

THE PEDAGOGY OF TEAM-TEACHING DURING STUDENT TEACHER PLACEMENT

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ABSTRACT

Team-teaching is a modern pedagogical concept in the educational world. Previous research highlights the benefits of a teaching approach to enhance the learning experience of pupils in schools, along with significant benefits for teachers as they develop their own teaching and learning. School placement modules in teacher training courses give student teachers a valuable, real-life work experience in schools where they develop and implement concepts exposed to in lectures. The aim of this research was to investigate whether two student teachers, team-teaching while on school placement, can impact their own teaching and learning. The researcher engaged in qualitative research, by conducting semi-structured interviews with six student teachers who had undertaken team-teaching while on placement. The findings indicated that this was a positive aspect of their school placement and it benefited their teaching and learning going forward. It gave student teachers the opportunity to flourish, grow in confidence, experiment with classroom management and differentiation techniques, all of which allow student teachers to nurture their own teaching and learning. The research also gave way to some interesting findings which are particularly relevant in today's educational landscape with technology becoming more prevalent. Team-teaching has an important role to play when technology is incorporated into the classroom in order to create responsive and adaptable teachers going forward.

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INTRODUCTION

This research aims to investigate the concept of two student teachers team-teaching while in their ITE school placement programmes, to enhance their own teaching and learning. The overarching motivation for this research study stemmed from the researcher's personal interest in the concept of school placement and student teachers' practice and, in particular, the researcher's interest in team-teaching. The motivation was influenced by two critical factors:

- Engagement in team-teaching on school placement while studying a Bachelor of Arts in Education Business and Religion.
- Experiencing ITE practices and implementation of team-teaching while undertaking an international placement with Mary Immaculate College.

The researcher believes that team-teaching has many benefits for both pupils and teachers when it is implemented on school placement modules. It gives student teachers the opportunity to explore, experiment and enhance their teaching practices while also being provided with opportunities to learn from others. It is important ITE bodies prepare future teachers for modern teaching practices being implemented in schools.

METHODS AND MATERIALS

In answering the research question, it was decided that the chosen methodology be qualitative research and the research method would be semi-structured interviews. This was chosen due to the study's specific nature, as it would be more applicable as experiences and perceptions are difficult to quantify and furthermore, fall into the quantitative research paradigm.

Overall, the aim of the research was to learn from the participants and this methodology allows participants to express their opinions, in an open dialogue, on the topic to allow the researcher to develop, specify and analyse their standpoints.

The data was collected by interviewing student teachers in a teacher training college in Munster, who have undertaken team-teaching during their school placement programme. Students were contacted using their secure college email where they were sent an information sheet and a consent form providing information about the research.

Due to Covid-19 and government restrictions the interviews were conducted via MS Teams video conferencing software. Thematic analysis was chosen to analyse the data which is presented in the findings/results.

FINDINGS/ RESULTS

The findings which resulted from the semi-structured interviews conducted with post-primary student teachers who have experienced team-teaching as part of their school placement programme in their ITE are outlined below.

• Impact of Team-Teaching on Solo Taught Lessons:

From the interviews it became clear that when you learn something in a team-taught lesson, the learning is also applicable elsewhere, namely in solo-taught lessons. School placement is a fertile learning ground and gives student teachers an opportunity to experiment and implement what they have learned in college into a classroom setting. Participants found that, with another colleague in the classroom, it gave them opportunities to experiment with methodologies, differentiation and classroom management techniques creating a vast learning experience for a student teacher.

• Confidence

Another interesting finding that emerged as the research evolved was how team-teaching can impact a student teacher's confidence. It is evident that student teachers have a lot to handle when they are on placement and it can be a nerve-wracking experience teaching a class for the first time. Previous literature suggested that student teachers struggle to find their professional identity while on placement and participants in the research stated that a team-teaching environment aided this development.

• Movement Around the Classroom

A teacher's standing position in a classroom can impact the effectiveness of the teaching environment. Literature suggests that movement around the classroom allows for responsive and for personalized instructional strategies. When team-teaching, working out where teachers are going to position themselves during activities was a common theme in this research and participants found that with two teachers this led to greater control of the classroom which led to effective teaching and learning. Students who misbehaved were dealt with by one teacher and didn't disrupt the whole class learning. Similarly, when implementing differentiation in a lesson it was noted by multiple participants that with team-teaching pupils can be given individual attention if required.



Words Associated with Team-Teaching.



ClipArt of Team Teaching.

DISCUSSION/RECOMMENDATIONS

Initial teacher education bodies are preparing future teachers for a dynamic modern education setting and the findings of this research have highlighted how team-teaching for student teachers while on school placement can improve overall teaching and learning for future educationalists. While the research was being undertaken, there were several recommendations which became apparent based on the findings of the research in the context of future improvement and implementation to benefit student teachers in their ITE journey.

- Participants stated that school placement was hugely beneficial to their professional development, but many identified that more placement was needed to prepare them for their chosen profession.
- Participants agreed that more dual-placements and team-teaching should be organized by the ITE bodies where possible.
- Participants also noted the Covid-19 pandemic has placed a renewed emphasis on digital skills in education and technology playing a greater role in classrooms thus, leading to more challenges for a student teacher to manage while on placement which team-teaching would be able to help with.

CONCLUSIONS

It is evident that, although team-teaching is a relatively new concept being adapted and trailed in the educational world, it has many benefits for student teachers who are learning the skills of their chosen career path. This research set out to try illustrate the benefits of team-teaching on student teachers' own teaching and learning. The findings combined the positive results from the interviews to the literature and outlined some interesting developments which ITE bodies could consider when fostering the development student teachers in the future.

KEY REFERENCES

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