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Learning to use teaching for personal and social responsibility through action research

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1 RUNNING HEAD: TEACHING TPSR

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6 Learning to use Teaching for Personal and Social Responsibility through action research

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Abstract

23 *Purpose.* The purpose this investigation was to explore the learning experiences of two teachers
24 from different secondary schools in Scotland as they engaged in their respective action research
25 projects to learn to apply TPSR in physical education. *Method.* Both teachers worked within a
26 small community of practice and used qualitative methods to gather data to inform their inquiry.
27 The teachers shared their findings with their co-authors and engaged in further, more focused
28 analyses to explore and understand their learning experiences and the learning experiences of
29 their pupils. *Results.* Both teachers found that their learning in context was much slower and
30 more challenging than first expected. Over time, both teachers learned to set ‘new’ learning
31 objectives, applied ‘new’ teaching strategies, talked more to their pupils, and reflected with others
32 to evaluate their learning. *Discussion/Conclusion.* When teachers are committed to their own
33 learning and when the subject of their learning aligns with their core values, professional needs,
34 and the needs of their pupils, then pedagogical change is possible.

35 *Keywords:* Social and Emotional Learning, Experiential Learning, Critical Friends

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37 Learning to use Teaching for Personal and Social Responsibility through action research

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39 The development of pupils' social and emotional skills in school contexts is a key priority

40 for many education systems world-wide (United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural

41 Organization [UNESCO], 2017). Furthermore, in many curricula, physical education (PE) is

42 viewed as a logical site to promote, for example, positive and trusting relationships, coping skills,

43 impulse control, and peaceful conflict resolution. The development of such skills can lead to

44 improved behaviour, wellbeing, academic performance, and a positive school ethos (Durlak,

45 Weissberg, Dymnicki, Taylor, & Schellinger, 2011; Taylor, Oberle, Durlak, & Weissberg, 2017).

46 It is in the interest of all teachers and their learners, therefore, to develop knowledge and

47 strategies that might nurture and promote social and emotional learning in schools, and

48 specifically in PE (Jacobs & Wright, 2014). Teaching Personal and Social Responsibility (TPSR;

49 Hellison, 2011) is a pedagogical model that was developed to promote positive youth

50 development and social and emotional skills in PE and other physical activity contexts. The

51 model has been developed and researched extensively over the last 40 years, with researchers

52 uncovering a number of positive student outcomes including improved behaviour and attitudes

53 (Hellison & Martinek, 2006), as well as improved responsibility and life skills (Metzler, 2017;

54 Pozo, Grao-Cruces, & Perez-Ordas, 2016). However, researchers have also pointed out that we

55 still know very little about how PE teachers learn to apply it in their own professional (learning)

56 context (Beaudoin, 2012; Pozo et al., 2016). They call for further research to be carried out to

57 explore the unique ways in which TPSR is understood and enacted in schools. This type of

58 research will highlight the complexities and challenges that teachers face when learning in

59 context, and also exemplify how these challenges might be overcome.

60 **Teacher Learning**

61 Research and educational policy world-wide recognise the importance of teacher learning

62 and in doing so, emphasises the role of high quality Continued Professional Development (CPD)

63 provision (Caena, 2011). Effective CPD has the potential to raise teaching standards in schools,

64 and thus, improve pupil experience and attainment (Armour, Quennerstedt, Chambers, &
65 Makopoulou., 2017; Goodall, Day, Lindsay, Muijs, & Harris, 2005). However, there is little
66 empirical evidence to suggest that traditional forms of CPD have a positive impact on teacher
67 practice or educational outcomes for pupils (Goodall et al., 2005). Traditionally, CPD for
68 teachers has included one-off courses that are ‘delivered’ by external providers. Resultantly,
69 teachers’ learning experiences are often fragmented and incoherent and far removed from their
70 day to day professional issues and challenges. Consequently, there has been a call for a change in
71 the way in which CPD is provided (Armour & Yelling, 2004). Even the term ‘development’ has
72 been identified as problematic as it suggests that the teacher is passive in the process (i.e.,
73 someone who can be developed to ‘be’ the expert teacher). Armour et al. (2017) instead argue
74 that teachers should view themselves as learners, and recognise the complexity that this involves.
75 Consequently, and inspired by the work of philosopher and social theorist John Dewey, Armour
76 et al. (2017) developed a framework for effective CPD that recognises the complexity of
77 learning. This framework positions teacher learning in context and focusses on the development
78 of teacher knowledge for action (bridging research/theory with practice). From this perspective,
79 learning is not conceived as knowledge to be ‘acquired’, but as personal growth with a nurturing
80 environment that guides and shapes learning. Consequently, this Deweyan framework presents
81 professional learning in terms of teacher engagement, where the teacher and their experiences
82 are central to what, why, and how learning takes place. Consistent with Dewey’s (1938) theories
83 of education and learning, experience is fundamental to this approach. Not only do learners
84 bring their previous experiences to the current situation to create new experiences and
85 knowledge, but the act of ‘doing’ provides the learner with richer experiences with which to
86 create a deeper understanding. Thus, bodily experiences are part of the meaning making process
87 and teachers themselves can begin to define the types of learning opportunities that they need,
88 how they might foster their own learning, and who they might need to engage and interact with
89 to enhance their learning.

90 The role of ‘others’ in the teacher learning process is important, particularly in terms of
91 peer support and collaboration. Teachers do not learn in a vacuum; they require support,
92 dialogue, and resources. Oliver, Luguetti, Aranda, Nuñez Enriquez, and Rodrigue (2017) draw
93 attention to the importance of collaborative learning in their investigation that explored how
94 teachers in different contexts learned to use an activist approach in PE. They point to several
95 studies to demonstrate how teacher learning is more effective when learning communities are
96 created, enabling teachers to share, examine, and reflect on their experiences. In this context,
97 teachers are more willing to take risks and ultimately, learn and transform their practice (Oliver
98 et al., 2017). Similarly, in a study that investigated a school-based CPD programme, Goodyear
99 (2016) found that teachers worked together to sustain their learning. Goodyear also explains how
100 her role as a researcher, external to the school context, supported their learning. For example,
101 she was able to provide individualised advice and feedback that was specific to their needs and
102 practise, which in turn, enhanced the teachers’ confidence in the learning process.

103 This collaborative approach to teacher learning forms part of what Garet, Porter,
104 DeSimone, Birman, and Kwang (2001) describe as ‘Reform CPD’. Consistent with the Deweyan
105 framework developed by Armour et al. (2017), Garet et al. (2001) suggest that ‘reform’ types of
106 professional learning take place in schools, where teachers work collectively with other teachers,
107 and where they are encouraged to make connections between existing knowledge and new
108 experiences. Teachers are active in this learning process; they observe, plan, teach, and review,
109 with colleagues (mentors or coaches) and with pupils. In doing so, their learning is in response to
110 the emerging events that unfold in their work. To observe, reflect, and question is to take an
111 ‘inquiry as stance’ position, where teachers take control of their own professional learning in the
112 interest of their pupils. This resonates well with ideas around the reflective practitioner (Schön,
113 1983) and the teacher as the researcher (Stenhouse, 1975). Here, the teacher assumes the
114 position of a ‘researcher’ or professional inquirer, one who observes, reflects, and transforms,

115 supporting Stenhouse's assertion that for teachers to engage with research, they must engage in
116 it.

117 Action research is a form of research that aligns well with the conceptions of
118 professional learning espoused by Armour et al., (2017) and Garet et al. (2001), where the
119 teacher (and colleagues or external expert) is a central, deliberate, and contributing participant in
120 the research process (Berg, 2004). It is collaborative and democratic process where the teacher
121 identifies the problem in their local context and works out ways of solving it, increasing their
122 social consciousness, and creating positive social change (Berg, 2004). However, although action
123 research has been used widely as a means of raising social or political awareness in schools
124 (Tinning, MacDonald, Tregenza, & Boustead, 1996), there is little evidence to suggest that it has
125 been extensively adopted within the PE domain, even though researchers have highlighted the
126 need for PE teachers to be more reflective about their practice through action research (Casey,
127 Dyson, & Campbell, 2009). This may be especially important in the current climate of
128 curriculum change, which suggests a shifting role for PE teachers as they become more
129 accountable for the development of pupils' social and emotional skills and wellbeing (Gray,
130 MacIsaac, & Jess, 2015). Action research, and its capacity to encourage reflection, problem-
131 solving, and action therefore, may be a useful mechanism through which teachers can focus their
132 learning in relation to this contemporary challenge (Armour et al., 2017).

133 **Teaching Personal and Social Responsibility**

134 TPSR (Hellison, 2011) is a pedagogical model in the field of PE that has the potential to
135 promote social and emotional wellbeing through the development of personal and social skills
136 (Metzler, 2017). It is similar to restorative practice (McCluskey, 2017) which, rather than focusing
137 on the reduction of problematic behaviours among selected pupils, instead fosters positive
138 personal and social competencies. TPSR was developed with the intent of using sport and
139 physical activity as a vehicle to teach pupils life skills (e.g., self-management, goal-setting) that
140 they can apply in other settings to help them reach their potential in life. The model is framed

141 around helping pupils take responsibility for and develop skills related to the ways they conduct
142 themselves (personal responsibility) and interact with others (social responsibility). The core
143 program goals include respecting the rights and feelings of others, self-motivation, self-direction,
144 and caring. The final goal of TPSR is transfer, or the application of the values and behaviours
145 promoted in the model to other setting such as the classroom, home, or community. A format of
146 relational time (opportunities to connect positively with students on a one-to-one basis),
147 awareness talk (group discussion about student responsibilities), physical activity plan
148 (embedding student responsibilities into physical activity content), group meetings (opportunities
149 for students to express their views), and reflective time (time to self-evaluate) is offered to
150 provide some structure to each lesson (Beaudoin, 2012) and Hellison (2011), the founder of
151 TPSR, proposed several empowerment-based instructional strategies to support teachers'
152 implementation of the model. These include leadership roles, peer-coaching, self-reflection, and
153 group debriefing sessions to guide implementation.

154 Importantly, Hellison (2011) actively encourages teachers and coaches to adapt strategies
155 to fit their own context and teaching philosophy. Furthermore, it has been suggested that
156 the effective integration of TPSR strategies in PE requires a significant level of teacher reflection,
157 balanced with observation and input from others to support the process (Coulson, Irwin, &
158 Wright, 2012; Hemphill, Templin, & Wright, 2015). Like action research, this perspective on
159 teacher learning views the teacher as central to their own learning and capable of creating
160 knowledge and practice (with others) that has a direct impact on their learners (Armour et al.,
161 2017). Action research, therefore, may be a useful means by which teachers can develop their
162 understanding and application of TPSR in their own school-setting.

163 Consequently, guided by the Deweyan framework developed by Armour et al. (2017), the
164 purpose of this investigation was to explore the learning experiences of two teachers from
165 different secondary schools in Scotland as they engaged in their respective action research
166 projects. Both teachers used action research as a means to learn to apply TPSR in secondary level

167 PE to promote social and emotional learning and improve pupil behaviour. They worked with
168 researchers external to their school context to develop their research ideas and share their
169 experiences. Together they aimed to uncover the learning activities that the teachers engaged in,
170 and explore the impact that this engagement had on their learning, teaching, and the learning
171 experiences of their pupils. In doing so, we hope to illuminate the complexities of teacher
172 learning, and identify the factors that contribute to successful learning and pedagogical change.

173 **Methods**

174 **Research Design**

175 Action research projects were conducted by two PE teachers, **Simon** and Robert. Given
176 that the teachers in their own unique contexts were central to this process, we viewed their work
177 as parallel interpretive qualitative case studies (Stake, 1995). Furthermore, both teachers worked
178 within a small community of practice, with their pupils, within their PE department and with the
179 **two researchers, Sarah and Peter**. Sarah and Peter are both experienced researchers in the fields
180 of PE, pedagogy, and teacher learning. Peter is also an expert practitioner and academic in TPSR.
181 They worked with Simon and Robert to develop their research aims and to support them in the
182 role of critical friends, in other words, to scaffold, challenge, and bring alternative perspectives to
183 their learning (Kember et al., 1997). Sarah and Peter also brought both teachers together upon
184 completion of their respective inquiries to articulate, discuss (with the researchers and each
185 other), analyze and understand their learning experiences. Ethical permission to work with the
186 teachers was granted by the University ethics committee of their respective Institutes.

187 **Participants and Setting**

188 **Simon.** **Simon** (age 38 years) is a PE teacher and the curriculum leader for health and
189 wellbeing in his school, which incorporates PE and Food and Health Technology. He held this
190 position for one year at the time of his action research project. Before this, he was the principal
191 teacher of PE at the same school for four years. He taught at this school for 11 years, with a
192 teaching career of 12 years in total. The school is located near the outskirts of a major Scottish

193 city, with a school roll of approximately 620 pupils and four full-time teachers of PE (2 male, 2
194 female). The area that the school is located scores below the national average for indicators of
195 socio-economic disadvantage.

196 The idea behind **Simon**'s inquiry emerged from discussions with his Senior Leadership
197 Team (SLT). Together, they identified six S1 boys (aged 12-13 years) to be part of a PE
198 curriculum that was positioned outside of the main school curriculum. These were boys who had
199 previously and consistently exhibited disruptive behaviors during lessons and all had been
200 excluded from the school on at least one occasion. Simon taught this class for one period each
201 week (approx. one hour) for two academic terms (13 weeks in total). He did not have a
202 curriculum to follow; his aims were to develop his understanding and delivery of TPSR and
203 understand the impact that this might have on the boys' learning experiences and behavior in his
204 lessons, and in the school more widely.

205 **Robert**. At the time of his action research project, **Robert** (age 33 years) had been
206 teaching PE for seven years, six of which were in his current school. **Robert** was also
207 undertaking a Master's degree, and this action research project was aligned with one of the
208 course modules and assessment. **Robert** was also a pupil support teacher for one day each week.
209 In this post he was responsible for communicating with pupils, parents, colleagues, and outside
210 agencies on a range of topics relating to the happiness and success of individual pupils at a
211 school level and beyond. He was also responsible for teaching Personal and Social Education
212 which incorporates a broad subject area essential for the development of life skills. The school is
213 located in the center of the same Scottish city, with a school roll of around 1,200 pupils. The
214 pupil population is very diverse at this school, with the pupils from the least and the most
215 affluent areas of the city center.

216 **Robert** also worked with S1 pupils. This was a co-educational class of 25 pupils within
217 which he identified eight boys who consistently demonstrated low-level, but disruptive
218 behaviors. **Robert** taught the class twice each week and the curriculum activity was swimming.

219 Prior to this, Robert taught the same class for a term of football. He used these football lessons
220 (2 each week for 8 weeks) to begin to think about how TPSR might be applied in context and
221 began to ‘test’ some of the strategies that he had learned from the TPSR literature, as well as a
222 TPSR CPD session that he had recently attended, which was delivered by Peter. However, the
223 focus of his professional inquiry was swimming. There were eight swimming lessons in total,
224 each lasting one hour, although this was typically reduced to 40 minutes in the pool to allow time
225 to change. Robert’s aims for his class were, to a large extent, dictated by the PE curriculum at
226 this school, namely to develop stroke technique. However, like Simon, he also aimed to address
227 other issues related to his practice, TPSR, and pupil behavior and wellbeing. More specifically, he
228 aimed to critically evaluate the impact that TPSR had on pupil behavior and social responsibility,
229 and to develop his application of TPSR with a focus on investigating teaching strategies that
230 might foster social wellbeing.

231 **Teacher Data Collection**

232 Both teachers primarily adopted qualitative methods to gather data about their learning
233 experiences and the learning experiences of their pupils. Methods for both teachers included
234 structured and collaborative reflections, peer observations, and pupil interviews. Simon, for
235 example, was observed for eight out of the 13 lessons by Sarah, his critical friend. After each
236 lesson, a discussion took place to reflect on Simon’s teaching, the boys’ behavioral and social
237 responses, and any critical incidents. Notes from these meetings were typed up by Sarah and sent
238 to Simon for review. Sarah also completed a TPSR implementation checklist (Wright & Walsh,
239 2018). This checklist addressed a range of indicators associated with quality TPSR
240 implementation including lesson format (e.g., reflection time), goals (e.g., self-direction), teaching
241 strategies (e.g., fostering social interaction), and pupil behaviors (e.g., helping others; Escartí,
242 Wright, Pascual, & Gutiérrez, 2015; Hellison, 2011). This checklist acted as a fidelity guide for
243 Simon and Sarah to ensure that the TPSR model was adhered to as much as possible. It also
244 served as a post-teaching reflection tool for Simon and helped him to plan future lessons. Robert

245 was observed by a critical friend, a female PE teacher in the school with two years teaching
246 experience. She had no previous knowledge of the TSPR model and she also used the
247 implementation checklist to focus her observations and guide their post-lesson discussions. In
248 addition to this, after each lesson, Robert rated and commented on his own teaching using the
249 Tool for Assessing Responsibility-based Education (TARE; Wright, 2016). He did not use the
250 TARE to objectively measure his teaching behaviors. Similar to Simon, he used it to identify,
251 reflect and self-evaluate his teaching practices that promoted personal and social responsibility
252 (Wright, 2016).

253 In their dual role of teacher-researcher, both teachers also carried out interviews with
254 their pupils to explore their perceptions of their learning experiences during the TPSR sessions,
255 specifically in relation to their understanding of the aims of each lesson, their learning, their
256 behavior, and the impact that these experiences had on their learning and behavior in different
257 contexts (transfer). While this has some limitations in terms of the power-relationship between
258 the interviewer and the interviewee (Karnieli-Miller, Strier, & Pessach, 2009), the teachers viewed
259 it as natural and logical component of their professional practice, as they frequently initiated
260 dialogue with their pupils to evaluate their lessons. This represents what Wall and Hall (2017)
261 describe as the principle of autonomy, where teachers have control over their research to make
262 decisions about the best ways to answer their research questions.

263 Simon carried out paired interviews with all six boys (Wilson, Onwuegbuzie, & Manning,
264 2016). To encourage the boys to express themselves freely, Simon adopted a conversational
265 interview style and did not use a voice recorder. Instead, immediately after each interview, Simon
266 took notes to summarize the key issues raised. Each interview lasted between 15 and 20 minutes.
267 Robert carried out a focus group interview at the end of his study with five pupils randomly
268 selected from the eight pupils he previously identified as exhibiting more challenging behaviors.
269 The interview lasted 30 minutes, was recorded using a digital voice recorder, and transcribed
270 verbatim. Simon and Robert received informed consent from the pupils and their parents and

271 had permission to engage in their action research project from the head teacher of their
272 respective schools.

273 **Data Analysis**

274 A practical iterative analysis (Srivasta & Hopwood, 2009) was adopted, where multiple
275 stages of analysis took place from which further ideas emerged, new connections were made, and
276 a deeper understanding was generated (Berkowitz, 1997). This approach is based on the premise
277 that qualitative data analysis is highly reflexive, fundamentally iterative, and progressively
278 focusing (Srivasta & Hopwood, 2009). Firstly, both Simon and Robert examined their data to
279 explore and understand ideas related to their learning activities, their learning, teaching, and pupil
280 experience. Both teachers were then invited to discuss their findings individually with Sarah,
281 which generated further understandings of their learning experiences. After these meetings, both
282 teachers were invited by Sarah to share their experiences and findings with each other. This
283 provided them with another opportunity to develop and focus their ideas, but also encouraged
284 them to uncover previously unconsidered experiences a result of ideas triggered by the ‘other’
285 teacher (Wilson et al., 2016).

286 To develop a more refined and focused understanding of the teachers’ learning
287 experiences (Srivasta & Hopwood, 2009), the individual discussions and the paired discussions
288 were recorded, transcribed, and analyzed by Sarah. This analysis involved considering the texts as
289 units of meanings and assigning phrases that reflected these meanings. A constant comparative
290 method of analysis (Glaser, 1965) was then used to identify common themes within the text.
291 These common themes were then shared with **Simon and Robert** and a ‘follow-up’ meeting was
292 arranged with each teacher individually. This was to pose further questions to explore any
293 underdeveloped themes and acted as a form of member checking to ensure a shared and
294 accurate understanding of the key themes. A final meeting was held with three co-authors (Sarah,
295 **Simon, and Robert**) to review the key themes. This also provided a useful opportunity to
296 highlight the similarities and differences in experiences and learning between the teachers,

297 further establishing key themes, but also emphasizing those that were unique to each context. It
298 is important to note that the relationship between Sarah, Peter, **Simon, and Robert** was one that
299 was already established prior to embarking upon their inquiry. Sarah had previously been
300 involved with **Simon** in another research project and met **Robert** at a CPD event led by Peter.
301 Peter had previously met both **Simon and Robert**, visited their schools, observed their typical
302 teaching practice, and conducted interviews with them. This facilitated numerous open and
303 honest discussions over time, the establishment of shared goals and expectations, thus enhancing
304 the trustworthiness of the reflective and data analysis processes, particularly in relation to their
305 dependability and credibility (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

306 **Discussion of Results**

307 Teacher learning is complex (Armour et al., 2017) and influenced by many interacting
308 components within and between the individual and their environment (Jess, Keay & Carse,
309 2016). The pathways that teachers take in their learning, therefore, can be unique, messy, and
310 non-linear. The following discussion explores the key themes that have shaped the teachers'
311 learning journeys, journeys that they have come to understand by sharing their experiences and
312 learning with each other. Specifically, it examines how their values and contexts, experiences and
313 collaborations, the perspectives of the pupils, and the challenges they faced influenced how they
314 learned to apply TPSR.

315 **Same Values, Different Contexts**

316 **Shared personal and professional values.** Both teachers were situated in different
317 contexts, but shared similar values around teaching and learning. **Simon and Robert** expressed
318 their desire to learn, to improve and to provide their pupils with more positive learning
319 experiences. In highlighting why he was drawn to TPSR, **Robert** said:

320 I knew that I taught the physical skills explicitly and knew that I was only ever
321 reactive to anything in my class for behavior or how they were communicating to

322 each other. And I needed, I needed something to understand how to teach that, the
323 social aspect.

324 Both **Robert and Simon** aimed to impact upon the personal and social development of their
325 pupils in the PE context, but also in the wider school community. For example, in justifying his
326 reasons for engaging with his project, **Simon** said during his initial data-analysis meeting with
327 Sarah:

328 It's a thing that I've long had on my radar, you know, it's something I've always felt.
329 That sport had a, a hook really to get a lot of the pupils that we do struggle with
330 behavior round the school, get them involved and get them engaged wi' school a bit
331 better.

332 Previous research has shown that PE teachers will sustain their efforts in professional
333 learning activities when they understand the direct benefits for their pupils (Gray, Treacy & Hall,
334 2017). In addition, research has demonstrated that teachers are more likely to engage in
335 professional learning when the focus of that learning builds upon their own beliefs and current
336 practices (Armour et al., 2017; Garet et al., 2001). In the present study, both **Simon and Robert**
337 described the ways that their past experiences of restorative practices (McCluskey, 2017), and the
338 importance that they both placed on the development of social and emotional skills in PE acted
339 as a powerful incentive for them to learn about TPSR. They described TPSR as a good 'fit' with
340 their beliefs and previous experiences, or in Deweyan terms it offered 'continuity of experience'
341 (Dewey, 1938). For example, during his initial data analysis meeting, **Robert** stated, "we have a
342 restorative behaviour system in the school so I felt like I did marry in with it quite well."
343 However, although both initiated and sustained their learning because of these shared goals,
344 beliefs and values, there were features of their unique contexts that created very different
345 environments for their learning.

346 **Simon's context: Active support.** **Simon's** context and his role within his context were
347 quite different from **Robert. Simon** was a senior teacher who began his learning journey in

348 consultation with, and with the full support of his SLT. In the first individual follow-up meeting
349 with Sarah, he explained that he worked closely with his SLT to develop a strategy that might
350 enable the boys to lead a successful life in the school and, ultimately, lead a successful life after
351 school. **Simon** intimated that this collaboration, trust, and shared vision enabled the SLT to offer
352 **Simon** the freedom to develop his understanding and application of TPSR with this group of
353 boys, with no pressure, no fear of failure, and no top-down, prescribed curriculum to follow.
354 This is a highly unusual situation and in stark contrast to the working conditions of many
355 teachers who are bound by curricular demands and other forms of output regulation of their
356 work (Biesta, Priestley & Robinson, 2015). **Simon** appeared to be in a context that allowed him
357 to be more agentic, where he could build upon his past experiences to create opportunities in the
358 present and shape a more optimistic vision for the future. Importantly, this was facilitated by the
359 support and resources offered by his SLT and his work with Sarah. This reflects a form of
360 ‘ecological agency’ proposed by Biesta et al. (2015) who suggest that achieving such agency is
361 critical if teachers are to engage with policy and change in more meaningful ways. Further
362 dimensions of **Simon’s** ‘ecology’ were the staff in his department. They supported, facilitated,
363 and enhanced his learning by sharing their own experiences of developing social and emotional
364 skills. This was a reciprocal process where they actively sought ideas from **Simon** about his
365 learning so that they might also learn.

366 **Robert’s context: Passive support.** Rather than co-developing his ideas with his SLT or
367 his PE department, **Robert** developed his ideas for learning from his professional reflections, in
368 combination with his engagement in a Master’s degree and meeting Peter and Sarah. He worked
369 with ‘external experts’ who were able to focus on his needs, helping to develop his knowledge,
370 and increase his confidence (Goodyear, 2016). In this sense, **like Simon**, his learning was
371 collaborative and influenced by context, but this was a different context. **Robert** did share his
372 ideas with his PE department, and in doing so, they encouraged him to pursue his studies,
373 offered their time to observe his lessons, and supported him with his reflective practice.

374 However, they did not engage with, and did not seem to be influenced by his learning in the
375 same way that Simon's PE department was. Furthermore, Robert was bound by a pre-
376 determined curriculum, with specific learning outcomes that he had to achieve and for which he
377 remained accountable. Thus, the 'ecology' within which his 'agency' was afforded, was very
378 different to that of Simon. Yet despite this, Robert's individual efforts and search for resources
379 beyond the contextual and structural confines of the school resulted in his continued learning
380 and commitment to TPSR. In his efforts to become a better, more knowledgeable teacher, he
381 initiated professional and regular dialogue with 'external experts' who helped him to develop his
382 knowledge of TPSR, understand the research process, and offer advice about planning for the
383 future (Timperley, Parr, & Bertanees, 2009).

384 **Experiential and Collaborative Learning**

385 **Applying the model 'on the job.'** For Dewey (1938), experience is a process through
386 which we learn. It is an on-going process of interaction between past, present, self and context
387 that allows us to learn from our day to day encounters. An important feature of the teachers'
388 learning in the present study was the way they experienced TPSR, actively engaging with it in the
389 busy, complex, and dynamic context of the school environment. Thus, their learning experiences
390 were shaped by the 'new' ways in which they interacted with this environment. These 'new' ways
391 included being much more explicit before, during, and after their lessons about the social and
392 emotional skills that they aimed to teach. This type of learning 'on the job' can be very
393 challenging for teachers, but particularly in a context where performance or academic outcomes
394 are typically prioritized over social and emotional outcomes (Jacobs & Wright, 2014). Indeed,
395 both teachers did find this challenging, yet they remained committed to the model and their
396 learning, making explicit, consistent, regular, and clear connections between the pupils' PE
397 experiences, their personal and social learning, and their lives in other contexts. For example,
398 there was evidence from the TPSR implementation checklist and post-lesson reflections to
399 indicate that they began each lesson by stating their social and emotional learning intentions, they

400 developed learning from previous weeks, they praised positive behaviors (for example, listening,
401 taking turns, not talking out of turn, showing empathy and sympathy), modelled respectful
402 behavior and created numerous opportunities for their pupils to related to the teacher and to
403 each other (relational time and reflective time). For example, in her post-lesson reflections notes
404 after Simon's 5th lesson (volleyball), Sarah wrote:

405 None of the boys got shouted at today (I can't imagine that they do not get shouted at
406 or excluded from other lessons). Instead, Simon calmly asked them to sit out for a
407 while, spoke to them, asked them if they were ready to take part again and what they
408 needed to do to stay on court.

409 While both teachers remained committed to the model, their engagement in the research
410 process, their on-going learning and reflection and their deep understanding of their pupils in
411 context also allowed them to apply the model in a more flexible way. This exemplifies Hellison's
412 (2011) vision that teachers should make TPSR their own, rather than viewing it as a prescribed
413 curriculum. For example, both teachers began to understand and embrace what they described as
414 'teachable' moments. In other words, they began to see social and emotional behaviors (both
415 positive and negative) as opportunities for pupil learning, rather than as moments to be ignored,
416 or moments where pupils had to be punished. Simon and Robert both explained that when
417 pupils exhibited negative behaviors (for example, not listening, arguing, and being disrespectful
418 to peers) they did not shout at them, they were not punished nor were they excluded from the
419 classroom. Instead, the teachers described how they would use this as an opportunity to discuss
420 the behavior with the pupil so that they might understand the cause of the problem, the impact
421 of the problem and work out ways of learning from the situation. For example, in the final data
422 analysis meeting with Sarah, Robert, and Simon, Robert said:

423 But actually with TPSR, you can let some behaviors go if it's not dangerous or
424 anything. If they're not putting in all their effort, they definitely aren't, they're off task,
425 they've just hit another tennis ball across there, I'll remember that at the end. But then

426 you draw them in at the end and it's, 'right here's, here's what I saw' and then we can
427 discuss.

428 In these instances, the teachers were able to draw from their knowledge and past experiences of
429 'restorative practice' where those involved in the 'incident' are encouraged to discuss and
430 understand their behaviors and, at the same time, build more positive relationships with their
431 peers and their teachers (McCluskey, 2017).

432 **Critical friends.** The role of the 'critical friend' within the action research process is
433 commonly used as a means of "developing the reflective and learning capacity of the teacher in a
434 supportive and cooperative manner" (Kember et al., 1997, p. 464). This is interesting because,
435 although both Robert and Simon invited a critical friend to observe their teaching and support
436 their reflections, their critical friends came from different contexts, which resulted in quite
437 different learning experiences. Sarah acted as Simon's critical friend. They had worked together
438 previously on research projects related to the development of PE pedagogy and had thus
439 developed a good working relationship which was underpinned by trust and a shared desire to
440 learn. While Sarah had engaged in the TPSR literature, she had limited knowledge about how
441 TPSR was implemented in schools and was keen to observe Simon's teaching so that they could
442 support each other's learning. This became a shared learning experience, one that both Sarah and
443 Simon highly valued because they both brought different, but complimentary perspectives to the
444 learning environment. Simon experienced TPSR first hand, interacting directly with the content
445 and his learners. However, Sarah observed things that Simon did not, and encouraged him to
446 create the time and the space to reflect upon his teaching and the boys' learning in a way that he
447 had not previously experienced. During the first data analysis meeting with Sarah, Simon
448 highlighted:

449 I think having yourself there to observe from the outside and then reflect back what
450 you'd witnessed in the lesson. And then also being able to then put forward my own
451 reflections and then kinda batter that out a bit, directly after each lesson, I think was

452 hugely valuable because quite often my personal reflections as I finished the lesson
453 were different seven or eight minutes later after we had a discussion about it. You
454 know, very much, it very much changed because, because you gave an alternative
455 viewpoint. And then I was able to reflect slightly differently on it.

456 These processes enabled Simon to explore his teaching in more depth, enhancing his knowledge
457 of TPSR, but also giving him more confidence in himself and this approach (Goodyear, 2016).

458 Robert worked with several external critical friends, including Sarah and Peter, engaging
459 in critical discussions about his teaching, pupil learning and his research beyond the school gates.
460 However, he also had a critical friend from within the school who he invited to observe and
461 discuss his lessons. This critical friend was one of his work colleagues who volunteered her time
462 to support him in his investigation. Thus, she brought her day to day experiences of working
463 with similar pupils in a busy and complex workspace to her observations. Consequently, her
464 feedback was very practical in nature and, at times, intimated some resistance to the model. For
465 example, she would often advise on how she would do things differently, especially in relation to
466 managing pupil behavior. For example, after one of the lessons she suggested:

467 You would say to the class your actions are having an impact on our ability to
468 proceed. Otherwise we're not going to get games or something like that. I
469 thought that happened a bit towards the end but like with the restorative
470 approach that we have some kids just take advantage of it. So, some kids realised
471 that they weren't really going to get a row off you. Sometimes three-strikes is
472 clearer for pupils.

473 Furthermore, because she had taught the class previously and knew them well, there were times
474 when she 'stepped in' to stop low-level disruptive behaviors. Baskerville and Goldblatt (2009)
475 suggest that a precursor to developing any critical friendship should be reflection and discussion
476 around the values, beliefs, and goals of the teacher. Robert's critical friend at times challenged
477 and contradicted his beliefs, values, and goals. However, while he was initially rather frustrated

478 by her perspective and comments, it resulted in an emotional and embodied response, and thus a
479 richer learning experience and a deeper understanding of his teaching, pupil learning, and TPSR
480 (Armour et al., 2017; Dewey, 1938).

481 **Understanding the Pupils' Perspectives**

482 **A more democratic and positive learning environment.** In line with previous studies
483 that have explored the impact of TPSR on pupil learning (Pozo et al., 2016) both teachers
484 believed that one of the main benefits of using TPRS (and carrying out their action research) was
485 that it encouraged them to talk to their pupils more. This then helped them to develop more
486 positive and respectful relationships that involve listening and responding. Simon never shouted
487 at his pupils. They did at times demonstrate some inappropriate behaviors, but Simon dealt with
488 this during his relational time, or he invited the boys themselves to solve the problem. For
489 example, during the volleyball sessions, most of the boys wanted to play football with the
490 volleyball. To stop them from kicking the balls, Simon asked the pupils to think about how they
491 might be encouraged to stop kicking the ball so that they would not be damaged. They came up
492 with a '*3-strikes and you are out*' rule which they applied successfully and complicity. This example
493 is typical of the lessons Simon taught, where he engaged the boys in discussions, listened to their
494 views, responded to their suggestions, and helped them to evaluate their outcomes. This
495 provided them with opportunities to make decisions and take on board leadership roles,
496 opportunities that they usually responded very well to.

497 Creating as many opportunities for leadership and decision-making was more difficult for
498 Robert, especially in the context of swimming. However, he did manage to do this during the
499 football session and, even in swimming, the pupils were offered choices about their learning. For
500 example, while the school curriculum dictated that the pupils had to develop stroke technique,
501 the pupils were also offered choices and opportunities to engage in alternative water-based
502 activities, such as water polo or volleyball. This involved discussion, negotiation, and
503 compromise. It gave Robert an opportunity to build his relationship with the pupils and allowed

504 him to model respectful behaviors. Given the difficulties that Robert had in the swimming pool
505 with TPSR, modelling respect became one of the main ways in which he attempted to promote
506 personal and social responsibility. He frequently highlighted to the pupils the positive ways in
507 which they interacted with him on a one to one basis and challenged them to do the same when
508 communicating with each other. If pupil interaction was positive, he would question the group
509 on the effect this had on classroom atmosphere and challenged them to continue to interact
510 positively with one another beyond the PE context.

511 **Pupils' understanding of TPSR.** Although Robert had a larger class compared to Simon,
512 which sometimes made it more challenging to communicate effectively with all pupils, many of
513 the pupils in his class were highly aware of his learning intentions and he did observe changes in
514 levels of self-control and respect for some pupils, although not always consistently. During one
515 of the post-lesson discussions with his critical friend, she stated, "I thought that a group of the
516 lads who would be kind of your messers, I saw them taking a leadership role, telling their mates
517 to be quiet."

518 However, Robert also learned from his pupils that some of his learning intentions were not well
519 understood. For example, the focus group interview with his pupils Robert learned that the
520 pupils did not understand what he meant when he said: '*set yourself a behavioral goal for the lesson*'.
521 One of the boys explained, "I did some behaviour goals but they are quite hard to come up with
522 so I think you should give some suggestions before you do it because it's quite hard." Another
523 said, "I never really remember them because you think about them in your mind at the start and
524 then you just forget about it."

525 This was an important learning opportunity for Robert and had a direct impact on his practice.
526 During his final data analysis meeting with Sarah, he explained that he continues to be more
527 explicit with his pupils about what respectful, cooperative, and supportive behaviors look like,
528 using both his and his pupils' behaviors as examples. In addition, he is now more aware about

529 how he communicates with his pupils and understands that they might interpret him in ways that
530 he did not intend.

531 Interestingly, while the boys from Simon's class did not raise the issue of language or not
532 understanding his instructions or questions, it was discussed frequently by Sarah and Simon.
533 There were several comments made in the post lesson discussions and reflective notes where
534 Sarah and Simon both had a concern about the language that was used in the TPSR literature,
535 and how it may not be a language form that the pupils were familiar with. Consequently, each
536 week, Simon made slight changes to the ways in which he presented the lesson objectives,
537 gradually moving away from some of the terms used in the literature towards a language that the
538 boys could relate to. This is exemplified in Sarah's post-lesson notes from the third lesson:

539 Simon started off by looking at the learning intentions and the success criteria.

540 Interestingly, they were not presented in the same way as before. They were not
541 presented as the 5 levels. They were really clear and simple statements about how they
542 should behave and to consider how their behaviors might impact on others. This made
543 more sense to me and I think more sense to the boys.

544 This on-going reflection and change may have been why the boys that Simon spoke to all
545 seemed to have a very good grasp of the things that Simon was trying to achieve in each lesson.
546 Indeed, Simon was surprised at how articulate they were in recalling the ideas that they were
547 presented with. They recognized that this was a different experience from their 'usual' PE
548 lessons, one that aimed to improve their behavior in PE and the wider school context. During
549 the paired interviews, they appeared to understand how to behave well in PE, and indeed they
550 did behave well in PE. However, they also discussed that they found this very difficult to do in
551 other contexts. In other areas of the school they described how they felt targeted by some
552 teachers and that they saw little relevance in the topics they had to study, both factors
553 contributing towards their disruptive behaviors in class.

554 It appears, therefore that the smaller class size that Simon was afforded allowed him to connect
555 more frequently with this small group of boys in this PE context. Hellison (2011), who did much
556 of his work in alternative schools and after school programs with smaller class sizes (e.g., 10-12
557 pupils), has noted that it is easier to individualize instruction, build pedagogical relationships, and
558 create a more democratic environment when teaching smaller groups. Despite some challenges
559 associated with class size, several reports indicate TPSR can be implemented with larger classes
560 (e.g., 25 to 35 pupils) in more typical PE programs (Pozo et al., 2016). In the current study,
561 despite the different contexts in which Simon and Robert operated, both teachers faced similar
562 challenges with their learning and teaching.

563 **Overcoming the Challenges of Teacher Learning**

564 **Challenges, doubts, and discomfort.** Pedagogical change can be extremely challenging
565 for teachers (Casey & Dyson, 2009). It can be a slow process, with many barriers to overcome,
566 accompanied by enduring feelings of doubt and uncertainty. Both Simon and Robert noted times
567 during their inquiry where they had doubts about the project and their teaching. During the
568 initial data analysis meeting with Sarah, Robert said:

569 So I'm trying not to judge, so I feel like with learning TPSR, my teaching's also almost
570 sometimes taken a step backwards because it's not an automatic process of teaching.

571 I've gotten into a way of teaching that's comfortable to me. And so learning TPSR and
572 implementing it, there's a lot going on in your head. It's like being a probationer and
573 being in front of you class and learning the curriculum.

574 Simon found it difficult to move from a teaching approach that focused on the development of
575 movement skills. He found it a challenge not to slip back to focusing more on the technical
576 development of skills, rather than remaining explicitly focused on the development of social and
577 emotional skills. Class size and activity type were identified by Robert as major challenges. He
578 felt that swimming was a difficult activity to apply TPSR effectively because of his concerns
579 around pupil safety. He felt that he had to be able to observe the class at all times, which made it

580 difficult for him to have one-to-one time with the pupils, a problem that was intensified by the
581 poor acoustics in the swimming pool.

582 While there were some differences between the teachers in terms of their challenges, they
583 both explained the difficulties they had in moving away from an approach that they were
584 comfortable with. They highlighted the discomfort they felt initially when ‘let certain behaviors
585 go’ to create teachable moments to deal with behaviors in a more positive and democratic way.
586 This discomfort was especially intense for Robert, who also had his colleague observing his
587 practice, a colleague who perhaps did not understand TPSR in the same way. As a result, he
588 became highly sensitive and even critical towards his own practice and felt the need to justify
589 himself and convince her of the benefits of using this approach. Simon also became more
590 sensitive towards his teaching, but was less self-critical, possibly because he worked so closely
591 with Sarah who was able to offer a more knowledgeable and positive perspective on his work.

592 **Continuous and collaborative learning over time.** In line with previous research that
593 positions teachers as learners in context (Casey & Dyson, 2009; Dyson, Colby, & Barratt, 2016),
594 both Robert and Simon began to recognize that meaningful pedagogic change takes time. They
595 discussed how they felt like the change process was much slower than they expected, and that
596 they have become more aware and accepting of the fact there may be significant periods of
597 difficulty and challenge that must be overcome before any noticeable change takes place. For
598 example, during his data analysis discussion with Sarah at the end of his project, Simon said:

599 I think I’ve seen some changes. I suppose part of it’s almost in my, my mind-set shift
600 is probably how I’ve overcome it because instead of looking at it and thinking that I’ll
601 see vast changes in their behavior across the school overnight, I’ve gotta look for
602 almost sorta small targets, small goals within that.

603 Despite this challenge, both remained very positive about TPSR, describing again how it allowed
604 them to build on their previous practice and it aligned with their values around education and
605 physical education. Martinek and Hellison (2016) highlight that learning to apply TPSR in

606 context is extremely challenging, but that challenges can be overcome with a commitment to and
607 a belief in the core values of TPSR. This is evident in the present study as both teachers continue
608 to apply and investigate their use of TPSR in a supportive and collaborative learning
609 environment, creating time to reflect on their learning with their pupils, their peers and with
610 Sarah and Peter. In addition to learning through their own inquiries, the collaborative nature and
611 process of analyzing their data and writing this paper has also given them the opportunity to
612 learn from each other. They were able to draw from their experiences to discuss the various ways
613 in TPSR might be used in different contexts. These discussions further highlighted the value in
614 working collaboratively, with both teachers suggesting that they may in the future find time to
615 observe each other teacher in the next phase of their professional inquiry.

616 **Summary and Conclusion**

617 Armour et al. (2017) proposed a framework that recognises the complexity of learning in
618 context, where teachers develop knowledge for action (bridging research/theory with practice)
619 that supports their professional growth throughout their career. Consequently, they propose that
620 the core focus of teacher learning should be “practice itself (i.e., embedded and contextualized);
621 learning is dynamic (active and requiring time for reflection); and it is never ending (continuing)”
622 (p.10). Reflecting this view, the action research projects that the teachers in the present study
623 carried out, encouraged them to explore different ways of engaging with their learners, reflect,
624 discuss, and plan activities that have taken them on a learning journey that continues to this date.
625 A number of factors have shaped this journey, including their unique contexts. Simon’s
626 investigation derived from his collaboration with and support from his SLT. Robert was
627 supported by his school but was perhaps more motivated and supported by factors that were
628 external to his school context. However, these were not the only factors that influenced their
629 learning. For example, both teachers had a strong and intrinsic desire to learn, do the best for
630 their pupils, and both had core values that aligned well with those of TPSR. These core values
631 were the catalyst for learning and change, encouraging them to set ‘new’ learning objectives,

632 apply a variety of ‘new’ teaching strategies, talk more to their pupils, change their own behaviors,
633 and importantly, reflect with others to evaluate the impact that these changes had on them and
634 their learners. Their experiences of learning to apply TPSR in context have provided a platform
635 to explore their learning, develop their understanding, and create new knowledge that will
636 ultimately influence future experiences (Downey & Clandinin, 2010). This reflects Dewey’s
637 (1938) notion of learning as growth, where learning is an on-going process of experience and
638 sense making (Armour et al., 2017). Importantly, they did this despite at times feeling
639 uncomfortable and despite not seeing immediate changes in their pupils’ behaviors. This may be
640 because such deep and collaborative engagement in learning has enabled them to develop a
641 critical understanding of TPSR so that they can adapt and apply it flexibly to focus on the
642 specific needs of their pupils.

643 Teacher learning is difficult and complex and those responsible for organizing learning
644 opportunities for teachers need to consider the environment required to nurture teacher
645 learning. However, this research demonstrates that teacher learning can take place even when the
646 support structures within the school are perhaps more passive. There is evidence from the
647 present study that when teachers are committed to their own learning, prepared to devote time
648 to their learning, and when the subject of their learning aligns with their core values, professional
649 needs, and the needs of their pupils, then they will seek support from elsewhere and pedagogical
650 change is possible. Research often reports that teachers fail to engage in professional learning
651 because of the various pressures and constraints they are under from other areas of the
652 curriculum and school life (Muijs & Harris, 2006). The teachers in this study were not immune to
653 these pressures, yet they still devoted time and effort to their learning and inquiry. Understanding
654 why some teachers appear to be more committed to professional learning is an area of research
655 that requires further consideration. Future research might consider investigating teacher learning
656 from a broader perspective to understand how it is positioned among, and interacts with, their
657 other professional responsibilities. There are perhaps also implications here for Initial Teacher

658 Education providers, who might consider ways in which they could nurture an enduring interest
659 in teacher learning and action research, and support the development of skills that will enable
660 pre-service PE teachers to navigate their learning journey in an extremely complex and
661 demanding space.
662

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