From *"participation"* to *"transformative participation"*: My living-educational-theory of Facilitating Transformative Continuing Professional Development

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Abstract

Driven by a strong desire for change and personal values, I began to embrace a participation-orientated approach to my own Continuing Professional Development (CPD), rather than the expert-driven one I had previously employed. In an effort to address past instances in which my actions did not align with my values, I developed my living-educational-theory. I collaborated with various stakeholders, including ten primary school teachers working in low-resource South African schools. I actively refined my evolving educational beliefs by seeking feedback from several of my expert critical friends. Through rigorous reflection, I formulated my research question: "How do I interpret *participation* as a CPD facilitator in fields such as Physical Education (PE), and how can this understanding be effectively conveyed to others?" Drawing upon insights gleaned from my doctoral research, embedded in Participatory Action Learning and Action Research (PALAR), and my annotated reflections, I identified *transformative participation* as a core value driving my practice. Consequently, by putting this value into action, I discovered the importance of how to dismantle established norms, recognising and respecting the boundary between personal-professional development, and cultivating leadership for lasting impact. This knowledge informs my decision to share practical insights and standards of judgment to assess how I have adopted *transformative participation*. My hope is that these insights may assist colleagues seeking to facilitate transformative CPD.

Introduction

My professional journey as a Human Movement Science specialist facilitating Continuing Professional Development (CPD) in Physical Education (PE) within low-resource school contexts has been enlightening and transformative. Delving into professional development facilitation began for me in the vibrant, yet under-resourced, township primary schools of New Brighton and Motherwell in Gqeberha, South Africa. Working with these predominantly Black communities brought me face-to-face with the stark realities of poverty (Moyo *et al.*, 2022). These communities grappled with an education sector marked by a profound "rich and poor school divide" (Veriava, 2012, para. 1). Through my interactions with teachers in township schools, I uncovered a significant phenomenon that included the substantial migration of their students to schools in the predominantly Coloured[1] Northern Areas of Gqeberha (Petrus & Davids, 2023). Driven by this discovery, I decided to extend my CPD facilitation to both communities, laying the groundwork for my doctoral research (Kahts-Kramer, 2021).

Beyond these professional interactions, my own school experiences played a pivotal role in shaping my perspective. Having grown up in a middle-income family within a safe neighbourhood, my own primary and high school education in Quintile Five schools (situated in higher socio-economic communities) exposed me to a stark contrast from the realities I encountered working in township schools as part of my doctoral research. As Ncanywa (2015) aptly notes, a clear socioeconomic divide separates schools in South Africa. For context, South African schools are categorised into Quintiles based on socio-economic factors, with Quintile Five marking the most resourced and Quintile One indicating the least (Ncanywa, 2015). To further illustrate this divide and its impact on educational experiences, I include Figure 1. This visual representation captures the physical distinctions and offers insights into the broader socioeconomic context influencing teachers and their learners' educational experiences in these varied settings.

Figure 1: Comparison of a Quintile Three (or less) (Panel A) and Quintile Five (Panel B) school

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[1] The meaning of the word "Coloured" in the South African context can be understood by reading Kupemba (2023).

While School A holds inherent potential, its Physical Education and School Sports (PESS) infrastructure pales in comparison to School B. School A lies nestled amidst Gqeberha's less affluent communities, where shacks[2] and formal housing stand side-by-side. A considerable number of families in Gqeberha's less affluent communities grapple with poverty, often spiralling into issues of crime and gangsterism (Petrus & Davis, 2023). Poverty is, unfortunately, prevalent in these communities, and weaves a complex web of challenges into the educational fabric. During my visits to the Northern Area schools of Gqeberha, teachers shared haunting tales of gunshots cracking through the school day, with stray bullets a chilling reminder of the very real danger hanging over students and staff. The spectre of young lives lost to gang violence is not a distant statistic but a heart-wrenching reality, vividly documented by Koen (2020).

Regardless of the numerous challenges low-resource communities face, there are beacons of hope, one of which resides in the realm of PESS. The benefits of PESS are well-documented (Bailey, 2018). It holds the potential to positively impact the lives of children living in poverty (Gall *et al.*, 2018). Moreover, sports have been recognised for steering youth away from gangsterism, particularly in the Northern Areas of Gqeberha (Davids *et al.*, 2022). A testament to the transformative potential of sport is Siya Kolisi, the South African Rugby captain, who emerged from the township communities of Gqeberha, overcoming significant socioeconomic challenges to become a national icon (Harry, 2023). Nelson Mandela also acknowledged sport's power in enacting positive change, uniting people, and fostering hope amid despair (Triantafyllidis & Mallen, 2022). However, I realised that these potential benefits and aspirations could remain unrealised if teachers and children in these communities do not have access to quality PE.

Immersing myself in the complexities of these schools and communities profoundly reshaped my approach to CPD facilitation. These experiences challenged my long-held beliefs about traditional research methods, particularly their efficacy in capturing the lived realities of students and teachers in such settings (Kahts *et al.*, 2017 a, b; Kahts & Baard, 2020). Figure 2, extracted from a chapter in Wood's (2022, p. 32) book on community-based research, encapsulates my reflective insights from a workshop I attended on the dissonance I experienced when employing conventional research methods. The words I use vividly illustrate my re-evaluation of research ethics, particularly when engaging with vulnerable communities. Noteworthy is the highlighted word "from" in Figure 2, serving to underscore the stark contrast between traditional research approaches and the community-based paradigm, which should instead involve actively "working with" community members.

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[2] A shack is a rudimentarily designed shelter made from scavenged materials as the individual building the accommodation cannot afford to live in a formal house (Shack, 2023). You can watch a video on what it is here: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2Vt5_wcKIa0

> *The latter vision is my experience of traditional research. We went to poor communities who had very little hope, to gain information* **from** *them on how sport and physical education was being experienced at their schools. Their concerns about dilapidated schools and burned out staff, hopeless students, alcoholism, drug abuse, teenage pregnancy and violence overshadowed our conversations about physical activity. What disturbed me most was that I knew I was only there to gain information, and then leave, never to be seen again. I knew that my interviews and focus groups and long-winded questionnaires would not help this community to transform. The community members knew this too. They asked me: Are you also here to just take information and get your articles published, improve your career, and leave us stranded? I was not sure how to respond, because I knew the type of research I was conducting was exactly that.* (Sam Kahts [SK], doctoral candidate's reflection, November 2020)

Figure 2. Sam Kahts [SK], doctoral candidate's reflections (Brydon-Miller & Wood, 2022, p. 31–32)

Initially, as illustrated in Figure 2, I observed from the periphery, unsure how to meaningfully connect with community members. This sense of detachment clashed with my desire for deeper engagement, igniting a transformative shift in my practice. I resolved to become a co-participant, actively collaborating with teachers instead of imposing CPD programs. This commitment meant aligning my actions with my value of participatory learning. I remember when community members asked me if I am just going to come to get information from them and publish. It then dawned on me: I was a "living contradiction" (Whitehead, 1989, p.1), my espoused value of 'participation' undermined by my top-down and objective approach.

Living Educational Theory Research, as explored by Jack Whitehead, resonated deeply with this realisation. It urges us to bridge the gap between our values and our practices, ensuring that our actions embody the principles we believe in. This became my guiding light, pushing me to continuously refine my facilitation techniques to foster genuine partnerships with teachers and communities. This commitment to ethical research and participatory learning, which I will delve into further, defines my approach to professional development.

I am a "living contradiction"

Driven by my desire to embed the value of *participation* into my CPD approach, I was confronted with a fundamental question: What does *participation* mean within the framework of transformative CPD? Initially I envisioned *participation* as one-to-two-day workshop sessions with expert-led facilitators (Kennedy, 2014). I realised that if my goal was to engage in CPD fostering *participation*, the expert-led approach I followed positioned me as a "living contradiction" (Whitehead, 1989, p. 1). I gradually redefined *participation*. Initially *participation* meant teachers actively attended and engaged with activities I designed for them. I observed *participation* through teachers applying the activities I created at their schools and my creation of a comfortable and relaxed atmosphere reminiscent of the camaraderie around a campfire – seemingly removed from work pressures. I share my visual illustration of *participation* in Figure 3, denoting a relaxed, non-work-related

environment, led by me. Direct eye contact, lively discussions and laughter were my cues for success. Essentially, I played the role of the "fireplace", sparking teachers' interest in PE.

Figure 3. My visual depiction of expert-led participation[3]

My initial understanding of *participation*, limited by my own perspective, failed to encompass the complex tapestry of daily challenges and personal needs teachers face (Kahts-Kramer *et al*., 2023). Choosing an expert-led participatory model, based on my own assumptions, ultimately resulted in teachers feeling more "workshopped" than empowered to translate their new knowledge into daily practice (Dixon *et al.*, 2014, p. 140). Through my collaborative work with school teachers, active participation in community-based research workshops, and ongoing critical dialogues with trusted colleagues (my critical friends) [4], my understanding of *participation* profoundly evolved. My evolving understanding is further corroborated by a compelling reflection shared at a community-based workshop (Figure 4), as documented in Wood's (2022, p. 32) book on community-based research.

When I think of community-based research, I think of a group of people holding hands around a fireplace. I see them relaxing under the stars and in the open—conversing, singing, dancing and sharing their life experiences. I see the fireplace warms people's hearts and warms their food—their sustenance for life! People are drawn to the fireplace. Its welcoming warmth assisting with forging relationships and genuine interest in each other's needs. Its energy igniting the fire within. The fireplace is a community project, bringing people together. .

Figure 4. Sam Kahts [SK], doctoral candidate's reflections (Brydon-Miller & Wood, 2022, p. 31-32)

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[3] All pictures in this document have been created by Almarie Van Niekerk (Multimedia Developer, North-West University, South Africa).

[4] In developing a Living-Educational-Theory, the role of critical friends is akin to that of validation groups (of up to eight people); both play a pivotal role in resolving misalignments between our actions and values, as Delong and Whitehead (2023) suggest. These ongoing and iterative cycles of dialogue are integral to achieving clarity regarding values and ensuring their alignment with daily actions (Hiralaal, 2018).

As a result of my evolving perspective, my updated concept of *participation* changed into a collaborative undertaking, represented by a communal fireplace chosen collectively by teachers (see Figure 5). Within this collegial environment, every individual's expertise contributes equally to fostering a collective synergy. This stands in stark contrast to my earlier expert-driven approach, illustrated in Figure 3, where the facilitator assumed a more dominant role. Embracing the principle of "Leaders eat [and speak] last" (Sinek, 2014, p. 1), there was also a departure from my prior practice of dominating the conversation to ensuring that each individual in the group has an opportunity to contribute to the decision-making.

Figure 5. My visual depiction of collaborative participation

This journey deepened as I delved into participatory research methodologies. Immersion in Participatory Action Learning and Action Research (PALAR) as both a theoretical framework and a study design (Zuber-Skerritt, 2015) sparked my critical evaluation of my doctoral research and whether I was applying the value of *participation*. The reflection questions, gleaned from my training, inspired by and adaptations of Kemmis *et al.* (2014), Wood (2019) and Zuber-Skerritt *et al.* (2015), are clarified in Table 1. My transformative shift from a solitary "I" to a collaborative "we" encapsulates the essence of my journey.

Table 1. Reflective questions guiding teacher interactions

PALAR principles	Question	How are we achieving this?
Communication	How can we continue facilitating inclusive and symmetrical dialogue?	
Commitment	How can we foster commitment to our project, each other and ourselves? How can we continue identifying our roles and responsibilities?	
Competence	How can we continue learning from each other and community members?	
Compromise	How can we continuously facilitate listening to other points of view and reach mutual agreement?	
Critical attitude	How can we continue recognising how our feelings, thoughts, motives, and values impact our research process?	
Collaboration	How can we continue facilitating collaboration and equal participation in our sessions?	
Coaching	How can we continue improving our mentoring/facilitation skills?	
Reflection	How can we continue helping each other reflect on our learning?	
Relationship	How can we continue improving our research relationships?	
Recognition	How can we continue recognising and valuing our achievements?	

While the campfire metaphor in Figure 5 served as a springboard for my understanding of *participation* and the reflective questions in Table 1 guided my interactions with teachers, they ultimately fell short of achieving the transformative outcomes I envisioned for both teachers' and me. This realisation emerged through dialogue with one of my critical friends who is considered an expert in Living Educational Theory. She highlighted the insularity of my approach, as illustrated in the campfire metaphor, which limited its broader impact, and failed to fully encompass my expansive and transformative aspirations that we often discussed. At this critical moment, her insights prompted me to confront a central question from Living Educational Theory: "How can I enhance the comprehensibility of my explanation?" (Whitehead & Huxtable, 2022, p. 7). Our ensuing rich dialogue proved instrumental in clarifying my core values and to formulate the research question of this article: "How do I interpret *participation* as a CPD facilitator in fields such as PE, and how can this understanding be effectively conveyed to others?"

While fostering *participation* remained at the heart of my approach, I began to understand its true potential: *transformation*. This revelation propelled me beyond the comfortable confines of the communal fireplace (as indicated in Figure 5). Instead of merely facilitating discussions, I now aimed to equip those around the fire to carry their learning to others in their community, thereby causing a lasting "ripple effect" of change. Figure 6 vividly illustrates this shift, portraying teachers not just gathered around the fireplace, but venturing out, returning to their schools (and beyond), to spark a wave of positive change. The "ripple effect" can be seen commencing around the fireplace, and then moving outwards towards schools and community settings.

Figure 6. My visual depiction of transformative participation

Bridging the gap between passive learning and impactful change, transformative CPD (Williams *et al.*, 2022), as illustrated in Figure 6, empowers participants to become active agents of positive transformation within their context. This approach equips participants with the tools and confidence to take ownership of desired changes. Facilitators must create opportunities for participants to see the transformative potential that resides in their

individual and collective efforts, taking the first steps on a journey of transformation (Schoonen *et al.*, 2021). Additionally, facilitators should guide participants in acknowledging and constructively challenging existing power dynamics. Empowering participants to navigate and address power structures effectively is crucial for sustainable change. Regardless of perceived challenges, participants possess the capacity to find solutions within themselves and their communities, initiating change from the ground up. As Wood and Zuber-Skerritt (2013) aptly state, change starts within; communities hold the power to unlock their own potential. According to Smith and Duckworth (2022, p. 94), participation ought to generate a "ripple effect" of change. As depicted in Figure 6, this emphasises that seemingly small individual actions, even when isolated, can serve as inspiration for broader community engagement and drive systemic change. One remarkable illustration of this "ripple effect" that I personally witnessed involves a teacher's progression from a managerial role in a school and involvement in our localised CPD program to ascending to a provincial management position. This individual had successfully utilised the insights she gained from the CPD program to impact teachers across more than 200 schools.

Methodology

Driven by a desire to delve deeper into the evolving landscape of my facilitation role, particularly within the realm of *transformative participation*, I embraced Living Educational Theory Research (Whitehead, 1989, 2019). This methodology provided the perfect lens to dissect the intricacies of my participatory facilitative approach in CPD settings. My primary objective was to pinpoint any potential misalignment between my stated commitment to *transformative participation*, a cornerstone of Living Educational Theory Research (Whitehead, 1989), and my actual actions as a facilitator.

At the heart of Living Educational Theory, as Whitehead and Huxtable (2022) so eloquently state, lies a constant commitment to growth and influence. This growth stems from the continuous alignment of our daily actions with the values we hold dear. This journey necessitates a dynamic, reflective process where we actively seek out and acknowledge moments of "living contradiction", aptly coined by Whitehead (1989, p. 1). These contradictions arise when the chasm between our actions and values becomes visible. Recognising and addressing these discrepancies ignites a powerful learning process, ultimately guiding us closer to embodying our professed values.

My doctoral research (Kahts-Kramer, 2021) presented a treasure trove of data – annotated reflections, verbatim transcripts, and more – through which I critically scrutinised my implementation of PALAR (Wood, 2019) and its alignment with *transformative participation*. This two-year (2018-2019) collaborative journey engaged ten teachers as co-inquirers, focusing on transforming their PE teaching practices within their low-resource primary school contexts. Within PALAR, we explored two action learning cycles: 1) identifying teacher needs (Kahts-Kramer & Wood, 2023a) and 2) addressing those needs (Kahts-Kramer & Wood, 2023b). While a third cycle focused on teacher-led communities of practice held the potential for collaborative learning and school-wide impact, its inclusion fell outside the scope of my doctoral study.

My interactions were infused with participatory techniques like Circle of Voices and "hatful of quotes" (Brookfield & Preskill, 2016), fostering democratic dialogue (Reason &

Bradbury, 2001) and ownership of needs. My hope was for teachers to emerge from this process with re-evaluated perspectives, empowered to steer their CPD towards desired changes and sustain their PE practice beyond the program. For a deeper dive into the guiding principles co-developed through these interactions, readers can turn to Kahts-Kramer and Wood (2023b).

The authenticity of my knowledge claims is bolstered by feedback from three critical friends: a doctoral and community-based research guide from North-West University (South Africa), a teaching and learning practice mentor at Nelson Mandela University (South Africa), and a key influencer in my understanding of Living Educational Theory Research from the University of Cumbria (United Kingdom). The doctoral and community-based research guide has compiled more than 150 articles and books addressing community-based research, along with practical insights gained from extensive field applications centred on the utilisation of participatory methodologies. The teaching and learning practice mentor, a seasoned senior academic developer, possesses extensive expertise and hands-on experience in providing support to both students and academic staff for the purpose of enhancing the learning experience. The Living Educational Theory Research specialist is a senior educational psychologist with extensive training and experience in assisting individuals in the development of their living-educational-theories.

To enhance the credibility of my claims, I employed Whitehead's five standards of judgment (Whitehead, 1989, 2019). For example, I systematically delve into my educational influences by illustrating the learning context, the purpose of my enquiry, the processes I employed to navigate my learning and the outcomes of my explorations. I describe how I reshaped my perspective on the value of *participation*, and I outline the impact of this transformation on my facilitation of CPD. In doing so, I leverage my value of *transformative participation* to distinctly articulate my claims to knowledge and substantiate them through annotated reflections, verbatim transcripts, and visual depictions of my transformation. Drawing on PALAR as a theoretical and conceptual framework (Zuber-Skerritt, 2015), I provide evidence of critically accommodating propositional contributions from traditional education disciplines. I assert the development of my living-educational-theory for *transformative participation* through analysing my claims to knowledge and assumptions from various perspectives with the assistance of expert critical friends. In so doing, I actively demonstrate an inquisitive and critical approach to answering the primary question of this article focused on understanding what the value of *participation* means to me within transformative CPD.

Navigating the ethical landscape was paramount, and I secured clearance from all necessary authorities, including the university (H14-HEAHMS-015), the Department of Education, and each participating school's principals. The participating teachers and I were committed to upholding participatory ethical principles throughout the study, as outlined by Wood and Kahts-Kramer (2023), ensuring informed consent, ongoing dialogue, and respect for participant autonomy. To protect the privacy of the teachers involved, all names within this work are replaced with pseudonyms. Drawing upon a tapestry of educational influences, I now turn to showcase how the value of *transformative participation* shaped my CPD facilitation approach.

Findings and Discussion

My quest to embody *transformative participation* yielded three crucial lessons, namely the importance of how to: 1) dismantle established norms, 2) navigate personal-professional boundaries, and 3) cultivate leadership for lasting impact. Sharing these insights is not merely theoretical; it sheds light on instances where my actions diverged from the principles of *transformative participation*, providing concrete examples of how self-reflection led to transformative shifts in my facilitation approach. This continuous introspection, fuelled by realisations of discrepancies, has culminated in practical insights that elevate my effectiveness as a transformative CPD facilitator, offering guiding principles for assessing and enacting transformative participation in my practice.

Dismantling established norms

Many professionals, including teachers, often get relegated to passive, siloed learning in traditional expert-led CPD. Having felt this firsthand, I am driven to dismantle this dynamic as a transformative CPD facilitator, where teachers actively navigate their learning journeys, unshackled from the top-down shackles of conventional facilitation (Kennedy, 2014). To crack open established norms, I have successfully harnessed playful learning, celebrated nourishment through good food, included different forms of creative expression, adopted lifelong learning language, and empowered teachers to invite colleagues and management when ready, injecting novelty and enthusiastic engagement. Each of these unconventional choices deserves a closer look. So, in the next section, let us delve deeper into their transformative potential.

Disrupt norms through play, good food and creative expression

Challenging norms can begin with playful sparks and delicious bites. As Whitton (2022) argues, play fuels adult learning and well-being, while MacGovern (2021) emphasises food's power to spark connections and explore self-discovery through culinary journeys. Take, for instance, a collaboratively created video capturing teachers' CPD experiences: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AphVIcJA22E Highlighted is how teachers move from passive recipients to active, playful participants.

Delving into the heart of transformative learning within my CPD sessions with teachers, I initiated a powerful exploration of personal growth. Guiding discussions, I prompted them to identify the factors that most significantly fuelled their individual journeys. Instead of rigid frameworks, I encouraged them to articulate their experiences in a format that resonated deeply with their unique paths. This open invitation ignited a spark of creativity, leading them to embrace diverse forms of self-expression. Some penned heartfelt poems, while others wove their reflections into vibrant art pieces. Below is a collectively crafted poem by the teachers, capturing the core of their developmental journeys:

> We started off as unenthusiastic, but with food and laughs, our minds became fantastic.
> Logs and planning videos and "Samming" [learning with the facilitator/researcher, me, Samantha].
> Fundamental movement skills are more daring.
> Reflection, reflection, reflection. Action leads to perfection.
> Learners and teachers, participation in skills and features.
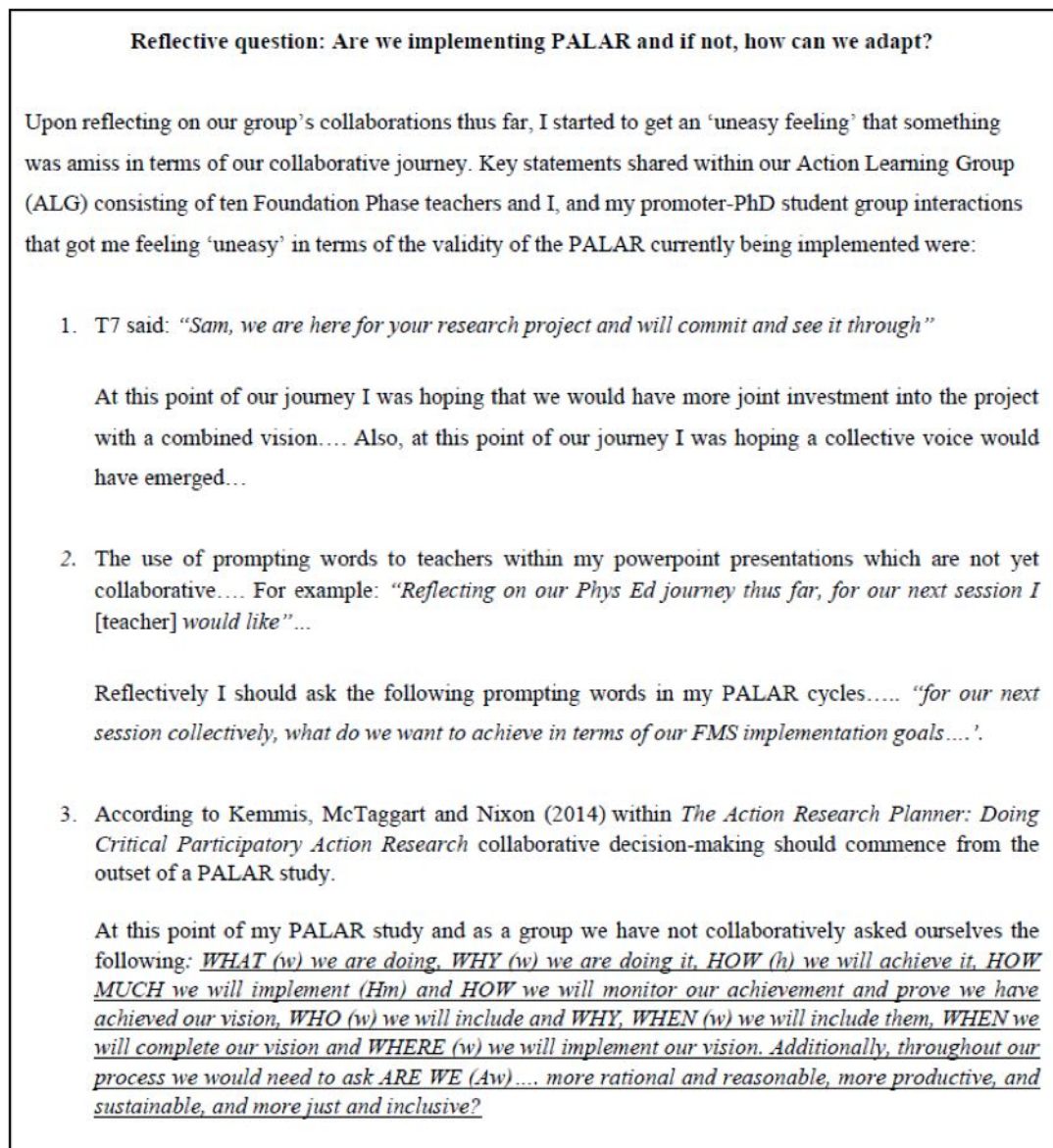> What started off as unenthusiastic ended up as being bombastic.

Beyond mere amusement, these playful activities laid the groundwork for deeper transformations in their relationships. Trust blossomed as colleagues shed their professional personas and embraced playful interactions. Teacher 12 aptly captured the shift – "We became more friends than just colleagues," a sentiment echoed by others. This transformative experience solidified "playing before work" as a core principle in my facilitation toolkit. To equip others with this playful approach, I have curated a comprehensive workshop booklet brimming with such activities. This collaborative effort emerged within a higher education CPD project, where my lecturing colleagues and I formed a community of practice grounded in PALAR, focused on improving our teaching and learning practices. Along with my colleagues, we co-created a space for playful learning and connection and captured these in a workshop booklet (Kahts-Kramer, 2023c).

While embracing play, good food, and breaks from the usual school environment brought forth undeniable benefits, my experiences also revealed a crucial challenge, ensuring these playful elements do not morph into mere enticements for participation. To navigate this potential tension, I actively fostered collaborative, reflective practices with the teachers, establishing clear and actionable objectives centred on driving sustainable change within their schools. This approach strikes a crucial balance, seamlessly integrating play and work, ensuring these playful facets amplify, rather than distract from, the fundamental goals of progress and genuine transformation in CPD.

Support and encourage inclusive language and lifelong learning

Deeper into dismantling the traditional expert-led model and igniting *transformative participation*, I unearthed a crucial lesson, that I must meticulously observe both my own actions and language, paying close attention to the teachers' responses, to cultivate a truly collaborative environment. This heightened awareness aligns with Kemmis *et al*.'s (2014, p. 47) notion of understanding a group's "sayings, doings, and relatings". Shockingly, I realised that my own well-intentioned words and actions often inadvertently hijacked the direction of our sessions, hindering the group-driven approach I so passionately championed. As Figure 7 visually illustrates, a snapshot of my reflective thoughts within my doctoral research, I realised the groups "saying, doing and relating" were a "living contradiction" to the value of *transformative participation*.

> **Reflective question: Are we implementing PALAR and if not, how can we adapt?**
>
> Upon reflecting on our group's collaborations thus far, I started to get an 'uneasy feeling' that something was amiss in terms of our collaborative journey. Key statements shared within our Action Learning Group (ALG) consisting of ten Foundation Phase teachers and I, and my promoter-PhD student group interactions that got me feeling 'uneasy' in terms of the validity of the PALAR currently being implemented were:
>
> 1. T7 said: *"Sam, we are here for your research project and will commit and see it through"*
>
>   At this point of our journey I was hoping that we would have more joint investment into the project with a combined vision…. Also, at this point of our journey I was hoping a collective voice would have emerged…
>
> 2. The use of prompting words to teachers within my powerpoint presentations which are not yet collaborative…. For example: *"Reflecting on our Phys Ed journey thus far, for our next session I [teacher] would like"*…
>
>   Reflectively I should ask the following prompting words in my PALAR cycles….. *"for our next session collectively, what do we want to achieve in terms of our FMS implementation goals….'*.
>
> 3. According to Kemmis, McTaggart and Nixon (2014) within *The Action Research Planner: Doing Critical Participatory Action Research* collaborative decision-making should commence from the outset of a PALAR study.
>
>   At this point of my PALAR study and as a group we have not collaboratively asked ourselves the following: *WHAT (w) we are doing, WHY (w) we are doing it, HOW (h) we will achieve it, HOW MUCH we will implement (Hm) and HOW we will monitor our achievement and prove we have achieved our vision, WHO (w) we will include and WHY, WHEN (w) we will include them, WHEN we will complete our vision and WHERE (w) we will implement our vision. Additionally, throughout our process we would need to ask ARE WE (Aw) …. more rational and reasonable, more productive, and sustainable, and more just and inclusive?*

Figure 7. Reflective notes from my doctorate (Kahts-Kramer, 2021, p. 252)

Confronting my unwitting role in perpetuating expert-led dynamics ignited a transformative shift in our sessions. I actively incorporated thought-provoking reflection questions (illustrated in Table 1 and Figure 7) designed to guide our progress towards teacher-centred priorities. This shift fostered a palpable commitment to collaboration, evident in how teachers embraced the project as their own initiative. Take T7, for example. Her journey exemplifies the power of this approach. We (teachers and I) observed a remarkable transformation in her language, evolving to be more inclusive, and witnessing her take ownership of her learning as she transitioned from stating, "Sam, we are here for your research project and will commit and see it through" to gradually shift towards the following:

> "There is no use we sit with all this information and we don't apply it and see if it is workable. We are just adding on and on to our group and knowledge. But we are not implementing and seeing if it makes a difference or if there are challenges in the concepts on paper… So, for me, our aim should be to focus on a specific skill that we have learned. We

have the wheel… We have clips on all the fundamental movement skills. We need to apply it." (T7)

T7's transition to using "we" and "our" instead of "your" exemplifies the enhanced inclusivity fostered through this approach. Furthermore, her emphasis on celebrating small wins and avoiding fixed end goals, captured in phrases like "it is not going… [to end]" and "well done," beautifully embodies the essence of lifelong learning: "You can't say, when is it the end. Cos it's not going... [to end]… I just feel that we need to have that moment of where you just… you just stand still and say, well done." (T7). Her words became a powerful lesson for me as a facilitator: prioritising inclusive language and lifelong learning by celebrating progress and embracing ongoing change. This contrasted sharply with my initial focus, illustrated in Figure 8, where achieving predetermined outcomes and reaching my own goals took precedence.

I assumed that the only measure of success in CPTD was whether PE was being implemented, how effectively it was being taught, and whether what I was doing with the participants was making a change to their learners' PE experiences. Even though I had realised in Phase One that both systemic and personal factors affected teachers, I had not integrated this in to how I perceived assessment and monitoring. Only as I reflected on my thinking, did I realise that through only focusing on whether the teachers were implementing PE, I was inhibiting my ability to be an active listener during our collaborative sessions (McGrath, Palmgren & Liljedahl, 2019). My transformation from one-dimensional thinking to the inclusion of teachers' overall wellbeing represented an important learning moment for me. I realised that CPTD can transform individuals in many ways, by for example, changing how they viewed their learners' academic development, barriers to education, collegiality, and their own thinking and actions in everyday life. Thus, for Cycle Two, I aimed to maintain an open mind and use different lenses of analysis to explore participants' holistic growth within the PE domain.

Figure 8: Reflective notes from my doctorate (Kahts-Kramer, 2021, p. 145)

Dewey's (1916) concept of education as a never-ending journey, where the process itself outweighs fixed endpoints, resonated deeply with my experiences. I started recognising that the most significant impact of our work transcended the initial, tangible goals, like PE implementation. Rather, the holistic development of the teachers, an aspect that extended beyond our original vision, blossomed into the most valuable fruit of our collaborative efforts. This experience exposed a crucial tension within the academic world: the pressure for measurable achievements, like publications and quantifiable data, versus nurturing the holistic growth of individuals within a community. Striking a balance between these seemingly disparate goals remains a vital challenge, but my journey with the teachers has illuminated the path towards a more holistic and meaningful impact in education.

Encourage teachers to invite colleagues and management

In the face of prevalent isolation and apprehension towards management that teachers may face (Elliot & Campbell, 2015; Msila, 2012), CPD workshops emerge as crucial beacons of hope, offering secure and supportive learning environments where fostering collaboration and addressing management anxieties can pave the way for both professional growth and school-wide progress. This dual challenge resonated acutely with T19, a teacher who powerfully captured the sense of insecurity:

> People are intimidated, somewhat, to a certain degree by management… They get this fear attached to, to ah, management. So, what happens is that teachers fear it and stay away. They're not being themselves… They're more reserved; they're more well-behaved. (T19)

T19 was not alone in expressing anxieties within the school environment. Another teacher openly voiced concerns about potential resistance from colleagues, stating: "They [our colleagues, are] going to take us out at school" (T4). Adding to these anxieties, some teachers outside the CPD group voiced negative perceptions, further impacting the group's confidence in implementing their newfound learning within their schools:

> There is always that type of thing; they are at some lodge, and it is Friday. They are already probably at home. So that is why I put on the group, we are here, and we are doing this. So, it is not like a get-away from school type of thing… So, there will always be that type of friction… We have that animosity. (T7)

This realisation ignited a crucial shift in my approach. I understood that fostering the sense of safety and trust nurtured within our CPD group transcended the workshop walls and demanded extending it into the teachers' school environments. One powerful strategy embraced by the teachers involved inviting their colleagues to join them in a PE day. This initiative, aimed at building open communication bridges between colleagues and management, also served as a practical demonstration of their learning. T9 captured the essence of this approach: "I am inviting colleagues to a lesson so they can practically see what we are doing and why we are doing it... and how it can help their learners." Others provided invaluable support by reminding the group of their collective journey, emphasising the progress they had made and the importance of collective learning, reminding everyone "what we needed to not know before moving forward":

> "We have a lot of new ladies here. And I think for learning purposes, we must share this first with them. The warm-ups and, the discovery, and the fundamentals are in there. A lot of the questions will be answered. So, I would see my first purpose at my school is to get these ladies that are new and on board, to get them the material. So that they have what you need for the planning and the fundamental movement skills" (T7)

Through this insightful journey, I gleaned a fundamental lesson: the strategic integration of new participants and early inclusion of management are critical considerations for transformative CPD. While fostering a secure space within our CPD sessions undoubtedly yielded positive outcomes, it also, somewhat inadvertently, created a sense of exclusion for those outside the group. My own reflections on this dynamic, delving into the potential unintended consequences of exclusion, are further explored in Figure 9.

I assumed it was not necessary to include the Principals and other colleagues sooner than later. As the participants and I had worked in isolation and away from schools' premises up until our fourth session together, and our collaboration was progressing well, I had not considered the social implications thereof. Working together at school and with others presented a totally different social dynamic. We had not considered including the relevant Principals in our decision-making processes. For the participants, this might have been because they were not sure how to include their Principal or feared authority. For me, it was because I had learnt in Phase One, and Cycle One of Phase Two, that it was important to remove myself from the influence of authority and focus only on empowering the action learning group members I was with. In future, inviting the Principal, HODs and other colleagues to the learning process sooner rather than later, would be important. However, this approach must be strategised with the action learning group as they need to be confident enough to share and feel safe to share. They also need to consider how their colleagues can be included in a supportive manner. Collaborating at one school at a time might have also helped with trust and relationship building processes.

Figure 9. Reflective notes from my doctorate (Kahts-Kramer, 2021, p. 160)

Navigating the tightrope between nurturing a safe CPD haven and ensuring seamless integration of new members and management, who may hail from more challenging school environments, is a critical balancing act. Embracing a scaffolded approach, marked by playful pre-work activities and elements like shared meals and fresh settings, can ease the transition for newcomers. Acknowledging that each newcomer brings unique dynamics and presents distinct challenges for the group is paramount.

Nurturing leadership for sustained continuity

As our CPD group blossomed, welcoming new participants and witnessing their efforts to spark change within their schools, a crucial lesson, previously veiled, unveiled itself. Teachers, I realised, were not mere recipients of knowledge but potential catalysts for progress. Instead of fostering dependence, the true essence of facilitation lies in empowering teachers to evolve into leaders and facilitators themselves, capable of inspiring others and navigating conflicts with confidence. This shift resonates powerfully with Simon Sinek's (2011, 2014) definition of the ideal leader, a model applicable not only to teachers but also to facilitators working alongside them. Sinek presents a compelling Figure of a leader: someone who fosters a circle of safety, where individuals feel empowered to contribute and thrive. According to Sinek, being a leader means people willingly follow you because they want to. Considering Sinek's sentiments, and re-imagining a CPD session, not as a rigid hierarchy but as a vibrant circle where the facilitator and teachers alike learn from and inspire each other. This is the essence of leadership I strive to cultivate in my CPD programs.

In *transformative participation*, leadership is not a solo sprint, but a relay race. While the facilitator starts strong, the baton must eventually be passed, enabling teachers to carry the torch of change within their schools. Though bittersweet, recognising the group's independent thriving – no longer needing the facilitator's guiding hand – becomes the ultimate measure of success, the sweet reward for nurturing self-sufficient leaders. Initially, letting go of control proved a monumental obstacle for me. Fear of rejection, conflict, of the project collapsing and doctoral research faltering, clung to me like a shadow. My expert-driven, outcome-obsessed leadership, fuelled by anxieties, inadvertently eclipsed teachers' own leadership potential and stifled my ability to be a truly attentive listener. This internal struggle is further dissected in Figure 10, thanks to the insightful observations of a critical friend, who helped me confront these blind spots.

"She [critical friend] shared that what has been done up until this point has all been about Sam and her transition towards understanding herself and how PALAR should be applied. Hence everything that has happened [with teachers] up until this point from a PALAR perspective for the teachers, is tainted by Sam's own journey within the critical paradigm." (K personal communication, journal entry: 2018).

Figure 10. Reflective notes from my personal journal entry in 2018

My struggle to relinquish control was not solely an internal battle. My own promoters, unfamiliar with participatory action research intricacies, mirrored my inclination towards centralised leadership. Early meetings with my promoters, documented in my journal entries, became a shared learning ground. Reflecting on these interactions underscores the undeniable importance of having a dedicated PALAR expert woven into the fabric of any such project. Their specialised knowledge and experience serve as guiding lights, illuminating participatory research methods and empowering participation itself. Figure 11 delves deeper into this crucial aspect, showcasing the invaluable insights gleaned from collaborating with a PALAR expert throughout the journey.

"I am wondering about the comments we [my promoters and I] shared today. On the one hand, we felt it is critical that in our next session, we guide them [teachers] on how we can prove FMS PCK [Fundamental Movement Skill Pedagogical Content Knowledge] is being implemented. What monitoring tools can we use? On the other hand, we discussed to what extent we have the freedom to guide them in a direction so that I maintain the focus. But then, to what degree is collaboration taking place? They are not meant to function as a unit surely, once we are complete with the PALAR? The goal is that they go on their own and become self-directed." (K personal communication, journal entry: 2018).

Figure 11. Reflective notes from my personal journal entry in 2018

The reflections in Figure 11 illustrate my meaning-making and coming to terms with positioning myself as a facilitator of transformative CPD. The phrases used (in Figure 11), such as "monitor" and "guide them in a direction to maintain focus", are related to a more positivistic approach (Killam, 2013). *Transformative participation* should involve words such as the group's "freedom" and "to choose" the project's direction, how it is monitored, and how it functions as a unit. Furthermore, the decision should be made collectively by teachers and not only the promoters and the doctoral student.

While honing my skills in guiding groups towards co-created visions, self-driven goals, and effective collaboration (as detailed in Table 1), I came to realise that true leadership cultivation and fostering vibrant communities of practice within schools, particularly teacher-led ones, demanded more leadership from teachers. Moving forward, I am determined to integrate continuity as an unshakeable pillar of my practice, ensuring that transformative participation transcends ephemeral workshops and translates into lasting change within schools. As outlined in Table 2, this translates into equipping teachers with skills like leading effectively, navigating conflict constructively, and building resilience amidst the inevitable political terrain of school environments, as Msila (2012) aptly points out.

Table 2. Reflective questions guiding teacher interactions: *Continuity*

PALAR principles	Questions	How are we achieving this?
Continuity	• What skills and knowledge will you cultivate to spearhead a change-supporting community of practice within your school? • How will you leverage your program learnings to step into leadership roles and drive change initiatives at your school? • How do you envision this community evolving and thriving beyond the program's duration? • How can you actively integrate "tensions" or conflict into your leadership approach to strengthen your community?	

Balancing personal and professional development: Fostering responsibility and accountability

While collaborative settings offer fertile ground for transformative learning, unlocking profound personal and professional growth, it is crucial to acknowledge the potential pitfalls teachers may face. These pitfalls, including the insidious presence of trauma and fear, can pose significant hurdles to progress. As Vaugn (2016, p. 284) aptly notes, implementing transformative learning demands a mindful consideration of the inherent risks involved:

> As much as transformative learning is premised on an autonomous learner, it also tends to be premised on an autonomous and transformed educator who can act as an agent of change. In oppressive contexts marked by fear and trauma, this is not a given. Furthermore, transformative learning can be highly risky work and vulnerable educators, not organisations, are the ones who must face the brunt of such risk.

Vaugn's cautionary reminder underscores the importance of approaching this powerful pedagogy with both open eyes and a commitment to safeguarding teacher well-being. Imagine a vibrant CPD session where transformative learning flourishes, yet the potential thorns of trauma and fear have not been adequately addressed. This underscores the need for a holistic approach that prioritises teacher well-being alongside pedagogical innovation.

Transformative learning involves engaging in conversations designed to challenge values, beliefs, and an individual's understanding of the world (Mezirow, 2018). Critical dialogue serves as a platform for discussing barriers to change on both a personal and systemic level until a conclusive point is reached. These discussions can give rise to profound conversations, often delving into the origins of core beliefs, cognitive dissonance, unresolved issues, the challenge of comfort zones, the vulnerability of self-discovery and introspection, the prospect of social rejection due to adopting different beliefs, and unsafe power dynamics (Morrice, 2013; Vaugn, 2016). One instance that highlights a teacher's underlying trauma, and my realisation that I lacked the professional expertise to provide adequate support, occurred when she shared with me her struggles to come to terms with the loss of one of her Grade Three students to violence in the community. In instances where a teacher shared vulnerabilities, I validated their emotions and inquired whether they had sought professional help or were part of a support group to help them process their emotions. I emphasised that I am here to listen. Recognising the significance of these moments helped me realise that from the start of our sessions, it is crucial for me to clearly define my role and skillsets and, as a group, to put in place support networks for teachers who may need additional psychological support beyond what I or the group can offer.

Guided by ethical considerations, I will prioritise safeguarding the privacy of participating teachers by not disclosing anymore personal traumas or experiences in this paper. While respecting the confidentiality of individual experiences, I am eager to continue sharing my own journey and the personal and professional development strategies I found valuable in navigating the challenges of transformative learning as a facilitator. Therefore, I will focus on my own experiences and the strategies I developed, inviting you to consider their potential application in your own practice.

In my role as a facilitator, I closely observe how my trauma shaped my leadership and transformation journey. For example, being raised in a traditional Afrikaans patriarchal family exposed me to a skewed power and authority structure, primarily wielded by the male members of the family. For a deeper understanding of this dynamic and its potential influence on South African women, readers are directed to Mindry (1999). While I found it easy to position myself in an expert-led role as a facilitator, the aspect I found most challenging to navigate was conflict resolution, partly due to my upbringing. I was accustomed to assuming a submissive rather than an assertive role. Conforming to traditional gender roles and the expectation of showing respect to those in authority and my elders, also meant that I would adhere to a code of silence. I have learned that, as a leader, maintaining a balanced power dynamic is crucial (regardless of expertise, gender, or age) and being assertive in dealing with conflict is empowering. In my professional role, I now demonstrate the ability to navigate personal triggers, such as wanting to remain quiet when conflict arises, and maintain effective leadership by reflecting on instances where I feel silenced. Thankfully, under the guidance of critical friends and psychologists, I have honed

my ability to navigate such critical moments effectively. Through my own learning and interactions with teachers, this solidifies the crucial role of readily accessible psychological support networks for both the facilitator and teachers, particularly when embarking on the potentially vulnerable journey of personal development within transformative learning (Morrice, 2013) and contexts that may have traumatised teachers (Vaugn, 2016).

Clearly communicating my role and promoting external psychological support are crucial aspects. Navigating conversations that tend to focus on personal development, potentially rooted in trauma, or which involve socio-political issues (where conflicts at school remain unaddressed, and teachers may exhibit passive or passive-aggressive behaviour during a CPD session) poses another significant challenge. This dynamic interplay demands a nuanced approach that acknowledges the interconnectedness of personal and professional growth while gently refocusing discussions towards the jointly decided on CPD vision and goals, fostering responsibility and accountability among participants. By doing so, a balanced emphasis on personal and professional growth is achieved, nurturing a sense of responsibility and accountability. In a specific CPD session, I encountered what appeared to be animosity among teachers, and I struggled to comprehend the underlying dynamics. The central theme of our discussions shifted towards an emphasis on perfection and criticism. During this exchange, T5 expressed:

> "There's only one point I want to make: no perfection... no-one is perfect. We will make mistakes, just accept what's done is done... You were perfect, but it's not about perfection... What did I tell, when I was busy with helping my colleague here, we were busy with our activity there now? I fall, you all laugh. I'm only human. I make mistakes." (T5)

Teachers were able to negotiate how feedback should be given in a non-threatening way:

> "We take the word crit away. When we planned this session, that was not our aim and that word was not used at all. We are not at College. We are here to learn. We can't crit each other. We are having a lekker [good] discussion" (T7).

I continued to reflect on teachers' initial focus on perfectionism and criticism. Upon further investigation, it became apparent that different teachers at the school set varying standards, leading to a perceived unfair pressure on their colleagues. Additionally, the emergence of vacancies for management positions intensified a competitive atmosphere. As this matter persisted without resolution at school and among the teachers, it manifested itself during our CPD sessions.

In conclusion, the approach to integrating personal development with professional resonated with the teachers. They echoed similar sentiments, acknowledging the need to discuss the negatives, and to reframe these negatives into positives: "We mustn't always focus on the negative, we must try to focus more to let the positive flow, even if there is shooting outside, or other problems..." (T7). Another participant aptly stated, "It starts with yourself" (T4), which underscores the importance of acknowledging and addressing personal challenges and in so doing, staying committed to professional development objectives. It also highlights the role of truth, accountability, and responsibility in personal and professional learning experiences by acknowledging their existence and establishing and seeking out psychological support when needed.

My experience in navigating personal and professional boundaries has led to a significant addition to my facilitation approach. Therefore, I have introduced another reflective question to enhance Table 1, namely: *Respecting healthy boundaries*. This new element is crucial in guiding my standards of judgment. *Respecting healthy boundaries* emphasises the importance of recognising and maintaining appropriate limits in conversations and interactions and collectively setting up psychological support networks. This acknowledgement serves as a safeguard, protecting both the facilitator and the participants. This approach ensures a healthy balance between engaging deeply with each other during transformative CPD, maintaining professional appropriateness and providing access to critical friends, expert psychological support, online resources, and/or community support groups as illustrated in Table 3.

Table 3. Reflective questions guiding teacher interactions: *Respecting healthy Boundaries*

PALAR principles	Question	How are we achieving this?
Respecting healthy boundaries	• How can we acknowledge and respect our individual experiences, including past experiences (or traumas) that may affect our abilities to change? • If personal sensitive issues arise, how would we like them addressed within the group? • What strategies can we use to constructively navigate challenging discussions or recognise them needing additional support from mental health professionals? • Does each team member have access to critical friends to assist them in their personal development? • How can we balance our personal and professional growth and acknowledge the importance of both?	

Conclusion

As a CPD facilitator in fields like PE, guided by how I interpret the value of *participation* and, more importantly, how this understanding can be effectively shared with others, I have embarked on a continuous learning journey. This exploration has unfolded through iterative cycles of critical friend engagement, participation in community-based workshops, and deep reflection on my interactions, actions, and relationships within various CPD collaborations. Invaluable lessons gleaned from the passionate teachers I have engaged with have enriched this process further.

This dynamic journey has guided me in formulating a living-educational-theory centred on *transformative participation*. I visualise this process as a vivid scene of a group collaboratively tending to a metaphorical fireplace, with its warmth and light extending beyond its boundaries, as illustrated in Figure 6. While Figure 12 below captures this vision, it specifically portrays the role of the facilitator embodying *transformative participation*. This visual representation, intertwined with my practical insights and standards of judgment, provides a comprehensive framework for individuals seeking to enhance their CPD experiences focused on *transformative participation*. The essential elements that a facilitator of transformative CPD should consider, as depicted in Figure 12, include play,

good food, initially the inclusion of a none-work-related environment, inclusive language, lifelong learning, trust and relationship building, the inclusion of key stakeholders, the use of participatory methodologies, the development of leadership, the integration of "tensions," and balancing personal and professional growth.

Moving forward, I consider the following key questions, which guide me in the continued development of my living-educational-theory rooted in the value of *transformative participation*. These questions align with the essential elements of transformative CPD depicted in Figure 12 and may serve as a valuable guide to colleagues embarking on transformative CPD:

1. How can I, as a facilitator, initially guide the integration of play and communal meals in a non-work setting to foster relationships and trust, and eventually empower teachers to take the lead with the motto "Playing before work," thereby contributing to the evolution of our shared living-educational-theory? To address this question, I have collaborated with fellow colleagues to compile participatory activities, providing concrete examples that demonstrate how I am approaching this question (Kahts-Kramer *et al.*, 2023).

2. How can I, as a facilitator, initially guide the collaborative management and navigation of tensions within various realms and gradually empower teachers to independently address and resolve these tensions, fostering shared experiences that contribute to the evolution of our living-educational-theory? To respond to this query, I take note of specific tensions which arise during CPD session. An example includes striving to harmonise my and teachers' personal and professional development by integrating Table 3's reflective questions focused on establishing healthy boundaries. Addressing these tensions also entails aligning my academic publishing demands with community-based needs, as seen in the consideration of reflective questions from Table 1 to meet teachers' specific requirements. Additionally, I work on aligning extrinsic rewards, such as shared meals and time away from school, with reflective discussions on the group's vision for PE at their school and the strategies to actualise this vision. Lastly, teachers from CPD sessions contribute valuable insights on how to effectively involve their colleagues, particularly when integrating fellow colleagues and management who have not previously been part of the process and might be navigating challenging work environments.

3. How can I, as a facilitator, initially guide the careful attention to and cultivation of the use of inclusive language focused on lifelong learning, and progressively empower teachers to autonomously champion inclusivity in their communication, fostering shared experiences that contribute to the evolution of our living-educational-theory? To tackle this question, I have gleaned insights from teachers regarding the importance of celebrating small victories and maintaining a focus on the journey rather than the outcome as a measure of success. Moreover, I have incorporated Tables 1, 2 and 3 as my new standards of judgment, engaging in discussions with teachers to foster an inclusive environment. Finally, by embedding participatory methodologies in every interaction with teachers, I support the inclusion of inclusive language.

4. How can I, as a facilitator, initially guide the extension of learning within the group to those outside the group, and over time empower teachers to autonomously share knowledge and insights beyond the immediate group, contributing to the evolution of our shared living-educational-theory? I address this question by including Table 2's reflective questions focused on *Continuity.* What is learned in CPD sessions should be extended to the broader community through the formulation of communities of practice by teachers.

Figure 12. My *practical insights and standards of judgement for adopting the value of transformative participation*

My embrace of *transformative participation* as a core value is an ongoing journey. The approaches I have taken to answer the aforementioned questions will continue to evolve as I collaborate with diverse individuals on various projects within different contexts. Thus far, I have partnered with teachers in low-resource schools (Kahts-Kramer, 2021), engaged with youth from township communities (Wood *et al.*, 2023), and collaborated with lecturers in a university setting (Kahts-Kramer *et al.*, 2023). Each distinct group in its specific context presents unique challenges, which in turn shape my facilitation skills and the development of my living-educational-theory centred on *transformative participation*. I hope that the insights I have shared may prove beneficial to colleagues embarking on facilitating transformative CPD, and I look forward to colleagues sharing their own developments in Living Educational Theory Research as they journey towards embracing *transformative participation* as a core value.

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