

TEAM TEACHING AT THE PRIMARY LEVEL
Insights into Current Practice in Trinidad and Tobago

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Team teaching is an arrangement that is sometimes used to organize instruction in primary schools in Trinidad and Tobago, and its use needs to be documented. This qualitative study used the principle of maximum variation to select four teaching teams and to investigate the factors that determine the introduction of team teaching, the organization and functioning of the teams, and the perceived benefits and challenges. Data gathered from interviews with the principals and team members suggest that team teaching was usually introduced in response to the needs of the institution, and that principals primarily determined how teams were constituted. School cultures that fostered collaboration and collegiality facilitated the introduction of team teaching, and where the allocation of subject was based on teacher preference or expertise, there were benefits for both pupils and teachers. Factors at the level of the institution, the class, and the individual influenced the functioning of teams. The findings also indicate a critical need for ongoing assessment of the impact of team teaching arrangements on teaching and learning.

Introduction

Over time, schools have explored different methods of organizing instruction. Traditionally, at the primary level in Trinidad and Tobago, the class teacher is a generalist—one teacher is assigned to one class with the responsibility for teaching all subjects. This can make extensive demands on the knowledge and skills of the teacher as well as foster teacher individualism and isolation.

Although this generalist approach remains the most common arrangement for instruction, other approaches that require teachers to specialize in specific subject disciplines have been adopted. At the primary level, team teaching is one such arrangement. This term is

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commonly used to refer to any arrangement in which subjects in the curriculum are divided between two or more teachers who are given the responsibility of instructing one class. Slater (1993) describes this arrangement as an interdisciplinary team with subject specialization and shared responsibilities for the same students.

Primary schools in Trinidad and Tobago have the autonomy to organize the curriculum within broad guidelines. The factors that influence the decision to introduce team teaching vary in schools that use it, and in the Trinidad and Tobago context, these factors need to be analyzed and documented.

The most common arrangement of teaching teams is the assignment of two teachers to one class. There are, however, variations in how teams are organized and how they function. These arrangements need to be examined. The findings of a study of team teaching can foster greater understanding of its use and provide a basis for assessing its effectiveness in the Trinidad and Tobago educational context. Such a study can also provide the impetus for practitioners to document, analyze, and reflect on how team teaching functions in their schools, and modify their programmes if necessary.

This study examined the factors that influenced the introduction of team teaching in three schools in Trinidad and Tobago. The questions that guided the research were:

1. What factors determine the introduction of team teaching in primary schools?
2. How is team teaching organized and how does it function?
3. What are the perceived benefits and challenges of team teaching?

Issues in Team Teaching

The nature of contemporary teaching demands extensive skills and knowledge on the part of the teacher, especially at the primary level. Team teaching is one strategy that has been employed by schools to attempt to meet those demands. As a teaching and learning option, it can promote a culture in which expertise is shared as opposed to one that

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fosters isolated, individual, professional problem solving (Brownell & Walther-Thomas, 2002). A study by Evans (1997) of newly qualified teachers in Jamaica, for example, found that isolation and absence of collaboration hindered the development of their professional collegial relations with experienced teachers. Educators who favour team teaching contend that it offers a means of meeting the increasingly diverse needs of pupils (Pugach & Wesson, 1995; Slater, 1993). Brennan et al. (1973) and Miller (1992) also suggest that team teaching is a useful technique for improving learning “efficiency” and bringing about changes in pupil or teacher attitudes. Since team teaching involves varied degrees of subject specialist teaching, it offers a means of meeting the demands that the curriculum makes on the content knowledge of primary school teachers.

In the past, subject specialist teaching at the primary level was more commonly found in the creative arts—music, art, or physical education—where it was assumed that an innate talent was essential (Hall, 2000). However, there is now an increased use of subject specialization in the teaching of academic subjects at the primary level. The main advantage cited for specialist (or semi-specialist) teaching is that the subject specialist brings a high level of subject knowledge to his/her teaching, and it is the lack of such knowledge that is the main weakness in the generalist class teacher model (Hall, 2000). Proponents of the generalist model argue that the generalist teacher has better knowledge of pupils and their individual needs, and can ensure the coherence and balance of their educational experience. A report cited in Thornton’s (1998) review suggests that it is advantageous to maintain the generalist system as far as possible; but that it is unreasonable to expect one teacher to cope unsupported with the depth and width of the modern curriculum.

Marilyn Friend, a leading expert in professional collaboration, argues that “there is simply too much for any one educator to know in order to effectively meet the needs of all his or her students” (Brownell & Walther-Thomas, 2002. p. 224). Friend thus advocates collaboration in the delivery of the curriculum. From this perspective, if team teaching is well structured and organized, it has the potential to foster collaboration, cooperation, and collegiality and thus make curriculum delivery more manageable and effective.

Any decision to introduce team teaching at the primary level requires consideration of how teams are to be structured and how they will function. The number of teachers in a team may vary and they may teach a single class or classes that are joined. Teams can be arranged vertically or horizontally with discernible differences in authority structure and degree of specialization (Clifford & Friesen, 1993; Lovell, 1967; McGoogan, 2002). Whether members are of equal professional status may be important to the success of the team. Craig (1998) for example, shows the difficulties that can confront teams comprising expert and novice or teacher in training.

With respect to the functioning of teams, the need for sustained collaboration is highlighted in the literature. Coordination requires that members of the team have a common philosophy so that they will have a similar order of priorities. They must share a vision and work towards a common goal. Teams must therefore plan, prepare, and dialogue about delivery. The relationship between team members is consequently an important issue. Craig's (1998) study concludes that team teaching relationships should be collaborative and non-hierarchical, and that team members need to know the direction in which their class is moving and share responsibility for shaping the class "story." It is difficult, though, for teams to achieve high levels of collaboration in the classroom if the culture of the school is not collegial and collaborative. School administration has a critical role to play in this regard (Brownell & Walther-Thomas, 2002).

Studies invariably highlight the benefits of team teaching for both pupils and teachers (Lovell, 1967; McGoogan, 2002; Miller, 1992; Pugach & Wesson, 1995; Slater, 1993). Teachers combine their expertise to decide on appropriate content. Teacher/s not involved in the actual lesson presentation can individualize content for special or at-risk pupils. Feedback and evaluation can also be assigned to the free teacher/s (Rink, 1998). The level of cooperation displayed by teachers can serve as a model for pupils. Brennan et al. (1973) suggest that team teaching provides an ideal opportunity for teachers to learn from one another as they plan for their learners—a situation that the writers see as particularly advantageous for the new teacher. Williams, Prestage, and Bedward (2001) emphasize the role of collaboration and collegiality in

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promoting teacher development and in eliminating professional isolation. Indeed, since teachers usually teach the subject in which they have greater expertise, viewing their peers teach may improve their knowledge in their weaker areas.

Time for “constructive communication” is identified as the greatest challenge to successful collaboration for teaching teams (Brownell & Walther-Thomas, 2002). Difficulties are also created when principals and teachers have mindsets that work against the development of a collaborative school culture. If team members do not trust and respect each other, then the team cannot function efficiently.

Method

A qualitative approach was used in this study to gain insights into the phenomenon of team teaching in the primary school system in Trinidad and Tobago. Some primary schools are government schools and are owned and operated by the State. Others are assisted by the State but are managed by private institutions, usually a denominational body. Children spend seven years in one of these schools at the primary level, at the end of which they write the Secondary Entrance Assessment (SEA) examination for entry into secondary school. For this study, the researchers first identified schools in which team teaching existed and examined how team teaching was organized. This examination revealed varying patterns of organization of instruction. These included vertical arrangements in which two or more teachers delivered instruction to classes at different levels. In addition, we discovered horizontal arrangements in which two or more teachers were involved in the instruction of one or more than one class of pupils at a specific level. In some schools, there were both vertical and horizontal arrangements. Given the scope of the study, we confined our investigation to horizontal arrangements of team teaching.

In order to obtain an in-depth understanding of the subject, four cases were selected for study using a purposive sampling strategy. Purposive sampling facilitates the selection of cases that allow the investigator to discover, understand, and gain insights into the phenomenon (Merriam, 1998). Merriam suggests that maximum variation helps to identify and seek out those cases that represent the widest possible range of

characteristics of interest for the study. We selected cases that exhibited variation in horizontal team teaching arrangements at three sites in the primary school system. The cases selected varied on the basis of the composition of the team and the characteristics of members. These characteristics included the number of teachers on the team, their years of experience as trained teachers, and their gender. There was also variation in the way the teams were organized.

Within each site, we selected one case for in-depth study. However, at one site, which had a long history of team teaching, we decided to study a second team, one member of which was a male teacher in an Infant class. Male teachers assigned to an Infant class are not common in the Trinidad and Tobago school system. All teachers in the cases under study were trained. Data were obtained through audiotaped interviews with the teachers involved in team teaching in the selected classes and the principals of the three schools. The interviews were semi-structured and sought to determine why team teaching was introduced, how it was organized, and the participants' perceptions of the benefits and challenges of team teaching. The interviews were transcribed and the two researchers jointly coded the transcripts. The codes were then organized into broader themes/categories. In the interest of anonymity, all individuals and schools have been given pseudonyms.

The Cases

The three sites selected for study were: Seaview Primary, Tamarind Heights Primary, and Pine Valley Primary. Seaview Primary is located in north Trinidad, and the other two in the south. The three schools varied in a number of ways. Two schools, Seaview Primary and Tamarind Heights Primary, had two teachers assigned to one class, while Pine Valley Primary had an arrangement in which three teachers worked with a group of three classes.

The history of team teaching varied at the three sites. Tamarind Heights Primary had a long tradition (20 years) of team teaching, whereas Seaview Primary and Pine Valley Primary had only recently begun experimenting with this approach to teaching. Seaview Primary had introduced team teaching three years prior to the study, while Pine

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Valley Primary had only been using this approach for about one year. The three schools had populations varying between 257 and 415 pupils.

Seaview Primary is a denominational boys' school that was established over 100 years ago. It is a relatively small school located in a semi-urban area. At Seaview Primary, the case studied was a Standard 4 class of 46 pupils. In Standard 3, these pupils were in two separate classes that were merged at the Standard 4 level. The pupils in this class were of mixed ability. Two teachers, both male, shared the class in a single, self-contained classroom. One was an experienced teacher with 19 years of service while the other was a newly qualified teacher. In this study, the term *newly qualified teacher* refers to one who is in the first year of teaching after graduation from teachers' college. The more experienced of the two had prior experience of team teaching at another school. For the newly qualified teacher, it was the first experience of team teaching. Both teachers had only joined the staff at the start of the academic year and had no prior knowledge of the pupils.

Tamarind Heights Primary has been in existence for 42 years. It is a government school for boys in an urban district. At this school, two cases were investigated. One team, Team A, consisted of an experienced teacher working with a newly qualified teacher. They taught a Standard 2 class of 33 pupils of mixed ability, in a single classroom. The senior teacher had been teaching at the school for over 10 years. The other team, Team B, comprised an experienced teacher and a teacher with three years experience who had just joined the staff. They shared a First Year class of 45 pupils in a self-contained classroom. The new teacher had no prior experience teaching at this level. Unlike his team partner, he had never before taught in a team. In both cases, the senior teachers were female, while the less experienced teachers were male.

Pine Valley Primary is a denominational school that was established 50 years ago. It is a boys' school located in a rural district. The team comprised three trained teachers, instructing three classes at the Standard 4 level. The classes were of mixed ability, and were only to be streamed just before the SEA examination. Each class comprised 15 pupils who were taught as a group. This case was unique in that each teacher had a self-contained classroom to which one class went for instruction. There were two female teachers and one male teacher in this team. They were

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all experienced and had been at the school for a long time, two of them for over 10 years.

Findings

Factors Determining the Introduction of Team Teaching

At Seaview Primary, team teaching was initiated by the principal, who was experimenting with it for the first time. It was introduced because of limited classroom space and a surplus of teachers. Tamarind Heights Primary had a policy of mentoring for relatively inexperienced teachers, whether they were trained or not. Team teaching also addressed the problem of limited space and large numbers of pupils in classes. Team teaching at Pine Valley Primary was initiated by the teachers involved, in consultation with the principal. Their main consideration was a desire to improve pupil learning. Thus, team teaching was mainly introduced to improve the functioning of the school, either as a policy decision or as an ad hoc measure.

Most team members indicated that a culture of collaboration and collegiality facilitated the introduction of team teaching:

Mother's day, father's day, graduation, you know, whenever we have something...to celebrate, the entire school will be involved. Contributions from each class...So, collaboration takes place on a school level...even though people may be in separate classrooms. (Mr. Williams, Tamarind Heights Primary [THP])

...the whole staff is one. All the children too, I think it rub off on them...we have a lot of activities...we bring out our Carnival band; all the teachers take part. We have a vibrant house system. (Ms. Jones, Pine Valley Primary [PVP])

Organization and Functioning

At Seaview Primary, members of the team were selected by the principal based mainly on the perceived personality of the teachers. Subjects to be taught were selected by members of the team on the basis of preference. One teacher taught mathematics, language arts, social studies, art, and religious education, while the other taught science, mental mathematics, physical education, and also reinforced areas of mathematics. The

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teachers collaborated in planning lessons, but the more experienced teacher usually taught during the morning session while the newly qualified teacher taught during the afternoon. They also sat in on each other's lessons and, at times, there was joint delivery.

Teaching teams at Tamarind Heights Primary were selected by the principal who had practical experience of team teaching. In Team A, the criterion for allocation of subjects was teacher preference. One teacher taught mathematics, science, and social studies, while the other taught all areas of language arts and creative arts. There was no joint planning and each teacher delivered instruction in the subjects for which he/she was responsible. In Team B, subjects were allocated on the basis of expertise. The senior teacher taught mathematics, science, and composition, while the junior teacher taught social studies, grammar, and composition. There was joint planning and, at times, joint delivery of lessons.

At Pine Valley Primary, the selection of team members was based on experience and expertise. A male teacher was deemed desirable due to concerns about discipline. Three teachers taught three classes, and expertise and preference guided subject allocation. One teacher taught mathematics and science, another taught agricultural science, grammar, and comprehension, while the third teacher taught social studies and vocabulary. Teaching was organized in such a way that each teacher was responsible for allocated subjects with all three classes. However, there was a core of subjects (religious instruction, creative arts, and handwriting) that each teacher taught to an assigned class. The timetable for each class changed from week to week during a three-week cycle. There was joint planning and, usually, individual delivery of lessons, although at times two classes were combined and taught by two teachers. Teacher-assigned classrooms allowed each teacher to organize learning centres in the areas of his/her specialty.

Administrative support was a significant factor in team teaching. This support took different forms. At Tamarind Heights Primary, planning sessions were timetabled and administrators supervised classes. At Pine Valley Primary, the principal established the boundaries and gave the team the freedom to structure the arrangement in a manner they thought appropriate. On the other hand, even when the principal supported the arrangement, the lack of structure inhibited the success of teaming. For

example, at Seaview Primary, the team indicated that their programme of work for the class was sometimes disrupted when the administration assigned a team member to duties outside of the classroom. They suggested that principals should know their staff resources and use them judiciously. Brennan et al. (1973) and Lovell (1967) support this position and suggest that optimum use of the strengths of individual teachers is critical in team teaching.

The status of team members varied. In the majority of cases, a senior teacher acted as a mentor to a less experienced teacher, while in one case, all teachers on the team enjoyed equal professional status. The quality of the relationship depended on the attributes of the members of the team. Recurring themes in the analysis were team members' willingness to learn from each other, work cooperatively, and discuss issues; their ability to fulfil classroom responsibility; and the degree to which partners were open to feedback and criticism. The following comments capture some of these themes:

It is cooperation. Without that, nothing doing. You have to be dedicated. Know that if you stay home, you don't prepare, or you don't pull your weight the children will suffer. So *that* part of it is very, very important, I think, and you have to be able to ... work with your partner. (Ms. Johnson, THP)

Teachers must be willing to work together. They need to be open and honest about shortcomings. (Mr. Paul, Seaview Primary [SP])

Less recurring themes were partners' willingness to (a) learn to work together and discuss issues, (b) demonstrate a level of maturity, (c) show understanding, and (d) command the respect of the pupils. When asked whether team teaching improved classroom discipline, Ms. David at Tamarind Heights Primary replied:

Once both teachers are firm, and they maintain the discipline, it works well. But if there's one that they have no respect for, well, he could spoil the whole group.

The quality of the relationship was enhanced when a member of the team displayed an attribute that the partner found to be exemplary, especially when the attribute related to the emotional and physical well-being of pupils. For example, when speaking about her experiences with a peer, one teacher commented:

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He's a real father figure to the little ones in the Infant [class]. (Ms. Johnson, THP)

Generally, teams reported positive experiences of team teaching. Both members of the team at Seaview Primary said that the experience of team teaching was favourable. At Tamarind Heights Primary, both members of Team A expressed mixed views about their experiences of team teaching. However, both teachers of Team B were extremely satisfied with the team teaching arrangement. At Pine Valley Primary, the team members were, so far, pleased with the teaming initiative.

Benefits of Team Teaching

From the perspective of the teachers, team teaching offered the opportunity for more effective organization and management of instruction. All teachers saw benefits in the division of subjects according to preference and/or expertise:

I started off with my strengths first...English...social studies and things like that. So she [the other teacher] would have handled the maths and the science...also the composition. So we drew upon each other's strengths...So team teaching worked well, as far as my experience was concerned...Afterwards, after handling my strong areas...and getting into my comfort zone, I started to tread into new areas, maths.... (Mr. Williams, THP)

All teachers indicated that the arrangement gave them more time to prepare classwork and assess pupils' progress, especially with large classes. Thus, most teachers found team teaching to be less stressful and time-consuming. Referring to the way the team was organized, one teacher said:

We decided to teach different areas so no one teacher would be burdened with all the subjects.... Since we have this arrangement, it is much easier on me. (Ms. Jones, PVP)

Teachers also found that improved classroom discipline was another major benefit of the team teaching arrangement. The combined effort of the team was considered to be extremely useful in monitoring patterns of pupils' behavior and responding appropriately:

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If I find a boy is not performing well, I go across by Mr. Charles and tell him something or I go by Ms. Jones and tell her...And then sometimes when we look back at the pattern on that particular day, that child did not perform, so something wasn't right with that child, probably from home or somewhere else. (Ms. Stewart, PVP)

A significant feature of teams in a mentoring relationship was the opportunity it offered the less experienced teacher to learn by observation. One newly qualified teacher stated that college training:

...gives theory. Real teaching starts when you leave college. (Mr. Thomas, SP)

He therefore thought it fortunate to be associated with his mentor teacher to get real experience.

In particular, most junior teachers found that they improved their skills in communicating with pupils and parents by observing the senior teachers. At the same time, the experienced teachers sometimes felt that they benefited from exposure to new ideas and methods. Mr. Paul, a mentor, described the experience as "refreshing" since newly qualified teachers can bring current ideas into the classroom.

The majority of teachers expressed a greater sense of enthusiasm and motivation that extended beyond the classroom:

We excited. I lie down in my bed in the night and I...thinking about next morning. I can't wait to get out there. I'm in school very early now. (Ms. Jones, PVP)

The presence of a partner assisted with the management of large classes of mixed ability and provided support during the delivery of the lesson. Team teaching also facilitated pupils' learning and teacher-pupil interaction. All teachers found that the involvement of two or more teachers in the teaching of a group of pupils allowed individualized instruction as well as remediation:

While he [the partner] is teaching the maths, I would go around to see what they are doing, and if you find they are not understanding, or they didn't grasp the concept, you pull them out and like when he is doing something else or they are doing their enrichment ... you take them and

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you explain again, give them examples and that kind of thing. (Ms. Johnson, THP)

You know exactly, this child did not understand this particular concept, and you know exactly well you have to work to help that child build on that particular concept. (Ms. Jones, PVP)

Ongoing dialogue between teachers enabled tracking of pupils' progress. Ms. Jones further explained that the teaching was so organized that if one of the teachers experienced difficulty in getting children to understand a topic in his/her area, another member of the team would teach the topic again to enhance pupils' learning. This strategy allowed pupils to be exposed to different teaching styles and enhanced their understanding:

If I find I'm not getting through [to the pupils], I'll say to Mr. Charles, "I want you to go over this with those boys." ...[to] get it from a different teacher, you know, and he would do that. So I would just quickly ask him, and tell him where I feel the problem is. (Ms. Stewart, PVP)

When a team member was absent, continuity of instruction was also possible. The allocation of subjects based on expertise and preference allowed more comprehensive coverage of the curriculum since teachers had less work to prepare, and most teachers in the study stated that this had a positive effect on student achievement.

A consistent theme was the opportunity that team teaching presented for pupils' selective interaction with teachers, based on the nature of the pupils' concern as well as the gender and perceived personality of the teacher:

I think the children enjoy [being taught by a team] especially if it's a mixed team...There are some things they will come by Sir for, and some things they will come [to me] for. (Ms. Johnson, THP)

You see what I look at, sometimes some children relate better to one teacher than to others. So ... one teacher teaching this child for let us say two years...could have a negative impact on the children. Whereas, [with two or more teachers] you have opportunities to go to another teacher...You find, one teacher teaching a class, if there's a child in that class that cannot understand that one teacher, that is two years of trouble. (Ms. Jones, PVP)

Challenges of Team Teaching

The effectiveness of team teaching seemed to be constrained by several factors. This arrangement required a great deal of planning and collaboration, which was difficult if partners had no joint free time. In one school, time was allocated in the timetable for planning and collaboration. In the other schools, teachers found time to meet at their convenience. All the teams emphasized the need to do so.

The absence of one partner also affected the functioning of the arrangement. Sometimes one partner was given responsibility for another class or for an activity elsewhere, and one team member was left in charge of a class for extended periods. Negative qualities of members of the team, such as irresponsibility in fulfilling duties, severely affected its functioning:

That person will begin to feel taken for granted ... because it's just two of us, I would take the burden ... and conflicts might arise. So it could be abused. It depends on a good relationship; it would have to be a good relationship. (Mr. Williams, THP)

Where one partner acted as a mentor, unwillingness of the junior teacher to take advice was identified as a critical factor. However, one junior teacher felt that the arrangement inhibited the use of skills acquired during training:

When I first came, the idea [of sharing a class with a mentor] wasn't too pleasing and appealing in the sense that at [training] college, you learn so many different things; up-to-date strategies and when you're fresh out, you want to try things out on your own. You want to see how you could develop yourself. (Mr. Andrews, THP)

Since classes were sometimes combined in a team teaching arrangement, the sheer size of the class, coupled with the mixed ability of pupils, posed a challenge. Some of the problems related to assessment and feedback. Often, strategies adopted to address these concerns resulted in one partner's limited involvement in lessons being taught.

Discussion

In the literature, collaboration between members is generally a defining feature of teaching teams (Brownell & Walther-Thomas, 2002; Salend, Gordon, & Lopez-Vona, 2002). Our study revealed varying levels of collaboration between members of teams: high to moderate levels of collaboration, planning, and discussion as opposed to little or none of these between members. The findings further suggest that effective team teaching was facilitated when the school had a culture of collegiality, collaboration, and a history of harmonious staff relationship. Institutional structures, such as working committees and teacher participation in school events, helped to foster congenial relations among members of staff and make team teaching easier to implement. In the absence of this, the chances for effective teamwork to attain educational and institutional goals may be reduced. This relates directly to the important consideration of culture when innovations are introduced into a school setting. It must be recognized that in organizations such as schools, habits of individualism, reinforced by strong, articulate personalities or teachers who are insecure about their pedagogical skills, may prevent the formation of teams or limit their effectiveness (Brownell & Walther-Thomas, 2002; Katzenbach & Smith, 1994).

Even when the school culture provides a scaffold for an arrangement such as team teaching, an important consideration in organizing teams is the personality of the members. Individual factors such as work ethic, willingness to learn, and interpersonal skills are critical to the effective functioning of teams. Given the demands that teamwork makes on individuals on the team and the need for members to share a common vision, the ability to work collaboratively and to fulfil responsibility are crucial to the success of the team.

One striking feature of the cases studied was that team teaching was mainly introduced to promote the efficient functioning of the institution; the needs of pupils were secondary. There was only one exception to this tendency. In most cases, team teaching provided an opportunity for teacher professional growth and development, more specifically, for the mentoring of new members of staff and for less experienced teachers to learn by observing their seniors. Brennan et al. (1973) make a similar observation. Our study noted, too, that team teaching helped to alleviate

the problem of limited space, which today constrains the operations of many primary schools in Trinidad and Tobago. However, this is a situation that is not limited to Trinidad and Tobago since the issue is also addressed by Pugach and Wesson (1995). With the growing trend towards the establishment of school libraries and computer laboratories, adequate classroom space may become even more limited, especially where physical expansion of the existing plant is not possible.

The nature of team teaching demands time for planning and coordination. Given the fact that the primary school teacher in Trinidad and Tobago usually teaches a class for the entire school day, finding time for collaboration and planning is difficult. The administration must therefore allocate time for this, if team teaching is to function efficiently. The benefits of doing so are well documented in the literature (Brownell & Walther-Thomas, 2002; Craig (1998); Pugach & Wesson (1995); Rink (1998). With respect to the structure of teams in classrooms, the traditional structure of team teaching was predominant in the cases studied: two teachers were assigned to one class. However, a different arrangement emerged in one case that was marked by the creative use of the experience and expertise of team members. This team used flexible scheduling as they rotated classes among three teachers. Similar arrangements were described in Hall (2000) and Miller (1992). These can serve as models for other schools seeking to implement new ways of delivering instruction, while maximizing the strengths and preferences of teachers.

The findings further revealed that team teaching positively influenced teacher performance and teacher satisfaction, and this redounded to the benefit of pupils. Team members in our study found that the presence of two or more teachers in an arrangement with a class increased the likelihood of the needs of all being met. Principals and staff interviewed by Lovell (1967) and students interviewed by Pugach and Wesson (1995) confirmed this benefit for learners. Team teaching also allowed greater opportunity for assessment and feedback during and after lesson delivery. Teachers in our study reported that they were able to employ more formative assessment while team teaching. The tracking of the progress of individual pupils was also easier and, consequently, it was possible to implement measures for remediation or enrichment as required. This is a crucial benefit, which is also highlighted in

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McGoogan (2002) and Miller (1992). Apart from pupils' academic development, opportunities to cater to their social needs increased in classes that were taught by teams, since more than one teacher monitored pupils. Slater (1993) identifies this as an opportunity for increased teacher involvement in pupils' personal and academic lives. Thus, while team teaching in the cases studied was mainly introduced to serve the needs of the institution, many benefits accrued to pupils instructed within this arrangement, once teachers functioned as a team in a collaborative relationship.

The potential of team teaching to increase teacher motivation was also apparent. Increased collegiality among teachers, the comfort of teaching subjects of preference, and the early gains in pupils' academic progress contributed to teachers' feelings of well-being and a positive attitude to work. The fact that all teachers in the study expressed satisfaction with teaching fewer subjects indicates that the education system may have to explore alternate ways of organizing instruction at the primary level, where each class teacher is generally expected to teach all subject areas. The opportunity to teach subjects of preference was a primary benefit identified by Miller (1992). Furthermore, when team members have individual classrooms, these can be organized as learning centres for the specific subject areas that they teach.

Some issues currently facing the administration of schools were raised in the study. A major concern for all groups was discipline. In one case, it was a factor in the selection of a team. There was general agreement that team teaching had a positive impact on discipline. Schools may wish to consider this option in their search for solutions to problems of indiscipline. In Slater's (1993) study, team teaching facilitated the implementation of reform programmes for at-risk students and minority groups. However, effective teamwork is extremely important.

Generally, evidence from this study suggests that team teaching provides opportunities for enhanced teaching and learning, if it is used effectively. However, there is the view that such gains can also be obtained from conventional arrangements for instruction. Pugach and Wesson (1995), for example, observe that many benefits of team teaching simply represent good teaching, which can be found in any classroom. Lovell (1967) also cautions that team teaching does not automatically assure

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better teaching or better pupil learning. Perhaps the critical factor is not the form of organization in itself, but the extent to which the potential for enhanced teaching and learning is utilized.

Challenges to team teaching were linked to: (a) institutional factors, (b) issues at the level of the class, and (c) individual factors. There is an apparent willingness by administrators to experiment with different ways of organizing delivery of the curriculum, and this has given rise to different teaching arrangements. For example, there is an increasing practice of using teachers who specialize in the teaching of one subject, usually in the area of creative arts, computer studies, agricultural science, and science. This has implications for the future of team teaching as it is currently structured. Additionally, unless administrators view the team as a unit, members will always be used conveniently as relief teachers in other classrooms when teachers are absent. This severely reduces the effectiveness of team teaching. However, this reflects the difficulty that confronts administrators as they attempt to ensure that the needs of the pupils, teachers, and the institution are all met.

At the level of the class, the circumstances under which a class is brought together can sometimes impact on successful team teaching. If some pupils have prior experience with one teacher in the team and view the other teacher as a stranger, they may respond in ways that undermine the effectiveness of one member of the team.

The literature and findings from this study suggest that the personal attributes of members are important to the functioning of a team. If team members are not professional in their approach to teamwork, and they do not engender trust and respect, then it would be difficult for the team to function effectively.

Individuals may respond differently to institutional arrangements such as mentoring. The findings indicated that while two newly qualified teachers welcomed the opportunity to work with a senior teacher, one found that it limited the opportunity to try out new strategies.

Future of Team Teaching

In the context of primary schooling in Trinidad and Tobago, team teaching lies on a continuum of approaches to curriculum delivery. The generalist approach with one class that is assigned to one teacher stands at one extreme. Theoretically, specialized instruction, in which one class is assigned a different teacher for each subject, is at the other extreme. Different combinations of teaching teams are possible between these two extremes. These teams can differ with respect to the way they are organized and how they function. It is also possible to have a class instructed by specialist teachers who do not collaborate and integrate instruction and, therefore, cannot be said to function as a team.

There was general consensus among teachers in the study that team teaching as it has been traditionally organized in local schools was on the decline, even though one school had just introduced team teaching. The decline was linked to the increasing use of forms of subject specialization, which are seen as more effective options in the delivery of the curriculum at the primary level. Teachers felt that they could plan more effectively if their teaching was restricted to those subject areas that they preferred, or for which they held special aptitude or expertise. As educational institutions strive for greater efficiency and for improved student performance, there is likely to be movement towards increased subject specialization, with or without the type of collaboration and planning among teachers necessary for effective team teaching. If there are fewer subjects for a class teacher to teach, there is less justification for having two or more of them assigned to one class, and team teaching as traditionally structured may be less frequently used.

However, it is possible for the two arrangements—team teaching and other arrangements of specialized teaching—to coexist in the same school. At the time of our study, team teaching had been recently introduced into a setting where there were specialist teachers in some subjects who taught at all levels of the school. It is perhaps significant that team members in that school were all experienced and operating within a school culture that was described as “communal” by both the teachers and the principal. The structure and functioning of that team did not follow the traditional pattern, and was initiated by the team members

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to improve pupils' learning. In the process, these teachers discovered benefits for themselves.

Apart from the increase in forms of subject specialization, the greatest threat to the continued use of team teaching was thought to be the unwillingness of new teachers to take advice and value the wisdom of more experienced teachers. New teachers, though, vary in the extent to which they do so. Ultimately, the growth or demise of team teaching depends on its ability to meet the needs of the institution and prove itself to be a viable option for curriculum delivery.

Suggestions for Future Research

This study elicited the views of administrators and teachers; those of the pupils were not included. Future research can therefore investigate pupils' perspectives of team teaching. This can provide useful insights into pupils' experience of being taught by two or more teachers, and can assist educators in evaluating team teaching arrangements. In addition, teachers often expressed the belief that team teaching positively impacted on pupils' learning. This warrants investigation. Improved student achievement may well be a consequence of team teaching arrangements; however, no documented evidence was offered to support this assertion. Also, the use of different forms of subject specialization in primary schools requires close examination. At present, schools appear to have a great deal of autonomy in the use of specialist teachers. The Ministry of Education perhaps needs to develop a national policy/framework on this issue and, as an initial step, monitor and evaluate the use of specialist teachers in schools throughout the primary system.

With specific reference to team teaching, future research can use classroom observation to investigate the dynamics of interaction between members of a team and between the team and the class. The results of further investigation would undoubtedly enhance our understanding of teaching and learning processes at the primary level of Trinidad and Tobago's education system.

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