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Shifting Teacher Practice in Trauma-Affected Classrooms: Practice Pedagogy Strategies Within a Trauma-Informed Positive Education Model

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Abstract
This study explored how primary and secondary school teachers changed their practice pedagogy as they underwent training in trauma-informed positive education (Brunzell et al., Contemp School Psychol 20:63–83, 2016b. https://doi.org/10.1007/s4068 8-015-0070-x). TIPE integrates teaching strategies from two practice paradigms: trauma-informed education and positive education in order to educate vulnerable students who struggle in school due to trauma histories from abuse, neglect and/or violence. Over the course of 1 year, teachers ($N=18$) co-designed and/or adapted TIPE through an iterative procedure of appreciative inquiry participatory action research. The aim was to strengthen teacher capacities in order to assist their students to overcome classroom-based adversity and to bolster their learning. This study privileged teachers' phenomenological experience of TIPE by investigating the experiential aspects of planning for and implementing curriculum and classroom management. Two emergent themes were found in the qualitative data: (1) increasing relational capacity and (2) increasing psychological resources. These results were analysed through contemporary frames of teacher practice, which revision the purpose of teacher practice as a set of practice challenges to better assist teachers in educating their vulnerable student cohorts.

Keywords Trauma-informed education · Wellbeing · Pedagogy · Classroom strategies · Healing · Growth

Bolstering Teacher Practice to Support Vulnerable Students

Trauma-affected students can enter the classroom presenting dysregulated, angry or disengaged behaviours and continue doing so. Up to 40% of students have been exposed to adverse childhood experiences that compromise a student's healthy stress response (National Child Traumatic Stress Network, 2014). Adverse student behaviours are often masking fear, sadness and great loss for the child, and teachers, therefore, require renewed perspectives that take into account new advancement in trauma-informed practice (Hughes, 2004).

The rationale for this study is predicated on bolstering teacher capacity. When faced with classroom adversity from unsuccessfully teaching vulnerable students, teachers report compounding symptoms of professional burnout (Sullivan, Johnson, Owens, & Conway, 2014). Teachers may hold beliefs and desires to empower and to develop an integrated whole view of children (Brzycki, 2009). However, lack of pedagogical support to meet the many needs of seemingly resistant students erodes the efficacy and purpose that teachers derive from their work (Pines, 2002).

A practice pedagogy for trauma-affected classrooms has not existed that unites the concerns of trauma-informed pedagogies (Bloom, 1995; Downey, 2007; Wolpow, Johnson, Hertel, & Kincaid, 2009) with wellbeing-informed pedagogies (Norrish, Williams, O'Connor, & Robinson, 2013;

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Seligman, Ernst, Gillham, Reivich, & Linkins, 2009; Waters, 2011, 2014; Waters & Stokes, 2013). A new model of practice pedagogy was developed to assist teachers to understand aspects of *healing* (i.e. trauma-informed practice) and *growth* (i.e. wellbeing-informed practice) in the classroom. Predicated on Keyes' (2002) two-factor theory, which posits that building mental health requires more than addressing deficits in mental health, the contention was that struggling students first require opportunities to redress trauma's effects on classroom learning, and second must also have deliberate opportunities to identify and use their character strengths and other resources for psychological wellbeing (i.e. emotional intelligence, a growth mindset, resilient self-talk).

This study aimed to investigate the ways in which teachers first learned about, then implemented a new practice pedagogy model, trauma-informed positive education (TIPE; Brunzell, Stokes, & Waters, 2016b). The study also aimed to explore how TIPE better equipped teachers to meet the challenges posed in the current teacher practice pedagogy literature (Kennedy, 2015). TIPE was designed as an evidence-informed model which integrates current research from trauma-informed education models (Bloom, 1995; Downey, 2007; Wolpow et al., 2009) and positive education models (Norrish et al., 2013; Waters, Sun, Rusk, Cotton, & Arch, 2017). TIPE positions three developmentally sequenced domains for teacher practice to engage students who struggle in classrooms due to the negative impacts of trauma, abuse and neglect. When educating students who can quickly escalate due to a dysregulated stress response and impaired relational skills, teachers are encouraged to envision their practice as one that (first) increases self-regulatory abilities of their students to mitigate this escalation, (second) increases relational capacities within their students to make strong peer and teacher relationships for safe and supportive relational bonds and (third) increases psychological resources for student wellbeing.

A New Direction in Trauma-Informed Teacher Practice

Trauma-informed education models (Bloom, 1995; Downey, 2007; Wolpow et al., 2009), comprised of evidence-informed pedagogical strategies, have assisted educators to understand and to teach students who are trauma affected. Trauma can be defined as an overwhelming experience that undermines one's belief that the world is good or safe and can dramatically and negatively affect a student's educational trajectory (Downey, 2007). The effects of childhood trauma on learning outcomes can have devastating consequences for a student's physical and mental health and educational attainment. When considering the neurobiology of childhood posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD), and diagnoses such as reactive attachment disorder or acute stress, three developmental pathways may be thwarted: (1) the maturation of brain structures, (2) neuroendocrinologic and associated physiologic responses and (3) the capacity to coordinate behaviour with cognition and emotional regulation (van der Kolk, 2003).

In a systematic literature review and integration of trauma-informed education practice models, Brunzell et al. (2016b) conclude two domains or two sequential stages of interventions for teachers to action within classrooms to meet the complex needs of trauma-affected students: (domain 1) repairing self-regulatory abilities and (domain 2) repairing disrupted attachment. While self-regulation and relational capacities are critical therapeutic aims for trauma-affected children (Bath, 2008; Hughes, 2004), they are both considered essential for the demands of classroom learning (Cornelius-White, 2007; Herndon & Bembenutty, 2017).

Bowlby (1982) found that children formed attachment bonds with significant adults outside the family, and a teacher was often identified by children as the most significant adult after parents/carers. Consequently, the awareness and learning of attachment and unconditional positive regard takes on greater importance for trauma-informed teachers. Based on adult attachment theory (Hazan & Shaver, 1987), Riley (2009) proposes that a teacher who is insecurely attached within their own personal relationships will be vulnerable when encountering student resistance because the adult may be seeking an emotionally corrective experience of their own. Accompanying attachment within the trauma-informed literature is the principle of unconditional positive regard (Rogers, 1961), wherein the student feels valued regardless of their behaviour, cognitions or affect in the classroom.

Given that trauma-informed practice models recommend teachers first focus on building self-regulatory abilities and then on increasing relational capacities of struggling students, these two recommendations can help teachers understand why their students may not be ready for learning academic content nor make healthy social bonds within the classroom to support new learning. These practice recommendations can also help teachers understand that learning new content (a cognitively mediated process; Brunzell et al., 2016b) requires students to increase resources for self-regulation when they feel heightened or escalated when faced with classroom-based challenges as well as relational safety when working with the teacher and student peers.

Positive Education and Wellbeing-Informed Teacher Practice

Wellbeing-informed education models (see, e.g., Norrish et al., 2013; Waters et al., 2017), often referred to as positive education approaches, have arisen from the paradigm of

positive psychology and the desire to increase psychological resources (Fredrickson, 2001) as predicated on the evidence base of wellbeing interventions within classrooms (Seligman et al., 2009; Waters, 2011, 2014; Waters & Stokes, 2013). Inherent within the labelling of psychological resources, positive education strategies require students to be open to learning new content and new skills. By building upon the first two domains of trauma-informed practice (1) increasing self-regulatory abilities and (2) increasing relational capacities, a new third focus on increasing psychological resources represents an important next step for teacher practice with aims of supporting student wellbeing and academic accomplishment.

Wellbeing-informed learning positively correlates with academic performance (Dix, Slee, Lawson, & Keeves, 2012; Durlak, Weissberg, Dymnicki, Taylor, & Schellinger, 2011), and both positive affect and life satisfaction predict academic attainment (Suldo, Thalji, & Ferron, 2011). These topics often include mindfulness (Huppert & Johnson, 2010; Waters, Barsky, Ridd, & Allen, 2014; Waters & White, 2015), character strengths (Park, Peterson, & Seligman, 2004; Peterson & Seligman, 2004; Seligman et al., 2009; Gillham, Reivich, Jaycox, Seligman, & Silver, 1990), positive emotion (Fredrickson, 1998, 2001; Lyubomirsky, King, & Diener, 2005), resilience (Gillham et al., 1990; Reivich & Shatté, 2002), hope (Snyder et al., 1997; Snyder, 2002; Park et al., 2004) and growth mindset (Dweck & Leggett, 1988; Dweck, 2006; Blackwell, Trzesniewski, & Dweck, 2007). There is not a single practice model of positive education, and the field continues to evolve with evidence-informed frameworks based upon specific school and community contexts (see, e.g., Norrish et al., 2013; Waters et al., 2017; White & Murray, 2015).

Although there is robust support for such approaches within mainstream student populations, the field of positive education has yet to adequately or comprehensively address the importance of such practice pedagogy approaches for trauma-affected student cohorts. The TIPE model (Authors) is the first positive education approach to address the complex unmet needs of trauma-affected students by positioning a developmental sequence of repairing self-regulatory abilities (stage 1), repairing disruptive attachment (stage 2) and increasing psychological resources for wellbeing (stage 3) to support effective integration into current teaching practice of positive education for vulnerable students. The TIPE model was designed to help teachers understand why their students may struggle to learn new strategies to support their own learning and wellbeing, and to developmentally revision teachers' understandings of priority goals within their classrooms to engage students.

Within the TIPE model (Brunzell et al., 2016b), positive education topics are encouraged once students are ready to learn and to integrate new cognitively based strategies. For this report, three positive education topics are elaborated below: character strengths, growth mindset and reaching goals through flow. This study's authors deemed these three topics as particularly relevant for students who have not yet experienced classroom success. As recommended by the TIPE model, students who participate in classrooms strong in self-regulation and relationships then require multiple opportunities to identify and use their character strengths, examine and understand their own mindsets, and pursue their goals underpinned by full engagement (flow) principles.

Character Strengths

A classroom which embeds the teaching and daily reinforcement of character strengths provides opportunities for students to identify the strengths within themselves and to live into their own values enactment (Seligman, 2011). Character strengths are defined as positive traits manifested in thoughts, feelings and behaviours (Park et al., 2004). The use of character strengths as a classroom intervention has shown increased levels of school performance, achievement and wellbeing (Seligman et al., 2009; Shoshani & Slone, 2012) and is predictive of school success (Weber & Ruch, 2012). There are a cluster of character strengths classifications that have been useful in schools (see, e.g., Rath, 2007; Linley, 2009; Linley, Woolston, & Biswas-Diner, 2009), and for the TIPE model, the Values in Action (VIA) Inventory of Character Strengths (Peterson & Seligman, 2004) was selected for its evidence base with students, including practical and accessible vocabulary for youth (ages 10–17; see www.viacharacter.org). A classroom which places focus on character strengths provides opportunities for students to identify and employ their signature character strengths towards goals for learning and wellbeing (Brunzell et al., 2016b). Once deliberately taught to students, spotting character strengths within the classroom context can be done through identification in stories, curricular texts, personal narratives or public recognition (Proctor & Fox Eades, 2011).

Growth Mindset

When students learn about a growth mindset, they learn an incremental theory of intelligence (i.e. one's intelligence, personality and character are malleable and can be improved over time with effort and the incorporation of specific feedback to improve; Dweck & Leggett, 1988; Dweck, 2006). Students who hold this incremental view of intelligence have higher academic attainment than those who do not (Blackwell et al., 2007). Often the teacher's ability to maintain a growth mindset predicts the mindset of his or her students (Dweck & Leggett, 1988).

Reaching Goals Through Flow

Positive education models often apply hope theory for student goal setting (Snyder, 2002; Snyder et al., 1991; Marques, Lopez, & Pais-Ribeiro, 2011). Further, student goal attainment can be facilitated by principles of flow (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990, 1997) in the classroom when teachers understand the phenomenology of full engagement (i.e. full immersion, energised focus and enjoyment, clear and motivating goals, ability matches task, timely feedback). Together, these two concepts can assist teachers to support students when setting both micro-goals (i.e. seeking help with a classroom assignment in a proactive way) and macro-goals (i.e. finishing the all required assignments in the school term).

Conceptual Framing: Evolving Concerns of Practice Pedagogy

Given the study's concerns of positively shifting teachers' practice pedagogy to better meet the social, emotional and learning needs of their trauma-affected students, the current investigation extends the teacher practice literature. Changing teacher practice is enhanced by positioning teachers as practitioner researchers who are capable of designing their own questions, gathering evidence and reflecting on the impact of their actions (Wells, 2014). It has been shown that student achievement increases when teachers are given the opportunity to work together to consider classroom data (i.e. student achievement and behaviour indicators; Strahan, 2003) rather than view their professional improvement individualistically (Webb, Robertson, & Fluck, 2005). Effective professional learning which impacts teacher practice promotes collaboration, actionable goals, the use of student data, ongoing support in communities of practice and galvanising for both individual and collective accountability (Darling-Hammond & Richardson, 2009; Wenger, 1998).

Kennedy (2015) first acknowledges the field's recent focus on visible practices of teaching (Hattie, 2008) and then argues that the next phase of teacher practice should move beyond Hattie's visible teaching practice and emphasise the *purposes* that teachers have for their practice. In doing so, teachers can gain deeper understandings as to why they have chosen specific pedagogies to address the dynamic and complex environment of the classroom. Kennedy envisions an integrated teacher practice wherein each lesson is an opportunity to address five practice challenges or five persistent problems that require teachers to analyse and evaluate alternative pathways towards classroom-based solutions. Kennedy argues these challenges are universal and cannot be avoided. These five practice challenges are as follows: *portraying the curriculum* by lifting the curriculum out of standards and textbooks to provide experiences and questions to make it comprehensible to students; *enlisting student participation* by ensuring students understand the content of their learning, relate new knowledge within a context, see the knowledge as relevant and remember what they have learned; *exposing student thinking* to uncover what students understand, do not understand and misunderstand; *containing student behaviour* within a classroom culture of safety and belonging, in addition to helping students manage distractions; and *accommodating to the personal needs* of the teacher to address the first four problems in ways that is consistent with their own values, personalities and needs in order to bolster teacher self-efficacy within their work.

Given Kennedy's helpful prompts for teachers to emphasise these five challenges of practice pedagogy, the next step was to gain understandings of how the TIPE model, as a practice pedagogy intervention, could assist teachers in evolving their current practice to better support their struggling students. This study rested on the assumptions that TIPE might revision the purpose that teachers derived from their practice, and it would also enable teachers to develop context-specific strategies to better equip their students for learning.

Given the special context of trauma-affected classrooms and the desire to contribute new knowledge to the paradigms of trauma-informed and wellbeing-informed teacher practice, the current study addresses the following questions:

(1) In what ways do teachers shift their own practice pedagogy when learning about trauma-informed positive education?
(2) How do changes that teachers make to their practice increase their capacity to address the five emerging challenges within the teacher practice literature?

Methods

Participants

The study followed participant teachers ($N = 18$) from two Government schools. The researchers followed this sequence as outlined in the research ethics agreements approved by both the University of Melbourne's Human Research Ethics Committee and the Victorian Department of Education. Principals were contacted who lead schools located in communities within the lowest quartile of the state's socio-economic indicators.

Research site one was a small primary school serving a rural community about 150 kilometres from a large metropolitan city. With classrooms ranging from Foundation to Year 6, nine teachers (seven women: two men; ages 22–51) had between 1 and 17 years of teaching experience, and averaged 12.2 years at this school. Within this cohort, the

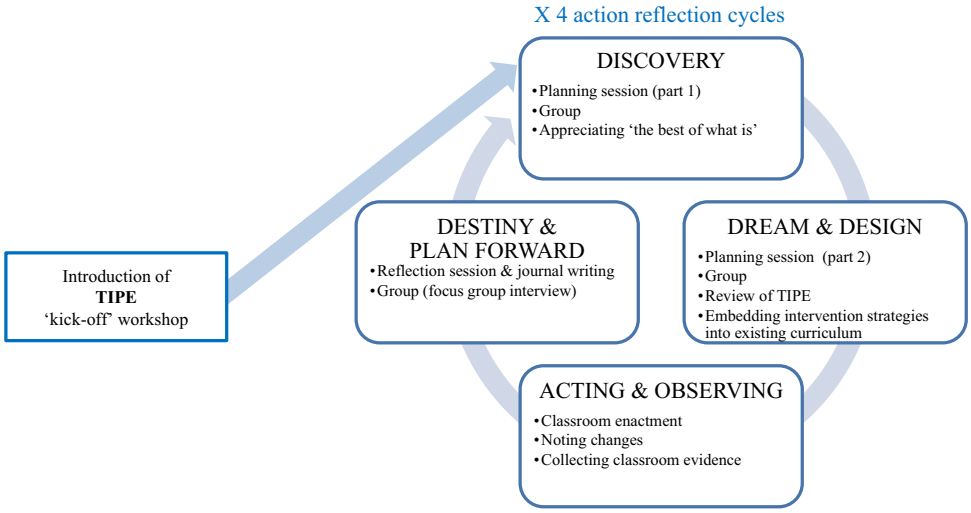

Fig. 1 Appreciative inquiry participatory action research cycle

entire teaching staff from this small school was represented, and all teachers taught the full range of primary school subjects including literacy, mathematics and a range of other specialist subjects (i.e. science, art, physical education). Of the students in this school, 24% were of Aboriginal descent, 30% were known to the Department of Health and Human Services and 72% of families were in the lowest quartile in the state's socio-economic status indicators.

Research site two was a large (Foundation to Year 12) school serving an outer suburb located in a growth corridor of a metropolitan city. The participating teachers were middle-years classroom teachers (Years 5 through 8). Nine teachers (six women: three men; ages 22–32) had between 1 and 6 years of teaching experience, and averaged 1.8 years at this school. Most teachers taught single subjects (e.g. literacy or mathematics) to multiple student cohorts, three teachers taught both core subjects to a single cohort and three teachers also held leadership roles within the school. Of the students in this school, 42% had a language background other than English, and 40% of families were in the lowest quartile in the state's socio-economic status indicators.

Research Tools

Group interviews were preferred for data collection in this study because they made good use of time and other resources, produced cumulative and elaborative data and were potentially stimulating for participants through group recall and shared reflection (Fontana & Frey, 2000). Further, group interaction encouraged the vigorous exchange of questions, anecdotes, new learnings and differing points of view amongst participants (Howell, 2013). The questions within the interview groups were derived from the two research questions: (1) In what ways did teachers shift their own practice pedagogy after learning the intervention? (2) How did these changes help them address the challenges within their own practice? Written journals were also kept by participants and were completed before and after group interviews. All recordings and journal entries were fully transcribed for data analysis.

Procedures

Rationale for Procedures

The data for the present study were collected over 11 months, comprehensively from the start to end of the school year. Each school term, teachers learned about a new TIPE domain within the sequential model and were asked to (1) consider which TIPE interventions they felt were most applicable to their specific cohort of students, (2) reflect upon which TIPE interventions were most feasible to implement given the time frames of the school terms and (3) co-design their classroom curricular objectives with peer teachers within professional-learning groups comprised of either year-level teams or subject matter teams within each school site. Framed by the paradigm of positive psychology and positive education, appreciative inquiry participatory action research (AIPAR) was selected as an appropriate method due to its privileging professional practice while giving participants multiple opportunities to learn, envision, implement and reflect as practitioners (Ludema & Fry, 2008; Zandee & Cooperrider, 2008) and to encourage collective teacher efficacy (Eells, 2011; Goddard, Hoy, & Hoy, 2000).

Figure 1 illustrates the research design. Based on the trauma-informed literatures (Brunzell et al., 2016b), this first 'kick-off' workshop exposed teachers to trauma-informed

Table 1 Trauma-informed positive education (TIPE) strategies actioned by teachers

Axial codes	Attachment	Unconditional positive regard	Empathy	Active constructive responding	Identifying emotional intelligence	Values	Character strengths	Positive emotions	Kindness	Resilient self-talk strategies	Growth mindset	Hope	Flow
	Co-regulation	Separate student from their behaviour	Power	Bucket and dipper shout-outs	Using emotional intelligence in relationships	Values to anchor triage meetings	Strengths to anchor triage meetings	Positive primers	Gratitude		Stamina	Goal setting	Engagement
	Mirror behaviour Attunement Belonging Meeting unmet needs	Unconditional neutral regard	Loyalty Giving of yourself					Play, humour, and fun	Savouring		Persistence		
Secondary selective codes	Attachment	Unconditional positive regard	Dynamic relational qualities	Relational reinforcement	Emotional intelligence	Values	Character strengths	Positive emotion primers	Experiencing positive primers	Resilience	Growth mindset	Goals	Flow
Primary selective codes	Nurturing relational capacities				Increasing psychological resources for wellbeing								

practice approaches to plan classroom strategies and application based upon their new learning. Teachers were given copies of the research summaries in the form of presentation slides and session planning pages.

Following this first workshop, teachers participated in two more meetings in each of the four school terms (ranging between 2- and 6-h each meeting) where they were audio-recorded in semi-structured group interviews. Within each of these cycles (one cycle in each of the four school terms), teachers continued to learn the sequentially designed TIPE. In each new term's first session (occurring at the beginning of the term), teachers were exposed to new literatures and given workshop time to discuss and collaboratively plan for the term ahead through cycles of the *discovery* (i.e. 'appreciating what is') and *dream* phases (i.e. 'imagining what might be').

The second meeting each term (occurring at the end of the term), teachers were provided with opportunities to participate in the *reflect* and *design* phases to open the dialogue with teachers to 'determine what should be' (Zandee & Cooperrider, 2008). After reflecting on teacher-collected classroom data on student achievement and behaviour, teachers selected the topics and actions most pertinent and most feasible to carry out in their classrooms for the following term.

Analytic Plan

Data reduction of group interview and participant journals occurred through an iterative, inductive process detailed as follows: several re-readings of all transcriptions including participant member checking of transcriptions, followed by two additional independent auditors (e.g. professional peers of the researchers) to increase internal confirmability (Guba & Lincoln, 1989) and intercoder agreement (Ryan & Bernard, 2000). NVivo data analysis software was used to identify, label, sort and categorise unique data themes. The analytical strategy of interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA; Smith, 1996), an adaptation of qualitative content analysis, was employed as an appropriate way to study participant experience to prioritise their phenomenological meanings ascribed to their own actions and reflections (Larkin, Watts, & Clifton, 2006).

Results

Within the raw data, 40 unique themes were identified through open-coding categorisation. An iterative process was followed (i.e. member checking, peer checking, etc.) to note potential researcher bias resulting from a priori theory. Next, 35 codes were brought forward as axial codes to reflect patterns and relationships, 13 secondary selective codes were present based upon the actions teachers selected in the AIPAR cycles and for discussion, two primary selective codes were determined as they were the most frequently mentioned themes within the study (see Table 1). Deriving these themes followed recommendations for inductive qualitative procedures (Miles & Huberman, 1984; Taylor-Powell & Renner, 2003).

Within the following section, two emergent themes are presented using teachers' own perspectives and voices.[1] A full discussion of all themes is beyond the scope of this report. Instead, themes were selected based upon a theme's frequency across participants. However, due to the idiographic nature of the chosen IPA method, selected themes were also included to account for particular relevance to a specific participant's experience. For theme (1) *build classroom relationships*, the following two sub-themes were included for the present discussion: attachment and unconditional positive regard. For theme (2) *increasing psychological resources for wellbeing*, the following four sub-themes were included for the present discussion: character strengths, growth mindset, reaching goals and flow.

Theme 1: Build Classroom Relationships

In order to build classroom relationships with struggling students, teachers could choose specific behaviours that would facilitate attachment and would communicate to the student that the teacher truly saw them as a human being, worthy of their positive care and attention no matter what may have occurred in the classroom. Arising from the data were co-occurring themes of how teachers were designing their classes to build attachment with struggling students by framing their interactions through unconditional positive regard. The teachers discussed how both themes were necessary when working with students who had prior patterns of testing teacher/student and student/student relationships as a way to maintain self-concept, to meet their own needs in unproductive ways, or to divert from learning tasks.

Attachment and Unconditional Positive Regard

All teachers (100% of participants) in this study discussed the ways in which they employed strategies of attachment

[1] A third theme emerged from the study: "Increasing self-regulation in trauma-affected students". Due to the significant nature of these findings and the limitations within the scope of the current report, please see (Brunzell, Stokes, & Waters, 2016a) for in-depth exploration and analysis of this theme.

and unconditional positive regard in their classrooms.[2] Teachers mutually agreed that it was not easy to build attachment and have unconditional positive regard for students who resisted relational interactions. They believed that when students outwardly rejected teacher support in the classroom, this resistance could be interpreted as testing the commitment of the teacher to see the student unconditionally. Carole, who taught senior secondary students in both vocational classrooms and within a flexible learning classroom for trauma-affected students, told a story that illustrated how difficult it could be for her to attach to a disruptive student with complex needs resulting from a history of family trauma and an Asperger's syndrome diagnosis. Carole recalled:

> He's very demanding, and I have said to him, "I don't want to talk to you right now, you're annoying me," and I'm a bit ashamed of that—but I've said it. The more I get frustrated, it creates a bit of hatred for the kid, a bit of animosity and not the greatest relationship.

Carole continued by recounting that in the prior week, she saw this student in the yard and took an opportunity to go over and sit next to him, side-by-side, shoulder to shoulder and eye level. The physical positioning of teacher to student was a repeated topic in the discussion groups with teachers. In order to attach to students who did not already have relational skills, the teacher's own body position was significant in the dynamic interactions of relationship building. Carole continued discussing a side-by-side, shoulder-to-shoulder interaction:

> He was at recess on an iPad and just on his own, and I sat down next to him at his level, and I found out that we have the same birthday…and I found out all these cool facts about him.

Carole reflected that, 'He really wasn't the bad kid that I thought he was', and she admitted she had to actively consider unconditional positive regard in the light of his complex social and learning needs, and in order to effectively use unconditional positive regard as a strategy, she needed to find some way to anchor him positively into her own mindset.

Teachers began to use attachment strategies (i.e. co-regulating students through body positioning and using vocal prosody to de-escalate students) in times of heightened moments of student anger and dysregulation. Mike discussed how one of his Year 5 students had a temper tantrum in the middle of the lesson because the student could not finish the classwork:

> We had [student] walking around the classroom, pushing chairs over, turning the big tables to the ground, and not able to talk at all. The only I thing I could think to do was to stay side-by-side and reassure him, it's going to be alright, and I was there to help him calm down.

Mike continued to explain how the relationship he had built with the student paid off in moments like these when he was finally able to talk the student out the classroom. Instead of a lecture on discipline or a confrontational meeting, Mike took the boy out onto the field and they threw a rugby ball (i.e. building self-regulation through patterned, repetitive, rhythmic activity in a relational context), while talking through the incident. Here, Mike's attachment moves (staying with the student, shoulder to shoulder, using a calm voice) were co-regulating the student. Attachment as a regulatory strategy helped de-escalate students in the safety of a trusted relationship while assisting their body to build self-regulation in times of emotional arousal. Eventually, the student was brought inside for a restoration meeting with Mike and the other co-teacher.

The ongoing reflection of these teachers helped explore the challenges of moving from theory to strategy in practice. It was an easy step for teachers to understand the principles of why it was important to build classroom relationships through strategies like deliberately planning micro-moments to talk to students, using attachment moves to co-regulate and de-escalate students and framing students through unconditional positive regard. However, the procedure of this study allowed for reflective practice sessions for teachers to uncover how difficult it can be when students resist teacher moves to strengthen classroom relationships with these trauma-informed pedagogical strategies.

Theme 2: Increasing Psychological Resources for Wellbeing

The next theme, increasing psychological resources for wellbeing, explored the practical strategies trauma-informed teachers used to implement wellbeing-informed pedagogies to support students in making and sustaining positive classroom behaviours for learning. As suggested in the TIPE model, each one of these themes followed similar implementation pathways in the participatory appreciative inquiry action research procedure: first, teachers taught the specific topic (i.e. character strengths, growth mindset, etc.) in deliberate moments integrated with classroom instruction. Next, teachers reinforced these topics through daily interaction and review throughout the school term. When teachers needed to assist a student in a difficult situation, teachers called on the concept again in order to respond to negative or off-task student behaviour in a *follow-up conversation* (i.e. a one-to-one conversation between teacher and student) to promote student insight and self-reflection for the future. Teachers were able to adapt intervention ideas within their classrooms in order to assist students to connect their new learning in the service of positive classroom interactions.

[2] Amongst the 18 original participants, two teachers dropped out of the study after the first term of the school year when they vacated their positions in their schools.

Character Strengths

Twelve teachers (67% of participants) chose to incorporate character strengths as an action research goal. Teachers hypothesised in the design process that their struggling, trauma-affected students might show increases in positive behaviour if those students were given opportunities to envision their own their classroom as a place that (1) validated the character strengths within each student, (2) provided opportunities to practise those strengths, and (3) was reminded of character strengths within follow-up one-to-one conversations. The teachers mutually agreed that none of their trauma-affected students had been given opportunities to discover, identify or be able to articulate their specific character strengths.

Jenny introduced the character strengths to her Year 8 class. She designed a lesson where her students were asked to reflect on which strengths they identified with the most, and to put them in a ranking order. After the lesson was finished, Jenny reflected:

> It was probably one of the best lessons for the whole entire year. They sorted the twenty-four strengths on a scale rating them one to four based upon how they valued each strength. They got to identify strengths in others. The vibe in the room completely changed.

Jenny recalled her cohort of students needed an intervention to promote positive relationships and a culture of belonging to support the learning. She reflected that the students' focus shifted once each member of the class had the opportunity to reveal their character strengths and the language of the character strengths positively primed student interactions to spot the strengths in one another. She noticed daily increases in positive behaviour, particularly in student peer interactions.

The introduction of the character strengths occurred within terms three and four, the second half of the school year. At this later stage of the year, teachers remarked how certain students began to make better behaviour choices in classrooms when the students felt the teachers recognised their strengths. They discussed the need to ensure all students knew their character strengths, and as illustrated above by Jenny, teachers continually found that their most vulnerable students were surprised to find that they indeed had a unique set of character strengths inside of themselves.

Growth Mindset

Thirteen teachers (72.2% of participants) employed growth mindset as a specific strategy in their academic lessons. First, teachers discussed the possible ways to bolster academic curriculum learning by teaching students about a growth mindset. Maddie introduced the growth mindset strategy to her Years 5 and 6 class that she co-designed with her colleagues. Her action research goal arose from her concerns that her students were putting forth a growth mindset in literacy. However, when it came time for numeracy lessons, her students quickly gave up and had great difficulty completing assignments that she had diligently differentiated to their specific achievement levels.

She decided that every Friday for 1 month, she would give students a creative task before the numeracy lesson. She explained 'My kids are very visual and physical, so they need to be able to experience something rather than be told'. At the beginning of this activity, she put a ball of [modelling dough] on each student's desk and then projected a picture of a horse on the screen. She recalled, 'I asked each student if they thought they could or couldn't make a horse and recorded it on my laptop. Six students straight out said, 'Nah, I can't do it!' and I had about 15 students who said that they could'. Then, she gave them 3 min which was timed to build anticipation and urgency.

Maddie noticed that her students were immediately energised (i.e. by participating in a positive primer, a deliberate activity or game which generated positive emotions), and she continued with these activities every Friday for the next 3 weeks. Maddie saw a direct improvement watching her class approach the mathematics lessons with a growth mindset:

> I've now got results to prove that even though there are major social and traumatic backgrounds, they can all actually see that [their ability] is not set in stone. Showing them that things can change is really important to them.

Although this activity was amongst her first attempts to track the effects of teaching with a growth mindset, Maddie observed significant changes in her classroom culture. Students were more willing to begin the numeracy lessons, and they were more likely to finish their classwork. Their self-talk began to incorporate the terms 'growth' and 'fixed' when Maddie had mini-conferences with specific students to assist their work completion.

The teachers who prioritised growth mindset as an action research goal collaboratively worked together in order to implement their adapted activities for their unique student cohorts. Teachers noticed increases in minutes on-task, increases in positive student language within the classroom and increases in time spent on accomplishing academic aims, rather than managing distraction and disruptive student interactions.

Reaching Goals Through Flow

The teachers mutually concurred that successfully identifying and reaching academic goals represented considerable effort for some trauma-affected students who struggled in past years to be successful learners. At the primary school

participating in this study, the teachers collectively agreed upon building the reading stamina of their entire student population as a whole-school goal. The teachers discussed how reading was a priority area of improvement in their annual improvement plan.

Given that only seven teachers (38.9% of participants) deliberately integrated concepts of goal setting and flow in their classrooms, this subtheme was included in the present findings because all seven teachers worked together within the same small campus, representing 100% of the teaching staff at the school. Within the appreciative inquiry participatory action research sessions, they collaborated on classroom tools to increase stamina for reading. First, the school realigned its whole-school schedule in the mornings to prioritise morning exercise groups to increase student self-regulation, followed by independent reading block before the literacy period. In addition, the teachers continued discussions on how to ensure other principles of flow were being met.

The following sequence describes how flow principles were incorporated into reading lessons: Student's skill level matched the task at hand (i.e. teachers were required to complete regular reading assessment and reading conferences for each student). The task had clear goals which were motivating for both the individual and the group (i.e. daily on-task goals that were achievable and galvanising by setting up clear expectations with goal-setting charts which looked like thermometers tracking minutes on-task, journals to record reading strategies, reading calendars to plan and celebrate the completion of books and motivating rewards for whole-class goal attainment such as a whole-class game on Friday afternoons). There were clear and fair rules to define the task (i.e. the importance of teachers brainstorming what excellent reading stamina looked like and how to support peers). The task completely absorbed the student's concentration (i.e. teachers ensured that each student had a high-interest texts and/or time taken to build a student's interest and investment in the text). Teachers committed to give students timely feedback on their reading by scheduling each student in the class on a fortnightly reading conference schedule.

Teachers shared how they needed to work together to teach independent reading using a TIPE approach. John explained:

> We started each day by setting a goal on the reading stamina chart. I really did have students who would only read for one-minute. They set their first goal at 15 minutes, but they didn't even get to five minutes obviously.

John continued by sharing that his class reflected on why they achieved less than 5 min. While they celebrated that success, they brainstormed strategies that would help them reach their first goal of 15 min.

Although it was only these teachers' first attempt to build reading stamina through the principles of flow and successful goal attainment, the teachers were galvanised by their student data. They continually shared evidence of their student's reading levels increasing as measured by their in-class reading assessments. As students progressed through each year level school, teachers wanted the commitment of their leadership and their teaching peers to refine the strategies they had created. By the end of the year, these teachers reported that their students' reading levels had climbed to over 2 years of achievement in just 1 year (which was more than the prior year when teachers looked back at their prior year's data).

In this study, teachers changed their practice within two umbrella themes: nurturing relational capacity and increasing psychological resources for wellbeing. The findings can also be summarised by the following three new learnings: (1) TIPE was infused into practice as both teacher strategies and classroom activities, (2) TIPE was used to alter curriculum to address student need (i.e. reaching goals through flow for independent reading) and (3) time was a factor in how/when the TIPE concepts were integrated into teacher practice.

Discussion

The emergent results in the present study have shown that participating teachers were able to shift their own practice pedagogy when learning about trauma-informed positive education (TIPE; Brunzell et al., 2016b). The results were further analysed to show the ways in which teachers' actions within cycles of appreciative inquiry participatory action research (AIPAR; Ludema & Fry, 2008; Zandee & Cooperrider, 2008) were able to shift their practice as they contended with five persistent challenges arising within the teacher practice literature (Kennedy, 2015). Given the dynamic and complex nature of the unmet needs of trauma-affected students, teachers felt more able to help students meet these needs in the face of classroom adversity when learning new academic content.

Kennedy (2015) positions teacher practice as five dynamic challenges for teachers. Each of these challenges provides teachers with opportunities to assess and understand student need and to select pedagogical strategies to empower student learning. By focusing on these five teacher challenges, as opposed to teacher behaviours, teachers are encouraged to reframe their practice decisions as attempt to meet these challenges.

Challenge 1: Portraying the Curriculum

Within the sessions, teachers agreed that curriculum was indeed a priority, and they used TIPE strategies to portray their curriculum in more effective ways. Although the state's curriculum standards dictated the *what* of curriculum, teachers felt a great deal of freedom from their schools to decide the *how* of curriculum. Teachers identified the greatest challenge to portray the curriculum effectively for struggling students had to do with overcoming student resistance at the *start* of lessons. Teachers observed that struggling students gave up before the introduction of new learning, and teachers needed strategies both to address the curricular aims as relevant to student goals.

Growth mindset (Dweck & Leggett, 1988; Dweck, 2006) was quickly integrated into curriculum planning once teachers were introduced to the concept. Some teachers portrayed their weekly curriculum through a growth mindset lens (i.e. 'Today, we will be using our growth mindset to revise our essays. Looking at the writing rubric, in which point of the success criteria do you need to intentionally use your growth mindset?') Further, some teachers felt that a growth mindset focused allowed them to reframe their initial expectations through a lens of effort, and the celebration of small, daily steps of effort that students made towards learning the curriculum.

Character strengths also provided robust opportunities to portray the curriculum. Character strengths can be an important resource in thoughts, feelings and behaviours (Park et al., 2004) and used for adolescent goal setting (Proyer, Sidler, Weber, & Ruch, 2012). When using character strengths to introduce an approach to tackling new learning (i.e. 'So, today, we are going to use our strengths of *courage* and *curiosity* to solve this problem'.), or connecting a student's own character strengths to set learning goals, teachers found benefit and helpful novelty to use character strengths as a bridge between a student's internal resources and the confidence to use their character strengths as new strategy.

Challenge 2: Enlisting Student Participation

TIPE revisioned teacher practice as a relationally mediated practice. In this way, teachers enlisted the participation of struggling students within the relational context of the classroom. Strong student–teacher relationships predict student achievement (Cornelius-White, 2007; Roffey, 2013), increase levels of engagement (Klem & Connell, 2004) and form the foundation of trauma-informed pedagogies (Bloom, 1995; Downey, 2007; Wolpow et al., 2009). When exposed to literatures concerning the therapeutic principles of relationships (Bowlby, 1971; Crittenden, 2008), trauma-informed strategies to repair disrupted attachment (Ludy-Dobson & Perry, 2010; Schore, 2012) and literatures on practitioner self-care and trauma-stewardship (van Dernoot Lipsky, 2009), the teachers then considered ways in which these theories were relevant to their own students. Through classroom moves based upon attachment (Bowlby, 1971; Crittenden, 2008) and unconditional positive regard (Rogers, 1961), teachers witnessed growing relational strength in their students and in themselves, and teachers attributed a greater sense of student participation within their classrooms because of these robust relational bonds.

Finally, greater student participation was noticed through the integration of flow (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990, 1997) and goal setting (Snyder, 2002; Snyder et al., 1997; Marques et al., 2011) within some classrooms to build stamina for independent reading (Witter, 2013). These results argue that together, the TIPE approaches to relationships and goal setting were all perceived as increasing student participation and engagement for new learning. These strategies provided teachers with effective tools to address the challenge of enlisting student participation from a strengths-based perspective, particularly for a student cohort with prior experiences of punishment, exclusion and rejection of classroom participation.

Challenge 3: Exposing Student Thinking

TIPE provided specific tools to increase teachers' ability to address the practice challenge of exposing student thinking. Teachers shared their perceptions that trauma-affected students were easily triggered when faced with new learning. This increased student arousal quickly became frustration and panic which resulted in negative and explosive student behaviours. TIPE offered practical strategies to specifically expose student thinking about their own personal triggers that thwarted learning.

Further, teachers also employed the teaching and learning of emotional intelligence, the skills to identify and utilise accurate reasoning about one's emotional life (Mayer, Roberts, & Barsade, 2008) which enhances student flourishing (Waters, 2014). Students and their teachers must specifically understand difficult emotions which arise in learning to nurture psychological wellbeing (Ryff, 1989). The findings of this study suggest that TIPE teacher practice, which integrates the teaching of emotional intelligence, helps students understand the heated and difficult emotions which arise when encountering new challenges and the potential fear of having one's ignorance exposed to one's peers.

Some teachers taught resilient self-talk strategies (Reivich & Shatté, 2002) to expose student thinking about the sources of classroom adversity. TIPE encourages teachers to reframe resilience as a set of strategies that focus on the cognitively mediated process of explanatory style, which is the person's

own way of making sense of both positive and negative experiences (Peterson & Steen, 2009). Acknowledging that trauma-affected students often hold a pervasive and pessimistic explanatory style (Bunce, Larsen, & Peterson, 1995; Cerezo & Frias, 1994), some teachers observed that once their students were explicitly taught to identify and practise a resilient mindset, students were more able to voice their frustrations in productive and proactive ways.

Challenge 4: Containing Student Behaviour

Trauma-informed teacher practices (Bloom, 1995; Downey, 2007; Wolpow et al., 2009) advocate the need to reinforce positive behaviours within the classroom. Wellbeing-informed pedagogies (Norrish et al., 2013; Seligman et al., 2009; Waters, 2011, 2014; Waters & Stokes, 2013) advocate for making student connections between positive behaviours and their own wellbeing. Beyond recognition of when a student has made a positive choice (i.e. to finish classwork, to de-escalate a heightened situation, to restore a ruptured relationship, etc.), teachers can take many more actions throughout the school day to harness opportunities to frame and reframe positive reinforcement.

The results of this study suggest that the teacher practice challenge of containing student behaviour through TIPE consists of a multi-layered approach to specifically address the complex behaviours that trauma-affected students present in the classroom. However, Kennedy's (2015, p. 12) label of 'containing' student behaviour may not help teachers meet this practice challenge in a trauma-affected classrooms. Kennedy's review of containment includes a system of standardised rules for behaviour in the classroom and teacher moves to prevent distracting behaviours. While both of these teacher practices are well established in the literature, TIPE argues for specific emphasis placed upon the teaching and reinforcement of positive behaviours, and this turn implies that TIPE teachers must address the practice challenge by deliberately teaching, noticing and celebrating the positive behaviour choices that struggling students make.

Challenge 5: Accommodating Personal Need

The final teacher practice challenge is described as accommodating the personal needs of the teacher's own personalities and desires for personal growth and wellbeing (Kennedy, 2015). Throughout the study's action research orientation and the focus on TIPE, teachers were given multiple opportunities to first reflect on themselves as educators and practitioners in a professional sense. Teachers discussed at length their need to feel empowered in their own relational skills in trauma-affected classrooms. A key theme in the data was that, as a result of the TIPE intervention, teachers were now using strategies to stay calm and be centred by noticing their own triggers, building relationships and setting goals to increase their own psychological resources as practice goals. Teachers were encouraged through the intervention to meet the practice challenge of accommodating their personal needs in a trauma-informed context.

The results of the study also replicated and extended existing literatures that teacher practice is enhanced when teachers are empowered to envision their own practice as practitioner researchers (Wells, 2014) working together for collaborative practice change (Strahan, 2003). Rather than seeing their own practice as an isolated or independent work plan, the teachers in this study were given multiple opportunities to reflect on student data, set actionable goals and work towards collective accountability within the AIPAR cycles of teacher learning, reflection and goal setting (Darling-Hammond & Richardson, 2009).

Implications

As a new trauma-informed practice technology, TIPE gives promising direction for educators, teacher educators and school mental health practitioners. By integrating new understandings on trauma's impacts on learning, and those impacts on the ability of students to create strong classroom-based relationships, educators can better understand why students continue to struggle within their classrooms and proactive steps they can take to integrate new literatures from traumatology and wellbeing. For teachers who 'race to academic content' and feel that TIPE strategies take away from learning time, a recommendation of this study is for teachers to reflect: *How much time are you spending trying to get students to maintain focus? How much time is wasted when students struggle to work collaboratively and creatively together?* TIPE gives teachers a shared focal point to reflect on their practice and integrate new ideas to nurture important capacities required for effective learning.

Another key implication is that teachers must be given multiple opportunities to learn and to reflect on their practice pedagogy when attempting to integrate new practice technologies. This study's design included two significant opportunities for teachers to reflect upon their own practice per term (eight times per year). The data suggested that teachers looked forward to the AIPAR meetings because the sessions were (1) a predictable rhythm within their busy schedules, (2) mediated with shared expectations for proactive collaboration and (3) focussed on practical steps which celebrated small successes.

In regard to using TIPE to impact teacher practice at community, state and national systemic levels, the growing evidence base of TIPE practice is critical to the argument that all students in a community can do better if their teachers have a shared practice that is trauma-informed and

wellbeing-informed across the sequential years a student spends in school through to university entry, and/or work and beyond. Employing these early data, researchers and policy makers must share these results with local city councils, teacher educators, philanthropic funders and system leaders with aims of gaining support for continued implementation into training to shift teacher practice. Contributing to the already robust national- and state-level conversations centred on meeting the complex needs of trauma-affected young people, TIPE teacher practice is one important component of many to strengthen a community's response to pressing systemic concerns.

Methodological Considerations

This study privileged the phenomenological experience of teachers while implementing TIPE through appreciative inquiry participatory action research (Larkin et al., 2006) to deeply explore the experiential aspects of planning for and implementing curriculum with TIPE strategies. While generalisable conclusions cannot be made for all trauma-informed teaching, the data suggest that the developmental sequence of first building a classroom which focuses on increasing regulatory abilities and relational capacities lays a strong foundation for building up psychological resources through wellbeing-informed concepts such as character strengths, growth mindset and the like. When implemented, teachers felt more able to shift their practice when supported to build classroom relationships, reinforce positive behaviour and bolster academic curriculum learning with enhanced understandings from the TIPE domains.

Teachers also spoke of another limitation when commenting that there were too many topics to learn and practise within TIPE for one calendar school year. Some teachers believed that they could more effectively action TIPE over a 2-year study which gives valuable recommendations to future researchers and educators. The 11-month design of the present study was one of convenience to practically meet the requests of the principals' consent to participation and agreements with the state's department of education.

Conclusion

This study investigated how teachers educating trauma-affected students explored the TIPE approach through an 11-month appreciative inquiry participatory action research design. Once exposed to the TIPE model, teachers were then asked to design and implement classroom interventions to support the wellbeing and academic needs of their students. Data reduction supported the discussion of two selective themes: nurturing classroom relationships and increasing psychological resources for wellbeing. There is also evidence to confirm that TIPE increased teacher capacity to meet the five emerging challenges within the current teacher practice literature (Kennedy, 2015). Results also suggested that TIPE and appreciative inquiry participatory action research may be a powerful conduit to increase teacher collective teacher efficacy (Eells, 2011; Goddard et al., 2000) to empower consistent practice across an entire school.

This study's new contribution to the fields of traumatology, positive education and the teacher practice literature suggests that teachers who are given opportunities to actively collaborate and co-design their pedagogies through trauma-informed positive education principles felt more empowered as professionals to meet the complex developmental needs of students arising from trauma and other community adversity which impeded vulnerable students' ability to succeed within the classroom. These results call for continued research into trauma-informed positive education and the ways in which schools can systemically embed this approach over time for sustainable changes to teacher practice.

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Compliance with Ethical Standards

Conflict of interest The authors declare that they have no conflict of interests.

Ethical Approval All procedures performed in studies involving human participants were in accordance with the ethical standards of the institutional and/or national research committee and with the 1964 Helsinki declaration and its later amendments or comparable ethical standards.

Informed Consent Informed consent was obtained from all individual participants included in the study.

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