

Exploring the Ready Set Play (RSP) Programme in Maltese Primary Schools: The Perspective of Key Stakeholders.

Daniel Paul Ellul

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Abstract

Daniel Paul Ellul

Physical activity is increasingly recognised for its profound physical, cognitive, and emotional benefits in childhood. In Malta, the introduction of the Ready Set Play (RSP) programme represents a national effort to embed structured physical activity (PA) within the primary school timetable. However, its integration within the primary school setting is often challenged by curricular demands and institutional constraints. This study explores the RSP programme offered in state primary schools within various colleges. A qualitative approach was employed, involving semi-structured interviews with 3 class teachers, 3 physical education (PE) teachers, and 3 RSP educators. The participants were from three local state schools and were chosen using a purposive sampling technique. Reflexive thematic analysis, guided by Braun and Clarke's (2019) framework, was used to code and analyse the data, revealing five key themes: educator's knowledge perceptions of RSP; educator's attitudes and knowledge; barriers and constraints; benefits of PA; and visions for future development. Findings indicate a general recognition of RSP's holistic value but also highlight challenges, such as insufficient structural support and its impact on other academic subjects, be it positive or negative. Optimism regarding the future of RSP was highlighted yet advocating for improved policy guidance, and better resource allocation. This research offers insights into the first-hand experiences of implementing PA initiatives in Maltese primary schools. Implications are discussed with recommendations for policymakers, educators, and further research.

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Ready Set Play

Primary Education

Co-curricular activities

Physical Activity

School-Based Interventions

Dedication

This work is lovingly dedicated to the memory of my grandfather Lino, whose wisdom, strength, and love continue to inspire me even in his absence.

I also dedicate this dissertation to all children who are less privileged and who lack opportunities to be physically active and to lead healthy lives, both emotionally and physically. It is my hope that this work may, in some small way, contribute to a future where every child has the chance to grow, thrive, and flourish.

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List of Abbreviations

APA	American Psychological Association
ASF	Active School Flag
CNS	Central Nervous System
FF5	Fun Fit 5
FMS	Fundamental Movement Skills
FREC	Faculty of Laws Research Ethics Committee
LOF	Learning Outcomes Framework
LSE	Learning Support Educator
LTAD	Long Term Athlete Development
MCAST	Malta College of Arts, Science and Technology
MET	Metabolic Equivalent of Task
MEYR	Ministry For Education, Sport, Youth, Research And Innovation
MFA	Malta Football Association
MTL	Masters in Teaching and Learning
MVPA	Moderate-to-Vigorous Physical Activity
NHS	National Health Service (UK)
PA	Physical Activity
PE	Physical Education

RSP	Ready Set Play
SBI	School-Based Intervention
SLT	School Leadership Team
TDM	The Daily Mile
TVM	Television Malta
UREC	University Research Ethics Committee
WHO	World Health Organization

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Chapter 1 Introduction

1.1 Promoting Physical Activity through School-based Initiatives

Physical inactivity among children remains a pressing global health concern, that is contributing to the rising rates of obesity, cardiovascular risk, and poor mental health outcomes (World Health Organization [WHO], 2021). The school environment, where children spend approximately 40% of their waking hours, is widely acknowledged as a critical setting for physical activity (PA) promotion (Nanney, & Schwartz, 2009). Therefore, school based interventions have been identified as strategic opportunities for increasing PA and promoting long-term healthy behaviours (Scottish Government, 2017, Naylor & McKay, 2009; Chesham et al., 2018; Booth et al., 2022).

PA, as shown in a study by Darmanin et. al (2023, p. 31-32), has a different definition to many people; *“PA is anything which has to do with movement”* or *“[PA]... is not only when you’re doing a sport”*. The World Health Organisation (WHO) (2024, para. 1) defines PA as *“any bodily movement produced by skeletal muscles that requires energy expenditure”*.

In recent decades, a growing body of evidence has underscored the importance of regular PA during childhood. Research shows that an active lifestyle supports not only physical and mental well-being, but also the social and emotional development in young people (Clark, 2023). Despite this, a substantial proportion of children fail to meet WHO’s recommended daily minimum of 60 minutes of moderate-to-vigorous PA (MVPA) (WHO, 2018). A global trend of increasing screen time, sedentary behaviours, and urban lifestyles has led to declining levels of PA among children worldwide (Moore et al., 2016).

In Greece, Venetsanou et al. (2020) found low levels of PA, measured through daily step counts, that were below the recommended 11,500 steps, alongside high screen time. Apart from this, the study proposes a possible link between socio economic factors, like the recession in Greece, and health outcomes. In fact, it was found that there was a general decrease in PA across school time and leisure time between 2009 and 2018 (Venetsanou et al., 2020). United States experiences similar trends, as sedentary behaviours have increased drastically since the introduction of phones, video games, and electronics (Moore et al., 2016).

Malta is no exception to this global concern. Local reports have consistently placed Maltese children among the most inactive and overweight in Europe (Decelis et al., 2014; WHO, 2016; Borg et al., 2023). This situation raises concerns about the long-term physical and psychological consequences of inactivity, such as increased risk of non-communicable diseases, poor emotional regulation, and low self-esteem (Park et al., 2020; Clark, 2023). In fact, findings from Decelis et al., (2014) show that only a minority of Maltese students meet the WHO PA recommendations. These findings stress the need for early intervention, particularly in the primary years.

Although the local national curriculum framework recognises Physical Education (PE) as a core component of the educational experience, the reality is often different. In many primary schools, PE is under-prioritised due to academic pressure, time constraints, and a

lack of resources (NAO, 2010; Hardman, 2008). In some schools, structured PA is limited to just two sessions per week, where one PE lesson is conducted by the PE teacher and the other by the class teacher. In this context, the integration of PA into everyday school life is inconsistent, often dependent on the initiative of individual educators or school administration.

In response to these challenges, the RSP programme was introduced in 2021. The initiative's mission is to "*empower schools to foster a culture of physical literacy in which consistent physical activity becomes an essential component of learners' lives*" (Spiteri, 2025, p.5). Spiteri (2025) notes that the RSP aims to enhance physical literacy among primary school students through structured and engaging PA. This programme can be considered as a co-curricular activity, which are structured activities that complement the formal curriculum that support, and enhance learning experience (Rezwan Rahman et al., 2021).

1.2 Research Agenda

The primary aim of this study is to examine the attitudes, experiences, and suggestions of primary school educators, being the Class, PE and RSP teachers, regarding the RSP programme.

The research questions guiding this study are as follows:

1. What is the overall perception of RSP from the key stakeholders?
2. What are the benefits and challenges of RSP?
3. What do the key stakeholders suggest about further implementation of this programme?

To address these questions, a qualitative research method was adopted, focusing on the subjective experiences and insights of those directly involved in the school system. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with a purposive sample of nine participants from different schools involved in the RSP programme. These included three class teachers, three PE teachers, and three RSP educators. This composition allowed for a balanced exploration of both general classroom perspectives and specialist insights related to PA delivery.

The data collection method was selected for its ability to generate in-depth narratives and it allows for flexibility in probing specific themes. Interviews were transcribed and thematically analysed to identify recurring patterns, contradictions, and suggestions for improvement across participants' accounts.

1.3 My Position in this Study

As a 28-year-old male currently pursuing a Master's in Teaching and Learning (MTL) in Physical Education, my background and interests have significantly shaped the motivation and direction of this research. Apart from being physically active from a very young age, for the past nine years I have been actively involved in coaching, which has allowed me to work closely with children and young people in various PA settings. I also participated in two five week long teaching practice in different schools, both at primary and secondary levels. This long-standing engagement with sport, has deepened my appreciation for the physical, mental, and social benefits of structured movement and formed my educational philosophy as an aspiring PE teacher.

During my MTL teaching placement, I had the opportunity to observe the RSP programme firsthand. Not only did I witness RSP in action, but I also supported the RSP teacher when I did not have scheduled lessons. This involvement offered me a unique lens to better appreciate the potential of the programme. I observed enthusiastic student participation, diverse movement-based tasks, and the ways in which RSP could complement both PE and general classroom learning. At the same time however, I became aware of recurring challenges, such as scheduling, unclear roles and expectations, and complaints about lack of time in relation to the curriculum of academic subjects.

Although I am not currently employed as a teacher in any of the participating schools, my role as an MTL student positioned me as a semi-insider. I was familiar with the educational environment to build rapport with participants and understand contextual references, but also distant enough to maintain a degree of neutrality. Importantly, I approached this study not just as an evaluator of the RSP programme but also as a researcher seeking to better understand how such initiatives, of increased PA during school hours, can be implemented in ways that maximise student benefit without putting additional stress or pressure on the educators.

I acknowledge that my passion for sport and belief in the value of PA may introduce certain biases. However, I made every effort to approach the data collection and analysis process with reflexivity and openness, ensuring that participants' voices guided the direction of the findings. My aim throughout was to produce research that is both academically sound and practically useful, particularly within the Maltese primary school context, where structured PA programmes like RSP hold a lot of promise, but require careful implementation.

By exploring the perspectives of educators, I hope this study can contribute to evidence-based improvements that support not only the development of students, but also the wellbeing and practical realities of the professionals tasked with delivering PA in schools.

1.4 Outline of Study

This chapter introduced the purpose and scope of the study, outlined the research questions, and provided the personal and professional context of the researcher. It also discussed the significance of the RSP programme in the local educational context. The next chapter will present a review of relevant literature, exploring the benefits of PA in schools, the impact of school-based interventions (SBI), and how programmes like RSP fit into both local and international efforts to promote healthier, more active lifestyles among children.

Chapter Two delves into the literature review, providing a comprehensive understanding of PA in a government primary school context. The chapter explores the significance of PA for child development and discusses international and local frameworks that support or hinder their integration in school curricula. It also examines the challenges of balancing academic demands with active time, the role of co-curricular programmes like RSP, and the broader social, and institutional factors influencing PA in Maltese government schools.

Chapter Three provides a detailed account of the research design and methodology employed in this study. It outlines the qualitative approach used to explore educators' perspectives, including the rationale for choosing semi-structured interviews, participant recruitment, and data collection procedures. The chapter also discusses ethical considerations.

Chapter Four presents and discusses the findings of the study, drawing directly from the voices of participants. Organised into key themes, the chapter explores educators' attitudes, knowledge, constraints, and visions for improving PA in schools, with a particular focus on the RSP programme. The discussion critically engages with the existing literature reviewed in Chapter Two.

Chapter Five concludes the dissertation by summarising the main findings and articulating actionable recommendations for policy, practice, and future research. It highlights the implications of the study for improving PA provision in government primary schools and for strengthening the programme of RSP. The chapter also reflects on the limitations of the research and suggests directions for future investigations that could build on the insights generated by this study.

Chapter 2 Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

This literature review explores the role of PA in primary schools, focusing on the benefits in children's physical health, mental well-being, and cognitive development. With rising levels of sedentary behaviour among young people, schools are increasingly recognised as important settings for encouraging movement and shaping healthy habits from an early age (Naylor & McKay, 2009). The chapter begins by defining PA and outlining its wide-ranging benefits. It then explores the concept of early intervention and how establishing active routines in childhood can leave lasting impacts, even into adulthood (Hinkley et al., 2011). A key section is dedicated to school-based interventions, which provide more informal, voluntary opportunities for students to stay active beyond PE lessons. Special attention is given to RSP, a Maltese initiative aimed at increasing PA in government primary schools. The chapter explains further what RSP is and how it works within schools. Furthermore, this literature review will discuss similar SBI both locally and internationally.

2.2 Physical Inactivity and Sedentary Behaviour

The notion of a predominant sedentary lifestyle and its effects on the health of Maltese citizens has emerged from various local studies (Borg et al., 2023, Decelis et al., 2014, Grech et al., 2017). A Eurobarometer survey taken in 2022 shows that only 7% of the Maltese population exercise regularly which is a decrease of 4% compared to 2017 (Shalan, 2022). Alarming, the survey also reported that on a typical day, 44% of the people spend between 5 and a half hours to 8 and a half hours sedentary. (Shalan, 2022). This trend can also be observed at an international level. A 2024 cross-national study of 7017 children aged three to four across 33 countries found that only 14% met all components of the WHO guidelines. WHO guidelines recommend 180 minutes of physical activity with 60 minutes MVPA, less than one hour of screen time, and between 10 to 13 hours of sleep (University of Stirling, 2024).

Sedentary behaviour is defined as *“any waking behaviour characterized by an energy expenditure ≤ 1.5 METs while in a sitting, reclining or lying posture”*, meaning energy expenditure smaller or equal to 1.5 metabolic equivalent (MET) (van der Ploeg & Hillsdon, 2017, p. 1). 1 MET is equal to the amount of oxygen consumed whilst at rest (3.5ml oxygen per kg body weight per minute) (Jetté et al., 1990).

2.2.1 Benefits of Increased Physical Activity

Increasing PA during school hours should be considered as an important step towards a healthy future. This comes with a multitude of holistic benefits, ranging from short-term to long-term. The RSP programme goes beyond improving fundamental movement skills. There is a wide range of studies that prove the correlation between overall mental, physical and social well-being and PA (Clark, 2023). This sub-chapter seeks to further explore the benefits of PA.

2.2.1.1 Physical Benefits

Increasing PA helps address several problems associated with a sedentary lifestyle. Regular engagement in PA contributes to cardiovascular health, cancer prevention, diabetes management, musculoskeletal strength, respiratory function, and combats obesity, collectively reducing overall mortality rates (Park et al. 2020).

Regular engagement in PA significantly reduces the risk of cardiovascular diseases. Miller et al. (2016) reported a 20–35% reduction in mortality rates through exercise, with inactive women showing a 52% higher risk of death, particularly from cardiovascular causes. PA improves lipid profiles by lowering triglycerides and increasing high-density lipoprotein (HDL) while also enhancing low-density lipoprotein (LDL) /HDL ratios (Miller, 2016; Sarzynski et al., 2015). It enhances cardiac output, lowers blood pressure, and improves coronary circulation (Colberg et al., 2016). Additionally, active individuals are 20–36% less likely to suffer a stroke (Gallagher et al., 2011).

A growing body of evidence supports the protective effects of PA against several forms of cancer. Regular PA is associated with a 20–30% reduced risk of breast cancer as well as a 30–40% reduction in colon cancer (Miller, 2016; Warburton, 2006). Lyu (2024, p.7) highlights how moderate PA enhances immune surveillance by increasing circulation of natural “killer cells” that inhibit tumour growth and metastasis.

Type 2 diabetes can be prevented or managed through regular PA since exercise improves insulin sensitivity, glycaemic control, blood pressure, and lipid profiles (Colberg et al., 2016; Sigal et al., 2013). Warburton et al. (2006) notes a 39–70% reduction in mortality rates among diabetic individuals who are active. Both aerobic and resistance training are effective, with Miller et al. (2016) indicating stronger glycaemic improvements with resistance training. Lifestyle interventions that combine PA with diet can also lower diabetes occurrence by up to 60% (Warburton et al., 2006).

Another benefit is when dealing with osteoporosis. PA, particularly resistance and weight-bearing exercises, enhances bone mineral density (BMD) and prevents age-related bone loss (Miller et al. 2016); Warburton et al., 2006). Miller et al. (2016) reported a 62% fracture risk

reduction in active men, while Warburton et al.(2006) documented positive BMD changes in postmenopausal women through structured exercise.

Contrary to common concern, children with asthma benefit significantly from PA. It improves VO₂max, lung capacity, and reduces inflammation, ultimately lowering symptom frequency, thus improving life quality (Lucas et al., 2005; Wanrooij et al., 2014; Kuder et al., 2021). Eijkemans et al. (2012) affirms that PA may also reduce the risk of developing asthma.

Obesity remains a key public health challenge with links to multiple diseases. In fact, Malta is said to have one of the highest obesity rates in Europe, where nearly 50% of children aged 11 and 12 in Malta were found to be overweight (Cuschieri et al., 2016; Decelis et al., 2012). PA reduces cardiometabolic risks, insulin resistance, and intrahepatic fat (Battista et al., 2021; Miller et al., 2016). However, PA alone is insufficient for significant weight loss and dietary control must accompany it (CDCb, 2024). Still, PA is vital for long-term weight maintenance and immune support (Niemiro et al., 2023).

The benefits of PA have led to analogies with medicine itself. As Dr. Robert Butler famously stated, *"If exercise could be put in a bottle, it would be the strongest medicine money could buy"* (UK Essays, 2013, p.3). Beyond chronic disease prevention, resistance training has also shown to reduce sickness absence more effectively than moderate aerobic activity (Amlani, 2014). In recent years, mental and cognitive well-being have gained increasing attention, particularly within educational and child development discourse. Regular PA is widely recognized not only for its physical advantages but also for its substantial impact on psychological functioning, brain development, and academic performance.

2.2.1.2 Mental and Emotional Well-being

The significance of mental health has become increasingly recognized across various sectors, with numerous institutions actively promoting awareness campaigns and initiatives aimed at reducing associated stigmas. Mental health encompasses the emotional, psychological, and social aspects of a person's well-being, affecting how individuals think, feel, and behave (SAMHSA, 2023). It plays a critical role in shaping our responses to stress, interpersonal relationships, and decision-making capabilities throughout the human lifespan (CDC c, 2024).

Several mental health conditions are prevalent, especially among students. These include depression and anxiety, which are particularly common (Field, 2012). Other conditions such as bipolar disorder, Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), eating disorders, and more may also emerge, often triggered or exacerbated by trauma or adverse experiences. Early identification and support are crucial to mitigating these symptoms.

Childhood depression can develop due to several influencing factors, such as a family history of mental illness or environmental stressors at home (NHS, 2024). Symptoms are varied and not confined to persistent sadness. They may also include difficulties with concentration, irregular sleep patterns, significant changes in body weight, and a general lack of motivation

or interest (NHS, 2024). At a biological level, depression has been linked to deficiencies in key neurotransmitters in the Central Nervous System (CNS), such as serotonin, norepinephrine, and dopamine. A lack of these neurotransmitters disrupts the brain's regulation of mood and emotional stability (Hasler, 2010). Hasler (2010) specifically notes the association between serotonin deficiency and the onset of depressive symptoms. While therapy and, where appropriate, medication remain important, PA also plays a key role in managing depression. Field (2012) argues that PA, when used alongside other treatments, can help alleviate depressive symptoms. Similarly, Sharifi et al. (2018) shows that PA can elevate serotonin levels, contributing to improved mood. Importantly, Noetel et al. (2024) highlights that the intensity of the activity is positively related to the level of benefit experienced, suggesting that more vigorous PA may yield greater psychological gains.

Anxiety is another common psychological condition that manifests as worry, apprehension, and unease about potential future events (NHS a, 2023). Physiological symptoms often include an increased heart rate, excessive sweating, muscle tension, and heightened blood pressure (NHS a, 2023). Unlike fear, which responds to immediate threats, anxiety typically arises from perceived, often hypothetical, dangers.

Children may exhibit anxiety in several ways, and its symptoms can vary from those observed in adults. Affected children may experience somatic symptoms such as stomach-aches or headaches, and may begin to avoid specific scenarios, such as attending school or engaging in social interactions (NHS b, 2023). These behaviours can interfere with their ability to succeed academically and socially.

Whilst, similarly to depression, medication and therapy are widely prescribed treatments, PA is also recognized for its ability to support anxiety management. Numerous studies affirm that those who maintain regular PA are not only less likely to develop anxiety disorders but also experience reduced symptoms if they do (Kandola et al., 2018; Stubbs, 2017). PA may also alleviate symptoms of stress-related disorders, including PTSD and panic disorder (Kandola et al., 2018; Stubbs, 2017).

PA has been shown to improve several neuropsychological functions, one of the most notable being attention (Janssen et al., 2014). It supports healthy brain function by enhancing blood flow to the brain, elevating hormone levels associated with stress reduction, and promoting the growth of new cells (Janssen et al., 2014). These processes collectively contribute to better focus and decision-making abilities (Janssen et al., 2014).

Numerous studies highlight how MVPA is positively associated with increased attention capacity. For example, Vanhelst et al. (2016) demonstrates that students who regularly engage in this level of PA exhibit enhanced attentional performance. Buddle et al. (2008) found that coordinative exercises appear to have a more substantial effect on attention than other forms of exercise.

In terms of duration, research shows that even short bursts of PA can make a difference. A 20-minute session of PA has been found to significantly enhance attention levels (Janssen et al., 2014). This is reinforced by Wold (2019), who found that students engaging in 30

minutes of PA demonstrated greater on-task attention compared to those who only participated in 5-minute sessions.

As emphasized, intensity also plays a vital role. According to the inverted U-shape hypothesis by Yerkes and Dodson (1908), cognitive performance is optimally enhanced at a moderate level of arousal. Janssen et al. (2014) supports this model by noting that PA can elevate arousal levels, thus improving attention. This suggests that it is not merely about engaging in PA, but rather the quality, intensity, and structure that significantly contributes to children's attentional capacities.

Beyond attention, PA plays a measurable role in boosting academic performance and cognitive development. Several studies have found a positive correlation between PA and academic outcomes, with PA shown to improve brain function, focus, and general cognitive capacity (Zhao et al., 2017; Vanhelst et al., 2015; Hillman et al., 2009).

Vanhelst et al. (2015) suggest that the link between PA and improved cognitive function can be explained through physiological changes. These changes include enhanced brain circulation and neuroelectric activity, both of which support the learning processes. Similarly, Zhao et al. (2017) found that increased PA is associated with better academic achievement, likely due to its ability to sharpen mental focus and cognitive functioning.

A more focused study by Mazzoli et al. (2021) examined the impact of cognitively engaging active breaks in the classroom. The findings revealed enhanced brain efficiency in the left dorsolateral prefrontal cortex, a key area responsible for executive functions. Students who participated in these breaks showed increased deoxygenated haemoglobin in this region compared to a control group, indicating more efficient brain activity during cognitive tasks (Mazzoli et al., 2021).

Other research supports the idea that physical fitness attributes are linked with cognitive performance. Páez-Maldonado et al. (2020) noted that children who score well in physical tests such as speed and agility often demonstrate stronger selective attention and concentration. These outcomes are attributed to physiological brain adaptations, such as increased hippocampal and basal ganglia volumes and enhanced white matter microstructure (Páez-Maldonado et al., 2020).

Davis and Cooper (2011) explored how fitness and fatness correlate with cognition and behaviour in sedentary, overweight but otherwise healthy children. Their findings confirm that higher levels of physical fitness were associated with improved academic achievement, cognitive functioning, and behavioural outcomes (Davis and Cooper, 2011). In contrast, children with higher levels of body fat showed poorer results across these domains (Davis and Cooper, 2011).

2.3 Early Intervention in PA promotion

Early intervention plays a crucial role in promoting PA among children, particularly in a school setting. This sub-chapter will explore the various dimensions of early intervention, its benefits, and how it can effectively increase PA levels among students and the future generations.

During early childhood, the brain exhibits a high degree of plasticity, meaning it is exceptionally adaptable and responsive to experiences (Center on the Developing Child, 2007). This plasticity allows for rapid learning and the formation of neural connections. In fact, during the first few years of life, a child's brain can create approximately one million new synapses every second (First Things First, nd). This period is fundamental for establishing the neural architecture that supports cognitive functions, emotional regulation, and social skills.

There are various studies and models that show how to implement PA from a very young age to achieve the maximum results (Cliff et al., 2019). An example of this is the Long-Term Athlete Development (LTAD) model, which suggests 7 or 9 stages of development, depending on which version one follows, that allows educators to understand which stage the child is in and what is imperative for the child to work on. For example, the first stage is to focus on making play and PA a fun and an essential part of daily routine, meaning that the focus is on indoctrinating the importance of an active life (Athletics Canada, 2015).

PA comes with a lot of different health benefits, and this is also true for children, with evidence showing that early PA experiences *"may shape later behaviour and subsequent health"* (Cliff et al., 2019, p.8). This is because early childhood is a time where children absorb knowledge and develop behaviours and habits (Hinkley et al., 2011). Additionally, Johnrose and Maher (2010) highlight the link between early childhood PA and lifelong participation in physical activities, further combating the negative effects of a sedentary lifestyle.

According to McGowan et al. (2021), apart from all the benefits mentioned of introducing PA at an early stage, children are more likely to develop self-regulatory skills, which will develop other aspects mentioned above. These include various executive functions, such as attention control, task-switching, following directions, and exercising self-control, as well as managing their cognitive processes, emotions, and behaviours, which also links with their academic success (McGowan et al., 2021).

Scholarly literature (Koper et al., 2024; Carson et al., 2016) highlights how PA is not only essential for physical health but also plays a significant and measurable role in children's academic development and cognitive growth. Children spend a big part of their lives in school, and with the increasing barriers for PA amongst children, school is a viable way to introduce a physically active lifestyle. The next section will examine interventions which are school-based and their impact on students.

2.4 Co-curricular Activities and School Based Interventions

Co-curricular activities are structured activities that complement the formal curriculum that supports, and enhance the learning experience (Rezwan Rahman et al., 2021). They also play an important role in academic performance (Rezwan Rahman et al., 2021). These activities, such as sports, drama, debate clubs, are not part of the formal classroom curriculum but are closely aligned with educational objectives (Singh, 2017). RSP can be considered a formal co-curricular activity since it is structured (Singh, 2017).

Co-curricular involvement has been shown to enhance academic outcomes (Rahman et al., 2021). Laraib et al. (2020, p.16) reported that co-curricular activities support *“self-confidence, better communication skills, [and] improve physical and mental abilities,”* that contributes to academic success. Despite this, barriers are still in place. Time, resources, and institutional emphasis can limit student participation. Therefore, Laraib et al. (2020) argues that governments must help equip schools with proper resources for the students and the success of co-curricular activities.

Policy makers around the world have been actively advocating and incorporating new ways to increase the PA of children. Sedentary behaviour is on the rise, therefore, building good habits at a younger age, through PA, is a solution many governments and policy makers have opted to adopt. There are various ways in which PA was implemented, and this sub chapter will delve into these programmes.

Studies show that SBIs are known to be the most effective way to counteract sedentary behaviour (WHO, 2021; Kriemler et al., 2011; Story, 2009). The American Psychological Association (APA, 2018) defines SBI as strategies used in schools to improve students' health and well-being, focusing on preventing or reducing problematic behaviours and psychological issues.

Evidence suggests that SBI are generally effective in increasing levels of PA and improving overall physical fitness (Kriemler et al., 2011). In fact, children spend a lot of time at school and, the *“activity during this time is less than one third of the daily requirements”* (Decelis et al., 2014, p10). Kriemler et al. (2011) concludes that SBI not only increases PA during school hours, but also outside of school and overall PA. Further studies show that this increase in PA *“remained high over the years”* (Cluss et al., 2016, p.349). Naylor & McKay (2008) mentions three different strategies of SBIs, educational, multicomponent or whole school approaches. Programmes that include curriculum integration, environmental changes, teacher training, and family engagement are more likely to succeed, and according to Naylor & McKay (2008) multicomponent strategies seem to reap the most benefits.

As discussed previously, increased PA brings out several physical, social and cognitive benefits. They nonetheless give rise to their own challenges. Bremer et al., (2018) states that although there is evidence of increase academic achievement, there is little evidence that SBI increases overall fitness and psychological wellbeing. Bremer et al., (2018) also states that the implementation of the SBI is very important for its success, which includes

dedicated educators and complementary exercises. This shows that there are issues within schools which give rise to struggles maintaining engagement and deliver the programme as intended, thus diminishing its effectiveness. Allison et al. (2016) note that a significant contributing factor is to this is the conflicting demands and pressures that elementary school teachers often face. Moreover, the WHO (2021) shows case studies that face systemic barriers such as lack of resources, limited training and time, and competing academic priorities.

Despite these limitations, the potential of SBI remains compelling. With a strong design, sufficient support, they can play a crucial role in promoting lifelong health behaviours. Programs like the Daily Mile and Active School Flag provide successful models. These initiatives emphasise inclusivity, flexibility, and regular movement without the competitive pressures of formal sport, and have demonstrated effectiveness in improving physical fitness, classroom behaviour, and emotional well-being (Booth et al., 2022; Ni Chróinín et al., 2012).

In the Maltese context, the RSP programme reflects many principles of school-based intervention. It increases students' opportunities to engage in guided PA up to four times a week, supports skill development across year levels, and integrates collaboration between specialist teachers, classroom educators, and Learning Support Educators (LSE) (MEYR, 2023). Importantly, RSP complements rather than replaces formal PE, making it a hybrid model that strengthens the school's PA environment.

2.4.1 School Based Intervention Programs

Having outlined the effectiveness, challenges, and potential of SBIs, the next step is to examine specific programmes that have been implemented both locally and internationally. The following subsections present selection research on SBI programmes both from the international and local perspective, highlighting their structure, goals, implementation methods, and documented outcomes.

2.4.1.1 Ready Set Play

The RSP programme is a fun and creative PA initiative, implemented in government primary schools. These programmes have a set of learning outcomes split into three groups: Year 1 and Year 2, Year 3 and Year 4, Year 5 and Year 6 (MEYR, 2023). Each group will have learning outcomes based on fundamentals, gymnastics and athletics, with each section further split down into more specific learning outcomes (MEYR, 2023). It also must be noted that the RSP learning outcomes (Appendix 5) serve as a guideline for the RSP teacher, such that the educator is not restricted from further developing new or more complex skills appropriate to the student's skill level.

The programme entails station-based sessions involving multiple classes with a minimum of three classes per session (MEYR, 2023). In cases where there are only one or two classes from the same year group, sessions can include a mixture of year groups (e.g., Yr1/2 or Yr3/4 or Yr5/6) (MEYR, 2023). Each session lasts 30 minutes and complements the existing PE curriculum delivered by both class teachers and specialist PE teachers. It is crucial to note that RSP is not a replacement for these compulsory PE lessons (MEYR, 2023). The programme is strategically designed to avoid conflicts with existing class schedules. Through its implementation, the students will increase their PA to four times a week.

The success of the RSP programme relies heavily on the involvement of class teachers and LSEs. The programme's guidelines specify that class teachers and LSEs must be present and actively involved during all sessions. This collaboration ensures that teachers are better prepared to conduct similar PA sessions independently, enriching their teaching practices and enhancing the overall PA experience for students. Additionally, due to the large number of students participating, the RSP teacher would need assistance from the class teacher and LSE, to maximise the development and learning of the students.

2.4.2.2 The Daily Mile

The Daily Mile (TDM) is a very simple and yet a very effective way to encourage students to focus on their health and wellbeing. This activity was initiated in St Ninian's Primary School, Scotland in 2012 for the same to improve children's overall wellbeing (The Daily Mile 1, n.d). In fact, beyond improvements in physical fitness, numerous additional benefits have been anecdotally observed by children, teachers, and parents (Chesham et al., 2018). It is designed for primary schools, and offers valuable principles that can also be effectively adapted to Early Learning and Childcare (ELC) settings.

The main aim of this initiative is that children should engage in running, jogging, or walking for 15 minutes daily, focusing on health and well-being without the pressure of completing any specific distances. TDM focuses on the "Four Fs": fun, friendship, fresh air, and freedom, which emphasises that the aim is for "each child, every day" to be active in a non-competitive environment (Scottish Government, 2017 & The Daily Mile 1, n.d).

Some of the key elements of TDM highlight the importance of child autonomy, where children are encouraged to set their own pace and decide how they wish to participate. This flexibility allows for a personalized experience that can accommodate varying abilities and preferences. Additionally, the timing of TDM is at the discretion of the educators, allowing it to fit seamlessly into daily schedules. Importantly, while TDM promotes PA, it is distinct from traditional physical education or active play, as it instead fosters a social environment where children can enjoy being outdoors (Scottish Government, 2017).

As already discussed, the benefits of TDM extend beyond physical fitness. Participation has been linked to reduced anxiety and stress, improved cognitive function, enhanced focus in class, and greater overall happiness. Children experience increased confidence and social

connections, contributing to their emotional well-being. The initiative also addresses broader health concerns by promoting outdoor activity in all weather conditions, which can help combat childhood obesity and instil lifelong habits of PA (Scottish Government, 2017).

A study conducted by Chesham et al., (2018) compared two schools, only one of which had implemented the programme, to demonstrate the effects of this intervention. Chesham et al., (2018) found that the implementation of this programme improved the overall fitness of the students, as they were physically active for a longer duration thereby reducing sedentary time. Additionally, the study also highlighted the measurable effects on the body composition and physical fitness of the students.

Interestingly, Booth et al. (2022) also investigates the impact TDM has on the cognitive and wellbeing of the students. Various tests were conducted to measure certain qualities of students. For example, cognition was measured by using “*three bespoke computer-based tasks*” (Booth et al., 2022, p.3). To measure inhibition, an adapted stop-signal task was used. Memory was assessed using a static boxes search task, as well as a reading span task, testing both visual and verbal memory. The students’ overall wellbeing was measured using the Children’s Feeling Scale and Felt Arousal Scale created by Hully et al. (2008). This scale suggests that, while long-term cognition and wellbeing benefits were not apparent, there nonetheless are health benefits in relation to learning, arising as a direct result of PA.

The effectiveness of TDM has not only been demonstrated internationally but has also shown positive outcomes in the Maltese context. Findings from Vella (2021) confirm that implementing the core principles of TMD, such as minimal equipment, short duration, and flexible scheduling, supports successful integration across different school environments in Malta. Teachers observed improved focus in the classroom and stronger student-teacher relationships, while students engaged enthusiastically (Vella, 2021). These insights reinforce that TDM is adaptable and impactful, even within the specific educational and environmental realities of Maltese schools.

2.4.2.3 Active School Flags

Another programme that aims to increase PA amongst students is called Active School Flag (ASF). Launched in 2009 by the Department of Education in Ireland, it aims to “*achieve a physically active and physically educated school community*” (Guardian Angels, nd, para. 1) both in primary and post primary schools

In line with programme procedures, schools are incentivized to engage in self-reflection and action planning at a school-wide level. This approach ensures that all staff members are committed to promoting PA among students. ASF encourages schools to further enhance their PE programmes, ensuring that students develop the necessary skills for a physically active lifestyle. ASF supports schools in identifying strategies to energize the school day, which includes integrating PA into various subjects as well as providing classroom-based activity breaks, leading to a reduced sedentary time. This is also done by encouraging teachers to incorporate PA into lessons, helping students maintain focus and improve concentration (ASF, n.d.).

This initiative also emphasizes making PA fun and inclusive, shifting focus from competition to participation. This helps engage less-active students and fosters a sense of community. In fact, it aims to build friendships and improve relationships between students and teachers (ASF, n.d.). ASF helps schools build partnerships with parents and local communities as well as with national organizations, to support PA initiatives. This also includes promoting local opportunities for families.

Schools in Ireland can be awarded the ASF by the Department of Education and Skills (DES) when meeting specific success criteria related to PA promotion (Ni Chróinín et al, 2012). This includes engaging students in regular physical activities and fostering a culture of health and wellness within the school environment.

Ni Chróinín et al. (2012) investigated how Irish primary schools engage in promoting PA through the Active School Flag initiative. It focused on schools' self-evaluation and improvement strategies regarding PA, examining their current practices, prioritized areas, and planning processes. The findings reveal that the schools' perceptions of PA have enhanced and the different schools that participated in this study showed that they were willing to adapt and change the schools' ideologies and even make renovations to the schools' facilities. Ni Chróinín et al., (2012, p.284) notes that different schools require different "*action plans*" to increase PA and awareness of the students, and noted that some schools should enhance the PE curriculum.

This study shows that change in practice can be aided through self-evaluation, meaning that this structure seems to work in increasing PA amongst students. (Ni Chróinín et al, 2012) This is also supported by a study done in 2020 looking at 10 years since the implementation of ASF (Belton et al., 2020). Using a mixed method approach, ASF was evaluated across three levels, being: administration, application, and outcomes. Belton et al. (2020) states that this programme shows a level of adaptability that has met the needs of the participants over the past decade.

From the children's viewpoint, ASF has shown effectiveness in promoting PA, particularly in increasing MVPA levels in primary schools, especially among socio-economically disadvantaged students, where health initiatives often suffer. However, Belton et al. (2020) notes that future research should explore whether these successful in-school programmes can also influence PA behaviours outside of school.

In Malta, ASF is also present and promoted, however, further research would be beneficial to evaluate how the framework is being adapted to the local context.

2.4.2.4 GoNoodle

Another notable programme is GoNoodle, which focuses on movement and mindfulness, aiming to empower children and transform screen time into active time. This programme is utilized by approximately 80% of United States (US) public elementary schools and in millions of homes (Clark, 2023).

GoNoodle offers a free web-based digital exercise tool specifically designed for children to be active during school hours. GoNoodle is generally used as a brain break during class room activities, meaning pausing from academics and be physical, and is mainly targeted for younger children in K5 (5- to 6-year-olds). It also promotes involvement in Science, Technology, Engineering and Math (STEM) subjects, and mindfulness (Ofgang, 2022). This is done through fun and interactive videos, with a variety of topics to choose from. This goes into cross-curricular activities, since GoNoodle provides videos on academic subjects such as Spanish, Maths, Science, among others, while also providing videos on social-emotional learning, mindfulness, sensory and motor skills.

There is a vast body of research on the impact on the brain as a result of PA breaks, which is emphasised in this programme. It promotes physical health, enhances attention, and improves cognitive function in various ways (GoNoodle a, 2019). In fact, Clark (2023) states that students who use GoNoodle experience increased attention and expand their capacity to learn new information. Interestingly, a similar study to the one being conducted, revealed that the majority of the 726 teachers using this tool highlighted positive effects of GoNoodle on student engagement and performance in the classroom. Specifically, 66% of teachers observed that GoNoodle enhanced students' memory, while 57% noted it positively impacted overall academic performance (GoNoodle b, 2019). Furthermore, an impressive 85% expressed that GoNoodle significantly boosted student motivation (GoNoodle b, 2019).

Using GoNoodle as a PA break also contributed to better attitudes toward school, with 72% of educators reporting improvements in students' feelings about school and their schoolwork (GoNoodle b, 2019). Additionally, 83% indicated that GoNoodle helped increase students' attention, focus, and concentration, and 82% mentioned it led to improved participation in class (GoNoodle b, 2019). Teachers recognized the programme's influence on PA as well, with 82% stating that GoNoodle encouraged greater levels of PA among students.

Beyond student outcomes, 77% of *“teachers noted that GoNoodle changed their teaching for the better”*, while 75% reported changes in how they managed their classrooms, and 72% noted that it made transitions smoother (GoNoodle b, 2019, p.1). These findings suggest that GoNoodle serves as a valuable tool for enhancing student engagement and assists in the educator's effectiveness in the classroom.

Wold (2019) explains that the most significant improvements in reading fluency were observed immediately after these short PA breaks. It was also remarked that consistency is required for long-term improvements in students. On the other hand, another study by Duke (2018) shows that the impact of GoNoodle on academic performance in subjects like maths and arts was limited, as well the student's attitude towards school and PA. It is also remarked that off-task behaviours have decreased when GoNoodle videos were introduced, noting that *“when completing the strenuous activity videos, the effects were magnified, and even fewer off-task behaviours were displayed”* (Quiring, 2021, p.27). With the use of active breaks, engagement in class increases, as the children seem more focused and more willing to learn (Quiring, 2021). Although this is a good initiative, other studies show concern that this might not be enough for the children to get the recommended vigorous PA. Data from a

study by Brown et al. (2020, p. 47) states that teachers “do consider play as potential for children’s PA” and that 50.6% of the teachers used GoNoodle, raising the question of “whether the GoNoodle videos used by teachers involved vigorous PA”. This suggests that GoNoodle is a positive introduction to the classroom due to the various benefits identified. but it should not replace outdoor PA.

2.4.2.5 Fun Fit 5

Fun Fit 5 (FF5) is a local initiative conducted by the Malta Football Association (MFA) and Inhobb il-Futbol Foundation, in collaboration with MCAST and the Minister for Education, Sport, Youth, Research and Innovation (Darmanin, 2022). It seeks to contribute towards positive social change with regards to fostering children’s overall well-being, as well as promoting grassroots football, aligned with UEFA’s goals (Darmanin et al., 2023). This project started with a pilot programme in the scholastic year 2022-2023, with three schools around Malta. This project targeted around 90 children in the Year 4, where they engage in daily 45 minutes of PA led by MFA coaches (MFA, 2023, MCAST, 2024). During the summer preceding the start of FF5, these coaches participated in a pre-academic year curriculum training programme to familiarize themselves with pedagogical tools. These include, the Learning Outcomes Framework (LOF), as well as introducing the implementation of cross-curricular approaches to enhance children's enjoyment (Darmanin et. al, 2023).

A detailed report on the FF5 project was conducted in collaboration with researchers at MCAST in 2023. The findings from this study provide significant insights into the relationship between daily PA programmes in schools and academic performance. Darmanin et al. (2023) indicates that participation in a daily PA programme does not negatively affect academic outcomes. This should alleviate parental concerns regarding potential declines in grades due to missed lessons for PA.

Furthermore, the study shows the difference in students' PA levels amongst those who do not engage in daily PA at school and those students who actively participate in daily PA in terms of steps taken during school hours. The difference is an average of 1597 (38%) more steps during school hours (Darmanin et al., 2023). This correlation suggests that regular PA is crucial for enhancing movement levels among students.

Additionally, Darmanin et al. (2023, p.71) highlights that stakeholder perceptions at the end of the programme was generally positive, noting “improvements in their students, including enhanced mood, attention span, and focus”. In fact, after encouragement from the coaches, some students started engaging in sports after school. A concern teachers faced was regarding content coverage, and to mitigate this issue, it was suggested that teachers should be given additional support (Darmanin et al., 2023).

2.5 Conclusion

This chapter reviewed the growing importance of PA in childhood and its wide-ranging benefits for physical, emotional, and cognitive development. It examined local and international studies highlighting the negative trends in sedentary behaviour, and the value of early intervention through SBIs. Programmes like RSP, TDM, ASF, and others demonstrate the potential for schools to become key environments in promoting lifelong healthy habits. While these interventions show promising outcomes, challenges related to implementation and sustainability remain. The following chapter will outline the research methodology used in this study, detailing how the investigation into stakeholders' perceptions of RSP was conducted.

Chapter 3 Methodology

3.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the main aim and research questions guiding this research study, the chosen approach and the rationale behind it, and discusses the epistemological perspectives underpinning this study. It delves into the research design, detailing the structure of the study. It offers a comprehensive overview of the methodology and research tools employed for data collection and analysis. This chapter also describes the procedures undertaken to invite potential participants, ensuring their competence to provide informed consent. Additionally, it addresses the methods used for data analysis, highlighting the steps taken to ensure good quality research. The ethical considerations that were observed are also outlined.

3.2 Main Aim and Research Questions

The primary aim of this study is to examine the attitudes, experiences, and suggestions of primary school educators, being the Class, PE and RSP teachers, regarding the RSP programme.

The research questions guiding this study are:

1. What is the overall perception of RSP from the key stakeholders?
2. What are the benefits and challenges of RSP?
3. What do the key stakeholders suggest about further implementation of this programme?

The results from this study will strengthen the SBI like RSP and can be used by educators, policymakers and School Leadership Team (SLT), to make better-informed decisions for the holistic development of students.

3.3 Research Paradigm

Conducting a research study in social research involves a systematic process aimed at gaining new insights and understanding complex social issues. According to Grix (2018, p.57) a research study is built around “*building blocks*” being ontology, epistemology, methodology, and methods, which also form part of the research paradigm (Alharahsheh & Pius, 2020). These building blocks provide the foundation upon which the entire research framework is built. Grix (2018) gives the likeness of a bricklayer having to be well-versed in the tools of his trade to construct a solid structure, meaning researchers must have a deep understanding of

these foundational elements to effectively design and execute their study. Knowing the tools and concepts of research is crucial, as it ensures that the study is methodologically sound and capable of yielding reliable and meaningful results.

Ontology is the philosophical position on the reality of the study and epistemology is how that knowledge is acquired (Maxwell, 2012) and these are key factors in determining the researcher's methodology for answering the research questions. Ontology is a fundamental concept in social research that pertains to the nature of reality and existence. It involves understanding what constitutes reality and how different aspects of society, such as social actors, cultural norms, and social structures, relate to one another. Ontology addresses the nature of existence and the structure of reality (Crotty, 1998). Ontology also involves the assumptions we make about the nature of reality and what exists (Richards, 2003), as well as the nature of the world and what we can know about it (Snape & Spencer, 2003). In essence, ontology encompasses our beliefs about the nature of reality and the social world (Crotty, 1998; Richards, 2003; Snape & Spencer, 2003; Ormston et al., 2014).

Epistemology is the philosophical study of the nature, origin, and scope of knowledge. It involves examining the assumptions about what constitutes as knowledge, how it can be acquired, and how it can be communicated, as held by Cohen et al. (2007). It relates to the nature of knowledge and our understanding of the world as well as how to find out about it (Richards, 2003; Snape and Spencer, 2003). The ontology that is being adapted for this research is in the constructivist realm, as everyone's views are socially constructed through the experiences and perceptions of the educators involved in the RSP programme (Al-Saadi, 2014). Denzin and Lincoln (2011) emphasises that knowledge is actively constructed by the individuals through their day-to-day interactions. This solidifies the constructivist ontology whilst bridging onto epistemology.

The epistemological framework underpinning this research is interpretive since this qualitative research works with humans and focuses on the educator's experiences. In the context of the RSP programme, educators' perceptions and experiences will shape their understanding of the programme's effectiveness and its impact on students. Additionally, the interpretivist paradigm allows researchers to view each research context and its circumstances as distinct and influenced by the specific participants involved (Alharahsheh & Pius, 2020).

By adopting a constructivist (ontology) and interpretive (epistemology) lens, this study seeks to delve into the subjective realities of the key stakeholders involved. It explores their diverse perspectives on the programme's benefits, challenges, and potential for future improvements as well as their views on increased PA during school hours. This research takes note that knowledge is relative to the knower rather than constructed from an existing reality (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011).

Focusing on the subjective experiences and perceptions of the educators involved in the RSP programme, we can gain a deeper understanding of these diverse perspectives. This approach allows us to embrace and explore the complexities of the individual and social factors that influence stakeholder's understanding.

No quantifiable data will be collected in this study, thus making this a non-positivist qualitative research (Clark & Braun, 2013), aligning with the typical methods used in the interpretivism epistemological theory (Saunders et al., 2009).

There are different areas of constructivist approaches; social, psychological, personal, radical and contextual constructivism (Tebgogo, 2014). Due to the nature of this study, a social constructivist approach is used due to the emphasis on the interactions among the stakeholders like RSP teachers, primary class teachers and PE teachers with their students. Social constructivism highlights the importance of social interactions and the shared construction of knowledge. A social constructivist approach is also present due to the context of this study. This means that the co-curricular activity that is being researched is implemented within the specific context of Maltese government primary schools. Additionally, social constructivism acknowledges the influence of cultural and social contexts on learning and development (Alharahsheh & Pius, 2020). The methodological preferences are derived from the ability to coherently express the ontological and epistemological positions underpinning the study. The methodology refers to the specific steps used to execute the research. The method of which data is collected is the next step to building this research. This refers to various tools like questionnaires and interviews. The tool adopted is semi-structured interviews, to highlight individualism whilst keeping in mind that different perspectives and viewpoints interact and influence each other.

3.4 Research Design

A good research design for qualitative research is not simply an “*abstraction or plan*” that one can adopt from other studies (Maxwell, 2012, p. 215). Throughout the research, the design's effectiveness should be evaluated, since it interacts with the surrounding context thus is shaped by it (Maxwell, 2012). This will allow for necessary adjustments and ensure that the study achieves its intended goals. According to Maxwell (2013), a well-structured research design should be both flexible and comprehensive, encompassing the study's aims, a clearly defined conceptual framework, research questions, selected methodologies, and strategies to ensure validity. Figure 3.1 represents the research design of the study.



Figure 3.1: Research Design

3.4.1 Qualitative Research Methods

Clark and Braun (2013, p. 1) defines quantitative research as research that “uses words as data ... collected and analysed in all sorts of ways” as opposed to quantitative research where numbers are collected and analysed by statistical methods. Qualitative research does not just concern the techniques of data collection, but it is also a framework or a paradigm, referring to the general assumptions of the study.

Muzari et. al (2022) explains that qualitative research is a social inquiry approach that focuses on understanding how individuals interpret their experiences. A deeper understanding of the case study will be achieved when exploring the social contexts. It aims to understand social interactions by examining the meanings that participants ascribe to their conversations and interactions (Muzari et. al 2022). Qualitative research includes various methods like “logic, ethnography, discourse analysis, case study, open-ended interviews, [and] participant observation” (Mohajan, 2018, p. 2). These are used as a systematic and subjective approach that attempt to give appropriate meanings to things that are often not quantifiable.

To capture the subjective experiences and perspectives of teachers involved in RSP, this research will utilize in-depth one-to-one interviews. These interviews will provide a valuable opportunity to delve into their professional views and opinions on the increased PA during school hours. As in most qualitative research, semi structured interviews were chosen for this study due to its versatility, flexibility as well as “enabling reciprocity between the interviewer and participant” (Kallio et al., 2016, p. 2).

To enhance the reliability of the interviews, the process described by Kallio et al. (2016) for conducting semi-structured interviews was followed. This involved first identifying the

necessary conditions for using semi-structured interviews, then gathering and applying existing knowledge (Kallio et al., 2016). After that, a preliminary interview guide was created, which was subsequently pilot tested (Kallio et al., 2016). Finally, the complete semi-structured interview guide was prepared and presented (Kallio et al., 2016).

3.5 Participants of the Study

The RSP programme is an SBI, taking place in Maltese government schools and different colleges across the Maltese islands, who are in different stages of RSP involvement. For this study, only the duration of each school's participation in the RSP is considered relevant and is detailed in Table 3.1. Any additional information that could potentially identify specific schools, such as; names, locations, or other institutional characteristics, has been excluded, as it is not pertinent to this research. Figure 3.2 presents employment data of the study participants.

Years of RSP	2 < years < 3	1 < years < 2	0 < years < 1
College	College 2	College 3	College 1

Table 3.1: Duration of RSP involvement

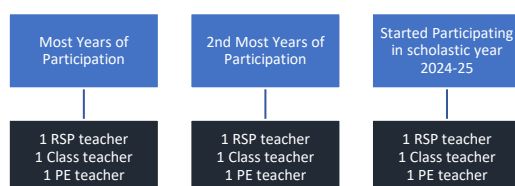


Figure 3.2: Structure of Participants

Conducting interviews with the whole population of educators involved in RSP was not considered feasible, therefore sampling techniques must be used to pick out the participants of the study. To take a clearer picture of these three levels of RSP implementation, using purposive sampling techniques, 3 educators from each scenario was taken, being one class teacher, one RSP teacher, and one PE teacher, since they are *“especially knowledgeable about or experienced with a phenomenon of interest”* (Palinkas et al., 2015, p. 2). This decision was also taken to get representation from each stage of implementation of the RSP programme.

The procedure adopted to contact the interviewees is as follows. The initial step was to obtain approval from the University Research Ethics Committee (UREC) and the Ministry for Education, Sport, Youth and Research (MEYR) as well as the Faculty Research Ethics Committee (FREC). Following such authorization, permission from the respective college's principals and heads of school was obtained. The heads of schools also provided the contact information of possible interviewees, prior to any contact with the participants. This was

done for all three categories of participants: namely the class teachers, PE teachers and the RSP teachers.

Information Letters (Appendix 1) were then distributed to the possible participants of the research study on the RSP programme in Maltese primary schools, including the aims and a detailed description of the area being researched. The participants in the study were also explained to about the benefit of contributing to a deeper understanding of the effectiveness of increased PA programmes, including aiding future educational development by providing their valuable insights and any suggestions for improvement. The participants were also informed that they will be given a pseudonyms in the research, thus ensuring confidentiality. (Confidentiality and ethical safeguarding issues are discussed in depth in Section 3.8.

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3.5.1 Key Stakeholders: Class, RSP, and PE Teachers

The key stakeholders chosen to participate in this study are 3 different types of educator: class teachers, RSP teachers and PE teachers. Class teachers in Maltese state schools play a very important role in the educational and personal development of their students. They are responsible for planning and delivering engaging lessons that align with the national curriculum, while also ensuring the well-being and progress of their students. These educators spend most of their time in school in contact with the students.

Apart from the teacher's instructional duties, a class teacher also plays a crucial role in pastoral care (The Teacher's Handbook, n.d. & Job Description - Teacher n.d.). They must maintain regular communication with guardians, provide guidance and support to students, and address behavioural issues. Furthermore, they are responsible for administrative tasks such as record keeping, reporting, and collaboration with other school staff, including the RSP teacher, which is relevant to this study.

Another role of the class teachers is to keep updated on educational trends and best practices. They are expected to engage in ongoing professional development. This includes attending workshops, conferences, and pursuing further studies. By continuously learning and growing, class teachers can enhance their teaching skills and provide the best possible education for their students. This also ties into the study, as observing and taking part in RSP will serve as a professional development tool.

A class teacher oversees around 18-28 students in one class, with a range of abilities. In Malta, a teacher is typically in charge of teaching a diverse range of subjects across the primary school curriculum. These subjects often include language arts; Maltese and English, mathematics, science, social studies, arts and crafts, religious education, with an Ethics teacher also available, and other subjects such as Information technology (IT). Interestingly, a class teacher should also instruct 1 lesson per week of PE, apart from the 1 PE lesson which is carried out by the PE teacher, as well as participating in RSP.

PE teachers in Malta play a vital role in the educational framework, focusing on the promotion of physical fitness, health, and overall well-being of the students. Their primary responsibility is curriculum development. PE teachers implement a curriculum that aligns with the National Curriculum Framework (Ministry of Education and Employment, 2012) and the Learning Outcomes Framework (Ministry of Education and Employment, 2015). This involves creating lesson plans that cover a variety of physical activities and sports, ensuring that students acquire the necessary techniques and skills for an active lifestyle as well as holistic growth.

Instruction and assessment are also key components of a PE teacher's role. This includes evaluating physical literacy, health-related fitness, and understanding the social aspects of sports. By providing constructive feedback, PE teachers can better assist students in identifying areas for improvement and encourage them to set personal fitness goals.

In addition to teaching physical skills, PE teachers are strong advocates for health promotion. They incorporate discussions on nutrition, fitness, and overall well-being into their lessons, emphasizing the importance of adopting lifelong healthy habits. By integrating these topics into their curriculum, PE teachers aim to foster PA in the student's life contributing to both the physical and mental health of the student.

The PE teacher is also in charge of taking care of equipment and resources, which is done in liaison with the School Management Team (SLT). Additionally, they run Sport Days and other sport activities, as well as aid in interschool competitions.

RSP teachers are typically educators with a background in sport, having obtained qualifications from institutions such as the University of Malta or MCAST. Rather than teaching the PE curriculum, an RSP teacher follows the RSP framework, since the two programmes have different aims. The role of an RSP teacher varies slightly from that of a PE teacher. An RSP teacher manages students, class teachers and LSEs, of more than one class, in different activities within this programme. As already discussed, the RSP sessions follow station work, meaning students will go from one activity to another after a certain amount of time, until all students participate in all activities. This is where communication with other educators becomes vital. Class teachers should aid in the stations and use it as an opportunity to discover new ideas on building their own PE lesson. The duration of every RSP lesson is of 30 minutes, and an RSP teacher stationed in one school might have contact with the students twice a week.

3.5.2 Participant Demographic Information

The recruitment strategy ensures that each phase of the RSP is represented in this study. Therefore, as mentioned above, participants were chosen from three different colleges, whose schools form part of the RSP programme. The demographics of the participants shows a wide range of personal and professional backgrounds. This is an important part of the study since with this information, one can better analyse the data due to the context it provides (Dobosh, 2017).

The final sample reflected a diverse cohort in terms of age, gender, education, professional background, and geographic location. Participants age ranged from early 20s to early 50s. This showed the inclusion of individuals at different career stages and life phases. While gender-specific data was not explicitly listed as important, 5 participants were male, and 4 participants were female.

It is interesting to note that some teachers, most notably PE and RSP teachers, might be shared with another school. In fact, in this study, 2 participants fall into this category, Sam and Jesse. They both form part of another school which is not being researched in this study but elicits vital information when compared to schools participating in the RSP programme. Table 3.2 presents a detailed rundown of participants demographic information.

Participant	College + Role	Age	Post Secondary Education	Work Experience
Jamie	College 1 RSP teacher	44	UEFA Elite Youth A Licence Advanced fitness diploma IT graduate	Employed in Sports Complex Supply teacher (5 yrs) primary, mostly RSP; 16 years' experience as a football coach
Charlie	College 2 RSP teacher	22	Advanced Diploma Sport	MCAST Placement 1 st year as a teacher
Sam	College 3 RSP teacher	25	Enrolled in a Masters in Teaching and Learning in PE	7 th year; taught PE and now RSP. Taught RSP with kinder. This is the 2 nd year RSP. Has 2 different schools.
Chris	College 1 Class Teacher	26	Qualified teacher	4 th year teaching in Primary School
Alex	College 2 Class Teacher	53	Qualified teacher	33 years teaching in the same primary school; taught O level Maltese private lessons
Riley	College 3 Class Teacher	47	Qualified teacher	12 years at current school, 25 years teaching primary
Taylor	College 1 PE Teacher	33	Qualified teacher	10 years PE teacher, 8 yrs secondary and 2 yrs primary: yr 1-3
Robin	College 2 PE Teacher	27	Qualified teacher	4 th year teaching PE primary
Jesse	College 3 PE Teacher	38	Qualified teacher	11 years teaching, 5 years coaching, total 15 yrs of relevant experience, Teaches at 2 different schools

Table 3.2: Participants' Information

3.6 Data Collection Methods

Data collection is defined by Taherdoost (2021, p.1) as:

Different methods for gathering information regarding specific variables of the study aiming to employ them in the data analysis phase to achieve the results of the study, gain the answer of the research questions or test the hypotheses are referred to as data collection.

Choosing the appropriate data collection method is not a neutral decision. It is influenced by the research's ontological and epistemological assumptions (Grix, 2018). This means that researchers must ensure that the tools and strategies selected for data collection are consistent with their wider research framework. In qualitative research, for instance, methods such as interviews, focus groups, and observations allow for a deep exploration of participants' perspectives, experiences, and interpretations (Grix, 2018). In contrast, quantitative studies may rely on surveys or experimental measurements to collect numerical data that can be statistically analysed (Grix, 2018).

In qualitative research, selecting appropriate data collection methods is crucial to ensuring truth value, consistency, neutrality and applicability (Noble & Smith, 2015). These criteria serve as the qualitative equivalent of validity, reliability and generalisability. For example, as Noble and Smith (2015) emphasize, aligning methods with these principles strengthens the rigour of the study and ensures that the findings are both authentic and meaningful.

3.6.1 Semi-structured Interviews

For this study, semi structured interviews were identified to be the ideal tool to carry out the research. It can be "*defined as a systematic way of talking and listening to people*" (de la Croix et al., 2018, p.2). Effective interviews provide a valuable window into participants' perspectives, allowing researchers to gain detailed insights into their experiences, beliefs, and emotions. By actively listening and engaging with interviewees from three different classes of educators, the researcher can gather rich data that informs improvements in various areas of the intended research subject. Interviews offer a distinctive advantage over questionnaires by providing a more in-depth exploration of complex behaviours and motivations, through open ended questions which allows participants to share their personal perspectives and experiences, fostering a richer understanding of the research topic (Mantula et al., 2024).

The key to successful interviews lies in establishing a rapport that fosters open and honest communication, enabling participants to share their authentic thoughts and feelings (de la Croix et al., 2018). A semi-structured interview typically starts with an opening statement and a few general questions to initiate conversation. These questions are designed to delve deeper into specific topics and facilitate a free-flowing exchange of ideas between the

interviewer and the interviewee. The interviewer has the flexibility to adjust the direction of the conversation or request additional information by asking probing questions based on the participant's responses (Naz et al., 2022).

3.6.1.2 Interview Guide

Three different interview guides were created for this study. Whilst following the same pattern, the interview guides vary through specific prompts linking to the role of the different educators. According to Naz et al., (2022, p.1) a well-developed semi-structured interview guide must not be underestimated as it

becomes an authentic and valid source of data collection whereas weakly developed semi-structured interview guide distorts the findings of research resulting in unreliable, inaccurate and invalid data collected.

This guide helps ensure that the data collected from each participant is consistent and it can be compared and analysed. While interviewers can modify the phrasing of questions, they must maintain the original meaning to avoid misunderstandings among different respondents.

In this study, whilst the guides provided a framework of questions, the researcher-maintained flexibility to adapt the discussion based on participants' responses, ensuring that the conversation remained relevant to the research objectives. This approach fostered an open and engaging dialogue, that allowed participants to share their thoughts and feelings with ease. By building trust, the researcher created a comfortable and safe space for interviewees to discuss their ideas and experiences freely. The interview guides can be found in Appendix 3.

3.6.2 Piloting the Interview

Prior to conducting the study, a pilot interview was conducted to further enhance the study, also fulfilling the number four of the five steps mentioned by Kallio et al. (2016, p.8) which are.

1) identifying the prerequisites for using semi-structured interviews; (2) retrieving and using previous knowledge; (3) formulating the preliminary semi-structured interview guide; (4) pilot testing the interview guide; and (5) presenting the complete semi-structured interview guide.

The interviewee was a PE school teacher in a school participating in RSP. The pilot interview served as a valuable opportunity to test the clarity, relevance, and structure of the interview guide. Overall, the flow of the conversation was smooth, and the questions elicited rich and relevant responses. Therefore, major changes were not necessary. However, some minor

amendments were made. A few questions were reworded, and some questions were restructured to improve the logical sequencing, thus ensuring a more natural conversational flow. The pilot interview also reaffirmed the appropriateness of the interview duration and confirmed that the selected questions were well-aligned with the study's objectives.

3.6.3 Implementing the Interviews

The interviews were implemented using a semi-structured format, guided by a set of open-ended questions designed to explore participants' experiences and perceptions related to the RSP programme. Interviews were conducted individually to allow participants to speak freely without influence from colleagues, and they were scheduled during mutually convenient time slots.

Each interview began with brief rapport building conversation and a recap of the purpose of the study, followed by introductory questions to ease participants into the conversation. Whilst the interview guide was followed, the order of questions was occasionally adapted in response to the natural flow of the conversation, which *"opened up avenues of investigation and interesting themes previously unthought of"* (Grix, 2019, p.164).

Information letters (Appendix 1) outlining the purpose of the research, the nature of participation, and ethical considerations were then distributed to all potential interviewees. After obtaining informed consent, individual interviews were scheduled at times convenient for each participant to minimize disruption to their professional duties.

The interviewees were given the option to conduct the interviews online for their convenience and all of them opted for this. Each interview lasted approximately 30 to 45 minutes and was audio recorded, with the participants' permission, for ease of transcription. Notes were also taken during and immediately after the interview to capture contextual information and initial reflections. The interviews were then transcribed verbatim and anonymised, with each participant assigned a pseudonym to maintain confidentiality and uphold ethical standards throughout the research process.

A sample transcript can be viewed in Appendix 4.

3.7 Data Analysis

This study employed reflexive thematic analysis as outlined by Braun and Clarke (2019), a widely recognised method for identifying, analysing, and reporting patterns within qualitative data. The six-phase approach provided a structured yet flexible framework, enabling a rigorous and coherent exploration of the participants' perspectives.

Phase 1: It entailed the familiarisation with the data involved, transcribing each interview verbatim and reading the transcripts multiple times. This also included translating the interviews from codeswitching (mix of Maltese and English) to English. This initial immersion allowed for a deep understanding of the content and facilitated early recognition of significant patterns and potential codes. Microsoft Word was used for this initial phase.

Phase 2: All relevant quotes were extracted and placed into Column D of a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet. This format provided a clear overview of the data. Adjacent columns were used to record initial codes, proposed sub-themes, and tentative themes. Each quote was also tagged with a unique participant identifier (e.g., Taylor, Alex, Sam), ensuring traceability and transparency in linking statements to their source.

Phase 3: The searching for themes involved sorting and filtering the codes to identify meaningful clusters. This step allowed similar codes to be grouped, leading to the development of broader sub-themes that captured patterns across participants.

Phase 4: Reviewing themes. The coherence and distinctiveness of each theme were evaluated (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Some themes were refined, merged, or discarded to ensure that each one represented a clear and internally consistent narrative grounded in the data. This iterative process helped ensure alignment between the developing thematic structure and the original dataset.

Phase 5: Defining and naming themes entailed further refinement of each theme's scope and content.

Phase 6: Producing the report was the final step of the thematic analysis approach.

The analysis was adapted to suit the practical aspects of this research. The use of Microsoft Excel facilitated efficient organisation, filtering, and analysis of data, allowing for clear visual tracking of each theme and sub-theme. This approach ensured that the process remained systematic and grounded in the participants' lived experiences.

Over 50 initial codes were generated during the early stages of analysis, reflecting complexity of the data. Through a process of consolidation and refinement, these were narrowed down to approximately 35 codes, ensuring that only the most relevant and recurring ideas were retained. Initially, five preliminary themes were identified based on these codes. Upon further review and evaluation, these five themes were retained as they a strong alignment with the participants' experiences relative to this study. The final thematic framework, presented in Figure 3.3, illustrates the five main themes with their sub-themes.

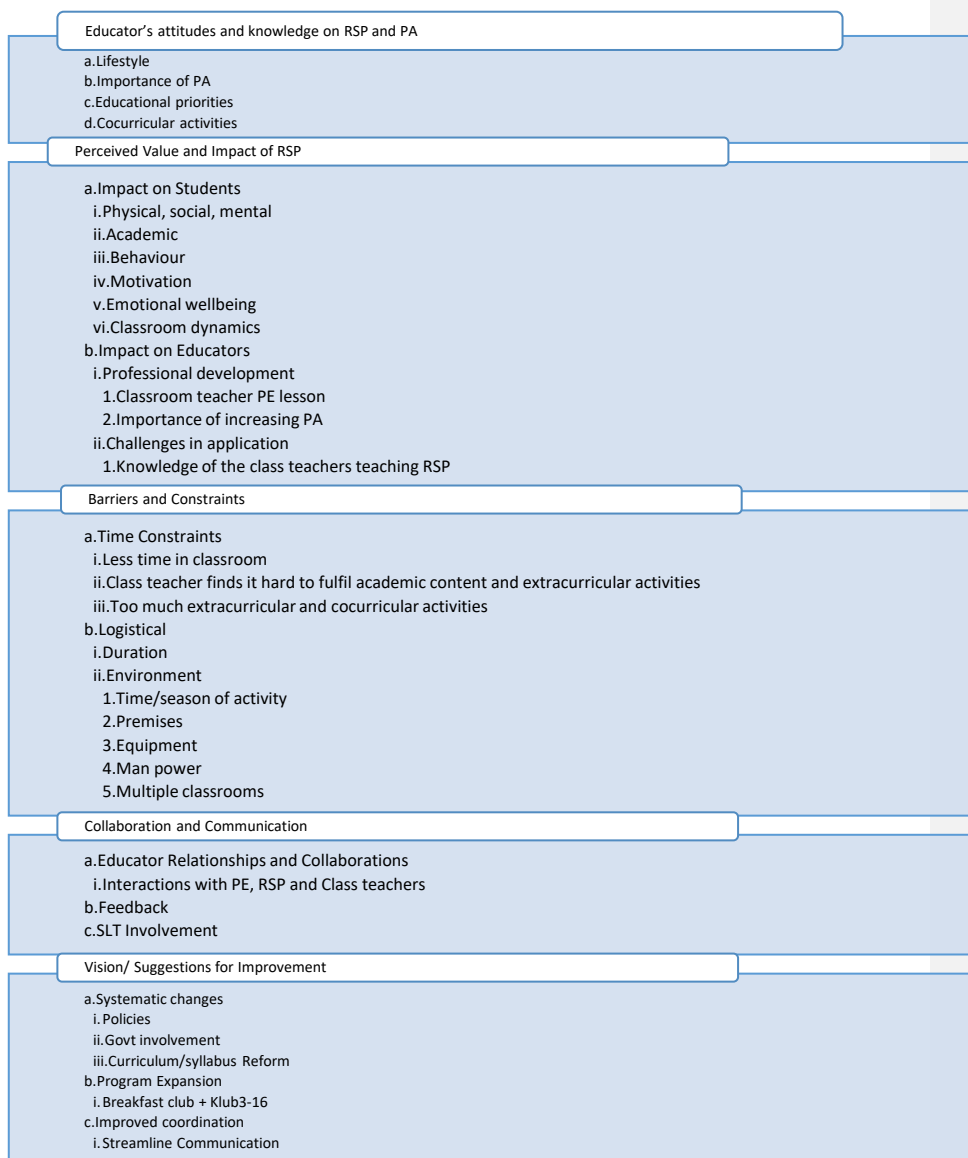


Figure 3.3: Themes

3.8 Ethical Clearance

Following the approval from the University Research Ethics Committee (UREC), the Ministry for Education, Sport, Youth and Research (MEYR), and the Faculty Research Ethics Committee (FREC), the implementation of the interviews was initiated. Contact with potential participants was facilitated through school leadership, where after approval from Heads of School, they shared the contact details of eligible educators; class teachers, RSP teachers, and PE teachers.

3.8.1 Informed Consent

Prior to their involvement in the study, informed consent (Appendix 2) was obtained from all participants. Each individual was sent an information letter outlining the purpose of the research, the nature of their participation, and how the data would be used. The letter also clarified that participation was entirely voluntary, and participants had the right to withdraw from the study at any point without providing a reason or facing any negative consequences. Additionally, participants were made aware that the interviews would be audio-recorded for transcription purposes, and their permission for recording was explicitly requested and granted. After obtaining informed consent, individual interviews were scheduled at times convenient for each participant to minimize disruption to their professional duties.

3.8.2 Maintaining Confidentiality

To ensure the confidentiality and anonymity of all participants, several safeguards were put in place throughout the research process. All identifiable information was removed during transcription, and participants were referred to using pseudonyms in all documentation, analysis, and reporting. The names of schools and colleges were also anonymised to prevent identification of institutions. Data was securely stored in password protected files, accessible only to the researcher. Table 3.3 shows the list of pseudonyms used to represent the participants across the three participating colleges

College	Role	Pseudonym
College 1	RSP Teacher	Jamie
College 1	PE Teacher	Taylor
College 1	Class Teacher	Chris
College 2	RSP Teacher	Charlie
College 2	PE Teacher	Robin
College 2	Class Teacher	Alex
College 3	RSP Teacher	Sam
College 3	PE Teacher	Jesse
College 3	Class Teacher	Riley

Table 3.3: Participants' Pseudonym

3.9 Conclusion

This chapter outlined the methodological foundation of the study, guided by a constructivist ontology and interpretivist epistemology. These philosophical perspectives informed the decision to adopt a qualitative approach, which allowed for an in-depth exploration of educators' experiences, perceptions, and suggestions regarding the RSP programme. The research design adopted purposive sampling and semi-structured interviews to ensure that rich, contextually grounded data could be gathered from key stakeholders; class teachers, PE teachers, and RSP teachers, across the different levels of programme implementation in their respective colleges.

The chapter also described the data collection process, including piloting and implementing the interviews, and explained how reflexive thematic analysis was employed to interpret the data. Ethical standards were maintained throughout the research process, including securing informed consent, protecting participant confidentiality, and managing data responsibly. This approach provides a solid foundation for the findings and themes that will be discussed in the next chapter.

Chapter 4 Results and Discussion

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the key findings that emerged from the semi-structured interviews conducted with educators and key stakeholders involved in the RSP programme. These findings are discussed in relation to existing literature. The goal is to interpret the insights shared by the interviewees, highlighting common themes as well as noteworthy differences in perspective.

The data analysis revealed several themes that reflect participants lived experiences, perceptions, and suggestions regarding the implementation and impact of the RSP programme. By combining empirical evidence from this study with established findings, this chapter aims to provide a comprehensive and meaningful understanding of how RSP and increased PA in primary schools is functioning, and how it may be enhanced moving forward. Figure 4.1 provides a visual representation of the final themes extracted from the findings and will be discussed in the following sections.



Figure 4.1: List of Final Themes

4.2 Educators' Attitudes and Knowledge

Knowing teachers' personal and professional backgrounds, particularly with regards to their own engagement in PA, deepens the interpretation of their views (Dahal et al., 2024). Their lifestyle, beliefs, and environmental constraints contextualize their perspectives, making their voices more grounded and analytically rich. The educators' attitudes and knowledge towards PA and their teaching profession will be discussed.

4.2.1 Lifestyle

Personal engagement with PA was most noticeable among the participating RSP and PE teachers, whose active lifestyles closely mirrored the professional values they promoted. Many described sport and movement not merely as a job, but as integral to their daily routines and identities. For these educators, teaching PA seemed to be a natural extension of long-standing personal habits.

Taylor shared that he had been involved in sport since the age of four, participating in football, athletics, and basketball, which are activities that he credits with keeping him mentally clear, motivated, and away from “*certain behaviours which are less good*”. This is in line with studies like Collingwood et al., (2000) and Carrellán et al., (2025). What began as a hobby eventually became “*a second job*” (Taylor) due to the competitive nature of his involvement. Robin similarly recounted being “*always with bikes*” in their youth, before later joining team sports such as football, athletics, and handball. Their account reflected a sustained and diverse connection to PA. Jesse noted that she “*used to compete in shotput*” whilst emphasising that she is still committed to general fitness.

Among the RSP educators, a similar pattern emerged. Jamie described training three to four times per week in addition to holding a technical director position at a sports club. Charlie mentioned a consistent gym routine and a personal enjoyment in “*taking care of [their] body*” by keeping it active. Sam described their early involvement in ballet, gymnastics, and athletics as formative to their current interest in PA. Both Sam and Robin stressed the principle of “*practice what you preach*,” highlighting how educators’ own behaviours can model healthy lifestyles for students.

Notably, two class teachers, Alex and Riley, also reported that they consider PA as an important facet of life. Alex described sport as “*a big part of [his] life*,” by joining weekly gym sessions and participation in veteran football leagues. Riley shared a similar commitment, going on walks three times a week and making sure his children attended football clubs. Their routines suggest that even among general educators, PA can hold personal value and shape how they engage with it in school.

Chris provided a contrasting perspective. She spoke about her drift from PA during adolescence, noting that she stopped participating in PA after secondary school. Chris described how, as teenagers, her peer group began to see PE as “*a burden*”, leading to a gradual withdrawal from active habits. Still, Chris recalled primary school as a time where they were excited for PE lessons, especially due to the variety in PA, being enjoyable and ever-changing.

Overall, whilst the lifestyle habits varied among participants, most of them are nonetheless physically active. Cheung (2020) found that students are more likely to be active when they are being taught by teachers who are active themselves. Therefore, teachers’ personal commitment to movement may not only influence the students enthusiasm for initiatives

like RSP but also shapes the authenticity with which they promote active lifestyles to students.

4.2.2 Importance of PA

Educators across all roles consistently emphasized the importance of PA for children's development, highlighting physical, psychological, cognitive, and social benefits. There was a shared belief that PA is not just recreational, but rather, a fundamental contributor to students' health, behaviour, and learning outcomes.

RSP teachers pointed to a recent shift in how schools value physical education. Charlie remarked that *"school is giving much more importance to sport,"* while Sam reflected that she used to *"fight for PE to be considered as any other academic subject"* but now feels it is *"hopefully... being seen as important as other academic subjects."* This perceived cultural change was also backed by structural adjustments, as Sam celebrated the increase to *"four lessons a week"* of PA in their school, describing it as a tangible sign of progress.

The benefits of PA were described by participants in a holistic way. Chris linked regular activity with *"become[ing] healthier... more motivated, satisfied."* Alex elaborated further, stressing the value of *"free play"* as essential, also assisting children to *"get their mind working"* through decision-making and problem-solving during games, pointing out the cognitive benefits of PA (Robles et al., 2020). Alex also pointed out the role of PA in teaching resilience, such as knowing *"how to behave when one loses"* and functioning within a team, emphasizing the social benefits (NHS b, 2023). Jesse summarised this as follows; *"healthy mind and a healthy body,"* reinforcing the view that PA supports the overall well-being.

Many teachers connected declining activity levels to broader lifestyle shifts. Taylor and Robin expressed concern about the difference in lifestyles in today's children. Taylor noted as follows; *"video games nowadays... children find them more attractive than playing (PA)."* Robin observed that *"life used to be different before,"* referencing a time when outdoor play was more embedded in daily routines. These changes were viewed not only as cultural, but also as detrimental to children's natural movement and social development.

The interviewees also referred to scientific backing when discussing the benefits of PA. Taylor emphasised that PA is *"scientifically proven"* to release endorphins, which contribute to emotional regulation and general wellbeing. He framed school PA as a stepping stone toward creating *"a physically literate nation"* and fostering *"lifelong commitment to sport,"* echoing the World Health Organization's recommendations (WHO, 2020).

Finally, the importance of educating families also emerged. Riley, for example, voiced concerns about children's poor dietary habits and noted that efforts to improve student health through PA must be accompanied by parental engagement; *"we have to educate the parents that they need PA."*

In sum, participants positioned PA as a critical element in holistic child development as well as their own development. Their comments reflected both personal convictions and a growing institutional recognition of PA's value, which is showing a its continued prioritisation within schools.

4.2.3 Educator's Drive

Passion is a sub-theme that arises from the analysis of the transcripts. It is very encouraging to note that all participants show a great deal of passion and motivation regarding their teaching role. Although many expressed being tired or "*exhausted*", such as Alex, the passion for teaching was very evident, not only with what was said but also in their tone of voice.

Class teachers expressed how much satisfaction they get from this job, with Alex stating "*you would not find this in any other job, this satisfaction*". Chris and Riley both expressed interest in becoming teachers from a young age with Riley stating that "*teaching is ingrained in me*". The way students learn things from scratch is also something that Alex mentioned as being motivational to keep on teaching. After 33 years of teaching, Alex describes their motivation as stemming from "*the rapport you build with them,*" "*the children's smiles,*" and the fact that:

they are ready to receive more...they are like tissue paper, ready and attentive to absorb what you give them.

RSP and PE teachers also show that they are passionate about their work. In fact, RSP 1 echoes Riley's sentiment, stating teaching "*(is) ingrained in you*". RSP 2, Taylor and Jesse both state that they had positive experiences with their PE teacher when they were students, which directly motivated them to pursue a career in teaching, and, more specifically, teaching sport. This shows the importance of the role of a teacher, and the influence educators have on the students that they encounter.

In furtherance of this, Robin stated as follows;

The satisfaction of teaching does not come when someone says well done or when someone says thank you, but that you observe improvement, [in children].

4.2.4 Understanding Co-curricular Activities

One unexpected finding that emerged was the widespread confusion among participants regarding the concept of co-curricular activities. None of the educators demonstrated a clear understanding of what the term entails. Instead, most confused it with cross-curricular teaching, often referencing subject integration within the classroom, rather than referring to structured activities that occur alongside the academic curriculum.

This confusion is significant, given the potential of co-curricular programmes to support broader educational goals, including physical literacy, social development, and student engagement. According to Watts (2023, para. 4), "*co-curricular activities are programmes that take place outside of the traditional classroom but in some manner complement academic learning from classroom curriculum.*" Although they are not graded and do not offer academic credit, they serve to reinforce and enrich the educational experience.

The lack of awareness among participants suggests a gap in teacher training or policy communication regarding how co-curricular activities might be purposefully leveraged to support initiatives like RSP. Addressing this conceptual misunderstanding could provide new opportunities for schools to integrate non-academic programming, such as RSP and after-school sports as part of a more holistic educational model.

4.3 Value and Impact of RSP

The value and the impact of the RSP programme is presented and discussed. The participating educators provided an interpretation of the programme's impact on students' PA levels, classroom behaviour, social interaction, and general well-being. The findings reveal that the RSP programme has also made an impact on the educators, most notably the classroom teachers.

4.3.1 Impact of RSP on Students

While students are the central focus of the RSP programme, they were not direct participants in this study. Instead, insights were gathered from key stakeholders, such as RSP teachers, PE teachers, and class teachers, who, through their experiences and observations, offered valuable perspectives on the programme's impact on students. This section will explore the perceived benefits of the RSP as observed and reported by these participants.

4.3.1.1 Physical Wellbeing

This section explores participants' perceptions of the RSP programme's physical impact on students, focusing on physical literacy development, reduced sedentary behaviour, and overall engagement.

Interestingly, only one participant reported observing an improvement in students' physical literacy because of the RSP programme. The remaining participants either felt that there was no noticeable impact or expressed that it was "*difficult to notice improvement*" (Taylor). Within such a short timeframe despite these differing views on physical literacy development, all participants agreed that the increased movement and physical engagement provided by RSP was beneficial, particularly in reducing sedentary time during the school day.

The PE teachers and RSP teachers all agree that one of the biggest benefits of RSP is the fact that the children are moving and thus, as Robin states, "*it is reducing children's sedentary time*". Charlie noted that the stamina of certain students has improved from the start of the scholastic year, remarking that in three to four months "*they are no longer asking me 'Sir, I'm going to sit down, because I am out of breath*" specifically referencing children suffering from asthma. This is in line with Wanrooij et al., (2014) and Eijkemans et al., 's (2012) stating that PA improves overall quality of life of asthmatics.

The participants were all in agreement that RSP works on the fundamental movement skills which should lead to a more physically literate population. Jamie states that one of the major benefits of RSP is that:

It touches on many aspects in one lesson ... I include a little bit of throwing, this week I worked on tennis, I had one side tennis, gymnastics ... yes, I did bouncing like basketball. Erm and they had an exercise agility.

This shows a mixture of movements that the students are exposed to in the 30 minutes of RSP. On the other hand, there are participants like Robin, who state that “no, I see no changes per se from the PE lesson”. One of the issues is that PE teachers and RSP teachers also remarked that it would be difficult for her to follow up on the individual students when they teach all the students in that school (Robin and Sam).

Class teachers, in contrast to PE and RSP teachers, have the opportunity to follow up on their students’ progress daily. Chris, a year 1 class teacher, stated that she notes students who struggles in PA, accomplishing new tasks and skills; “when they actually do it, they feel proud”. Alex and Riley offered a contrasting perspective. Alex and Riley, with their vast experience of over 30 years, expressed that they did not see any notable improvement in their student’s physical literacy. In relation to this, Alex states that “if they were struggling in co-ordination, I don’t think they improved much” whilst Riley states that “they are moving, if the aim is for example to reduce obesity, they are doing more activity, but in my opinion, it is for sure not enough”.

Sam remarked that when working with kinder classes, the improvement in the student’s physical literacy was “astronomical” noting that this programme works well with the younger age groups. This pushes on improving adolescents’ physical inactivity since it aligns with the data on early childhood FMS (Fundamental Movement Skills) delays, thus promote their motor skill competence (Stodden et al., 2008).

A startling comment that strengthens the value of RSP stated by Chris is purely that of increasing the time students are active, is:

During circle time, I ask them what they did in the weekend, I have 4 foreigners, they don’t even go to the playground, even the Maltese you will find that they stay home.

This shows that due to different factors, many students in Malta are not being active away from school, so the introduction of RSP allowed for more children to be active throughout the scholastic year.

4.3.1.2 Social Wellbeing

Bailey (2006) highlighted studies that show the relationship between PE, sport, and social development is somewhat ambiguous, however he also presented studies indicating that structured PA can have a positive impact on students' social behaviours. All the participants of the study reflected on the social impact of the RSP programme, often linking its structured delivery model, noting improved peer interaction, communication, and inclusivity. Participants described how RSP offered students opportunities to work alongside peers outside their usual classroom groups, encouraging the development of social skills such as turn-taking, teamwork, and mutual respect.

A classroom teacher, Chris, shared that students who were typically quiet or withdrawn in class became more expressive and socially active during PA sessions. This is evident when Chris stated:

I have around four students that do not talk much in class. Then during PA, even during break, I noticed that while they are running and playing, it's like their character comes out.

This observation aligns with findings by Kandola et al. (2018) and Stubbs (2017), who noted that PA can reduce social anxiety and provide a safer social setting for children who might struggle in a traditional academic environment. In this case, the carefully designed, non-competitive nature of RSP appeared to create space for students to engage without fear of judgment.

Charlie, an RSP teacher, observed that one of the challenges students face during PA is working together, effectively. By continually exposing students to these situations, and with time and guidance, students might be able to improve these social skills.

Five participants commented on the social advantage of combining multiple classes during RSP sessions, when they observed that this promoted new peer relationships across year groups and enhanced communication between students from different social circles. Examples of these are:

They are having social interaction not just with their class, but also other classes

(Taylor);

Their communication between them—it is better

(Charlie).

These reflections also suggest that the way RSP is structured is vital to these social wellbeing outcomes. RSP sessions are organised to include varied and inclusive activities, and multiple classes are allowed for the social domain to be emphasised. This supports Bailey's (2006) conclusion that the quality and intentional design of school-based PA programmes are critical to achieving outcomes such as co-operation, inclusion, and moral reasoning.

Van Boekel et al. (2016) argues that participation in structured school sport and PA contributes to the formation of strong peer and adult relationships, expanding students' social networks and supporting their integration into school culture. The consistency and predictability of RSP sessions may play a key role in allowing these bonds to form, especially for students who benefit from routine and structure in social settings.

4.3.1.3 Mental and Emotional Wellbeing

A consistent theme across all participant responses was the clear sense of anticipation and enthusiasm students displayed toward PA, whether during RSP or PE lessons. Educators unanimously observed that children looked forward to these sessions, with Taylor noting, *"It shows in their body language, as well as their behaviour and facial expressions."* This excitement reflects not only high engagement but also the role PA plays in supporting students' mental and emotional wellbeing. This enthusiasm suggests that students find the sessions enjoyable, a critical factor in fostering long-term engagement in PA and sport participation (Michael et al., 2016).

Regular opportunities for movement and play appeared to help students regulate their mood and fostered joy and motivation within the school environment. A PE teacher (Taylor) from a school where RSP had only recently been introduced explained that, although he had not yet seen significant physical improvements, he had observed *"improvement in terms of mood, behaviour, [and] happiness."*

Jamie believes that it is important to offer a wide range of sport even though for example *"girls don't like football"* but *"running with the ball is a PA. If you go in with the perspective of that they will become footballers, they will hate it and will not like the subject"*. The fact that RSP exposes students to a variety of different skills and sport allows them to find something that they enjoy, thus opening doors for them to have fun reaching their daily recommended PA, tapping into their intrinsic motivation (Michael et al., 2016). Charlie notes that the students are gaining more confidence in their sport abilities, which also links to motivation and self-esteem (Van Boekel et al., 2016)

Interestingly, PE teacher Robin shared two contrasting views about students' enthusiasm for PE. Initially, she remarked that PE had become routine, saying, *"What I noticed is that the children aren't as excited as they used to be... It's like it's become something normal"* (Robin). However, Robin also noted that *"they get so enthusiastic before they go out that they don't even let you explain."* This contrast suggests that student excitement may vary depending on the type of activity, the structure of the session, or even their emotional state on the day. While this structured PA may be part of the weekly, nearly daily routine, it continues to generate genuine enthusiasm.

Robin emphasised that PE is a powerful setting for emotional expression, noting that *"certain things come out more,"* especially students' emotions. She explained that behaviours such as bullying were more noticeable during PE than in the classroom and

shared that students often felt more comfortable opening up to the PE teacher. This highlights how PE can serve as a space not only for PA but also for emotional visibility and connection. They also expressed that RSP is not tackling a lot of issues like students with low self-esteem, due to the large number of students at one go.

4.3.1.4 Academic Achievement

Academic achievement is a central focus of the educational experience, and recent research highlights the important role that PA and participation in school sports can play in supporting students' academic outcomes (Vanhelst et al., 2015; Páez-Maldonado et al., 2020; Wold, 2019). Participants offered a range of perspectives on how the RSP programme relates to academic outcomes. The majority of RSP and PE teachers argued that PA should not be seen as a distraction from academic learning; rather, they believed it could support students' cognitive performance, classroom behaviour, and overall readiness to learn if there is the "*right time management and planning*" (Robin). However, this view was not universally shared. Two classroom teachers, Alex and Riley, expressed doubts about RSP's academic value, even suggesting that it might detract from valuable teaching time.

Alex offered an interesting observation. The class teacher noted that, compared to the previous year's class, where students appeared to concentrate better after PA, this year's group did not show noticeable improvement in focus or in the way they approached tasks, stating, "*how they do their work slowly and tidy, I didn't see any difference.*" Riley goes further stating that "*marks are going down*" expressing that they are fighting against time and other school activities to keep up with academics. This will be further analysed and discussed in the Barriers and Constraints Theme of this dissertation.

4.3.2 Impact of RSP on Educators

Beyond its influence on students, the RSP programme also had a notable impact on educators, mainly the class teachers. Participants reflected on how the programme has the capability to shape educator's views on PA and increase their knowledge on the building and structuring of their physical education lessons.

4.3.2.1 Professional Development

The success of the RSP lesson depends heavily on the active involvement of class teachers. Jamie explained, "*I think that RSP helps the class teacher a lot because they get many ideas from us, they tell me so themselves.*" Exposure to a variety of physical activities and teaching strategies during RSP not only benefits students but also provides informal professional

development for teachers. Research supports this, indicating that both observation and co-teaching contribute meaningfully to professional growth in educational settings (Hendry et al., 2013; Tinker Sachs et al., 2011). Chris echoed this sentiment, noting that she regularly draws on ideas from RSP sessions, complemented by her own independent research.

However, not all educators perceived the same level of follow-through. Charlie questioned whether class teachers consistently delivered their own PE sessions, *“I never saw them, maybe there was one that comes to ask us for equipment,”* though others acknowledged it was difficult to know, as teachers often conduct the lesson on different pitches. The other two class teachers shared that, although they previously taught their own PE lessons, increasing academic demands had forced them to deprioritise physical education. Alex noted, that *“Last year I managed to do them, but this year my class takes too long to finish work.”* Still, Sam reinforced the broader value of the programme, stating that *“you’re promoting PA within the school,”* which is key to cultivating a positive and active school culture.

4.4 Barriers and Constraints

While the RSP programme was generally viewed in a positive light, participants also identified several barriers that affect its perceived value to both students and educators. The most cited constraint was time, particularly for class teachers, who felt increasing pressure to balance academic responsibilities with SBI, co-curricular or extra-curricular activities such as outings, talks, and other peripatetic subjects like art, music, and drama. In addition to these challenges, logistical issues were also noted, including limited access to adequate space or equipment and broader structural limitations within schools. This section explores these challenges, as described by educators, and considers how they may impact both the implementation and sustainability of RSP.

4.4.1 Time Constraints on Class Teachers

One of the most prominent challenges identified by participants was the issue of time. Across all interviews, there was a clear consensus that class teachers face significant restrictions in their schedules, in which the students are suffering the consequences. Educators explained that due to the demands of their workload, which includes core academic subjects, extracurricular activities, and specialist lessons like art, music, and drama, PA is often the first to be deprioritized. Alex noted that they commonly skip the PE lesson led by the class teacher, *“[class teacher] PE doesn’t even cross our minds...unfortunately”* as they are unable to omit RSP sessions or PE lessons delivered by the specialist PE teacher. Alex in fact emphasizes that *“the biggest challenge for me is time.... the only challenge”*. This causes a dilemma since on one hand the students are getting an hour

of PA more a week with RSP, but if the class teachers are not conducting the PE lesson, the students are missing 40 minutes of PA per week, leaving a surplus of only 20 minutes a week of PA. Riley pleads that:

if 2 RSP sessions are added into the weekly schedule, ... the time has to be taken from somewhere else because the school day is what it is.

4.4.1.1 Overcrowded Timetables and Competing Priorities

This pressure emerging from overcrowded timetables was particularly evident when participants spoke about the difficulty of maintaining a balanced timetable. Several class teachers admitted that, despite the value they see in RSP, the increasing academic workload and interruptions to the weekly schedule left little flexibility. One participant (Alex) reflected that, *"we no longer have time for reading, the grades will start to drop, because the first that goes out is the reading lesson"*. Interestingly, these participants do not solely put the blame upon the increase of PA in schools, because they feel that the issue is that there are too many co-curricular or extra-curricular activities. This information did not just come from the class teachers, but also from the PE teachers. These participants used similar vocabulary to express the time restrictions of the class teachers, *"I do not know if they have enough time due to the syllabus"* (Charlie), *"try to catch up"* (Jamie), *"when I talk to them [class teachers] they have a lot of stress to catch up with certain subjects"* (Jesse), *"there has to be a balance [academics and co-curricular/extra-curricular activities]"* (Sam). This shows that the stakeholders involved in the programme all note that this increase in PA, although there are benefits, one cannot ignore the strain it puts on the class teachers. One RSP teacher (Sam) states *"You cannot continue, yes ey, let's do PE 4 times and the syllabus stays the same"*.

4.4.1.2 Impact on Student Focus and Behaviour

Class teachers also pointed out that students appeared more restless and overwhelmed due to the accumulation of various school activities. Riley noted, *"We made them restless"*, expressing concern about the number of initiatives packed into the school week. The pressure seemed to affect concentration levels, as students struggled to shift between PA and classroom tasks. Alex added that, *"children are not capable of concentrating for a long time"*, noting a change compared to previous years in teaching.

This shift in attention span was linked by educators to broader societal and technological changes. Alex reflected that after just five minutes of instruction, students' focus would often drop, suggesting that *"they do not take note of the human voice anymore"*, attributing this to extended screen time and digital habits. While technology can be a useful tool, its overuse results in what some refer to as brain rot, which is believed to contribute to shorter

attention spans (Yousef et al., 2025). Even as early as 2004, Christakis et al. identified a connection between early exposure to technology, specifically television, and attention problems in children. Interestingly, Alex even noted that students appeared more focused during the remote learning period of the COVID-19 pandemic, pushing the idea that this is due to the use of technology.

4.4.1.3 Parental Influence and Lifestyle Factors

Parents play a major role in a child's life, be it through nature, (biological instances) and or nurture (environmental factors). Participants from this study all mention this important responsibility of providing the best for their children. Parents also have control over the lifestyle of their children, and this shapes also their future lifestyles. Participants like Chris, Riley, Charlie and Robin emphasise the need of awareness of the importance of PA (Nagel & Lemel, 2019). Teachers notice shifts in trends of parents' interactions with their children. Two PE teachers (Taylor and Jesse) note that since most parents both work, family time is reduced, which gives less time for parents to drive their children to some kind of PA. This is a genuine picture of a Maltese modern family, as there are children being dropped off to school for "breakfast klabb" (Sam) at 7am and picked up from Klabb 3-16, (an after school care service for children) as late as 6pm, with Sam saying that students do their homework and just sit and wait for their parents.

Alex also shows how children are influenced by their parents' behaviour when he stated:

they do everything for them, not just homework but also to change, or a paper falls on the ground, they pick it up for them... so if they leave their book at home, it is like nothing happened ... there is no industry in work.

Another trend noted is the increase of separations and divorces in Malta, which in turn makes children with separated parents more common in Maltese schools (TVM News, 2024). There is a multitude of research on the effects parental separation has on children (Zartler, 2021; Kreidl et al., 2017; Cherlin, 1999), and Alex notes that this creates "a crazy life, meaning sometimes at their dads, sometimes at their mums". All these factors are impacting the students during their time in schools, be it attention and focus, work ethic etc, which due to the time constraints added in the timetable, class teachers feel that they are struggling to use the time they have productively. Class teachers emphasized the problem they face when it comes to settling the students down after PA or any other activity, which takes a lot of time from the day. Alex gives an example of having to start explaining from scratch since the students would have forgotten what was said or done before PA.

4.4.2 Logistical and Operational Constraints on RSP Implementation

This section explores how limitations in infrastructure and human resources and how these affect the quality and feasibility of RSP implementation.

4.4.2.1 Limited Facilities and Equipment and Weather Constraints

The successful delivery of RSP was shown to be heavily dependent on the facilities and resources available at each school. While a small number of participants described their schools as adequately equipped, the majority expressed concerns about the lack of sufficient indoor and outdoor space, equipment, and weather factors that collectively created logistical barriers.

Many participants pointed out that some schools have better facilities and equipment than others, which affects how well RSP can be delivered. As Sam explained,

Not all schools are the same. For example, in School X we have two grounds... we have all the equipment we need. But in School Y we have a ground. The ground doesn't have a canopy... and there is very little equipment.

In the other school Sam teaches in, even indoor spaces like the hall posed limitations since it is shared with another school and required permission from two separate heads of school to access during bad weather. To further emphasise these restrictions, she stated that *"If I am going to use the hall, she tells me (the head of school) don't use a ball ..."*. Similarly, Jamie commented, *"In terms of facilities, no, ... we are not equipped,"* and to highlight the lack of a shaded area for outdoor activities he states, *"We don't have a canopy, so children are never in the shade... even I won't be in the shade."*

Several class teachers and PE teachers echoed these structural and environmental concerns. Chris noted, *"If the weather is bad, we do not have a place to do RSP,"* and Alex pointed out that *"the ground is small to have three classes."* Taylor and Robin also raised issues with overcrowding, particularly since RSP sessions involved multiple classes. Robin explained that *"we end up using the small ground because RSP has more than one class,"* making it difficult to conduct full games or structured PE activities.

Views on equipment availability also varied across participants, showing the differences between schools. Jamie stated, *"Equipment here I have no problems,"* and Charlie echoed a similar sentiment, saying, *"They are [equipped], but I hope that there will be more equipment."* Other participants described their school as being well-resourced. Chris remarked, *"In terms of equipment... yes, they have, because [there is] always something different,"* while Taylor and Robin both stated that their schools had *"enough equipment."* However, Sam again highlights the sharp contrast between the schools she teaches in, saying *"In School X ... we have all the equipment we need,"* whereas *"in School Y... there is very little equipment."* These varying perspectives suggest that while some schools are sufficiently

equipped, others face clear limitations that can impact the consistency and quality of RSP delivery.

Beyond space and equipment, weather appeared to be a critical limiting factor. Even schools that were said to be well equipped, struggled during extreme weather. Riley acknowledged, *“We are equipped. The problem is when it is sunny,”* while Jesse added that *“when it is raining, we do not have anywhere inside,”* which often resulted in RSP being cancelled. When indoor alternatives like the hall were unavailable, as Jesse noted, *“RSP ends up not happening.”*

These findings reveal that variability in school infrastructure, lack of appropriate equipment, and exposure to seasonal weather conditions all significantly impact the consistency of quality of RSP. The impact of these limitations not only affects student participation (Bevans et al., 2010) and safety but also places additional strain on staff attempting to maintain programme standards in suboptimal environments. These barriers can also impact future participation in PA of students since Black et al. (2019) links adequate sport facilities with long term PA.

4.4.2.2 Managing Multiple Classes

A defining feature of the RSP programme is that sessions are delivered to multiple classes simultaneously. While this structure has logistical advantages, such as time efficiency and maximizing student access to PA, it introduces significant challenges related to group management, supervision, and instructional quality.

Participants across roles acknowledged that one educator alone is often insufficient to manage such large groups effectively. RSP teachers expressed concern over the reliance on class teachers for support, support which is not always consistent or adequate. Jamie shared that *“they [class teachers] see it as a free lesson,”* adding that if he has 3 classes, he will have over 60 students. Similarly, Charlie commented, *“But I don’t find much help. Because they treat it like a break”* and it doesn’t feel like the class teachers take it seriously. As Jamie put it:

RSP is difficult for one teacher. Obviously, if there is not going to be help from class teachers, that should be there.

Similarly, Charlie noted, *“There should be two teachers at least”* and explained how sessions ran more smoothly when assisted, stating that when another RSP teacher joins him, he has *“her support and it helps me.”* The lack of such support not only increases physical and emotional fatigue for the RSP teacher, but also affects the overall experience for students, since student to teacher ratio is identified as a PE quality indicator (Turner et. al, 2014). Sam confirmed this, stating, *“If teachers don’t help me, I get more tired.”*

A recurring theme among some of the participants was that many class teachers may not have the confidence, knowledge, or interest to assist effectively during RSP. Sam shared a concerning example: *“I left for another station, and the [class teacher] saw him (student) throw the ball incorrectly, and she did not correct him.”* Robin echoed this sentiment when discussing PE delivered by class teachers, questioning: *“Then what do you mean by a PE lesson?”* A participant also expressed this by noting that *“there are a lot of teachers who do not like to move. They come wearing smart clothes, with high heels”* (Alex).

Alex defends the class teachers actions by saying *“you cannot be a jack of all trades”*, meaning that it should be understandable that not every class teacher is able to teach PE. Alex also expressed the difficulties he faces to participate in RSP,

It doesn't matter how much I love sports, but if I'm not the one giving the lesson, it's hard for me to just stand there watching and telling them what to do. ... primary school teachers don't get a chance to say a single word to another adult. Now, when we're two classes together, there's another teacher, and at least you can say a word during that time. You get it? It's important for the mental health of primary school teachers, it's important to have a chance to talk. Because otherwise, I'd go crazy. Thankfully, after school we play football, I train, because if not, by now I'd have lost it. Just imagine, an entire day only talking to children.

The size of the groups intensified class management issue. Class teachers acknowledged the difficulty of managing three classes at once. Alex, although he finds it hard to help during RSP, described the experience as *“just barely making it,”* adding, *“it can get a bit too hectic when there are three classes”*. Alex further commented that *“the [RSP] teacher has so many children that they cannot see if what they are doing, they are doing it well”* while Chris felt that *“as long as it's two classes, it's okay”*.

This perception also impacts how educators view the intended purpose of RSP. Alex offered a critical reflection when he stated that:

If the scope is not to learn from it, but to move, then however they are doing it, it is good since they are moving. But we must make a difference between teaching them and them moving.

This highlights a tension between promoting PA and ensuring meaningful, skill-based learning. Sam offered a direct comparison of the difference he finds in different schools when stating that:

School X, they help me a lot. I truly don't have any problems, maybe with one here or there. But then, for example, in SCHOOL Y, erm, I see a lot of apathy.

This further emphasises that the effectiveness of RSP is not only influenced by its design but also by the school culture and staff buy-in.

In sum, although RSP's multi-class structure allows for broader reach, its success depends heavily on the active involvement and preparedness of class teachers. Without adequate

teacher engagement, these sessions risk becoming ineffective rather than a structured opportunity for physical development and social growth.

4.5 Collaboration and Communication

Effective communication and collaboration are essential components in the implementation and sustainability of the RSP programme. This theme explores how different stakeholders, educators, support staff, and members of the school management team, worked together to support and deliver RSP lessons. While positive examples of teamwork and feedback were shared, the findings also revealed gaps in communication and inconsistent engagement from leadership. This section is organised into three key sub-themes: educator collaboration, feedback processes, and the role of the school management team.

4.5.1 Collaboration between RSP Teachers and PE Teachers

One of the strongest collaborative relationships emerged among RSP teachers and their PE colleagues. This sub-section will discuss various formal and informal ways in which these two educators work together daily, be it discussing logistical issues like equipment and premises, and also providing feedback for professional growth.

There are daily conversations between PE teachers and RSP teachers before they start the day. Jesse reflected positively, saying that:

Every morning, we speak and see what we need... Sometimes we say, 'Listen, check the equipment, if you need anything, I'm here'.

This also shows that these communications ease the pressures of these educators, often offering each other help.

RSP allowed for PE teachers to have another teacher with them in schools where most often than not, they are the sole PE teacher of that school. This in turn brought a very positive opportunity for professional development, where discussions to improve one's practice can take place between two Physical Education professionals. Charlie described a reciprocal and supportive dynamic with the PE teacher, sharing how their colleague often provided guidance and reassurance, saying, "[she says] 'when I was a student like you... no one was there to help me, so thank God, I can help you now'."

In this case, a mentorship-like relationship was formed since as Charlie stated that "*she has more experience than me*" and remarked that she gives a lot of feedback. This collaboration also allowed both these educators to coordinate during extracurricular activities like a "*running competition*" (Charlie). Jamie echoed this sentiment by demonstrating initiative and leadership through the organization of a college-wide extracurricular "*trials*" event.

Citing “a little bit more experience” than the PE teacher, he expressed a desire to serve as a role model and encourage greater collaboration among staff.

These comments show that there is thirst for professional development. A study on peer group mentoring provided evidence of the positives such initiatives can bring, including mentees feeling more knowledgeable and the mentors feeling empowered (Rajakaltio & Syrjäläinen, 2012).

However, Taylor and Robin both stated that no formal collaboration occurred between RSP and PE educators. Taylor noted, “*I have my own Scheme of Work... He does his own thing,*” indicating an isolated approach to lesson delivery. Sam similarly reflected, “*There has never been communication so far,*” adding that a disconnect in curriculum timelines, made it difficult to collaborate. These examples suggest that while formal collaboration not necessarily required the opportunities for this would be of benefit to the quality of RSP.

4.5.2 Collaboration between RSP Teachers and Class Teachers

Participants discussed the importance of strong working relationships between RSP teachers and class teachers. The level of collaboration varied across schools, with some educators reporting highly supportive colleagues and others expressing concerns about limited interaction or unclear roles. This subsection explores how collaboration, or the lack thereof, impacted the delivery and perceived success of RSP as well as other collaborative opportunities.

As mentioned briefly in the section 4.4, ‘Barriers and Constraints’, RSP teachers in particular expressed concern over inconsistent support from class teachers during sessions. Jamie pointed out that the big number of students requires more teachers to be involved. This was echoed by Charlie whilst Sam compared the two schools she teaches in, showing contrasting collaboration levels.

Like Alex, other class teachers also observed that some colleagues do not assist during RSP lessons, whilst also highlighting the importance of their active involvement. Some actively collaborated, with Riley explaining, “*We help her out... because otherwise the RSP lesson wouldn’t succeed.*” Others took a more observational role, attending sessions without necessarily engaging in instruction. Chris shared that in her team, “*some go down to supervise during RSP... but then you find others who aren’t really following the same approach.*” This inconsistency may reflect class teachers’ unclear role descriptions or lack of willingness to participate due to barriers mentioned above like, disinterest in sport and time constraints.

Like the collaboration between the RSP teacher and PE teacher, an opportunity for professional development emerged as a positive outcome of RSP. For example, in schools where collaboration was strong, feedback between RSP teachers and class teachers was important. Chris gave an example from RSP sessions, describing how they would offer input

if students were struggling to grasp an activity. “We each take a station and observe the kids,” she explained. “Sometimes I told him, ‘They didn’t quite get it for example, sir, how can we do it?’” These exchanges allowed RSP teachers to refine instruction and better meet student needs, reflecting a shared ownership of the lesson.

Alex highlighted the importance of giving feedback “*constructively*,” and praised the RSP teacher for being receptive, but Alex also explained that “*Just because I say something doesn’t mean I know it all, he’s the one who knows.*” The emphasis on mutual respect and open dialogue points to a collaborative culture where feedback is framed not as criticism but as an opportunity to learn from one another.

These examples show that when class teachers are not only physically present during RSP but also engaged in communication and feedback, both the quality of delivery and the potential for mutual professional development are enhanced. There is evidence that this can expose teachers to different teaching techniques but also expresses the need for more active participation (Fenty et al., 2012).

4.5.3 School Management Team Involvement

The School Management Team (SLT) plays a pivotal role in shaping how PA is implemented, perceived, and supported across schools. The majority of RSP and PE teachers in this study described positive relationships with SLT, often crediting them for facilitating collaboration, discipline, and logistical coordination related to the programme.

SLT support varied across schools. In one setting, Charlie felt strongly backed by heads, who made it clear they would intervene when staff weren’t cooperative. Sam’s old school had a more formal monitoring system where class teacher PE was tracked by yard presence. Yet, in contrast, Charlie described the current school as having “*no such pressure*” (Sam) on the class teachers and management has little involvement. These comments show the power SLT’s input has and how it affects student’s PA. Timetabling was also another critical area of influence. Sam noted that “*SLT handles everything before we even start,*” referring to schedules for RSP sessions and peripatetic subjects.

PE teachers shared similar views on SLT involvement. Jesse recalled being invited into planning conversations and having his input sought by the head: “*She’d say, ‘I need your perspective on sports and facilities, maybe you can shed some light on them.’*” This level of inclusion reinforced the PE teacher’s role as a valued contributor to school-wide initiatives. Furthermore, when issues with class teachers arose, such as lack of supervision or engagement, Jesse stated that the SLT often intervened.

Despite these examples of strong collaboration, not all participants experienced direct or structured coordination. Taylor and Robin indicated minimal involvement in RSP operations, citing that they followed their own schedules independently. While this doesn’t necessarily suggest conflict, it may reflect missed opportunities for unified PA programming.

These findings suggest that SLT involvement is critical to the effective implementation of the RSP programme. In schools where SLT actively support RSP, teachers feel more empowered and accountable. As noted by Engels et al. (2008), strong leadership helps foster a positive school culture, which in turn promotes collaboration and programme success.

This is supported by Plaku and Leka (2025), who found that in schools with a positive culture, principals and teachers share values and communicate openly, reducing misunderstandings and improving teamwork. In schools where leadership is weaker or disconnected, staff are less likely to engage consistently, which limits the programme's impact (Plaku and Leka, 2025). Therefore, sustained SLT commitment and a collaborative culture are essential to ensuring that initiatives like RSP are successfully embedded and valued across the school.

4.6 Vision and Suggestions for Improvement

This final theme brings together participants' insights and suggestions, aimed not only at enhancing the delivery, reach, and long-term sustainability of the RSP programme, but also at promoting increased PA within and beyond the school environment. As Robin states, *"there is always room for improvement"* and the feedback gathered points to both structural and practical recommendations, spanning from systemic reform to programme expansion and improved communication. These visions reflect a broader commitment among educators, not just to improve RSP, but to foster a culture where PA is embedded across school life and extended into students' routines outside of school. This will give rise to healthier people in the country (Bailey, 2006; Kandola et al.; Van Boekel et al., 2016; Wold, 2019).

4.6.1 Systematic Changes

Educators highlighted the need for changes beyond the school level, arguing that meaningful reform must come from higher-level structures. Suggestions focused on creating clear, enforceable policies that protect the time and quality of PA in schools. These ideas reveal a desire for more coherent, “*pressure from above*” (Sam) that legitimizes and sustains school-based PA initiatives like RSP (Engels et al., 2008).

4.6.1.1 Policies

Participants expressed a clear desire for stronger policies and official guidelines to support the implementation of PA in schools. Some suggestions focused specifically on formalising the structure and expectations of the RSP programme, while others addressed the broader integration of PA throughout the school day. A set of clearly defined, written protocols would help standardise implementation across schools, clarify the responsibilities of class teachers, and enforces PA as a valued and essential part of holistic education, not an extra fun subject. If policies are already in place, pushing forward and keeping confidence in implementing these policies in practice is crucial to their success (Viennet & Pont, 2017)

Having institutional backing through enforceable school or national-level policies emerged as an important addition. Jamie was especially vocal in calling for a structural overhaul, recommending that schools dedicate five hours weekly to PA. This suggestion emerged from a belief that the current education system is overly focused on academic content at the expense of children's physical and mental well-being. Jamie advocated for a return to outdoor, experiential play, warning that overly rigid curricular structures risk children disconnecting them from a natural developmental experience.

Time-related concerns also reinforced these policy demands. others. Charlie highlighted that the current 30-minute duration of RSP was often too short, reduced further by transition time, like time going down for the RSP session or going from one station to the other, and suggested that even a-5 minutes increase would improve session quality. From this perspective, any future policy should not only define the frequency and content of RSP but also ensure that time allocations are realistic and effectively used.

Class teachers also recognised the need for broader school-wide policies on PA. Alex stressed that without timetable reforms and clear policies governing how RSP effects the core academic subjects, PA often becomes the first casualty when academic demands increase. This highlights the need for policies that safeguard PA from being sidelined due to curriculum pressure

In summary, participants were not merely asking for more PA, they were calling for system-wide recognition of its value through concrete policy measures. This includes formal timetabling protections, curriculum alignment between PE and RSP, and structured lesson

and assessment frameworks. These steps were seen as essential to ensuring that PA is delivered consistently, effectively, and with institutional support across all schools.

4.6.1.1.1 Parent Education

Participants all mentioned the importance of parental involvement in some shape of form, and parent education became a significant theme to point out (Nagel & Lemel, 2019). Several participants, including Riley, Chris, and Sam, raised the importance of involving parents more directly in the broader efforts to promote PA among children. Riley was especially vocal, highlighting that without parental awareness and cooperation, the school's efforts could only go so far. They described concerning trends in children's diets, such as sugary "*protein shakes*" and processed snacks, and emphasized that increasing PA at school alone would not solve issues like childhood obesity. Instead, "*we have to educate parents*" (Riley). A parent education programme is recommended, one that informs parents about healthy lifestyles, nutrition, and the importance of regular PA beyond school hours. Burke et al., (2021) shows multiple studies which resulted in parents improving their behaviour like communication skills, but there still should be more studies on the effectiveness of such programs.

4.6.1.2 Government Involvement

Certain suggestions called for stronger government support, whether in terms of resources, infrastructure, or leadership. Educators believed that action needs to be taken to prioritise PA, recognising the long-term benefits of initiatives like RSP on student health, well-being, and school engagement not at the expense of academics.

Jamie highlighted the need for institutional backing from national authorities to ensure that PA is not marginalised within the curriculum. Jamie mentioned multiple times that he strongly advocates for a structural shift at the national level, calling for five hours of PA per week in schools. This, he argued, would not only counterbalance the dominant focus on academics but also help children reconnect with more organic, outdoor, and playful forms of development. According to this educator, such a shift is needed to aid in the issues around Malta regarding sedentary behaviour when he stated that "*you have to start from here, from education*" (Jamie).

Similarly, both Chris and Riley recommended that government-led initiatives should include mandatory participation in sport-related activities, not only within school hours but also through affordable or subsidised external opportunities. Riley suggested to "*give incentives*" to parents to encourage their children's participation in PA, recognising that financial cost is also a barrier for some families. These proposals suggest a shared belief that PA should be

normalised as a routine and supported part of a child's development, with the government facilitating access.

Jesse further stressed that calls for increased PA time must be met with a parallel investment in infrastructure. They pointed out that while expectations around PA have grown, Malta "*is lagging*" behind in building dedicated indoor or all-weather PA facilities. They cited examples where new infrastructure, like the gymnastics centre in Marsa or basketball pavilion in Ta' Qali, received positive attention, but argued such developments remain too few and far between to meet growing demand. Without a corresponding expansion in facilities, policies encouraging more PA would risk being undermined by practical limitations.

Overall, participants urged that ministries adopt a more proactive and strategic stance on PA policy, that not only promotes time allocation and curriculum development for PA in schools, but also provides the infrastructure, financial support, and cultural messaging needed to sustain it across the country.

4.6.1.3 Curriculum Reform

Participants also called for a review of the national curriculum, especially regarding how PA and initiatives like RSP are scheduled and prioritised within the broader school timetable. The current curriculum, whilst at face value, gives priority to regular and meaningful PA, some participants noted that this might not be the case in practicality.

Jamie and Charlie called for structured guidance like PE, including curriculum documents, lesson banks, and mechanisms for tracking student progress. Jamie went further, recommending skills assessments at various points in the school year, rooted in the idea that "*what can be measured, can be improved.*" These suggestions reflect a desire for RSP to be recognised as a formal educational subject, to the same planning and accountability as other curricular subjects.

As already highlighted when discussing barriers and constraints, a central issue expressed by educators, mainly class teachers, was the constant race against time to catch up on other academic subjects. Alex specifically noted that the current structure often forces trade-offs, stating that when academic work drags on, PA is the first to be sacrificed. This time pressure reinforces the need for a systematic review of how RSP fits into the broader school day. Naturally, the curriculum itself emerged as an area in need of reform; "*we have to change the syllabus, all of it*".

Jesse and Riley also mentioned the importance of reworking the school timetable to avoid scheduling conflicts that cause stress on the class teachers. Riley stated that:

you can't have RSP and PE on the same day as me and other teachers have this year. It doesn't make sense...timetable must be scheduled properly.

Another observation was made by Alex, stating that RSP teachers cannot do "*lesson after lesson, for 6 lessons everyday*", remarking that they should get a break since they are always

outside, shouting to manage multiple classes. Having more than 1 RSP teacher could also ease this, and this could also help Sam's concern of not being able to know the children "on a deeper level"

In summary, reforming the curriculum to make space for consistent, structured, and meaningful PA was seen by many participants as a necessary condition for the long-term success of RSP and similar initiatives. These indicate that although educators find PA important, they can neglect it due to being overworked, which can in turn lead to burnout (Mahmood, 2022). Teacher wellbeing is very important, because teachers who are fatigued or demoralised will not be able to perform their duties to their fullest potential (Mahmood, 2022).

4.6.2 Programme Expansion

Beyond structural changes, educators also proposed ways to expand the reach and impact of the RSP programme. Their ideas included integrating RSP principles into other initiatives such as Breakfast Club and after-school activities (e.g. Klabb 3–16), ensuring children have more opportunities for structured and enjoyable movement across the school day. These expansions were framed as opportunities to build on RSP's success and address gaps in student activity levels beyond traditional lesson time.

Participants envisioned PA being embedded not just in formal lessons but across the entire school day. Sam and Riley offered a particularly compelling case for extending PA opportunities into before-school (e.g., breakfast club) and after-school hours (e.g., Klabb 3–16). Riley described the time these children spend here as a "waste of time" or bordering on "babysitting" when she stated that:

there are children coming in at 7 in the morning till 8:30am sitting down doing nothing. That is where you should add RSP. Or after school like Klabb 3-16.

Rather than having children spend this time seated or idle, they could engage in sports and movement-based programmes that promote health.

Jesse also mentioned The Daily Mile initiative as an example of how PA could be integrated into non-classroom time during breakfast time, which could be designed in a "free play" scenario as remarked by Jamie. Studies show the potential power of these types of interventions, be it physical, social, and mental wellbeing. (Scottish Government, 2017 & The Daily Mile 1, n.d).

4.6.3 Improved Communication and Collaboration

Many suggestions centred on improving communication and clarity around roles, particularly between RSP teachers, class teachers, and school leadership. Jamie believed that better explanation of RSP at the start of the school year would have prevented many implementation issues, such as timetable clashes and inconsistent staff involvement. Charlie recommended structured communication channels like dedicated chat groups or digital noticeboards to streamline coordination and encourage feedback.

There was a shared sense, especially from Sam and Robin, that pressure and direction from leadership were necessary to enforce teacher participation and standardise expectations across schools. Sam argued that Heads of Department and SLTs should be more directive, setting clear expectations that class teachers actively assist during RSP, suggesting a disciplinary framework for repeated non-compliance.

Several educators also identified professional development as essential. Sam mentioned the need for training at the beginning of the year, particularly for new staff, so they understand their roles and expectations during RSP. Similarly, Robin stressed that planning and curriculum alignment should occur before the academic year starts, not after sessions have already begun.

Lastly, coordination between RSP and PE teachers remained a concern. Robin highlighted the need for better long-term planning, suggesting a college-wide system with a lead RSP coordinator to ensure that the programme is integrated into the school culture with purpose rather than viewed as a standalone activity.

The collective vision presented by participants reveals that improving PA in schools cannot be achieved through isolated interventions. Instead, systemic and cultural shifts are required, for example formalised policies, parent education, expanded programme reach and better communication. What unites these diverse suggestions is a shared understanding that PA is a foundation for a healthier future generation.

4.7 Conclusion

This chapter explored the lived experiences and perspectives of educators involved in the RSP programme, highlighting its perceived value, challenges, and impact on both students and teachers. The findings suggest that while RSP is generally viewed as a positive and much needed initiative to increase PA in schools, its success is influenced by a variety of personal, institutional, and structural factors. Educators consistently emphasised the importance of PA for children's holistic development, meaning physical, cognitive, social, and emotional. Their own attitudes, lifestyles, and passion for teaching played a clear role in shaping how they engaged with the programme. Teachers noted improved student wellbeing, enhanced social interaction, and increased enjoyment during school, although the direct academic impact of RSP was viewed in a more negative light. The RSP also prompted informal professional growth among teachers and encouraged stronger collaboration. However, barriers such as time constraints, overcrowded timetables, lack of resources, and limited staff involvement emerged as key challenges. Many educators highlighted that without stronger policy direction, clearer communication, and curriculum reform, the long-term sustainability and effectiveness of RSP could be compromised.

Finally, participants shared valuable suggestions for improvement, pointing to a shared desire to embed PA more meaningfully within school culture and daily routines. These insights not only strengthen the understanding of RSP in practice but also offer a foundation for strategic enhancement.

The next chapter will conclude by discussing the main findings of the study, reflect on its limitations, and offer final recommendations for policy and practice in the implementation of school-based physical activity programmes.

Chapter 5 Conclusion

5.1 Introduction

This chapter presents a comprehensive overview of the key findings in relation to the study's research questions. It critically assesses the study's strengths and limitations, and provides thoughtful recommendations and directions for future research.

5.2 Response to the Research Questions

The following subsections will answer the research questions of this study.

5.2.1 What is the Overall Perception of RSP from the Key Stakeholders?

The study found that participants generally held a positive view of RSP, recognising it as a valuable and much-needed intervention to enhance PA provision in schools, particularly against the backdrop of Malta's well-documented inactivity trends among children (Decelis et al., 2014; Borg et al., 2023). Educators emphasised that the programme successfully reduced sedentary behaviour during the school day, while providing students with an engaging and enjoyable outlet that supported both learning and wellbeing. RSP was often described as motivating for the students, with teachers noting its potential to instil long-term healthy habits. Participants highlighted that the students look forward to the RSP session.

At the same time, this overall positivity was tempered by recurring concerns around role clarity, varying levels of staff participation, and the pressure of time restrictions within already crowded timetables. Some participants questioned whether the benefits of RSP were being maximised, given inconsistent implementation across schools. Despite these challenges, stakeholders consistently agreed that RSP represents a progressive step in addressing inactivity at primary level. With clearer structures, stronger collaboration, and adequate resourcing, participants believed that the programme's benefits could be amplified.

5.2.2 What are the Benefits and Challenges of RSP?

The findings revealed that the RSP programme provides multiple benefits. These included increased physical fitness, improved classroom behaviour, higher engagement among students, and the potential for social-emotional development. RSP also provide professional development opportunities for PE and RSP teachers through collaboration. The findings also revealed that the programme created opportunities for children from different classes and sometimes year groups to mix. This encouraged inclusivity, and helped build a stronger sense of school community.

Contrasting perspectives emerged regarding the extent to which these activities influence students' concentration in class. While some participants noted enhanced focus in their students, others observed that the activities contributed to student restlessness. Several respondents highlighted positive implications for mental and social well-being, noting that RSP offered a safe and enjoyable environment for the children. The benefits of RSP were observed to have extended beyond physical literacy, but also reflected in the cognitive, emotional, and social dimensions of student well-being.

However, challenges were also reported. The most prevalent issues were time constraints, unclear roles for class teachers, scheduling conflicts, and insufficient support. The inconsistent involvement of class teachers during sessions and limited communication between RSP teachers and SLT were recurring themes that impacted programme implementation. Environmental factors also posed obstacles, as interview participants note that facilities are not always adequate, noting that sessions often get cancelled because of bad weather. Additionally, because of Malta's warm climate, and the lack of shaded yard area, holding outdoor activities becomes unfeasible.

Another challenge is the syllabus. Students have more activities and SBIs, yet the syllabus remained the same, resulting in additional pressure stress for the class teachers. In practice, this meant that class teachers opted to exclude their (class teacher) PE lesson from the timetable, raising concerns that the programme does not always result in an increase to the children's overall levels of PA.

Additionally, several respondents explained that managing groups larger than two classes at once rendered RSP less effective, since the staff found it difficult to maintain meaningful engagement and supervision for students. These challenges highlight the importance of adequate planning, resources, and co-ordination if the programme is to achieve its intended benefits.

5.2.3 What do the Key Stakeholders Suggest about Further Implementation of this Programme?

A number of areas were identified that could support the further development of the RSP programme in schools. One important step would be to formalise the initiative through national policy, to ensure that schools have a clearer framework and greater consistency in programme delivery.

Another way of improving this initiative is by extending opportunities for participation beyond the normal school hours. This could include breakfast clubs, after school sessions, or Klub 3–16. This could provide children with additional opportunities to be active, helping where the programme becomes part of their daily routine.

Clearer communication from SLT, together with stronger collaboration amongst teachers, would ensure a more effective implementation. When SLT provide clear guidance, expectations, and regular updates about the RSP programme, it reduces uncertainty and helps teachers understand how the initiative fits within broader school priorities. This clarity also creates a sense of shared purpose, making it easier for stakeholders to view RSP as part of school culture.

To maximise RSP's potential, a form of mentoring system or sharing good practice would help create a more co-ordinated approach across schools as well as creating a culture of continuous professional development.

Finally, greater parental involvement could help extend the benefits of RSP beyond the school setting. Awareness-raising and parent education initiatives would encourage healthier routines at home, bridging school and home.

5.3 Recommendations

The following recommendations are being presented with the aim of targeting policy makers, school leadership, and educators to enhance the effectiveness and sustainability of RSP and PA in schools.

5.3.1 Recommendations for Policy and Practice

It is recommended that

- A strong need for policy frameworks that formally recognise PA, including RSP, as an essential part of the school curriculum.
- Clear guidelines should define the responsibilities of RSP teachers and class teachers during RSP lessons. SLTs should also be given authority or be more vigilant to make sure the roles are being followed.
- Schools/ Colleges should rethink the syllabi of the students, as well as reduce the number of extra-curricular activities and focus on those that are deemed to be most important. This should be done to ease pressure on the class teachers as well as making students less restless.
- Timetabling protections should be introduced to avoid scheduling conflicts, or having RSP and PE on the same day. Professional development in PA delivery should be expanded to include class teachers, not just PE and RSP specialists.
- Government support, particularly in terms of infrastructure, training, and programme funding, is also essential to ensure equitable access and consistency across schools. Lastly, parent-focused initiatives can further support what is being taught at school, not just on prevention of sedentary behaviours, but also on other health related topics that goes hand in hand with PA. This should be done with the aim of having a physically active population.

5.3.2 Recommendations for Further Research

Given the promising but preliminary nature of this qualitative exploration, several areas for future investigation are proposed:

- Student Perspectives: Future studies should include the voices of children to better understand their engagement and perceived benefits of RSP.
- Longitudinal Impact: Research by tracking students over time would help determine the long-term effects of RSP on physical fitness, behaviour, and academic outcomes.
 - Academic Performance Correlation: More detailed research is needed to examine how RSP influences academic achievement, particularly through its impact on concentration, classroom behaviour, and academic results.
 - Academic results and components of fitness can be researched in qualitatively
- Comparison Across Schools: Broader comparative studies across different schools may reveal further nuances in implementation and reception.
- A research expanding the participant base across more schools and colleges, as well as roles, including school administrators, parents and students, to enrich the findings and better inform recommendations for programme implementation

5.4 Strengths and Limitations of the Study

The following section presents a critical discussion of the study's strengths and limitations, highlighting aspects that enhance the credibility of the findings as well as factors that may have influenced their scope and generalisability.

5.4.1 Strengths

One of the main strengths of this study is its qualitative design, which allowed for an in-depth exploration of educators' experiences with the RSP programme. The use of semi-structured interviews gave participants the opportunity to share their views openly and in detail, generating insights that would not have been captured through a purely quantitative approach.

The purposive sampling strategy is another strength, as it ensured that the voices of class teachers, PE teachers, and RSP teachers were included from schools at different stages of programme implementation. This mix of perspectives enriched the findings by allowing comparisons across roles and contexts, while also highlighting areas of common ground.

The analysis process added further rigour to the study. Braun and Clarke's (2019) six-phase reflexive thematic analysis was applied carefully, eventually consolidated into five clear

themes. This step-by-step process made the analysis both transparent and grounded in participants' accounts.

Finally, the study was strengthened by the attention given to ethical practice. Informed consent, confidentiality, and pseudonymisation were carefully observed throughout. Conducting the interviews online also offered participants convenience and flexibility, which may have encouraged more open and honest responses. Together, these measures helped ensure both the integrity of the research and the reliability of its findings.

5.4.2 Limitations

A notable limitation of this study is the small sample size, which, while purposefully selected to provide diverse insights, may not fully capture the wide spectrum of experiences and perceptions related to the RSP programme. Although participants were chosen from schools at different stages of RSP implementation to enhance variability, the limited number of stakeholders interviewed, particularly from each role (Class Teacher, PE Teacher, and RSP Teacher) may restrict the generalizability of findings.

Given that educators' experiences and attitudes toward PA interventions can be shaped by various contextual factors such as school culture, individual teaching styles, student demographics, and institutional support, a broader participant pool would have allowed for a more comprehensive representation of understanding. Different stakeholders may encounter unique challenges or benefits that were not fully explored in this study.

Another limitation is that all interviews were conducted online via a Zoom Call. While this approach was intentionally chosen to respect participants' comfort and flexibility, giving them the option to join from familiar environments and fit interviews into their schedules, it may have affected the depth of interaction. Face-to-face interviews could potentially have yielded richer data by allowing for more non-verbal communication, rapport-building, and observational cues, which are often important in qualitative research and might be lost through an online meeting. As a result, some details of participants' experiences or emotional responses may not have been fully captured.

While the study is limited by its small sample, it still manages to offer valuable perspectives that can inform policy, training, and the wider development of school PA programmes in Malta. Future research should include the views of students and families, and look more closely at long-term outcomes.

5.5. Final Conclusion

This study has shown that while RSP is a valued addition to Malta's primary education landscape, its effectiveness is currently moderated by institutional, curricular, and communicative barriers. Educators largely agreed that RSP helped increase PA among students, supported classroom behaviour, and promoted overall well-being. These benefits are significant, particularly in a context like Malta, where inactivity levels among children remain high. However, these positive effects are being limited by issues such as unclear roles between teachers, scheduling challenges, and the pressure of an already overcrowded school timetable.

The study also revealed that while some class teachers were enthusiastic about RSP and its value for students, others expressed concern that too many initiatives, including RSP, were starting to impact the time available for core subjects. This highlights a key challenge for schools and policy makers to find a workable balance between academic learning and the equally important need to support children's physical, social and emotional development.

This research does not claim to offer a final answer to the debate, but it does give voice to those most directly involved in delivering the programme. By listening to educators, this study contributes practical insights into what is working, what is not, and what might be done differently in the future. It supports the growing understanding that SBI on PA should not be treated as extras, but as a core part of a child's development.

In conclusion, RSP is a step in the right direction. With the right structures, support, and clearer communication, it has the potential to make a lasting difference. It is now up to schools, policy makers, and society more broadly to decide how seriously we want to take the challenge of raising a healthier, more active generation.

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Appendix

Appendix 1: Information Letter

Dear Sir/Madam,

My name is Daniel Paul Ellul and I am a student at the University of Malta, presently reading for a Masters in Teaching and Learning in Physical Education. I am presently conducting a research study for my dissertation entitled 'Exploring the Ready Set Play (RSP) Program in Maltese Primary Schools: The perspective of Key Stakeholders'. This is being supervised by Dr Lara Tonna Grima. This letter is an invitation to participate in this study. Below you will find information about the study and about what your involvement would entail, should you decide to take part.

The aim of my study is to explore increased physical PA in children in Maltese schools and its effect on the children, from the perspective of their teachers. The teachers in question are class teachers, RSP teachers, and PE teachers. The study will be looking for a vast understanding of benefits and challenges, being physical and mental health, children's behaviours as well as academic results from the perspective of their teachers. The general consensus on the Co-curricular program RSP will also be researched. This includes the stakeholder's views on how RSP is organised and implemented.

Your participation in this study would help contribute to a better understanding of increased PA in children via a Co-curricular program, specifically RSP. The benefits of this research are multifaceted: Educators, Educational Officers, and policy makers will gain a clearer understanding of the success rate of programs that include more hours of PA per week. Participants will have the opportunity to contribute to decision-making by providing ideas and feedback, whether positive or negative, whilst also gaining a deeper understanding of the program. Additionally, society will benefit in the future as the findings from this study can be used to improve children's education, building on the results to continually enhance educational programs/Co-curricular programs. Any data collected from this research will be used solely for purposes of this study.

Should you choose to participate in this semi structured interview, you will be asked to give your professional opinion about increased PA amongst children during school hours, (Co-curricular activity). You will be asked about behaviour and attitudes of children, as well as their academic and/or physical abilities etc. You will also be asked to give feedback on RSP as well as suggestions for improving the children's holistic development.

Participants will remain anonymous throughout the process. The interview will be done at your convenience, whether face to face, or online. If done face to face, a neutral venue will be used, for example at university. The interview will be recorded and once the study is complete, all participant data will be deleted as per Data Protection Act Chapter 586 and the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) (EU2016/679). Each participant will receive a consent form that clearly explains the study, their rights, and the fact that the sessions will be recorded. I will also sign the form to acknowledge my role and responsibilities in the research.

Participation in this study is entirely voluntary; in other words, you are free to accept or refuse to participate, without needing to give a reason. You are also free to withdraw from the study at any time, without needing to provide any explanation and without any negative repercussions for you. Should you choose to withdraw, any data collected from your interview will be erased as long as this is technically possible (for example, before it is anonymised or published), unless erasure of data would render impossible or seriously impair achievement of the research objectives, in which case it shall be retained in an anonymised form.

If you choose to participate, please note that there are no direct benefits to you. Your participation does not entail any known or anticipated risks.

Please note also that, as a participant, you have the right under the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and national legislation to access, rectify and where applicable ask for the data concerning you to be erased. As discussed all data collected will be stored on a password protected device accessed only by the researcher and once the research is complete, the data will be deleted. This means that by 30th June, data will be deleted.

A copy of this information sheet is being provided for you to keep and for future reference.

Thank you for your time and consideration. Should you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact me by e-mail daniel-paul.ellul.16@um.edu.mt ; you can also contact my supervisor via email: lara.tonna@um.edu.mt

Sincerely,

Daniel Paul Ellul

daniel-paul.ellul.16@um.edu.mt

Dr Lara Tonna Grima

lara.tonna@um.edu.mt

Appendix 2 Consent Form

Exploring the Ready Set Play (RSP) Program in Maltese Primary Schools: The perspective of Key Stakeholders

I, the undersigned, give my consent to take part in the study conducted by Daniel Paul Ellul. This consent form specifies the terms of my participation in this research study.

1. I have been given written and/or verbal information about the purpose of the study; I have had the opportunity to ask questions and any questions that I had were answered fully and to my satisfaction.
2. I also understand that I am free to accept to participate, or to refuse or stop participation at any time without giving any reason and without any penalty. Should I choose to participate, I may choose to decline to answer any questions asked. In the event that I choose to withdraw from the study, any data collected from me will be erased as long as this is technically possible (for example, before it is anonymised or published), unless erasure of data would render impossible or seriously impair achievement of the research objectives, in which case it shall be retained in an anonymised form.
3. I understand that I have been invited to participate in semi structured interview in which the researcher will participate to explore and analyse Co-curricular programs that increase Physical Activity, specifically RSP. I am aware that the semi structured interviews will take approximately 45-60 mins. I understand that the interview is to be conducted in a place and at a time that is convenient for me.
4. I understand that my participation *does not entail any known or anticipated risks*.
5. I understand that *there are no direct benefits to me from participating in this study*. I also understand that this research may benefit others by: better understanding of increased PA in children via a Co-curricular program, specifically RSP. The benefits of this research are multifaceted: Educators, Educational Officers, and policy makers will gain a clearer understanding of the success rate of programs that include more hours of PA per week. Participants will have the opportunity to contribute to decision-making by providing ideas and feedback, whether positive or negative, and may also gain a deeper understanding of the program. Additionally, society will benefit in the future as the findings from this study can be used to improve children's education, building on the results to continually enhance educational programs/Co-curricular programs.
6. I am aware that, by marking the first-tick box below, I am giving my consent for this interview to be [audio recorded] and converted to text as it has been recorded (transcribed).
7. I am aware that extracts from my interview may be reproduced in these outputs, either in anonymous form, or using a pseudonym [a made-up name or code – e.g. respondent A].
8. I understand that, under the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and national legislation, I have the right to access, rectify, and where applicable, ask for the data concerning me to be erased.
9. I understand that all data collected will be stored in an anonymised form on a password protected device up on completion of the study and following publication of results and completion of the study the data will be erased.
10. I am aware that my data will be pseudonymised; i.e., my identity will not be noted on transcripts or notes from my interview, but instead, a code will be assigned. The codes that link my data to my identity will be stored securely and separately from the data, in an encrypted file on the

researcher's password-protected computer, and only the researcher have access to this information. Any hard-copy materials will be placed in a locked cabinet/drawer. Any material that identifies me as a participant in this study will be stored securely *for the duration of the study*.

11. I am aware that my identity and personal information will not be revealed in any publications, reports or presentations arising from this research.
12. I have been provided with a copy of the information letter and understand that I will also be given a copy of this consent form.

I have read and understood the above statements and agree to participate in this study.

Name of participant: _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Daniel Paul Ellul

daniel-paul.ellul.16@um.edu.mt

Dr Lara Tonna

lara.tonna@um.edu.mt

Appendix 3 Interview Guides

Interview Guide Class Teacher

Title of Dissertation: Exploring the Ready Set Play Program in Maltese Primary Schools: The perspective of key stakeholders

Research Questions:

1. What is the overall perception of RSP from the key stakeholders?
2. What are the benefits and challenges of RSP?
3. What do the key stakeholders suggest about further implementation of this program?

Section A: Introduction

Index no. —
Age —
Gender —
Years of experience —

Qualifications

1. What are your views on the current education system?
2. Do you enjoy teaching? (what motivates you?)
 - a. Can you describe the personal experiences or values that initially inspired you to pursue a career in teaching?
3. How do you describe the relationship you have with Physical Activity and PE?
 - a. Relate to past experiences to school
 - b. Overall thoughts on PE at your school and your involvement in school activities
 - c. Do you conduct PE lessons?
 - d. How do you view the integration of cross-curricular activities, such as combining mathematics with physical education, within the educational framework?
4. What do you know about Co-Curricular activities?
 - a. "Co-curricular activities are activities and programs that take place outside of the traditional classroom but in some manner complement academic learning from classroom curriculum."

Section B Increased PA

5. Are you aware that one of the prevalent issues around the world, especially Malta, is children's sedentary lifestyles. Why do you think this is?
6. How can we combat this issue?
7. Do you agree with increasing PA during school hours and why?
 - a. If you agree, why?
 - b. Why not?
8. Can you list some possible outcomes of increased PA?

Section C RSP Program

9. How long have your school been involved in RSP and how long have you been in the school?
10. What were your initial thoughts on RSP?
11. **Impact on Students:**
 - a. In your opinion, how has the RSP program influenced your students' engagement in your regular lessons?

- b. Have you observed any changes in your students' behaviour or focus/attendance/ academic level since the introduction of RSP?
- c. Do you think the children enjoy and what do you think they take away from such an activity?
- d. Does the time of RSP affects the students? First thing in the morning or late in the afternoon.
- e. Does the season make any difference to the overall behaviour etc of the students?
- f. Based on your interactions with students, what are some of the biggest challenges students face regarding PA? And do you think RSP is helping?

12. Implementation:

- a. How has the implementation of the RSP program impacted your daily schedule and workload?
- b. How do you find having multiple classes during the RSP sessions?
- c. Do you think the schools are equipped for this increased PA?
- d. Have you incorporated any of the activities from the RSP sessions into your own PE lessons? How?

13. Collaboration:

- a. How do you find the collaboration with the RSP teacher/ other class teachers during the sessions?
- b. Do you feel comfortable providing feedback or suggestions for the RSP activities?
- c. Do you manage to include all students during RSP? Does LSE help/ need help to integrate student?

14. Suggestions

- a. Does RSP works for the betterment of the students holistically?
- b. Does it take away from the academics done in class or does it complement?
- c. What would you change?

Section D Conclusion

Final Takeaways

- 15. Do you think we are maximizing the potential of such a Co-curricular program?
 - a. If yes how?
 - b. If not why not?
- 16. Biggest Benefit
- 17. Biggest Challenge
- 18. Suggestion for improvement of RSP
- 19. Different ways of increasing PA from government/ colleges and schools/ parents

Interview Guide PE teacher

Title of Dissertation: Exploring the Ready Set Play Program in Maltese Primary Schools: The perspective of key stakeholders

Research Questions:

1. What is the overall perception of RSP from the key stakeholders?
2. What are the benefits and challenges of RSP?
3. What do the key stakeholders suggest about further implementation of this program?

Section A Introduction

Index no. —
Age —
Gender —
Years of experience —

Qualifications

1. What are your views on the current education system?
2. Do you enjoy teaching? (what motivates you?)
 - a. Can you describe the personal experiences or values that initially inspired you to pursue a career in teaching?
3. How do you describe the relationship you have with Physical Activity and PE?
 - a. Relate to past experiences to school
 - b. Overall thoughts on PE at your school
4. What do you know about Co-Curricular activities?
 - a. "Co-curricular activities are activities and programs that take place outside of the traditional classroom but in some manner complement academic learning from classroom curriculum."
5. How long have your school been involved in RSP and how long have you been in the school?
6. Did you ever teach RSP?

Section B Increased PA

7. Are you aware that one of the prevalent issues around the world, especially Malta, is children's sedentary lifestyles. Why do you think this is?
8. How can we combat this issue?
9. Do you agree with increasing PA during school hours?
 - a. If you agree, why?
 - b. Why not?
10. Can you list some possible outcomes of increased PA?

Section C Ready Set Play Program

11. How long have your school been involved in RSP and how long have you been in the school?
12. What were your initial thoughts on RSP?
13. **Impact on Students:**
 - a. Have you noticed any changes in students' physical literacy or overall fitness since the introduction of RSP?
 - b. Have you observed any motivational/behavioural changes from the students since the introduction of RSP?
 - c. Does the time of PA or the season effect these variables?

- d. Based on your interactions with students, what are some of the biggest challenges students face regarding PA? And do you think RSP is helping?
- e. Do you think the children enjoy it and what do you think they take away from such an activity?

14. Implementation:

- a. What are your views about the structure of RSP?
- b. How do you feel about having multiple classes at one go?
- c. Do you think the schools are equipped for this increased PA?
- d. What are the differences between RSP and a PE?
 - What are benefits of RSP that PE lacks and vice versa.

15. Program Integration:

- a. How do you see the RSP program complementing your existing PE curriculum?
 - Are you aware of the aims of RSP and its LOs? Do you go beyond the LOs and how?
- b. Do you feel the RSP activities prepare students for the content covered in your PE lessons?
- c. How do you bridge the gap between RSP activities and PE lessons?

16. Collaboration and Communication:

- a. How do you collaborate with the RSP teacher to ensure a cohesive approach to PA for the students?
- b. How is the communication between you and the SLTs regarding equipment, premises, scheduling etc (clash with RSP?) ?
- c. Do you have any suggestions on how communication between class teachers, PE teachers, and RSP teachers could be improved?

17. Impact on educators

- a. Do you think RSP made an impact on the class teachers on how they view PA?
- b. Do you see more class teachers deliver PE lessons / cross curricular lessons

18. Suggestions

- a. Does RSP work for the betterment of the students holistically?
- b. Does it take away from the academics done in class or does it complement?
- c. What would you change?

Section D Conclusion

Final Takeaways

- 19. Do you think we are maximizing the potential of such a Co-curricular program?
 - a. If yes how?
 - b. If not why not?
- 20. Biggest Benefit
- 21. Biggest Challenge
- 22. Suggestion for improvement of RSP

Interview Guide RSP teacher

Title of Dissertation: Exploring the Ready Set Play Program in Maltese Primary Schools: The perspective of key stakeholders

Research Questions:

1. What is the overall perception of RSP from the key stakeholders?
2. What are the benefits and challenges of RSP?
3. What do the key stakeholders suggest about further implementation of this program?

Section A Introduction

Index no. —
Age —
Gender —
Years of experience —

Qualifications

1. What are your views on the current education system?
2. Do you enjoy teaching? (what motivates you?)
 - a. Can you describe the personal experiences or values that initially inspired you to pursue a career in teaching?
3. How do you describe the relationship you have with Physical Activity and PE?
 - a. Relate to past experiences to school
 - b. Overall thoughts on PE at your school
4. What do you know about Co-Curricular activities?
 - a. "Co-curricular activities are activities and programs that take place outside of the traditional classroom but in some manner complement academic learning from classroom curriculum."
5. How long have your school been involved in RSP and how long have you been in the school?
6. Have you always taught RSP?

Section B Increased PA

7. Are you aware that one of the prevalent issues around the world, especially Malta, is children's sedentary lifestyles. Why do you think this is?
8. How can we combat this issue?
9. Do you agree with increasing PA during school hours?
 - a. If you agree, why?
 - b. Why not?
10. Can you list some possible outcomes of increased PA?

Section C Ready Set Play Program

11. How long have your school been involved in RSP and how long have you been in the school?
12. What were your initial thoughts on RSP?
13. **Impact on Students:**
 - a. Have you noticed any changes in students' physical literacy or overall fitness since the introduction of RSP?
 - b. Have you observed any motivational/behavioural changes from the students since the introduction of RSP?
 - c. Does the time of PA or the season effect these variables?

- d. Based on your interactions with students, what are some of the biggest challenges students face regarding PA? And do you think RSP is helping?
- e. Do you think the children enjoy it and what do you think they take away from such an activity?

14. Implementation:

- a. What are your views about the structure of RSP?
- b. How do you feel about having multiple classes at one go?
- c. Do you think the schools are equipped for this increased PA?
- d. Did you ever teach PE and what are the differences between RSP and a PE?
 - What are benefits of RSP that PE lacks and vice versa.

15. Program Integration:

- a. How do you see the RSP program complementing your existing PE curriculum?
 - Are you aware of the aims of RSP and its LOs? Do you go beyond the LOs and how?
- b. Do you feel the RSP activities prepare students for the content covered in your PE lessons?
- c. How do you bridge the gap between RSP activities and PE lessons?

16. Collaboration and Communication:

- a. How do you collaborate with the PE teacher to ensure a cohesive approach to PA for the students?
- b. How do you describe the relationship between you and the class teachers during the RSP session?
- c. How is the communication between you and the SLTs regarding equipment, premises, scheduling and more?
- d. Do you have any suggestions on how communication between class teachers, PE teachers, and RSP teachers could be improved?

17. Impact on educators

- a. Do you think RSP made an impact on the class teachers on how they view PA?
- b. Do you see more class teachers deliver PE lessons / cross curricular lessons

18. Suggestions

- a. Does RSP works for the betterment of the students holistically?
- b. Does it take away from the academics done in class or does it complement?
- c. What would you change?

Section D Conclusion

Final Takeaways

- 19. Do you think we are maximizing the potential of such a Co-curricular program?
 - a. If yes how?
 - b. If not why not?
- 20. Biggest Benefit
- 21. Biggest Challenge
- 22. Suggestion for improvement of RSP

Appendix 4 Transcript

Verbatim

Quotes

Interviewer

Mela ħa nirrekordja is-session biex ikolli ease of transcription u mbagħad f' Ġunju ħa niddilitja kollox. Sewwa? Mela tista' tgħidli xi' naqra dwarek? Eta, eccetra.

Partiċipant

Erm, jiena PE teacher, għandi 38 years old.

Ilni f'dan il-qasam 11 years. Kont anke 5 snin qabel, kont anke nagħmel Erm coaching u water games activities, u affarijiet hekk ġo skola privata. So, qisni ħa, bħala esperjenza għandi fifteen years ngħallem das-suġġett.

Li huwa vera ferm għal qalbi, jiġifieri dejjem nipprova kemm jista' jkun nagħti mill-aħjar li nista' bħala bħala sessions lill-Istudenti tiegħi.

Bħala background. Jiena dejjem kont fuq general fitness u kont għamilt żmien qasir hekk qisu bodybuilding. Erm u anke għandna naqa esperjenza f'naqa athletics u kont nikkompeti fix-shot put. Erm, basically that's it u naħdem x'jismu, ġo ma' skola tal-gvern.

Interviewer

Erm, meta kont student inti, f'liema skola kont? Tal gvern jew tal knisja?.

Partiċipant

Skola privata, skola privata.

Interviewer

Ok. Erm, Orajt, issa, what are your views on the current education system, mhux just fuq il-PE, in ġenerali?

Partiċipant

In ġenerali, nista ngħidlek minn dak li nisma' mit-teachers, meta nitkellem magħhom, hemm xebgħa stress fuqhom biex ilaħħqu, Erm, ma' ċertu suġġetti, fosthom anke bħala Malti u anki għandhom il -problema bħal issa qed ikunu ħafna foreigners, qed ikun hemm sab problemi fuq il-lingwa, fuq il-pressure fuq il-Malti.

Anke aħna bħala PE, tkun komda anke biex twassal, il-lesson bl-Ingliż tkun komdu titkellem. Għax il-maġġoranza kollha bl-Ingliż. Imma qed jippruvaw iħeġġuna bil-Malti.

Erm. Jien as such ma tantx nista' ntik. Erm. kind of basic idea ta' fuq s-sistema kif inhi. Erm. Inħoss li qed jitfgħu ħafna ħafna affarijiet fuq it-teachers u jippruvaw ilaħħqu ma' kulhadd hu.

Interviewer

Erm, Diġa` semmejt li you enjoy teaching. What motivates you?

Partiċipant

What motivates me? Meta kont żgħir, dejjem kont naqra fuq ruhi u dejjem kont noqmos allura, jiġifieri t-teachers kienu jgħidu 'Ffittex ara x'ser tagħmel, għax, biex tikkalma u fis-sekondarja kont iltqajt ma' PE teacher li kien tagħna l-ewwel forma ta' training session, għalija kienet, circuit training, kienet fil gym bil-ħbula u bil-weights u hekk u kind of, I fell in love with it. U minn hemmhekk, bqajt nittrenja. Imbagħad kif bdejt nittrenja, bdiet nidhol anke l-basketbol u bdejt nikkompeti fix-shot put. U qisni, I kind of qisu ha, my active lifestyle, it hit it from there. Jiġifieri mis-sekondarja. U bqajt għaddej imbagħad fuq hekk imma anki jiġifieri, kont għamilt żmien studjajt anke, għax jiena dejjem xtaqt għal teacher u kont għamilt żmien kont għamilt art u Taljan. Imma imbagħad qisni in a certain way, qisni irrealizzajt li isma, nixtieq nagħmel PE, u bqajt fuq il-PE u bqajt hemmhekk imbagħad.

Interviewer

Tajjed Erm. Ġieli smajt bil-kelma co-curricular activities?

Partiċipant

Sorry?

Interviewer

Ġieli smajt bil-kelma co-curricular activities?

Partiċipant

Yes, cross curricular mhux co-curricular.

Interviewer

Hemm differenza bejn il-cross u il-co. Cross curricular hija meta jkollok maths u PE eżempju, math u taljan. Whatever.

Partiċipant

Sewwa.

Interviewer

Co-Curricular huma activities li jsiru outside of the traditional classroom, but they compliment academic learning from classroom kull curriculum. Bażikament huwa l-RSP. RSP. Erm. Fun Fit Futbol, ma nafx jekk qatt smajtx bih. Dawn it-tip ta' ta' activities li jagħmlu t-tfal. Erm. Issa mal-iskola tiegħek, kemm ilha involuta f'dawn it-tip ta' co-curricular activities?

Partiċipant

Mela., bdiet bl-RSP mis-sena l-oħra. Aħna konna it-tieni kulleġ li bdejna bl-RSP. L-ewwel, ewwel kulleġ kien, St X jekk mhux sejjer żballjat. Jew. X'imkien ieħor?

Aħna konna aw, it tieni kulleġg li beda l RSP u s'issa, jiġifieri, għaddej vera tajjeb. Two years in, jiġifieri I mean it tfal kuntenti għax ikunu vera looking forward speċjalment meta jkollhom PE u RSP on the same day. Jghidu il lallu mela jkollna aktar barra.

Interviewer

Hemm. Qatt ma għallimt RSP inti jiġifieri?

Partiċipant

No, narah jiġifieri, għax kind of jigifieri bl-station work u jkun hemm id-design u hekk. Imma no qatt ma għallimtu.

Interviewer

Orrajt, Issa fuq increased physical activity.

Partiċipant

Sewwa.

Interviewer

Are you aware of the issues around the world, especially Malta regarding sedentary lifestyles?

Partiċipant

Dawn l-aħħar sentejn, le ma tantx zammejt up to date. Imma fis-sens, jien aktar nisma' through word of mouth jew fuq ċertu artikli, meta, ehe hawn Malta qed nippruvaw naghfsu ħafna fuq PA. They try to put, kind of, qisu the stress on education, u fl-iskejjel. Kind of qisu ha, ha tkun xi miracle pill li l-poplu Malti ħa jimpruvja f'daqqa waħda.

Imma the thing is, you need to also, Erm, promote facilities. I lum il-ġurnata tant qed qed ikun hawn bini tiegħla, Erm, in-nies kulhadd jaħdem.

Ħin għal kważi għal familja qed jonqos. Allura, jiġifieri biex ikun hemm dak l-attività fizika barra minn dar u hekk, issa qed tonqos xi kultant inħossha.

Erm, Anke rigward facilities, xi kultant, aħna l-Maltin vera nħobbu xi kultant nibnu il-bini, imma qisu biex nibnu fuq, purposely for indoor facilities jew hekk kind of we still lacking behind. Meta jinfetaħ xi facility fuq ġewwa, iva kulhadd ifaħħru iva vera. Imma kemm qed jiftħu facilities imbagħad? Għadni niftakar meta kien fetah Tal' Qali l-ewwel darba, hemmhekk il-basket pavilion ma' ġenbu, kulhadd dan ifaħħruh jew meta nfetaħ, anke mbagħad hemmhekk il-il- tal- gymnastics, il-Marsa. Kulhadd beda jfaħħar...imma bir-rata ta' kif qed jinbnew, its very slow. Meta tipprova tara l-istress li qed jittfġhu fuq il-poplu biex jgħid isma, you need to be physically active. We need to promote sports but we lack the ability of building more facilities.

Interviewer

Ok, Taqbel li jzidu l-ħin attivi fl-iskejjel?

Partiċipant

Iva naqbel ħafna. (INCREASE ACTIVE TIME) Imma b'mod ibbilanċjat għax erm għalkemm jien favur ħafna għal l-attività fizika, its kind of qisu, tajjeb li jkollok inizjattivi li tghid , isma' , ħa nagħmlu hekk, ha nagħmlu hekk. Imma, trid tipprowa tara il min ħa taffettwa.

Għax qed nghanid, eżempju ta' RSP vera kien sabiħ. Erm. Imma, qed ninnota li eżempju il-klassijiet li jkollhom RSP u PE on the same day, it puts a lot of stress on the academic subjects speċjalment għat- teacher biex jipprova jlaħħqu. U jghidu il lallu, mhux darba jkollhom RSP u hekk? Imma considering the time outside of the classroom, imbagħad plus l-attivitajiet oħra, emm, irid ikun hemm bilanċ, irrid ikun hemm bilanċ, so yes nemmen ħafna li l-attività fizika hi importanti hu.

Interviewer

Erm għalxiex hija importanti? Tista ittini naqra outcomes/ benefits?

Partiċipant

Ara jiena li nemmen hu, li the body is made to move not to stay static. And, when you start moving it, you start also feeling better and when you train your body, you also kind of, eem encourage the mind to develop as well. Għax hu eżempju, healthy mind and a healthy body. Fhimt? You need a balance of both. Ma tistax toqgħod static ma tagħmel xejn u lanqas tghid isma', erm anke eżempju too much PA you still need to do academic. So, having a balance is always important. Plus plus heqq being PA, erm, qisu it kind of goes hand in hand, li awtomatikament tghid isma, I try to also watch my eating habits, or my diet, sewwa? Għax ma tistax tisma' jiena nigri maratoni imbagħad niekol dižastru d-dar imbagħad, fimtha?.

Interviewer

Orrajt, mela issa fuq ir-RSP. Erm. What were your initial thoughts meta daħal fl-iskola tagħkom fuq l-RSP.

Partiċipant

Le jien kont entużjast ħafna jiġifieri biex narah, to see it in play għax fil-fatt, Erm, kienet xi ħaġa ġdida.

Erm. Meta kont meta bdejt naqra tissettja l-istations u hekk it was very well organised, anke d-design. It-teacher ġiet b'design, jiġifieri tajjeb li anke l-istudenti it keeps them always going. It-teachers erm bdew anke jissaportjaw lit-teacher, meta dejjem setgħux, għax issib minn jghid ok , qegħdin mal-PE teacher mela ejja mmorra x'imkien ieħor jew inpoġġu. No they have to stick with the kids għax għax inti jkollok erba' klassijiet, hija differenti. Imma it was a very nice programme to start with.

Interviewer

Mhm. Erm. Issa l-impatt fuq l-istudenti. Rajt xi changes fuq il literacy, Physical literacy u overall fitness malli giet introduced l-RSP?

Partiċipant

Erm, li qed ninnota, again going again fuq il-min ikollu PE u RSP on the same day, hemm, issa jiena ili ngħallem din l-iskola eleven years so jiġifieri kind of qisni qbadt il-routine, vibe ta ċertu studenti li isma', when they have PE with me, I need to do certain things and they kind of work well with them.

Meta gie introdott l-RSP, ejja ngħidu ħa jkollhom RSP qabel il-break u mbagħad wara break ikollhom miegħi. Plus l-brejk, jiġifieri dawn ikunu qed jiġru. jiġu vera għajjenin. U meta jkolli bżonn nagħmillhom xi attività fejn tiċcaqlaq naqra mhux ħażin, ejja ngħidu ħa, erm, forsi inkun qed nitrejnjom għal xi cross country jew inkunu qed nagħmlu obstacle course. Ikun hemm minnhom "sir I dont feel like moving anymore', Eh, X'għara? moving anymore? Għala? Għax qabel kellhom l-RSP u tathom ħafna x'jagħmlu, waqt il-brejk inħelbu wkoll, imbagħad jiġu għal PE u hemm minnhom jibdew jgħidu "sir we're too tired." Ilallu, too tired, għadna kif bdejna!

Xi kultant vera it-temp, xhur ma jgħinx, meta meta tkun is-sħana, imma xi kultant ikunu għajjenin. Għalhekk għidtlek il-bilanċ u imbagħad sibt ukoll forsi min ikun naqra, ta' fuq ruħu, forsi jkun aktar aktar kwieti, jkunu aktar moħħu hemm, imbagħad għal ċertu instructions.

Interviewer

Mhm. Erm ehe infatti ħa nsaqsik fuq behavioural changes jew motivational changes. Hekk kien hemm qabza kbira, differenza kbira? Bejn qabel li bdew, qabel li kellhom RSP u issa li għandhom RSP.

Partiċipant

Mhux xi daqshekk ħafna jiġifieri, mhux li tgħid isma' fluwenzatli lill-istudenti kollha li dawn erm jew ma jridux jagħmlu PE jew ikunu wisq għajjenin jew f'daqqa waħda issa tħarbtu. Imma innutajt hemm illi ċertu studenti, stenna erġa' għidli d-domanda?

Interviewer

Erm fuq motivational u behavioral changes. Li....

Partiċipant

Ehe fuq motivation u behaviour changes. Erm dawk li kienu naqra zġħira mqarcin, qed ikollna qisu aktar kontroll fuqhom. Again għax inżertaw illi lessons tagħhom ikunu eżatti wara l RSP għalhekk kienu għajjenin. Hemm minnhom bħala motivation, issa ma tantx affettwat anki jgħidu isma' llum il-ġurnata RSP u PE għandna, so hemm minnhom li jkunu vera looking forward għaliha. Jgħidu isma' kważi kważi ġurnata barra mill-klassi. Imma mbagħad hemm minnhom, li xi kultant ikunu għajjenin wisq, so I kind of need to adapt my lessons according to their needs.

Interviewer

Orrajt.

Hemm u x'taħseb li huwa l-ikbar challenge li t-tfal isibu waqt li jkunu attivi?

Partiċipant

Hemm attivi qed tgħid l-iskola jew in ġenerali?

Interviewer

L-iskola waqt l-PE, u l-RSP speċjalment.

Partiċipant

Kellna problema qabel. Bl -equipment. Imma issa reċentament għandi kif I acquired new equipment hoops markers u hekk, So, issa qisna nistgħu narmaw sew għax qabel insertajta fejn per eżempju kien ikollha xi linja twila, jew giex linji u jkun hemm linja twila ta' tfal se joqogħdu jistennew.

Għax inti station work , tiehux l-iskola tiegħi li għal grazzja t'Alla għanda fejn taħdem, imma hemm min qed isma', m' għandux fejn naħdem, so facilities xi kultant jew hemm areas ma jkollhomx available biex jagħmluh sew l-RSP u jispiċċaw kollha cramped, hekk ikollha kollha ġo xulxin.

Jien nista' nieħu eżempju, għax jiena nista' nieħu eżempju minn skola oħra li nghanem fiha darba fil-ġimgħa, fejn qed juża, dan qed iħaddem rasu qed juża il-hall, qed juża biċċa yard ta' mal-ġenb tagħha u qisu jagħmel RSP hemmhekk rotational. So we have to work with what you have. U anke rigward equipment.

Basically, dik hi bħala challenges, facilities, l-equipment u l-ammont ta' klassijiet għax ikollok tgħid isma' tliet klassijiet mod. Tista' taħdem bi three stations jew four u dak. Imbagħad ikollok pereżempju xi ħamsa jew sitta, biex iddaħħalhom kollha fl-istess ħin. Imma mbagħad dejjem qishom sabu r-rimedju fejn qed tgħid isma' ma jinżlux il-klassijiet kollha, pereżempju kien hemm xi year grupp li jkollha sitt klassijiet jinżlu tlieta f'ħin imbagħad jinżlu tlieta f'ħin ieħor.

Interviewer

Ok, ħa nerġa' mmur għal din il-mistoqsija. It-tfal xi jħossu bħala l-ikbar challenge għalihom. Fis-sens forsi, it-tal lesson, jew communication bejniethom, jew teamwork.

Partiċipant

Jiena personalment, ara meta ġilli narahom għaddejjin waqt l-RSP, vera sabiħa tara tfal għaddejjin u jinterektjaw u jilagħbu iżda, inti again, they are station work. U naħseb illi it-teacher, -il class teacher, ma jkollhomx dik it-trained eye tal-PE teacher. Li jekk jara xi haġa li isma' mhux qed togħġbu jew tista' timpruvja , you go there to facilitate that student to help them out. Waqt station work just għaddejjin, sewwa, qisa mass production, heqq , ikun hemm min forsi mhux qed ilaħħaq bħal haddieħor jew forsi mhux qed jaqbez il-hurdle kif

suppost jew forsi mhux twaddab il-ballun kif kif xieraq, mhux qed ikollhom iċ-ċans to focus on that technique. Fhimtha?

Int ok ghandek il-klassi għaddejja bi station work, qed iwaddbu l-blalen vera sabiħ, imma jekk inti juru inkarigi overhead u hemm xi ħadd li forsi overhand ma jafx jwaddab, dan għaddejja li station, jiġifieri, il PE teacher, ma tistax, vera tista' iddur tirrangah dak il-ħin, imma jkun hemm tliet każijiet oħra għaddejjin, ma tistax tlaħħaq ma' kulħadd. U l-class teacher again il-class teacher, tgħid it-tfal qed jagħmlu attività and thats it. Mhux se jgħidu isma' lllum il focus huwa catching u throwing. Mela ħalli nara t-tfal kif se jaqdbu jagħmlu communication, eye contact, ready hands. Mhux se jagħmluhom dawn l-affarijiet, huma importanti li tiegħi t- tfal qed jiċċaqalqu u qed jilagħbu. So, ija dik hija wahda miċ-challenges, jiġifieri good quality technics during the session, fhimtha?

Interviewer

Mhm, Eħe u x'inh i d-differenza bejn l-RSP u l-PE?

Partiċipant

Hemm, RSP nara ħafna station work u drill based. Jiena waqt il-PE tiegħi, ghalkemm nipprova - niffollowja l-curriculum jkoll i anke l-objectives u l-outcomes li jkoll i niffollowja kull sena. Jiena nagħmilhom forma ta' games ukoll u ilkoll i progressions ovvjament, għax inti pereżempju, irrid ngħallem it-tfal pereżempju game base activity, ngħid ha niffoka fuq handball. Għandhom ċertu games li jista' anke bl-affarijiet li jkunu jafu fil-futbol, ngħidu issa flok ha nilgħabu bis-saqajn ser nilgħabu bl-idejn. U daħlilhom ċertu rules u qed tillidjahom għall- games, so you are doing to a specific sport u fl-istess ħin qed tilhaq tohq, ċertu learning outcomes. Fl-RSP nara il, you know , you're providing the activity, the kids are active, they are enjoying themselves. And, that's it. Fhimtha? Issa qed nitkellem ta' bniedem li qatt m'għamiltu l-RSP jiġifieri forsi there is something lying underneath li ma nafx bih.

Interviewer

Eħe infatti erm. L-RSP għandu certu learning objectives tiegħu, are you aware of that?

Partiċipant

Le jien qatt ma rajthom.

Interviewer

Orrajt.

Partiċipant

Jien nista' ngħid li qatt ma staqsejt li isma' jekk hemm xi learning objectives jew hekk. Probabbilment għax naħseb assumejt l-isma' qed jagħmlu dan għal skop. Dan mhux se jisma' ħa nagħmlu dan sal-lum ħa nieħdu pjaċir noqgħod nwaddbu l-frizbee 'l hawn u 'l hemm. Imma għalxiex? So, Jien assumejt li hemm xi ħaġa, imma qatt ma qatt ma staqsejt.

Interviewer

Ok ok. U tahseb li jikkumplimentaw lil xulxin il-PE u I-RSP?

Partiċipant

Erm interesting question, taf li qatt ma staqsejt...jikkumplimentaw żgur b'mod ta' attivita fizika, iżda issa qed iġibni in se. Mhux dejjem jimxu kind of accordingly fis-sens li ngħidu ħa RSP qed tahdem fuq kicking pereżempju. qed tagħmel xi games fil kicking u jien kont nagħmilhom handball. So jiġifieri they are totally different things. Mhux tgħid isma' ee qed tagħmel hekk mela ħa nbiddel SOW u dawwarhom futbol jew inkella isma' nkellimha ngħidilha isma' iffokalhom fuq throwing għax bħalissa qed naħdem fuq handball. So, it could be implemented din, ehe tkun tista' tagħmilha din il-ħaġa kieku. Tkun idea tajba. Imma naħseb li kulhadd ikun għaddej bis- schemes of work tiegħu bil-programm li jkun komdu jlaħħaq hu matul is-sena. So I-RSP għandha I-SOW tagħha u jien SOW tiegħi u again with experience x'jismu erm, again due to weather, facilities availability of equipment. You have to adapt to be able to deliver the sessions to the children.

Interviewer

Hemm. U fuq collaboration. Inti tikkomunika ma' l PE teacher fuq equipment facilities?

Partiċipant

Yes yes qatt ma kellna problemi. Fil-fatt dejjem kull filgħodu nitkellmu u naraw x' għandna bżonn, ġieli ngħidilha isma' , nara l-equipment, hu li għandek bżonn, jiena I always manage to adapt. Għall-grazzja t'Alla to adapt my session jiġifieri, according to their needs. U again riċentament, jiġifieri għadni kif, I aquired new equipment, so issa ġiet vera komda l-ħaġa. Allura kulhadd qisu kuntent, hemm equipment biżżejjed għal kulhadd. Għax inti bil-klassi tiegħi u b'3 klassijiet tagħha jiġu qishom erba' klassijiet għaddejjin. Għaliex ikun hemm jiġifieri twenty ...around eighty, ninety children ikun hemm. Allura, jiġifieri biex kulhadd ikollu equipment, imma qed ninqdew, talking talking from my school iġifieri.

Interviewer

U bħala skola, premises, anke man power u hekk, do you think we are equipped for this increased PA?

Partiċipant

In my case we're equipped. Għal grazzja t'Alla. Hlief meta tkun ix-xita imma, għax meta tkun xita, m'għandna imkien ġewwa. Sakemm ovvjament il-hall ma jeħduhiex biex jagħmlu l-meetings u hekk li quite recently qed jużawha ħafna, u bħalissa t-temp kif qiegħed, meta jmissna nsaqsu, il-hall hija available? Le għandna meeting. Allura RSP jispicca ma jsirx. Hi, tispiċċa iddur il-klassijiet, tgħidulhom x'għandhom jagħmlu u joqogħdu jagħmluh mat-teacher. Imma again, what type of quality comes out...

Interviewer

Mhm understood, u communication with the SMTs regarding equipment, premises u hekk?

...

Partiċipant

With the?

Partiċipant

With the SMTs

Partiċipant

Hemm, le qatt ma kelli problemi għax, x'ismu meta kelli bżonn ġieli saqsejthom, isma għandna bżonn hekk hekk u hekk u anke il-head ġieli kellmitni, ġieli anke involviet ma ċertu laqgħat mal-SMT , tgħidli isma sir, għandi bżonn nara l-perspettiva tiegħek fuq sports u facilities forsi you can shed some light on them. U le dejjem dejjem dejjem inkludewni.

Interviewer

Tajjeb, tajjeb. Għandek xi suggestions fuq kif nistgħu ninpruvjaw il-komunikazzjoni bejn class teacher, PE teacher u RSP teacher?

Partiċipant

Jiena naħseb il-communication bżonn timpruvja bejn il-class teacher u l-RSP. Fis-sens hemm jiena min għandi miegħi tal-RSP, she communicates imma meta tigi, erm, titkellem miegħi tgħidli, ċertu teachers qishom jarawha as a break jew tgħid isma', some time out of the class room. U anke naqra mit-teachers mill-espezzjoni tagħhom jgħidu isma' għandi ħafna ħin x'ħin l-aħħar fil-klassi. Din qed narah ħela ta' ħin noqgħod ninżel mat-tfal. Ħafna minnhom kienu jgħidu isma' tfal ħudhom li ejja nkomplu bix-xogħol tiegħi u din inħossha ħafna u anke naraha għax ġieli anke nismagħhom jtkellmu waqt il-brejk. Jew ġieli l-aħħar darba kumbinazzjoni smajt "issa wara break għandi l-RSP, ħallini mejta biex nitla' l fuq nkompli." Jigifieri again, they feel kind of qishom obliged, isma' trid toqgħod mal-istudenti. Isma' hekk suppost u hekk xi kultant nara li isma', erm, fil-fatt l-SMT jgħinuna ħafna għax aħna qegħdin naraw dan-nuqqas ta' kind of, għajnuna u support mill-class teacher dejjem għidnielu isma' ċertu, dak it-tali jew ċertu teachers mhux qed jagħmlu xogħolhom kif suppost, mhux qed joqogħdu minn studenti, u jkellmuhom imbagħad jibdew iqumu. Imma again, ċertu nies qishom, skużi, qishom tfal žgħar, qed tisma' darba darbtejn tlieta come on, qed tintefa' fil-ġenb u t-tfal qegħdin hemmhekk. No problem, ħa tpoġġihomlok it-tfal, ma ma jilagħbux. Jekk it-tfal jistaqsu sir jew ms,-għax mhux qed nilagħbu, morru staqsu t teacher, morru staqsu teacher tagħkom għax mhux qiegħda hawn.

Allura erm, xi kultant anki jibagħtuhom mal LSEs pereżempju , il-class teacher ma tinzix. Jigifieri xi kultant jabbużaw. Imbagħad bl-LSEs, li mhux suppost, għax jekk jinqala' alla ħares qatt xi ħaġa, isma' fejn il-class teacher? E kienet fuq. So ehe dik il-problema li tgħid isma', class teacher should not see it as an extra physical activity, tgħid isma' ħa joqogħdu jilagħbu mat-tfal. But they need to be kind of committed u fl-istess ħin, they observe and learn from the RSP. Għandhom iċ-ċans li joqogħdu hemmhekk jattendu l PA kif issir minn PE teacher so

they can learn. Hemm min ta, jigifieri teħodnix ħażin. Hemm min jgħidli isma' naqra, u narahom xi kultant, ħa nsemmijha, li narahom xi kultant, Mela jiena nkun qed nuża grawnd, jigru jinżlu jagħmlu jagħmlu l extra PE session. Jigifieri hemm hemm class teachers imberkin li jinżlu u ġieli jkun hemm min "sir isma,' t-tieni xi idea" jew "isma' x' tista' tagħmilhom sir". Yes please ask me, I'm here for this. U jigifieri, imma mbagħad it's a rare sight to see ħa ngħidu hekk.

Interviewer

Infatti dik kienet il-mistoqsija li jmiss, x'impatt ħalla l-RSP fuq it-teachers. Ermu jekk tarax teachers jagħmlu l-lesson. Irrispondejtha mingħajr ma staqsejtilek. Hemm issa biex nikkonkludu, l-ahhar ftit.. Holistic jaħdem ma -tfal dan l-RSP?.

Partiċipant

Yes, yes, għax anke dik il-ħaġa, you're promoting PA fl-iskola, I mean il-PE, l-RSP, issa riċentement kellmitni reġgħet il-head għax fil-bidu tas-sena staqsejt jekk nistgħux nibdew nagħmlu daily mile filgħodu waqt il-breakfast club. Għidtilha għax qed nara ħafna tfal speċjalment tat-trasport qegħdin just bilqiegħda fil-kuratur ma jagħmlu xejn jew jagħmel ħafna storbu. Għidtilha isma jien faċilment nista' naqbad it-tfal, naqbad niftah il-gate tal-grawnd u noqgħod immur indur, hemm il-linja tal-grawnd u nimxu magħha u ovvjament joħorġu miegħi, l-LSEs jew teachers u joqogħdu bilqiegħda jekk ma jridux jimxu. L-importanti li jkun hemm supervision u we increased kind of their activity u nagħmlu din id-daily mile filgħodu, RSP matul il-ġurnata, plus PE. U tkun sabiħa. U it-tfal iħossuha, isma we are very physically active, so let's stay physically active. Fhimt?

Interviewer

Mhm, Le, idea tajba!. Hemm issa taħseb, diġa semmejt xi ħaġa, imma taħseb li tieħu mill-akkademja?

Partiċipant

Sorry mhux, .

Interviewer

Taħseb li tieħu mill-academics li jsir fl-iskola fil-klassi l-RSP u l increased PA?

Partiċipant

Li tieħu mill-academic f'liema sens? i li tinkoraġġixxi l-akkademja qed tghid?

Interviewer

Yes

Partiċipant

Yes yes of course. Again, il-bniedem hu magħmul biex jiċcaqlaq u tfal li qed nittrenjawhom biex joqogħdu bilqiegħda il-ħin kollu ma' mejda. So when they get PA waqt il -brejk jew waqt

I-RSP jew PE it's always a kind of an improvement on their mental health and and wellbeing hux, so academic going to be eventually affected by that.

Interviewer

Ok. Hemm xi haġa li tista tbiddel f' RSP? Xi suggestion for improvement?

Partiċipant

As such m'hemm xejn x' nista' nbiddel. M'għandhiex is-saħħa mbaġħad tal-proprjetajiet li noħroġ il-facilities hekk hu kulhadd jista jkun igawdi minnhom fhimt inti?, jiġifieri ? Imma l-bqija le, l-RSP għaddej tajjeb għalissa.

Interviewer

Tajjeb. Issa, biggest challenge u biggest benefit.

Partiċipant

Mela biggest challenge ta' xiex? RSP?

Interviewer

Of the increased PA at school.

Partiċipant

Mela hemm availability of equipment, facilities, u support from class teachers.

Interviewer

Tajjeb. U benefit?

Partiċipant

Benefit. Extra PA for the kids, benefits for the mental wellbeing u anke stress relief, għax anke tkun kollu magħluq go klassi tfal jiddejq. Allura, when they get the time to get out and play and have fun it's better for them.

Interviewer

Tajjeb jien min-naħa tiegħi that's all, ma nafx jekk għandek xi haġa min-naħa tiegħek trid iżżid.

Partiċipant

Jien m'għandi xejn.

Interviewer

Nirringrazzjak PE3 ta' żmien. Anki ahna vera festa?????

Translated

Interviewer

So, I am going to record the session so that I will have an ease of transcription and then in June I will delete everything. So, can you tell me a bit about yourself? Age, etc..

Participant

Erm, I am a PE teacher, I am thirty-eight years old.

I have been in this sector for eleven years. I used to five years before, I used to coach and organise water game activities, and other stuff like that in a private school. So regarding experience, I have been teaching this subject for fifteen years.

I have a love for this subject, so I always try to, as much as possible, to give my best to the sessions for my students.

Regarding my background, I have always focused on general fitness, and I had done a short amount of time on bodybuilding. Erm, I also have some experience in athletics, and I also used to compete in shot put. Erm, basically that's it and I also work in a government school.

Interviewer

Erm, when you were in school as a child, what school did you go to? A government one or a church one?

Participant

Private school, private school.

Interviewer

Ok. Erm, now. What are your views on the current education system, not only regarding PE, but also in general?

Participant

In general, I can tell you mostly for what I heard from the teachers. When I speak to them, erm, there is a lot of stress they are under, due to trying to catch up with everything. Erm, with certain subjects, from those, mostly regarding Maltese, there is a problem, as there are numerous foreigners. There has been a problem with the language and a pressure on the Maltese language.

Even us as PE teachers, to be comfortable giving a lesson in English, you must be comfortable speaking it. Because most of the classes are in English, but they do encourage us to speak in Maltese.

Erm, to be quite honest I can't tell you much. Erm, about the basic idea of the system in general. I feel that they are putting a lot on the teacher's plate, and they must try and manage and give everyone the right attention.

Interviewer

Erm, you already mentioned that you enjoy teaching. What motivates you?

Participant

What motivates me? When I was younger, I was always an energetic person, and I would always be all over the place. The teacher used to tell me, "Start looking into what you would like to continue on, something that helps you to calm down." In secondary school I had met my PE teacher, that had given us a type of training session, to me it was circuit training, it had been held in the gym, with some rope, weights, and I sort of fell in love with it. From then on, I had continued training. When I had started training, then started basketball and I had then started to compete in shot put. And from then, kind of, my active lifestyle, it hit it from there. So, it started from secondary school. Then I had continued from there, and then I had done some time studying, because I had always wanted to become a teacher and I had done some time studying art and Italian. And then in a certain way, I had realised that I wanted to continue PE, and I had stayed on PE and I stayed there since then.

Interviewer

Good. Erm. Have you ever heard with the word co-curricular activities?

Participant

Sorry?

Interviewer

Have you ever heard the word co-curricular activities?

Participant

Yes, cross curricular not co-curricular.

Interviewer

There is a difference between the cross and co. Cross curricular is when you have maths and PE for example. Maths and Italian. Whatever.

Participant

Ok.

Interviewer

Co-curricular are activities that happen outside of the traditional classroom, but they compliment academic learning from classroom curriculum. Basically, it is the RSP. RSP. Erm. Fun Fit football, I don't know if you have ever heard of it. These types of activities that the children do. Erm. Now, with your school, how long has it been involved in this type of co-curricular activities.

Participant

So, the school started with RSP from last year. We were the second school to start using RSP. The first first school was X, if I was not mistaken. Or somewhere else.

We were the second school to start RSP until now. It is going very well. Two years in, and I mean the children are happy, because they would be very looking forward, especially when they would have PE and RSP on the same day. They would say “oh wow, we have more time outside.”

Interviewer

Erm. You have never partaken in RSP?

Participant

No, I see it happening, because it would be based on a station work and there would be the design and all. But no, I have never partaken in it.

Interviewer

Ok, now on increased physical activity.

Participant

Yes.

Interviewer

Are you aware of the issues around the world, especially Malta regarding sedentary lifestyle?

Participant

These past two years, no I haven't been up to date. But I usually listen through word of mouth or on certain articles, which state that Malta is trying to motivate people a lot on physical activities. They try to put, kind of, the stress on education, and the schools. Kind of, there would be some miracle pill that the population of Malta is going to improve on suddenly.

The thing is, you need to also, Erm, promote facilities. In today's world, there is so much building happening, erm, and people, everyone is working. The time with family, is decreasing, so for there to be physical activity outside your house, is decreasing sometimes, I feel.

Erm, even about facilities, sometimes, us as Maltese we love to build buildings, but like to build on, purposely for indoor facilities, kind of we still are lacking behind. When an indoor facility is built, everyone praises it, yes true. But how many facilities are being opened in reality? I still remember the time when Ta' Qali was built, with the basket pavilion next to it, everyone had praised it when it had opened, also when the gymnastics, in Marsa had opened. Everyone had praised it, but with the rate of the building that is happening, is very slow. When you start observing the stress that they are putting upon the population, to say, “you need to be physically active”. We need to promote sports, but we lack the ability of building more facilities.

Interviewer

Ok, do you agree that they should increase the active time in schools?

Participant

Yes, I very much agree (to increase the active time). But in a balanced way, because, erm, despite me being in very much in favour of physical activity, its kind of, good that you have initiatives to say, "Let me do this, let me do this." But you would have to be aware on who you are affecting.

Because we are saying, that for example the RSP was a beautiful idea. Erm, but I am noticing that that the classes that have RSP and PE on the same day, it puts a lot of stress on the academic subjects, especially for the teacher regarding time to manage everything. And they would say "oh wow, not once they have RSP? But considering the time outside of the classroom, and plus the other activities, erm, there must be a balance, there must be a balance, so yes, I very much believe that physical activity is important.

Interviewer

Erm, why is it important? Can you give me some outcomes/ benefits?

Participant

Look I believe that the body is made to move, not to stay static. And, when you start moving it, you start also feeling better and when you train your body, you also kind of, erm, encourage the mind to develop as well. Because for example, healthy mind and a healthy body, you understand? You need a balance of both. You cannot stay static and do nothing and not even, erm, for example, too much physical activity, you still need to do academic. So, having a balance is always important. Plus, plus, being physically active, erm, it kind of goes hand in hand, that automatically you also try to watch your eating habits, or your diet. Because you cannot state that you want to run a marathon and then you eat horribly at home. You understand?

Interviewer

Ok, so, now on the RSP. Erm, what were your initial thoughts when it had entered your school, regarding the RSP?

Participant

No, I was very enthusiastic to see it in practise, in fact, erm, it was a new thing.

Erm, when I had started setting up the stations, it was very well organised, even its design. The teacher had come up with the design, it's even very good for the students as it keeps them always going. The teachers were also supporting the teacher, when they could. Because you always find people who say "ok, they are with the PE teacher so, let's go somewhere else or sit down". No, they must stick with the kids, because the teacher would have four classes and it's very different, but it was a very nice programme to start with.

Interviewer

Mhm. Erm, now, the impact on the students. Have you seen some changes regarding literacy, physical literacy and overall fitness when RSP got introduced?

Participant

Erm, what I did notice, again, going back again to those who have PE and RSP on the same day. Erm, I have been working in this school for eleven years, so kind of, I have gotten used to the routine, vibe of certain students. I can say for example, when they have PE with me, I need to do certain things and they kind of work well with them.

When RSP had gotten introduced, let us say that they are going to have RSP before the break and then, after the break they have a session with me. In the break, these children would be running around. They would come to the lesson very tired. And when it comes to an activity when they must move quite a bit. Erm, maybe when I would be training them for cross country or they would be instructed to do some obstacle course. There would be many of them, "Sir, I don't feel like moving anymore", what happened? moving anymore? Why? Before they would have RSP and they would have a lot to do, during the break they would get exhausted and then they would have to come for PE. Many of them would say, "Sir, we're too tired." Oh wow, too tired, we have just started!

Sometimes the weather, months, doesn't help, especially when it's hot, and sometimes they would be very tired. That's why I told you, balance is important. There would be some students that are more outgoing, and they would come to the lesson more quiet and more attentive about certain instructions.

Interviewer

Mhm, erm, in fact, I was going to ask you about behavioural changes or motivational changes. Was there a big difference? Before they had started with the RSP and now that RSP is added.

Participant

Not that much, that is, not to say listen it affected all my students who either don't want to do PE or are too tired or suddenly they become lost. But I noticed there that certain students, wait, tell me the question again?

Interviewer

Erm, regarding motivational changes and behavioural changes. That....

Participant

Ehe, on motivation and behaviour changes. Erm, those who were a little bit more energetic, we are having more control over them. Again, because they happened to have their lessons right after the RSP so they were tired.

There are some of them regarding motivation, now it's not really affected even they say, listen today we have RSP and PE, so there are some of them who are really looking forward

to it. They say, listen almost a day out of class. But then, there are some of them, who sometimes are too tired so I kind of need to adapt my lessons according to their needs.

Interviewer

ok. Erm, what do you think is the biggest challenge that children find while being active?

Participant

Are you saying active at school or in general?

Interviewer

School during PE, and RSP especially.

Participant

We had a problem before. With the equipment. But now, recently, I have acquired new equipment hoops, markers and so on, so now we can set it up properly because before I had noticed where for example, she would have a long line, or two lines and there would be a long line of children waiting.

Because station work, thankfully in my school, I have a place to work, but there are those who don't have a place to work, so sometimes facilities or there are areas they don't have available to do the RSP properly and they all end up cramped, so all the students will be squashed together.

I can think of another example, because I can take an example from another school that I teach at once a week, where he is using the hall, he is using a piece of yard next to it, and it looks like he is doing RSP there rotationally. So, we have to work with what you have. And even regarding equipment.

Basically, that's the challenges, facilities, equipment and the amount of classes because there is difference between three classes as you can work with three stations or four. Then you have for example five or six, to bring them all in at the same time. But then, they always seem to have found the remedy where you're saying listen not all the classes come down, for example, there was a year group that had six classes come down three at a time then three come down at another time.

Interviewer

Ok, let me go back to this question. What do the children feel is the biggest challenge for them? In a sense, maybe, the length of the lesson, or communication between them, or teamwork.

Participant

I personally, when I observe them during RSP, it's really nice to see children going on and interacting and playing but, then again, it's station work. And I think that the teacher, the class teacher, they don't have that trained eye of a PE teacher. That, if he sees something that he doesn't like or you can improve, you go there to facilitate that student to help them

out. During station work, they would just be distracted and going about it, like mass production, right, there will be those who maybe aren't keeping up like others or maybe aren't jumping the hurdle as well or maybe aren't throwing the ball as well as they should, they don't have the chance to focus on that technique. Do you understand?

Ok, you have the class going on with station work, they're throwing the balls really nicely, but if you show overhead assignments and there's someone who maybe doesn't know how to throw overhand, the station is still happening, that is, the PE teacher can go around and fix it at the time, but if there are three other cases going on, you can't keep up with everyone. And the class teacher again the class teacher, would be observing that the children are doing an activity and that's it. They won't say listen today the focus is catching and throwing. So let me see how the children are going to communicate, use eye contact, ready hands. They won't do these things, the important thing for them is that the children are moving and playing. So, yes that's one of the challenges, so good quality techniques during the session, do you understand?

Interviewer

Mhm, yes, and what is the difference between RSP and PE?

Participant

In RSP I see a lot of station work and drill based. During PE, although I try to follow the curriculum, I also have the objectives and outcomes that I must follow every year. I also put together games and progressions of course, because for example, I want to teach the children for example a game base activity, I say focus on handball. They are certain games that can even be done from things they know about football, instead of playing with their feet we will play with hands. And you introduce certain rules, and you are leading them to games, so you are doing to a specific sport and at the same time you are achieving, certain learning outcomes. In RSP I see that, you know, you're providing the activity, the kids are active, they are enjoying themselves. And that's it. You understand? Now I'm speaking as someone who has never done RSP, meaning maybe, there is an underlying factor that I am not aware of.

Interviewer

Yes, in fact, RSP has certain learning outcomes, are you aware of that?

Participant

No, I have never seen them.

Interviewer

Ok.

Participant

I can say that I never asked if there were any learning objectives or anything like that. Probably because I think I assumed they were doing this for a purpose. The teacher is not

going to tell the children that for today we can have fun by throwing the frisbee here and there. But why? So, I assumed there was something, but I never, ever asked.

Interviewer

Ok, ok. And do you think that PE and RSP complement each other?

Participant

Erm interesting question, you know I never asked...they complement in a physical activity way, but you are making me aware of it. They don't always move accordingly, in the sense that RSP is working on kicking for example. She's doing some games in kicking, and I used to do them handball. So, they are totally different things. She can't say, I'm doing this, so I'll change the SOW and turn them into football or else I tell her listen focus more on throwing because I'm currently working on handball. So, it could be implemented, she could do this if she wanted to. It would be a good idea, but I think everyone is going through their schemes of work with a programme that they can comfortably cope with throughout the year. So RSP has its SOW and I have my SOW and erm, again due to weather, facilities, availability of equipment. You must adapt to be able to deliver the sessions to the children.

Interviewer

Erm, and about collaboration. Do you communicate with the PE teacher regarding equipment/ facilities?

Participant

Yes yes, we never had any problems. In fact, we always talk every morning and see what we need, sometimes I say listen, take what you need I always manage to adapt. Thank God, I always manage to adapt my session, according to their needs. And again recently, I have acquired new equipment, so now things are very comfortable. So, everyone seems happy, there is enough equipment for everyone. Because with my class and her 3 classes it comes like four classes going on. There would be ...around eighty, ninety children there. So, that everyone has equipment, but we are managing, however, I'm referring to the school I work at.

Interviewer

And regarding school premises, and manpower, do you think we are equipped for this increased physical activity?

Participant

In my case we're equipped. Thank God. Except when it rains but, because when it rains, we have nowhere inside. Obviously, if they won't be using it to hold meetings and quite recently, they've been using it a lot, and right now the weather is as it is, and when we whether the hall is available, they say "No, we have a meeting." So RSP ends up not being done. She ends up going around the classrooms, telling them what to do and they do it with their teacher. But again, what type of quality comes out...

Interviewer

Mhm understood, and regarding communication with the SMTs, regarding equipment, premises?

Participant

With the?

Interviewer

With the SMTs.

Participant

Erm. No I never had any problems because, when I needed something, I sometimes asked them, listen we need this and that and even the head came to me and talked to me sometimes and even involved me in certain meetings with SMT. She tells me, listen sir, I need to see your perspective on sports and facilities, maybe you can shed some light on them. And no, they always included me.

Interviewer

Amazing. Amazing. Do you have any suggestions on how we can improve the communication between the class teacher, PE teacher and RSP teacher?

Participant

I think that communication need to be improved between the class teacher and the RSP, I have the teacher of RSP with me, and we communicate effectively but when she, erm, talks to me, she tells me that some teachers, see the RSP lesson as a break or she says it's "some time out of the classroom". And even from the teacher's side, from their experience they say they have more things to do in their class, so they see it as a waste of time, staying getting out of the class to be with the children. Most of them say "Take the students so that I can continue my work", I feel this happens and see it happen, when I overhear them speaking in the break. Last time, I overheard someone saying, "Now after the break I have RSP, I'm dying to go up to my class and continue." Again, they feel kind of obliged that they must stay with the students.

That's how it should be, the fact is that the SMT help us a lot because we are seeing this lack of help and support from the class teacher, we always told him, listen that person or certain teachers are not doing their job properly, they are not overseeing the students, and they talk to them and then they start to participate more. But again, some people are like, excuse me, like little children, you hear that you must stay with the children once, twice, three times come on, you sit on the side when the children are present. No problem, I will put the children aside and they won't play, If the children ask sir or ms, why are we not playing? Go ask the teacher, go ask your teacher because she is not here.

So erm, sometimes they even send their LSEs instead, for example, the class teacher doesn't come down. I mean sometimes they take advantage of the LSEs presence, which is not

ethical, because if God forbid something happens, listen where is the class teacher? So yes, that is a problem you can say, listen, class teachers should not see it as an extra physical activity, you say, listen, they should stay there with the children. But they need to be kind of committed and at the same time, they observe and learn from the RSP. They have the chance to stay there to attend physical activity as it is done by the PE teacher so they can learn. There are some who attend, don't get me wrong. There are some who tell me listen, and I see them sometimes, let me mention it, that I see them sometimes, when I'm using the ground and they come down to do the extra PE session. I mean there are class teachers who come down and sometimes ask me "Sir, listen, would you give me some ideas" or "Listen, what can I do for them". Yes, please ask me, I'm here for this. And that is a rare sight to see, let's say that.

Interviewer

In fact, that was the next question, what impact did the RSP have on teachers. Erm, do you see teachers doing the lesson? You answered it without asking you. Now to conclude, one last thing. Does RSP work holistically on the children?

Participant

Yes, yes, because that's the thing, you're promoting physical activity in school, I mean PE, RSP, she recently spoke to me, again because at the beginning of the year I asked if we could start doing a daily mile in the morning during breakfast club. I told her, because I see a lot of children, especially those who come with the transport, just sitting in the corridor not doing anything or making a lot of noise. I told her listen, I can take the children, open the gate of the ground and we walk along the line that there is on the ground and of course they come out with me, the LSEs or teachers. They can sit down if they don't want to walk. What's important is that there's supervision and we increase this kind of activity, and we do this daily mile in the morning, RSP throughout the day, plus PE., it will be effective. And the children feel the difference, "Listen we are very physically active, so let's stay physically active." Do you understand?

Interviewer

Yes, it is a good idea. Erm, do you think, you already mentioned something on these lines, but do you think you take from the academics?

Participant

Sorry I'm not understanding.

Interviewer

Do you think you take from the academics that happen in school or in the class of RSP and increased physical activity?

Participant

That you take from the academics in what sense? That you encourage academics you mean.

Interviewer

Yes.

Participant

Yes, yes, of course. Again, the person is made to move and we are training the children to stay sitting at the table all the time. So, when they get physical activity during the break or during RSP or PE, it's always a kind of improvement on their mental health and and wellbeing, right? So academic is going to be eventually affected by that.

Interviewer

Ok, is there anything you wish to change about RSP? Some suggestion for improvement?

Participant

There isn't anything I would change. I don't have the power over the properties to add more facilities, as everyone would benefit from them. Do you understand? But other than that, no, RSP is going well for now.

Interviewer

Good, now, biggest challenges and biggest benefits?

Participant

Biggest challenge of what? RSP?

Interviewer

Of the increased physical activity in school.

Participant

So, there is the availability of equipment, facilities and support from the class teachers.

Interviewer

Good. And benefit?

Participant

Benefit. Extra physical activity for the children, benefits for the mental wellbeing and even stress relief, when you are closed off into a classroom the children get easily annoyed. So, when they get the time to get out and play and have fun, it's better for them.

Interviewer

So, from my end that's all, I don't know if you would like to add something else from your side?

Participant

I don't have anything else to add.

Interviewer

Thank you PE3 for your time and happy holidays.

Appendix 5 RSP Learning Objectives

Area	Topic	Learning Outcomes
Fundamentals		Year 1 & Year 2
F2.3	Equilibrium	I can travel while balancing an implement such as a bean bag on my head without dropping it.
F2.4	Equilibrium	I can balance on one foot while balancing an implement such as a bean bag on different body parts such as knee, shoulders, and foot.
F2.5	Combination of Movements	I can self-toss / bounce an implement such as a scarf, balloon, or a ball perform a body action such as a jumping jack and catch the implement again.
F2.6	Combination of Movements	I can lift my foot over a low obstacle and I can crawl under low obstacles to move in the intended direction.
F2.7	Orientation of Space & Time	I can travel faster in a big space and slower in small space.
F2.8	Orientation of Space & Time	I can travel as required to go from one spot to another and arrive at a destination.
F2.9	Reaction	I can react instantly to a given instruction.
F2.10	Reaction	I can roll a ball through my feet, turn and go and catch it fast.
F2.11	Rhythm	I can throw and catch a ball upon rebound for at least three (3) consecutive times at the same rate.
F2.12	Rhythm	I can travel as slow as possible such as an inch worm and fast such as a cheetah.
F2.13	Agility	I can travel along different pathways to create letters such as 'V', 'M', 'L' and /or numbers such as '0', '4', '7'.
F2.14	Agility	I can create and copy different footwork movements using different implements such as 'square', 'hexagon'.
F2.15	Speed	I can differentiate between running in a straight line and running in between obstacles.
Gymnastics		Year 1 & Year 2
GY2.3	Directions	I can travel in different ways such as forward / backward, right / left ...
GY2.4	Pathways	I can travel from one side to another side of the mat in different ways, using hands, feet and rolls
GY2.5	Weight Transference	I can transfer weight from my feet to different parts of the body.
GY2.6	Levels	I can travel at a low, medium and high levels.
GY2.7	Balance	I can hold a balance for 3 seconds.
Athletics		Year 1 & Year 2
A2.2	Runs	I can start to run from different starting positions.
A2.3	Runs	I can run around an obstacle course circuit.
A2.4	Jumps	I can jump for height.
A2.5	Jumps	I can jump for distance.

Area	Topic	Learning Outcomes
Fundamentals		Year 3 & Year 4
F4.3	Equilibrium	I can balance with a partner at various levels on different body parts.
F4.4	Equilibrium	I can move from one balance to another having different points, i.e. from 5 points to 3 points of contact.
F4.5	Combination of Movements	I can travel, turn around a cone 360°clockwise, run, turn around a cone 360° anticlockwise and continue running.
F4.6	Combination of Movements	I can jump with a quarter, half or full turn and upon landing perform a skill.
F4.7	Orientation of Space & Time	I can travel into open space after passing a ball.
F4.8	Orientation of Space & Time	I can travel in general space and upon signal move a colour that is (not) called.
F4.9	Reaction	Reaction I can react to a ball thrown from behind me while I'm looking forward and I can react to catch the ball.
F4.10	Reaction	I can react to a z-ball that is thrown in different ways.
F4.11	Rhythm	Rhythm I can time running through partners who are passing a ball to each other without getting hit.
F4.12	Rhythm	I can copy my partner's tempo with my movement.
F4.13	Agility	I can travel along different pathways to create letters such as 'V', 'M', 'L' and /or numbers such as '0', '4', '7'.
F4.14	Agility	I can create and copy different footwork movements using different implements such as 'square', 'hexagon'.
F4.15	Speed	I can perform speed running exercises such as high knees and quick feet.
F4.16	Speed	I can stop with fast short steps after a sprint (deceleration).
Area	Topic	Learning Outcomes
Gymnastics		Year 3 & Year 4
GY4.4	Jumps	I can jump and land in a controlled manner.
Area	Topic	Learning Outcomes
Athletics		Year 3 & Year 4
A4.5	Jumps	I can jump on one foot and land on two feet.

Area	Topic	Learning Outcomes
Fundamentals		Year 5 & Year 6
F6.3	Equilibrium	I can balance on one foot on a stable surface and tap / circle three markers, one placed in front, one to the side and one behind.
F6.4	Equilibrium	I can balance and move from one unstable surface to another.
F6.5	Combination of Movements	I can receive a pass, dribble, and shoot in a fluent way while running.
F6.6	Combination of Movements	I can perform four different consecutive movements at various levels (low, medium, high) and different speeds (fast, slow) such as walk on all fours (bear), turn to walk as a tabletop, get up, skip from one spot to another and run.
F6.7	Orientation of Space & Time	I can position myself in the middle of three (3) or four (4) teammates who are running around me with/out a ball and I can adjust my position according to their movement to be always in the middle.
F6.8	Orientation of Space & Time	I can always position myself in relation to others (i.e., triangle formation with player in possession in a team game and find personal space in a dance).
F6.9	Reaction	I can react to a visual stimulus and perform a required movement.
F6.10	Reaction	I can react to a kinaesthetic stimulus (such as a tap on the shoulder) and perform a required movement.
F6.11	Rhythm	I can vary the rhythm from slow to fast to slow ... as required by the situation.
F6.12	Rhythm	I can pass / dribble very fast and I can pass / dribble at a slower pace.
F6.13	Agility	I can do a T run using the correct pathway and the correct footwork.
F6.14	Agility	I can go over and under things situated in a circuit and run through obstacles.
Gymnastics		Year 5 & Year 6
GY6.4	Jumps	I can jump, rotate and land in a controlled manner.
GY6.5	Sequence	I can follow a pre-set routine of at least 5 skills that includes a balance, a roll and a jump and body actions.
Athletics		Year 5 & Year 6
A6.4	Jumps	I can perform a short run up (1 to 3 steps) and jump for distance.
A6.5	Jumps	I can perform a standing broad jump and land on two feet.