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Supervisors' guidance of PETE students' reflections at practicum: creating conditions for different learning journeys

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ABSTRACT

Physical education teacher education (PETE) students' reflections on their practicums are influenced by how their supervisors guide them. Supervisors often evaluate and discuss PETE students' teaching by guiding their focus on essential aspects to consider. This exploratory case study focuses on how supervisors' guiding styles in reflective conversations affect how PETE students make meaning of their teaching. Reflective practitioners, in this case PETE students, make sense of practical situations from their own perspectives as part of their teaching practice. Supervisors' guidance is essential here, because it can change PETE students' understanding by (re) directing their attention to meaningful aspects when framing their teaching and help them to examine it from new perspectives. However, the findings indicate that supervisors' various guidance affect how PETE students experience their learning journeys during practicum. In this study, the participating PETE students' experiences of practicum differed: either they experienced a controlled journey that restricted their teaching due to predefined rules and condemning attitude toward pupils, or they experienced an adventurous journey that enabled them to find their own paths as a teachers.

Introduction

Reflective practice is constructed in various ways in educational settings with a view turning students to professional reflective practitioners (Schön, 1983). In Sweden's teacher education, student teachers (STs) are educated to reflect on their teaching practice at practicum using the theoretical perspectives they developed knowledge about. At practicum, STs are assigned supervisors who guide them and 'play the most influential role' (Orland-Barak & Wang, 2021, p.86) in their professional growth. However, Russell (2013,2005) claims that STs rarely gain meaningful experiences of being reflective practitioners at practicum. One reason for this is the lack of constructive guidance from their supervisors (see e.g. Tolgfors et al., 2021). Therefore, this study focuses on how supervisors guide physical education teacher education (PETE) students in evaluative discussions to teach (more) wisely and effectively during practicum and how their guidance affects PETE students' learning journeys.

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It has been shown that PETE students value practicum more than academic university-based courses (Amaral-Da-Cunha et al., 2020; Mordal-Moen & Green, 2014; Standal et al., 2014). Thus, practicum is essential because it enables PETE students to gain constructive practical teaching experiences (Russell, 2005). This in turn makes supervisors' guidance critical (Orland-Barak and Wang, 2021), in that it can influence how PETE students experience and reflect on their teaching. During the practicum supervisors, as (more) experienced professionals, are expected to share their reservoir of teaching experiences with STs (Lawson et al., 2015). However, research also indicates that supervisors influence PETE students' experiences in various ways.

First, it varies in terms of what PETE students should focus on, e.g. the technical (Uhrich, 2009) or critical aspects (Ovens & Tinning, 2009) of teaching. Ovens and Tinning (2009) claim that the hegemonic focus tends to be on 'management and control' (p. 1130), which often places pupils' learning in the background and managerial issues in the foreground.

Secondly, research findings vary as to how reflective environments influence PETE students' experiences in practicum. For example, PETE students have sometimes experienced unconstructive reflective environments, especially when their supervisors have a macho culture, talk negatively about pupils' bodies, are sexist or poor role models (A. M. Rossi & Lisahunter, 2013; T. Rossi et al., 2008; Sirna et al., 2010). In such cases the reflective environments are often toxic and lead to PETE students feeling uncomfortable in their supervisors' presence (Sirna et al., 2008).

Other more modest yet undesirable examples from research indicate that PETE students can feel abandoned by supervisors during practicum (Mordal-Moen & Green, 2014), and that supervisors rarely help PETE students to connect the knowledge gained at university to practical teaching situations (Standal et al., 2014). Tolgfors et al. (2021) find that supervisors' views and understandings tend to influence their guidance, as they often encourage PETE students to take a multi-activity approach. Such a focus rarely considers pupils' learning in that PETE students are not explicitly invited to develop and deepen pupils' movement capabilities in a specified activity. For example, PETE students reflected that their teaching often looked like this: 'starting up the lesson, letting the pupils activate themselves and then finishing it off' (Tolgfors et al., 2021, p. 320).

To date, little research has focused on how supervisors' different forms of guidance can influence PETE students' experiences of practicum. In the literature review by Lawson et al. (2015) on STs' practicum, only 10 out of 114 articles focus on STs and their supervisors. Furthermore, Orland-Barak and Wang (2021) state that a thorough understanding of supervisors mentoring approaches is needed. In addition, further research on how supervisors' different mentoring approaches influence PETE students' experiences can shed light on important aspects to consider for teacher education.

Supervisors have a unique function in a practicum context to 'support preservice teachers' learning to teach' (Orland-Barak & Wang, 2021, p. 86), especially as PETE students' experiences and reflections are interrelated (Johansson, 2023), which underlines the potential of gaining educative experiences from practicum. However, this is only possible if students are encouraged to focus on constructive aspects of their teaching. Thus, supervisors can function as catalysts to help PETE students become aware of aspects they have not paid sufficient attention to, and enable them to widen and broaden their experience of the situation (Biesta, 2022).One situation of interest for research on how PETE students make meaning of their experiences during the practicum is the evaluative

discussion that take place with their supervisor after the lessons, which can be understood as a reflective conversation (see Schön, 1983).

Reflective conversations are 'in-depth discussions between individuals with varying levels of experience and knowledge [. . . and] not so much about deliberations on how something is to be done but more about what factors ought to be considered in given circumstances' (Ashraf & Rarieya, 2008, p. 270). Schön (1983) describes practitioners' reflections as having 'a problem in finding the problem' (p. 129) when communicating *with* the situation. This is in line with Chan and Lee's (2021) findings that higher education students have difficulty identifying problems in the practical situations they experience. However, when reflecting on their teaching situations, PETE students can imagine how their actions might affect pupils and, in that sense, do a 'dry run' (Rodgers, 2002, p. 854) of different alternatives. This makes PETE students 'a constitutive part of the situations they are in conversation with' (Biesta, 2019, p. 129), in that they already have preconceived ideas about how their teaching is likely to affect their pupils. This highlights why supervisors are essential for helping students (Hobson et al., 2009), in this case PETE students, to identify (see Chan & Lee, 2021) and (re)frame (Schön, 1983) problems in reflective conversations. Supervisors can (re)direct PETE students' attention to important teaching aspects (Biesta, 2019) and stimulate them to reflect on the aspects they have not noticed (Hobson et al., 2009), simply because they (most likely) have a reservoir of practical experiences to share (Ashraf & Rarieya, 2008; Schön, 1983). Research on supervision in teacher education indicate that the provision of emotional support can help to boost STs' confidence and enable them 'to put difficult experiences into perspectives' (Hobson et al., 2009, p. 209). Research on practicums indicates that supervisors' guidance can be related to four different mentoring approaches (Orland-Barak & Wang, 2021): to stimulate STs' personal growth, to help STs to situate their teaching in the school culture, to develop STs' core teaching competencies, and transform STs to critical thinkers (cf. Orland-Barak & Wang, 2021).

In this article, reflective conversations constitute a case study (Yin, 2018) to explore: 1) how supervisors guide PETE students' reflections on their teaching and 2) how the supervisors' guidance influences PETE students' meaning-making. The purpose of this investigation is to contribute knowledge about reflective conversations in PETE and respond to the call from Orland-Barak and Wang (2021) for further research on how supervisors can enable PETE students to experience their practicums in constructive ways.

Theoretical framework

To explore the influence of supervisors' guidance on reflective conversations, I have 'embraced theor[ies]' (Yin, 2018, p. 35) describing how educators' guidance can influence learners' focus on aspects that are regarded as more important than others. In this endeavour, Biesta's (2022) 'act of pointing' (p. 76) is relevant. This teaching gesture directs learners' attention to certain aspects that can change their understanding of experienced situations. Supervisors can guide PETE students' gaze by pointing in directions that are 'different from where [their] gaze was likely to go next' (Biesta, 2022, p. 77). However, '[. . .] this redirecting is not caused by teaching [in this case guidance] and also cannot be enforced by [guidance], which means that, at most, it can be *evoked* by [guidance]' (Biesta, 2022, p. 77). In reflective conversations, PETE students can 'find what [they] were not

looking for and may receive what [they] did not ask for' (Biesta, 2022, p. 71). The 'act of pointing' cannot foresee what learners focus on, although it does direct their attention to more essential aspects of situations (Biesta, 2023). The purpose of such guidance is to encourage PETE students to become thoughtful and reflective teachers (Biesta, 2019).

The sharpening of learners' attention during supervision can reach a tipping-point and lead to indoctrination (Biesta, 2023), or schooling as Säfström (2020) calls it. Schooling is a controlled form of education that can only reproduce previous values, thoughts and norms. In this study, schooling shapes PETE students based on the external criteria that are created to meet certain requirements when graduating. Hence, schooling is a controlling act that treats PETE students as objects to be formed in particular ways in order to be accepted as teachers. Biesta (2023) states that such forming is not desirable and argues that educators should not, or even cannot, control their learners like this. However, it is necessary to help learners attend to certain aspects of the teaching situation. The romanticisation of educational contexts that emancipates learners and sets them free to explore their surroundings with little or no guidance from educators is not what Biesta (2023) regards as good or desirable education. Hence, there is a continuum between schooling and emancipation, where somewhere along the line supervisors' guidance tips over to an unwanted 'act of pointing'. Both Biesta (2023) and Säfström (2020) are concerned about how educators control their learners, as it rarely enables them to be emancipated. Säfström (2020) claims that emancipation is essential for stimulating new ideas and for changing understandings, values and norms in education. To achieve this, learners require a break from educators' control. Emancipation in this article is synonymous with PETE students being treated as autonomous teachers by their supervisors.

Following Säfström's (2020) rationale, encouraging PETE students to become autonomous, judicious and responsible teachers requires supervisors to loosen their control over them. Biesta (2019, 2022) argues that educators should stimulate learners' reflective thinking when experiencing new situations, because what is experienced as a result of minimum or thoughtful reflection differs. Hence, educators who stimulate learners' thoughtfulness by asking questions can energise their search for alternative actions that sharpen their arguments (Biesta, 2023; Dewey, 2018). However, such an approach can make supervisors' guidance less controllable, in that they cannot foresee what PETE students will focus on or how they will teach in upcoming situations. Accordingly, an interpretation of Biesta (2022) is that all students' learning journeys are *adventures*. No-one, not even the students themselves, can know where their thoughts will lead them. Hence, supervisors' uncontrolled guidance may seem irresponsible and risky (see Chan & Lee, 2021). However, giving PETE students the freedom to decide their own teaching can also make them responsible for it, which may encourage them to reflect on it and open the way for an unfolding of their understandings, values and norms, which in turn will enable them to understand teaching situations differently.

In the study, the schooling-emancipation continuum enabled me to examine supervisors' 'acts of pointing' in reflective conversations and to present how their actions related to these two endpoints. However, in order to describe how the PETE students' experiences influenced their meaning-making, Dewey's (2015) concept of experience was also embraced (Yin, 2018). Dewey (2015) claims that there is a difference between experiencing and having *an* experience. Having an experience widens and broadens

the meaning of the experienced teaching, which can help PETE students in their future work, and he distinguishes between three different kinds of experiences: educative, non-educative and mis-educative.

Educative experience broaden 'the field of experience and knowledge [. . .] and leads in a constructive direction' (Rodgers, 2002, p. 847). *Non-educative experiences* stagnate PETE students' further growth of experiences and do not broaden or widen their understanding of experienced teaching situations. *Mis-educative experiences* widen and broaden PETE students' experiences in undesirable ways, and can lead to unwanted teaching habits. As experiences and reflections are interrelated and situated (Dewey, 2018), PETE students' experiences can direct their focus when reflecting, and vice versa. Hence, reflective conversations are essential for (re)directing their focus in ways that enhance *educative experiences*.

Method

The reflective conversations that constitute the exploratory case study (Cohen et al., 2018, p. 377; Yin, 2018, p. 35) in this article indicate how the supervisors' various 'acts of pointing' control and influence the PETE students' meaning-making in their practicums. To do this, qualitative empirical material has been gathered and used to identify the different nuances in the supervisors' guidance and in the PETE students' meaning-making.

Participants

Two male supervisors and two male PETE students out of five possible pairs of supervisors and PETE students participated in the study. One PETE student's supervisor declined to participate, which meant they were excluded. Two other PETE students had their practicum in other parts of the country, which made it difficult for me to visit them to the extent required for the study. In this article, the participating PETE students are called Mike and John. Both students took their last practicum course before graduating at a university in Sweden. Mike's supervisor was a licensed teacher, but not in the subject of physical education (PE), while John's supervisor was a licensed PE teacher. Mike had his practicum at a secondary school, and John had his at an upper secondary school.

Generating the empirical material

The generation of the empirical material was done in three steps:

First, I observed the PETE students' lessons on three occasions in their usual environments to 'get a feel' (Cohen et al., 2018, p. 551) for their teaching. During the observations I took field notes of the teaching situations in which they instructed or interacted with the pupils. Participants in reflective conversations need to have experienced the same set of circumstances when discussing them with each other (Crow & Smith, 2005, p. 494). Thus, it was important to observe the same authentic teaching situations as the PETE students and their supervisors experienced. The observations were used as background material to support my understanding and interpretations of the supervisors' guidance in the reflective conversations.

Secondly, I recorded the reflective conversations on all three occasions to gain insights into how controlling the supervisors' 'acts of pointing' were and how they influenced the PETE students' experiences. As part of their supervisory duties, the supervisors were expected to have formal reflective conversations with the PETE students after their lessons, which were regarded as natural features of their school day. However, as my presence at them and recording of them were not natural features, I said that I was interested in their reflections and nothing more. Although, in some of the conversations I did get involved and was able to ask follow-up questions.

Finally, I conducted in-depth, semi-structured interviews (Cohen et al., 2018) with the PETE students after the practicum period. In these interviews, the focus was on what they had found meaningful in their practicums and in the reflective conversations with their supervisors.

Analysis

Initially, the analysis focused on the reflective conversations by examining the supervisors' 'acts of pointing' and discerning whether they: 1) asked questions, 2) explained what they usually did in similar teaching situations or 3) instructed the PETE students to teach in particular ways by pointing to 'what worked'. Depending on whether the supervisors asked questions, explained or instructed, and how the PETE students responded to their guidance, I examined how the supervisors' 'acts of pointing' were constituted. The supervisors' most dominating and influential acts of pointing enabled me to determine where their guidance lay on the schooling-emancipation continuum. For example, asking PETE students how they taught was perceived as less controlling than instructing them about what had worked. Finally, the dominating and influential 'acts of pointing' are presented in the results section. More 'acts of pointing' may have been identified if a zoomed-in approach had been used.

In the second step, the in-depth interviews were analysed by focusing on how the PETE students experienced their practicums in general, and the reflective conversations in particular, in order to understand their meaning-making. This analysis focused on the larger tendencies in their descriptions of their experiences to identify the dominating features of their learning journeys. In this second step, Dewey's concepts of educative/non-educative/mis-educative experiences, combined with the schooling-emancipation continuum, were used, which enabled me to describe the most prominent and decisive experiences. Hence, the analysis was reflexive (Cohen et al., 2018), in that the reflective conversations were reanalysed based on the insights gained from the in-depth interviews.

Ethical considerations

The participants gave their written consent to take part in the study before it began. In addition, I asked them on every occasion I visited their classroom whether they agreed to my presence, and that it was acceptable to observe and later record the reflective conversations. I also informed them about the possibility to withdraw their participation at any time. Furthermore, I treated the participants' statements with care so as to not reveal their identity or the school's location. After the analysis, I archived the empirical material (Swedish Research Council, 2017).

Results

In this section, the supervisors' four dominant 'acts of pointing' are described by relating them to the schooling-emancipation continuum. John's and Mike's most prominent and decisive experiences of their practicums are also described.

The restrained and constructive 'act of pointing'

The restrained and constructive 'act of pointing' (re)directed the PETE students' attention to aspects they had not paid much attention to in their teaching situations. Restraint related to the supervisors' low-key approach when guiding the PETE students by asking questions that (re)framed the situations discussed in their reflective conversations. Constructiveness related to the supervisors' finding aspects that the PETE students had not yet reflected on.

John's supervisor was reserved in their reflective conversations in that he asked questions rather than explaining how John should teach. Furthermore, the supervisor pointed to aspects of John's teaching that John had not yet reflected on, which seemed to stimulate his thinking. John was asked how to direct the pupils' attention to meaningful aspects, for example when teaching gymnastics. John reflected that he could do as he did when teaching ballgames and use central concepts when communicating with the pupils to stimulate their awareness of how to move to create time and space when playing (Reflective conversation 1, John). In their second reflective conversation, John presented five concepts to use when communicating with pupils in gymnastics, which were: timing, power, speed, position and gravitation. The concepts were intended to help pupils to identify essential aspects of the movements being explored. Another aspect that was highlighted was when John presented his session of four gymnastics lessons to the supervisor, which included showing pupils different exercises and allowing them to choose two or three of them as challenges in the last lesson. However, John did not present a detailed plan of the lessons in the middle of the session, which the supervisor picked up on and asked him about. John reflected on this and said:

> I think it would be appropriate in lesson 3 to pair the pupils up so that they can peer-assess their chosen movements. In lesson two, the focus could be on identifying which movements to choose. This might already have happened in lesson one, but in lesson two they can start the real process of practising them. In that way they will be more prepared for the peer assessment process Reflective conversation 2, John.

The supervisor's restrained and constructive 'act of pointing' seemed to stimulate John's thoughtfulness, in that he was treated as an autonomous and responsible teacher, which made him evaluate his teaching more thoroughly. Another identified 'act of pointing' that was more controlled and more *direct* is presented below.

The direct and technical 'act of pointing'

The supervisors' direct and technical 'act of pointing' limited the PETE students' focus on specific aspects, in that they only pointed to the problems they saw and explained how to solve them by sharing their own experiences as teachers in similar situations.

It's important to try to start quickly, perhaps with only a few instructions. After that you can try to instruct the pupils. You can also divide the pupils into teams during an exercise, for example at the beginning of the lesson if the focus is on technique. You could also divide them into teams at the same time. Otherwise, there is a risk that you might lose them, because there'll be a lot of instructions. You can make it more efficient that way Reflective conversation 1, John.

In the above example John's supervisor shared 'what worked' for him in a direct and technical way. Such an 'act of pointing' directed John's reflections to more managerial issues in terms of 'what worked'. Another 'act of pointing' was identified in Mike's supervisor's *rule-focused* guidance, as presented below.

The rule-focused 'act of pointing'

The rule-focused 'act of pointing' directed the PETE-students' attention to following predefined rules to control pupils in teaching situations.

Mike's supervisor had stipulated 'rules for participation' for the pupils, which meant they were only allowed to take part in lessons if they were wearing the correct clothing for physical activity. If they did not change into the appropriate clothes they were told to go for a walk. The supervisor was not unduly concerned about this action because he had made it clear what was expected of the pupils and that it was up to them to decide whether they wanted to participate or not. This rule-focused environment affected Mike's responses in the reflective conversations with his supervisor. For example, two pupils arrived late to a lesson and had not changed into the correct clothing. This made Mike unsure about what to do, since he had allowed another pupil who was not dressed according to the rules to participate. The two pupils arrived late, both of whom were known to be troublemakers and difficult to handle, yet despite this Mike allowed them to participate. However, after a couple of incidents in which they made the other pupils in the lesson insecure, the supervisor asked them to leave.

Supervisor: It was easy to go round and talk to and instruct the pupils at each station calmy and quietly. It was when those two other lads arrived that the situation changed and that was why they had to leave.

Mike: Yes . . . [Teaching] wasn't possible then . . .

Supervisor: Of course, they had to leave. They disrupted the entire lesson. Things would have gone wrong if they'd stayed [. . .] I would have told them much earlier to go for a walk instead. Now that I know what they are like.

Mike: I know now that I need to be consistent. In this situation I was inconsistent and deviated from [the rules].

Supervisor: Yes, that's right. We [the supervisor and the pupils] will probably have that discussion again. I'll be clear about that when I write to the school management. Some of them [the pupils] will fail the course, it is inevitable.

Mike: Yes, their attitude today was terrible [. . .] (Reflection conversation 2, Mike)

This reflective conversation is strongly framed by the 'rules for participation' and how Mike deviated from the rules. The supervisor's dismissal of the pupils was in line with the

stipulated rules, which pushed Mike to confess that he had not honoured the rules. Thus, Mike was sorry for not following the rules that were expected of him. A similar theme can be seen in the last identified 'act of pointing' in the material.

The restricted and condemning 'act of pointing'

This 'act of pointing' established the 'right course of action' and directed the PETE students' focus to condemning pupils who did not achieve what was expected of them in class. In this 'act of pointing', the supervisors predetermined the problem of the teaching situation without letting the PETE students have any say about it in their reflective conversations.

Mike's supervisor often blamed the pupils for their failure in different sports and exercises and thought that at their age their skills ought to be better developed. However, as he never reflected on how Mike's teaching would help them to develop these skills, it was difficult for Mike to reflect on his own teaching, since the conversations were restricted by the condemning attitude towards the pupils' abilities.

> Supervisor: At the first station it is clear that in principle they have no previous knowledge about the game [volleyball] and are not even where they should be.
>
> Mike: No, but they've been playing [volleyball] since Year 7.
>
> Supervisor: Yes, but the question is, how much did they do in Year 7?
>
> Mike: Yes, but everyone plays volleyball in Years 7, 8 and 9.
>
> Supervisor: Yes, they should, but that is the question.
>
> (Reflective conversation 3 Mike)

This last 'act of pointing' indicate that Mike's focus was directed towards specific aspects that may have limited his reflective thinking. Instead, the supervisor schooled (Säfström, 2020) him to think about what the pupils' development ought to be as a model volleyball pupil.

The next part presents the supervisors' guidance and how it affected the two PETE students. This is done by describing the most prominent and decisive experiences they gained from their different learning journeys, either an adventurous and meaningful journey or a controlled and predictable one.

An adventurous and meaningful journey

Meaningful journeys are often influenced by the experiences that are gathered along the way, rather than the destination itself. Furthermore, unexpected happenings along the way are often those that we remember the most. Such happenings can make travellers grow and become (more) responsible and thoughtful.

John's experiences from the practicum could be compared to a traveller on an adventurous journey. He was treated as an autonomous teacher and encouraged to try his own ideas when teaching gymnastics, with some guidance and support from his supervisor when his teaching became *too* adventurous. John's supervisor gave him the

freedom to plan his teaching independently. He 'presented [his] plan, and [the supervisor] gave [John] some advice and aspects to consider' (John, interview). Being treated as an autonomous teacher seemed to stimulate John's further growth, since he 'felt that the focus has moved from [him as a leader in the classroom] to the pupils, their learning and the teaching content' (John, interview). When reflecting on a particular situation in his planned gymnastic teaching, John became concerned that he had planned to teach his pupils exercises that he could not do himself. However, he felt confident because he had learned at university that 'it's not about being an expert in everything myself, but it's about being able to teach the pupils, even such things that one might not be able to do' (Reflective conversation 2, John). This seemed a bit too adventurous for the supervisor, though, in that it made him feel that John had been let loose too much in his gymnastic teaching. Thus, he guided John onto a more controlled path by offering him video-clips of exercises that he could use to show the pupils how to do them, instead of doing them himself. Furthermore, the supervisor advised John to let the pupils video-record themselves so that they could look at their movements and visualise how they could do the exercises in more complex ways. The video-tools 'were good to have at hand, [. . .] to get the pupils to start reflecting [. . .] on the movement, even if you couldn't do it yourself' (Reflective conversation 3, John). John's adventurous journey enabled him to gain educative experiences of what to think about before starting to teach gymnastics and how he could use different kinds of pedagogical tools to stimulate the pupils' movement capabilities in gymnastics. This seemed to make him experience what it was like to be a thoughtful, reflective teacher (Biesta, 2019; Schön, 1983).

A controlled and predictable journey

Journeys that only focus on the destination, or on reaching the set goal, can make travellers feel uninterested in what they are experiencing here and now. Such journeys are controlled by external criteria and chain the traveller to these stipulations, thereby causing a feeling of futility about the experiences along the way.

Mike seemed to feel controlled, or at least restricted, by his supervisor's 'rules for participation' when reflecting on his teaching, because they appeared to have affected the pupils' attitudes to PE. At the beginning of Mike's practicum period, he found it difficult to motivate pupils to participate in his lessons, which made him deviate from his supervisor's rules. Furthermore, he realised that he had to establish routines when starting and ending his lessons to make it clear what was expected of the pupils when participating. Both actions could be understood as educative experiences that were meaningful for Mike's professional growth, especially when he grasped the importance of sound routines in his lessons. However, overall, he seemed to experience mis-educative situations, which may have influenced him to question whether he should become a teacher or not. For example, when he tried to teach the pupils about cardio- and aerobic capacity, their attention was unfocused and the class started to become anxious, which made him abandon his intended teaching. He activated them physically, which made him feel like a personal trainer who should keep his clients satisfied, instead of focusing on teaching them the intended content. Hence, he did not experience what it meant to be a PE teacher whose task it was to educate pupils about the subject's content, which made him question his choice of career. Furthermore, Mike scrutinised the condemning and ruled-

focused environment surrounding the lessons and asked himself 'how much is it the teacher's responsibility that the pupils are unengaged?' (Interview, Mike). He was surprised by the pupils' degree of non-engagement, and that the supervisor did not have any planned structure for stimulating the pupils' learning and participation. This affected his experience negatively, as the focus was on managing and controlling pupils rather than stimulating their movement, which to him felt like a failure.

Summary and reflections on the results

The supervisors' different acts of pointing seemed to influence how John and Mike experienced their learning journeys. John's supervisor treated him as an autonomous teacher by being restrained and asking him questions about his teaching plan, while Mike's supervisor's guidance tipped over into schooling when instructing him to obey the rules and norms of what to expect of pupils. Regardless of that, the PETE students found the practicum courses more valuable and relevant than the university-based courses. They said, 'it's like the university doesn't know what it is like in the reality' (Mike, interview) and that 'one learns most in the classroom with the pupils and in the discussions with one's supervisor' (John, interview).

Discussion and conclusion

The purpose of this study has been to contribute knowledge about reflective conversations during PETE students' practicums. The findings confirm Tolgfors et al. (2021) findings that supervisors' understandings of teaching influence their guidance, and that their guidance varies as to how it directs PETE students' focus (Ovens & Tinning, 2009; Uhrich, 2009). Hence, this study strengthens the notion that supervisors are, or at least can be, influential actors (Amaral-Da-Cunha et al., 2020; Standal et al., 2014) depending on how they construct reflective environments for reflective conversations with PETE students (Biesta, 2022; Schön, 1983). The various 'acts of pointing' identified in this study, correspond with Orland-Barak and Wang's (2021) guiding approaches to stimulating STs' personal growth, gaining core practices in John's case and situated learning in Mike's case, which enabled them to experience their practicums differently and influenced their meaning-making of them.

John was treated as an autonomous teacher and encouraged to test his ideas. However, when his ideas became difficult to realise in the teaching situations, the supervisor asked questions about how John could make his teaching more viable. Such guidance can stimulate practical synthesising and bridge the gap between gained theoretical knowledge from the university and practical experience during the practicum (Standal et al., 2014). It also appeared to stimulate his professional growth (Orland-Barak & Wang, 2021) when, for example, being advised to make use of central concepts in his interactions with pupils when teaching gymnastics. There were also signs of how John's supervisor guided him to gain some core teaching methods (see Orland-Barak & Wang, 2021) that would make his teaching more efficient and seamless between warm-ups and the next exercises. Therefore, it is fair to say that John's experiences during his practicum period were educative (Dewey, 2015) and constructive (Rodgers, 2002), in that he realised what it meant to be a reflective,

thoughtful, and responsible teacher (Biesta, 2019). The criticism of supervisors' lack of constructive guidance for stimulating PETE students' growth as professionals (see Mordal-Moen & Green, 2014) in previous research is here nuanced by the examples and insights of this case study.

Mike's experiences of his practicum seemed to make him truly reflect on whether he wanted to become a teacher or not, since the guidance was highly situated in the supervisor's teaching practice, for example by stipulated rules (Orland-Barak & Wang, 2021). However, when Mike *radically* stepped forward as an autonomous teacher and deviated from the so-called 'rules for participation', this might have been a transformative experience for him. Mike's actions could be understood as radical because he said *no* to his supervisor, unlike the PETE students in previous research (see A. M. Rossi & Lisahunter, 2013; T. Rossi et al., 2008; Sirna et al., 2008, 2010). In this way, Mike can be said to have become emancipated, in that he acted in line with his personal values. However, this could also be a heavy burden for a PETE student to bear, which is something that could be considered further in PETE programmes in order to promote more transformative guidance (Orland-Barak & Wang, 2021). Nevertheless, Mike's decisive experience could either have been truly educative and made him aware of how to not treat and think about pupils, or have been mis-educative and influence his future thinking about pupils. It all depended on how he reflected on his gained experiences and how he made meaning of them. This is something that supervisors, as experienced teachers, can help PETE students with. They can invite PETE students to focus on certain aspects and at the same time help them to gain confidence in trying out new ideas and teaching approaches (Hobson et al., 2009). Accordingly, Mike's supervisor could have paid more attention to his feelings about following the rules for participation and perhaps strengthen his confidence about becoming a teacher instead of decreasing it.

One limitation of this case study is the small number of participants, although this is also outweighed by the depth of the data material. Another limitation is that the study does not respond to the call to use mixed methods (see Lawson et al., 2015). Nonetheless, as my focus was on supervisors' guidance and PETE students' experiences of it, using quantitative methods to measure the data would not have been appropriate or adequate.

To sum up and draw conclusions from this case study, there are some pedagogical implications for PETE students, teacher educators, and supervisors that are worth considering in terms of reflective practices and educative experiences. These include:

- Treating PETE students as thoughtful subjects by supervising them with restraint and enabling them to experience what it is like to *be* autonomous teachers during the practicum.
- Listening to PETE students' ideas with interest and curiosity and always offering them opportunities to 'dry run' their ideas in reflective conversations. In this way, PETE students can imagine how their teaching will turn out and enable them to identify any potential mistakes.
- Requiring a more extensive argumentation from PETE students regarding their teaching plans before being implemented.
- Being available when needed, e.g. when PETE students' ideas become too radical or adventurous.

- Loosening the control, but never losing it.
- Avoiding disciplinary rules for PETE students to follow in their teaching, considering the purpose of obedience and how such rules might stimulate or limit their growth as professional teachers.

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Notes on contributor

Emil Johansson is a doctoral student in Educational work at Dalarna University. Emil's research interest focuses on the concept of reflection and reflective practice in educational settings. Generally, Emil focuses on teacher education, particularly on physical education teacher education, in his research. Furthermore, Emil has an educational interest in how to stimulate student teachers' reflections and what teacher educators can encourage them to focus on when they reflect.

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