivations for designing and delivering

a critical intervention – so again, an implication of looking for underlying messages, but relatively little relation or movement between the reflexive levels. That said, there are some hints at the second level, *interpretation.* For example, the use of the term 'embedded' relates back to JJ's experiences in school where the term was a buzzword – for learning to be effective, it had to be *embedded,* the implication being through repetition, revisiting, rigour. Perhaps one of the underlying meanings that JJ is implicitly communicating here is 'if EEE is so important to this school, why are we not *embedding* it?'.

***The levels of reflexive interpretation in Conversation (ii)***

In Conversation (ii), we see a greater presence of the third level, *critical interpretation.* In particular, CC discusses the ideologies that inform her beliefs about learning, contrasting the learning of skills with the learning of knowledge. Similarly, in places her words indicate an awareness of power and status within educational research (e.g., *'all the cognitive science people')*. We notice other levels of reflexive interpretation as well. In describing their listening back to the previous conversation, both CC and JJ provide observations, accounts of their experience. They are '*interacting with empirical material*' (the first level). In asking '*what is the point in enterprise?',* CC is searching for underlying meanings to her practice, indicating the second level, *interpretation.* We notice a brief indication of the fourth level where JJ says, *'that's good because we're being critical'*. In saying this, JJ is *reflecting on text production,* implying that our own text (in this case, the recorded conversation) needs to have a degree of criticality. It is interesting to note that in our first conversation, there appears to be a greater presence of the first and second levels. However, in the second conversation, after we have reflected upon recorded material, we are starting to be more *critically interpretative* (the third level).

***The levels of reflexive interpretation in Conversation (iii)***

Within this excerpt, we notice the third level, *critical interpretation*, in various places. For example, CC revisits previous conversations where we discussed the nature of learning. JJ, with a background in educational research, has a broader interpretive repertoire on which to draw. Through conversation, JJ expands CC's conception of learning suggesting the theory of latent learning (Tolman, 1951) as possible grounding for some of the ideas we were discussing.

As well as more frequent instances of critical interpretation within Conversation (iii), we also notice the fourth level, *reflection on text production and language use.* Conversation (iii) was recorded in preparation for this paper, and again, our ideas about the nature of learning resurface. However, we now reflect on our earlier conversations in relation to the meta-theoretical perspective of dialogism (Bahktin, 1986; Bauman, 2005). We start to recognise the voices or discourses that we ourselves are reproducing (e.g., '*...even me going "skills versus knowledge",* that's *discourse*'; *'I've just so internalised that skills versus knowledge thing'; 'we're doing ourselves a disservice by pretending that there's not that complexity'*). In turn, this prompts reflection on language use (e.g., '*I like that [term] multiplicity'; 'language is restricting our understanding of it [the nature of learning]*).

Although we recorded Conversation (ii) on 15th July 2019, our deeper understanding of the discourses present did not emerge until we returned to the recorded artefact in January 2021, which was driven by the practical purpose of constructing our own text. We were signposted towards dialogism by a reviewer of this paper; additionally, we had seen the theory introduced at a conference (Higgins & Refai, 2019). These instances broadened our interpretative repertoire and we gained deeper reflexive insight by recognising the discourses inherent in Conversation (ii).

In the latest conversation, there are more instances of the fourth level of reflexive interpretation (*Reflection on text production and language use)* than in the earlier conversations. Alvesson and Sköldberg (2018) are clear that levels of reflexive interpretation are not worked through in a linear process. However, the conversations above suggest that the third and fourth levels appear less likely to be accessed in initial stages of reflection. Engaging in constructing our own text facilitated us in reaching the fourth level of reflexive interpretation. The level did not lead us to the text, the text led us to the level. This indicates the importance of *using one's own academic constructions as empirical material* to prompt reflexivity.

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***The abstracted form of GCC***

Above, we have presented excerpts of our conversations, indicating the presence of the three methodological elements and the emergence of the levels of reflexive interpretation. In Figure 2, we present the abstracted form of GCC. The central circle represents the first recorded conversation, where the researchers discuss their chosen focus (in our case, our motivations and experiences of our practice). Each circle moving outwards represents a subsequent recorded conversation, where the researchers reflect upon what they each noticed in the previous recording (drawing upon the method of *self-study)*. The researchers engage in *co-generative dialogue* and *critical questioning* in order to look for underlying meanings, question taken-for-granted assumptions. Throughout this, the different levels of reflexive interpretation may be noticed in their conversations. We suggest that the first and second levels are likely to be more present in the early conversations, and the third and fourth levels are more likely to be noticed in the later conversations, especially when reflecting on one's own text construction.

Figure 2. The method and the outcome in generalised/abstracted form

Having presented the abstract figure, we now go on to describe the conditions that enable GCC and consider its transferability within and beyond EEE.

**Discussion - Enabling Conditions and Transferability**

This paper's contribution is in offering a practicable method that facilitates deepening reflexivity for educators and researchers. We consider there are enabling conditions for GCC to develop fruitfully: a shared purpose, willingness to question, and temporality. We then explore the potential transferability of GCC.

***Shared purpose***

As it is a collaborative process, a shared purpose between the participating educator-researchers is important to give focus and practical relevance to conversations. In our case, we were initially designing and delivering an EEE intervention together; as shown in the timeline, our shared purposes shifted to writing a conference paper and later this journal paper. Our shared purposes contributed to the sense of investment that we felt during and between conversations, and in the way we thought of the conversations as supporting us to realise our shared purposes.

***Willingness to question***

Another important enabling condition for GCC is that educator-researchers are willing to question themselves, others, the wider world and *objectivity itself* in order to reveal assumptions and consider alternative perspectives. As well as having a shared purpose which facilitated such questioning, the role of trust – in terms of asking questions of each other

sensitively, recognising their own/others' preoccupations and actively listening to the other – was important. In addition, being from similar but ultimately different fields (CC is from the world of EEE; JJ has a background in primary teacher education) contributed to our ability to question each other's assumptions. We had enough shared language to understand each other (e.g., both being familiar with 'enterprise weeks' in primary schools), but there was also enough difference between our initial perspectives to question, challenge and interrogate *each other*. In turn, we found that this encouraged us to question, challenge and interrogate *ourselves*. We recognise that being able to work with educator-researchers from other fields is not always practicable. With this in mind, we provide a selection of questions that we found ourselves asking each other throughout our conversations (see Appendix, Table 7.). Educator-researchers working with someone in the same field could use these questions as prompts to notice each other's taken-for-granted assumptions.

***Temporality***

As Alvesson and Sköldberg (2018) assert, movement can occur between any or all of the levels of reflexive interpretation, at any time. While the excerpts of conversation suggest that this is indeed the case, we also suggest that the third and fourth levels (*critical interpretation* and *reflection on own text production and language use*) are harder to access in the initial stages of reflection. We noticed these levels with greater frequency in the later conversations. We are not suggesting that time alone can bring about deeper reflexivity, however, there is a temporal aspect. Listening back to the recorded material, revisiting and sharing our ideas in subsequent conversations; this happened over a period of days, weeks and months. The time between the recordings, the listening back, and the next conversation allowed for introspective reflection. Individually, we were coming to terms with uncomfortable feelings or questions about our contributions to the conversation; we were making links between those

ideas and other aspects of our practice; we were making links back to previous conversations. This led to more open and more critical dialogue in subsequent conversations.

***Transferability***

We have both taken action towards and considered possibilities for applying GCC within our respective roles in teacher education and enterprise education. In teacher education, within a module developing reflective practice, students were formally introduced to the idea of GCC and asked to record a series of four conversations, and then to reflect back in order to look forward. In enterprise education, the approach has been more organic, spotting an opportunity here or there where collaborating students might benefit from having the chance to converse, listen, reflect and converse again.

Given the enabling factors discussed in the preceding section, it is important to avoid viewing GCC as a magic pill that people can take to develop their reflexivity. We discussed that it might be possible to feel anxious, inadequate and threatened in the process of listening back, in particular to one's self. In offering GCC as a method, we also recognise that *we brought ourselves* to this process and that our willingness to challenge and be challenged, by ourselves and each other, contributed to the value we perceived. Yet, for those looking for a way to develop reflexivity, and create a space to question and interrogate their practice and assumptions, it provides a practicable route towards that.

Whilst our attention has been more directed towards the reflexive potential of GCC, we believe it also holds interesting possibilities in terms of developing insights into moments of creation that happen when two educators negotiate and work together to create something new, whether that be research or educational provision. In one conversation, we strayed into talking about a future session we were going to plan; listening back to this conversation, we heard ourselves trying to build understanding between our different disciplinary knowledge

and co-construct mutually appealing activity that served out different needs and interests. With this intentional focus, GCC becomes a method to "capture it as it happens" (Brundin, 2007), when educators negotiate and decide how they piece together their professional and personal pre-occupations.

We perceive GCC as transferable to many research and practice situations, either a specific focus or open-ended investigation, both in education and in EEE, and, indeed, more importantly, bringing both together. While our text has reflected our experience in one-to-one exchanges and individual reflections in between conversations, the process could be used in group and collective inquiry. The value of interdisciplinary collaboration was highlighted in our previous work ([Authors], 2019). Indeed, a practical way to better connect the fields of education and EEE, as advised by Fayolle, (2013), would be to work more closely together *as colleagues*, developing research and practice *together*. GCC could both capture and support reflection upon such developments, which may help build understanding and break down barriers, facilitating stronger connections between people and their respective disciplines and the development of thoughtful research and practice. If methods are "concrete techniques or procedures that are used to gather data" (Crotty, 1998, p. 6) and a methodology is a research "strategy or plan of action" (Crotty, 1998, p. 6), then GCC could potentially be either, depending on how an educator or researcher chooses to use it.

In relation to our experience of using GCC as a method to develop reflexivity, we have abstracted a list of question prompts which may guide conversation. Equally, we acknowledge that at the start of our process, we did not have such a list, but were guided by the spirit of McNiff (2009) and overarching critical questions such as: what are we trying to achieve and what difference are we making (intended and unintended)? Indeed, it may be the willingness to explore the *unintended* as well as the intended consequences and implications of our research and practice that might yield the most critical insight.

**Conclusion**

In this paper, we summarised how a lack of criticality has been seen as a factor limiting the field of EEE. Uncritical educators may unquestioningly reproduce handed down activities, with insufficient concern for structures and context and which silence axiological debate. Uncritical researchers may unquestioningly reproduce taken-for-granted research approaches and practices, undermining the exploration and explanation of research issues that require out of the box thinking. Authors in EEE are clear that *reflexivity* is required, from both educator and researcher, to address this lack of criticality, however, it is less clear *how* one should start, practically, to develop one's reflexivity. This paper contributes a method that enables that development. By hybridizing three methodological elements from educational practice- the self-study strategy of **reflecting on recorded material**; **exploring lived experiences through co-generative dialogue** and a focus on **critical questioning –** we provide a method for the development of educator-researcher reflexivity. We use a framework from reflexive scholars (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2018), to recognise movement between levels of reflexive interpretation. And we recognise a move in our conversations from reflection (examining one's own experiences and reimagining them for the future), to reflexivity (recognising the ways in which one may affect and be affected). Whilst the concept of reflexivity has been positioned as important to the quest for legitimacy in EEE, without concrete ways of doing it, it is likely to remain a theoretical rather than a practical concern. Generative Critical Conversation is a practical contribution to this issue, offering a feasible method and a process to enhance educator-researcher reflexivity. The method we offer may strengthen not only the contribution an individual makes, but also the field itself, through its potential to enable more reflexive educators and researchers with increased capacity for criticality, a lack of which is said to limit the legitimacy of EEE. There is interesting potential in the transferability of the

approach, into different contexts, with different stakeholders and for different purposes; not just within education or EE, but between – and beyond - these two disciplines, in circumstances where educators or researchers wish to explore their practice and assumptions.

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**Appendix**

Table 7. Conversation prompts for developing reflexivity.