



(Re)Positioning team teaching: The visibility and viability of learning in classrooms

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Team teaching, where two teachers teach in the same classroom at the same time, while not a new concept, is increasingly being positioned and repositioned in research and policy literatures as central in advancing a range of valued educational goals. These goals include supporting inclusive learning for all students as well as supporting classroom-based elements of teacher learning and professional development. However, team teaching remains more often encouraged by policymakers than enacted effectively by practitioners. This article focuses on the visibility and viability of students' learning experiences within a larger team teaching initiative involving 20 teaching dyads in 7 post-primary schools in Ireland, between 2007-2011. The research method adopted an interpretative paradigm to capture the evolving perspectives of participants. Data collection encompassed interviews and observations (n= 9) with three pairs of teachers (n= 6) in two schools involving 34 lower-secondary students. Adopting an inductive approach Positioning Theory offers a framework for theorising learner experiences of teaching and learning in team taught lessons. Findings are discussed in terms of their possible implications for both research, practice and policy vis-à-vis more nuanced understanding and enactment of team teaching.

Introduction

Throughout the world schools unequivocally privilege solo-teaching. Yet team teaching, where two teachers teach in the same classroom at the same time is increasingly encouraged to address a range of valued educational goals (OECD, 2013; Teaching Council

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of Ireland, 2015; EU, 2016; UNESCO, 2016). These goals have evolved to address two fundamental imperatives (i) students who are deemed to be at risk of not learning and (ii) the promotion of workplace learning for teachers. However, such entreaties are often more encouraged than enacted and this in part may be explained by the insights from long-established researchers of team-teaching, Friend et al. (2010) who declare that “far more literature exists describing co-teaching and offering advice about it than carefully studying it” (p. 9). A similar view, is expressed in a critique published by Thousand, Nevin and Villa (2007). They concluded that there was a “lack of theoretical frameworks for collaborative teaching...and a lack of agreement on how to measure the impact of collaborative teaching” (p. 426). Our focus in this paper is to examine the latter point through the lens of Positioning Theory and contribute to how best measure the impact of team teaching as it seeks to promote inclusive learning for all students.

In this paper we acknowledge the interplay of a range of provision and attending variables to support inclusive learning, such as the quality of teaching as well as the duration, sequence, combination and modes of support deployed (in-class support, one-to-one or small group withdrawal). Our purpose is to support both school personnel and policy makers in gaining a more informed understanding regarding the potential of, and potential limitations placed upon, team teaching. Throughout we attend to the possible learning dividends that might accrue for students as a result of effective team teaching. Team teaching in post primary settings, where it does exist, usually does so in tandem with solo teaching and student withdrawal (DES, 2013). Such contexts combined with the pivotal role of the quality of (team) teaching make it difficult and yet all the more important to explore the visibility and viability of team teaching. The fundamental question remains: What difference can team teaching make to learners and their experience of learning?

This question formed the basis for an ongoing initiative that was commenced in Ireland by 7 post-primary schools, within the state-funded system, in one region in 2007-2008. The initiative sought to

alter the normative script and determine from participants' perspectives the potential that team teaching had to offer both learners and teachers where lower secondary students were team taught English and Maths. Two representative schools involving three teacher dyads and 34 students form the basis for this paper. We specifically address how the presence of two teachers, neither of whom have any recognised qualification in special education, can positively impact upon learners and their learning experience. The paper will outline current understandings of team teaching, as well as addressing team teaching's place in relation to policy directives and research on changing understandings of 'effective learning'. Set against such a background insights into the learning and learning experience of students involved in the initiative will be presented in the form of three vignettes. Adopting a socio-cultural perspective on learning, the experience and learning opportunities available to students are framed by what is both facilitated and constrained by classroom actions. Learning is defined as situated, relational, and involves change in participation (Cole, 1996; Rogoff et al, 1995; Wortham, 2006). Within such a definition of learning we draw upon Positioning Theory (Davies & Harre, 1990) as a means of framing and theorising team teaching practices.

The Irish context

The term 'team teaching' first entered the lexicon of Irish official documentation with the publication of the Special Education Review Committee (SERC) report in 1993. Repeated Department of Education and Skills (DES) circulars, guidelines and reports (DES 2014, 2013, 2012, 2007 and 2003) have advocated team teaching as a useful means to support students identified with special educational needs in both primary and post-primary settings. The term, while not defined, is seen as a catch all for various configurations of actions undertaken by two teachers and their students in one classroom.

The context for such exhortations spins on the twin axis of evidence-based practice and optimal use of additional teaching

resources. More recent research suggests that while no one funding model is deemed ‘the best’, the focus on classroom funding within the context of school funding emerges as a means of addressing both improved learning and reduced costs (Mitchell, 2010; Huberman, Navo & Parrish, 2012; Rix, Sheehy, Fletcher-Campbell, Crisp, M. & Harper, 2013). Mitchell (2010) contends that “the starting point should not be with how to fund special education, but rather with how to fund general education in the context of universal design for learning” (p. 90).

With more than 99% of the school population attending mainstream schools there is significant and increasing diversity among students in Irish schools and classrooms. To address these needs an additional c.11, 000 whole teacher equivalents (wte), from a national total of c.58, 000 wte., are assigned to support the learning and learning experiences of students identified with special educational needs including those requiring support with literacy and numeracy (NCSE, 2015). In light of such significant ‘additionality’, where approximately 1 in 5 teachers are assigned to address additional learning needs, calls by DES for greater use of team teaching arrangements have been echoed by NCSE-led research and reports (2012-15) and social inclusion related studies (2014). While the Chief Inspector’s report (2013) indicates that there is evidence of increased use of team teaching it recommends, as per previous policy statements, greater use of team teaching as well as greater attention to the quality of team teaching and its impact on learners and their experiences of learning.

At a local level the call for greater use of team teaching has also been influenced by student self-advocacy and the expressed wish by many post-primary students, though not by all, to be allowed stay with their peers and not be withdrawn from class or be placed permanently in a special class (Griffin & Shevlin, 2011; Travers, Balfe, Butler, Day, Dupont, McDaid, & Prunty, 2010). Teachers and principals also recognise that the withdrawal model from regular class can hinder communication and cohesive action among teachers. Some schools are also revisiting team teaching in light of the lack of space to provide withdrawal classes and other concerns

associated with meeting students continuously on a one-to-one basis (DES, 2013)

The potential benefits offered by team teaching to students and their teachers are significant and inviting but need to be tempered by the continued focus on the impact of such practices upon student learning. Collaboration does not always equate with improvement. At all times we need to remain mindful of the learners when adults collaborate. "...increased teacher-to-teacher contact may be to intensify norms unfavourable to children" (Little, 1990, p. 524).

Team teaching defined

Team-teaching it would appear, continues to attract considerable attention as well as causing considerable confusion in the Irish context (Weir, McAvinue, Moran & O'Flaherty, 2014). These authors report that schools given additional resources to support students at risk of not learning, through Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools (DEIS) were on occasions not quite sure what constituted team teaching, as well as displaying uncertainty in relation to the various configurations available to teachers. The working definition of team-teaching adopted in this research study is based on the work of Welch, Brownell and Sheridan (1999) and that of Friend, Cook, Hurley-Chamberlain and Shamberger (2010). We define team-teaching as the simultaneous presence of two educators in a classroom setting who share responsibility in the development, implementation and evaluation of direct service in the form of an instructional or behavioural intervention to a group of students with diverse needs. (Welch, Brownell & Sheridan, 1999, p. 38)

But this definition requires the caveat that 'educators' in this context refers to qualified teachers and not to other personnel who may work in classrooms. The use of team-teaching as an overarching title for a range of activities instead of other similar terms, such as 'collaborative teaching', 'co-teaching', 'cooperative teaching', and 'coteaching' (Maroney, 1995; Villa, Thousand &

Nevin, 2008; Murawski, 2009) is important. The membership of ‘team’ in this context is comprised of both teachers and students alike.

The initial positioning of teachers is captured by six models or configurations of team-teaching (Maroney, 1995; Friend & Cook, 2003; Walther-Thomas et al., 2000). The dominant model in the research literature is of ‘one teach and one assist’ (Scruggs, Mastropieri & McDuffie, 2007). Other models or configurations include teachers engaging in parallel or split groupings within the classroom, station teaching and classic team-teaching where the interplay between lead and support teacher is fluid and alternates. That said, all configurations can occur within one lesson and positions within these configurations may alter among both teachers and students. However, it is the quality of the instructional practices aligned with the configurations chosen, and not the configurations themselves, which determine the level and type of ‘learning’ for students. The ‘level and type of learning experience’ encountered by students is also of significance in the context of a classroom atmosphere conducive to learning that is created by such configurations. It is the latter point that forms the focus of this paper.

What does effective (team) teaching look like and what does it allow students be and allow students do?

To date researchers and those associated with lower-secondary level in Ireland have raised concerns about student engagement, expectations and experiences, particularly among those at risk of not learning because of learning difficulties, social disadvantage and/or disability (DES, 2012, Devine, Fahie & McGillicuddy, 2013; Smyth et al., 2011; Lyons et al., 2003). In seeking to inform debate and make the potential of team teaching more visible and viable it is necessary to align our research against what is perceived as good teaching and learning. In reviewing 40 years of research on effective teaching, Good (2014) returns to the general and inter-related principles of effective teaching which he adapts from Good

and Brophy (2008) and outlines as: (i) Appropriate teaching expectations (ii) Effective use of time (iii) Proactive classroom management (iv) Supportive and caring classrooms (v) Opportunity to learn (vi) Coherent curriculum content (vii) Curriculum alignment (viii) Thoughtful discourse (ix) Scaffolding students ideas and task involvement (x) Practice/application (xi) Goal-orientated assessment. Such a review is useful in exploring how viable and visible learning can be in team taught lessons, but we need to also remain alert to other useful lenses including more recent debates on lower secondary education in Ireland which focus attention on what learners can be as well as what they can do.

The new revised Junior Cycle (2015) seeks to focus attention on 8 key learning skills, which as well as addressing dimensions associated with literacy (reading, writing, speaking, listening, comprehension) and numeracy (including problem solving), addresses i) 'Managing myself' ii) 'Staying well' iii) 'Being creative' iv) 'Communicating' v) 'Working with others' vi) 'Managing information and thinking'. Furthermore, there are 24 statements of learning framed around principles such as quality, engagement, inclusion, flexibility and learning to learn.

Socio-cultural perspectives, team teaching and Positioning Theory

While keeping a respectful eye to normative understandings of learning and learning outcomes as depicted by achievement test-based construals we draw upon a socio-cultural perspective to extend our understanding of learning and to assist in making team teaching more viable and team learning more visible. This extension is in tandem with and not in opposition to the more common interpretations of learning. We believe learning is not simply a 'with-in child' phenomenon, but rather cognition, mind and learning occur between people in communities of practice (Wenger, 1998; Rogoff, Baker-Sennett, Lacasa & Goldsmith, 1995). In short learning occurs moment-to-moment in communities of practice, in this instance classrooms, where individuals learn to

participate in communities of practice, rather than just acquire information. Adopting a socio-cultural perspective on learning Hall, Curtin and Rutherford (p. 208, 2014) describe how: ‘communities of practice learn as their participants engage in practice through mutual engagement and joint enterprise using a shared repertoire’. They later add that ‘emotion is also central to learning’ (p. 208). In adopting a socio-cultural perspective which includes all in our classrooms we draw upon Positioning Theory to find ways of revealing aspects of the learning that takes place and the centrality of emotions in learning.

The concept of Positioning Theory has its origins in the social sciences with Holloway’s (1984) examination of women’s and men’s subjectivities. It has particular resonance with determining the moment-to-moment, as well as day-to-day, inclusive learning opportunities accessed or otherwise by those at risk of not learning or being marginalised, intentionally or otherwise, by school actions. Building on previous proponents of Positioning Theory (Davies & Harré, 1990; Harré & Van Langenhove, 1999) Harré and others argue that during discursive interactions people draw on narratives or ‘storylines’ to make their words and actions meaningful to themselves and others. These positions are described as changing from one moment to the next depending on the storylines through which participants make meaning of the interaction.

Linehan and McCarthy, (2000) describe Positioning Theory as “an analytical tool that can be used flexibly to describe the shifting multiple relations in a community of practice” (p. 441). The impact of how a student self-identifies and is identified by others in class, both peers and teacher(s), influences the process of learning and self-development. In the context of team teaching Positioning Theory offers a frame of reference to reveal the impact of teachers’ collaborative practice upon their students’ learning and students’ sense of self and those around them. Significantly such a frame captures the moment-to-moment to complement more extended time-bound assessment of achievement and attainment.

In sum, for the purposes of this article, we are asking; what positions (ways of being a student) are created, accepted, facilitated, rejected or missed by students and teachers in team-taught lessons and how does this align with our understanding of effective teaching and the goals of effective teaching.

Methodology

Research design and analysis

This research adopted a grounded theory approach within an interpretive paradigm. In the words of McNeil and Coppola (2006) this research seeks to examine ‘official’ and ‘unofficial stories’ regarding the impact of a particular policy on educational practice. A policy that remained relatively dormant until the initiative sought to revive interest in team teaching. The methodology adopted attempts to meet the high standards expressed by the aforementioned authors.

We believe that only through research in classrooms, schools and communities that is fine grained enough to track significant and compelling narratives, sensitive enough to explore the definitional contours of the policy and persistent enough to pursue discrepant explanations can we truly understand how policies, affect the lives and learning of the children they are intended to help. (p. 681)

Fieldwork was undertaken by the lead author over the 14-month period from April 2007 to June 2008 with data collection encompassing semi-structured interviews (n=44), classroom observation (n=20), attendance at monthly teacher meetings (n=6), questionnaires and other data gathering practices including school documentation, assessment findings and joint examination of student work samples (n=8).

Sample

In total, twenty team-teaching dyads were formed across seven post-primary team teaching project schools. In all cases the schools and personnel self-selected themselves to be involved in the initiative. For the purposes of this paper research study participants were from two of the seven project schools, Ash and Oak, involving six teachers and 34 students, whose age ranged from 12-16 years old. In Oak there was a class of first years (n=14) with one dyad with the other dyad. In Ash one class group (n=20) had two dyads. The content areas in which the teacher dyads engaged were English and Mathematics. The duration of the team-taught classes was usually 40 minutes with teachers engaged in team-teaching for an average of 15-20% of their teaching day.

Purposive sampling (Creswell, 2008) was adopted, with two of the seven schools being chosen as case studies. These schools were chosen as representative samples of schools in the project. Ash School had some limited experience of team-teaching while Oak School had very little experience of team-teaching. While similar in size, these schools were located in different environments, with one school located in a suburban setting and the other in a rural town. The different degree of initial commitment by the respective principals to the project, one sceptical (Oak) the other enthusiastic (Ash), was also a determining factor in choice of schools as was the difference in student intake. Ash School had a significant urban student profile with significant socio-economic challenges while Oak School intake revealed a broader profile. Both schools were part of a nationwide school completion programme that received additional funding under the Delivery Equality of Opportunity in Schools (DEIS) action plan for students from economically disadvantaged communities.

Ethics

Seeking ‘to capture the voices and insights of those affected’ requires an understanding of the everyday. Blackledge and Hunt

(1985) echo Elmore's sentiment on improvement being about the everyday actions when they conclude that "everyday life is produced by people employed within the system acting together and producing their own roles and patterns of actions" (p. 236). Perspectives in turn are seen as frameworks where sense is made of the world, they are not fixed and are interdependent.

Power and relationships are brought into sharp relief when the policymaker becomes the researcher. Justification for adopting such a research design as outlined above is further supported by not only the research question but also the context in which the research is being undertaken. One of the author's role as a schools' inspector influenced the particular use of methodology and methods. The interpretive paradigm seeks 'understanding' over 'judgement'.

Profiles of teachers

Ash School: Ned and Rachel, Mathematics, Class Nollaig, Year 2: Ned and Rachel are teachers of Mathematics and both self-selected for the team-teaching project. Both had engaged in some team-teaching with one another the previous school year and enjoyed what they described as an informal arrangement but it was 'nothing as organized as the project'. Neither held any formal qualifications in the area of special education. Both regularly spoke of the fun and 'craic' they had with each other and with the students during team-taught lessons. Rachel was of the view that personalities were an important factor in team-teaching.

Ash School: Cathal and Peadar, English, Class Nollaig, Year 2: Cathal and Peadar were two relatively young teachers in the school. Cathal had spent a longer period teaching in the school and self-selected himself for team-teaching while Peadar was in his second year in the school and was asked by the school to become involved. At times, both struggled with their team-teaching arrangement but continued because they believed that the benefits for their students, and for themselves, merited perseverance. Cathal dominated in the classes observed, positioning Peadar out of the lesson. Of note is

that both dyads taught the same class of students but the former dyad adopted a more dynamic team teaching style.

Oak School: Joe and Hilda, English, Class Pól, Year 1: This was Joe and Hilda's first time team-teaching, though Hilda did recall engaging briefly in such practice in the past. Both had twenty years teaching experience and Hilda was the only member of the entire teaching group who held formal qualifications in special education. Joe possessed a broader and more refined instructional repertoire than Hilda.

Findings

The focus of this research paper is to offer a theoretical frame and a metric to measure the potential influence of effective team teaching as aligned with our understanding of effective teaching and the goals of effective teaching. Specifically we focus on the positions (ways of being a student) that are created, accepted, facilitated, rejected or missed by students and teachers in team-taught lessons. Learning is defined as situated, relational, and involves change in participation (Cole, 1996; Rogoff et al, 1995; Wortham, 2006). Learning is captured by drawing upon Positioning Theory and the analysis of the contingent moment-to-moment classroom interactions.

While we will also draw attention to the under-utilisation of team teaching, the paper for the most part focuses on the significant advantages of effective team taught lessons as identified by teachers and students. In general terms enhanced time and space to enact instructional practices facilitate relational dimensions of belonging and participation as witnessed in greater (i) dialogue, (ii) cooperation and (iii) feedback (Good, 2014). One may well argue that such aspects of effective teaching could be achieved by an effective teacher on their own, however, we contend that effective team teaching creates a dynamic that allows both teachers and students to behave in ways that add to the quality of learning and the quality of the learning experience. A quality which may not be

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otherwise achieved if additional support was provided solely by means of small group, or individual, withdrawal from class (for either setting).

Set against such a backdrop we draw upon three vignettes to illustrate the potential of team teaching as framed by Positioning Theory.

Vignette 1: Distributed teaching

In this example, teaching was reported, and witnessed by the researcher, to be mainly in the mode of classic team-teaching where both teachers, Rachel and Ned, shared time and space equally. Students in these lessons saw teachers alternate lead roles rapidly and fluently in a manner that set these teachers at the level of refined users of team teaching. Students witnessed their teachers help them, and their peers, in a manner that was often publicly visible and audible across the classroom or on other occasions more private and out of view and out of earshot. Here both teachers reflect on and discuss the structured and spontaneous engagement that took place between two students.

- Rachel: Ritchie got all his homework wrong on Monday. And Denis who was sitting beside him got all his homework right. And I said would Ritchie sit there beside Denis and Denis try and explain to Ritchie where he is going wrong. When I was walking down through the class I heard Denis saying... he made up an example in his head, and said you try it now and see if you can get it right.
- Ned: Yeah that was brilliant on Monday, yeah.
- Rachel: He had no problem then. He moved over back to his own spot.
- Ned: They learn from their peers a lot quicker than they do from us. There's less of a barrier there for them.

In this contingent event, Harré and Van Langenhove's (1999) tri-order modes of positioning are foregrounded. The teacher initiated the learning moment by asking Denis to help Ritchie. Of note is the teacher's positioning of students (first order positioning) is based on knowledge acquired through feedback and engagement with the students. For such to be accepted by students they initiate their own positioning (first order positioning) as set against previous storylines and relationships with one another and the teacher. In this example Denis' positioning as 'helper' and later as 'teacher', is contingent upon Ritchie accepting Denis' help (second-order positioning). The third order positioning ensues in the subsequent co-generated reflection by teachers on positions adopted, bestowed, altered or dismissed.

This episode is in line with Esmonde's (2009) use of Positioning Theory where positions of 'expert' and 'non expert' occur in small groups of students engaged with mathematics. Of note in this vignette is Denis taking the extra step of making up examples for his classmate to attempt. In Denis taking the extra step emerges evidence that, as well as his teachers, Denis is comfortable with his identity as 'teacher' and 'Ritchie' doesn't object to his position of 'non-expert' or 'stuck learner' in their shared storyline. Ideally Ritchie should have been positioned to have his homework complete but both teachers honestly shared the view that such occurrences did happen and that team teaching at least gave them greater options to respond. Indeed, both teachers suggested that over time there was a strong correlation between effective team teaching and the frequency/quality of homework being produced. This was in part due to the quality and timeliness of teacher feedback and to teachers availing of team teaching arrangements to check for understanding in advance of homework being assigned.

As well as the mathematical task at hand, Positioning Theory clearly offers a scaffold to capture and place many of the skills and principles identified earlier by the Junior Cycle Framework (2012). In this case it could be argued that all skills are attended to with more obvious dimensions evident such as working with others,

managing information and thinking, as well as being creative and communicating.

In summary this vignette highlights the visibility of a range of good teaching practices, the potential to cease ineffective practices and contributes to the viability of team teaching as teachers obtain a better insight into their learners. Students in turn seized the opportunity to engage in self-initiated collaborative practices that emerged from the manner in which team teaching was undertaken.

Vignette 2: Bridgie gets involved in her learning

In this vignette, teachers, Cathal and Peadar in a second year class, comment on the interdependence between questioning, feedback and classroom atmosphere. Good (2014) ranks opportunity to learn as the key factor in supporting learning and this point links to Good and Brophy (2008) correctly contending that feedback and questioning are interdependent as teachers respond to students' efforts with further questions. Of note in the team-teaching arrangements are the opportunities for teachers and students to enhance the quality of feedback by engaging in more meaningful dialogue than might be facilitated in solo-taught lessons.

Classroom talk is facilitated by team-teaching at a number of levels with a number of benefits. The interplay between classroom talk and positioning in a literacy class is well captured by Vetter (2010) who also makes reference to respectful expectations of teachers and enhanced self-belief among students. The interplay between learning and learner identity comes to the fore once more. Teachers speak of students, as referenced by Rachel above, being more responsible for their homework and taking pride in their work as the engagement with the students indicates that teachers value the work and by implication value the authors of such work.

... if you like Bridgie is taking more responsibility in presenting homework. I know myself the level of support doesn't exist at home. So she is taking on that responsibility herself and it is a slow process. (Cathal, Dyad B, Interview 2)

Bridgie is seen as a student who thrives on the conversation and attention associated with the work she and others in her class are producing. Team-teaching seems to be influencing what she is doing and how she is feeling about what she is doing, and in particular the opportunity to receive *immediate feedback*.

..., like her opinions and things I think she feels are valued...she has more opportunity to talk to an adult but to get immediate feedback on what she is saying from somebody. I think that's down to having the two teachers. (Peadar, Dyad B, Interview 3)

As with Vetter's (2010) examples, the interplay between learning and belonging is palpable in this example as Bridgie's storyline alters from 'student with no homework' to 'student engaged and involved'. Feedback from her teachers makes the work authentic for Bridgie and its immediacy supports her to persist as well as take pride in their work.

This team teaching dyad were limited in their impact as power related differentials witnessed the dominance of one teacher always leading and the other always supporting. This did limit the quality of learning and learning experiences for their students. However, the time and space created by team teaching still allowed learning to be visibly occurring within the lesson for Bridgie and for team teaching to be deemed viable even if not deemed to be at optimal level.

Earlier concerns about student engagement, expectations and experiences can be addressed by effective team teaching arrangements. The change in student participation can come in many forms as illustrated by the next example.

Vignette 3: Martin writes his own script

The vignette below captures some aspects of the opportunities that team-teaching can afford to students to practice and apply what they

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are learning, to make their own of their learning and to make their own learning authentic in a social setting.

Martin is a 14 year old student who is described in his first term in his new school, 'as struggling' and at risk of not only not learning but of not staying in school. He is literally on the fringes and is in danger of dropping out. Early in the school year, one of his team-taught teachers, Hilda, explains:

His attendance can be a bit erratic and he can come in without the work being done. We have to work on him really, to involve him a little bit more. He's inclined to be on the edge or the fringe, more than the others really. He's very quiet... But he can come up with good ideas, though... (Hilda, Dyad B, Interview 1)

By spring, teachers have noticed a significant improvement in Martin's attendance and behaviour. Teachers state that he is much more part of the class, his self-confidence has increased and he is physically at the centre of the classroom. Hilda's team teaching partner, Joe, observed:

Martin would have started out in a corner on the edge...near the door...He's now taking a far more central role and quite happy to do it. Not a bother on him, very relaxed, very comfortable and happy in himself. The confidence is growing daily. (Joe, Dyad B, Interview 2)

Being at the centre is in part as a result of his engagement with the class, as illustrated by the production of his self-generated and authored play, *'The Match'*. In this vignette Martin's learning identity in the social setting of the school is intertwined with his academic progress and with the feedback he receives from the teacher and his classmates. The feedback/recognition from his teachers was a significant moment for Martin.

It's fabulous. He claimed ownership of that, silent ownership in his own way but he was so proud. Unbelievably proud, but funnily enough the pride came from our reaction to the piece when it arrived on our table...We were reading through it and I

was fascinated by it... and what was said and what happened, he was thrilled. (Joe, Dyad B, Interview 2)

Another significant moment was when Martin's play became the artefact that allowed others to adopt positions that also merged their academic learning with their personal development. As observed during our visit to the class, modelling of certain parts was initiated by the teachers, who reverted to Martin, 'as scriptwriter' to clarify that they were correct in their interpretation. The power differential and knowledge differential shifts from Martin's teachers, to Martin as author and authority. Eddie, a shy introverted student with ASD, was purposely cast by his teachers as the referee in Martin's play and 'came out of his shell' as he was encouraged to roar and blow the whistle in a manner that took him 'out of his character and into another one' (Joe). Eddie and Martin, exemplify Wortham's (2006) observation of 'joint emergence of social identification and academic learning' with their reputation and storyline among peers and teachers on the rise rather than, as initially feared, on the slide.

Discussion

In these three vignettes the opportunity to learn, the manner of learning and the attention to what students can be as well as what they can do, is experienced by students initially because of their teachers' decisions in 'changing the local order'. These key aspects are described below.

Expanding opportunities/positionings for each to learn

The alteration to the normative narrative and introducing a new 'oughtness' where teachers enter the room instead of students leaving, offer such students, indeed all students, an opportunity to learn and participate with peers. In turn their peers are also positioned to benefit from the additional teacher in their presence, where a community of learners and learning replaces an over emphasis on labels and labelling. Where universal design focused on learning dividends complements or replaces an over reliance on individualised withdrawal and student-centred deficits.

The dangers of labelling and isolating students abound (McCoy, Banks & Shevlin, 2012; Pijl, Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2010). McDermott speaks critically of the cultural construction of learning disability (LD) and ‘the acquisition of a child by a disability’ (1996). Effective team-teaching offers a counter-narrative and set the conditions for ‘the acquisition of a child by a class’ in that the students form a team of learners with their teachers. McDermott, Goldman and Varenne (2006) provocatively ask:

What are the classroom conditions that make educators desperate to label children LD (learning disability)?...Instead of more data on individual LD students, why not search for data on conditions that make LD look promising as a way to save children. (p. 13)

Team teaching has the potential to offer students more positive types of ‘self’ as school organisation is altered in a manner that produces ‘conditions that make LD look promising as a way to save children’.

Altered storylines: repositioning the learner’s identity

With a repositioning that resources the class, and not just the individual, team teaching shifts the scene of the story from outside to inside the classroom, from a ‘with-in student’ focus to a ‘with-in class’ focus. However, such a shift alone is not enough as it merely equates with integration rather than inclusive learning. The storyline rests on the interplay between choice of team-teaching configurations, choice of instructional practices and purposeful attention to building relationships that support learning in the classroom. It is only then that we can see altered storylines where students can be further facilitated to develop not only as students acquiring subject related knowledge and skills but also as human beings coexisting with others, in their class.

Such altered storylines require conscious and ongoing pedagogical decision making. In the vignettes presented here the focus was on intentional pedagogical practices that support, cooperative learning

(Ritchie and Denis; Martin, Eddie and class), opportunities for questioning (Bridgie and Eddie) as well as feedback which all students received through varying degrees of private and public engagement. Such altered experiences encouraged further actions where confidence and trust grew as a result of storylines that promoted a sense of learning and belonging.

Quality of opportunity: opening up new developmental pathways

Usually additional resources alter the storyline by removing the student(s) from the class. Those withdrawn are deemed to benefit from the slower pace and individual attention that they will receive in the one-to-one or small group setting. This paper shows how new developmental pathways can be accessed by availing of team teaching. It may well be that a combination of team teaching and withdrawal may ensue, it's not an either/or debate but rather how can both complement each other where both exist. We are wise enough not to say which is better or how best support can be combined, that depends on a number of variable, not least the student(s) themselves(s). However if team teaching is to be taken seriously and enacted correctly then we believe that our paper can contribute to schools making more informed decisions on how best to support their students' learning. In making such informed decisions school personnel and parents and students may wish to consider: is there merit in beginning with team teaching, and availing of withdrawal where necessary but only after team teaching configurations have been exhausted? Can team teaching when used in a nuanced manner preserve the unity of the curriculum and of the class, while still offering differentiated learning opportunities for each individual in the class? Similarly, what role has team teaching when many students' needs are about enhancing their social and emotional development, learning to be, and not necessarily about accessing additional academic support (NCSE, 2015)?

In the context of international research on best use of additional resources (Huberman et al., 2012; Mitchell, 2010; Rix et al, 2013) the altered storyline offered by team teaching aligns with supports first being initiated within the class. Response to Intervention-based

modes of support are informed by not only co-generative dialogue (Tobin & Roth, 2006) among teachers and others, but framed by co-generated actions and reflections by teachers. Where, the positioning of the student away from peers may justifiably occur, team teachers can inform the decision making around the student's withdrawal from class. In turn teachers can facilitate or advocate for that student's return. In this context, the quality of opportunity for all students and the equality of opportunity for each student are kept alive.

Positions and dispositions

As a counter narrative to research findings to date among similar cohorts in Ireland (Smyth et al, 2007; Lyons et al, 2003; Devine et al, 2013), students in team taught lessons in this study possess positive attitudes to learning, to school, and themselves. Such dispositions are no doubt possible to nurture in well-taught solo taught classes, just as they may be missed in poorly team-taught lessons. However, the added dimension of effective team teaching as shown in the vignettes reveal the 'additional learning' that can accrue from 'additional resourcing'.

The educational debate needs to continue to extend so that it is not just about accessing or retaining additional resources, but that it is also about the best use of such resources and the best means of determining their impact.

A theoretical lens to support team teaching

Positioning Theory offers an opportunity to reposition team teaching in educational debate and, we argue, make the concept more visible and viable. National and international policymakers and those who influence policy repeatedly call for greater use of team teaching to serve a range of educational purposes. To date, despite some evidence of increased use of team teaching, such calls have generally gone unheard.

However, it is only when the learning potential for their students is made clear will teachers decision regarding team teaching, or any proposed change, be more informed. As professionals, teachers have always responded to what is good for their students just as quickly as they will protect their students and themselves from vague entreaties to engage in team teaching when such encouragement lacks clarity and seems more fraught with tensions and difficulties than affordances and opportunities. Positioning Theory invites renewed consideration of team teaching as it highlights many aspects of the oft recounted elusiveness of its impact upon learners. Impacts which once realised, may recalibrate discussions and lead to decisions that outweigh the tensions and difficulties that invariably occur when we seek ‘to change the local order’.

Of course it can be argued that a ‘good teacher’ could achieve all of the classroom experiences and stories told in these vignettes. But the majority of teachers in this research who engaged effectively with team teaching find that they are ‘better teachers’ as a result of engaging with students and colleagues collaboratively.

Positioning Theory both challenges and assists existing team-teaching teams to ensure student learning is always to the fore in any self-review, irrespective of setting. Considerable funding is provided by governments to attend to students who may be at risk of not learning, but there is a considerable lack of knowledge as to how such funding is impacting upon students, their learning and that of their peers. This paper challenges the view that reduced pupil/teacher ratios should automatically be configured as smaller classes and offers an invite to teachers to make decisions that have the potential to nurture greater student engagement and avoid mere student containment.

We contend that Positioning Theory, as a dynamic and evolving theoretical frame, offers those involved in education a means to capture what each may value and honour. When framed by Positioning Theory, the impact of effective team teaching is made more visible and the potential of team teaching is made more viable.

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