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**How can my use of Team Teaching Methods develop Reading Fluency and  
Comprehension in the Senior Primary Classroom?**

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Childhood Education, Maynooth University, in fulfilment of the requirements for the  
degree of Master of Education (Research in Practice)*

*Date: 21/08/2020*

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## Abstract

This self-study action research project aims to enhance my practice in the area of reading fluency and comprehension using team teaching methodologies. Reading fluency and comprehension is an area of interest for me, having noticed reading fluency and comprehension as a recurring need while teaching in the senior primary classes. I wanted to learn more about how to support my pupils and improve and change my practice in this area. Upon reflection and considering my values on reading, inclusion and collaboration, I realised that I had become a 'Living Contradiction' (Whitehead, 1989). My over reliance on text books and a focus on standardized scores led to this realisation. My values are rooted to Vygotsky's (1978) 'social constructivism theory' concerning the co-construction of knowledge through social negotiation. Although I claimed to value inclusion and collaboration, I was not living towards those values in my teaching of reading, therefore, a change was needed.

Conducting my research within the self-study action research paradigm involved following an action-reflection cycle. A six week intervention was implemented which aimed to positively impact reading fluency and comprehension through the use of engaging and inclusive methodologies. Station teaching was deemed the appropriate team teaching methodology to address these concerns. Data was collected using a reflective journal, critical friend observations, interviews and questionnaires.

This project found that the use of station teaching promoted pupil and teacher engagement which resulted in improved behaviour and facilitated the children with a more productive use of their literacy time. Although these findings may serve as a useful example to those in similar settings, due to the small sample size and self-study nature of this action research project limitations surround the generalisation of these research findings.

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## **Chapter 1 Introduction**

### **1.1 Focus and Aims of the Study**

Reading is a skill that we use every day. Reading reveals a world of possibilities for both children and adults, through building their capacity for creative and critical thinking and expanding their knowledge base. Learning to read can be a challenging process for some but is an essential skill in the holistic development of a child. Children who do not learn to read are at risk of personal, economic and social limitations (Gillon et al., 2019). “Being literate represents the difference between inclusion in and exclusion from society” (International Literacy Association, 2019).

This self-study action research project aims to create new knowledge in relation to how my practice in the area of reading pedagogy may be enhanced through the use of team teaching methodologies. “Team teaching involves a group of two or more teachers working together to plan, conduct and evaluate the learning activities for the same group of learners” (The Teaching Council, 2013).

Reading fluency and comprehension were identified as the areas for improvement in my practice, while they were also highlighted areas of concern in terms of the learning needs of the research participants, a focus therefore developed within this study on reading fluency and comprehension. Research around both reading skills confirmed for me the reciprocal relationship between the two, with each fostering each other. Reading comprehension is a “process of simultaneously extracting and constructing meaning through interaction and involvement with written language” (Snow, 2002:11). Fluency has been referred to as the

bridge between decoding and reading comprehension (Pikulski and Chard, 2005). The achievement of fluent word recognition allows pupils to focus on comprehending the text and the comprehension of text enables expressive reading indicating that students understand what they are reading. “If automaticity is the fluency link to word recognition, prosody completes the bridge by linking fluency to comprehension” (Rasinski, 2012:519)

## **1.2 Research Title**

The title of this thesis is “How can my use of Team Teaching Methods develop Reading Fluency and Comprehension in the Senior Primary Classroom?”

## **1.3 Research Background and Context**

The reason for the particular focus on reading fluency and reading comprehension stemmed from the needs of the children in my class. These needs were identified in line with the Continuum of Support Guidelines (Department of Education and Science, 2007). Information was gathered through formal and informal means; more specifically the analysis of recent standardized testing, review of student support files and my observations and reflections within the class were employed to ensure suitability of planning.

Reading fluency and comprehension is also an area of interest for me in my practice as having taught in the senior classes for past six years I had noticed reading fluency and comprehension as a recurring need. I wanted to learn more about how to support the children in my class and improve and change my practice in this area.

Reflecting on my values placed on a social constructivist approach to learning (Vygotsky, 1978; Fröebel, 1887, 1899; Dewey 1916, 1975, 1980) and on the importance of reading and

then my growing reliance on text books, pressure to complete the text books and a focus on standardized scores in my research setting and my practice I realised I had become a ‘Living Contradiction’ (Whitehead, 1989). I was certainly using a didactic teaching style in this area of my practice which I believe was influenced by Lortie’s ‘Apprenticeship of Observation’ (Lortie, 1975) which involved me reverting back to how I was taught reading in primary school.

Current policy in Irish education endorses a range of teaching supports including team teaching and small group teaching to meet the needs of pupils with Special Educational Needs (Department of Education and Skills, 2017). Circular 0013/2017 advised schools of the revised allocation process for Special Education Teachers to primary schools which replaced the General Allocation Model. The Special Education Teacher (SET) Allocation Model works to support inclusion and ensure that resources are allocated to students with the greatest needs. In reviewing my responsibilities as class teacher, which were clarified by the Department of Education and Skills on the introduction of the new SET Allocation model (2017), I felt that I could do more in terms of adapting my teaching environment and my teaching methodologies to include small group tuition. I also felt that I could improve differentiation within lessons and become more hands on in the progress of children attending withdrawal support.

Vygotsky’s ‘Social Constructivism Theory’ (1978) concerns the co-construction of knowledge with an emphasis on learning as a collaborative process through social negotiation, not on competition (Vygotsky 1978; Jonassen 1994). Vygotsky saw social interaction or collaboration as the chief method for learning and placed more emphasis on language development (Powell and Kalina, 2006) as demonstrated in the new Primary Language Curriculum (NCCA, 2019).

In brief, I hoped that a shift towards the use of team teaching methodologies within my practice in the teaching of reading would allow me to live more aligned to my values. It was also hoped that such a shift would improve engagement during reading lessons and have a positive impact on reading fluency and comprehension attainment in my class.

#### **1.4 Potential Contribution of this Self- Study Project**

In undertaking this research study, I claim to have generated knowledge about how to teach reading fluency and reading comprehension more effectively through the use of team teaching methodologies. It is hoped that my colleagues in my research setting may become more informed about the use of team teaching methodologies and how they may be utilised as tools to meet varying literacy needs in our classrooms. In making efforts to improve my knowledge in both the use of team teaching methodologies and of reading fluency and comprehension pedagogy in the senior primary classroom, I am striving to provide children in my care with the best possible opportunity to reach their full potential as readers.

#### **1.5 Format of the Study**

This self-study took place over the course of a year in my classroom. As part of this project a ‘station teaching intervention’ took place over a 6 week period and comprised of 11 station teaching lessons. All 24 children in the class took part in the study. The ‘station teaching intervention’ comprised of four stations in total; two independent stations and two teacher led stations (see ‘Cycle 2’ in appendix 1.2). The station teaching lessons took place on Mondays and Thursdays (1:00 p.m. – 1:40 p.m.) and they were 40 minutes in duration, each station lasted for 10 minutes. The teachers involved were the class teacher (researcher) and the assigned literacy Special Education Teacher (SET). The 24 children in the class were divided

into four groups of 6 mixed ability groups. This intervention sought to gather information about how the children responded to the introduction of team teaching methodologies during literacy time. It also sought to create new knowledge relating to the children's engagement with reading fluency and comprehension activities and their attainment relating to both.

## **1.6 Chapter Summary and Thesis Layout**

This research project aimed to create new knowledge about the effective teaching of reading fluency and comprehension in my practice through the use of team teaching methodologies. The value I place on inclusion, reading and collaboration are intertwined throughout the research and were central to the aims of this project. This Master of Education thesis is divided into five chapters. This first chapter specifies the area of interest and the focus of investigation in this research project, introducing the reader to the rationale behind the research and the aims of this self-study. Chapter 2 provides a detailed review and critique of the literature appropriate to this research topic, drawing on scholarship from a range of studies both from an Irish and international context. Chapter 3 outlines the methodologies and research instruments applied and looks at qualitative research within action research specifically. Chapter 4 reports the findings of the study. Chapter 5 concludes this thesis with an overview of the study, potential limitations and suggestions for practice with recommendations for further research.

## **Chapter 2 A Review and Critique of the Literature**

### **2.1 Introduction**

This chapter will outline the relevant literature pertaining to the study focus. Several key aspects of scholarship are examined within aspects of reading fluency and reading comprehension in the senior primary school classroom. An overview of the literature that espouse the use of team teaching methodologies, possible challenges associated and important considerations prior to and during its introduction in a classroom setting are also in this chapter. The National Literacy Strategy 2011-2020 (DES, 2011) has brought about significant improvements in the literacy skills of Irish primary and post primary pupils through which have been highlighted through international studies (NEPS, 2019). The most recent PISA (Programme for International Student Assessment) project in the domain of reading literacy ranks Ireland 4<sup>th</sup> out of 36 OECD (Organisation of Economic Cooperation and Development) countries and 3<sup>rd</sup> out of 27 EU countries (OECD, 2019). However, it has been highlighted that further work is needed to raise the literacy achievement levels of some children (NEPS, 2020).

### **2.2 Reading Fluency Defined**

“Fluent reading refers to the ability to read orally with speed, accuracy and proper expression” (National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS), 2019:17). The Special Education Support Service (SESS, 2007) defines fluency as “the ability to read connected text rapidly, smoothly, effortlessly and automatically”. Automaticity in reading refers to the ability to read without occupying the mind with low level tasks such as sounding out words (NEPS, 2019). The use of prosodic features such as expression, stress, pitch and suitable phrasing are



highlighted in the Primary Language Curriculum definition of reading fluency (NCCA, 2019). Reading fluency can impact and relate directly to reading comprehension (Shanahan, 2019; Pikulski and Chard, 2005; Rasinski, 2012; EEF, 2017).

### **2.3 Reading Comprehension Defined**

The ultimate objective of reading is comprehension or the reconstruction of meaning (NCCA, 1999b). Reading comprehension is a “process of simultaneously extracting and constructing meaning through interaction and involvement with written language” (Snow, 2002). A number of definitions can be found for reading comprehension including that of Pardo (2004) which defines it as a process in which readers construct meaning by interacting with the text through prior knowledge, previous experience, information in the text and the stance the reader takes in relationship to the text. Bowe, Gleeson and Courtney (2012) identify a key theme which emerges in definitions of reading comprehension which is the transaction between the reader and the text, while the major elements of comprehension are also highlighted; the reader, the text and the context of the reading. The complexities and challenges surrounding the process of comprehension involve instances when a reader extracts a message coded explicitly into a text (such as a stop sign) and those that require inference, interpretation, disambiguation, connection and other actions that allow the construction of a message based on the particle and imperfect cues that the author has coded into a text (Shanahan, 2019).

## **2.4 The Link between Reading Fluency and Reading Comprehension**

The teaching of oral reading fluency in primary school has a positive impact on students' reading comprehension (Shanahan, 2019). "Reading comprehension depends upon an efficient and fluent decoding process that allows readers to translate text to oral language" (Shanahan, 2019:8). Reading fluency and Comprehension were identified as the areas of concern for me in my practice and reading around both reading skills confirmed for me the reciprocal relationship between the two, with each fostering each other. Pikulski and Chard (2005) refer to fluency as being the 'bridge between decoding and reading comprehension'. Achieving fluent word recognition or reading automaticity allows pupils to focus on comprehending the text and the comprehension of text enables expressive reading or prosody which is an indication of students understanding. "If automaticity is the fluency link to word recognition, prosody completes the bridge by linking fluency to comprehension" (Rasinski, 2012:519).

## **2.5 The Role of the Teacher and Values of Inclusion**

The value I place on inclusion means that striving to address and respond to the learning needs of all children in my class is important and connected to the values I hold as an educator. Inclusion has been defined as "a process that helps to overcome barriers limiting the presence, participation and achievement of learners" (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO, 2017).

The role of the class teacher has been clarified in recent years through the introduction of the new Special Education Teacher (SET) Allocation Model (Department of Education and Skills (DES), 2017). The class teacher is the first line of responsibility for the education of all pupils

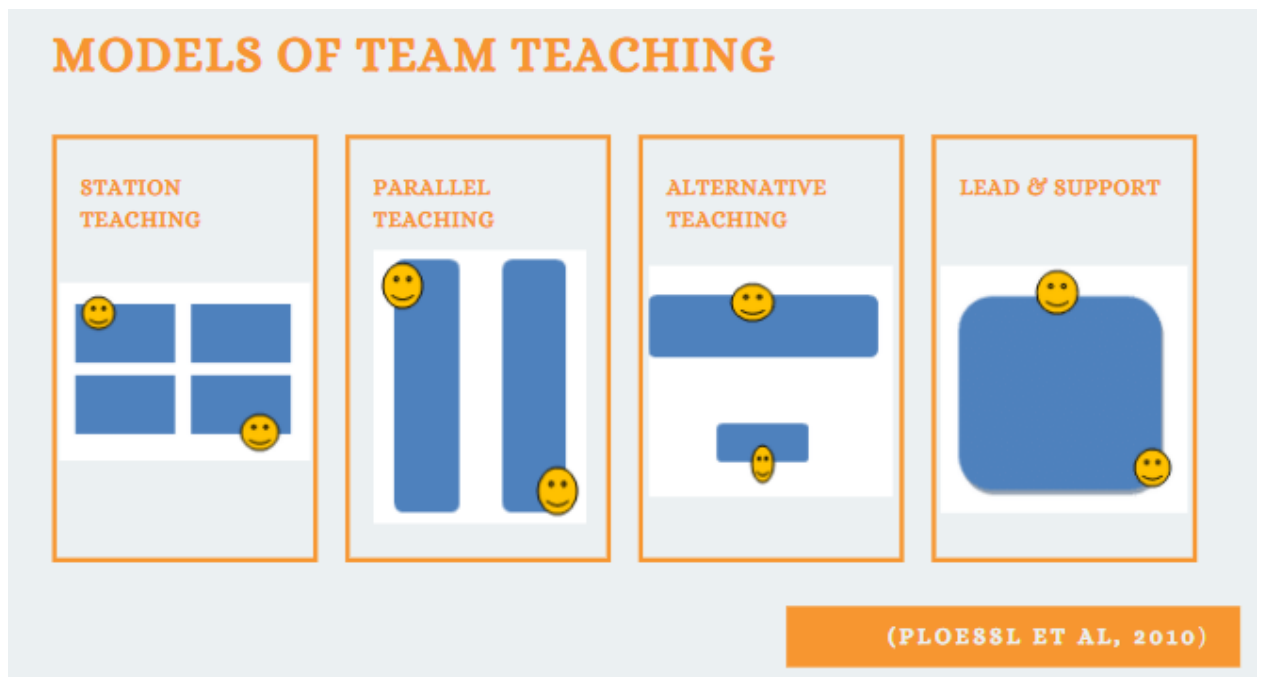
in their class and so should plan with care for the diverse needs within the classroom through adapting teaching approaches and the learning environment (DES, 2017). A variety of teaching methodologies should be employed including active learning, small-group tuition and scaffold instructions with an emphasis on collaboration with Special Education Teachers (SETs) and parents in the planning process (DES, 2017). The SET allocation model works to support inclusion and ensure that resources are allocated to students with the greatest needs. The class teacher's central role in differentiating the curriculum assisted by collaboration with colleagues is a crucial factor in promoting inclusion through successfully implementing the new SET allocation model, with the overall aim of providing a more inclusive education system.

## **2.6 What is Team Teaching?**

Team teaching generally involves teachers teaching the same group of heterogeneous learners at the same time and is based on the philosophy of inclusion (UNESCO, 2017). Team teaching, if true to its name, teamwork should begin with the joint planning of lessons (Johnston and Madejski, 2004) but it should also extend to problem solving and the co-instructing of lessons (Lacey, 2001; Friend and Cook, 2007). "Team teaching involves a group of two or more teachers working together to plan, conduct and evaluate the learning activities for the same group of learners" (The Teaching Council, 2013). Team teaching involves teachers sharing responsibility for planning, delivering content, facilitating learning and classroom management. The nature of team teaching supports collaborative practice among professional and it requires mutual respect between teachers (SESS, 2009).

## 2.7 Models of Team Teaching

A variety of team teaching models exist including ‘station teaching’, ‘parallel teaching’, ‘alternative teaching’ and ‘lead and support’, each with advantages and disadvantages, depending on the learning environment and purpose to which they are employed (Ploessl, 2010). See figure 2.1 for an illustration of the mentioned approaches to team teaching which will be discussed in subsequent sections.



**Figure 2.1:** Models of Team Teaching

### **2.7.1 Station Teaching**

Station teaching can be heavily dependent on the availability of personnel. The responsibility for planning and instruction is divided by all parties and a clear focus is important. Ploessl et al (2010) recommend station teaching where co-teaching styles may differ or if small teacher-pupil ratios are preferred. Station teaching involves pupils rotating from station to station, over varying time periods (See Figure 2.1).

### **2.7.2 Parallel Teaching**

Parallel teaching involves two teachers teaching the same content to two groups of pupils. The same physical space is used with a significant advantage being a reduced pupil-teacher ratio. Co-planning is important with the parallel teaching model and assessment is critical to identify achieved learning across the two groups. This is suitable at all class levels and is particularly useful model in multi-grade settings or when smaller instructional configurations better meet students' diverse needs (Ploessl et al, 2010), (See Figure 2.1).

### **2.7.3 Alternative Teaching**

An alternative teaching model occurs when one teacher manages the large group while another teacher delivers an alternative lesson, to a small group. The smaller pupil-teacher ratio facilitates improved interactions to clarify misconceptions or extend understanding. This model can allow teachers to work with pupils of exceptional ability challenging their specific

needs while the remainder of the class works under the direction of the second teacher (see Figure 2.1).

#### **2.7.4 Lead and Support**

This model involves the ‘lead’ teacher taking on the role of the ‘support’ teacher and vice versa. The shared language aspect makes collaboration more possible and enables both teachers to be aware of the pupil’s progress. Teachers are not assigned to pupils and so all pupils can access support from both teachers as required. A variety of assessments can be implemented by the lead teacher, support teacher or both in this model (See Figure 2.1).

### **2.8 Rationale for the use of Team Teaching in Classrooms in Ireland.**

The National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS) in their good practice guide for “Effective Interventions for Struggling Readers” (2019) outline that ordinary class teaching is not enough for failing readers. NEPS refer to the consistent finding that, for struggling readers, small group settings are more effective than larger groups (2019). In my own research setting and in many similar school settings “small group teaching” is more commonly associated with withdrawal from mainstream classrooms. However, small group teaching can take place in the mainstream classroom in the form of team teaching. Station teaching is a commonly used methodology in the junior classes (junior infants – 2<sup>nd</sup> class) within my research setting, however such team teaching methodologies are seldom utilised within in the senior classes (third – sixth class). A number of challenges associated with exclusive withdrawal of children

include stigma of leaving the classroom for extra support, missing out on class work and disruption for the class teacher (SESS, 2019) , all of which contribute to the need for a more varied approach to teaching. A review of a co-teaching arrangement established to combine a mainstream class and a special class of third grade students (age 9) in the city of Kuopio, Finland found that “teachers’ motivation increased significantly; the teachers indicated that working together gave them the strength to manage and develop their work” (UNESCO, 2017:34). Similarly, in the Irish context a key finding from research (Daly, 2017) on the station teaching model of team teaching indicates that teachers and pupils may enjoy participating in station teaching.

A positive effect of team-teaching on learners can be exposure to teachers positively collaborating, providing a model of good collaboration (Johnston and Madejski, 2004; Friend et al., 2010). Modeling is a strategy used in classrooms for many aspects of learning. Teachers model good language skills, good reading skills, problem solving techniques, good social skills and good behaviour. Teacher’s modeling working cooperatively and collaboratively with colleagues is an associated benefit with team teaching, encouraging children to follow suit and co-operate in building an atmosphere of mutual trust and understanding, echoing my value of collaboration and collegiality. Another significant factor is the sharing of professional knowledge through conversations that occur as part of the team teaching process and through observation of another teacher’s practice. Team teaching allows educators to observe colleagues at work without being an inactive observer in the classroom (Johnston and Madejski, 2004; Friend et al, 2010). Associations can also be made here to Vygotsky (1978) as a means of co-constructing knowledge, providing teachers with more knowledge in a collaborative context than when working alone (Rytivaara and Kershner, 2012).

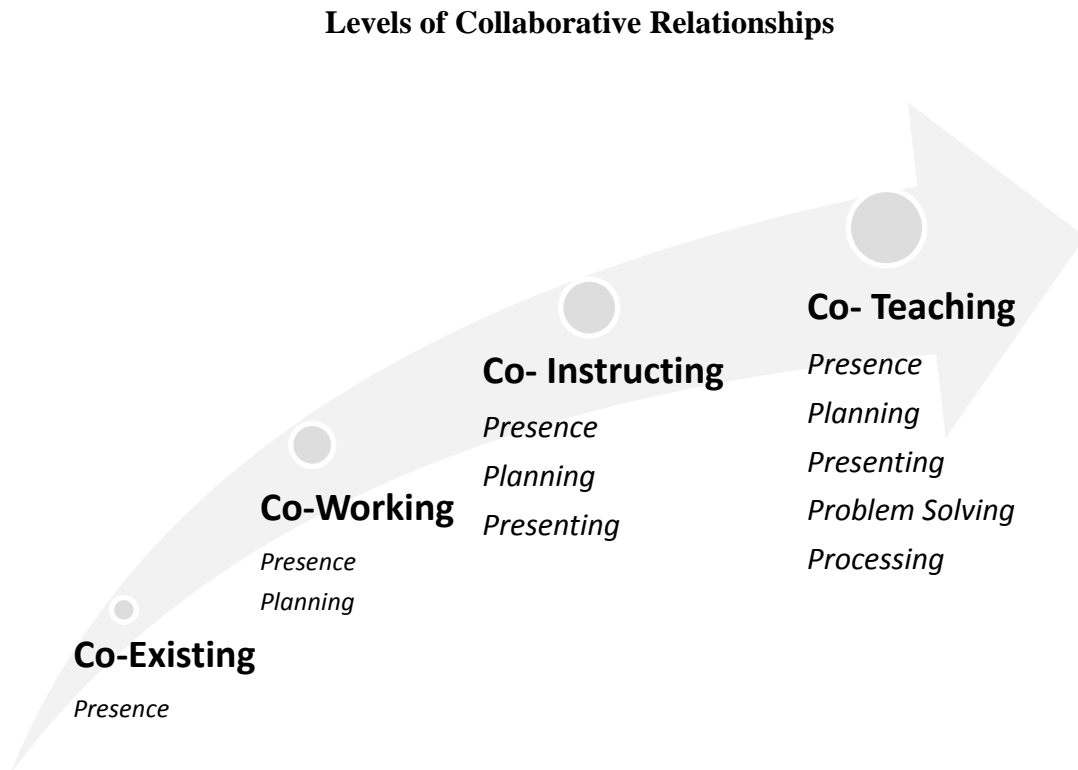
The use of small guided reading lessons is advocated in the new Primary Language Curriculum (NCCA, 2019a). Guided reading is an instructional approach to the teaching of reading allowing for differentiated teaching to occur in small-groups (NCCA, 2019b). Shanahan (2019) outlines how collaborative learning approaches can be particularly motivating in the context of teaching reading, while motivation is widely agreed to drive effort, energy and enjoyment (Guthrie, 2015). The value I place on working collaboratively, enjoyment in learning and inclusion resonates here in the use of small guided reading lessons as part of a team teaching model.

## **2.9 Collaborative Relationships**

The collaboration of staff is vital for team teaching methodologies to succeed (Daly, 2017). Issues such as control, responsibilities, personalities and teaching style of teachers should all be considered before team teaching method are embarked upon (Cook and Friend, 1995). It has been argued that different levels of collaborative relationships exist within team teaching (see figure 2.2.) Research conducted by Scruggs et al (2007) found that co-teachers generally believed their practices were beneficial to students but participation in co-teaching should only be voluntary which is similar to the approach in the senior classes of my research setting resulting in little engagement with such methodologies. Experiences of success connected to the research of Scruggs et al., (2007) reported sharing of expertise and collaboratively finding ways to motivate pupils. However, less collaboration was a feature of team teaching teams that struggled in the same research (Scruggs et al, 2007) with contrasting teaching styles resulting in conflict. Figure 2.2 illustrates how the nature of team work and its various factors contribute to successes in team teaching. Collaboration should go much further beyond joint planning



which is introduced at the ‘co-working stage’ level for team teaching to be successful (see figure 2.2: Levels of collaborative relationships). In the first ‘co-existing’ level there is merely a ‘presence’ of a co-teacher or team member. While in the ‘co-instructing’ level we see the additional element of presenting present. Collaboratively ‘problem solving’ and ‘processing’ bring team teaching to the more efficient level of ‘co-teaching’ as outlined in Figure 2.2. This self-study aimed to promote collaborative engagement at a co-teaching level rather than merely ‘co-existing’, ‘co-working’ or ‘co-instructing’.



**Figure 2.2:** Levels of Collaborative Relationships (Lacey, 2001; Friend at al., 2010)

## 2.10 Professional Conversations

Opportunities to talk through the preparation of a lesson with a colleague can build professional confidence and contribute to practice knowledge. We are reminded of the dialogic aspects of the professional learning process through advice that conversations should incorporate the entire teaching partnership including the visible team teaching activity (Rytivaara and Kershner, 2012). My critical friends played pivotal roles throughout this self-study. My ‘inside lens’ (Brookfield, 1995) critical friend refers to my colleague who co-taught with me during the team teaching intervention therefore providing me with additional ‘lens’ inside my classroom. My ‘outside lens’ refers to a colleague who provided a ‘lens’ ‘outside’ my classroom but within my research setting, both lenses are based on Brookfield’s (1995) lens of colleagues perceptions (see figure 3.2). In terms of conversations reflecting on co-taught lessons throughout this self-study discussions were focused on both student achievement and teacher satisfaction (Ploessl et al, 2010). The Primary School Curriculum (NCCA, 1999a) highlighted that continuity and progression in learning is achieved through a culture of collaboration and mutual support, in a climate of openness and trust.

## 2.11 Considerations in the use of Team Teaching

A recent study which examined teachers' stories on developing co-teaching partnerships highlights that:

- Co-teaching teams create their own unique shared space for co-teaching.
- Successful co-teaching is a result of numerous negotiations and a lot of time and effort.
- Commitment, shared meanings and engagement in sharing one's professional knowledge are key elements in successful co-teaching (Rytivaara and Pulkkinen, 2019).

Team teaching may not always come naturally (Scruggs et al., 2007) as it requires additional skills which may not always be used when teaching alone. Team teaching requires a genuine commitment not only to working closely with a colleague but to be open to the development of new competence in areas such as frequent communication and resolving differences in a way that strengthens rather than weakens the collaborative relationship (Ploessl et al., 2010). Additional time for joint planning and collaboration was required during a team teaching intervention outlined by UNESCO in Finland (UNESCO, 2017). The frequency and duration of team teaching interventions is also a consideration which should be made. NEPS (2019) state that the duration of an intervention may not necessarily relate to positive outcomes and recommend interventions that are short in duration, but intensive in nature. "Short, intensive bursts of intervention, with daily targeted support, appear to be more effective than longer term interventions, therefore, teachers may need to think of their work in half-term or 6-12 week blocks" (2019:26).

## 2.12 New Primary Language Curriculum

The new Primary Language Curriculum (NCCA, 2019a) has been developed as a result of the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategy (2011-2020). The importance placed on viewing language not as an “isolated sphere” but as “our fundamental instrument for dealing with the world” is highlighted by Hirsch (2003).

The introduction of the new Primary Language Curriculum (NCCA, 2019a) saw a move from the content and objective based Primary School Curriculum (NCCA, 1999a) to a skills-based curriculum. The Primary Language Curriculum (NCCA, 2019a) is an outcomes based curriculum and “learning outcomes focus on learning being an enabling process that helps children in their development of concepts, skills and dispositions” (NCCA, 2019a:18). The focus on skills rather than content promotes transferable skills, particularly transferable language skills.

Aistear defines dispositions as ‘enduring habits of mind and action’, mentioning positive dispositions including independence, curiosity, playfulness, perseverance, confidence, resilience and resourcefulness (NCCA, 2009:54). All Learning Outcomes use the word “playful” or “engaging” to describe the learning experiences through which children should acquire skills. The word ‘playful’ is used for Learning Outcomes at stage 1 (junior and senior infants) while at stages 2, 3 and 4 the Learning Outcome uses the word ‘engaging’ in place of ‘playful’. This change of wording is consistent across the Learning Outcomes for reading, writing and oral language which can almost dismiss the importance of play in senior primary classrooms.

Brooker (2008:9) outlines how researchers have identified the powerful nature of “learning dispositions or attitudes of the mind” and referred to a number of Lillian Katz’s (1994) ideas on dispositions; “the mere acquisition of knowledge and skills does not mean that they will be used and applied. Listening skills do not make children listen, and reading skills do not make children read: children need to feel disposed to listen or to read” (Brooker, 2008:9). Although, Brooker (2008) and Katz (1994) are referring to early years learning, it can be argued that this is also the case in middle and senior primary classes as endorsed in Fröebelian principles and by Dewey (1916) and Bruce (2015).

Across the three strands (oral language, reading and writing) of the Primary Language Curriculum (NCCA, 2019a), the three elements of language describe essential language learning. The elements of language learning are;

- developing communicative relationships through language,
- understanding the content and structure of language and
- exploring and using language” (NCCA, 2019a:14).

Each of these elements have a set of Learning Outcomes, which outline learning in terms of concepts, dispositions and skills and all elements are interdependent (NCCA, 2019a:14).

The use of wordless picture books is strongly advocated for by the Primary Language Curriculum (NCCA, 2019b). Picture books are employed as a useful resource to build domain knowledge of particular topics and I agree with Beckett (2012) that wordless books can offer “a unique opportunity for collaborative reading between children and adults (empowering) the two audiences more equally” (NCCA, 2019b:17). However, considering time constraints and priorities (e.g. reading fluency) in senior primary classrooms I question the strong emphasis

placed on wordless picture books by the Primary Language Curriculum (2019a) in the senior primary classroom. Reading comprehension and vocabulary are best served by spending time reading and listening to texts on the same topic and discussing the ideas in them, such immersion in a topic not only positively impacts reading and vocabulary but it also develops writing skills (Hirsch, 2003). Subsequently, Guthrie (2005) showed that focusing on coherent knowledge domain not only enhances general vocabulary but also improves fluency and motivation to read.

### **2.13 Teaching Reading in the Senior Primary Classroom**

Effective reading instruction should include an emphasis on oral language including vocabulary development, phonemic awareness, sight vocabulary and explicit teaching of comprehension strategies (Kennedy et al., 2012; EEF, 2017; NEPS, 2019). The ‘fourth-grade slump’ (Hirsch, 2003) in reading comprehension highlights that even though the majority of young readers can read simple texts, many pupils experience difficulties when they reach fourth grade (age 9-10), when they must tackle more advanced texts. This issue can be noticed teaching fourth class (age 9-10) in the Irish primary school setting. The term ‘slump’ was coined by Chall (1983) to describe the drop-off between third and fourth grade reading scores of low income students. ‘Chall found that low-income students in the second and third grades tended to score at (and even above) national averages in reading tests and related measures such as spelling’ (Hirsch, 2003:10). However, a steady drop in these scores began in the fourth grade which in some cases further steepened as students’ progressed through school (Chall, 1983).

It is now believed that assessments can make the comprehension gap seem much greater in fourth grade because of the nature of tests (e.g. decoding) used in earlier grades which may not measure the full extent of differences between earlier grades and fourth grade (Hirsch,2003). The Education Endowment Foundation (EEF) guidance report (2017) for the teaching of literacy to pupils aged between 7 and 11 found that pupils at this age are consolidating their literacy skills by building their vocabulary, developing their fluency and confidence as speakers, writers and readers of language. The importance of continually extending pupils' receptive and expressive vocabulary is acknowledged as a strategy to support reading skills (Shanahan, 2019). It is argued that “while children may have the decoding skills required to say a word out loud, they will only be able to understand what it means if it is already in their vocabulary” (EFF, 2017:12).

Reading aloud regularly to children throughout primary school is recommended as a way to encourage reading motivation (Gambrell, 2011). EEF (2017) also highlight that “reading to pupils” is still important in the senior classes. It is recommended that this should include active engagement with a wide range of genres and media, including digital texts providing “an opportunity to explicitly teach the features and structures of different types of text, which can develop more advanced comprehension and reasoning skills” (EEF, 2017:8). Similar benefits can be associated with wordless picture books which the use of is strongly advocated by the Primary Language Curriculum (NCCA, 2019).

## **2.14 Teaching Reading Fluency in the Senior Primary Classroom**

The teaching of reading fluency belongs in senior primary classes and this reading skill is often neglected. Shanahan points out (Amplify, 2020). While, Kennedy et al (2012) refer to how little attention was given to reading fluency in the 1999 curriculum and we can now see its inclusion in Learning Outcome 10 of the new Primary Language Curriculum: “read texts in a variety of genres effortlessly with appropriate pace, accuracy and expression for a variety of audiences” (NCCA, 2019a). I agree that the explicit teaching of reading fluency can be overlooked within senior primary classrooms and is often viewed as a skill which to be developed naturally with reading practice. The re-reading of familiar texts is a commonly used strategy to improve reading fluency, while read aloud opportunities with guidance from teachers, peers or parents are also associated with the development of fluent reading (NEPS, 2019). Guided oral reading with the teacher modeling fluent reading and repeated reading activities are recommended by EEF (2017). The teacher as a model of good reading aloud, choral reading (students read the text chorally), paired repeated reading with a peer or another adult, performance of text for an audience and vocabulary development have all been identified important components of a fluency development lesson (Doherty, 2017:75).

Audio assisted reading is also recommended as a method to promote reading fluency (SESS, 2017). Rationale for the use of audio assisted reading include: the building of fluency skills including proper phrasing and expression, comprehension development, students get the opportunity to hear tone and pace of a skillful reader and it is a flexible strategy that can be used across content areas (SESS, 2017).



## 2.15 Teaching Reading Comprehension in the Senior Primary Classroom

Approaches to the teaching of reading comprehension focus on the student's understanding of words, passages and texts and typically involve the explicit teaching of strategies such as prediction and clarifying (NEPS, 2019; Shanahan, 2019). The positive impact of teaching reading comprehension strategies has been reported extensively (Bowe et al., 2012; EEF, 2017; Shanahan, 2019). Comprehension strategies should be distinguished from comprehension skills. Shanahan (2019) does this by noting that strategies are “intentional actions taken by a learner to try to enhance remembering, understanding and problems solving”, while comprehension skills are seen as “abilities that allow one to identify particular kinds of information in a text, information for answering particular kinds of questions”, skills may include comparing and supporting detail (Shanahan, 2019:21). ‘Building Bridges of Understanding’ (Bowe et al., 2012) has been recommended as a resource for teaching comprehension strategies (NEPS, 2019) in this jurisdiction.

The approach to building on prior knowledge by the new Primary Language Curriculum (NCCA, 2019a) is a slow and steady one, which builds on the children's learning step by step. The Primary Language Curriculum (NCCA, 2019a) and EEF (2017) require that teachers gradually release responsibility to pupils, through scaffolding and targeted support; “Integration brings disciplines together in the service of important problems and questions, and where a learner's prior knowledge is incorporated into new understanding” (NCCA, 2019a:56). The research-based approach of ‘gradual release of responsibility’ is also endorsed by Shanahan (2019) in the teaching of reading strategies.

The Primary Language Curriculum states that “comprehension strategies are processes used by readers to make meaning from texts. Key comprehension strategies include ‘determining importance’ and ‘inferring’ (NCCA, 2019a:54)

The EEF (2017) argue that the impact of teaching comprehension strategies can be high and also recognise that success can “be hard to achieve, since pupils are required to take greater responsibility for their own learning” (2017:12). The new Primary Language Curriculum takes a more positive stance with the aim of affording children the opportunity to take their skills and access more knowledge. However, both the EEF and Primary Language Curriculum aim to facilitate pupils with taking responsibility for using these strategies automatically. Hirsch (2003) advises against spending too much time teaching formal comprehension strategies. A review conducted by Rosenshine and Meister (1994) on the effects of comprehension strategies found that spending six lessons on these skills had the same effect on pupils’ reading comprehension as spending twenty-five lessons on them. It was concluded from Rosenshine and Meister’s (1994) study that “after a quick initial bump, there’s a plateau or ceiling in the positive effects, and little further benefit can be derived” (Hirsch, 2003: 22). Bearing these findings in mind, it could be beneficial to devote a small amount of time to explicitly teaching comprehension skills. A comprehension strategy is to activate prior knowledge, if this relevant prior knowledge is lacking comprehension strategies cannot activate it (Shanahan, 2019).

Knowledge of vocabulary has been shown to have a positive impact on comprehension and significantly this knowledge increases in importance as student’s progress through primary school (Shanahan, 2019). While Hirsch (2003) outlines that most vocabulary growth occurs incidentally from immersion in language and knowledge, he recognises that there is a place for explicit vocabulary development, especially for children who are behind (2003). Pupil’s don’t

just learn a word and then have the word. It has long been known that the growth of word knowledge is “slow and incremental” and multiple exposures to the word are required (Hirsch, 2003:16). Stahl (2003) outlines that information such as spelling and context that overlap between repeated encounters can strengthen connections and become the way the word is ‘defined’. Integration strategies between literacy and all curriculum subjects particularly History, Geography and Science as advocated by Shanahan (2009) can be useful in this regard. Stahl (2003) adds that children exposed to vocabulary in multiple contexts, even without explicit instruction, can be presumed to gain more knowledge about those words than pupils who encounter a word in a single context (2003). In essence, reading practice with a variety of texts is essential for comprehension development, but just as important is explicit teaching and scaffolding in how to deal with challenges (Shanahan, 2019).

## **2.16 Conclusion**

This examination and critique of literature pertaining to team teaching, reading fluency and reading comprehension skills has provided an insight of the possible benefits (not without considerations) associated with introducing a team teaching model to meet reading fluency and reading comprehension learning outcomes. Team teaching is a strategy which could possibly be an efficient use of time in some classroom settings, depending on the various factors examined in this chapter. Coleman (1966) stated that the most important feature of a school program is that it makes good academic use of time and that good use of time in school is the most egalitarian function that schools can perform as for some children school time is their only academic learning time. The value of inclusion in team teaching is based on the need to ensure all children can learn and through team teaching methods these values could be realised.

## **Chapter 3 Research Methodology**

### **3.1 Introduction**

The purpose of this self-study action research project was to investigate the use of team teaching methods during the teaching of reading fluency and comprehension in senior primary classes. The principle reason for this focus was to target the literacy needs of the research participants. This self-study action research project developed a living theory of practice that is of relevance to my own practice, my research participants and noteworthy for the teaching staff of my research setting. A potential benefit of this self-study would be to improve and transform my practice in the use of team teaching methods in the teaching of reading fluency and comprehension in senior primary classes. This chapter discusses the research processes undertaken throughout this self-study action research project.

### **3.2 The Nature of Qualitative Research**

New recognition was brought to qualitative research approaches following a break from the traditional objectivist view. Kuhn (1970) and Habermas (1972 and 1974) demonstrated how different kinds of human interests were realised by different kinds of research. It was felt by researchers such as Kuhn, that the traditional approach relied too much on the researcher's view and less on the research participant's view (Creswell, 2005).

“Qualitative research is a type of educational research in which the researcher relies on the views of participants, asks broad, general questions, collects data consisting largely of words (or text) from participants, describes and analyses these words for themes, and conducts the inquiry in a subjective, biased manner” (Creswell, 2005:39).

Qualitative data analysis involves making sense of participant's definitions of the situation, noting patterns, themes, categories and regularities (Cohen et al, 2011). Qualitative research is a matter for interpretation, particularly the researcher's interpretation of what participants say and do. There is therefore a commitment to viewing events, actions and values from the perspective of participants. The researcher must be sensitive to the differing perspectives of participants, given the personal nature of qualitative research (Gibbs, 2007).

Creswell (2005) outlined how historical developments have led to the following recognitions associated with qualitative research:

- as researchers we need to listen to the views of our research participants
- as researchers we need to ask general and open questions
- research has a role in advocating for change and bettering the lives of individuals.

The following qualitative forms of data sources were used for this self-study:

- observations
- questionnaires
- teacher designed assessments
- my reflective journal
- Interviews and conversations with my critical friends

### 3.3 The Nature of Action Research

Action research is a continuous process of research in which a commitment is made to reflection, knowledge generation, collaborative working and practice transformation (Bell, 2005; McNiff, 2016; Reason and Bradbury, 2001). ‘Reflective Practice’ (Schön, 1983, 1987) is commonly associated with action research as it entails recalling, analysing and evaluating an experience; it involves conscious analysis of events (Fakude, 2003). The importance of reflection by practitioners who have identified a need for change or improvement was documented extensively by Schön (1991). The core aim of action research is to arrive at recommendations for good practice that will enhance performance through change (Bell, 2005:8). Reaching successful closure is not an aim of action research but the intention is to show personal and collective processes of learning with potential for generating personal theories of practice (McNiff, 2016). The flexibility of action research to unexpected or unintended events which may occur during the research (Cohen et al, 2011), allows for the changing nature of today’s schools and classrooms.

Claims to improved practice must be questioned, examined and justified. Action research is about praxis. Friere’s (1972) notion of praxis is action that is informed and linked to values. This is significant in the understanding of reflection. “Praxis is informed, committed action that gives rise to knowledge as well as successful action. It is informed because other people’s views and feelings are considered. It is committed and intentional in terms values that have been examined and interrogated” (McNiff, 2016:20). When adopting the participant perspective, it is often appropriate to speak of praxis rather than practice (Kemmis, 2012).

Action research goes beyond practice with a focus on knowledge that informs action, it is concerned with values, beliefs and motives that practitioners hold and how these influence

their actions (McNiff and Whitehead, 2009). This action research project required a range of perspectives (pupils and teachers) as Groundwater-Smith and Mockler (2007) highlight how allowing stakeholders a voice reflects an emancipatory agenda which links to my value placed on social justice. The core aims of social justice are empowerment of individuals and social groups whose voices need to be heard (Burton, Brundrett and Jones, 2014) which mirror my own educational and personal values, rooted in social justice and inclusiveness. The idea of sharing ideas in order to generate new ones and the sharing and valuing one another's learning (McNiff and Whitehead, 2009), aligns with my value on working collaboratively. Action Research facilitates my need to engage in these relationships for the greater need of improving practice within the setting. Therefore, it is deemed as an appropriate methodology due to the main aim of this project; to enhance my teaching in the area of reading in the senior primary classroom.

### **3.4 My Value Systems**

My ontological and epistemological values are rooted in social justice, primarily in relation to inclusiveness, working collaboratively and the social constructivist nature of learning. Social justice is subject to revision, what is good for each person affects and depends on the good for all, social justice depends on 'recognition' and 'redistribution' (Griffiths, 2003) and it needs to be understood in terms of localised issues which links to individual needs and differentiation practices. This focus on process rather than definite findings is in line with the action research approach and the value placed on each individual is in line with the qualitative research methods used such as: observations, questionnaires, my reflective journal and interviews with colleagues and critical friends.

### 3.4.1 Reading

The strong value I place on the power of reading was clear from the outset of this project. Reading for me is a way of learning and an escape from everyday life. When I find a great book, I look forward to picking it up and becoming lost in the next chapter. “To acquire the habit of reading is to construct for yourself refuge from almost all the miseries of life” (Maugham cited in Miller, 2009). A potential benefit of this self- study would be that the children become more engaged learners thus improving their literacy acquisition. I would like to instill a love of reading and for children to use it as a way of learning and as a tool to lessen anxieties they may have. I believe in the therapeutic power of turning the pages of a good book which can be a refreshing escape from our plugged-in world. Throughout my teaching career I have endeavoured to choose reading material I feel the children in my class would engage with. In more recent years, the scope to choose reading material for my classes has lessened as I feel under more pressure to get the English ‘reader’ completed. Furthermore, within my research setting I must choose a novel for my class from a list the local library provides. Often the more appealing sets of books are unavailable which is frustrating. It is deflating to read a novel that I know my class and I will find not find interesting. Engagement is outlined as one of the most important conditions for learning and reading must be an endeavour that has personal value to students – enjoyment (Cambourne, 1988 cited in Miller, 2009). I would like more scope to choose reading material which I think the children in my class will be engaged and excited by. Shanahan outlines how a variety of research on reading reveals that motivation plays a significant role in growth in reading comprehension (2019). Reading, I believe can be a social justice leveller, but children must be engaged in reading activities for this to happen. Through reflection on my value of reading and on my growing



reliance on text books within my practice impacted upon by pressure to complete text books and a focus on standardized scores in my research setting; I realized I had become a 'Living Contradiction' (Whitehead, 1989). I aimed to employ as part of this research project inclusive methodologies which the children would primarily enjoy but which would also have a positive impact their reading comprehension and fluency

### **3.4.2 Collaboration**

Being and working as part of a team as always been a part of my life. I have knowingly and unknowingly developed many life skills (e.g. communication skills and learning about the qualities necessary for making and maintaining friendship, dealing with disappointment and celebrating success) skills from my involvement in team sports. Collaboration is therefore an ontological value of great importance to me. My values related to the holistic development of each child and the nurturing of positive relationships are also linked to this value of working collaboratively. The value I place on perseverance, having a can-do attitude, working hard, active learning and enjoyment in the learning process are connected to the over-arching value of working collaboratively with success to which teacher compatibility and the centrality of effective communication is key (Friend at al., 2010). As a direct result of these experiences and developed skills I have come to appreciate how effective collaboration can be within the setting in which I practice. To this end, I aimed to apply these skills in this project for the enrichment of both teaching and learning.

### 3.4.3 Social Constructivism

My value placed on social constructivism (Vygotsky, 1978; Fröebel, 1899; Dewey, 1975; Jonassen, 1994) was not obvious at the outset of this self-study project. It was through interrogation of my value on collaboration that I began to realise how my values were very much connected to Vygotsky's theory of 'Social Constructivism' (1978). As I reflected on my own educational experience and teaching practice to date, I could see a clear value placed on the collaborative nature of learning and the importance of social interactions in the learning process. As a result of my involvement with sports teams and professional teams I began to reflect on how I have consistently learned from others and how some of the richest learning experiences of my life have resulted from my role as part of a team. My reflection on the use of experience or prior knowledge to collaboratively construct new knowledge, forge group expectations and make improvements through social negotiation have all played a significant role in linking my values to social constructivism.

Current policy in Irish education endorses a range of teaching supports including team teaching and small group teaching to meet the needs of pupils with Special Educational Needs (Department of Education and Skills, 2017). The new Special Education Teacher (SET) Allocation Model (Circular 0013/2017) works to support inclusion and ensure resources are allocated to students with the greatest needs. As part of the interrogation of my values, in reviewing my responsibilities as class teacher, which were clarified by the Department of Education and Skills on the introduction of the new SET Allocation model (2017) I felt that I could do more in terms of adapting my teaching environment and methodologies to include small group tuition. I also felt that I could improve differentiation within lessons and become more aware and hands on in the progress of the children attending withdrawal support.

Significantly, I realised I wasn't living as close to my values as I could have been in relation to Vygotsky's 'social constructivism theory' (1978) concerning the collaborative process of learning through social negotiation. Vygotsky saw social interaction or collaboration as the chief method for learning and placed more emphasis on language development (Powell and Kalina, 2006) linking to the use of smaller guided reading lessons which are endorsed by the new Primary Language Curriculum (NCCA, 2019a). It was aimed that the use of such small guided reading lessons within the team teaching intervention employed as part of this self-study would allow me to live more aligned with my social constructivist values.

### **3.5 Research Rationale**

The general reading fluency levels of this group of fourth class (aged 9-10) pupils has been a concern of mine since meeting the class in September 2019. My concern was affirmed by listening to the children read aloud and making intuitive and ability based observations in my reflective journal. The pace at which the children read and the ease at which some children broke down new words struck me as below expectations of the standard for fourth class children.

My concern was subsequently supported by the results the children achieved in the MICRA-T<sup>1</sup> (Mary Immaculate Reading Attainment) test which was administered to the class in September 2019 (as per DES guidelines). The scores achieved in this test were below the school average for that year. 43.47 % of the class attained a 'low average' or 'well below average' (See Table 3.1 and Graph 3.1). This score was a major concern for me, in my six years of teaching senior

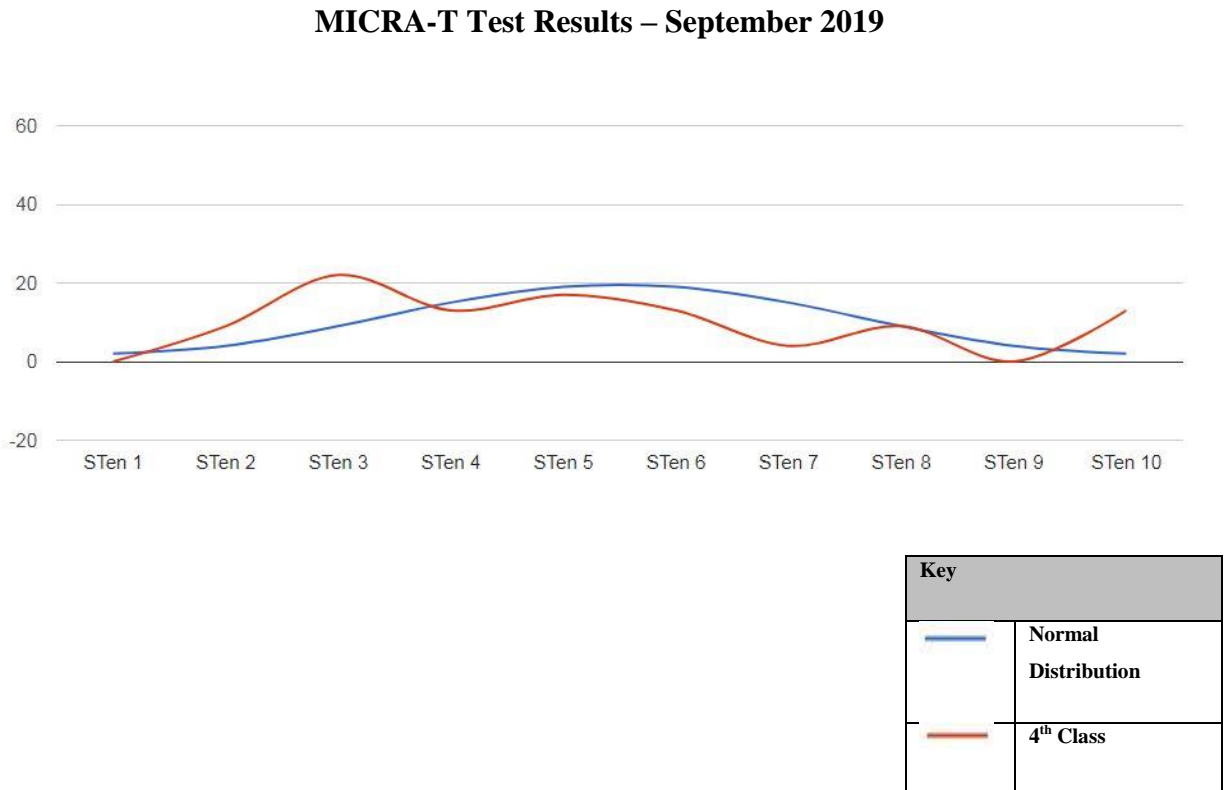
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<sup>1</sup>The MICRA-T test enables teachers to the reading performances of their pupils with reading standards nationally. The Micra-T test were last redeveloped during the 2002-2003 school year (CJFALLON, 2020).

classes in this research setting I had not seen such a high percentage of children fall into the ‘low average’ or ‘well below average’ categories of STen score ranges.

MICRA-T TEST RESULTS – September 2019		
STen Score Range	Descriptor	% of the class tested that achieved indicated STen Score Range
8-10	Well above Average	21.73 %
7	High Average	4.34 %
5-6	Average	30.43 %
4	Low average	13.04 %
1-3	Well below average	30.43 %

**Table 3.1:** MICRA-T TEST RESULTS – 4<sup>th</sup> Class, September 2019



**Graph 3.1:** MICRA-T TEST RESULTS – 4<sup>th</sup> Class, September 2019

These concerns were further echoed through professional conversations with a colleague who worked with the class in the previous academic year (2018-2019) (and agreed to act as an ‘outside lens’ (Brookfield, 1995) critical friend for the purposes of this project). This ‘outside lens’ (Brookfield, 1995) critical friend highlighted that the reading fluency levels of the research participants also posed concern for the previous class teachers of this group of children. As a result of these scores and subsequent conversations it was imperative that a relevant approach to tackling the issues with reading was sought.

### **3.6 Research Paradigm**

A research paradigm can be described as the framework of methods, values and beliefs within which the research occurs (Cohen et al., 2011). This research took place within the paradigm of action research. At the outset of choosing my research paradigm I found the questions posed by McDonagh et al., (2012:102) very useful.

1. Where am I placed as a professional within the paradigm?
2. Does it allow me to think professionally, act and reflect on my practice?
3. Can the paradigm increase my autonomy as a professional?
4. Can the paradigm help me contribute to the knowledge base of the teaching profession?

Revisiting these questions allowed me to link the relevance of my research paradigm to my ontological and epistemological values. Noffke and Somekh (2009) recommend that researchers ask themselves questions about how their research supports social justice and suggest questioning their practice using a step-by-step approach. The nature of action research

gives the opportunity to move at one's own pace while allowing one's own practice to be put into question.

### **3.7 Self-Study**

This is a self-study action research project, with the researcher acting as both a teacher and a researcher in a values-based approach to developing a 'living theory' (Whitehead and McNiff, 2006). The identification of my personal and professional values which are rooted in social justice was a key stage in this self-study. My values were interrogated, analysed and reflected upon within my practice, in doing so, 'risking disturbance' (Winter, 1996) exposing vulnerabilities and opening my practice to critique. My wish to realise my values and to find ways of doing so forms the basis of this self-study action research project. My values have acted as 'living standards of judgements' (Whitehead, 2001) as a means to assess whether or not I have achieved my research purpose.

A self-study approach allows the practitioner to engage in critical enquiry that supports their facility for expert and caring practice (Wilcox, Watson and Patterson, 2004). Reflective practice plays a key role in this process as the researcher must look at their practice with the aiming of unearthing reasons as to why they think or act in ways that they do. Sullivan et al., (2016) highlighted that this can be a difficult process for educators to master, which has resonated with me throughout this challenging yet rewarding process. Samaras and Freese (2006) refer to the benefits that improving one's practice can have on broader educational practice and knowledge in teaching. However, this self- study project is focused on improving my own practice and my knowledge of team teaching within the setting of teaching reading

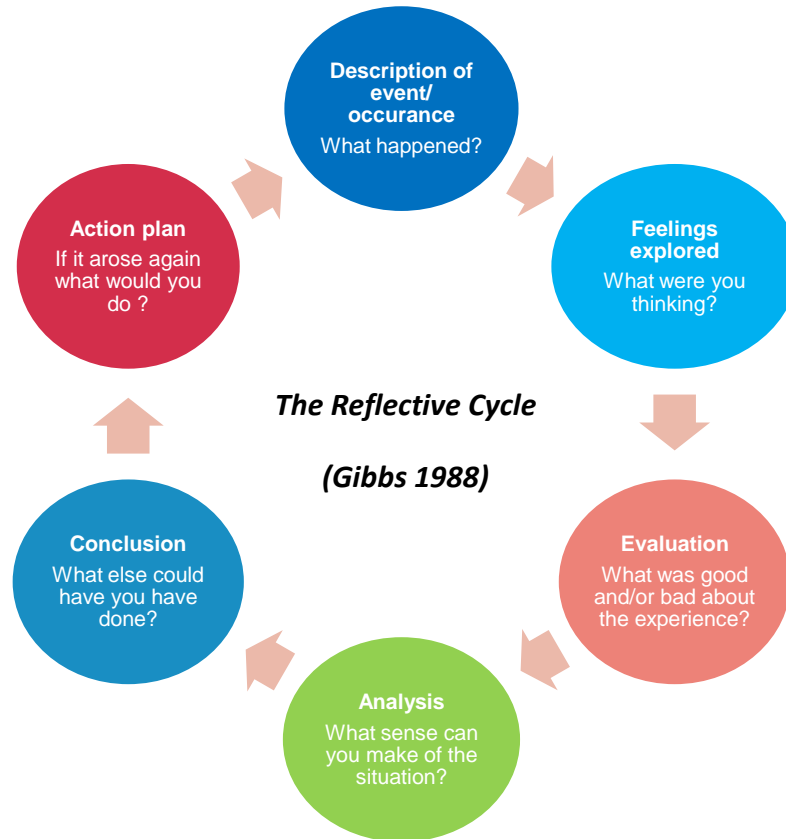
fluency and comprehension in the senior primary classes. In doing so, I have revisited the question “How am I improving what I am doing?” in order to maintain my focus on the experiences and implications of my values which give meaning and purpose to my practice. As Whitehead and McNiff (2006) outline, practitioner researchers are seldom acknowledged as having made original, significant and rigorous contributions to educational theory but as this living theory is grounded in my practice, I am continually asking “How do I live my values more fully in my practice?”(Whitehead, 1989:45). It is therefore a living form of theory rather than one that exists at an abstract level within the relevant context, as explained by McDonagh (2006).

### **3.8 The Reflective Cycle**

Gibbs’ Six Step Reflective Cycle (1988) was chosen as the reflection framework for this self-study project as it was deemed that the six questions would provide a sound structure to my reflections (see diagram 3.1). Gibbs’ cycle allowed for my systematic thinking about the phases of the intervention through answering the following six questions in relation to each cycle of this self-study action research project:

- What happened?
- What were my feelings and thoughts?
- What was good/or bad about the experience?
- What is my personal interpretation of the situation?
- What other ways are there to respond to the event?
- What have I learnt from this situation? If it rose again, what would I do?

The simplicity of Gibbs' Six Step Cycle (1988) was also a factor in its selection for use as Gibbs' cycle can help researchers identify where they are in terms of their ability to reflect, which can reduce the risk of misinterpretation (Fakude, 2003).

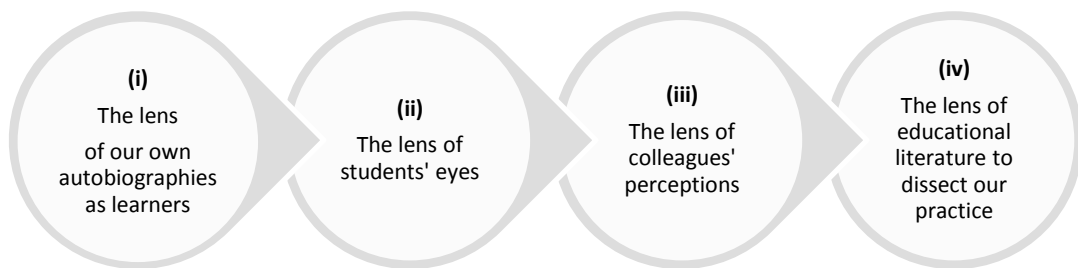


**Figure 3.1:** Gibbs' Reflective Cycle (Palmer et al., 1994).



Brookfield's (1995) four lenses were also used throughout this action research project in order to enrich the critical reflective process. These complementary lenses were used to bring awareness to assumptions that have shaped my practice, as referred to in section '2.10 professional conversations' (Brookfield, 1995).

Brookfield's lenses (1995) are as described in Figure 3.2 below:



**Figure 3.2:** Brookfield's Lenses (1995).

My practice was continually examined through these lenses while also revisiting my values to ensure they were being lived out within my practice. Brookfield's lenses encourage the researcher to see things from as many different perspectives as possible, which allows for a more accurate sense of what is happening. My reflective journal, pupil's opinions, my critical friends and reading literature around team teaching and reading fluency and comprehension were the primary forms of data retrieval which allowed me to utilise Brookfield's four lenses

of reflection. Moreover, the evidence collated from the different lenses was used to triangulate data for validation purposes (Sullivan et al, 2016).

“Our living practice unfolds in a continuous present, shaped by often unseen hands and habits inherited from the past” (Kemmis, 2012:893) Through the process of reflection as part of this self-study project a number of truths in relation to my practice have been realised. My own educational experience, my teaching experience and that of colleagues have all been factors in shaping my practice. Reflective practice can help us to dislodge those taken-for-granted assumptions that may inhibit the quality of our practice (Loughran, 2002). This reflective process has brought to light a number of areas where I was not living in line with my values but I have also learned that this is a continuous process and that as my practice changes and I continually reflect more truths will be discovered. Sullivan et al (2016) outline how engaging in reflective practice can be a powerful tool as it can initiate and sustain powerful change in thinking and practice. Critically reflective teaching occurs when we identify and scrutinize the assumptions that shape our practice (Brookfield, 1995).

### 3.9 The Research Setting

My research setting included participants who voluntarily took part in my research and the site where my research was conducted, both of which are discussed in the subsequent sections.

#### 3.9.1 Research Participants

Invited participants	Detail of participants involvement
All 25 children in my fourth class (aged 9-10)	24 children (as one child left the school)
'Inside lens' (Brookfield, 1995) Critical Friend	'Inside lens' critical friend (co-taught lessons with me)
'Outside lens' (Brookfield, 1995) Critical Friend	'Outside lens' critical friend (experienced learning support teacher)

**Table 3.2:** Research Participants

### 3.9.2 Research Site

My research was conducted in a vertical co-educational faith based (Catholic) primary school with classes from junior infants to sixth class and two ASD (Autistic Spectrum Disorder) classes. The following table 3.3: Research Setting outlines the various personnel.

<b>Research Setting (September 2019)</b>	
<b>Staff</b>	<b>Number</b>
Principal	1
Mainstream Class Teachers (including deputy principal)	12
Special Education Teachers (SET)	8
Special Class Teachers	2
Special Needs Assistants	8
Caretaker	1
Secretary	1
<b>Enrolment</b>	<b>Number</b>
Pupils	310

**Table 3.3:** Number of Personnel in Research Site.

English is taught as per Department of Education and Skills (2011) guidelines for 4 hours per week at junior and senior Infant level and 5 hours per week from first to sixth class. The infant classes benefit from daily station teaching in English, which involves splitting the class into groups while three teachers manage and teach at a station on reading, writing and phonics. Oral language is developed through AISTEAR: The Early Childhood Curriculum Programme (NCCA, 2009).

English learning support in the senior classes is typically provided through withdrawal, which facilitates differentiation. The use of team teaching methods is at the discretion of the class teacher. Team teaching methods are outlined as a method that is encouraged in the school but

is not actively engaged with by teachers in the senior classes, particularly in the teaching of literacy.

There is a good culture of independent reading in the school. All children in the school have access to a well-stocked library. The school runs an annual Read-a-thon and every senior class reads a novel (chosen from a list provided by the local library) and watches the screen adaptation of the novel. There is a reliance on English text books in the teaching of literacy in the school.

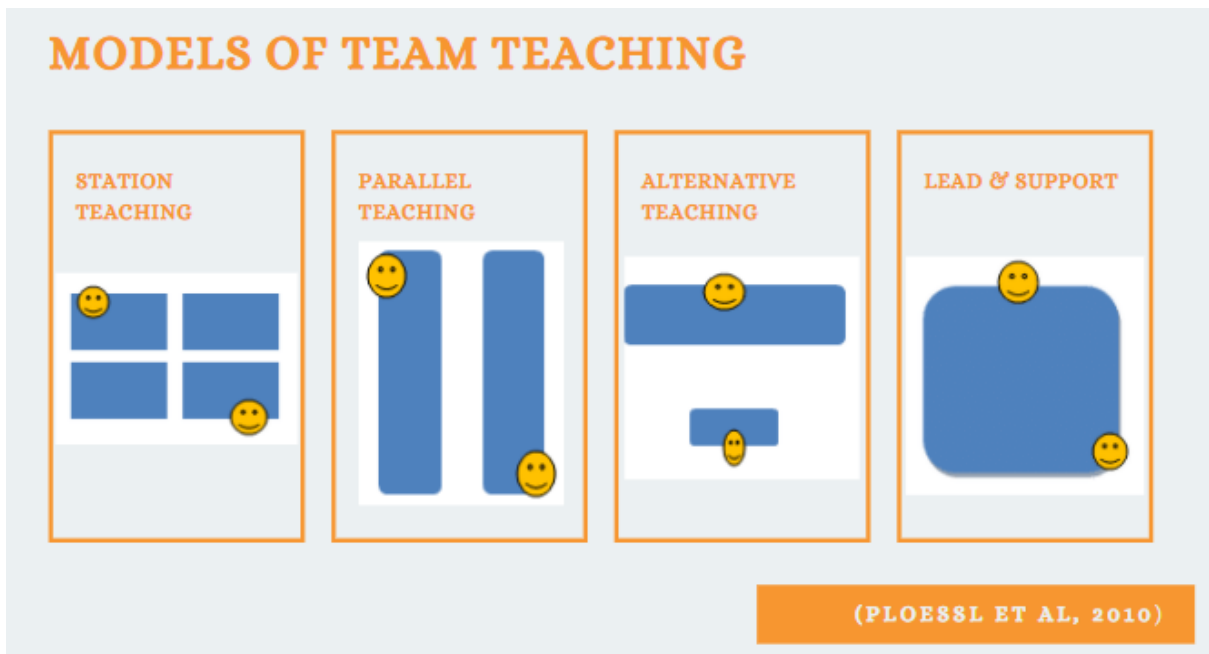
### 3.10 Research Schedule

Schedule			
Week	Date	Actions	
1	January 6 <sup>th</sup> – 10 <sup>th</sup>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Research project shared with class</li> <li>▪ Consent forms and information letters</li> <li>▪ Meetings with Critical Friends</li> <li>▪ Organisation of resources</li> </ul>	
2 & 3	January 13 <sup>th</sup> – 24 <sup>th</sup>	<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Cycle 1</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Questionnaire</li> <li>▪ Pre-assessments of reading fluency</li> <li>▪ Pre-assessments of reading comprehension</li> </ul>	
4	January 27 <sup>th</sup> – 31 <sup>st</sup>	<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Cycle 2</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Team Teaching - Station Teaching (6 Weeks of 11 Lessons)</li> </ul> <p style="text-align: center;"><u>National School Closure - Thursday March 12th</u> <u>COVID-19</u></p>	
5	February 3 <sup>rd</sup> – 7 <sup>th</sup>		
6	February 10 <sup>th</sup> – 14 <sup>th</sup>		
Mid-term Break			
7	February 24 <sup>th</sup> – 28 <sup>th</sup>		
8	March 2 <sup>nd</sup> – 6 <sup>th</sup>		
9	March 9 <sup>th</sup> – 13 <sup>th</sup>		
10	March 16 <sup>th</sup> – 20 <sup>th</sup>		<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Cycle 3 (2 weeks)</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Post-intervention assessments</li> <li>▪ Post-intervention questionnaire</li> </ul>
11	March 23 <sup>rd</sup> – 26 <sup>th</sup>		

**Table 3.4:** Schedule of Research Project

### 3.11 Structure of the Intervention

Prior to research cycle 1 a ‘pilot’ team teaching intervention was conducted with my ‘inside lens’ (Brookfield, 1995) critical friend. We used the team teaching model of ‘parallel teaching’ to teach reading and writing skills during literacy time in October 2019 (see figure 3.3). This experience was hugely beneficial in terms of the planning and design of the ‘station teaching’ intervention on reading fluency and comprehension. It was also a great way to introduce the concept of team teaching to the children.



**Figure 3.3:** Models of Team Teaching

Research cycle one involved gathering my pre intervention data. The children completed questionnaires (see appendix 2), in which they could draw on their experiences from the pilot intervention. Two pre-assessments on reading fluency were completed; one timed word per minute assessment on an unseen piece of text and an untimed reading record assessment on an

already practiced piece of text. Two comprehension assessments were also completed, (See appendix 8 for more details). It was intended to compare the data gathered in these assessments to post intervention assessments but the post intervention assessment didn't take place due to school closures on March 12<sup>th</sup> (COVID-19).

Research cycle two involved the 'station teaching intervention' which comprised of four stations; two independent stations and two teacher led stations (see appendix 1.2). The intervention took place over 6 weeks which involved 11 station teaching lessons. The 40 minute lessons took place on Mondays and Thursdays (1pm – 1:40 pm), each station lasted for 10 minutes. The teachers involved were the class teacher (researcher) and Special Education Teacher ('inside lens' critical friend'). The 24 children in the class were divided in to four groups of 6 mixed ability groups.

The four stations comprised of the following:

- 1: Independent Reading Station
- 2: Teacher Led Comprehension Strategy
- 3: Teacher Led Vocabulary Station
- 4: Independent Listening Station – Audio Book

The independent reading station involved the participants reading a graded comprehension cards.

The comprehension strategy was taught by the class teacher using guided reading lessons. These strategies were based on the school's monthly comprehension strategy e.g. Determining Importance. Martin Gleeson's 'Building Bridges of Understanding' (2012) was the programme used.



At the vocabulary station the Special Educational Teacher played games with the children using word lists from the children's textbook. The focus on play at this station links to aims in the Primary Language Curriculum (NCCA, 2019a).

The independent listening station involved each child following the text of *Kensukes Kingdom* by Michael Morpurgo while listening to the audio version being played aloud on earphones. This station reflected my value of inclusion as it aimed to motivate struggling readers, listening to the text being read aloud while following the words allowed all children access the reading material.

### **3.12 Data Collection Instruments**

To ensure accuracy and validity of the information gathered a variety of data collection instruments were used. Triangulation illustrated more fully the richness and complexity of the changes made because they were viewed from more than one perspective (Cohen et al. 2011, cited in Sullivan et al., 2016). The cross-checking of findings from different stand-points allowed for triangulation which demonstrated the credibility of the project as recommended by Bell (2005) and Sullivan et al. (2016). Laws (2003:281) states that “the key to triangulation is to see the same thing from different perspectives and thus to be able to confirm or challenge the findings of one method with those of another”. Brookfield's (1995) four lenses was employed throughout the data collection stage and within the various data collection tools selected. Gibbs' Reflective Cycle (1988) was also employed throughout.

The following sections detail rationale for selected tools:

- observations
- questionnaires
- samples of work
- teacher designed assessments
- my reflective journal
- interviews and conversations with my critical friends

### **3.12.1 Observations**

All research begins with observation (Mc Niff, 2016:180); watching what happens and systematically recording those observations. Observations are notes that are made in the field, in the social situation which is being investigated (McNiff, 2016). Observations using Brookfield's lenses (1995) provide the researcher with large amounts of data (Sullivan et al., 2016). Observations were made, recorded and analysed in my reflective journal with the six stages of Gibbs' Reflective Cycle (1988) and Brookfield's (1995) four lenses.

### **3.12.2 Questionnaires**

Participant's perspectives were collated through a pre-intervention questionnaire (see appendix 2) and observations. It was not possible to conduct the planned post-intervention questionnaire due to the COVID-19 school closures on 12<sup>th</sup> March 2020. Informed consent from parents and assent from participants was sought and granted before the pre-questionnaire

was administered (see appendix 4). The reading and writing levels of the respondents were considered in the survey design (see appendix 2). It was important ensure all participants could access the questions, with this in mind questions were read out loud. The pre-intervention questionnaire was designed with the structure and contents of questions focused on what information was needed, as recommended by Cohen et al., (2011). Open-ended questions were utilised with the aim of capturing authenticity, richness, depth of response, honesty and candour which are the hallmarks of qualitative data (Cohen et al., 2011).

### **3.12.3 Samples of the participants work**

Each participant had a copy book for use during the team teaching intervention; this formed the samples of participants work. This copy was corrected after each lesson and was a useful tool to monitor the children's progress and analyse changes. This copy was stored at the independent reading station where children answered questions based on the reading material. During the process of examining my own practice as part of this self-study action research project, my pupils were an important part of the process, taking account the advice of Sullivan et al., in that the voice of students' may influence the directions research may take and how the research is evaluated (2016).

### **3.12.4 Pre and Post-Intervention Assessments**

It was intended to administer both pre and post-intervention assessments in order to track participant's progress in reading fluency and reading comprehension. However, due to the

COVID-19 school closures in March 2020 the post-intervention assessments were not administered. Four pre-intervention assessments were administered and results were analysed (see appendix 8). The pre-intervention assessments consisted of the following: Comprehension Assessment 1 (CJFallon, Lift Off!), Comprehension Assessment 2 (Twinkl, year 4, reading assessment), Fluency Assessment 1 (Words Per Minute (WPM) using an unseen piece of text), Fluency Assessment 2 – (Reading Record using a familiar text). See appendix 8 for more detail.

Cohen et al (2011, p.493) outline guidelines for the construction and administration of pre and post-assessments; the pre-test and post-test must test the same content e.g. reading fluency and the level of difficulty must be the same in both tests. With these guidelines in mind the post-intervention assessments had been designed and decided upon at the same time as the pre-intervention assessments but they didn't take place for the reasons stated above.

### **3.12.5 My Reflective Journal**

My reflective journal was kept throughout the research process in which I recorded observations, project milestones and thoughts. The use of a reflective journal is advocated for by several researchers (Moon, 2006; Brookfield, 2009; Sullivan et al., 2016; Schön, 1991) and it's use teaches the process of reflection (Schön, 1991). Keeping a reflective journal can enhance the process of critical thinking as it heightens the researcher's awareness (Sullivan et al, 2016). The Journal also calls the researcher to re-visit and re-examine occurrences with fresh eyes in order to make modifications or adaptations. This metacognitive process of re-

visiting reflections with new ideas from literature or dialogue in a reflexive manner, played a key role in this self-study (Sullivan et al, 2016).

Brookfield's (1995) lens of our own autobiographies as learners was used to examine my practice in my reflective journal, using my own intuition. Innate knowledge and intuition are linked with personal ways of knowing (Sullivan et al, 2016). In my reflective journal I noted instances and developments that struck me as significant in my practice. I noted how any prior ideas I had could have been challenged or how new evolving ideas were or were not bringing my practice more aligned with my values. As suggested by Palmer et al., (1994) Gibb's Six-Step Reflective Cycle (see figure 3.1) was the chosen framework to assist with reflective journaling as it was deemed to best serve my own perspective in terms of reflective practice.

### **3.12.6 Interviews and Conversations with Critical Friends'**

Interviews can have a higher response rate than questionnaires as respondents become more involved and motivated in the research (Cohen et al., 2011), for this reason interviews with my critical friends were utilised. Methodological triangulation was made possible through comparing the findings from my 'inside lens' (Brookfield, 1995) critical friend and principal interviews with other sources of data. The data collected in these interviews became even more significant as the COVID-19 school closures on 12<sup>th</sup> March 2020 placed limits on other sources of data including the post-intervention questionnaire and assessments. Bell and Waters (2014) outline how adaptability is a major advantage of the interview in terms of how tone of voice and facial expression can provide information that a written response would conceal. However, even though the interviews for this research project could not be conducted in

person (COVID-19 school closures) they provided a rich source of information and are referred to throughout the findings (see appendix 6 and 7).

Brookfield's (iii) lens of colleagues' perceptions helped question assumptions in my practice (see image 3.2) and talking to a colleague can highlight positive or negative aspects of research; it also offers suggestions for research (Brookfield, 1995). A colleague who agreed to participate in this team-teaching intervention as a support teacher also agreed to act my critical friend and acted as an 'inside lens' (Brookfield, 1995) in my classroom throughout the research project. Brookfield outlines how talking to colleagues unravels the shroud of silence in which our work is wrapped (1995). Significantly, Plank offers it as a reason for his preference towards team-teaching (2011).

Another colleague agreed to act as an 'outside lens', an experienced learning support teacher, who previously worked with my class (research participants), as referred to in section '2.10 Professional Conversations. Scheduled conversations with these colleagues have provided valuable insights into the reading pedagogy in my research setting. When reflecting on the co-taught lessons advice was taken from research and discussions were focused on both student achievement and teacher satisfaction (Ploessl et al, 2010). Records of such conversations were kept as data and have provided valuable means of triangulation throughout the analysis stage. Reflections were also made on these conversations in my reflective journal. Sullivan et al (2016) emphasis the value of (iii) the lens of colleagues' perceptions in a self-study action research project (see figure 3.2) by stating that their perceptions about students are valuable; but their perceptions about one's work and interaction with the class may be invaluable.

### **3.13 Data Analysis**

Qualitative data analysis is distinguished by the merging of analysis and interpretation and often by the merging of data collection with data analysis (Gibbs, 2007). Data analysis commenced in the research field, as data was collected, for example, in my reflective journal, data analysis also started. Continually referring to my values and questioning as Whitehead (1989) did “How do I live my values more fully in my practice?” meant the data analysis phase of this self-study project had commenced.

### **3.14 Thematic Analysis**

When the project intervention was complete and data was collected, examination of the data commenced, in order to provide evidence of my research claims (Sullivan et al., 2016). Thematic analysis was used to code and identify patterns and emerging themes from the data (see appendix 8 for emerging themes). Thematic analysis offered flexibility in terms of its theoretical and epistemological approach (Braun and Clarke, 2006). Gibbs’s Reflective Cycle (1988) was also used as a tool of analysis (see figure 3.1).

### **3.15 Validity, Credibility and Reliability**

Validity, credibility and reliability are key criteria in quality research (Sullivan et al., 2016). The use of team teaching models and employed literacy strategies were validated through studying relevant and recent literature and research studies (Rytivaara et al., 2019; Rasinski, 2012; Shanahan, 2019; Ploessl et al, 2010; Pikulski and Chard, 2005; Bowe et al., 2012; Daly,

2017). This enabled me to communicate my research and findings comprehensibly and appropriately. Validity refers to the ‘authenticity’ of the researcher voice in communicating the findings of the research project (Sullivan et al., 2016). Habermas (1984) outlines criteria for social validity in that the researcher must speak comprehensibly, truthfully authentically and appropriately. Agreement of critical friends to participate in this project further helped to constitute validation of research claims (Sullivan et al., 2016). The triangulation of data through consultation with critical friends and my supervisor supported the credibility and researcher voice within this research project. Reliability refers to evidence reflecting the reality under investigation (Sullivan et al., 2016). To ensure reliability, all data was signed and dated. Initial findings of this research were shared with the teaching staff of my research setting in February 2020 while findings were also shared with a public audience in June 2020 as part fulfilment of this Master of Education degree. This has opened this research project to critique which is an important step in enhancing the credibility and reliability (Sullivan et al., 2016). Dialogue and the above-mentioned social validity theory can support rigour within the research methods used (Sullivan et al., 2016).

### **3.16 Ethical Considerations**

The Teaching Council values of Respect, Care, Integrity and Trust were reflected in all aspects of this research project (Teaching Council of Ireland, 2016). This self-study project was carried out in adherence to Maynooth University’s Research Ethics Policy. Ethical clearance was granted from Maynooth University Froebel Department of Primary and Early Childhood Education’s Ethical Committee before the collection of data commenced. Written permission from ‘gatekeepers’ (Cohen et al., 2011) such as the Principal, the Board of Management and



Parents was sought along with written consent from critical friends who gave input into the research project, ( See appendix 4 for letters of information and consent forms).

### **3.17 Principle of informed consent**

According to Diener and Crandall (1978) informed consent involves four elements:

- voluntarism
- full information
- comprehension
- competence

Informed consent was achieved through informing all participants in clear and appropriate language of the purpose and processes of the research (Mockler, 2014) Recommendations from Sullivan et al (2016) were followed in that adequate information about the projects aims, methods and potential outcome was provided in a pupil accessible form (both orally and in written form) which was appropriate to their reading level (see appendix 4). It was stressed on the information sheet and related consent form that participants could withdraw from the research process at any stage. The reading and language comprehension of all research participants was provided for using oral instruction in order to ensure all elements of informed consent was achieved.

### **3.18 Child Assent**

Children's assent to participate was sought through a child-friendly letter using appropriate language for their age (see appendix 4). The letter was read aloud to the class ensuring any child with reading difficulties duly understood the content of the letter. Research was also carried out in adherence to the Children First: National Guidelines for the Protection and Welfare of Children (Department of Children and Youth Affairs, 2017). In order to avoid power issues, Sullivan et al., (2016) argue for ongoing analysis of one's value system to take students seriously as agents in their own education. The National Strategy on Children and Young People's Participation in Decision Making outline as a priority objective that children will have a voice in decision making in early educational settings and schools (Department of Children and Youth Affairs, 2015). The importance of outlining any potential for risk or impact on participants' self-esteem was highlighted by Alderson and Morrow (2011) and was reflected in the ethical approval process.

### **3.19 Vulnerability**

The values of the Teaching Council of Ireland were always to the fore throughout this action research project. It was ensured that these values of Respect, Care, Integrity and Trust were reflected in my practice and research. Children with special educational needs (ASD) in my class were at risk of becoming stressed upon the introduction of new teaching methods. A time out area and S.N.A. support was available to these children if the need occurred. Children with specific learning difficulties (dyslexia) continued to receive differentiated teaching support during team teaching activities. The above provisions were outlined in the ethics form

submitted to Maynooth University for approval prior to the commencement of any research or data gathering.

### **3.20 Data Storage**

All data collected was stored and retained in line with the Maynooth University Research Integrity Policy. Attention was paid to the integrity and security of data records. Any data collected was stored in a safe, secure and accessible form. Good research practice was followed by securing data using passwords and access logs and appropriate firewalls and anti-virus software in place. All primary data will be held for a minimum period of ten years following publication (Maynooth University Research Integrity Policy).

### **3.21 Confidentiality and Anonymity**

The essence of anonymity is that information provided by participants should in no way reveal their identity (Cohen et al, 2011). In order to ensure anonymity, the names of participants or any other personal means of identification were not used in research process. The terms ‘inside lens’ and ‘outside lens’ (Brookfield, 1995) were used to distinguish between the critical friends throughout this project.

### 3.22 Power Dynamics

Brookfield (2009) outlined how power relationships that allow or promote one set of practices over others are called into question through critical reflection. Sullivan et al (2016) also refer to the imbalance of power that may exist between researcher and participants. In order to avoid such power issues, critical analysis of my values was imperative together with viewing pupils as active agents in their own education. My research was also linked to the ethical values of The Teaching Council of Ireland, care, integrity, respect and trust (2012). In doing so, I kept accurate data records of all research activities, providing the participants with anonymity. Data, methods and procedures were honestly reported. I discussed my research with the pupils' using language appropriate to their age and cognitive ability. I sought their assent making it clear that they may withdraw from the process at any time (See appendix 4). Parental consent was sought making it clear that the research was focused on me as a teacher, not on their children. I used my reflective journal to help stabilise my thoughts in relation to any power relationships that may occur e.g. with my co-teacher, which helped to manage power dynamics within the research process. In the event of issues arising I consulted my 'outside lens' (Brookfield, 1995) critical friend, my project supervisor or the principal of my school (depending on the nature of the issue).

### 3.23 Principled Sensitivity

I ensured the Teaching Council values of Respect, Care, Integrity and Trust were reflected in my practice and research. I informed my principal of any sensitive disclosures and I followed our school policy in relation to same. I also referred to Maynooth University Ethics Guidelines (2019).

### 3.24 Limitations

Data collected from different perspectives may not complement or correlate with each other (Laws, 2003) and conflict may even arise as a result of varying perspectives. The meaning of any mismatches in perspectives will need to be critically examined in such research activity. Law (2003) stated that mismatches may not mean that the data collection process is flawed. It could be that participants have different accounts of similar phenomena.

Bell (2005) highlighted how time and the willingness of people to be observed and complete questionnaires may become a limitation in action research projects. Resources both financial and human may also become a limitation. The purchasing of resources to set up stations in my classroom encountered a personal financial burden. The availability of my team-teaching partner could also have been an issue if that partner was sick or absent for another reason.

Bulman (2013) reminds us of Brookfield's warning of '*Lost Innocence*' which may accompany reflection. Brookfield (1995) suggested that the process of critical reflection may be slow and incremental as well as difficult and tiring work which refers to how researchers

become more open to change and challenge as uncertain territory is entered. This can be because of abandoned assumptions that once supported us and confidence in my own teaching practice did come into question as a result.

This is a study within my own education setting and therefore is not representative of all settings that are in a similar context. The sample number is also small in comparison to larger scale projects and therefore would not offer conclusive findings. Limitations are also associated with the timeline of the study, the demands of a University course and working as a teacher and therefore could not be extended any further across the school year.

### **3.25 Conclusion**

This chapter presented an overview of the research methodology used throughout this self-study project. The nature of qualitative and action research have been discussed along with an interrogation of my value system. A research rationale for this self-study, a description of the data collection methods and ethical considerations were also outlined. Chapter four will discuss the data collected throughout the study and findings in relation to literature examined critiqued in chapter one.

## **Chapter 4 Data Analysis and Discussion**

### **4.1 Introduction**

This self-study action research project sought to generate knowledge about how my practice in the area of reading fluency and comprehension could be enhanced with team teaching. While the previous methodology chapter outlined the research process undertaken, this chapter reveals the research findings. These findings are discussed in detail and in the context of the literature interrogated in chapter one and with additional relevant literature that emerged from data analysis.

### **4.2 Reflexive Thematic Analysis**

Reflexive thematic analysis was used to ‘generate’ themes through researcher subjectivity, organic coding processes, deep reflection and engagement with the data (Braun and Clark, 2019). Themes were generated rather than identified ‘in’ the data, which differentiates reflexive thematic analysis from Braun and Clarke’s initial theory on thematic analysis identified in 2006. However, it was deemed that thematic analysis was most suited to my research question due to its accessibility and flexibility in terms of its theoretical and epistemological approach to interpreting qualitative data (Braun and Clarke, 2006). This proved even more important due to the unexpected limits placed on the data collected due to the national COVID-19 school closures on the 12<sup>th</sup> March 2020. Researcher subjectivity was used as a resource throughout the analysis of and gathering of findings rather than as a potential threat to knowledge production (Gough and Madill, 2012). The themes generated are interpretive stories about the data developed through and from the researcher’s reflexive

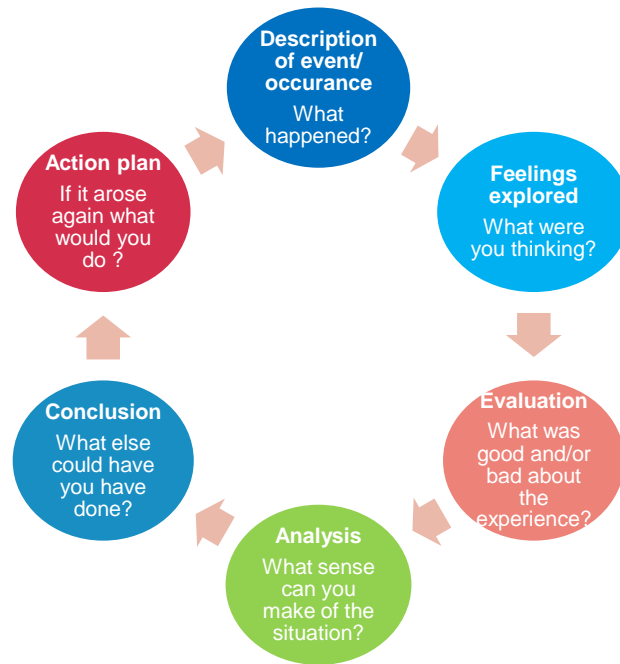
engagement with the analytic process (Braun and Clarke, 2019). Three main findings were generated following analysis of the data as illustrated below:

- ❖ The use of station teaching promoted pupil and teacher engagement and motivation.
- ❖ Station teaching resulted in improved behavior in the classroom.
- ❖ Station teaching facilitated the children with a more productive use of their literacy time.

### **4.3 Trustworthiness**

Although these findings may be useful as an example to teachers in similar settings, the small sample size and self-study nature of this action research project limits the generalisation of these research findings. Gibbs' Six Step Reflective Cycle (1988) was used throughout this action research project as a means of enhancing trustworthiness (see figure 4.1). Gibbs' cycle allowed for systematic thinking within each cycle of the project including analysis of findings, outlined in detail in Chapter 2.





**Figure 4.1:** Gibbs' Reflective Cycle (Palmer et al., 1994).

#### **4.4 Finding 1: The use of station teaching promoted pupil and teacher engagement and motivation.**

A clear focus of this action research project was pupil and teacher enjoyment. It was important that teachers and pupils enjoyed participating in the lessons as enjoyment and fun in the classroom are important values to me within my practice. As I interrogated my values around social constructivism, engagement and motivation emerged as something I wanted to improve upon in my teaching of literacy. Methodologies were selected which reflected my values of enjoyment and fun while also encompassing the collaborative nature of learning in a meaningful way. It was hoped that my station teaching intervention would enable the children to engage in real-world practical activities allowing them to demonstrate their knowledge through collaboration. These ideas were endorsed in Dewey's method of 'directed living' (1980).

#### 4.4.1 Enjoyment and novelty

In the majority of sessions both teachers and pupils enjoyed participating in station teaching activities. My reflective journal documented how the station teaching intervention became one of my favourite weekly lessons to teach.

“The ease of pupil behaviour management during station teaching means I now look forward to teaching the station lessons.”(Reflective Journal, March 2020)

While the improved behaviour of participants certainly had a positive impact on my enjoyment, equally, a more focused planning approach through increased collaboration with my ‘inside lens’ (Brookfield, 1995) critical friend resulted in a more enjoyable teaching experience. The following was noted by my critical friend during the post intervention interview:

“this intervention encouraged both of us to discuss the set-up and content for the different literacy stations. It encouraged a deeper level of thinking about our aims and objectives for this group of students. We looked at the needs closely and identified how we could best address them. This collaborative approach benefited not only the students but our teaching” (Critical Friend Interview, April 2020).

My principal also highlighted positive effects of station teaching for teachers which included; teachers acting as a support for each other, smaller groups leading to increased teacher engagement, reduced pupil teacher ratio allowing teachers to give more time and attention to individual pupils and teachers providing positive affirmations to each other (see appendix 7, interview with Principal Teacher).

The detailed planning of lessons led to an increase in the quality of teaching instruction provided which in turn led to improved job satisfaction for me. This was affirmed by my critical friend in the post intervention interview and through reflective journaling. My critical friend observed not only an improvement in pedagogy during the intervention but also during other lessons:

“knowing clearly what was being taught during stations encouraged me further to narrow the focus and objectives of my SEN sessions on the other three days” (Critical Friend Interview, April 2020).

Reflecting on entries in my reflective journal also confirmed the link between job satisfaction and enjoyment in my practice.

“Meeting children’s needs in an enjoyable way is important in terms of my professional satisfaction as an educator’, seeing the children achieve success and watch them enjoy a sense of achievement during finely planned guided reading lessons has given me a sense of achievement and enjoyment’ (Reflective Journal, March 2020).

Feelings of enjoyment amongst the participants were evident when reflecting on recounts from participants who expressed excitement for station time:

“When asked for feedback a child commented that they ‘liked that we got to move around the classroom and do lots of different things’ another child added that they ‘like stations because time goes fast, we get to do loads of different activities that help us learn’. I think the children are enjoying the busyness and novelty of the intervention. I think the novelty of using a different teaching strategy has had a positive impact on the participant’s literacy engagement” (Reflective journal, March 2020).

My ‘inside lens’ (Brookfield, 1995) critical friend also noted that the range of activities offered by the station teaching intervention was appealing for the participants. It was also suggested by this critical friend that the ‘novelty’ of participating in the station teaching intervention had a positive impact on the children’s enjoyment levels.

“It was something different, out of the ‘norm.’ I think it was important for this group that we didn’t complete it every day – only two times a week kept their interest and engagement. It was a chance for them to try out different activities e.g. listening to an audio book or something as simple as sitting on the cushions in a group together” (Critical friend interview, 2020).

This idea of ‘novelty’ being connected to enjoyment can be linked to the idea that situational interest can be effectively triggered by novelty, which may result in increasing reading comprehension and task enjoyment (Fridken, 2018). The concept that positive emotion is key to the development of interest and learning originates from the work of Dewey (1913). The inclusion of novel and new ways of learning and teaching contrasted to my former reliance on didactic methods of teaching reading. The introduction of new and more active forms of pedagogy with smaller groupings resulted in a more enjoyable teaching experience for me, while pupils also exhibited higher engagement and motivation levels performing activities in cooperation with peers, bringing my practice more in aligned with Vygotsky’s (1978) view of children as active agents in their educational processes.

#### 4.4.2 Listening Station

A particularly high level of engagement and motivation was observed at the listening station.

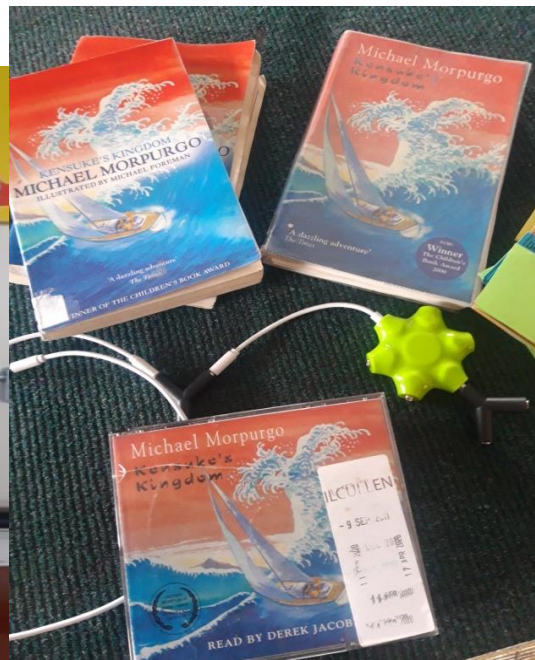
My principal noted that it was

“great to see the children listening to the book on earphones and smiling as they followed along with the text” (Principal Interview, April 2020).

While my ‘inside lens’ (Brookfield, 1995) critical friend commented on how the listening station activities appealed to many students as it was not a typical classroom activity that this class would have been familiar with (see appendix 6, interview with Critical Friend). Again the impact of using a ‘novel’ or an unfamiliar activity was at play here.



**Image 4.1:** Listening station area



**Image 4.2:** Listening station audio books and resources

The listening station appeared to visibly promote enjoyment and engagement. Smiling faces were observed by the principal while I documented similar observations in my reflective journal after lessons. I noted how the children moved with increased pace towards the listening station when the bell sounded. (Reflective journal, February 2020)

“There are no behavioral issues at the independent listening station. The children appear to be comfortably listening while following the text. My concerns that behaviour could be an issue at the independent stations have certainly been put to rest with regards to the listening station”. (Reflective journal, February 2020)

The children learned to organise themselves efficiently at this independent station, again, Vygotsky’s (1978) view of children as active agents in their own learning was at play here with learning taking place with help from others. I especially noticed that children who typically found reading a challenge (attending support for literacy) enjoyed the listening station, linking to my value of inclusion.

“When asked if they had a favourite station some responses included: ‘I like the listening station because it’s not like work, I like listening to it and I like sitting on the cushions, I like the listening station because it’s easy for me and I think the listening station is good because we all get to read the same book’” (Reflective Journal, February 2020).

Connections to my value of inclusion are evident in reflective journal entries relating to the listening station.

“To see one particular pupil highly engaged in a fourth class reading activity (listening station), given that this pupil has not accessed the same reading material as the rest of the class

since infants has been heartening. The delight on this pupil's face at the opportunity to read the same material as peers is an image that I will remember" (Reflective journal, February 2020).

Moreover, the reactions of the children to the idea that one group would be missing out on their listening station time as a result of a school fire drill confirmed for me that for the most part ,the listening station was enjoyable for participants.

"A fire drill resulted in the groups missing their final station of the day, (one group did not get to complete the listening station). Many children voiced the unjustness of this, even children who were not part of the said group. The reaction of the class at the unfairness of one group not getting to take part in their listening activity confirmed that the listening station is a favourite of the participants. This reaction resulted in me allowing the group to complete their listening station time while the rest of the class continued with an S.E.S.E activity" (Reflective journal, February 2020).

While it is acknowledged that part of the enjoyment associated with this station was the 'novelty' of sitting on cushions and using earphones that the children were not accustomed to using in school, the listening station has had an important impact on pupil engagement and motivation towards the station teaching intervention. This enjoyment and engagement links to the concept of interest: a critical positive emotion in learning contexts (Dewey, 1913). Furthermore, engagement and motivation play an important role in academic performance because it directs the participant's behaviour and effort to learning situations (Wigfield et al, 2006).

#### 4.4.3 Play

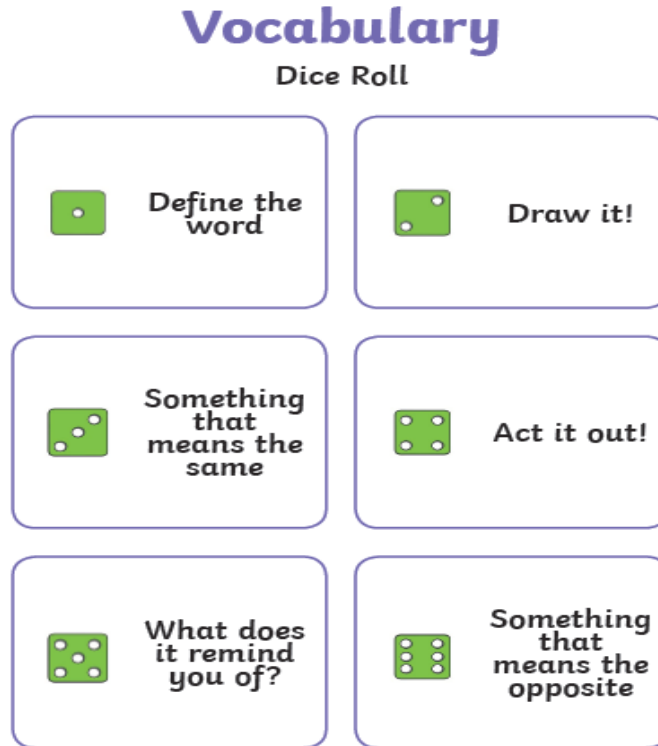
The inclusion of playful activities at the vocabulary (teacher led) station appeared to visibly increase pupil motivation and engagement. As noted in my reflective journal:

“Excitement levels at the vocabulary station are high. I often hear the children enthusiastically participate while I’m conducting my strategy lessons” (Reflective journal, February 2020).

The Primary Language Curriculum (NCCA, 1999), reflecting on principles of Aistear (NCCA, 2009), places importance on play and playful experiences for children’s learning. The inclusion of play has posed implementation challenges possibly due to a diminishing value placed on play in senior classes and in determining developmentally appropriate playful activities for older children (Walsh et al, 2010).

Playful activities formed part of the vocabulary station where word games added to the ‘range of activities’ offered by the station teaching intervention (see image 4.3, vocabulary dice game). These were highlighted as a benefit of the intervention by my ‘inside lens’ (Brookfield, 1995) critical friend (see appendix 6, critical friend interview). Vocabulary development held importance in the planning stages of the intervention due to its strong links with and reading fluency and comprehension improvement (Kennedy at al., 2012; Education Endowment Foundation, 2017). However, the inclusion of play was a secondary benefit which came about possibly because of my strong social constructivist based values.





**Image 4.3:** Vocabulary Dice Game (Twinkl.com, 2019)

My ‘inside lens’ (Brookfield, 1995) critical friend (teacher leading the vocabulary station) noted how small groups encouraged children’s involvement in games and discussions (see appendix 6, critical friend interview) linking to my social constructivist values (Vygotsky, 1978; Jonassen, 1994; Dewey, 1966). Benefits associated with interacting with children who had a higher standard of vocabulary than others (children usually withdrawn for literacy support), especially when the station was so targeted and structured were also highlighted (see appendix 6, critical friend interview). This connects to Vygotsky’s (1978) views on the transformation of potential learning to actual learning through social activities in a social constructivist approach to learning with cognitive functions as products of social interactions (Vygotsky, 1978).

The inclusion of play with its connection to the new Primary Language Curriculum would have been overlooked had my principal not made the connection, as was outlined in my reflective journal:

“My principal stated ‘It’s great that play is included, this is very relevant to the new primary language curriculum in the senior classes’. Admittedly, when planning the intervention the inclusion of play was not an aim. Teaching new vocabulary was a definite aim and I felt the use of teacher led games was a good way to do this” (Reflective Journal, March 2020).

Significantly this conversation with my principal links to my value of social constructivism as it was through discussion that this knowledge was co-constructed, highlighting for me even further the importance of open discourse among colleagues and the impact it can have on one’s practice.

However, in consideration of the six pillars of play as outlined in the Primary Language Curriculum: Support Material for Teachers (NCCA, 2019b) (see figure 4.2) a full emersion in play did not occur within this station teaching intervention. This was primarily due to the reading fluency and comprehension aims of the intervention and the developmental stages of the 4<sup>th</sup> class participants.



**Figure 4.2:** The Six Pillars of Play ( NCCA, 2019b).

Evidence of fostering warm secure relationship (see pillar 1, figure 4.2) are evident in reflective journal entries:

“I got to know some of the children in my class much better as a result of the intervention. The small group time enabled this and I am enjoying hearing the ideas and thoughts from all children, particularly the children who attend support as I they are out of the classroom so much I usually don’t have this time to spend with them” (Reflective journal, March 2020).

Similarly, my ‘inside lens’ (Brookfield, 1995) critical friend noted how:

“a number of students really ‘came out of their shell’ as the weeks went on. I could see them become more confident, maybe just more comfortable with me” (Critical Friend Interview, April 2020).

My principal also alluded to this in her post intervention interview when she stated:

“Teachers have more opportunities to give time and attention to individual students if there are two teachers teaching” (Principal Interview, 2020).

It was also identified that the intervention created more opportunities for differentiated teaching (see appendix 7, principal interview) working to support the idea of respecting individual differences (see figure 4.2). The inclusion playful elements positively impacted the motivation and engagement of pupils and teachers, however, the concept of play was not fully embraced as part of this intervention as noted in reflections subsequent to my principal’s comments on play: “activities at the vocabulary station do convey playful elements but it is not a pure emersion in play” (Reflective Journal, April 2020).

#### **4.5 Finding 2: Station teaching resulted in improved behaviour in the classroom.**

An improvement in behaviour became a reason as to why the intervention became a favourite weekly lesson of mine. Evidence of this improvement is clear in the answer to question ten of the ‘critical friend’ interview (see appendix 6), which asked for additional comments concerning the intervention.

“I feel that you cannot overlook the behaviour issues in the class and therefore a different approach to teaching literacy was needed. Having an extra teacher in the room and smaller groups allowed us both to keep the lesson on track and therefore helping the students reach the objectives” (Critical Friend Interview, March 2019).

My reflective journal documented evidence, and is reiterated by many researchers in papers such as Cook and Friend (1995) and Ploessl at al., (2010) relating to behavioural improvements from the start of the intervention, such as:

“It has become easier to prevent challenging behaviour from occurring, the presence of two teachers in the classroom is having an impact in this regard. We are both positioned at opposite ends of the room making it easier to see and stop off task behaviour. (Reflective Journal, February 2020).

Behaviour at the independent stations was an initial concern, however, as the children got used to the format of the stations and the presence of an additional adult behavioural problems featured less often.

Similar team teaching initiatives also reported findings of improved behaviour as a result of better differentiation in the team teaching lessons and the impact of having an extra significant

adult in the classroom (SESS, 2018). Such research findings have shown that the nearer a significant adult is to a child the less likely they are to be inattentive or display distracting behaviour (SESS, 2018; Cook and Friend 1995). These studies helped to further triangulate the data of this self-study action research project.

Initially, it was thought that the impact of having an extra teacher in the classroom was the primary reason for pupil behavioural improvements. My ‘inside lens’ (Brookfield, 1995) critical friend suggested that one independent station rather than two would have been the ideal in terms of “literacy learning” and “behaviour management” (see appendix 6, critical friend interview) which was not possible for timetabling reasons. However, subsequent data analysis and deeper reflection brought to light additional factors which also impacted upon pupil’s behaviour. The principal suggested that the

“variety of activities kept the children interested in the lesson” (Principal Interview, April 2020).

In response to question 4 of the post intervention interview (see appendix 7) which asked about the impact of intervention on the engagement of the children, the principal replied:

“They are a lively bunch of children and the teacher always needs to manage the class during lessons to keep the class on track. I felt that the children were all so engaged in the activity, they hadn’t time to chat or get distracted” (Principal Interview, April 2020).

Behavioral improvements may also be connected to reduced distractions associated with withdrawal such as gathering books needed and waiting for every member of the group to be ready. Early entries (before the intervention was set up) in my reflective journal noted such distractions:

“Withdrawal of children to support outside the classroom regularly impinges upon the instructional teaching time provided for the class. this group of children need so much support and reminders about organising their belongings that it has an impact on teaching time.” (Reflective journal, October 2019).

Furthermore, as identified by my ‘inside lens’ (Brookfield, 1995) critical friend the short duration of the intervention lessons (10 minutes) may have helped some pupils remain focused. This short duration was compared to that of typical whole class lessons in our post intervention interview:

“I also think that some students like knowing the activity is short and sweet – can be daunting/boring when they know a lesson could go on for 40 minutes and longer” (Critical Friend Interview, April 2020).

In short there have been several factors which have contributed to the improvement in the children’s behaviour including improved teacher collaboration and an increase in differentiation standards (Cook and Friend, 1995; Ploessl, 2010).

#### **4.5.1 Improved Teacher Collaboration and Differentiation Standards.**

Improved collaboration and dialogue between teachers facilitating the station teaching intervention led to improved planning which in turn resulted in an improved quality of instruction and differentiation. Ultimately all of this had a positive impact upon the children's behaviour. My 'inside lens' (Brookfield, 1995) critical friend outlined the impact of improved collaboration:

"This intervention encouraged both of us to discuss the set-up and content for the different literacy stations. It encouraged a deeper level of thinking about our aims and objectives for this group of students. We looked at the needs closely and identified how we could best address them. This collaborative approach benefited not only the students but our teaching" (Critical Friend Interview, April 2020).

Behavioural improvements were also documented upon weekly in my reflective journal, for example:

"The increased time spent planning lessons is proving productive. Pupils are engaged, I am engaged and I feel the benefits of collaboratively planning with my critical friend. There were no disruptions today." (Reflective journal, February 2020).

"Today's station lessons were taught with ease. I have covered more content in the mini lessons than I would have in a whole class lesson as the children. I do not have to spend time reminding children to stay on task" (Reflective journal, March 2020).

Staff collaboration was vital for the success of this intervention. This intervention naturally encouraged increased collaboration between the classroom and support teacher leading to



improvements in planning and better tracking of pupil progress which then resulted in an improved standard of differentiation within practice. This resulted in my practice becoming more aligned with my value of inclusion and the clarified responsibilities of the class teacher as outlined on the introduction of the new SET model (Department of Education and Skills, 2017). As my reflective journal noted:

“I feel much more in tune with the reading and comprehension levels of the children. I think the small group has facilitated this. Particularly in relation to children who previously attended support outside the classroom. I now have a better knowledge of their ability and how to help them intuitively” (Reflective journal, March 2020)

Significantly, this improved collaboration provided the children with a good model of collaboration while also allowing both teachers to work together in terms of behavior management in the classroom.

“From the outset of the intervention myself and my ‘inside lens’ critical friend have discussed practical issues, for example, where the headphone should be stored? This has provided a good model of problem solving for the children. Myself and my critical friend also work together to halt any off task behaviours discussing inappropriate behaviour in front of the class, likewise we have praised work which deserved merit in front of the children” (Reflective journal, February 2020).

Improvements in differentiation practices were noted in my reflective journal, during interview with my critical friend and by the principal following observation of the intervention and are echoed by Friend et al., (2010). In response to question two, of the post intervention

interview (see appendix 7), which questioned the benefits associated with this intervention, two of the points made related to differentiation:

“As the teachers were working closely with the children, differentiation was promoted”,  
“activities involved a variety of learning styles which meant that every child was catered for”  
(Principal Interview, April 2020).

The two guided reading lessons taught at the ‘vocabulary’ and ‘comprehension strategy’ stations were where the increased differentiation standards occurred. This mirrors the new Primary Language Curriculum (NCCA, 2019a) which advocates the use of ‘guided reading’ as an instructional approach to the teaching of reading allowing for differentiated teaching in small-groups (2019).

Ultimately, the increased level of differentiation resulted in increased engagement from pupils and therefore a decreased number of off-task behaviours which was similar to the findings in the action research project of Danzi et al (2008).

**4.6 Finding 3: The station teaching intervention facilitated the children with a more productive use of literacy time.**

Evidence that the use of team teaching methods in the senior primary classroom have led to a more productive use of literacy time first appeared in the baseline questionnaire (see appendix 2 and 3). As the baseline questionnaire was conducted after the pilot team teaching intervention (using the model of parallel teaching) pupil's had this experience to reflect upon in answering the questions. In response to question five, which asked if the participants liked having two teachers in the classroom teaching English, of the 88% who ticked 'yes', reasons included:

"I like having two teachers because you get more work done"

"I think it's good because you learn two different things about English in one English class"

(Pre-intervention Questionnaire, January 2020)

Of the participant's comments who answered 'yes', 56% of these alluded to 'learning more' or 'learning faster' (see appendix 3).

Unfortunately, the post intervention Questionnaire did not go ahead due to school closures on March 12<sup>th</sup>, 2020 (COVID-19) so that source of data was not collected. However, my reflective journal did document evidence of productive uses of literacy time:

"The comprehension strategies are taught more assiduously. It reminds me of the 'time' I had as a student teacher when my focus was on one lesson and not on all subjects that had to be taught on a weekly/monthly basis. I am also confident weekly vocabulary is being taught at the vocabulary station. Prior to the intervention a lot of time was taken up with teaching new

vocabulary and admittedly comprehension strategies were often sidelined or skimmed over as a result.” (Reflective Journal, March 2020)

My values of social constructivism, inclusion and reading which were identified at the outset of this self-study project were being denied through the use of a didactic style of teaching prior to the team teaching intervention. My practice in relation to the teaching of reading had become repetitive with tendencies to rely on text books rather than focus on teaching to meet individual needs within the class. I had become a ‘living contradiction’ (Whitehead, 1989) in my own teaching practice. Previously, my teaching of reading rarely involved the use of group work, yet, I believed in building knowledge mutually with my values rooted in a social constructivist approach to learning. Moreover, the differentiation strategies I had been using were insufficient to facilitate all children with the opportunity to gain full understanding and knowledge of strategies required to become a proficient reader. This made withdrawal for literacy support necessary and I was aware that gaps existed in my teaching as the following reflective journal entry conveys:

“Recently when ticking the boxes on monthly plans I have asked myself: have I covered the monthly comprehension strategy sufficiently? Do I believe the majority of the pupils in my class have sufficient knowledge of this strategy?”(Reflective Journal, October 2019)

‘No’ was my answer to the above questions. I could not stand over my practice in the knowledge that all pupils had an adequate knowledge of such strategies even though I was aware of research which demonstrated that such knowledge is pivotal to reading fluency and comprehension development (EEF, 2017; Kennedy et al., 2012; Bowe et al, 2012; Shanahan, 2019). Significantly, further reading on literacy pedagogy led to developments in my beliefs and ideas in relation to my practice. Having read and reflected upon the blog post of Timothy

Shanahan '*Is Amount of Reading Instruction a Panacea?*' (2014), I realised that I could not always blame a lack of time for not covering items of importance or for the children's performance in reading. My reflective journal entries display beliefs concurring with that of Shanahan (2014) in relation to time being just a measure and that

“an extra hour of something that doesn't work won't improve things” (Shanahan, 2014).

“Quality teaching is more important than the quantity of time spent teaching. My 10 minute station lesson feels more productive than previous 40 minute whole class lessons were. Increased discussion, debate and interest are making the 10 minute lessons a quality teaching and learning experience, connecting to social constructivist values. I am more organised and better prepared for the station teaching lessons than I would have been pre-intervention, which has added to lesson quality.” (Reflective journal, February 2020)

A number of factors emerged in the data which I believe had an impact on the quality of reading pedagogy and time devoted to reading in the classroom, which were;

- increased time to practice reading and oral language skills
- increased opportunity to read aloud
- improved quality of instructional reading lessons
- changes in my practice during non-literacy timetabled hours.

#### 4.6.1. Increased time to practice reading skills

Reading has been compared to any ability, in that “practice is a key to proficiency; reading comprehension is no different” (Shanahan, 2019). However, the issue of ‘time’ and its connections to curriculum overload have long been identified by teachers as an impediment to fully implementing all curriculum subjects (NCCA, 2005; 2008). The focus I placed on reading through an interrogation of my values and the subsequent implementation of the station teaching intervention naturally facilitated reading with additional time within my classroom.

Evidence that the intervention facilitated the participants with extra time to read was brought to light following the principal’s observation of the intervention and reflective journal entries alluded to this:

“It was identified by my principal teacher that every child had the opportunity to read during the intervention. She stated that the independent reading station ‘provided valuable reading practice time for the children’ (Reflective journal, February 2020).

My reflective journal also conveyed my thoughts on how participants were reading more material on a weekly basis as a result of the intervention:

“Since the introduction of station teaching the children have been exposed to more reading content including more of a variety of content. We are reading the weekly text book story during the whole class lessons while during station lessons they are; reading comprehension cards, following the novel at the listening station and also reading short pieces at the comprehension strategy station” (Reflective journal, March 2020).

Question six of the baseline questionnaire asked participants if they thought having two teachers in the classroom teaching English was improving their reading (see appendix 3) and of the 96% who ticked 'yes' their reasons included:

“It improves my reading because we get lots of practice”

“It lets me practice more reading”

“yes, because we get to read more”.

(Pre-intervention questionnaire, January 2020)

The children were aware of the strong focus on reading as a result of the intervention and this may have had an impact on their responses. Post – intervention questionnaire results may have provided data to support this finding but regrettably such results were not collected due to the COVID-19 school closures on March 12<sup>th</sup> 2020. However, my reflective journal provided significant connections to my values on the importance of practicing reading skills:

“as I wrote my class reports cards I thought about the advice I was giving children over the summer months in encouraging them to ‘read a variety of texts’ and ‘continue to practice reading skills’ (Reflective journal, June 2020).

My value of allowing children time to read is reflected here as I encouraged the children to ‘practice reading’! Evidence from my research was also triangulated through further research of similar studies. Mol and Bus (2011) meta-analysed 99 studies that reported correlations between reading ability and print exposure which found connections between print exposure and reading skills becoming even more evident over time, indicating that increased time for reading practice is all the more important in the senior primary classroom. Van Bergan et al (2020) added to this finding by endorsing ‘how much children read seems to matter most after the shift from learning to read to reading to learn’



#### **4.6.2 An Increase in opportunities to read aloud**

My reflective journal proved to be a valuable source of data in support of the finding that the intervention provided the children with an increase in opportunities to read aloud. Reflections on participation at the comprehension strategy station supports this finding:

“mini lessons teaching the comprehension strategy of determining importance have given me the opportunity to observe the participants read aloud new texts and then identify the key parts of the text” (Reflective journal, February 2020).

“Listening to the children read aloud at the comprehension strategy station has been a real positive aspect of the intervention for me allowing me the opportunity to hear children (some of which usually attend literacy support) read aloud, I otherwise would not have got the opportunity to hear read during English time. The small group setting has encouraged engagement and discussion” (Reflective journal, March 2020).

These reflective journal entries allude to visible positive changes in participant’s engagement with reading aloud as a result of the implementation of social constructivist methodologies (Bruce, 2015; Vygotsky, 1978; Fröebel, 1899; Dewey 1916). Thus, allowing my practice to become more congruent with my value system.

Additionally, responses to question six of the pre-intervention questionnaire (see appendix 3) support the finding of increased time to read aloud:

“I think it helps my reading because I get more time to read out loud”

“I think it helps me because I read out loud a lot so it helps me get over my fear”

(Pre-intervention questionnaire, January 2020)

While evidence was also found in the principals interview, in responding to question six which queried the impact of the intervention on reading fluency, the principal alluded to the opportunity that children were getting to read aloud every day, stating that:

“it will have a positive impact reading fluency” (see appendix 7, principal interview).

#### **4.6.3 Improved quality of Instructional reading lessons**

The opening section of finding 4.5 outlines how my reflective journal revealed evidence of my practice becoming more assiduous as a result of the intervention. Similar entries in my reflective journal also referred to an improved quality of instructional reading lessons:

“I do not find teaching the four 10 minute lessons on comprehension strategies repetitive. I am enjoying the interactions in a small group setting with the children. The children have become more forthcoming with answers and contributions to discussions. Some of the children appear to feel more comfortable answering in small groups compared to a whole class” (Reflective Journal, March 2020).

The lack of active participation during whole class reading lessons prior to the intervention was possibly a reason why I felt my reading pedagogy should be targeted as part of this self-study project. Significantly, Shanahan outlined how this kind of inhibited participation is a real problem and is likely to reduce learning (2020).

During the post intervention interview my principal listed positive effects which she believed the use of team teaching methods have on teachers' practice. Some of these benefits included: "teachers are a support for each other" and "can provide affirmation for each other" (see appendix 7) and these have been secondary factors in improving the quality of instructional reading lessons. However, benefits observed and found by the principal which are believed to have had a direct impact on improving the quality of instructional reading lessons during the intervention are the following:

"Teachers will probably have lessons more planned as they know the time is limited during station teaching"

"Teachers have more time to focus on assessment"

and the station teaching intervention

"creates more opportunities for differentiated teaching"

(Principal Interview, April 2020)

Similarly my 'inside lens' (Brookfield, 1995) critical friend' highlighted that

"clear and well thought-out lessons"

were a benefit of the intervention (see appendix 6). As outlined in section ‘4.3.1 Enjoyment and novelty’ my critical friend referred to the benefits of working collaboratively such as encouraging “a deeper level of thinking about our aims and objectives for this group of students” which benefited the practice of both teachers involved. This deeper level of thought around objectives and improved instructional teaching standards may have been a direct result of teachers’ focus on the station teaching lessons as this self-study placed prominence on this area. Post intervention questionnaire results may have added valuably to the validity of this finding had they been available. However, as a result of the COVID-19 school closures in March 2020 this data was not gathered.

In further support of finding 3 the format of the teacher led stations (vocabulary and comprehension strategy) portrayed a similar style to that of ‘guided reading lessons’ advocated for in the Primary Language Curriculum (NCCA, 2019a). The station teaching lessons allowed for comprehension strategies or vocabulary to be explicitly taught with the learner’s application of content then observed as they engaged in reading activities with scaffold provided on the spot, as recommended in the Teacher Support Guidelines for the new Primary Language Curriculum (NCCA, 2019a). This also connects to my value placed on a social constructivist approach to learning which promotes ‘scaffolding’ and ‘guided participation’ (Vygotsky, 1978).

#### **4.6.4 Increased opportunity to practice oral language skills**

The role of language and communication in cognitive development is an important feature of the social constructivist approach to learning (Vygotsky, 1978; Powell and Kalina, 2006) along with an emphasis on interaction (Dewey, 1966). The following entry in my reflective journal indicates how I enjoyed

“a better quality of dialogue with small groups which resulted in improved discussions and increased participation from children who may not typically engage in dialogue during whole class lessons” (Reflective Journal, March 2020).

Similarly, my ‘inside lens’ (Brookfield, 1995) critical friend noted that

“the small groups also gave me a great opportunity to talk to the students and engage in a number of oral language skills” (Critical Friend Interview, April 2020).

This corresponds with Haworth’s (1999) theory that greater opportunity to talk is best delivered in small group settings. These increased levels of dialogue observed during the station teaching intervention contribute to finding 3 in that the intervention facilitated a more productive use of literacy time. Providing a language-supportive environment that encourages oral language use with sound oral language models offers gains such as improved listening comprehension levels which may be supportive to reading comprehension levels (NCCA, 2019b).

#### **4.6.5 Changes in my teaching of reading during non-literacy timetabled hours.**

Secondary benefits to completing the station teaching intervention included a change in my reading pedagogy during lessons unassociated with the intervention as also experienced by Cook and Friend (1995). As a result of my reading around my research topic (reading fluency and reading comprehension) I started to try out alternative reading strategies to the didactic methods that I had been using such as e.g. Partner Reading or the silent reading activity ERT (Everyone Read To) as endorsed by Cunningham and Allington (2016). ERT involved all of the children reading down to the point where I told them to stop. Questioning takes place after the ERT reading activity with discussions helping readers who were struggling to assimilate meaning (NEPS, 2019).

#### **4.7 Conclusion**

Reflecting on my value of reading and my reliance on text books and a focus on standardized scores in my research setting, I realised I had become a ‘Living Contradiction’ (Whitehead, 1989). I was employing a didactic teaching style in this area of my practice which I believe was influenced by Lortie’s ‘Apprenticeship of Observation’ (Lortie, 1975) which involved reverting back to how I was taught reading in primary school. I realised I wasn’t living as close to my values as I could have been in relation to Vygotskys ‘social constructivism theory’ which concerns the co-construction of knowledge and learning as a collaborative process through social negotiation, not on competition (Vygotsky, 1978; Jonassen, 1994). Vygotsky advocated for the idea of discourse between the learner and others as a prerequisite to the learning process. Station teaching naturally lends itself to group work where creativity and

learners' construction of their own knowledge and understanding are key components. In undertaking this self-study project I hoped that a shift towards the use of team teaching methodologies within my practice in the teaching of reading would allow me to live more aligned to my values, which I believe it has done so to some extent.

## Chapter 5 Conclusions

### 5.1 Summary of Research

This action research project aims to enhance my practice in the area of reading fluency and reading comprehension through the use of team teaching methodologies in the senior primary classroom. Reading fluency and comprehension is an area of interest for me in my practice as having taught in the senior classes for past six years I noticed these issues becoming a recurring need. I wanted to learn more about how to support the children in my class and improve and change my practice in this area. Upon reflection on this area of my practice in light of my values on reading, inclusion and collaboration I realised that I had become a 'Living Contradiction' (Whitehead, 1989). My over reliance on text books led to this realisation. It was also discerned that my values were rooted to Vygotsky's (1978) 'social constructivism theory' which concerns the co-construction of knowledge and learning as a collaborative process through social negotiation. Although I claimed to value inclusion, collaboration and the co-construction of knowledge this was not living towards those values in my teaching of reading, a change was needed.

Conducting my research within the self-study action research paradigm involved following an action-reflection cycle. A six-week intervention was implemented which aimed to positively impact reading fluency and comprehension amongst my research participants through the use of engaging, motivating and inclusive methodologies. Station teaching was deemed the appropriate team teaching methodology to meet these needs and eleven station teaching lessons were conducted over the six week period. This comprised of four groups of children



rotating to four different stations at a 10 minute interval. Data was collected through a reflective journal, critical friend observations and associated interviews and questionnaires.

This self-study found that the use of station teaching promoted pupil and teacher engagement and motivation, station teaching resulted in improved behavior in the classroom and station teaching facilitated the children with a more productive use of their literacy time. Although these findings may be useful as an example to those in similar settings, it is important to note that due to the small sample size and self-study nature of this action research project limitations surround the generalisation of these research findings.

## **5.2 Limitations of the Study**

Challenges associated with the station teaching intervention included: timetabling and staffing, assessments and limited amount of available publications in the area of station teaching in the context of senior primary classes. As referred to throughout the national school closures on 12<sup>th</sup> of March 2020 also posed a unique set of challenges COVID-19 in terms of data gathering.

### 5.2.1 Timetabling and Staffing

The amount of time and teaching staff allocated to the station teaching intervention was limited by the SET literacy time allocated to my class. Ideally, I would have liked to have had three teacher led stations, a total of five stations for one hour. This would have resulted in groups of 4 or 5 children at each station for 12 minutes.

My class was allocated 40 minutes literacy time with one SET. This resulted in four stations, two of which were teacher led with each group spending 10 minutes at each station. I believe that the impact of having an additional teacher plus an extra 20 minutes bringing the total station time to one hour and teachers involved to three would have had a hugely positive impact upon this self-study action research project's findings. My Literacy SET who had agreed to act as my critical friend would come into my classroom during her timetabled time with my class rather than withdraw pupils to a smaller room. A number of discussions were held and various scenarios were examined. It was decided that the 'Station Teaching Intervention' would be conducted during timetabled SET literacy time on Mondays and Thursdays. This time was a 40 minute time slot which allowed for 10 minutes per station. My reflective journal shows evidence that I would have liked to have a longer time period devoted to the intervention "15 minutes per station at least" (Reflective Journal, December 2019).

Furthermore, following the principal's observation of the station teaching intervention it was recommended that the time allocated to each station be increased. I explained that 40 minutes of assigned SET time for my class had limited the intervention in this regard, as an extra teacher in the room was needed for this. Notably, Support Materials for Reading with the new Primary Language Curriculum (NCCA, 2019b) recommend that each guided reading group lesson should take about 15-20 minutes. Comparisons can be made between 'Station 2 –

Comprehension Strategy with the teacher’ and ‘guided reading’ instruction in the Primary Language Curriculum (NCCA, 2019a). The effectiveness of the ‘Station-teaching Intervention’ has been dependent upon effective timetabling practice, this is certainly an area that I feel has impinged on the success of the intervention.

### **5.2.2. Assessments**

The sourcing of pre and post intervention assessments which were standardized against each other for comparison took time and many discussions with critical friends and my supervisor. It was important to ensure validity and continuity between post and pre intervention assessments (see appendix 8), however the time and effort spent on this was wasted time as post intervention assessments were not conducted due to the Covid19 school closures in March 2020. Furthermore, even if these assessments were conducted I would question the significance of the data generated from such assessments compared to the data from interviews (appendix 6 and 7) and my reflective journaling which I believe was a stronger source of data for such a small scale self-study of this nature.

Design of the WPM Assessment took considerable time and re-drafting (pilot and actual test used) and involved careful consideration. My reflective journal demonstrated how I struggled with my decision on what type of unseen text to use:

“I am unsure what text to use for the WPM assessment, a piece of text from a novel by Michael Morpurgo may be an option as it would ensure the validity of the pre and post intervention assessments when making comparisons between the two results. However, the

prominent use of topic specific language, unusual place names and unfamiliar character names may be unfair to some participants” (Reflective journal, January 2020).

“The class literacy textbook ‘Lets Go!’ offers the choice of extracts from published children’s literature, fact units and poetry. I chose an extract ‘It’s a Monster’ from the *Water Horse* by Dick Kind-Smith for the pilot W.P.M assessment. The extract chosen for the actual W.P.M assessment was ‘Tyke to the Rescue’ from *The Call of the Whales* by Siobhán Parkinson. The reason for choosing a fictional text was that more time had been spent on reading fictional stories than had been spent on reading factual stories or poetry in the current school year (2019/2020).” (Reflective Journal, January 2020)

This process of choosing an appropriate text for the W.P.M. assessment also encouraged meta-reflect on reading content I had been utilising in my practice.

“Through my insistence in following the school booklist the class has read predominantly fictional texts, more time was spent on fictional stories than fact-based texts, which is evidence of me being a ‘living contradiction’ in own practice (Whitehead, 1993) as the Primary Language Curriculum (2019a) represents supporting features of disciplinary literacy in learning outcomes for example, some progression steps refer to a child’s ability to ‘select relevant information from a range of features of non-fictional texts’ (NCCA, 2019a)” (Reflective journal. January 2020).

The design of both the pilot and actual WPM was very time consuming (see appendix 8, table 1) and considering the effort involved to generate these results they are not of great significance to my research project. More significance and value lay in the process of listening

to each child read independently during the testing stage, as highlighted in my reflective journal:

“listening to the WPM assessments facilitated me with an additional opportunity to really get to know the participant as a reader. It gave me the opportunity to observe reading insecurities that I had not before noticed in some of the participants, while also affording me the opportunity to hear those who were eager to perform and who enjoy reading aloud” (Reflective journal, January 2020).

### **5.2.3 Limited Research in the area of Team Teaching and Reading Fluency relating to Senior Primary Classes in the Irish context**

While quality sources of research were located in relation to station teaching in literacy in the junior classes such as Dympna Daly (2015), it proved much more difficult to source similar research in the context of senior primary classes. Furthermore, station teaching was practiced daily while teaching literacy in the junior classes in my research setting but was never used as a method in teaching literacy in the senior classes.

Reading Fluency is of little prominence in the 1999 Curriculum but it does feature more prominently in the New Primary Language Curriculum (NCCA, 2019a). As Learning Outcome 10 for stage 3 and 4 specifically refers to fluency “children should be able to read texts in a variety of genres effortlessly with appropriate pace, accuracy and expression for a variety of audiences” (NCCA, 2019a). Van Bergan (2020) reported that studies prior to theirs have shown more evidence that reading skills such as reading fluency affect the development print exposure than vice versa during the early grades (2020). However it was also noted that studies focusing on the later grades are still rare (Van Bergan, 2020).

### **5.2.4 COVID-19 School Closures**

The impact of the nationwide school closures on 12<sup>th</sup> March 2020 as a result of COVID-19 on my self-study action research project is referred to throughout chapter 4 as the post intervention assessments did not go ahead as a result. Therefore, it was not possible to compare pre and post intervention data for use as evidence towards the projects findings. This placed limits on the sources of data available during the data analysis stage of the study.

### 5.3 Impact of Sharing my Research

Sharing my research with colleagues was certainly an insightful learning experience for me as discussed here. At the outset of my journey on this master's programme, I noted in my reflective journal that I had,

“informed my principal and deputy principal of my enrolment in a Masters programme at Maynooth University asking both of them to keep this information to themselves” (Reflective journal, August 2019).

At the time, I was adamant that I did not want my further study to become common knowledge in the staff room. Through deliberate self-examination I understand that this secretiveness of hiding my ambition from colleagues and not wanting to reveal vulnerability conflicted with my epistemological values of working collaboratively and inclusion and my ontological value of social justice.

The nature of my research project, ‘team teaching with a focus on reading comprehension and fluency’ meant that I had to discuss my research plans with colleagues in the early stages of the process. I carefully choose my critical friends to converse with on issues related to my research project. My ‘critical friends’ were also asked not to share the information of my further study with other colleagues! Kelchtermans (2018) stance that it is in the educational practice that teachers’ sense of self and professional self-understanding emerges, that the person is at the core of the practice (embodied behaviours and discursive representations around them i.e. thinking, talking) was lost on me at this stage of my intervention project. It is ironic that it was through conversations with colleagues that most of my learning and

transformation took place as can be seen through their input in support of the findings discussed in Chapter 4.

Following, positive feedback from my principal after observation of the intervention and subsequently requesting me to speak about my intervention at a training day for our teaching staff on the Primary Language Curriculum (NCCA, 2019a), a positive change in my self-understanding and mindset became evident in my reflective journal entries:

“I spoke about the structure and methods involved in my new intervention and I outlined the rationale behind the various methods employed in its implementation. The principal followed my comments by stating that my stations approach was very much in line with the requirements of the new Primary Language Curriculum (NCCA, 2019a). In discussing the indicator of ‘Teaching and Learning’ in the Primary Language Curriculum (NCCA, 2019a) it was outlined by the principal that my intervention achieves the ‘centrality of play’ very successfully. This comment took me as surprise as ‘play’ was not a primary aim of my intervention although achieving ‘engaging approaches’ in my teaching was certainly of importance to me was” (Reflective journal, March 2020).

The principal’s comments were then followed by questions from a few my teaching colleagues.

“This interest from other staff pleasantly surprised me. Reflecting on my willingness to answer questions and share this area of my practice with my colleagues, I could clearly see a transformation in my self-understanding and professional practice from that at the start of this research process” (Reflective Journal, March 2020).



Kelchtermans and Ballet (2002) argue that being acknowledged and valued by colleagues and school leaders is directly related to self-understanding which includes self-esteem and task perception. While Palmer (1997) asserts that if we want to grow as teachers, we must talk to each other about our inner lives.

“I now realise how necessary dialogue is in our practice. My value of working collaboratively has led me negotiating with my current research setting and to sharing my practice with colleagues, who have expressed interest in taking on some of my approaches. I am aware that I must continue to connect with other teachers and on a deeper level in order to further develop my identity. This new awareness has been a refreshing realisation for me regarding my practice but one I will also need to remind myself of regularly” (Reflective Journal, February 2020).

Kelchtermans and Ballet (2002) outline how the urge to develop a socially recognised self-understanding is a concern that continues over the teaching career. It is further claimed that it is never fully achieved and could also be lost at some point as it may escape teacher’s control.

#### **5.4 Suggestions for My Future Practice**

In consideration of the findings discussed in chapter 4, recommendations for future practice can be made. A key theme which emerged was the impact that the use of station teaching had on both pupil and teacher engagement and motivation and on the behaviour of the children in the class. Given these positive findings related to the station teaching intervention and in light of the considerations associated with team teaching methodologies I agree with the advice from NEPS (2019) in relation to interventions for struggling readers and I believe it can be

applied in the context of team teaching methodologies. This advice from NEPS (2019) recommends short intensive bursts of intervention, with daily targeted support as more effective than longer term interventions, “teachers may need to think of their work in half-term or 6-12 week blocks”(NEPS: 2019:26). Team teaching methodologies should be tailored to meet the needs of the learners in question as outlined in section 2.1 which discusses the variety of models associated with team teaching. Station teaching facilitated the children with a more productive use of their literacy time, I believe that this efficient use of time is particularly relevant to teaching in the senior primary classes where time constraints exist in relation to the wide range of learning outcomes (NCCA, 2019a). As outlined by Coleman (1966) the most important feature of a good school program is that it makes good academic use of school time, an argument that Shanahan (2014) also alludes to in relation to the provision of reading instruction. Significantly, these arguments make substantial links to the value I place on inclusion and reading.

### **5.5 Recommendations for Further Research**

As this study was conducted within a specific school setting and tailored to the needs of the research participants taking part, it may be of interest to conduct a similar study within other types of schools settings which would be targeting different literacy or reading needs.

Vanassche and Kelchermans (2015) privilege the use of qualitative research methods such as collaborative interactions with parents, children and colleagues. My action research project lacks interactions and views with parents, which is something that would enhance the meaning of my research findings while also adding to the rigour and validation within the project.

## 5.6 The Power of Reflective Practice

I now claim to have better understanding of how to teach reading fluency and comprehension in a more inclusive and engagement manner and one that is more aligned with my value placed on social constructivism. These claims of new knowledge are supported by the evidence provided in chapter 4. Engaging in the process of reflective practice required in an action research project has provided me with a means of achieving improved self-knowledge, self-understanding and self-challenge thus providing a useful way of realising personal development that has occurred throughout the course of this study. The epistemological value of dialogue only emerged for me since undertaking this course and has proved to be of profound importance. The developments of personal awareness through research processes have offered some resolution. However, self-understanding represents a momentary positioning in the ambiguities that characterise the teaching profession (Kelchtermans, 2018). My self-understanding has stemmed from ‘meaningful interactions’ with my teaching context over time. A greater professional self-understanding has both challenged me and taken me by surprise. Self-understanding has been a powerful tool in becoming more comfortable in my practice and confident in my research setting. My ‘self-image’ and ‘future perspectives’ have certainly been impacted upon in a positive way (Kelchtermans, 2018) but the dynamic nature of self-understanding means that it will always be a result of ongoing processes of interaction and sense making in my career as a teacher.

## **5.7 Final Thought**

“Qualitative researchers are always thinking, reflecting, learning and evolving – we do not reach a point where we have nothing more to learn. We are journeying, not arriving!” (Braun and Clarke, 2019:592).

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## Appendices

### 1. Research Schedules

#### 1.1 Pre-Research Intervention Schedule (September – December)


Month	Actions
August	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Consideration of the following:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Research Question</li> <li>➤ Research Methodologies</li> <li>➤ Principles of Action Research</li> </ul> </li> <li>▪ Reflective Journal Writing Commenced</li> </ul>
September	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Research Proposal Submitted</li> <li>▪ Reflective Journal Entries</li> </ul>
October	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Board of Management Permission Granted</li> <li>▪ Reflective Journal Entries</li> <li>▪ Ethical Approval Form</li> <li>▪ Gathered Literature for Literature Review</li> <li>▪ Supervisor Meeting to discuss Research Proposal</li> <li>▪ Commenced Pilot Team Teaching Intervention</li> </ul>
November	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Reflective Journal Entries</li> <li>▪ Continued gathering and examination of Literature for Literature Review</li> <li>▪ Ethical Permissions Received</li> </ul>
December	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Reflective Journal Entries</li> <li>▪ Consideration of the following:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Research Methodologies</li> <li>➤ Methods of Data Collection</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

### 1.2 Team Teaching Intervention Schedule (January – March)

Week	Date	Actions
Week 1	January 6 <sup>th</sup> – 10 <sup>th</sup>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Research project shared with the class</li> <li>▪ Consent forms and information letters</li> <li>▪ Meetings with three Critical Friends</li> <li>▪ Organisation of resources (audio books, novels, splitter, earphones).</li> </ul>
Week 2 & 3	January 13 <sup>th</sup> – 24 <sup>th</sup>	<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Cycle 1</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Questionnaire</li> </ul> <p><b>Assessments conducted to identify present standard of comprehension and reading fluency levels</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Pre-assessment of reading fluency – 1. unseen timed WPM, 2. seen reading record</li> <li>▪ Pre-assessment of reading comprehension – 2 comprehension assessments</li> </ul>
Week 4	January 27 <sup>th</sup> – 31 <sup>st</sup> Week 1 - Stations	<p><u>Cycle 2</u></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><u>Team Teaching - Station Teaching</u></p> <p>Listening Station (Independent)</p> <p>Comprehension Strategy Station (Teacher led)</p> <p>Comprehension Cards (Independent)</p> <p>Vocabulary (Teacher led)</p> <p><u>Schools Shut down on Thursday March 12<sup>th</sup></u></p> <p>Total Weeks of Station Teaching – 6 Weeks</p> <p>Total Station Teaching Lessons – 11 Lessons</p>
Week 5	February 3 <sup>rd</sup> – 7 <sup>th</sup> Week 2 - Stations	
Week 6	February 10 <sup>th</sup> – 14 <sup>th</sup> Week 3 - Stations	
	February 17 <sup>th</sup> – 21 <sup>st</sup> <b>Mid-term Break</b>	
Week 7	February 24 <sup>th</sup> – 28 <sup>th</sup> Week 4 - Stations	
Week 8	March 2 <sup>nd</sup> – 6 <sup>th</sup> Week 5 - Stations	
Week 9	March 9 <sup>th</sup> – 13 <sup>th</sup> Week 6 - Stations	
Week 10	March 16 <sup>th</sup> – 20 <sup>th</sup>	<u>Cycle 3 (2 weeks)</u>
Week 11	March 23 <sup>rd</sup> – 26 <sup>th</sup>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Post-assessment of reading fluency</li> <li>▪ Post-assessment of reading comprehension</li> <li>▪ Post-intervention questionnaire</li> </ul>

## 2. Pre-Intervention Questionnaire

**Questionnaire**



1. Do you like reading?      Yes     No     (please tick one box)

2. How do you feel about reading aloud in class? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

3. What do you think makes a good reader? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

4. If you don't understand a piece of text what do you do? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_


5. Do you like having two teachers in the classroom teaching English?  
Yes     No     (please tick one box)  
Why? (Please explain) \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

6. Do you think that having two teachers in the classroom teaching English is helping you to improve your reading?  
Yes     No     (please tick one box)  
Why? (Please explain) \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

7. Would you like to say anything else about reading?  
\_\_\_\_\_



### 3. Pre-Intervention Questionnaire Results



## Questionnaire Results

1. Do you like reading?      Yes **23/25 - 92%**      No **2/25 - 8%**

2. How do you feel about reading aloud in class?

a.	I don't like reading aloud because I feel embarrassed / nervous / people look at me	8	32%
b.	I do not mind reading aloud but I prefer not to	1	4%
c.	I don't mind reading aloud, sometimes I'm nervous (that I'm going to pronounce a word wrong)	2	8%
d.	I'm ok with with reading aloud/I don't mind reading aloud	5	20%
e.	I like reading aloud but it makes me nervous	2	8%
f.	I like reading aloud	3	12%
g.	I like reading aloud, it is fun/enjoyable	3	12%
h.	I like reading aloud, it makes me feel confident	1	4%

a	I don't like reading aloud	8/25	32%
b-d	I don't mind reading aloud	8/25	32%
e-h	I like reading aloud	9/25	36%

- Mentioned the word - nervous 9      9/25 36%
- Reading gives me confidence 2      2/25 8%

3. What do you think makes a good reader?

a.	clearly and confidently	3
b.	Clear	4
c.	Clear, expressive who thinks about how they're reading and tried their best	1
d.	Clear and loud and if they make a mistake they keep trying	1
e.	Someone who doesn't make mistakes and is clear	1
f.	Someone who doesn't make mistakes	1
g.	Loud, clear and taking your time	1
h.	They make no mistakes and understand fancy words	1
i.	They read all the time (see n. practice!)	1
j.	confident, expressive, loud and clear	1
k.	expressive and confident	1
l.	expressive and clear	1
m.	clear, expressive and makes few mistakes	1
n.	practice makes a good reader! – 2 maybe I should have phrased this differently	2
o.	clear and loud	1
p.	expression and no mistakes	1
q.	confidence and making few mistakes	2
r.	confident	1

Confident	7	28% of children said being confident makes you a good reader
clear	14	56% of children said being a clear reader makes you a good reader
Accuracy (makes no/few mistakes)	7	28% of children said making few/no mistakes makes you a good reader
loud	5	20% of children said reading loudly makes you a good reader
expression	7	28% of children said reading expressively makes you a good reader
Practice!	3	12% of children said 'practice' makes you a good reader
Someone who is trying their best	2	8% of children said 'trying your best' makes you a good reader
Taking their time	1	4% of children said 'taking your time' makes you a good reader
Understanding / comprehension	3	12% of children said they thought 'understanding the text' makes you a good reader
Thinks about how they are reading	1	4% of children said they thought 'thinking about how you are reading' makes you a good reader

#### 4. If you don't understand a piece of text what do you do?

From the answers given, the number indicates the number of children who mentioned the below strategies:

- |                                 |    |     |
|---------------------------------|----|-----|
| a. Ask someone                  | 9  | 36% |
| b. Read over it again           | 3  | 12% |
| c. Read on                      | 1  | 4%  |
| d. Read around the unclear part | 2  | 8%  |
| e. Use the pictures as clues    | 5  | 20% |
| f. Use a dictionary             | 10 | 40% |
| g. Skip it                      | 1  | 4%  |

5. Do like having two teachers in the classroom teaching English?

Yes ☐ 22/25 88%

No ☐ 3/25 12%

Of the 12% who said 'no'...

- 4% said 'because I like normal English'
- 4% said 'it's too hard reading because there are two people talking and I can't concentrate'
- 4% said 'because I have to go to a different classroom'

Of the 88% who said 'yes'

- 12% said having two teacher in the classroom teaching English is "Fun" 3
- 56% said "We get to learn more things/ we learn faster" when there are two teachers in the classroom teaching English 14
- 8% said "we get more work done" when there are two teachers in the classroom 2
- 4% said they like having two teachers in the classroom teaching English because "it's different to the other days of the week" i.e. variety 1
- 16% said they like having two teachers in the classroom because "you learn different things in one English class" i.e. variety 4

6. Do you think that having two teachers in the classroom teaching English is helping you to improve your reading?

Yes  24/25 96%  
No  1/25 4%

Of the 4% who said no..

- They gave no reason for their answer

Of the 96% who said 'yes'..

- 4% said having two teachers in the classroom teaching English helps improve their reading because "there is more time.
- 12% said having two teachers in the classroom teaching English helps improve their reading because "there is more time to read aloud" – of the 12% one child said "it helps me because I read aloud a lot so it helps me get over my fear"
- 28% said that having two teachers in the classroom teaching English is helping them improve their reading because they get more time to 'practice' or 'read more'.
- 4% said having two teachers in the classroom teaching English helps improve their reading because "I don't like reading but it is helping me read".
- 8% said having two teachers in the classroom teaching English helps improve their reading because "they get to read different things".
- 4% said having two teachers in the classroom teaching English helps improve their reading because "the teachers ask different questions and it is easier to understand".
- 36% % said having two teachers in the classroom teaching English helps improve their reading because it is helpful or they improved.

Maybe this question should have been multiple choice for the Why? Part as a lot children were not specific.

7. Would you like to say anything else about reading?

- 16% did not answer this question.
- 28% said they find reading 'relaxing' or 'calming'.
- 8% said reading helps them learn
- 16% referred to reading as 'fun'.
- 8% said they found reading 'hard'.
- 4% said reading was 'easy'.
- 4% said reading was a distraction from "the computer and the T.V.".
- 4% said we should do more DEAR time.
- 4% said it was their favourite hobby.
- 16% said they like reading in their head (independently to themselves rather than aloud).
- 12% said they read before bed.

Possibly should also have been multiple choice. These answers inform questions for Endline Questionnaire.

#### 4. Information Letters and Consent Forms



**Maynooth University Froebel Department of  
Primary and Early Childhood Education**

**Roinn Froebel Don Bhun- agus Luath- Oideachas  
Ollscoil MháNuad.**

**Mr. X**  
**Chairperson – Board of Management**  
**X**  
**X**

**4<sup>th</sup> November 2019**

Dear Mr. X,

I am currently undertaking a part time Master of Education programme at Maynooth University. As part of my degree I am doing a research project. The focus of my research is based on the use of Team Teaching methodologies in the classroom and whether they lead to an enhancement in children's learning.

I intend to carry out research in the classroom by asking the children questions about the way they are learning. I may include samples of their work within my research with their permission. I may ask children to participate in a group interview. The child's name and the name of the school will not be included in the thesis that I will write at the end of the research. Children will be allowed to withdraw from the research process at any stage. Part of the research will involve other teachers observing my practice and critiquing it.

The data will be collected using observations, a daily teacher journal and the pupils work samples. The children will be asked their opinions through discussing their learning and work, and how they feel about their learning.

All information will remain confidential and information will be destroyed in a stated timeframe in accordance with the University guidelines. The correct guidelines will be complied with when carrying out this research. The research will not be carried out until approval is granted by the Froebel Department of Primary and Early Childhood Education.

In order to carry out the research, I need the Board of Management approval to proceed and I would be very grateful if you could agree to this request.

Yours sincerely,

---

Aoife McCormack

**Maynooth University Froebel Department of  
Primary and Early Childhood Education**

**Roinn Froebel Don Bhun- agus Luath- Oideachas  
Ollscoil MháNuad.**

Dear Parent(s)/Guardian(s),

I am currently undertaking a part time Master of Education programme at Maynooth University. As part of my degree I am doing a research project. The focus of my research is based on the use of Team Teaching methodologies in the classroom and whether they lead to an enhancement in children's learning.

In order to do this, I intend to carry out research in the classroom by teaching literacy lessons through team teaching methodologies.

The data will be collected using observations, student work samples, a daily teacher journal and the pupils test scores. The children will be asked their opinions through discussing how they felt about learning through team teaching methodologies.

The child's name and the name of the school will not be included in the thesis that I will write at the end of the research. Your child will be allowed withdraw from the research process at any stage.

All information will remain confidential and information will be destroyed in a stated timeframe in accordance with the University guidelines. The correct guidelines will be complied with when carrying out this research. The research will not be carried out until approval is granted by the Froebel Department of Primary and Early Childhood Education.

I would like to invite you and your child to give permission for him/her to take part in this project.

If you have any queries on any part of this research project feel free to contact me by email at [AOIFE.MCCORMACK.2020@mumail.ie](mailto:AOIFE.MCCORMACK.2020@mumail.ie).

Yours faithfully,

---

Aoife McCormack



**Child's name** .....

I am trying to find out how team teaching can help you learn.

I would like to find out more about this. I would like to watch you and listen to you when you are in school and to write down some notes about you.

Would you be ok with that? Pick a box

**Yes**

**No**

I have asked your Mum or Dad or Guardian to talk to you about this. If you have any questions I would be happy to answer them. If you are happy with that could you sign the form that I have sent home?

If you change your mind after we start, that's ok too.



**Maynooth University Froebel Department of  
Primary and Early Childhood  
Education**

**Roinn Froebel Don Bhun- agus Luath- Oideachas  
Ollscoil MháNuad**

### **PARENTAL CONSENT FORM**

I have read the information provided in the attached letter and all of my questions have been answered. I voluntarily agree to the participation of my child in this study. I am aware that I will receive a copy of this consent form for my information.

Parent / Guardian Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Parent / Guardian Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Name of Child \_\_\_\_\_

Child's signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_





**Maynooth University Froebel Department of  
Primary and Early Childhood Education**

**Roinn Froebel Don Bhun- agus Luath- Oideachas  
Ollscoil MháNuad.**

## **Information Sheet**

### **Parents and Guardians**

#### **Who is this information sheet for?**

This information sheet is for parents and guardians.

#### **What is this Action Research Project about?**

Teachers Master of Education in the Froebel Department of Primary and Early Childhood, Maynooth University are required to conduct an action research project, examining an area of their own practice as a student teacher. This project will involve an analysis of the teacher's own practice. Data will be generated using observation, reflective notes and questionnaires. The teacher is then required to produce a thesis documenting this action research project.

#### **What are the research questions?**

- What impact does the use of team teaching methods have on literacy engagement and attainment in the primary class room?
- What impact does the use of team teaching methods have on the literacy teaching skills of a primary school teacher?

#### **What sorts of methods will be used?**

- Observation, Reflective Journal, Questionnaires, Work Samples.

#### **Who else will be involved?**

The study will be carried out by me Aoife McCormack as part of the Master of Education course in the Froebel Department of Primary and Early Childhood Education. The thesis will be submitted for assessment to the module leader Dr Bernadette Wrynn and will be examined by the Department staff. The external examiners will also access the final thesis.

#### **What are you being asked to do?**

You are being asked for your consent to permit me to undertake this study with my class. In all cases the data that is collected will be treated with the utmost confidentiality and the analysis will be reported anonymously. The data captured will only be used for the purpose of the research as part of the Master of Education in the Froebel Department, Maynooth University and will be destroyed in accordance with University guidelines.

**Contact details: Student Email:** AOIFE.MCCORMACK.2020@mumail.ie



**Maynooth University Froebel Department of  
Primary and Early Childhood  
Education**

**Roinn Froebel Don Bhun- agus Luath- Oideachas  
Ollscoil MháNuad..**

**Child's assent to participate**

**My parent/guardian has read the information sheet with me and I agree to take part in  
this research.**

**Name of child (in block capitals):**

\_\_\_\_\_



**Signature:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

## 5. Researcher Declaration



**Maynooth University Froebel Department of  
Primary and Early Childhood Education**

**Roinn Froebel Don Bhun- agus Luath- Oideachas  
Ollscoil MháNuad.**

### **Declaration by Researcher**

This declaration must be signed by the applicant(s)

I acknowledge(s) and agree that:

- a) It is my sole responsibility and obligation to comply with all Irish and EU legislation relevant to this project.
- b) I will comply with Irish and EU legislation relevant to this project.
- c) That the research will be conducted in accordance with the Maynooth University Research Ethics Policy.
- d) That the research will be conducted in accordance with the Maynooth University Research Integrity Policy.
- e) That the research will not commence until ethical approval has been granted by the Research and Ethics committee in the Froebel Department of Primary and Early Childhood Education.

Signature of Student:

Date:

## 6. Post Intervention - Interview Questions with Critical Friend 'Inner Lens'

### Post Intervention - Interview Questions with Critical Friend

Thank you for taking part in my research project.

*"A Primary Teacher's Exploration of the use of Team Teaching Methods in the Teaching of Literacy in the Senior Primary Classroom"* is the title of my research project.

#### 1. How do you feel the station teaching intervention went?

I was really pleased with how the station teaching intervention was going. Obviously it would have been great to continue the intervention for at least a full term if not for a number of months, to get a clearer image of the impact it had on the student's literacy attainment. However, given the positive few weeks we had I would not hesitate in engaging in a similar strategy next year.

#### 2. What do you think were the benefits associated with this station teaching intervention in terms of the teaching of literacy, if any?

1. Small groups –the small number of children in the group allowed me to focus on the one/two students who were really struggling with the vocab. However, it also gave me an opportunity to encourage/check in with the students who may struggle from time to time with new vocabulary (students who may have been on a 'classroom support plan' for literacy.) The small groups also gave me a great opportunity to talk to the students and engage in a number of oral language skills.
2. Mixed-ability grouping – I know this is something that came up when we were discussing the intervention at a staff level (where it was suggested that ability grouping might be seen as more beneficial and maybe it would help 'results' overall). However, reflecting back over the couple of weeks that we did I feel that the mixed ability groups worked well for us. I think this was because we only completed two days a week at station teaching. So the children who really needed a differentiated programme got that with me on the other three days. On the two days of station teaching these children (i.e. children who come out to the SEN setting) had an opportunity to hear a greater range of answers, often pitched at a higher level. I feel listening carefully to students with a greater vocabulary would have had a positive impact on them – especially when the station was so targeted and structured (eg. they were actively engaged in a vocab game).
3. Clear and well thought-out lessons – This intervention encouraged both of us to discuss the set-up and content for the different literacy stations. It encouraged a deeper level of thinking about our aims and objectives for this group of students. We looked at the needs closely and identified how we could best address them. This collaborative approach benefited not only the students but our teaching. Even knowing clearly what was being taught during stations encouraged me further to narrow the focus and objectives of my SEN sessions on the other three days.
4. Range of activities – as there were two independent stations, suitable activities needed to be chosen. Having the opportunity to engage in an audio station was something a bit different and I could see that it appealed to many of the students. I don't think it would have worked as well if you completed this activity at a whole class level. (In the past I have tried to do audio books in a whole class setting and it has not worked well for me.)

3. What do you think were the disadvantages associated with this station teaching intervention in terms of the teaching of literacy, if any?

1. Timing – the limited time (8-10 minutes) per group was very restrictive. It meant that I could not elaborate fully on certain occasions. It was at times conflicting as I was trying to encourage some children to share their answers/knowledge/even giving them a chance to speak and then having to rush through the other content of the station.
2. Having two independent stations/lack of personnel – ideally it would be better if there was only one station where the students worked independently (audio station). Another adult guiding the comprehension station would have been very beneficial – both for the literacy learning of the group and even behaviour management.

4. What impact (if any) do you think this station teaching intervention had on the engagement of the children in literacy activities?

I do think the students enjoyed this station teaching. It was very much a novelty for them as they hadn't completed anything like it since infants. It was something different, out of the 'norm.' I think it was important for this group that we didn't complete it every day – only two times a week kept their interest and engagement. It was a chance for them to try out different activities eg. listening to an audio book or something as simple as sitting on the cushions in a group together. Small groups encouraged them to get involved in the vocabulary games or discussions. I also think that some students like knowing the activity is short and sweet – can be daunting/boring when they know a lesson could go on for 40minutes and longer.

5. What impact (if any) do you think this station teaching intervention had on the literacy attainment of the children?

This is so hard to know given the sudden closing of school and therefore not being able to complete the intervention for a full term or even to the end of the year. I do feel there were a few 'setting up' issues in the beginning – this was a new strategy for the students and teething problems were inevitable. I feel that these issues had just settled down and the students were fully engaging in the stations, maximizing the time they had at each one. It is therefore a great pity we were unable to continue with it to see its true impact.

However, one positive impact that I feel was already emerging was on the literacy attainment of the 'classroom support' students. This is purely based on my own observations (no official assessment). I do feel a number of students really 'came out of their shell' as the weeks went on. I could see them become more confident, maybe just more comfortable with me.

6. Do you think this station teaching intervention had an impact on the reading fluency of the children in my class?

Again, I don't feel we were able to give it enough time to properly judge the impact on the reading fluency of the students. We also were not able to complete the second part of the assessment or even any standardised tests at the end of the year to check for any improvement in results.

In my group the students had to read through the list of new vocab – yes between the Monday and the Thursday the majority had greatly improved in their ability to read through the list fluently. But I feel the main aim of my station was to promote a better understanding of the vocabulary.

7. Do you think this station teaching intervention had an impact on the reading comprehension levels of the children in my class?

Hard to know based on the content of my station – I wasn't really focusing on reading comprehension.

Looking at my group of students who attended the SEN setting, I couldn't see any clear impact on their comprehension levels.

8. Do you think station teaching in the senior classes (for literacy lessons) is something we as a school should implement or encourage as part of our planning?

I really do think that this strategy could benefit a number of senior classes. I would encourage both SET and senior class teachers to be open to the idea. I've done it with 5<sup>th</sup> class before and it also worked well then (similar set up – in that we had 4 groups, 2 teachers and we completed it twice a week).

As listed above I found a number of positives both for me as an SET and for the students too (however this is only anecdotal.)

It keeps things interesting – for all parties involved!

9. What changes (if any) would you make to this intervention?

1. Allow a longer slot for these two sessions (even 50 minutes rather than 40). This would need to be done when completing the SEN timetable at the start of the year.
2. Try and enlist another adult – ideally another SET however a parent or retired teacher would also be very beneficial.
3. If we were given the full year I would mix up the activities after one term. Even swap around the teachers at the stations – just to keep it a little different. This may also suit if the objectives for the terms were different.

10. Do you have any other comments to make that you think I should consider as part of this research?

1. The need for an intervention – the poor and regressing standardised scores were a huge concern for the SEN team and teachers who taught this class in 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup>. I feel that you had to try something different with this group of students in order to address these concerns. I feel this intervention was really aimed at the 'classroom support group' which unfortunately was quite a large number of students. The intervention gave us both a chance to really focus in on these students who would be considered just below average. (The other 3 days gave me a good chance to focus on the students really struggling to attain the literacy objectives.)
2. Behaviour in the class - I feel that you cannot overlook the behaviour issues in the class and therefore a different approach to teaching literacy was needed. Having an extra teacher in the room and smaller groups allowed us both to keep the lesson on track and therefore helping the students reach the objectives.
3. Mixed-ability grouping versus similar ability grouping - What does the research say? (I know I looked at this for my Masters – I did an assignment on 'streaming' as at that time we were streaming maths into three levels as we had 3 classes that year.)

## 7. Post Intervention - Interview Questions with Principal Teacher

### Post Intervention - Interview Questions with Principal Teacher

Thank you for taking part in my research project.

*"A Primary Teacher's Exploration of the use of Team Teaching Methods in the Teaching of Literacy in the Senior Primary Classroom"* is the title of my research project.

#### 1. How do you think my station teaching intervention went?

I thought the Station Teaching approach worked very well. I was delighted to see how all the children, of varying abilities were engaged in the activities. I was particularly interested in seeing how the independent stations would work. The children at these stations worked well with no adult intervention during the lesson. The reading group was well able to complete the comprehension cards and knew what was expected of them at the station. It was also great to see the children listening to the book on earphones and smiling as they followed along with the text. It was great to see two teachers teaching alongside each other. It was obvious both teachers had planned for the lesson.

#### 2. What do you think were the benefits associated with this station teaching intervention in terms of the teaching of literacy, if any?

- A variety of activities kept the children interested in the lesson
- I thought it was a good way of using the 2 teachers
- As the teachers were working closely with the children, differentiation was promoted
- Activities involved a variety of learning styles which meant that every child was catered for
- It gave children the opportunity to take responsibility for different roles during group work.

#### 3. What do you think were the disadvantages associated with this station teaching intervention in terms of the teaching of literacy, if any?

I thought the time at each station was too short. I know it was linked with the LS timetable but I feel an extra 10 mins would have made the station teaching even more effective.

I know the children were only getting used to Station Teaching when I observed, as time goes on they will be so familiar with the routine that they should be able to change to the next station at a faster pace.

#### 4. What impact (if any) do you think this station teaching intervention had on the engagement of the children in literacy activities?

I definitely think the station teaching method improved the engagement of the children in the class. They are a lively bunch of children and the teacher always needs to manage the class during lessons to keep the class on track. I felt that the children were all so engaged in the activity, they hadn't time to chat or get distracted.

5. What impact (if any) do you think this station teaching intervention had on the literacy attainment of the children?

I do think it would improve the literacy attainment of the children as the children were taught in a small focused group where they could concentrate and learn according to their level. If children are working every day on reading, word detective work, vocab, spelling, comprehension strategies, developing their listening skills etc it is bound to have an effect on their literacy attainment. Also the fact that two teachers are in the room always benefits students.

6. Do you think this station teaching intervention had an impact on the reading fluency of the children in my class?

Yes I do think this Station Teaching would have an impact on reading fluency.

- If children are getting the opportunity to read every day, it will have a positive impact on reading fluency.
- Listening to the story being read with intonation etc is very beneficial to children's reading fluency
- Building children's range of vocabulary benefits reading fluency.
- Research shows that teaching comprehension strategies leads to reading fluency – it is easier for a child to read if they understand what they are reading.

7. Do you think this station teaching intervention had an impact on the reading comprehension levels of the children in my class?

Yes I do think this Station Teaching had a positive impact on the reading comprehension levels in your class.

If the children are being taught comprehension strategies in a small focused group, it will improve their comprehension levels.

The independent reading group was working on comprehension activities after they read the text. Completing these comprehension cards regularly would improve comprehension levels.

8. Do you think station teaching in the senior classes (for literacy lessons) is something we as a school should implement or encourage as part of our future planning?

Yes it is definitely something I would be interested in looking in to. We have Station Teaching in the Junior classes in the school and it works very effectively. When we introduced Station Teaching almost 10 years ago, there was some resistance by staff but now it is understood that this is the way infant teachers in our school teach English. At the time, two classes trialed it and then when the other teachers saw the benefits, they used this approach too.

We could introduce it in a phased way.



9. What changes (if any) would you make to this intervention?

We would have to look at the timetable of the SEN team and see if we could allocate SEN teachers for a longer period of time to the Senior classes. This can be difficult depending on the needs of the school in any given year. We could also decide to do this intervention for a term rather than for the whole year so more classes would benefit.

10. What is your opinion on the use of team teaching methods in the senior primary classroom and the impact that they may have on the teaching practice of the teachers who engage with it?

I think team teaching in the senior primary classrooms is very beneficial to the children's learning. It also has a positive effect on teachers' practice:

- Teachers are a support for each other
- Teachers are more engaged as children are more engaged (groups are smaller than whole class)
- A variety of approaches can be used with an extra person in the room
- Creates more opportunities for differentiated teaching
- Teachers will probably have lessons more planned as they know the time is limited during Station Teaching
- Teachers have more opportunities to give time and attention to individual students if there are two teachers teaching
- Teachers have more time to focus on assessment
- Teachers can provide affirmation for each other

11. Do you have any other comments to make that you think I should consider as part of my research?

No

Well done – a great research topic.

Best of luck!

## 8. Analysis of Data Collected

	Data Set	Amount	Result(s)	Other relevant info
1.	<p><b>Pre-intervention Questionnaire</b></p> <p>(This was completed after pilot of literacy team teaching (parallel teaching) – before the station teacher intervention)</p>	25 completed questionnaires on 14 <sup>th</sup> January 2020	<p><b>Q.2 - Themes emerging:</b> pupil self-confidence</p> <p><b>Q.3 - Themes emerging:</b> pupils lack of knowledge of the cognitive processes involved in reading.</p> <p><b>Q.4 - Themes emerging:</b> Pupil autonomy, pupil efficacy, lack of independent skills.</p> <p><b>Q.5- Themes emerging:</b> play, enjoyment, hard work, variety, efficiency of learning time.</p> <p><b>Q.6 - Themes emerging:</b> variety of content, variety of teaching approaches, efficiency of time, more individual time to read aloud.</p> <p><b>Q.7. - Themes emerging:</b> reading as a form of relaxation or to relieve anxiety, fun, enjoyment, pressure of reading aloud.</p>	<p><b>Q.6</b></p> <p>Maybe this question should have been multiple choice for the ‘Why?’ part as a lot children were not specific.</p>
2.	Teacher Reflective Journal	Started August 2019 – to date	<p><b>Themes emerging:</b> timetabling, WPM, collaboration, reading for pleasure, power of reading, reading practice time for the research respondents.</p> <p><b>Sample quotes:</b>“I am concerned that the stations are short in duration, 10 minutes per station is not a long time, especially as it may take the children some time to get used to the transition from one station to another” (December, 2019).</p> <p>“<i>The Butterfly Lion</i> by Michael Morpurgo has a lot of unusual character names and place names which may be difficult for some children to pronounce, would this be fair? We have not read a novel like this, this year, so it may not be fair to test the children on this type of material” (January 2020).</p> <p>“The writing font used in Michael Morpurgo’s <i>The Butterfly Lion</i> makes it difficult to copy and transfer onto a W.P.M. sheet. Having purposefully listened to a number of children read for one minute I estimate needing 150-250 words on a sheet. There are about 3-4</p>	<p>Tools Utilised:</p> <p>1) Brookfield’s lens of our own autobiographies to examine my practice (1995).</p> <p>2) Gibbs’ Six-Step Reflective Cycle to assist with reflective journaling (Palmer et al., 1994).</p> <p>3) Microsoft Windows and free-writing journals were used throughout.</p>

			words per line in 'The Butterfly Lion while the 'Let's Go!' textbook contains 8-10 words per line. I do not want a child to run out of text to read before one minute is up" (January 2020)	
3.	Pre-intervention Comprehension Assessment 1 (cjfallon – Lift Off!)	23 completed	<p><u>Average result of those tested (23) – 69%</u></p> <p>(see table 5 for detailed breakdown of results)</p> <p>The four sections of this assessment and average results of each section were as follows:</p> <p>A. Light Thinking – average score 80%</p> <p>B. Deeper Thinking – average score 49%*</p> <p>C. Vocabulary Work – average score 70%</p> <p>D. Comprehension Cloze – average score 73%</p> <p>The average score of 49% in “B. Deeper Thinking” is significant in its relation to the cognitive capacity involved in the activity of reading.</p> <p><u>Themes emerging:</u> deficiencies in key variables associated with the reader (Bowe et al, 2012): cognitive capacity and knowledge of specific comprehension strategies.</p>	Bowe et al, outline how “cognitive capacity” is a key variable associated with the reader (2012). Cognitive capacity involves the following skills: attention, memory, ability to visualize, infer, determine importance, summarize, synthesize (Bowe et al, 2012).
4.	Pre-intervention Comprehension Assessment 2  (twinkl – Year 4, reading assessment)	25 completed	<p><u>Average result of those tested (25) - 51.88%</u></p> <p>(See table 4 for detailed breakdown of results)</p> <p>Q.14 - Based on what the man says, predict what Jamie might say to his mum when she asks him if he knows anything about what has happened. – <u>average score 6.6%</u></p> <p><u>Emerging Themes:</u></p> <p><i>Basic comprehension retrieval</i> – In Q. 1-4 the reader was asked to retrieve and identify key details from the text. The average score of these questions was 96%.</p> <p><i>Vocabulary knowledge</i> – In Q.6 the reader was asked to use evidence from the text to describe how a character</p>	<p>Q.14 raises the question of the difference between prediction and inference. This question uses the word predict “<i>Based on what the man says, predict what Jamie might say to his mum when she asks him if he knows anything about what has happened</i>”.</p> <p>It is outlined by Twinkl in their ‘Year 4 Reading Assessment Marking Scheme’ that Q.14 assesses</p>

			<p>felt, the average score was 41%, difficulties pertained to the use of appropriate words to describe feelings.</p> <p>This result contrasts from the multiple choice question, Q.11 “Jamie uses the words ‘stuck in the middle of nowhere’ to describe where he is. These words show us that Jamie feels: (circle the correct answer)”. The average score of Q.11 was 88%.</p> <p>The multiple choice provided in this question gave the reader a scaffold which allowed them to perform better. Similarly Q.9 was a multiple choice question “Which word is closest in meaning to ‘bewildered’? “.The average score of Q.9 was 80%.</p> <p><i>Cognitive capacity</i> – Q.8 required the reader to make inferences from the text “While the man was talking to Jamie’s mum, he looked down at Jamie ‘occasionally’. Give reason for this”. The average score of Q. 8 was 44%. While Q.6 relates to vocabulary knowledge it also required inferences to be made from the text. The average score of Q.6 was 41%.</p> <p>Q.13. “Why is the story called ‘A Real Virtual World?’” asked the reader to make a decision about the text that was not explicit. In doing so the reader was asked to summarise main ideas from more than one paragraph. The skill of inferring meaning from the text using background knowledge is also at play here (Bowe et al, 2012). The average score of this question was 33%.</p> <p>Similarly Q.14* required the reader to infer by piecing together clues from the text. The average score of this question was 6.6%.</p> <p><i>Cognitive capacity / knowledge associated with specific comprehension strategies</i> - An example of such a strategy is ‘Determining Importance’ (which also falls under cognitive capacity according to Bowe et al, 2012). This involves the reader identifying the key pieces of information. In Q.7 and Q.10 the task was to find a sentence from the text which gave the reader a key piece of information. The results of these questions were as follows: Q.7- average score 12%, Q.10 - average score 16%.</p>	<p>the skill of prediction however the researcher believes that the skill of inference is also assessed here. The reason for this is that in the marking scheme points for correct answers are awarded only if the reader’s response reflects three specific criteria. Bowe et al outline the difference between prediction and inference being that prediction is making a ‘guess’ while inferring is piecing together clues from the text to draw a conclusion that is correct (2012).</p>
5.	Pilot W.P.M. (Words Per Minute) – (see	13 <sup>th</sup> January 2020	A pilot W.P.M (words per minute) assessment was conducted as I had no previous experience of conducting such an assessment. It was decided that this was necessary in order to ensure the validity of the	Completing the pilot WPM assessment was important as it brought a number of unforeseen issues which

	Image 1)		<p>words per minute data gathering tool. Key characteristics of the pilot included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use of a stop-watch - I changed from using a stop watch to using my phone mid way through the pilot, I found the timer on my phone much easier to use.</li> <li>• Two copies of the assessment passage were necessary – one for the reader and one for the assessor to mark.</li> <li>• Errors were ignored for the purposes of the pilot to allow me to get used to the process of listening and timing.</li> <li>• Unseen fictional text from the class ‘Let’s Go’ reader was the chosen piece to be read aloud by the children.</li> </ul>	<p>included the design of the assessment.</p> <p>As these individual assessments were conducted in the classroom during Literacy time, while the rest of the class were in the room the pilot gave research participants an opportunity to get used to remaining quiet and not asking questions when I was conducting each test, this was an issue at the onset of the pilot testing</p>
6.	<p>Pre-intervention</p> <p>Fluency Words Per Minute (WPM)</p> <p>(see image 2)</p>	<p>25 completed on 15<sup>th</sup>, 16<sup>th</sup> &amp; 17<sup>th</sup> of January 2020</p>	<p>Key characteristics of the WPM assessment:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use of stop-watch on phone to time the assessment.</li> <li>• Unseen text.</li> <li>• No error was counted for self-corrections</li> <li>• When a child had difficulty with a word, I told them the word after approximately three seconds.</li> <li>• No error was recorded for extra words added (adding an extra word would increase their reading time so this was deemed to be enough)</li> </ul>	<p>See Table 1 (below) for detailed breakdown of results.</p>
7.	<p>Pre-intervention</p> <p>Reading Record</p> <p>(see Image 3)</p>	<p>21 completed on 22<sup>nd</sup>, 23<sup>rd</sup> &amp; 24<sup>th</sup> of January</p>	<p>PM reader guidelines were followed in conducting the reading record assessments (Nelley, 2000).</p> <p>Key characteristics include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Untimed individual activity</li> <li>• Seen text chosen that the children had already covered.</li> </ul>	<p>See Table 3 for detailed breakdown of results.</p>
8.	<p>Interview with critical friend (inner lense)</p>	<p>Answered Questions returned April 13<sup>th</sup>, 2020.</p>	<p><u>Emerging Themes:</u></p> <p>Q.1 – messiness of schools closing, engagement, positive co-teacher feedback.</p> <p>Q.2 – small groups, oral language skills, mixed-ability grouping, timeframe of station teaching, withdrawal, mixed withdrawal / station teaching approach, teacher organisation, increased dialogue between teachers, deeper level of thinking, collaborative approach</p>	

			<p>benefitted our teaching, secondary benefits during withdrawal sessions, range of activities, audio station,</p> <p>Q.3. - timing, restrictive times, lack of personnel, one independent station, behavior management.</p> <p>Q.4 – enjoyment, novelty, 2 sessions per good factor in maintaining interest/engagement, small groups, short sessions (beneficial).</p> <p>Q.5. COVID, setting up issues, literacy attainment of ‘classroom support’ students, confidence growing.</p> <p>Q.6. vocabulary, fluency</p> <p>Q.7 reading comprehension</p> <p>Q.8 future planning in the school, interest levels</p> <p>Q.9. longer time slots, SEN timetable, another teacher, SET, retired teacher/parent, recommendations for change, vary content based on objectives, swap teachers at stations.</p> <p>Q.10 – need for an intervention, ‘classroom support group’, behaviour, different approach to teaching, extra teacher in the room, smaller groups, objectives, streaming/mixed ability grouping/similar ability grouping.</p>	
9.	Interview with principal (post observation of intervention)	Answered Questions returned April 6 <sup>th</sup> , 2020.	<p><u>Emerging Themes:</u></p> <p>Q.1. – pupil engagement, working independently (independent station), clear expectations, teacher collaboration, enjoyment.</p> <p>Q.2 – variety (interest), use of time/teaching resources, differentiation, learning styles, inclusion, promotion of pupil autonomy (different roles during group work).</p> <p>Q.3 – timing of lessons, routine, pace.</p> <p>Q.4. – pupil engagement, class management.</p> <p>Q.5. – concentration levels, differentiation, vocabulary, comprehension strategies, listening skills, literacy attainment, increased pupil-teacher time.</p> <p>Q.6. – fluency, increased opportunity to read aloud, listening to others read, range of vocabulary, comprehension strategies.</p> <p>Q.7. – comprehension levels.</p> <p>Q.8. – station teaching</p>	

			<p>Q.9 – timing/timetabling for staff (SEN),</p> <p>Q.10. – station teaching, increased engagement, teachers working collaboratively, assessment for learning, teacher affirmation, increased planning, timing, and differentiation.</p>	
	Post-Intervention Questionnaire	Incomplete	Schools Closed - Covid 19 - March 2020	
	Post-Intervention Assessments	Incomplete	Schools Closed - Covid 19 - March 2020	

**8.1. Table 1: W.P.M (Words per Minute) Assessment) – 15<sup>th</sup> January 2020**

W.P.M (Words per Minute) Assessment) – 15 <sup>th</sup> January 2020				
Number of words in the passage - 279				
	<b>WPM</b> Words Per Minute	<b>Uncorrected</b> <b>Errors</b>	<b>WCPM</b> Words Correct Per Minute	<b>Accuracy/Reading</b> <b>Rate %</b>
1.	123	2	121	98%
2.	107	2	105	98%
3.	118	2	116	98%
4.	81	13	68	83%
5.	110	2	108	98%
6.	118	4	114	96%
7.	136	1	135	91%
8.	44	10	34	77%
9.	177	4	173	97%
10.	152	0	152	100%
11.	148	4	144	97%
12.	155	3	152	98%
13.	118	3	115	97%
14.	94	3	91	96%
15.	103	10	93	90%
16.	100	0	100	100%
17.	107	5	102	95%
18.	63	7	56	88%
19.	103	4	99	96%
20.	73	1	72	98%
21.	128	0	128	100%
22.	118	1	117	99%
23.	119	1	118	99%
24.	101	11	90	89%
25.	71	7	64	90%