Enabling Thoughtful Teachers

A Multidisciplinary Approach to Laying the Foundations for Trauma Informed and Restorative Practice for Pre-service Teachers

Dr Sharon Louth and Dr Alison Willis

Acknowledgement of Country

I would like to begin by acknowledging the traditional owners of the lands I present from today, the Butchulla people of the Fraser Coast, and extend my acknowledgement to the traditional owners of all country across Australia, and recognise these lands were never ceded.

I honour the courage, strength, integrity and values of Elders past and present and respect the continuing connection Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples have to the land, sea, sky and waterways, as they have done for more than 60,000 years.
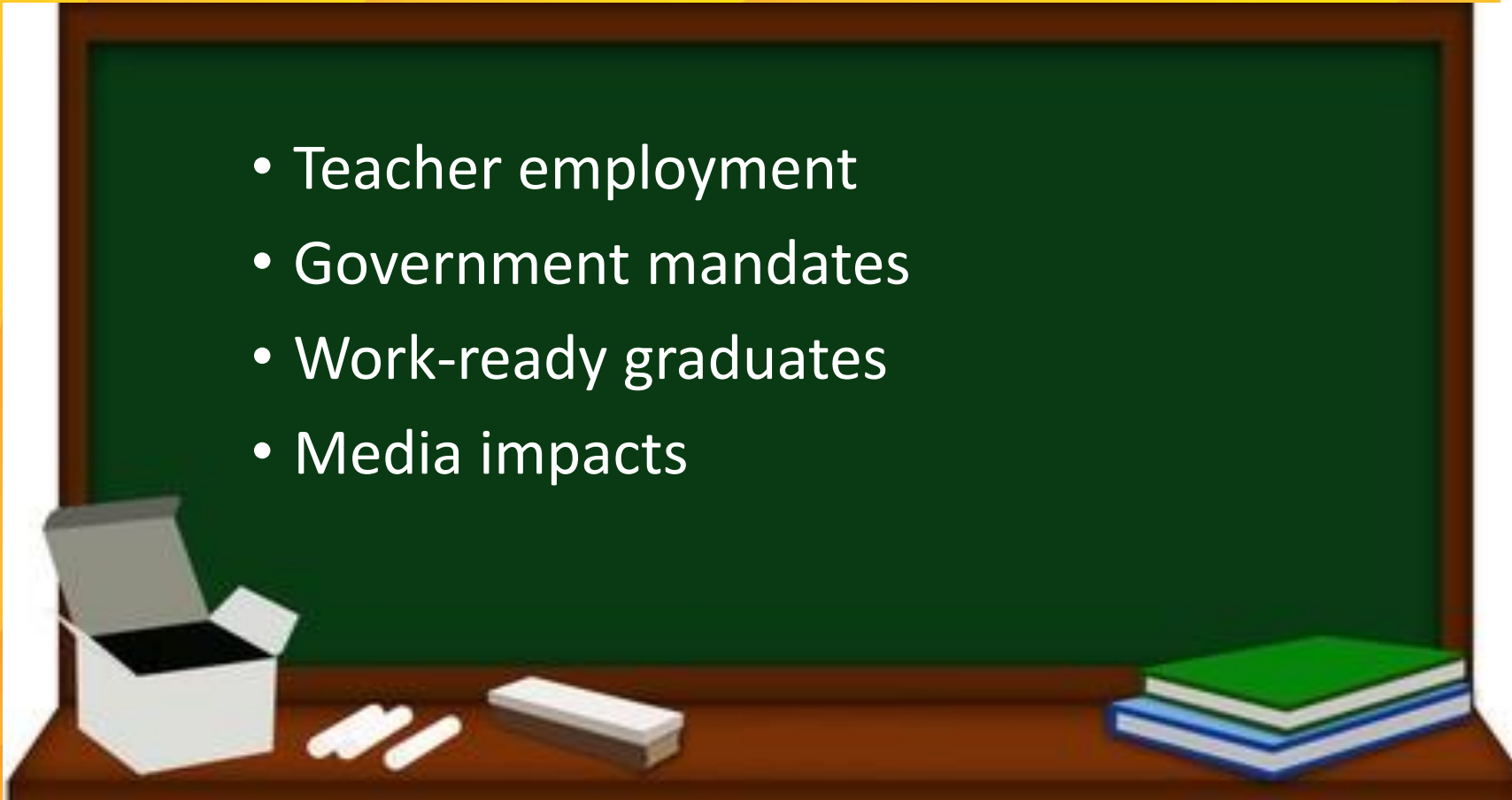
It is a privilege to work on Butchulla Country with community as we walk and work together in the spirit of reconciliation..

Current Issues/Trends for Initial Teacher Education Providers

- Teacher employment
- Government mandates
- Work-ready graduates
- Media impacts

Current Issues within Education

Teachers

- Teacher Shortage
- Workload considerations
- Emotional burden
- Mental health of teachers
- Supporting students mental health
- Behaviour management issues
- (Lestrange & Howard, 2022; Brown et al 2020)

Impact of Complex Trauma

Students

- Increases in domestic violence
- Increases in neurodiversity
- Mental health needs
- Socialising complexities
- Behavioural complexities
- (Brown, Riele, Shelley & Woodroffe, 2020; Willis & Nagel, 2016)

Complex Trauma

- Trauma is defined by the American Psychological Association (2008) as an emotional response to a terrible event like an accident, rape, or natural disaster.

- Multiple or chronic traumas that often begin early in life, may lead to Developmental or Complex Trauma (CT)

- Complex Trauma encompasses Intergenerational Trauma and Post Traumatic Stress Disorder

- Wide body of research on the effects of CT on brain development (Bick and Nelson, 2016). The physical evidence of the impact of CT explains earlier research identifying issues around self regulation and interpersonal relationships many children suffering from CT experience (Cook et al, 2005)

- Complex trauma is manifested in behaviours that are outside acceptable societal boundaries, that can become internalised or externalised (Martin, 2020).
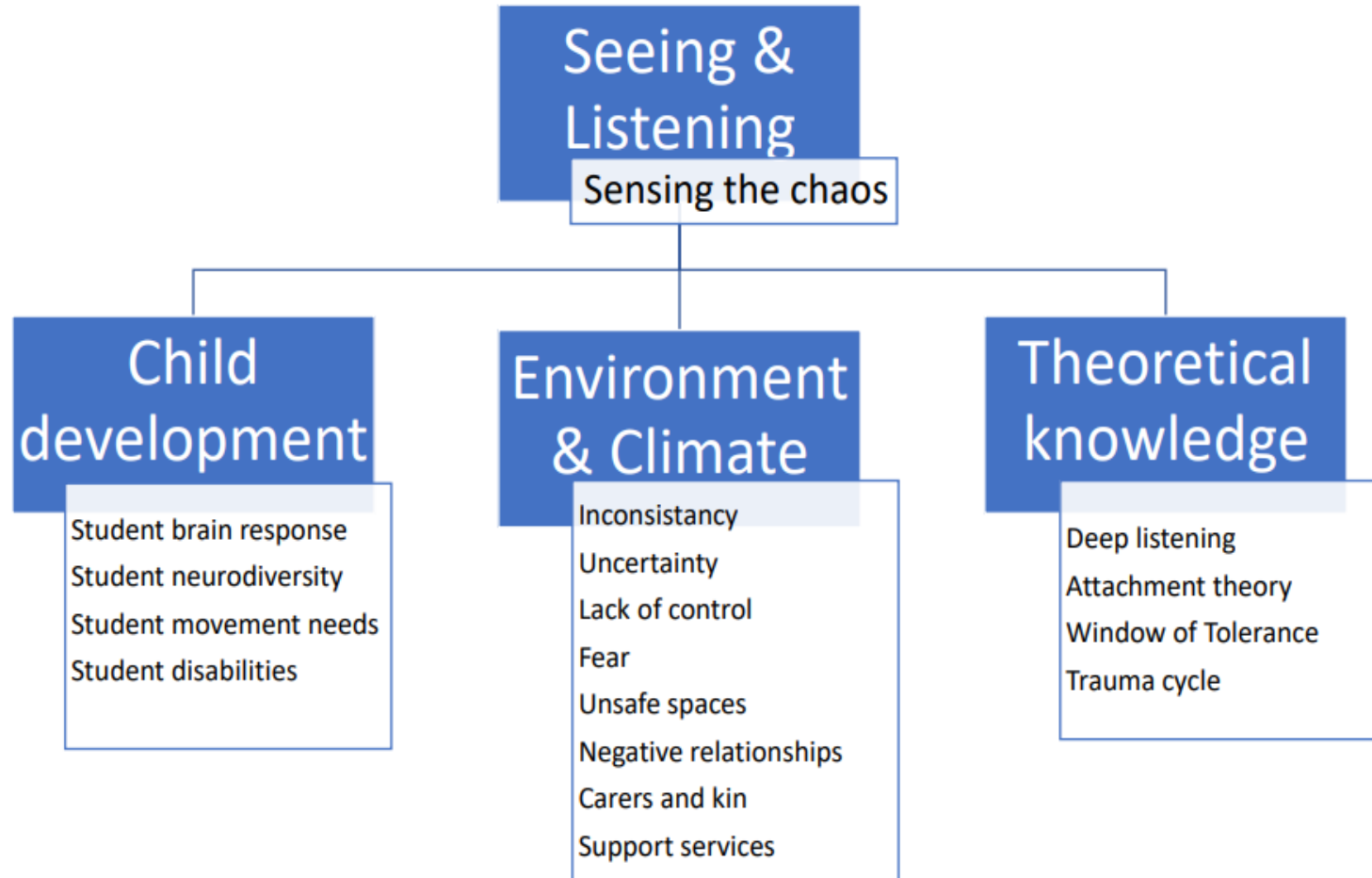
Focus of this Research

Enacting Trauma Informed pedagogy through a multidisciplinary approach to provide workable strategies for Pre Service Teachers to better manage themselves in this highly challenging classroom environment

Methodology

Phenomenological research nested in design based approach

Identifying stakeholders

Interviewing stakeholders

Analysing and interpreting results

Implementing research findings into ITE courses

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Results: Student Focus Theme

Seeing & Listening
Sensing the chaos

Child development
- Student brain response
- Student neurodiversity
- Student movement needs
- Student disabilities

Environment & Climate
- Inconsistancy
- Uncertainty
- Lack of control
- Fear
- Unsafe spaces
- Negative relationships
- Carers and kin
- Support services

Theoretical knowledge
- Deep listening
- Attachment theory
- Window of Tolerance
- Trauma cycle

Results: Child development

Student brain response

Student neurodiversity

Student movement needs

Student disability

"Most kids with complex trauma also have some sensory issues, whether it be from the trauma or undiagnosed neurodiversity" (participant #5)

"Developmental neurophysiology, ... if they're not feeling safe, it's really hard for them. It's almost impossible for them to emotionally regulate or think about things logically" (participant #1)

Results: Environment and Climate

Inconsistency

Lack of certainty

Lack of control

Fear

Unsafe spaces

Negative relationships

Carers and Kin

Support services

"The iceberg is not just paying attention to the things that are in your face. But the other things, the other things that we can't see as well" (participant #11).

"it's a real skill to be able to create a really safe environment. Makes kids feel like they belong. I think socially and emotionally, that's incredibly important. Our kids often talk about feeling like they're outcast. They don't have friends, or if they do people just know them as the kid in care." (Participant #4)

Results: Theoretical Knowledge

Deep listening

Attachment theory
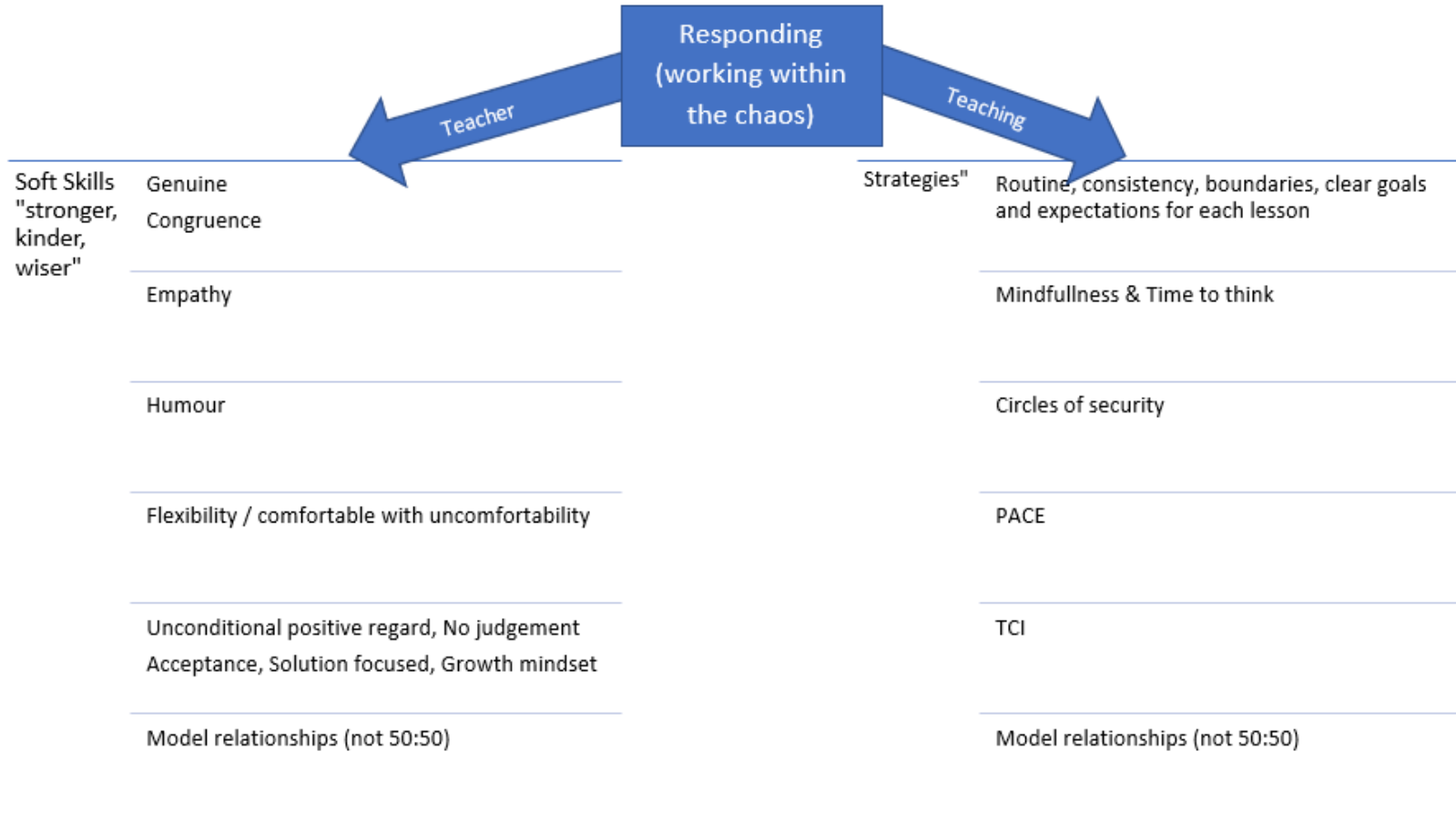
Window of tolerance

Trauma cycle

"a framework for us is pace it's P A C E (Playfulness, Acceptance, Curiosity and Empathy" (participant #2)

"Therapeutic crisis intervention (TCI) basically around how you manage yourself, how you manage your own emotions and keep yourself grounded" (participant #5)

"Mindfulness. It's really just as simple as trying to connect the different parts of your brains, make it work properly for you to be able to respond" (participant #10).

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Results: Teacher Focus Theme

Responding (working within the chaos)

Teacher

Teaching

Soft Skills "stronger, kinder, wiser"

Genuine Congruence

Empathy

Humour

Flexibility / comfortable with uncomfortability

Unconditional positive regard, No judgement Acceptance, Solution focused, Growth mindset

Model relationships (not 50:50)

Strategies"

Routine, consistency, boundaries, clear goals and expectations for each lesson

Mindfullness & Time to think

Circles of security

PACE

TCI

Model relationships (not 50:50)

Results: Teacher Focus Quotes

"Being human with children, I think is really important. I use it a lot in my work with these kids. And, and I think that comes back down to being genuine as well being able to use humour in in tricky moments" (participant #3)
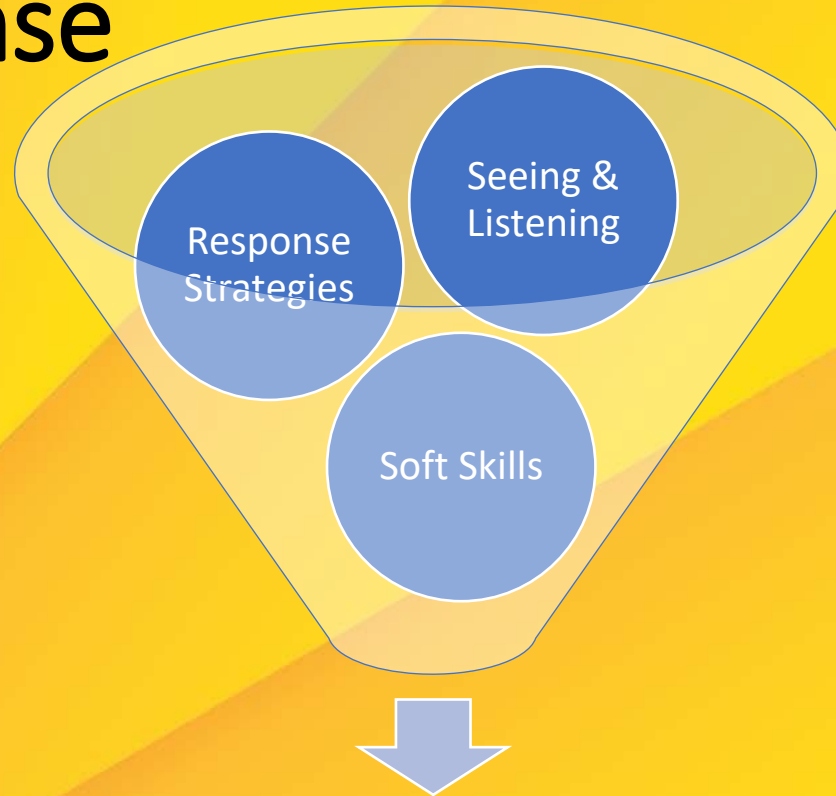
"I think one of the most powerful things that you can do is make sure the child knows that you're listening to them. So, whatever is their concern or issue is to actually listen properly" (participant # 5).

"What you're really saying there is that your actions align with what you're saying that your words and your actions come together so that the children can see that you are genuine, and that they can develop trust them" (participant #2)

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Results: Big Picture Overview

REFLECTING AND SELF-MANAGEMENT (Teacher focus)

RESPONDING (Teacher focus)

Specialist theories & knowledge

Teaching strategies

Student Focus: Seeing & Listening

Environment and Climate

Child development

Teacher soft skills

IMPACT OF STUDENTS AND TEACHERS
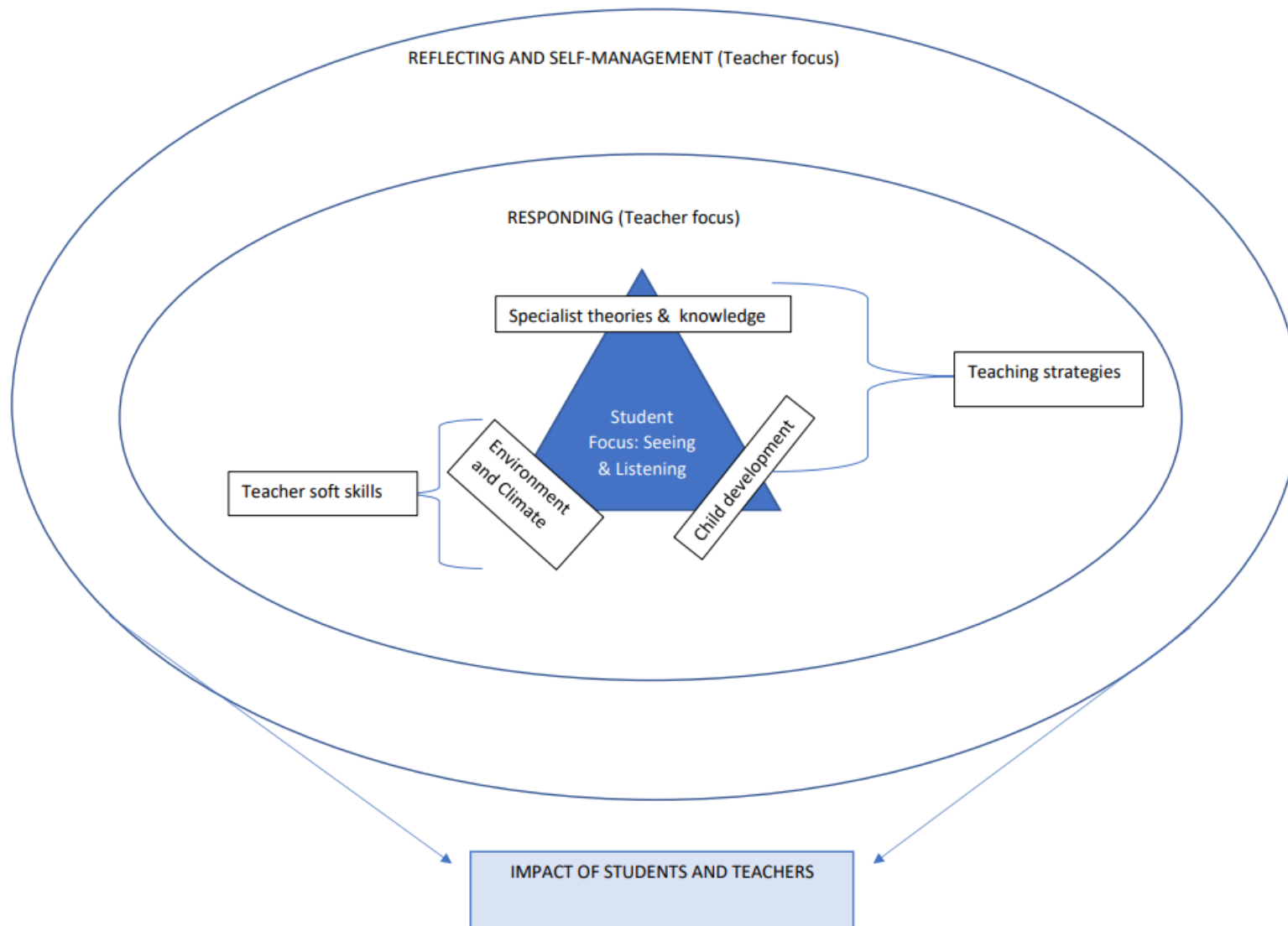
Teacher Response

Impact on Students

- ➢ **Reclaiming power and control**
- ➢ **Establishing safety and belonging**
- ➢ **Building trust**
- ➢ **Enhancing student resilience**

Soft skills – the driver for change

"they're the little person and they're little. They don't have what you have to give to the relationship. The relationship isn't 50 50. They shouldn't be meeting you halfway because they're a child. You should be doing the heavy lifting. That's your obligation as the adult." (Participant 8)

"be stronger, kinder, wiser" (Participant 7)

Discussion Time

Thank you for working with us on this vital work!

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