

**TEAM-TEACHING FOR INCLUSION: A CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF  
DISABILITY DISCOURSE IN IRISH POST-PRIMARY SCHOOLS**

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## Declaration

I declare that this material, which I now submit for examination on the programme of study leading to the award of Degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Education, is entirely my own work and has not been taken from the work of others, save and to the extent that such work has been cited and acknowledged in its text.

Signed: 

Date: **19<sup>th</sup> August 2020**

## Abstract

Educational policy rhetoric in Ireland has consistently represented team-teaching as an effective way to support the deployment of inclusive pedagogy in post-primary schools. Yet, evidence for such assertions is equivocal and the practice remains problematic and underused. Much of the inertia reported in relation to the adoption of team-teaching in post-primary schools had been associated with the cultural colonisation of inclusive education by positivist epistemologies and a lack of ideological commitment to the principles of inclusion.

Using a multiple case study research design, this study investigated three purposely-chosen post-primary team-teaching initiatives, each in a different school, that were set up to support learners deemed to have disability. In each case, a series of team-teaching meetings held over the course of the 2015-2016 academic year was transcribed and subjected to Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) using Fairclough's (2003, 2016) Dialectical-Relational approach. Particular emphasis was placed on identifying and problematizing the discourses that dominated teachers' constructions of learners deemed to have disability and whether these were grounded in positivist epistemologies or those congruent with inclusive education. The work also sought to examine whether or not teachers' representations of students deemed to have disabilities influenced their conceptualisation of team-teaching as a support to the inclusion of these learners. Critical Disability Studies was used to develop a socio-cultural analysis of these issues.

Findings suggested that the genre of team-teaching meetings significantly constrained how teachers made meaning about learners deemed to have disability. They also suggest that teachers relied disproportionately on essentialist and personal tragedy discourses to do so. This reliance limited their conceptualisations of team-teaching to a narrow set of normalising practices that required learners to accommodate to highly visible diminished identities and fit into existing mainstream educational programmes. In this context, team-teaching was used primarily to differentiate instruction and provide individual support to a broad range of learners, not just those deemed to have disability. It was deployed in ways that reproduced the power relations and disciplinary technologies of special education rather than the values and underlying epistemologies of inclusive education.

Within team-teaching dyads, individual teachers often varied greatly in their use of disability discourse. They enacted particular team-teaching identities to negotiate incongruence between their discourse positions and those of their partners. As well as essentialist and personal tragedy discourses, teachers also used a range of counter-hegemonic discourses to represent learners deemed to have disability. These were usually deployed in tandem with essentialist discourses, which limited their influence on teachers' conceptualisations of team-teaching. The study documented these counter-hegemonic discourses as examples of what resistance to oppressive essentialist discourse can look like and how this might be developed further in the future. Conclusions were drawn about how Universal Design for Learning and Assessment for Learning could be used to enhance the inclusive orientation of team-teaching.



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## Glossary of Terms/Abbreviations

Abbreviation	Term
CDA	Critical Discourse Analysis
CDS	Critical Disability Studies
CSO	Central Statistics Office (in Ireland)
DES	Department of Education and Skills
DEIS	Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools
DFI	Disability Federation of Ireland
DS	Disability Studies
EPSEN	Education for Persons with Special Educational Needs Act, 2004
EDF	European Disability Forum
G26	A pseudonym for the Room Number G26, the room in which the Behavioural Unit in Willow Way was located.
HP	Hazel Park Post-Primary School
IQ	Intelligence Quotient
JCSP	Junior Certificate Schools Programme
LCA	Leaving Certificate Applied (Programme)
ML	Maple Lodge Post-Primary School
WW	Willow Way Post-Primary School
Max.	Maximum
Mtg.	Meeting
NBSS	National Behaviour Support Service
NCCA	National Council for Curriculum and Assessment
NCSE	National Council for Special Education
NLN	National Learning Network
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
SENCO	Special Educational Needs Coordinator
SERC	Special Education Review Committee
SET	Special Education Teacher
SNA	Special Needs Assistant
T1	The team-teacher who was assigned first to the team-taught group, who taught them during every lesson during the week, and who was invariably trained to teach the subject area on which the team-teaching intervention focussed.

T2	The team-teacher who was assigned to the group after the T1 teacher, who saw the group less often than the T1 teacher, and who was not necessarily trained in the subject on which the team-teaching intervention focussed.
UN	United National (Intergovernmental Organization)
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation

# Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

## 1.1 Context and Rationale

Evidence of the successful inclusion of those deemed to have disability within education has been equivocal at best (Baglieri et al., 2011). In Ireland, it has been described as “mixed” (Rose, et al., 2015, p. 2). On the one hand, there have been signs of significant infrastructural improvement, on the other serious systemic shortcomings have been reported, including a failure to implement fully the provisions of the Education for Persons with Special Educational Needs Act (Government of Ireland, 2004). A need for “joined up thinking” at the level of policy and practice has also been identified (Drudy and Kinsella, 2009, p. 661). At the school level, significant commitment to inclusive practice has been found (Drudy and Kinsella, 2009; Rose, et al. 2015). Yet this has been characterised as variable across institutions (Drudy and Kinsella, 2009; Rose, et al. 2015), according to the widely “different stages of development in this process” at which these institutions find themselves (Rose, et al., 2015, p. 2). At the individual level, positive outcomes for students deemed to have disability, are thought to include increased access to stimulating and challenging learning environments, higher levels of academic engagement and achievement, improved social interaction and skills development and reduced dropout rates (Winter and O’Raw, 2010). Yet many studies have described these improvements as marginal (Winter & O’Raw, 2010, p. 23). Moreover, scholars point to the dubious experiences reported by those deemed to have disabilities in educational settings that purport to be inclusive and the poor educational outcomes associated with this group (Connor 2014; Skrtic, 1991; Zigmond, 2003, 2006).

Such findings suggest that the inclusive education movement represents a “troubled and troubling educational and social project” (Slee, 2014, p. 217) that has at least stalled (Ferguson, 2008; Lindsay, 2007; Nind et al., 2004; Slee, 2014; Warnock, 2005) and may have “lost sight of its destination” entirely (Kozleski et al., 2014, p. 234). Many believe that the establishment within the inclusive education movement, of a cultural stronghold of positivist epistemologies associated with special education, is at the heart of these difficulties (Baglieri, 2017; Florian, 2014; Graham & Slee, 2008; Liasidou, 2012; Riddell & Watson, 2014; Thomas & Loxley, 2007). For example, Allan (2003) asserts that the *grand narrative* of positivism is very much alive and well within the field of inclusive education, and that many of the things that go on in the field are, in fact, just reiterations of the practices of special education. All of the above scholars, express concern that the continued entrenchment of essentialist epistemologies within inclusive education, hampers efforts to reposition the location of disability from individuals to broader society and its cultures and institutions.

From a pedagogic perspective, concerns have been expressed about how the continued proliferation of positivist epistemologies has constrained teachers' thinking about inclusion to a narrow set of teaching and learning possibilities, limited their propensity to engage in pedagogic innovation, and caused them to acquiesce in the functionalist and managerial agendas of education (Ball, 2013; Hart, 1996; Lynch, Grummell & Devine, 2015; MacRuaric, 2013b; Skrtic, 1991). While the concept of essentialist discourse will be discussed in some detail in Section 2.3 of this work, it is useful to give a brief outline of its meaning at this stage. Essentialist ontologies assert that individuals have some innate quality that can be reduced to a specific *essence* which allows them to be assigned to a particular category (Gallagher, 2007; Slee 1997; Thomas and Loxley, 2007). Essentialist ontologies tend to be based on positivist epistemologies, that locate human differences within individual pathologies that carry *medical* or *deficit* connotations. Thus, within the essentialist view, disabilities exist in a real and objective sense and are independent of what we think about them (Vehmas, 2008). They are individualised phenomena for which objective criteria can be established and in relation to which systems of assessment, identification and response can be devised and implemented.

Within the field of education, positivist epistemologies and essentialist discourses are thought to be routinely reconstructed by social actors, especially in second-level schools (Ashby, 2010). This has caused some researchers to conclude that these institutions operate not as inclusive entities, but as "sites where ableist norms of performance ... leave many marginalized" (Ashby, 2010 p. 345), including students with disability. These discourses have been found to be most assertively deployed in circumstances where the "difficulties of students exceeds the capacity of the school to respond" to these in ways that are deemed sufficient and appropriate (Black-Hawkins et al., 2007 p. 18). Thus, it is argued, they allow schools to pathologise individual difference and elide their own responsibility to respond to particular learners in ways that are inclusive (Black-Hawkins et al., 2007).

The cultural colonisation of inclusive education by positivist epistemologies has led many commentators (Biklen, Orsati, & Bacon, 2014; Connor, 2014; Florian, 2014; Graham & Slee, 2008) to suggest that inclusive education, like special education before it, has become "instrumental in the polity process of exclusion" (Slee, 2014, p. 218). Inclusive education has been characterised as an "empty signifier" that has been usurped by "powerful interest groups" who shape it "with their own values and agendas" (Armstrong & Barton, 2008, p. 5). Slee (2014, p. 218) goes as far as to assert that the once rebellious call of inclusive education has now been subverted and repurposed towards reinforcing the "normalising function of schooling". In similar vein, Griffin and Shevlin (2011 p. 73), have proposed that in Ireland the language of inclusion has been applied "to practices that are far from inclusive".

Many have suggested that combatting this cultural colonisation of inclusive education by positivist epistemologies and essentialist discourse necessitates a *cultural* response (Graham & Slee, 2008; Florian, 2014), focused on disrupting the “normative centre” of education (Florian, 2014, p. 20) from which all exclusion derives (Graham & Slee, 2008). This is what Florian (2007) means when she talks about reimagining a unitary system of education that responds equitably and effectively to all learners, regardless of ability.

It is within the context of this type of critical sociological analysis that the current work investigates team-teaching as a support to the inclusion of students deemed to have disability in post-primary Irish schools. From the time of the *Report of the Special Education Review Committee* (Government of Ireland, 1993) to the present day (Department of Education and Science, 2005, 2007, 2014, 2015, 2017a; Government of Ireland, 2004, 2005; National Council for Special Education (NCSE), 2010, 2014), Irish educational policy rhetoric has consistently represented team-teaching as a vehicle for the promotion of inclusive pedagogy. Policy documents have repeatedly referred to it, in largely uncritical terms, as a pedagogic approach that is inherently inclusive and particularly effective in supporting the inclusion of students deemed to have special educational needs, including disability.

In similar terms, much of the extant literature around team-teaching (Bouck, 2007a; Friend, Cook, Hurley-Chamberlain & Shamberger, 2010; Hourcade & Bauwens, 2002; Kloo & Zigmond, 2008; Pugach & Johnson, 1995; Thousand, Villa, & Nevin, 2006; Villa et al., 2013; Volonino & Zigmond, 2007; Winn & Blanton, 2005) has portrayed team-teaching as a key space within which knowledge around special and general education can coalesce to allow teachers to respond better to the increasingly diverse range of learners they encounter in their mainstream classes. In fact, some scholars have asserted that this is its primary function (Kilanowski-Press, Foote & Rinaldo, 2010; Villa et al., 2008; Walther-Thomas, 1997). Yet the empirical evidence for such claims remains equivocal, unconvincing, confusing and sometimes contradictory (Murawski & Swanson, 2001; Scruggs, Mastropieri, & McDuffie, 2007; Murawski & Goodwin, 2014; Hattie, 2019). Moreover, the enthusiasm for team-teaching evident in policy rhetoric does not seem to have filtered down to the school level, either in Ireland (Hislop, 2011; Rose, et al., 2015; Shevlin et al., 2009; Travers et al., 2010) or elsewhere (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), 2009; Saloviita and Takala, 2010), where the practice remains an undervalued and underused. These sources suggest that while teachers cite team-teaching as the model of support that best reflects inclusive educational principles, it is the model they deploy least often in their classrooms, compared to whole-group, small group and one-to-one instruction (Kilanowski-Press, et al., 2010).



The slow uptake of team-teaching and the weak basis for claims about its effectiveness in supporting learners deemed to have disability, have led some scholars to suggest that rhetorical commitment to the practice has come more from ideological beliefs about where such students should be educated (Friend et al., 2010) and an unwillingness to upset the normative centre of education (Florian, 2014), than any empirical evidence about of its usefulness as an inclusive pedagogical practice (Thousand, Villa, & Nevin, 2006; Friend et al., 2010; Murawski and Goodwin, 2014). Such concerns led Murawski and Goodwin (2014, p. 295) to conclude that much of the “ethical confusion about co-teaching relates to ambivalence surrounding inclusion in general” and to a lack of ideological commitment to its principles. The current work sought to interrogate this assertion.

## 1.2 Theoretical Framework and Commitments

The fact that team-teaching as a support to inclusion seems to be deployed largely on the basis of ideological commitments makes it an ideal subject for analysis within critical and postmodern paradigms. Critical Disability Studies (CDS) is a theoretical framework that facilitates such an analysis. While remaining firmly rooted in the social model and acknowledging materialism, it embraces “socio-cultural and historical dispositions towards dis/ability” (Connor & Valle, 2015, 1112). It focuses on the “cultural location of disability” and views this as a place “that evoke[s] violence, restriction, confinement” and oppression (Goodley, 2013, p. 633). Its drive to “unpack” the concept of disability from a cultural perspective (Gallagher et al., 2014, p. 1125), leads it to take a particular interest in the role of language and other semiosis, in other words discourse (Gallagher, 2007).

It borrows extensively from Foucault’s ideas about knowledge and power (Rogers, 2004b) to assert that it is only through discourse that we can shape meanings (Foucault, 1977), assimilate the ready-made understandings of others, and come to see the world and ourselves as others do (Barton & Walker, 2012). Yet discourses also carry their own *rationalities* which govern what can and cannot be said and how we think and act. They render “some things common sense and other things nonsensical” (Youdell, 2006 p. 36). CDS uses these ideas to focus on how meaning is made about disability within society and its institutions, including schools. It asserts that the discourses involved in meaning-making about disability are predicated on particular “sets of assumptions about what counts as learning, achievement, and ability” (Rogers, 2002, p. 215), assumptions that perform ideological functions and leads inevitably to the exercise of power.

CDS theory is used in this work, in tandem with the Foucauldian tools of archaeology and genealogy, to explore how certain “conventional and naturalized [*sic*] ways of thinking”

about disability have gained the status of *common sense* in certain schools (Baglieri, Valle, Connor, & Gallagher, 2011, p. 268) and to explore whether, and if so how, these discourses influence teachers' conceptualisations of team-teaching as a support to the inclusion of learners placed in the disability category. The study asks, for example, whether teachers' adherence to positivist discourses has led to a proliferation of essentialist discourse in relation to learners deemed to have disability that has constrained their thinking about team-teaching to a "narrowly circumscribed set of possibilities" (Hart, 1996) that had less to do with supporting inclusion and more to do with protecting the normative centre of mainstream education, from which all exclusion derives (Florian, 2014; Graham & Slee, 2008). Conversely, it asked whether their use of non-essentialist discourse provided them with opportunities to interrogate the dis/ability binary and conceptualise team-teaching as a vehicle that facilitated the creation of more inclusive educational environments in their classrooms (Florian, 2014; Graham & Slee, 2008).

CDS is also used to address ideological questions about the interests served by the deployment of team-teaching in the schools studied. It helps to interrogate whether it was deployed as an addition to the current set of questionable practices already operating within Irish post-primary education that call themselves inclusive, yet actually work to reinforced a cultural stronghold of positivist epistemologies and disciplinary technologies associated with special education (Black-Hawkins & Florian, 2012, p. 568). Such disciplinary technologies are thought to include elevated levels of hierarchical observation, normalising judgement, examination and spatialisation (Allan, 1996), that work in "local centres of power/knowledge" to exert a significant individualising *gaze* on *exceptional* learners and marks them out for exceptional treatment (Allan, 1996, p. 222). The work also took an interest in whether, and if so how, these technologies were incorporated into team-teaching practices. CDS was also used to ask whether team-teaching had been developed into a site where taken-for-granted assumptions about learners deemed to have disability could be subjected "to mutual critique" (Ainscow and Miles, 2008 p. 24) and where disabled *identities* could be reimaged in ways that reduced the oppression experienced by those to whom these were assigned (Danforth & Rhodes, 1997; Flood, 2013).

In looking at these issues, this thesis seeks to develop and extend the ideas of Baglieri et al. (2011), who used CDS to assert that team-teaching can inadvertently be used to partition students into *special* and *typical* categories that "presume the 'rightness' of a *normal* (one-size-fits-all) curriculum" and of a generic set of teaching practices to deliver this (Baglieri et al., 2011 p. 272). Their work suggests that such an "essentially static baseline" view of education leads inevitably to students with diverse needs being viewed as "*extra*

*work*, particularly for the general educator in the inclusive setting” (Baglieri et al., 2011, p. 272). For Baglieri et al. (2011), this view is often reflected in the division of labour within teaching teams, which tends to position certain students as marginal to the “regular” work of teaching and causes “a synthetic, detrimental division” between special and general educators that runs counter to inclusive principles (Baglieri et al., 2011, p. 272).

The current study also follows on from the seminal work of Skrtic (1991), who concluded that special education is generally deployed as “an organizational [sic] artefact” that symbolises structural change where none has actually occurred (Skrtic, 1991, p. 172). Similarly, this dissertation wonders if team-teaching, when framed within the positivist epistemologies of special education, is being deployed in ways that give the impression of underlying reform, while simultaneously reinforcing reifying networks of knowledge/power that sustain the “Faustian pact” (Florian, 2014 p. 13) between mainstream and special education that ensures both work together to reinforce the “normative centre” (Florian, 2014 p. 14) of post-primary education in Ireland. In short, it asks whether team-teaching is a vehicle for the realisation of inclusive pedagogies or whether it has simply become part of the delusion of inclusion (O’Donnell, 2014).

### **1.3 Aims, Purpose and Research Questions**

At the heart of this research is a focus on how teachers make meaning about learners deemed to have disability, and how they draw on readymade discourses of difference to do so. The work is particularly interested in gathering empirical evidence of whether there has been a cultural colonisation of disability discourse in Irish post-primary schools by positivist epistemologies or whether such discourse is permeated by assumptions consistent with the epistemological base of inclusive education, based on equity, belonging, human rights, social justice, transformability, universal design for learning and quality education for all (Hart, Drummond, McIntyre, & Florian, 2007; Thomas & Loxley, 2007; Connor, 2014; Florian, 2014). It is also interested in the effects of the dominant discourses on teachers’ conceptualisations of team-teaching as a support to the inclusion of learners deemed to have disability and whether learners were helped or harmed by these conceptualisations (Gee, 2004). Finally, the study seeks to move beyond a negative critique of hegemonic discourse to a more positive one that charts “possible ways past” the negative effects of this (Fairclough, 2016, p. 95). Thus, as well as identifying instances of the oppressive use of discourse, it seeks to identify instances where teachers challenge or resist damaging “taken-for-granted assumptions” about learners deemed to have disabilities (Ainscow, 2015). It is hoped that such an interrogation will provide indicators of how the conscientisation of teachers can be affected (Freire, 1985) around the inherent dangers of

using positivist epistemologies in relation to issues inclusive education. It is also hoped that these examples will provide teachers, school leaders, policy-makers and others, with examples of what such resistance looks like, how it can be facilitated, and how it represents important and emancipatory cultural work that can redress the marginalisation of learners in post-primary schools, including learners deemed to have disability (Danforth & Rhodes, 1997; Florian, 2014).

Consideration of all of the above issues led to the development of four key research questions, as follows:

1. What discourses deployed within team-teaching meetings in the schools studied, dominated mainstream post-primary teachers' representations of learners deemed to have disability?
2. Did dominant discourses reinforce the cultural stronghold of essentialism or were they congruent with the new epistemological base of inclusive education?
3. Did teachers' discursive representations of students deemed to have disability influence how they conceptualised team-teaching as a support to the inclusion of these learners? If so, how?
4. Did teachers challenge hegemonic discourses of disability during team-teaching meetings? If so, could examples of this be used to chart possible ways past the oppressive use of discourse in the future?

## **1.4 Research Design and Methodology**

The focus of this work on issues of ideology and the framing of these with Foucauldian and Critical Disability Studies theory, located it firmly within the critical paradigm. Thus, it required an investigative strategy and methodology that honoured its critical commitments and allowed critical theoretical interpretations to be incorporated into its analytical framework. The adoption of Critical Discourse Analysis with a Multiple Case Study research design was seen as the best way to realise these objectives, while shedding maximum light on the research questions posed. The nature of these approaches and their appropriateness to the work will be outlined in detail in Sections 5.2 and 5.3.

Yin (2009, p. 1) asserts that case studies are useful in answering *how* and *why* questions where the investigator "has little control over" the processes, events, conditions and behaviours s/he is investigating or when this kind of control is undesirable. Since this work was interested in *how* teachers represented students deemed to have disabilities and *how* this influenced their conceptualisations of team-teaching, case study represented a highly relevant approach. The researcher also wanted to examine, insofar as possible,

instances of typical or natural interactions that were representative of typical exchanges that occurred in the schools concerned, in the full knowledge that these exchanges were intrinsically bound up with the unique historical and cultural context of each case. Case study allowed the researcher to provide an “empirical inquiry” into “real-life” instances of discourse (Yin, 2009, p. 18) in a way that maintained their holistic attributes and provided *thick* descriptions of the complex and nuanced contexts in which they were produced and consumed.

The research also wished to understand precisely how the deployment of disability discourse occurred across a range of cases, all of which were “categorically bound together” (Stake, 2006, p. 6) as team-teaching initiatives put in place in mainstream post-primary schools to support the inclusion of learners deemed to have disability. The multiple case study approach was particularly suited to such a purpose (Yin, 2003, 2009; Stake, 2006). It allowed for a more comprehensive and nuanced treatment of the research questions than would have been possible within a single case study. Only within a multiple case study design can what was similar or different about the deployment of disability discourse in different team-teaching settings be examined (Stake, 2006).

### **Purposive Sampling**

Taking Stake's (2006) advice, the researcher decided to select enough cases to show the interactivity between discourse use and context in a range of settings, but not so many that the uniqueness of each setting would be lost (Stake, 2006, p. 6). With this in mind, he decided to study three separate cases, chosen using a “stratified-purposeful sampling” approach (Mertens, 2014, p. 332). All cases were second-level schools that put in place an instance of team-teaching specifically aimed at supporting the inclusion of at least one student deemed to have disability within a mainstream class during the 2015-2016 academic year. Consequently, the logistics and staffing of team-teaching initiatives was a matter entirely for the school concerned. Each instance of team-teaching was selected to fulfil a unique set of selection criteria relating to the professional development of the teachers concerned, their teaching roles and their gender. Care was also taken to ensure that schools from different post-primary sectors were represented and that they came from areas designated as socio-economically disadvantaged and areas of relative advantage. More precise details on how each school and instance of teaching-team was selected are given in Section

Ultimately, the three teaching teams that provided data for this study comprised respectively, a subject teacher and a trained special education teacher, two special education teachers, and two subject teachers who had not completed recognised continuing

professional development relating to the inclusion of students deemed to have disabilities. In terms of gender, two of the dyads were all-female while the third was made up of one female and one male teacher. The six teachers involved varied widely in terms of general teaching experience, their experience of teaching students deemed to have disabilities and their experience of team-teaching. All of the team-teaching initiatives were put in place to support the inclusion of students deemed to have disabilities.

## **Data**

Since the research was interested not only in identifying and problematising the discourses that dominated teachers' representations of students deemed to have disabilities but also in how these representations influenced their conceptualisations of team-teaching, it was essential to access texts that would yield empirical data on both of these questions. Thus, it used as its central source of data, the transcribed texts of nine team-teaching meetings, three in each case study school, that focused on instances of authentic team-teaching deployed to support the inclusion of learners deemed to have disabilities. The timing of team-teaching meetings, most of which lasted for approximately one class period, was agreed between each teaching dyad and the researcher. Thus the researcher was able to attend and audio-record each meeting and take field notes as he did so. All meetings were held on site in the schools concerned. The principal of each school kindly made time available for this.

Since, for reasons of validity, it was essential that meetings focused on authentic instances of team-teaching involving students deemed to have disabilities, the author only selected initiatives that involved a full class group containing at least one student assessed as having a disability. He required that both teachers be told that they enjoyed parity of esteem and shared responsibility for the class. He also required a commitment from the school authorities that the initiatives established would continue for the entire 2015-16 academic year and that they would be timetabled for a minimum of three lessons per week during that time. Finally, he asked for a commitment that the same two teachers would be involved in each lesson and that the student composition of team-taught groups would remain constant during the year. These requirements were adhered to for the most part, though some changes of group composition occurred at Hazel Park and this initiative was reduced to two lessons per week (from three) shortly after its inception.

The research was also interested in collecting data that would give insights into the *contexts* in which the discourses of disability were deployed and related to conceptualisations of team-teaching. Thus a range of data was collected with a view to developing *thick* case study descriptions of the cases within which discourse that was the

target of this study was deployed. This included information published on school websites and recorded in school policy documents relating to admission, special educational and, where relevant, inclusion. Semi-structured interviews with the principal of each school and with each teacher participating in the study were also conducted and transcribed to provide data on the context in which discourse was deployed. All of these data were gathered on-site within the participating schools, with the exception of information gleaned from school websites.

### **Analytic Framework**

Given the critical orientation of the questions posed in 1.3 above, and their focus on the role of discourse, Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) was thought to offer a particularly appropriate overarching framework within which data from the study could be analysed. Fairclough's Dialectical-Relational approach to CDA was seen as particularly efficacious in this connection (Chouliaraki & Fairclough, 1999; Fairclough, 1992, 1995, 2003, 2009, 2016). This approach is a text-oriented one (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002) in which texts are the primary unit of analysis for making sense of the workings of discourse and the relations of knowledge/power inherent within them. Texts are seen as graspable representations of discourses (Lemke, 1995). They are produced and consumed by social participants as they engage in meaning-making about particular phenomena within social practice (Fairclough, 2003). As noted in previous section, the texts on which this approach focused primarily, were generated through transcription of a series of three meetings in each case study school, that that focused on a single, real, and authentic instance of team-teaching in which participating teachers were actively involved.

The Dialectical-Relational approach had a number of advantages over other forms of CDA in addressing the research question posed in this work, which will be discussed in some detail in Section 5.3. The central thrust of the approach lies in Fairclough's proposal that social processes must be understood in term of "the interplay between three levels of social reality: social structures, practices and events" (Fairclough, 2016, p. 88). Social *structures* are thought to influence what it is structurally possible to say within social *events*, a term that refers to what is actually said (Fairclough, 2003). Fairclough believes that the relationship between social structures and social events is highly complex one that is mediated by organising entities he calls social practices. He believes that, in order to be effective, critical discourse analysis must occur across all three levels; social events, practices and structures.

Operationalising this approach involves looking at how discourse works at level and across all three levels. At the level of social events, it involves analysis at the word level. At

the level of social practices, it involves analysis of how various types of meaning-making (genres, discourses and styles) work to control meaning-making. At the level of social structures, it involves a socio-cultural analysis that expands beyond the texts themselves to an examination of the impact of discourse on society and *vice versa*. To do this, it needs to incorporate into its analysis requires theories that link textual and discursive analysis to broader explanations of discourse and ideology. Such theories tend to focus on the societal norms, standards and structures within which texts are produced and consumed. In deploying such theories within its overall approach, CDA asks about what texts say about society more generally (Fairclough, 1995). It looks at how and *why* social practices and events transpire as they do and why certain things seem sayable (for example, about disability) while others do not. It asks why certain things are taken as *truth* or *common sense* while others are not (Fairclough, 2001). This feature of the approach was particularly pertinent to this work, since it allowed the incorporation of a Critical Disability *Studies* perspective into its overall analysis. Given that this perspective was pivotal in the formulating its research questions, this contributed greatly to the coherence of the research design.

## **1.5 Significance and Contribution of the Study**

This work makes a number of important contributions to research on team-teaching as a support to the inclusion of learners deemed to have disabilities. Firstly, it responds to the critical shortage of research on team-teaching at the post-primary level (Mastropieri & Scruggs, 2001; Murawski and Swanson, 2001; Keefe and Moore, 2004; Scruggs et al., 2007; Van Garderen et al., 2012) and does so in a way that addresses the unique difficulties associated with research in this sector (Dieker & Murawski, 2003).

Secondly, it looks at team-teaching from a broader critical perspective. This allows for the deployment of critical theories and analytical tools which are rarely used in research relating to team-teaching. The adoption of such an approach was deemed necessary for two main reasons. Despite the significant amount of educational research that has occurred around inclusive education in the last three decades, traditional deficit discourses of disability have persisted within educational settings (Ashby 2010; Naraian, 2010; Baglieri et al., 2011; Aston, 2016), including settings in which team-teaching has been put in place to support learners deemed to have disabilities (Naraian, 2010; Aston 2016). The use of a critical approach responds to calls for closer examination of the discursive contexts of these settings (Naraian, 2010; Aston, 2016). In addition, setting this work within the critical paradigm responds to criticisms of team-teaching research that, with a few notable exceptions (see for example Naraian, 2010; Ashton, 2014), it has paid scant attention issues of power and ideology. In particular, it has failed to provide any account of how team-



teaching contributes to or challenges the “Faustian pact” (Florian, 2014 p. 13) between special and mainstream education that privileges *ableist* interests over those of traditionally marginalised learners, including those deemed to have disabilities.

Instead, it seems to have remained fixed on “model-specific applications and outcomes” (Sailor 2014 p. 3), logistics and implementation, comparison of different team-teaching models, identification of factors associated with success of the approach, teaching roles and responsibilities, and the benefits of team-teaching benefits to students and teachers (Friend et al., 2010). All of this has worked against the development of theoretical understandings of team-teaching that take account of its broader social, historical and cultural contexts and functions. The current study seeks to address this gap. It draws on Foucauldian critical discourse theory, Critical Disability Studies and Critical Discourse Analysis to provide an interpretation of how the deployment of discourse pertaining to disability, influences how teachers conceptualise and implement team-teaching as a vehicle for the delivery of inclusive pedagogy. By setting team-teaching within a critical theoretical framework, the study hopes to contribute to the development of new insights and new theorisations of team-teaching as a social practice. It also hopes to contribute to the conscientisation (Freire, 1970, 1985) of teachers about the importance of equitable and emancipatory discourse use in post-primary schools.

## **1.6 Overview and Structure of Dissertation**

Following on from the current introductory chapter, Chapter 2 reviews some of the ways in which disability has been conceptualised over the years, including through symbolic, essentialist, social, cultural and CDS models of understanding. While recognising that no single model has provided a sufficiently comprehensive explanation of disability to date, it focuses on essentialist and CDS understandings as the most current and influential lenses through which it is viewed in educational contexts today (Baglieri, 2017). Finally, it offers a rationale for the adoption by this work of a CDS perspective and discusses some of the strengths and limitations of the theoretical framework in addressing its overarching research questions.

Chapter 3 applies Foucauldian discourse theory and CDS to a discussion of the education of learners deemed to have disabilities. It offers an archaeological analysis of the history of thought about disability and suggests the replacement of traditional histories of the field by more *effective* ones. It also offers a genealogical analysis of how disabilities evolved as objects of understanding within the local and specific conditions of schools. Finally, it discusses the cultural colonisation of inclusive education by positivist and essentialist

discourses and the incongruence of these discourses with the underlying assumptions and values of inclusive education. It uses this discussion to identify the cultural work that must be done if the field of inclusive education is to re-focus on these assumptions and values.

Chapter 4 looks at the research on inclusive pedagogies and asks what approaches have proved particularly efficacious for learners deemed to have disabilities. Similarly, it asks whether general pedagogical approaches are not equally effective for students deemed to have disabilities. This discussion provides a context in which team-teaching as a pedagogical approach that can support the inclusion of students deemed to have disabilities is reviewed. This includes a discussion of claims made that it is particularly efficacious in supporting the academic, social and personal development of these learners, and that it can be instrumental in creating inclusive environments in mainstream classrooms. Finally, Irish national policy rhetoric and guidance around team-teaching as a support to inclusion is evaluated and related to empirical evidence for the claims it makes.

Chapter 5 describes the methodological approach of the work. It provides a rationale for its adoption of a Multiple Case Study design and the used of the Dialectical-Relational approach to CDA as its overall analytical framework. It also outlines how Foucauldian discourse theory and Critical Disability Studies were used both in framing its research questions and within the Dialectical Relational approach to CDA, to link analysis of text and discourse practices to broader socio-cultural analysis (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002; Chouliaraki & Fairclough, 1999; Fairclough, 1992, 2003, 2016). The chapter also offers a description of the cases in relation to which data were collected, which includes details on the schools, the teachers involved in the team-teaching dyads and the students that comprised the groups on which their work focused. Finally, it discusses ethical issues and issues relating to validity, reliability, generalisability and reflexivity.

Chapter 6 reports on the actional meanings created within team-teaching meetings around the construction of students deemed to have disabilities. It does this through an analysis the genre of these meetings, of which more will be written in Section 5.3. This analysis is presented in relation to each case study in turn and then across all of the cases. Chapter 7 outlines the findings in relation to the representational meanings created around disability within team-teaching meetings, through analysis of discourse. Again findings are presented on a case-by-case basis and then across the cases. Analysis here will include a treatment of how discordant or incongruous representations were negotiated between teachers. Finally, Chapter 8 reports on the ideational meanings created within team-teaching meetings, both in relation to each case and across all cases. Chapter 9 provides an interpretation of how each types of meaning-making by which teachers represented learners

deemed to have disabilities (actional, representational and ideational) influenced their construal of team-teaching as a support to the inclusion of this group. As before, findings here are discussed on a case-by-case basis and across the cases.

The final chapter integrates the findings of textual and interdiscursive analysis into broader explanations of how team-teaching for inclusion was “constituted, changed and transformed” by discourse (Rogers, 2004). It looks, in particular, at whether essentialist and non-essentialist discourses were deployed within the team-teaching initiatives studied, to alternatively reinforce or challenge the positivist epistemologies of special education (and their associated disciplinary technologies). It offers an interpretation of the interests served by the ways in which discourses of disability were deployed within team-teaching initiatives. It outlines a positive critique of discourse use across the cases, in order to make suggestions about how *conscientisation* of teachers might occur around the dangers of using positivist epistemologies as a basis for developing inclusive educational policy and practice. Finally, it identifies instances of where emancipatory discourse was used within the team-teaching meetings studied. It does this with a view to encouraging greater deployment of this and greater teacher involvement in the cultural work that is required, if the “ghostly” (Graham and Slee, 2008, p. 287) “normative centre” (Florian, 2014 p. 20) of Irish post-primary education, from which all exclusion derives, is to be challenged or deconstructed.

# **Chapter 2: Theoretical Perspectives on Disability**

## **2.1 Introduction**

Understanding disability, whether in epistemological, ontological, moral or practical terms, represents a difficult quandary (Gallagher, 2007). Positivist, social constructivist and critical paradigms have all been drawn upon to produce varied and sometimes contradictory accounts of the nature of disability, where it resides and how it is experienced (Gallagher, Connor, & Ferri, 2014). This chapter reviews some of these perspectives. Section 2.2 will look at how symbolic understandings of disability were used, and how their use continues today. Section 2.3 examines essentialist perspectives on disability and how they gained the status of common sense within broader society. Section 2.4 reviews the social and minority models of disability. It discusses how these perspectives emerged as an alternative to essentialist understandings and how they influenced thinking and activism around disability.

Section 2.5 introduces the Critical Disability Studies (CDS) theory, with Sections 2.6 and 2.7 examining the influence of Foucauldian discourse theory on the development of the field. These sections also provide a rationale for the adoption by this work of CDS and Foucauldian discourse theory as a theoretical framework in which to frame research questions and make sense of findings. CDS recognises that no single theoretical explanation to date has provided a full account of how disability is experienced. Rather it seeks to move away from understandings of disability as a set of inherent human differences towards “social, cultural, economic and political registers” (Goodley, 2013 p. 634). It focuses especially on unpacking disability as a cultural category (Gallagher et al., 2014), a set of value-laden and historically/culturally conditioned perceptions of difference (Gallagher, 2007). This cultural unpacking inevitably leads CDS to take a keen interest in the workings of discourse, a quality that makes it particularly useful in addressing issues of ideology such as those implicit in the questions posed in Section 1.3 of this work. CDS offers a semiotic entry point for investigation of these questions. Section 2.8 outlines some of this limitations of CDS. The chapter concludes with Section 2.9. This summarises the chapter and discusses a range of critical commitments that must be considered by those who use CDS.

## **2.2 Symbolic Understandings of Disability**

Throughout human history disability seems to have been linked to a range of social, cultural, moral, spiritual and religious beliefs. While these were particularly dominant in pre-historic, classical and medieval cultures and up to the early eighteenth century, the vestiges of these can still be found within modern cultures and societies today. Analysis of stone age

artefacts, such as amulet bags used by shamans, have led archaeologists to conclude that supernatural beliefs and practices were used widely to counter the effects of illness and impairment in prehistoric times (Winzer, 1993).

As writing technologies came into existence, more evidence of ideological positions to impairment were recorded. For example, the Old Testament indicated an ambivalent attitude towards impairment. On the one hand it commanded that “Thou shalt not ... maketh the blind to wander out of the path’ (Leviticus, 19:14, New International Version), indicating a charitable or deferent stance, while on the other, it warned that “if you do not carefully follow His commands” (Deuteronomy 28:14 New International Version), “the Lord will afflict you with madness, blindness and confusion of the mind” (Deuteronomy 28:28 New International Version), indicating a belief that impairment could be visited by God on the unworthy. Finally, those with impairments were often classified “with prostitutes and menstruating women as unclean and ... prohibited from making sacrifices as priests” (Deuteronomy 28:28 New International Version). All of these references ascribed diminished social status to those deemed to have a disability.

In classical times, the practice of infanticide by the Greeks and Spartans is now thought to have been greatly exaggerated by nineteenth-century scholars, and exercised more for economic rather than cultural reasons (Braddock & Parish, 2001; Rose, 2003; Bringell, 2008). That said, the use of terms such as *teras* in Greek and *monstrum* in Latin to refer to those deemed to be disabled, had the effect of othering these individuals, since these were the same terms used to describe mythological monsters (Bringell, 2008, unpaginated). Greek and Roman civilisations seemed to have had no word for a meta-category called *disability* (Bringell, 2008; Rose, 2003). Rather they focussed on specific impairments which seem to have been viewed as more of a “family and civic issue” than a medical one, with social status being negotiated “on a case-by-case basis within a community” (Rose, 2003, p. 3). This emphasis on different types of impairment and how they affected social participation seemed to provide the basis for the evolution in the sixth century Roman Justinian Code that categorised persons with impairment and set out their rights on this basis (Braddock and Parish, 2001). This system formed the basis of laws developed in most European countries from the sixth to the eighteenth centuries (Braddock and Parish, 2001).

Perhaps the most significant cultural legacy of Greek and Roman civilization, however, was the idealisation of the human body (Bringell, 2008). This occurred through the cultural construction of images of human beings (or deities) of mythical proportions and that could not, by definition, be achieved by normal human beings. These idealised images were then

proliferated through Greek and Roman literature, visual arts, architecture and philosophy into the cultural movement of the Renaissance, where they were emulated, refined and embedded into modern Western civilization and continue to do ideological work (Bringell, 2008). For Davis (2017), they provided a foundation for the development during the nineteenth century of the *normal* body, a concept that allowed the normal/abnormal binary to gain widespread social and cultural acceptance.

In Medieval Europe, Braddock and Parish (2001) suggest that many disabling conditions were attributed to supernatural causes such as punishment for sins, having been born under the influence of a hostile planet and demonic possession in the case of mental illness. Appropriate cultural responses were thought to include religious devotion, undertaking pilgrimages, exposure to religious relics and the giving of alms (Braddock & Parish, 2001). Some medieval beliefs linked impairment with positive attributes such as being considered closer to God, suffering purgatory on earth or gaining easier access to heaven (Jarrett, 2012). Having said that, many naturalistic perceptions of disability were also recorded in medieval society, such as in the medical texts of the time (Braddock and Parish, 2001). Accounts of the time also note the presence of advocates for natural causes to mental illness and the fact that towns often took responsibility for people with mental disabilities. In Ireland, for example, the Brehon Laws set down during the seventh century set out the rights of persons deemed to be without sense, to work, to contribute to society and to be sustained by it (Griffin & Shevlin, 2011). More recent studies (Metzler, 2006; Richardson, 2014; Shoham-Steiner, 2014) reinforce the view that competing and contradictory representation of disability co-existed in medieval times, with natural philosophy and religious discourses being used in combination to represent physical and sensory impairments in particular. Other writers have suggested similarly nuanced conceptualisations of disability in medieval Jewish (Shoham-Steiner, 2014) and Islamic cultures (Richardson, 2014). Similarly, Crawford (2011, p. 302) showed how a “Christian explanatory model” was conflated with a “naturalistic model” of understanding, that referenced a “corpus of empirical knowledge” about worldly causes, symptoms and treatments, to explain illness and disability in medieval Irish society. This conflated understanding was embedded in the legal code and the health system of the time and is thought to have contributed greatly to social cohesion (Crawford, 2011).

Between the fourteenth and sixteenth centuries, the study of anatomy and physiology of hearing, vision, and the human body by Da Vinci and others during the Renaissance led to significant advances in knowledge about human physiology. At the same time, beliefs in the bestial nature of people and in possession and other religious and spiritual causes of impairment was maintained, with Reformation leaders such as John Calvin and Martin

Luther continuing to preach these philosophies (Braddock & Parish, 2001). It was only in the seventeenth century, as societies became increasingly organised, that medicine began to eclipse other explanations of impairment and illness, a development which coincided with the “establishment of a range of institutions ... and residential schools for young people with sensory impairments’ (Griffin & Shevlin, 2011, p. 12).

While today, symbolic understandings of disability are widely rejected by theologians and philosophers, vestiges of these representations still endure. There are still individuals and groups who believe that impairment is a condition visited on individuals of foot of moral transgressions by them or those close to them. The notion that disability can confer spiritual enlightenment, innocence, skills or abilities on disabled people that are unavailable to those considered to be able-bodied, still finds expression today (Retief & Letšosa, 2018). In addition, the idealised body image has passed spectrally into modern society where it has been conflated with that of the normal body type. In a similar way, the notion that categories of impairment exist, each with its own set of essential qualities, has translated into modern conceptualisation of disability and special education. It has been asserted that symbolic beliefs about impairment and disability tend to surface wherever a new or poorly understood condition or epidemic emerges over which medical science has limited control (Chowell & Nishiura, 2014). From the perspective of education, religious and symbolic understandings of disability continue to be cited within the mission statements of religious or charitable organisations involved in the provision of educational and other services for those deemed to have disabilities.

### **2.3 Essentialist Perspectives on Disability**

The shift from symbolic understandings of disability to medical conceptualisations that saw it as a pathology to be prevented or cured seemed to have taken root at the beginning of the seventeenth century and seemed to represent “a significant step forward” when it occurred (Connor & Valle, 2015, p. 1105). Indeed, Connor and Valle (2015, p. 1105) acknowledge that technology, science and medicine made “many positive contributions” to the amelioration of disability and its symptoms. However, they also point to the “dark and cautionary history” of people with disabilities “at the hands of science” (Connor & Valle, 2015, p.1105). Nowhere was this history more disturbing than in its relationship with the eugenics movement of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

Connor and Valle (2015) outline the importance of Lennard Davis’ seminal work *Enforcing Normalcy* (Davis, 1995) in linking the “birth of statistics” to the “mathematization [sic] of the human body and mind” (Connor and Valle, 2015, p. 1113). Davis subsequently updated his ideas in the introduction to his *The Disability Studies Reader* (Davis, 2017). In

this later work, he reminds us that we live in a world of ubiquitous norms relating what the average person does, thinks, buys, and earns. Thus, we have a tendency to “rank our intelligence, our cholesterol, weight, height, sex drive, bodily dimensions along some conceptual line” or standard distribution (Davis, 2017, p. 1) making us oblivious to the fact that the norm is not actually a natural phenomenon at all, but a *technology* (Foucault, 1980), a configuration of difference (Davis, 2017) that emerged as significant within a particular moment in history. For Davis (2017), developing an understanding of how normalcy was constructed is the key to understanding the construction of the abled and disabled body.

Davis (2017, p. 2) begins by reminding us that the word *normal* only came into use in the English language around 1840, to denote the idea of “constituting, conforming to, not deviating from a common standard, regular, usual”. Terms such as *normality* and *normalcy* appeared shortly afterwards in 1849 and 1857 respectively, as the new idea of the *norm* began to take root (Davis, 2017). These terms began to supersede those associated with the *ideal* human body used since the seventeenth century (Davis, 2017). While the *ideal* body was one of mythical, even godlike proportions that could not, by definition, be achieved by normal human beings the *normal* body and mind was something completely different. In similar terms, Davis (2017) points out that the word *average* does not enter European culture until the nineteenth century, with the work of the French statistician Adolphe Quetelet, who borrowed it from astronomy where it was used to work out the probable future position of celestial objects. Quetelet however, applied it to human characteristics and in the process created the notion of the “*l’homme moyen*” (Davis, 2017, p. 3), an abstract amalgam that epitomised all the qualities of the average person. This concept was substituted for that of the *ideal* human specimen used to that point (Davis, 2017). However, unlike the idea of the *ideal* human specimen, the notion of the average person imbued individuals with a *non-ideal* status to which most people could aspire. Thus, for Davis (2017 p.3) began the “hegemony of the middle”, where deviation from the norm meant separation from the majority or othering.

Interestingly, Davis (2017) points out that almost all of the early statisticians were major figures within the “eugenics” movement. These included Sir Francis Galton who, in 1883, combined the Greek words for *well* and *born* to coin this term (Winzer & Mazurek, 2014). This was chosen with a view to focussing the movement on improving the genetic stock of the human species by diminishing occurrences of deviation from the newly hypothesised norm. Statistics were a key tool in the task, providing data to convince the state to consider some populations standard and others non-standard and lesser. Thus, it was the eugenics movement that “determined the content of Galton’s statistical theory” (Davis, 2017, p. 4), not *vice versa*. Galton began to refer to what had been known in



astronomy as the *error curve* or *normal distribution*. However, in terms of human beings, this curve presented a problem to Galton; deviation above or below the mean was presented in precisely the same way. For traits considered desirable by Galton, such as height and intelligence, this was not convenient. He wanted to avoid *middling* such traits so he substituted the concept of *average* with the concept of the *ranking and* changed the way society looked at the curve altogether. Reclassifying undesirable deviations from the mean into a highly desirable ranking, Galton laid the foundation for development of a “hegemonic vision of what the human body should be” and gave birth to IQ and scholastic testing (Davis, 2017, p. 6).

Galton was highly influenced by ideas of natural selection developed by his cousin, Charles Darwin. As Davis (2017, p. 4) reminds us, “[e]ugenics was in reality applied biology based on ... the Darwinian theory of evolution”. Together these ideas offered an apparently objective scientific basis for the wilful neglect of people who deviated unfavourably from an aggregated standard and who were deemed to possess characteristics that society did not wish to proliferate. Disabled people loomed large in such judgements. Davis (2017) notes that Galton’s links in the 1880s with the radical eugenic ideas of Alexander Graham Bell set the tone of disability discourse for the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Eugenicists began to group together all types of human variation they deemed undesirable. Kevles (1995) demonstrated convincingly how eugenic thinking became mainstream within official circles, such as through the establishment of an official UK Eugenics Office, which asserted that the view that the only way to keep a nation strong was to ensure that each new generation derived from the fittest members of the previous one. For Davis (2017, p. 7), language such as this played “into the metaphor of the fit body” implying that, if “individuals are not fit, if they do not fit into the nation, then the national body will not be fit.”

Davis (2017) asserts that eugenics thinking gained ascendancy because it sat well with the capitalist imperatives of the time, to create a homogeneous, capable, flexible and productive workforce. He points to its uptake within laws, social policies and institutional practices in many western countries during the 1920s and 1930s. He suggests that Adolf Hitler simply restated many of the ideas of Galton, Bell and others, to assert in *Mein Kampf* that the State “must proclaim as unfit for procreation all those who are afflicted with some visible hereditary disease ... and practical measures must be adopted to have such people rendered sterile” (Blacker, 1952 p. 144). Davis (2017) also argues that Germany saw itself as coming quite late to eugenics, and that part of its zeal in this area was due to the fact that it wished to demonstrate to other nations that they were equally devoted to its principles. It was in this spirit that the Nazi T-4 programme began the sterilisation and liquidation of those deemed to be disabled. As part of this programme, Nazi agents systematically gassed

disabled people in institutional settings, pretending that they were entering shower rooms. Their bodies were then cremated. The knowledge and procedures developed provided a blueprint for the mass murder of both disabled and able-bodied Europeans in subsequent years, including Jewish, Romani and homosexual individuals, political dissenters and anyone whose existence was deemed undesirable by the Nazi elite (Davis, 2017).

Connor and Valle (2015, pp. 1107) make a convincing case that eugenic ideas, predicated on essentialist beliefs about difference, are still in evidence within debates about the use of modern bio technologies, such as those used to detect foetal abnormalities. They argue that scientific methods, “adept public rhetoric” and genome research, have “thrust upon parents” the responsibility for choosing whether or not pregnancies should continue and that such decisions constitute a form of eugenics (Connor and Valle, 2015, pp. 1107-1108). Davis (2017) has also expressed concern that fetuses may be aborted on the grounds that they may not be normal, perfect or fit or that, once born they will experience undue pain and suffering. Connor and Valle (2015) have proposed that, in deciding whether or not to continue the pregnancies of children with Down Syndrome, families can be construed as bringing the consequences associated with the condition upon themselves (and on society) once a child is born. Conversely, aborting fetuses on the grounds that children are likely to be born with a disability may deepen the stigma attached to those already living with such conditions. Issues such as these are contentious and likely to remain so into the future (Connor & Valle, 2015). It is likely that essentialist perspectives will continue to play a role in their discussion.

Davis (2017, p. 14) reminds us that the hegemony of normalcy has profound implications that “extend into the very heart of cultural production”. In order to assert itself, the hegemony of normalcy must remain constantly vigilant in “creating and bolstering its image by processing, comparing, constructing, deconstructing images of normalcy and the abnormal” (Davis, 1997 p. 23). Davis argues that cultural products such as art and literature act as “proliferator[s] of ideology” (Davis, 2017, p. 14), translating physical and cognitive differences into ideological ones. Representations of people with disability, and the events in which they play a part, are always marked with ideological meaning that inscribe our thinking in relation to normal and abnormal. Disability is also reified in commonly-used metaphors such as *like a deaf man*, *beliefs that cripple you*, *blind allegiance*, and *crippled economy*. Even Freud’s psychoanalysis produced a kind of eugenics of the mind, that reified normal sexuality and normal mental functioning, and contrasted these with what was variously depicted as perverse, abnormal, pathological, neurotic, and even criminal functioning (Davis, 2017). For (Davis, 2017 p. 1), the key to countering the oppressive effects of this idea, was the development of a “disabilities-studies consciousness” (Davis, 2017, p. 1).

At that same time as the concept of the standard distribution was being developed, this became conflated with theories being developed that postulated normal trajectories and time frames for human development. These sought to describe the expected developmental trajectories of bodies and minds, and the parameters thought to be acceptable for this development (Graham & Slee, 2008). Thus, the idea that human qualities are distributed in a standard way and develop along predictable paths, came to dominate thinking and practice around education at the expense, for example, of ideas that posit human diversity as a naturally occurring phenomenon that strengthens all living systems (Winzer & Mazurek, 2014). Ideas about normal human development led to the expenditure of huge amounts of time and money on attempting to describe how certain individuals' physical, cognitive, social or emotional functioning, deviated from expected trajectories for this.

While such descriptions satisfied systemic demands of legal, medical, educational and other fields that required definitions of disability that set these out in quantitative terms, (see for example, Government of Ireland 1993, 2004, 2005; DES 2005), they also allowed the development of technologies (Foucault, 1980) that operationalised positivist views of disability, technologies such as psychometric and medical testing. As Skrtic (1995) demonstrated convincingly, the power to use these technologies was invested in professional groups who thus assumed "the authority to interpret normality ... [and] the power to define and classify others as abnormal and to treat their bodies and minds" (Skrtic, 1995, p. 41). They began to stratify human beings according to various binaries; normal/abnormal, impaired/non-impaired and able-bodied/disabled, on the basis of apparently objective assessment. This was not simply a matter of scoring at a particular level on a standardised or diagnostic test. Ultimately, disability became a matter of professional judgement (Kauffman, Hallahan, Pullen, & Badar, 2018), which followed "investigation" with "surveillance and treatment", often using "practices of medicalization [*sic*], objectification, confinement, and exclusion" (Biklen, Orsati, & Bacon, 2014, p. 352). Moreover, these technologies often resulted in those deemed to be disabled being "infantilised, assembled as helpless and fashioned as asexual" (Bhabha in Goodley, 2016, p. 19).

A key element of this approach involved focusing exclusively on individuals' limitations or impairments and treating these as problems to be solved. Thus, the focus of remediation or normalisation became the individual, not the conditions that contributed to the expression of their disability. The fact that people with disabilities may never be able to operate within the normal range of human functioning, in some areas, demarked them personally *incurable* or impervious to *treatment*. They were routinely assigned the "sick role" (Parsons, 1951, pp. 455-456), even where they were not sick. This exempted them from performance of certain of what were considered normal social obligations, such as going to

school, securing employment and taking on responsibilities associated with family and community membership (Parsons, 1951). They were also exempted from responsibility for their own state (Parsons, 1951), as long as they accepted the help of professionals working mostly within medical model understandings of difference (Retief & Letšosa, 2018).

Positivist beliefs have also found their way into more recent conceptualisations of disability, such as those emanating from the critical realist perspective (Anastasiou & Kauffman, 2011, 2012, 2013; Barnes, 2007; Kristiansen, Vehmas, & Shakespeare, 2008; Shakespeare, 2006; Shakespeare & Watson, 2001; Vehmas & Shakespeare, 2014). Many recent theories stress the importance of maintaining a central focus on embodied and visceral aspects of the disability experience (Shakespeare & Watson, 2001, p. 24).

Despite the fact that positivist explanations of disability have been stridently criticised in recent years, especially in academic and activist circles, they continue to exercise a huge influence on many fields of practice, including education (Baglieri, 2017; Florian, 2014; Graham & Slee, 2008; Riddell & Watson, 2014; Thomas & Loxley, 2007). Chapter 3 will argue that within mainstream, special and inclusive education, positivist thinking continues to allow sway with practitioners and policy-makers, who continue to conceptualise disabilities as observable and intrinsic restrictions in the capacity of individuals to perform in certain physical, cognitive, social and emotional ways, relative to what is typical of those without such restrictions (Anastasiou & Kauffman, 2011, 2012, 2013; Vehmas, 2008). It will assert that these social actors continue to view disabilities as real and objective phenomena that exist “independently of any perceiver or mental state” (Vehmas, 2008 p. 22); an individualised phenomenon for which objective criteria can be established and appropriate systems of assessment, identification and treatment devised. Such a view presumes that individuals have some innate and universal quality or *essence* that allows them to be ascribed, in seemingly unproblematic ways, to particular categories of difference (Slee, 1997; Thomas and Loxley, 2007). It is this notion that gives the essentialist perspective its name. Essentialism emphasises the quantification and, where possible, the treatment, accommodation or eradication of human difference (Gallagher, 2007). Perhaps the most salient, sustained and coherent critique of the perspective emanated from the development of the social and minority models of disability.

## **2.4 Social and Minority Models of Disability**

Gallagher et. al. (2014, p. 1120) believe that the social model of disability “revolutionised, and continues to revolutionise, the world of disability”, providing a radical alternative to essentialist perspectives. Hasler (1993) characterised it as *the big idea* of the British Disability Movement of the 1970s. It was first developed by activists in the Union of

the Physically Impaired Against Segregation (UPIAS) and gained academic credibility through the writings of Vic Finkelstein (1980), Colin Barnes (1991) and Mike Oliver (1990). For Goodley (2016, p. 11) it developed as “classic counter-hegemony” against individual tragedy accounts of disability that had been developed by the “paramedical professions”. It reflected a general shift within British sociology towards examination of material inequalities in society (Vehmas, 2008) and a reframing of disability from individual registers that viewed disability as a personal adversity that people had to overcome with the help of medical, psychological or educational professions to social explanations that required structural societal responses.

Early iterations of the social model made a distinction between impairment and disability. Impairment was a term used to refer to “the functional limitation within the individual caused by physical, mental or sensory impairment” (Goodley, 2016, p. 9). The term disability on the other hand, referred to the restrictions placed on people with impairments by a society that did not accommodate their difference in its social arrangements and organisation. It depicted disability as the “loss or limitation of opportunities to take part in the normal life of the community on an equal level with others due to physical and social barriers” (Goodley, 2016, p. 9). In this view, disability was “the product of social, political, economic, and cultural practice” in their interaction with the impairments of individuals (Baglieri, Valle, Connor, & Gallagher, 2011, p. 270). Thus people with impairments were oppressed by a disabling society that failed to take account of their naturally occurring differences; disability is framed as the material manifestation of their social oppression, not the expression of their impairment.

From a social model perspective, there is an imperative on society to transform attitudes, practices and social arrangements that comprise social barriers to the participation of people with impairment. Such barriers may come in the form of lack of information, discriminatory policies, insufficient support services, non-inclusive physical structures or inflexibility around working and learning conditions. Failure to identify and address these barriers or to mobilise sufficient resources to support the equitable participation of people with impairments is deemed discrimination. Social barriers may also come from faulty attitudes and beliefs that work against those who are excluded from equitable participation in society on the basis of a disability categorisation. These include essentialist views of disability that perpetuate what are deemed to be deep-seated prejudices to particular forms of naturally occurring human variation, concealed by a veneer of objectivity and the misapplication of science to human difference (Gallagher, 2007).

In spite of its pervasiveness over the last thirty years, the social model has come under sustained criticism in recent years. If Mike Oliver believed that its main purpose of the social model was reducing the dependence of professionals on individual explanations of disability, he lamented that it had “not been used” as he would have liked “as a tool for altering the material circumstances of disabled people and fostering inclusion” (Allan & Slee, 2008, p. 88). Rather, he felt its use had been limited largely to debates amongst academics and policy-makers about the nature of disability (Allan & Slee, 2008). Within these debates it was faulted for insufficiently acknowledging the biophysical and cultural causes of disability (Gallagher, 2007), and for continuing to support the right of society to decide who is *impaired* and who is not.

Most criticism however, focussed on the absolute distinction the social model drew between *disability* and *impairment*. In insisting on such a distinction, Shakespeare (2006, p. 3) asserts that British disability studies took “a wrong turn back in the 70s”. Shelley Tremain (2008) criticised the distinction as unnecessary and confusing. She pointed out that disablement is not a necessary consequence of impairment and impairment is not a sufficient condition for disability. She posed the following question: “If only people who were presumed to have impairments could be deemed disabled, then why must we make such a distinction in the first place?” Along with others, she asserted that the social model’s distinction between impairment and disability was not only unhelpful (Tremain, 2008), but it actively obscured “the ways that impairment, like disability, is constructed” in social and cultural ways (Gallagher et al., 2014, p. 1129).

For Goodley (2013), the separation of impairment and disability represented a double-edged sword. On the one hand, it offered a basis for those like Oliver Barnes and Finklestein to draw “unashamedly” on “neo-Marxist and Gramscian analyses of material barriers” (Goodley, 2013, p. 632) to the participation of people with disabilities in everyday life, without which “disability would have lacked recognition as a political phenomenon” (Goodley, 2013, p. 633). On the other, the dominance of this materialist stance became a “shibboleth; a dogmatic totalizing epistemology against which all disability research was expected to judge itself” for fear of being dismissed as “watering down the politics of disability” (Goodley, 2013, p. 633). Yet materialism appeared to explain only part of the disability experience, and came increasingly under fire from more critical epistemologies that were being expressed in psychology, the social sciences and education (Goodley, 2013).

Many of the criticisms aimed at the social model did not elicit great counter argument from its originator, Mike Oliver. Instead Oliver (2013) asserted that the social model was never intended to provide a full account of the experience of disability. It was

simply introduced to reduce the exclusive dependence of professionals working in the area “on the individual model” (Oliver, 2013, p. 1024) and “to re-orient their work to a framework based on the social model” (Oliver, 2013, p. 1024). Oliver (2013) recounts that at “no point did I suggest that the individual model should be abandoned, and neither did I claim that the social model was an all-encompassing framework” (Oliver, 2013, p. 1024). Similarly, Vic Finklestein reported that he never expected the social model to constitute a complete explanation or definition of disability (Thomas, 2004). Rather he wanted to include an element of “disability as oppression” in professionals’ foundational understanding of it (Thomas, 2004, p. 577). He did not believe that oppression was all there was to disability. Rather he wanted to make clear that impairments restricted the daily lives of the people who experienced them in very real and material ways (Thomas, 2004).

Just as the social model was developing in Britain, the minority group model began to gain traction in North America, influenced by the civil rights movement and the politics associated with gay and lesbian groups and the return home of Vietnam veterans (Goodley, 2016). Minority models made the case for developing positive minority identities and challenging ableism, the stigmatisation (Goffman, 2009) of those whose bodies worked differently from those that were considered complete, healthy and *normal*. It combined neo-Marxist critiques of capitalism with theories of race and eclectic understandings of disability (Goffman, 2009) that mapped the marginalised experiences of disabled people to those of other groups marginalised on the basis of race, colour, ethnicity and gender. It developed strategies such as *people first* language to counter societal attitudes and oppressive discourses and attributions.

Overall then, in becoming “the vehicle for developing a collective disability consciousness” (Oliver, 2013, p. 1024), social and minority group models played a useful role in eradicating a range of material barriers to the social participation of people deemed to have disability. By separating impairment from disability, the social model focussed on previously neglected material causes of disability and forced the removal of many of these (Allan, 2010). It continues to play a powerful role as a turbine for the production of discourse (Grue, 2011) and remains the “principal point of reference” for many disability researchers, especially in the UK (Thomas, 2004, p. 573). As Thomas puts it, “whether authors are for or against it their writings are almost invariably in dialogue with it” (Thomas, 2004 p. 573).

Both social and minority models continue to exercise an influence on global policy agendas (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, 1994, Council of Europe, 2003, 2006), national legislation (Government of Ireland, 2004, 2005), national policy (Department of Education and Science, 2007), research (Winter & O’Raw, 2010) and

practice, including practice at the level of schools and classrooms. Yet these models also led to a “disavowal of impairment ... which many disabled people have found difficult to accept” (Allan, 2010, p. 606). Consequently, there has been a significant shift in theorisation about disability in recent times, which has moved into more critical and nuanced paradigms.

## **2.5 Disability Studies (DS)**

Taylor (2006) contends that critical voices have always been present in the fields of disability, special education and inclusive education. Hence, Disability Studies (DS) existed long before the field had a name. Riddell et al. (2007) believe its origins can be traced to critiques of disability that were implicit in social and minority models. Similarly, Goodley (2013) asserts that,

If the late twentieth-century disability studies were associated with establishing the factors that led to the structural, economic and cultural exclusion of people with sensory, physical and cognitive impairments, then disability studies in the current century might be seen as a time of developing nuanced theoretical responses to these factors. (p. 631)

Meekosha and Shuttleworth (2009) agree that recent theorisation around disability has come about largely in reaction to perceived limitations in the social model’s materialist stance. However, they also believe that it has been driven by other factors, including the increased interest in constructivist and critical explanations of disability shown by disciplines such as psychology, a general move towards eclecticism rather than dogmatic adherence to individual theories and a dovetailing of “Marxist accounts with those of feminism, queer and post-colonial studies” (Goodley, 2013, p. 632). Similarly, (Goodley, 2013, p. 633) reports that scholars from “critical and community psychology”, while continuing to recognise disableism as essentially socio-economic in origin also recognised that marginalisation “is a relational concept, emerging in the routines of (and interactions between) non-disabled and disabled people, often experienced in deeply psychological ways.”

Congruent with this general move towards eclecticism, no single school of research dominates Disability Studies (DS). Rather, there exists an array of different approaches that emanate from different disciplinary and inter-disciplinary sources such as sociology, anthropology, Marxist political economy and literary analysis (Grue, 2011). In fact, it has been asserted that a key contribution of DS has been the creation of a trans-disciplinary space within which new contemplations of disability can be developed (Goodley, 2013; Thomas, 2007). In this respect, Thomas (2007) has expressed optimism that DS will be



useful in breaking boundaries between disciplines and “decolonizing traditional medicalized views of disability with socio-cultural conceptions of disableism” (Goodley, 2013, p. 632). Similarly, Grue (2011) believes that the interdisciplinary nature of DS will contribute to the development of new fields of inquiry, new knowledge and the subversion of “old truths” (Grue, 2011, 537). By viewing disability through different or multiple lenses, it is argued, DS can contemplate disability in richer and more nuanced ways (Connor, 2013); ways that “mobilise new theorisations” about its complex nature (Liasidou, 2012, p. 174) and which empower disabled individuals by allowing “new ... forms of action to emerge” (Barton, 2001 p. 5). As Grue (2011, p. 537) points out, DS distinguished itself “by a shift in framing, points of reference and discourse” which are partly “a matter of theorizing disability in a way that is radically different from the previous efforts” but which also establishes “a different set of causal relations that link disability not only to bodily factors, but to socio-political organization.”

In its early stages, DS focused almost exclusively on a critique of the “master-narrative of positivism” and its knowledge bases (Connor & Valle, 2015, p. 1110). It directed attention away from approaches that pathologised human difference, individualised educational failure and generated images of “otherness” (Liasidou, 2012, p. 174). It claimed that such models offered inadequate and erroneous explanations of disability and worked counter to the interests of those who had been assigned to disability categories (Liasidou, 2012). From a DS perspective, the medical model was seen as an ideological framework that reduced disability to bodily impairment, prescribed only medical treatment and normalization, and denied individual agency by concentrating power in the hands of a small group of medical and quasi-medical professionals (Riddell & Watson, 2014). As Goodley (2013) puts it, DS severed

the causal link between the body and disability. As a direct riposte to medicalized and psychologized hegemonies of disability – that sited disability as personal tragedy, biological deficiency and psychical trauma – disability studies relocated disability to social, cultural, economic and political registers. (p. 634)

Some writers, such as Grue (2011), have asserted that to refer to the procedures and practices produced by medicine and psychology as a legitimate *model* of disability, is erroneous and dangerous. For Grue (2011) the term has no meaning outside of histories about the development of thought around disability. He suggests that continued reference to positivist ideas as a theoretical model may inadvertently keep alive the illusion that they can provide a meaningful perspective on disability, which, in his view, they cannot (Grue,

2011). Similarly, Clough and Corbett (2000, p. 11) remind us that there is no conformity of definition or “orthodoxy” in the use of terms such as the medical model or psychological model. While these writers assert that “their use strongly implies “an *operational* meaning” in terms of practices related to pathology (Clough & Corbett (2000, p. 11), they have no distinct *conceptual* value and only become meaningful when used to set a context for the development of social or cultural models of understanding.

From its initial emphasis on critiquing the medical model, DS soon broadened out to assert its own identity (Connor, 2013). While firmly rooted in the social model it began to embrace “socio-cultural and historical dispositions towards dis/ability” (Connor & Valle, 2015, 1112) and to critique all models of disability, in terms of whether or not they could provide meaningful and accurate accounts of the experience of those deemed placed within this category. The focus on *culture* invited the “unpacking” of the term disability (Gallagher et al., 2014, p. 1125), as a category based on value laden and historically/culturally conditioned perceptions of difference (Gallagher, 2007). It criticised positivism for playing on people’s fears of mortality and vulnerability (Allan, 2010). In this connection, Allan (2010) cited the work of Nussbaum (2009) who posited that human beings, because they are deeply troubled about being highly intelligent and resourceful on the one hand, and completely helpless against death on the other, develop shame and disgust at their frailty, animality, and mortality (Nussbaum, 2009). In response, they create stigmatised groups on whom to project these anxieties, including people deemed to have disability. At a cultural level, such groups become the vehicle for society to express anxiety about the inherent frailties of its members (Nussbaum, 2009).

DS also admonished positivist ideologies for taking an insufficiently broad view of the disability experience and for ignoring the cultural values, social arrangements, institutional structures, attitudes and resourcing practices that make perceived differences into disabilities (Booth & Ainscow, 2002). It questioned the “parameters of normalcy, including who defines and enforces those borders” (Gallagher et al., 2014, p. 1125). It foregrounded the social, cultural and material repercussions of being placed “both inside and outside of these culturally drawn and fluctuating lines’ (Gallagher et al., 2014, p. 1125). It made the case that it is not the *actual* differences between people but the difference we make of these differences that matters (Gallagher, 2007). This perspective appealed to those who held epistemological and ontological positions in which objective reality is not deemed possible, those for whom human knowledge cannot exist outside of our interpretations of it; those who believed “that every human observation, including a scientific one, is influenced

by our selected methods and tools of inquiry as well as our personal background and dispositions” (Gallagher et al., 2014, p. 1124).

A general conclusion, shared by most DS scholars, is that no single theoretical explanation to date provides a full account of the disability phenomenon (Grue, 2011). The minority model is criticised for failing to account for economic and political causation. The gap model is disparaged for being predicated on the naïve assumption that discrepancy between ability and expectation can always be closed through social action (Grue, 2011), obviating the need for a distinct social category called disability. As has been argued, the social model has been critiqued for insufficiently acknowledging biophysical and cultural causes of disability (Grue, 2011), and for making an unnecessary distinction between impairment and disability; a distinction that may unwittingly support the right of a society to decide who is *impaired* and who is not.

The work of Shakespeare and Watson (Shakespeare, 1996, 1998, 2006; Shakespeare & Watson, 2001) was particularly influential in the early development of DS. Using feminist, postmodernist and poststructuralist perspectives, these authors argued for a rejection of the social model on the basis of, what they considered, outdated modes of binary thought (Shakespeare & Watson, 2001). One such binary centred on impairment *versus* non-impairment. Shakespeare and Watson (2001) suggest an embodied ontology to counter the effects of this. They argue that there is no qualitative difference between disabled people and non-disabled people, because everyone is impaired to some degree and impairment is an inherent feature of the human existence (Shakespeare and Watson, 2001). For them, the “ubiquity of impairment is an empirical fact” that does not allow the collapsing of ability into “two distinct ontological statuses” (Shakespeare and Watson, 2001, p. 24). Rather, it points to a continuum of ability. The job of disability studies then, should be to develop an understanding of how the ability/disability dichotomy came into existence and an analysis of the interests in which this occurred (Shakespeare and Watson, 2001).

For Shakespeare & Watson (2001, p. 22), impairment and disability as two “different aspects of a single experience” that represented by “a complex dialectic of biological, psychological, cultural and socio-political factors, which cannot be extricated except with imprecision”. While they focused on the “cultural locations of disability that evoke[d] violence, restriction, confinement” and oppression, they also remained “attentive to the lessons learnt from materialism” (Goodley, 2013, p. 633). Shakespeare and Watson (2001) espoused explanations of disability that transcended judgments about individual traits or social causalities alone. They asserted that an adequate theory of disability “would include all the dimensions of disabled people’s experiences: bodily, psychological, cultural, social,

political” (Shakespeare & Watson, 2001, p. 20). For them, disability is “the quintessential post-modern concept, because it is so complex, so variable, so contingent, so situated”, sitting as it does, “at the intersection of biology and society and of agency and structure” (Shakespeare & Watson, 2001, p. 19).

While DS scholars differ in their interpretation of the significance of the corporeality of disability (Goodley, 2014), they agree that placement in the disability category depends, to a very large extent, on the material, cultural and socio-political conditions in which this process occurs. They point to how arbitrary definitions of disability tend to be across jurisdictions and cultural conditions (Baglieri, 2017; Connor, 2014; Gallagher, 2007; Slee, 1997; Thomas & Loxley, 2007). They place emphasis on the increased probability of being assigned to a category of disability on the basis of social or cultural factors that have nothing to do with impairment, such as one’s abode, social class or ethnicity (Artiles, 2011; Bernstein, 1971; Biklen et al., 2014; Gallagher, 2007; Gallagher et al., 2014; Tomlinson, 1982). Finally, they note that compared to their non-disabled peers, those placed within the disability category were more likely to experience educational segregation and restrictive provision, leave school early and with fewer and lower-level qualifications, experience dramatically higher rates of unemployment and underemployment, gain less access to third level education, be subjected to higher rates of incarceration; and come from minority ethnic or linguistic groups (Connor & Valle, 2015).

Recent Irish Central Statistics Office (CSO) figures confirm, for example, that the unemployment rate amongst persons with a disability was 26.3%, more than double the 12.9% rate for the population as a whole. In addition,

“Educational attainment amongst disabled persons was also much lower than that of the general population at all levels. Amongst those aged 15 to 50 (inclusive), 13.7% had completed no higher than primary level education, compared with 4.2% of the general population; 37.0% had completed third level education compared with 53.4% of all those aged 15-50.” (Central Statistics Office, 2016)

In short then, DS sees explanations of disability based on individual pathology as inadequate, since they cannot account fully for the range of factors that cause a label of disability to be assigned to an individual or the consequences that ensue from this. They suggest that, rather than working in the best interests of people concerned, essentialist definitions provide a basis on which those deemed to have disability can “be acted on, shaped, and turned out as best as can be done to fit into the existing social structure”

(Linton, 2005, p. 518). They question why such inadequate explanations continue to hold sway within broader society and ask in whose interests this occurs.

## **2.6 Critical Disability Studies and the influence of Foucauldian Discourse Theory**

At the same time as DS was assimilating social and cultural ontologies and epistemologies, it became overtly *critical* in its focus. Thus, it began to self-identify as *Critical Disability Studies* (CDS), articulating an “explicit commitment to assist disabled people in their fight for full equality and social inclusion” (Thomas, 2004, p. 571). Barnes, Oliver, & Barton (2002, p. 2) assert that this was because CDS evolved “from a position of engagement” rather than “detachment” from those deemed to have disability and because its roots were deeply embedded in their activism (Baglieri et al., 2011, p. 269). This emancipatory commitment became a central feature of critical disability studies (Vehmas & Watson, 2014), to such an extent that it was characterised as the “academic wing” of the disability movement (Thomas, 2004, p. 581).

The emphasis of critical disability studies on “unpacking” disability (Gallagher et al., 2014, p. 1125) as a category based primarily on value-laden and historically/culturally conditioned perceptions of difference (Gallagher, 2007), led CDS to take a particular interest in language and other forms of communication. McDermott and Varenne (1995 p. 326) describe culture as “patterns of human activity and the systems and symbols that shape” them. These patterns are thought to be “crafted from the partial and mutually dependent knowledge of each person caught in the process” of meaning-making about particular phenomena, and “made of the voices of many, each brought to life and made significant by the others” (McDermott & Varenne, 1995 p. 326). Semiosis is seen as central to this process. It allows the members of a culture to assimilate the “ready-made” understandings of others and, in doing so, see things as others see them and “see themselves as others see them” (Barton & Walker, 2012).

Many poststructuralists viewed language as a form of social practice, asserting that it does not simply label entities, but conceptualises them; it is only through words that “a formulation of the world comes into being” (Wetherell, 2001, p. 16). The work of Foucault was central to this thinking. It shifted attention from a general examination of the role of language to an exploration of one of its most powerful features, *discourse*. For Foucault, discourse is the key system for meaning-making within social practice (Hall, 1997). He asserted that whether a phenomenon is considered real and material in the world or thought to be socially engendered, it cannot have meaning outside of discourse (Foucault, 1972). This is because we can only know about things when they have been ascribed meaning

through discourse, thus it is discourse that attributes *meaning* to phenomena and produces objects of knowledge, not things themselves (Hall, 1997).

Foucault was particularly interested in understanding how systems of knowledge (or *episteme*) allow certain truth assertions to develop and gain ascendancy within society and its cultures. He asserted that knowledge was divided into two types: *connaissance* and *savoir*. *Connaissance* referred to *bodies of learning* or conscious knowledge to be found in books, theories, beliefs and media (Foucault, 1972). It denoted the relationship between the subject and object and the formal rules that govern this. The second type of knowledge, *savoir*, referred to the conditions that allowed *connaissance* to emerge, such as discursive practice knowledge or general knowledge. *Savoir* comprised different bodies of learning and philosophical ideas, along with the social and institutional interactions and practices through which these were translated into everyday life (Foucault, 1972). To understand how something becomes an object of study within *connaissance* one must first explain the *savoir* that has allowed it to do so.

## **Discourse**

For Foucault, a discourse is “a group of statements which provide a language for talking about – a way of representing the knowledge about – a particular topic at a particular historical moment” (Hall, 1997 p. 44). Discourses “cohere around a set of shared meanings” (Goodley, 2016, p. 131). Thus an object of knowledge can only be made meaningful by everything that has been said about it “in all the statements that named it, divided it up, described it, explained it, traced its development, indicated its various correlations, judged it, and possibly gave it speech by articulating in its name” (Foucault, 1972, p. 32), in other words within discourse.

Discourses carry their own rationalities, which govern what can and cannot be said and how we think and act. As Youdell (2006 p. 36) puts it, they have the effect of “rendering some things common sense and other things nonsensical”. In some cases, once a particular view of reality is initially articulated, it can be very difficult to envisage or construct in an alternative way. Wetherell (2001) puts this succinctly when she writes:

As accounts and discourses become available and widely shared, they become social realities to be reckoned with; they become efficacious in future events. The account enters the discursive economy to be circulated, exchanged, stifled, marginalised or, perhaps, comes to dominate over other possible accounts and thus marked as the “definitive truth”. (p. 16)

## Power/Knowledge

However, discourses involve more than just the sharing of meaning. They are sets of statements that construct the objects of which they speak. For Foucault, the way in which we give meaning to words and other signs allows us to shape their meaning and to position ourselves and others in relation to them. In other words, discourse also has ideological dimensions which inevitably lead to the exercise of power; power that often remains hidden to those involved in a given social practice. Thus, Foucault (1980) used the term *power/knowledge* to emphasise how power is constituted through the assertion of particular forms of knowledge that become accepted as *truth*. For Foucault (1980),

Truth is a thing of this world. ... Each society has its regime of truth, its "general politics" of truth: that is, the types of discourse which it accepts and makes function as true; the mechanisms and instances which enable one to distinguish true and false statements, the means by which each is sanctioned; the techniques and procedures accorded value in the acquisition of truth; the status of those who are charged with saying what counts as true". (p. 131)

Similarly, social norms and customs only come into existence when someone enacts them. They are only possible because people have an idea of the ways in which culture expects them to act. In using sign and language within discourse to interact with each other, individuals get a sense of what exactly the norms and culture of a society will allow or disallow (Foucault, 1980). In other words, discourse provides a means by which "a person learns and internalizes [*sic*] the prevailing norms and culture as he or she acquires knowledge, identity and a sense of how to behave, to communicate and to interact" (Walker, 2007 p. 356).

In his later work, Foucault focussed on "how knowledge was put to work through discursive practices in specific institutional settings to regulate the conduct of others" (Hall, 1997 p. 47). He looked specifically at how knowledge and power were related and how they worked together within institutional apparatus and its technologies (Hall, 1997). Institutional apparatuses are the forms of power/knowledge that constitute particular institutions. Institutional technologies are the practical techniques used to put that power/knowledge into practice. Because knowledge is always employed to regulate social conduct in practice, Foucault saw knowledge and power as inextricably enmeshed. As Hall (1997, p. 49, original emphasis) puts it, "Knowledge linked to power, not only assumes the authority of 'the truth' but has the power to *make itself true*. All knowledge, once applied in the real world has real effects, and in that sense at least, becomes true". Thus, for Foucault (1977 p. 27), "there is

no power relation without correlative constitution of a field of knowledge, nor any knowledge that does not presupposes and constitute at the same time, power relations”.

It is important to note that Foucault sees power as neither inherently good or bad, rather it circulates within social systems allowing them to function in particular ways. “We are all caught up in this circulation” and its operation “at every site of social life” (Hall, 1997 p. 50). Foucault sees discourse not only as a resource for the reinforcement of power but also as something that provides the scope to “evade, subvert or contest strategies of power” (Gaventa, 2003, p. 3). Thus, “[d]iscourse transmits and produces power; it reinforces it, but also undermines and exposes it, renders it fragile and makes it possible to thwart” (Foucault, 1998 p. 101). Discourses then, are socially constitutive as well as socially shaped. They are constructed by, and help to construct assumptions that influence how social actors think, talk, act and position themselves in relation to phenomena and to each other. They can constitute situations and objects of knowledge as well as social identities and relationships. They can also be used to sustain and reproduce particular representations or to challenge and transform these through the exercise of individual agency (Fairclough, 2011).

Foucault’s theories take account of the fact that “forms of knowledge, objects, subjects and practices of knowledge’ can differ “radically from period to period” (Hall, 1997 p. 46). They set out to reveal, and where necessary undermine, certain claims to truth (Hall, 1997), by denaturalising what appear to be immutable and natural categories, all of which are viewed as products of discursive practices operating in particular social contexts at particular points in time. By, radically historicising the way discourse, knowledge and truth are conceived, Foucault offered a way to understand how *savoir* allows disability to become an object of knowledge within *connaissance* (Hall, 1997). He suggested two ways by which such exploration of this process could occur, archaeology and genealogy (Foucault & Rabinow, 1991).

### **Archaeology and Genealogy.**

In Foucault’s early work he produced “a series of historical case studies” (Crowley, 2009 p. 3) focussing on the emergence of various human sciences, including *Madness and Civilisation* (Foucault, 1965), *The Birth of the Clinic* and *The Order of Things* (Foucault, 1963a, 1963b). Within these Foucault developed an analytical method he referred to as *archaeology*; an approach he later summed up in *The Archaeology of Knowledge* (Foucault, 2013). Archaeology, in its Foucauldian sense, involved working through a broad range of historical archives to gain insight into the systems of thought (or what Foucault called *epistemes* or discursive formations) operating in given social contexts at particular points in history. These systems of thought are governed by rules, “beyond grammar and



logic” (Gutting, 2011, p. 36), that operate, often beneath the conscious level, within discourse. They produce and shape the boundaries of knowledge and what is taken as truth.

Archaeology then, is concerned with contextualising and historicising truth assertions and with understanding why and how certain truths, and the discursive formations that produce these, become established in different ways across different settings and times. It has been described by (Goodley, 2016), as taking an interest in the *epistemology* of phenomena. It involves the intellectual excavation of different discursive formations that govern talking, thinking and acting around a particular phenomenon and which set out the parameters for our meaning-making about it (Hall, 1997). It is about examining how the vestiges of past discourses and current orders of discourse influence representations of disability. In addition to socially sanctioned discourses, archaeology uses those that have been traditionally silenced or disqualified to systematically deconstruct accepted, often unquestioned, truth assertions about disability to reveal the discursive structures that produce these. Thus, archaeology is concerned with contextualising and historicising truth assertions and understanding how certain truths become dominant at different times and in different settings.

While archaeology is good for comparing how truth assertions differ in these settings and times, it yields little insight into what caused a transition from one mode of thinking that produces one set of truth assertions to another mode that produces alternative claims to truth (Gutting, 2005). In *Discipline and Punish* (Foucault, 1977) and *The History of Sexuality* (Foucault, 1990) Foucault sought to address this issue by focussing his analytical method more explicitly on power, knowledge and the body (Crowley, 2009). He called this new approach *genealogy*.

While archaeology continued to focus on discourse analysis, discontinuity and a rejection of totalising views of history, genealogy used an “historical perspective and investigative method” to provide “an intrinsic critique of the present” (Crowley, 2009, p. 2). It looks at how the relationship between knowledge, power and the human subject in modern society is shaped, not by universal scientific truths, but by ethical and political commitments to particular representations of phenomena (Gutting, 2005). It is concerned with the “technologies of the self and the practices of human nature” that affect how we have come to understand ourselves (Goodley, 2016, p.131). Genealogy then, sets out to reveal, and where necessary undermine, certain claims to truth (Goodley, 2016), by denaturalising what seems clear and immutable and by destabilising what seem to be natural categories of human characteristics (Goodley, 2016), all of which it views as products of discursive practices operating in particular social contexts at a particular point in time. Hook (2005, pp.

4-5) characterises Foucault's genealogical approach as "an array of defamiliarizing [*sic*] procedures and reconceptualization [*sic*] that pertain not just to any object of knowledge, but to any procedure of knowledge production".

In his essay "Nietzsche, Genealogy and History" (Foucault, 1978) and his lecture entitled "Orders of Discourse" (Foucault, 1971), Foucault outlined a set of methodological injunctions to be used as the building blocks of genealogical analysis (Bowman & Hook, 2010). These included the principles of reversal, discontinuity, specificity and exteriority (Hook, 2005). Foucault proposed that these principles be used explicitly to critique of "traditional" readings of history, to "produce an awareness of the complexity, contingency, and, frailty of historical forms" (Smart, 1983 in Hook, 2005, p. 7) and to illustrate how "issues of knowledge are no longer exclusively epistemic, but are rather primarily critical or political in concern" (Hook, 2005, p. 8). Foucault used them to examine historic discourses surrounding madness, disease and normality, crime and punishment and sexuality, in order to re-evaluate the discourses operating in these fields and make explicit how the knowledge assertions that dominated them were constituted. In this way, he was able to illuminate how certain, sometimes oppressive, discourses influence the formation of the subject in society (Crowley, 2009).

Foucault proposed that together, archaeology and genealogy can provide a framework within which tools and methods from various disciplines (history, geography, anthropology, politics, linguistics, education) could be deployed to analyse how certain truth assertions in many fields of social practice have gained dominance. He suggests that scholars should use these tools to remove themselves from particular historical assumptions, preconceptions and prejudices about phenomena in order to open themselves up to new ways of perceiving what was previously been taken as *commonsensical* or *given* about these. The objective here is not to seek absolute truth, but to detach "the power of truth from the forms of hegemony, social, economic, and cultural, within which it operates" (Foucault & Rabinow, 1991 p. 75) and to reveal in whose interests dominant truths about disability sustain.

## **2.7 Foucault, CDS and the Truth about Disability**

Foucault's ideas about discourse, knowledge and power have been important in the development of theorisation about disability and within Critical Disability Studies (Rogers, 2004). CDS has used these ideas to assert that concepts such as disability and normalcy are not objective facts, but cultural institutions that have been socially, culturally, historically and politically engendered through particular socio-cultural interactions and their discourses that *shape* our subjective sense of ourselves and others (Goodley, 2016). This is because

we can only know about these phenomena through what is upheld about them in discourse. As Goodley (2016 p. 36) puts it “[i]mpairment is understood, felt, experienced, referred to and evoked by the words we use to describe it. Then the words or discourses we use are socially mediated”.

Within CDS, those who acquire designations of disability or normalcy, do so predominantly through the deployment of ideologically laden discourses that rest on particular “sets of assumptions about what counts as learning, achievement, and ability” (Rogers, 2002, p. 215). Acquisition of a disability designation generally connotes undesirable images and negative consequences. Because of this, CDS is informed by the idea that disability, like other types of social marginalisation, is centrally structured by oppression, inequality and exclusion (Thomas, 2004). It maintains an overtly critical focus, prioritising the disruption of oppressive discourses through emancipatory action. In Linton's (2005) terms, it seeks

to expose the ways that disability has been made exceptional and to work to naturalize [*sic*] disabled people — remake us as full citizens whose rights and privileges are intact, whose history and contributions are recorded, and whose often distorted representations in art, literature, film, theatre, and other forms of artistic expression are fully analyzed [*sic*]. (p. 518)

CDS uses the methodological tools of archaeology and genealogy to problematise how different combinations of knowledge/power produce and render particular representation of disability as *true* at different times and in different contexts; how disability and impairment are manufactured within societal institutions like schools, clinics, charities, art, science, media and popular culture in ways that dis-locate and *other* disabled people (Vehmas & Shakespeare, 2014). Within CDS, archaeology has been used to examine the epistemologies operating within superstitions, religious beliefs, moral positions as well as medical, psychology and other scientific perspectives, to reveal how the discourses operating within these fields influence meaning-making about disability (Goodley, 2016). CDS has also tried to construct “a genealogy of disability as a socially meaningful category” (Grue, 2011, p. 536). It looks at how certain *technologies of self* use the disability category to get us to understand ourselves and each other in certain ways (Goodley, 2016). In particular, it seeks to understand how certain discourses become dominant in contexts where meaning is made about disability and in whose interests these are deployed. Finally, it sets out to make explicit the epistemological, ethical, social and political issues that make particular discourses problematic, including those that create disability as an identity marker

of oppression and discrimination “on a par with” with class, gender, race and ethnicity (Thomas, 2004, p. 581).

The emphasis of CDS on discourse also requires it to consider a range of contextual factors operating in sites where meaning is made about disability, such as schools and classrooms. It forces an examination of how institutions function, either as sites for the reproduction of dominant discourses or as locations where resistance to these occurs (Liasidou, 2012). For Davis (2017) the main aims of CDS are to challenge hegemonies that represent disability within a rubric of normalcy, to disrupt essentialist discourses, to expand definitions of disability “into such concepts as neurodiversity, debility and capacity, chronic illness”, and “to render complex the simple fact of impairment while rendering simple the ideological screen of normality” (Davis, 2017 p. 13). For Shildrick (2012), it should focus on the unconsidered assumptions that produce binaries of difference and obscure commonalities between people. One way to disrupt traditional narratives of disability and the oppression that they produce, is to interrogate both sides of each binary equally, challenging negative stereo-types created by them and replacing these with more positive and equitable representations (Goodley, 2013, 2014, 2016).

The idea that disability is centrally structured by social oppression has been formalised in recent times by the adoption of the *United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities* (United Nations, 2006). This document officially adds disability as a marker of identity to those associated with class, gender, race and ethnicity. It is interesting however that, although Ireland was one of the first states to sign the UNCPD, it only ratified this formally at the end of March 2018, albeit in the context of “a number of reservations and declarations, steering away from the obligations on employment with relation to recruitment in the Garda Síochána, the Defence Forces and the emergency services” (McGee, 2018 unpaginated). The delay in doing so led to calls from the European Disability Forum (EDF) and the Disability Federation of Ireland (DFI) to get on with it as soon as possible, along with full implementation of the National Disability Strategy (Department of Justice and Equality, 2017). The need for political pressure from representative groups lends weight to the view of disability as a source of oppression, the remedy for which lies in affirmative political, legislative and social action by disability activist and their advocates.

## **Biopower**

Another component of Foucault’s ideas about discourse that makes these particularly applicable to an exploration of disabilities, is his conceptualisation of the site in which power is applied primarily, in other words, the body. Foucault placed “the body at the centre of the struggles between different formations of power/knowledge”, a body which itself is “*produced*

within discourse” (Hall, 1997 pp. 49-50 original emphasis). For Foucault different discursive formations are sites for power struggles with each inscribing the body differently according to the different regimes of power/knowledge that sustain them. Central to Foucault’s conceptualisation of power/knowledge is the idea of biopower (Ojakangas, 2005). He characterised this as a new form of power that emerged during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries in response to the rejection by modern societies of traditional or violent forms of power and their demands for power to be exercised in justifiable and rational ways.

For Foucault, biopower looked at human beings not in their individuality but in larger populations and over the course of a lifetime. It represented as a set of disciplinary technologies for managing human populations that were “situated and exercised at the level of life, the species, the race, and the large-scale phenomena of the population” (Foucault, 1998 p. 140). These focussed on the biological processes of life, especially reproduction, public health, heredity, education and the family. They emphasised the protection of the state and its citizens through the regulation of the body. For Foucault (1998 p.140), modern society has witnessed an “explosion of numerous and diverse techniques for achieving the subjugations of bodies and the control of populations in recent times”.

Biopower differs from discipline, in that discipline is deployed to make individuals behave and be productive through individualization and exclusion of the abnormal (Foucault, 2007). Biopower, on the other hand, “produces a generalized [*sic*] disciplinary society and regulatory controls through biopolitics of the population” (Foucault, 2007 p. 378). It generated new *connaissances*, apparatuses and techniques to control bodies and lives, including statistical devices, normalcy, demography, public policies (Foucault, 1998). Thus, it not only sought to control citizens’ bodies but also their subjective selves and collective relations (Foucault, 1978). It became encoded into social practices and behaviours, as human subjects acquiesce to the subtle regulatory expectations of the social order. The exercise of biopower in the service of preserving the life of the population and the state can have serious disadvantages, however. In presenting the state as a body to be protected, and the use of state power as essential to its health and survival, virtually any action can be justified, including the oppression or elimination of individuals and groups identified as a posing a threat to its life or wellbeing.

Foucault’s concept of biopower has been particularly influential in explaining how disability emerged as a cultural artefact, especially within modern capitalist states. Such societies required the standardisation, homogenisation and normalisation of bodies and bodily practices in order to ensure a steady supply of reliable labour (Goodley, 2011). Thus they discursively created the ideal physical and ethical type of citizen and the non-ideal type.

The exercise of biopower allowed not only the identification of the non-ideal but also their formulation as problems to be addressed through measurement, treatment and regulation. Thus it created both “the objects (impairments) and subjects (impaired people) of biopower” in the name of securing “the well-being of the population” (Davis in Goodley, 2011 p. 113). However, Tremain (2000 p. 296) reminds us that the body has “no pre-given materiality, structure, or meaning prior to its articulation in discourse”. It is because of the exercise of biopower and the need for positivist ideologies to camouflage their socially constructed origins that bodies are marked out for assessment, diagnosis and treatment (Tremain, 2000). Since such practices became firmly embedded in medicalised practices over the years, they can only be problematised fully within biopolitical analysis (Tremain, 2000).

## 2.8 Critiques of Critical Disability Studies

The application of CDS to the study of disability has not been without its critics, with some scholars seeming to find its analyses “difficult to abide” (Baglieri et al., 2011, p. 274). For example, critical realists have posed a “powerful challenge” (Thomas, 2004 p. 576) to its postmodernist construction of disability by refusing to reduce disability to our contingent and shifting knowledge about it. Anastasiou & Kauffman (2012, p. 141) assert that because impairments cause restrictions in the performance of “critical evolutionary abilities”, disability is grounded in observable “socialised biological factors” that render it as a neutral category incomparable to other forms of diversity. Similarly, Vehmas (2008) argues that, before a phenomenon can become a human institution, it must be preceded by some physical realisation or *brute fact*, upon which social representations of it are imposed. For Vehmas (2008) because impairment is the *brute fact* upon which social interpretations of disability rests, any full explanation of disability must be predicated on an acknowledgement of impairment. Using such arguments, critical realists (Shakespeare, 2006; Anastasiou & Kauffman, 2011, 2012, 2013; Vehmas and Watson, 2014), assert that emancipatory paradigms pay insufficient attention to the physical foundations of disability, and, in doing so, offer an insufficient account of the disability experience. Vehmas & Watson (2014, p. 649), for example, remind us that many physical conditions “cause suffering irrespective of one’s cultural environment” or socially conditioned views of them.

In response, Gallagher, Connor and Ferri (2014, p. 1124), point out that the distinction between “primarily intrinsic” and “socialised biological factors” can only be said to exist if we can establish a clear difference between the two (Gallagher et al., 2014), which, they believe, we cannot. This is because all human observation “is thoroughly imbued with human values”, despite any illusory “common sense” beliefs to the contrary (Gallagher et al., 2014, p. 823). For Goodley (2013, p. 637), the important thing is not whether lived bodily

experiences are important but whether bodies are inscribed as “disabled ... women, children, queer, people of colour [or] poor”, in ways that are “founded upon ableist, heteronormative, adult, white European and North American, high-income nations’ values” that mark them as other. For Linton (1998), even if they comprise a heterogeneous group, it is the fact that disabled people are bound together “by the social and political circumstances” that cause them to share a collective experience of oppression that marks them out as a distinct group. Those arguing against the realist turn, have argued that though it “has been powerful – allowing the body to resurface as a significant element of the disability experience” (Goodley, 2013, p. 634), the impaired body is still a social body. The important thing is not to explore differences *per se*, but to explore bodily differences that have been “made to matter” (Goodley, 2013, p. 635). To do this, CDS turns to “the cultural, discursive and relational undergirdings of the disability experience” (Goodley, 2013, p. 634).

In addition to criticism from critical realists, some writers (Barnes, 2007; Kristiansen et al., 2008; Shakespeare, 2006; Vehmas, 2008; Vehmas & Shakespeare, 2014; Vehmas & Watson, 2014) have asserted that the relativism of CDS is “false” (Vehmas & Watson, 2014 p. 646) and that its overt political commitment to people with disability makes impossible any claims it might have to objectivity. They posit that, while CDS criticises normative judgements in relation to disability, it places no such constraints on normative claims about oppression, which is “examined as an objective reality” (Vehmas & Watson, 2014). Goodley (2014) agrees that CDS references normative values, but believes that normative assertions about things like equity and social justice are relatively unproblematic for most people, for example that it “should not be normal to expel some children from mainstream education on the basis of their physical or cognitive impairments” (Goodley, 2014, p. 158). He takes issues with critics who propose “leaving dis/ability only in the realm of the normative”, accusing them of ignoring the potential of CDS to critique “a whole host of norms that are, in actuality, limiting and stifling” (Goodley, 2014, p. 158). For Goodley, it is “[n]on-normative children” to provide an essential impetus to “disrupt, contest and subvert educational policies, practices and pedagogies .... founded upon the assumption that education is the normal child’s playground” (Goodley, 2014, p. 158).

CDS has also been criticised by Vehmas and Watson (2014), for denigrating the ability of people with disability and their allies to coalesce around particular issues in order to ameliorate the effects of impairment. They warn against its tendency to deconstruct “the single interest group identity” into “a kaleidoscope of shifting identities and ableist discourses” (Vehmas & Watson, 2014, p. 646), which only serves to reduce the political power of those deemed to have disability. They also remind us that positive acknowledgment of difference can lead to the development of positive, liberating and

empowering group identities that can be “invaluable tools in the resistance against discrimination and oppression” (Vehmas & Watson, 2014, p. 648). They assert that emancipatory action of this kind first needs “to identify a group to be protected” or emancipated (Vehmas & Watson, 2014), on the basis of their impairment. Countering this argument, Goodley (2014) points out that any discussion of the impaired body takes “place against a very unstable background of tacit assumptions and fantasies about the natural body” (Goodley, 2014, p. 168), which he calls a “hygienic Western fantasy” that evokes of late capitalism that portrays the ideal human subject as one that is “rational, coherent, and above all autonomous” as well as “solitary, bright and productive” Goodley (2014, p. 168). For Goodley (2014) and others (Goodley & Runswick-Cole, 2014), a key objective of disability research should be to subvert such preconceptions and extend views of what it means to be human beyond “the narrow, normative and rigid view of the neoliberal capitalist self” (Goodley & Runswick-Cole, 2014 p. 2).

Vehmas and Watson (2014) also argue that, while CDS “has produced useful analyses of the cultural reproduction of disability”, it offers little by way of “practical moral guidance” or “conceptual tools for ethical decision-making” (Vehmas and Watson, 2014, p. 643). For them, it helps little with the “practical difficult ethical choices” that arise from the “lived, embodied and visceral experiences of having an impairment” (Vehmas and Watson, 2014, p. 641). In particular, the poststructuralist dimensions of CDS have been criticised for their “foolish” insistence (Searle in Feely, 2016a p. 867) on “treating the knowledge produced by material sciences as simple a social construction”, a suspicion that prevents meaningful engagement with “the most successful system that the human intellect has ever produced” in terms of knowledge creation. Baglieri et al. (2011), take issue with this view, asserting that CDS has many practical applications, including in fields such as education. Here, it is asserted, CDS can be used to question “conventional and naturalized [*sic*] ways of thinking about difference” as well as to develop more balanced, critical and nuanced understandings of “school failure” (Baglieri et al., 2011, p. 270) .

CDS is also seen as particularly useful in offering cogent analyses of how “macro-level processes ... intersect with disability issues” in local settings to “shape the experience of disability” (Baglieri et al., 2011 p. 270). It is in this respect that CDS was seen as particularly congruent with the aims of this work. It was deployed as a theoretical framework within which to examine the cultural politics of inclusive education and to develop insights into how team-teaching had deployed within this field, either to reinforce or deconstruct the disciplinary practices that cause the separation of students into those deemed to have disability and those who are not.



One of the most important criticism of CDS, comes from Florian (2014) who asserts that while reference to socio-cultural and historical perspectives may draw attention to discriminatory structures and practices, they have proven largely impotent in trying to “resolve” them (Florian, 2014, p. 12). Moreover, it is posited that these perspectives contribute to “a kind of identity politics”, they may unwittingly reinforce the legitimacy of the very categories they seek to deconstruct (Florian, 2014, p. 13). Similarly, Riddell (2013) asserts that models of disability based solely on notions of human rights and oppression lead inevitably to tensions between competing rights, such as between the right of a child to be educated with her/his peers and the right of these peers to an appropriate education. Tensions of this kind, she believes, can lead to a resurgence of positivist thinking and functionalist sociologies, such as those often evident in the “triangular tension” between parents, professionals and bureaucrats around the deployment of resources within education (Riddell, 2013, p. 100).

Similarly, Florian notes that while the *United Nations Convention of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities* promotes the right to education, rights in education remain “limited by the inequities imposed by bell-curve thinking and the subsequent restricted opportunities to learn” (Florian, 2014). For her, the key question is how can supports be offered in ways that avoid positioning inclusive education “at the boundary of education’s normative centre” and shifting attention from the failure of the “mainstream” education to provide for all learners (Florian, 2014 p.14)? Legislation, policy and practice may seek to prosecute the rights of learners with disability “to avail of, and benefit from, appropriate education as do their peers who do not have such needs” (Government of Ireland, 2004, p. 5), yet where positivist systems of assessment, identification, categorization and *special* pedagogy remain, the capacity of learners and parents to vindicate these rights is structurally undermined (Florian, 2014; Graham & Slee, 2008). Such issues lie at the heart of this work.

## **2.9 Summary and Conclusions**

This chapter reviewed the key ways in which disability has been conceptualised and understood over the years and reviewed the how symbolic, positivist, social, cultural and Critical Disability Studies (CDS) perspectives were used for this purpose. While recognising that no single theoretical explanation is thought to provide a full account of the disability phenomenon and how it is experienced (Grue, 2011), CDS was suggested as the most appropriate perspective through which to examine the issues of ideology inherent in the research questions posed by this work.

CDS sees disability as “a complex dialectic of biological, psychological, cultural and socio-political factors, which cannot be extricated except with imprecision” (Shakespeare & Watson, 2001, p. 22). It locates disability “at the intersection of biology and society and of agency and structure”, viewing it as a “quintessential post-modern concept” (Shakespeare & Watson, 2001, p. 19) that requires post-modern perspectives to comprehend it. While remaining attentive to materialist factors, it focuses primarily on the cultural location of disability and the symbolic violence and oppression that this evokes (Goodley, 2013, p. 633). Its emphasises the *unpacking* of disability as a cultural category (Gallagher et al., 2014), a set of value-laden and historically/culturally conditioned perceptions of difference (Gallagher, 2007). This leads CDS to take a particular interest in discourse, as articulated through language and other semiosis. This focus on discourse offers those researching disability and its effects, a semiotic entry point for their investigation, especially into ideological issues such as those posed by this work.

The critical imperatives of CDS also require it to “assist disabled people in their fight for full equality and social inclusion” (Thomas, 2004, p. 571). This commitment will be addressed in the current work, through the development of a positive critique of teachers use of disability discourse and an exploration of the effects of this on conceptualisations of team-teaching as a support to the inclusion of learners deemed to have disability. It is hoped that the identification of instances where oppressive disability discourses were challenged or resisted will provide a basis for the conscientisation of teachers (Freire, 1970, 1985) about the negative effects of deploying such discourses and provide practical guidance about how to avoid their use in the future (Fairclough, 2016).

# Chapter 3: Theoretical Perspectives on Disability and their Application to Education

## 3.1 Introduction

The previous chapter suggested that Critical Disability Studies (CDS) was the most appropriate theoretical perspective through which to examine the issues of ideology inherent in the research questions posed by this work. This chapter will now discuss the application of Foucauldian discourse theory, within a CDS framework, to the education of learners deemed to have disability in post-primary schools (Section 3.2). Sections 3.3 and 3.4 will use Foucault's *archaeological* approach to suggest an effective history of special education that draws attention to its propensity to privilege a range of oppressive assumptions. Section 3.5 will offer a review of the important but relatively sparse range of literature focussing on critiques of essentialism within the Irish education system. Section 3.6 will also use Foucault's concept *genealogy* to discuss how disabilities can evolve as objects of understanding within post-primary schools and how the disciplinary technologies of special education are used to increase the surveillance and control of students deemed to have disability in these settings. In Section 3.7 the epistemological differences between special and inclusive education will be discussed, along with the cultural colonisation of inclusive education by positivist epistemologies (Section 3.8). Section 3.9 will discuss the cultural work that has to be done if this colonisation is to be challenged and resisted. The chapter will conclude with a summary and some conclusions about the implications of the issues discussed for the questions posed in this work (Section 3.10).

## 3.2 Foucault, CDS and the Education of Learners deemed to have Disability

Despite the on-going criticism of CDS, the approach has been used extensively to critique many areas of social life, including education. Winzer and Mazurek (2014, p. 33) assert that as early as the 1970s researchers were beginning to use Foucauldian theory in tandem with "new educational and social philosophies" to question dominant truths about the education of students deemed to have disability. In the beginning, this use focussed predominantly on providing "a direct challenge to the weighty paradigm of special education, with its fixation on individual deficits and remedies" (Allan, 2010, p. 604). Later, its use was extended to critically interrogate inclusive education (Allan, 1996, 2010; Allan & Slee, 2008; Brantlinger, 1997; Gabel & Danforth, 2008; Gallagher, 2007; Iano, 1986; Skrtic, 1991, 1995; Slee, 1997; Thomas, 2007; Thomas & Loxley, 2007; Tomlinson, 1982; Winzer & Mazurek, 2014). Many have focussed on the cultural colonisation of inclusive education by essentialist

and neo-liberal discourses that, in their view, work to reproduce the same types of exclusion and inequity created by the dividing practices of special education (Thomas & Loxley, 2007; Allan, 2010; Florian, 2014; Slee, 2014).

The use of Foucault's archaeological and genealogical tools has been instrumental in these critiques. *Archaeology* has been used to develop what Foucault (1977) calls *effective* histories of the education for students deemed to have disabilities, histories that take account of the discursive workings of power/knowledge over the years. The next section of this chapter will look at both traditional and effective histories of the development of special and inclusive education, drawing out issues pertinent to the education of learners deemed to have disability in particular. Since Foucault (1977) reminds us that it is only by analysing the "micro-physics of power" that we can truly come to understand its operation, the chapter will also discuss how his concept of *genealogy* has been applied to explain how power relations operating in local contexts work to manufacture disability as a socially meaningful category in schools, and to explore the "technologies of the self and the practices of human nature" (Goodley, 2016, p.131) that facilitate this. Hook (2005, p. 4) suggests genealogy can be used to "denaturalise" what seems immutable and natural, to reveal disability as a product of the discursive practices operating within such contexts.

Section 3.4 will look at how Foucault's methodological tool of *archaeology* has been used to question traditional histories of the education for learners deemed to have disability, and to develop *effective* accounts of them, especially as they relate to the fields of special and inclusive education.

### **3.3 Traditional Histories**

#### **Traditional Histories of the Development of Education for Learners deemed to have Disability**

A review of typical traditional histories of the development of education for learners deemed to have disability in Ireland (Department of Justice and Equality, 2017; Flood, 2013; Griffin & Shevlin, 2011; MacGiolla Phádraig, 2007; McGee, 2004; McGee, 2018; Shevlin, 2016; Swan, 2000; Winter & O'Raw, 2010), suggests that, as elsewhere (Braddock & Parish, 2001; Peim, 2001; Salend & Garrick Duhaney, 2011; Winzer, 1993; Winzer & Mazurek, 2014), this began with an almost total absence of educational provision for these learners during the periods relating to pre-history, Brehon and medieval times. They usually move on swiftly to descriptions of the emergence of isolated private initiatives in the mid-eighteenth century, based on Enlightenment ideas, suggesting that these early initiatives were targeted mainly at sensory impairments, and describing attempts to provide comprehensive education

to the small numbers of individuals who were given access to available services. As part of this description, they tend to describe the emergence of a delineation between mental illness and intellectual disabilities, and outline a range of specialist pedagogies developed to respond to the ever-increasing number of disability categories being identified. They report that such educational responses were usually offered in segregated settings and driven by the moral, spiritual and reformist imperatives of the time (Griffin & Shevlin, 2011; MacGiolla Phádraig, 2007; McGee, 2004; Shevlin, 2016; Swan, 2000).

Traditional histories also tend to assert that this initial phase of development of the fields of special and inclusive education was followed by an expansion in the number and range of institutions set up to deal with the disability *problem*, including workhouses, asylums, and madhouses (Griffin & Shevlin, 2011; MacGiolla Phádraig, 2007; McGee, 2004; Shevlin, 2016; Swan, 2000). They also describe a significant expansion during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries in the types and number of professionals tasked with administering the institutions established, policing the categories produced and implementing specialist approaches used in relation to those placed in these categories (Griffin & Shevlin, 2011; MacGiolla Phádraig, 2007; McGee, 2004; Shevlin, 2016; Swan, 2000). They tend to characterise this period as an *era of neglect* (Swan, 2000) that lasted for about one hundred and fifty years. This era was thought to have led to “overwhelmingly negative” (Shevlin, 2016, p. 183) experiences for those for whom services were provided, since it was characterised by widespread institutional oppression and abuse under the direction of both the British and Irish Free State authorities (Griffin & Shevlin, 2011).

Traditional accounts of educational and societal responses to learners deemed to have disability usually characterise the late 1950s and early 1960s as the beginning of the end of the era of neglect. *The Report of the Commission of Inquiry on Mental Handicap* (Briscoe, 1965) is seen as having provided the initial impetus for positive change. It is credited with providing an increased focus on the education of people deemed to have disability, as distinct from their *care*. It is also credited with transferring responsibility for learners deemed to have disability to the Department of Education and for increasing the State’s involvement in the development of educational provision for this group, usually within special schools and classes. By the mid-1970s historical accounts report that over a hundred special schools and a large number of special classes had been established and increasing numbers of *remedial* teachers were being deployed in both primary and post-primary schools. Notwithstanding this, it was estimated that less than half of those deemed to have disabilities were in receipt of appropriate educational support (McGee, 2004). All of this tends to be represented as occurring at a time when segregated special educational

provision was undergoing a fundamental reappraisal in other countries (Griffin & Shevlin, 2011; MacGiolla Phádraig, 2007; McGee, 2004; Shevlin, 2016; Swan, 2000).

The 1980s onwards is usually represented as a period in which legislative inaction dating back to 1930 came to an end, with the publication of the *White Paper on Educational Development* (Department of Education, 1980). This was thought to have informed *The Programme for Action in Education 1984-1987* (Department of Education, 1984), which increased the number of special classes for those deemed to have disability in mainstream schools. A *Green Paper on Education* (Department of Education, 1992) estimated that 1.2% of the school-going population attended segregated special provision. Central to traditional accounts was the publication of the *Report of the Special Education Review Committee* (Government of Ireland, 1993) which is credited with bringing the education of students deemed to have disability and other special needs into a central position within policy-making. It was also credited with establishing a policy of supporting these learners within a continuum of special educational provision that took account of their needs and the wishes of their parents and which is still the bedrock of national policy today.

Attempts to implement the recommendations of this report, along with the governments propensity to sign up to international declarations, conventions and agreements, are represented within traditional histories as ushering in a period of unprecedented parental litigation, legislative action and policy development from 1998 to 2005. This tended to be seen as setting the policy and legislative context for practice in the area, in terms of integrating students deemed to have disabilities into local mainstream schools, where more inclusive educational environments were developed (Government of Ireland, 2004) and resourced (NCSE, 2017). Resources were provided for a range of pedagogic responses, with an increasing preference for in-class approaches such as team-teaching (Department of Education and Science, 2013, 2016, 2017a; NCSE, 2017).

### **Archaeological Critiques of Traditional Histories of the Education of Learners deemed to have Disability**

Such traditional histories of the development of special and inclusive education in Ireland are similar to accounts elsewhere, in terms of their linearity, though differences in timing and local contexts are reported (Shevlin, 2016). Indeed, they are useful in a number of ways. They allow us to sketch out the history of current legislative and policy contexts and to identify the epistemological bases upon which this developed. They can also help us to identify and critically interrogate the epistemological basis of historical accounts within current policy and guidance (DES, 2003, 2007; NCSE 2011, 2013; Winter and O'Raw, 2010), many of which draw exclusively on traditional histories to make arguments for current

and future policy. However, from a Foucauldian viewpoint, traditional histories of these fields are faulty in a number of ways.

Firstly, they are disparaged for assuming that the development of these fields have occurred in a relatively linear and uninterrupted progression from isolated private interventions, to increasingly institutionalised ones, to state-sponsored provision, to integration, and on to inclusive educational provision, all of which are purported to have been supported by an incrementally improving legislative context and increasingly enlightened thinking and policies (Burch & Nielsen, 2015). Armstrong (2002) controverted this idea in the English context. She used previously unanalysed accounts of the lives of people with disability in eighteenth and nineteenth century workhouses and was able to show that formal education and training were offered in many of these institutions, long before mass general education was available to the general population (Armstrong, 2002). Similarly, she showed how successive wars and the so-called *discovery* of *exotic* peoples affected perceptions of difference and disability in ways that were not represented in traditional histories of these fields. She concluded that traditional histories, “in which policy documents, acts of parliament, dates and ‘big events’ are seen as providing an adequate framework for interpretation” were wholly deficient (Armstrong, 2002, p. 440).

While Griffin and Shevlin (2011) produced a relatively traditional account of the development of special education and inclusive education, Shevlin (2016, pp. 181-182) later acknowledged that it had not evolved in either a “linear” or uninterrupted way, but from “a complex mix of societal attitudes, perceived capacity to cope with difference and individual initiatives” (Shevlin, 2016, pp. 181-182). In fact, Griffin and Shevlin (2011) identified a number of anomalous initiatives that took place within the development of special needs education and inclusive education, that disrupted a linear and progressive history of these fields, including those of the master-brewer and educationalist, David Mason, in Belfast during the mid-eighteenth century and Dr Charles Orpen in Dublin in the early nineteenth century.

A second criticism of traditional histories of the education of learners deemed to have disability is the implicit assumption that the passing of time equated to successive “improvement[s] in the human condition” as the field moved incrementally from “superstition, prejudice and cruelty” to increasing acceptance of diversity and more enlightened social attitudes (Armstrong, 2002, p. 437). Armstrong (2002), questions a unitary process that moved Irish society through discrete epistemological phases of thinking about special education and inclusive education, in which it successively abandoned one epistemological base as it progressed to the next. For her, centralising narratives of this kind are insidious

because they “iron out unevenness, discontinuities and contradictions” in available historical evidence (Armstrong, 2002, p. 447) and present things like impairment categories, institutionalisation, and the licencing of professional groups to administer these as natural, progressive, and relatively unproblematic. Instead, Armstrong (2002) characterises the development of special education and inclusive education as a process in which the “vestiges of older beliefs” coalesced with newer ones to produce a contested field of knowledge in which each remains active “even today” (Armstrong, 2002, p. 437). The idea that a multiplicity of views and discourses co-exist currently around the education of learners deemed to have disability, is particularly relevant to this work.

Thirdly, a number of writers have cautioned against the tendency within traditional histories of the education of learners deemed to have disability, to super-impose current thinking about disability on times past (Burch & Nielsen, 2015; Crawford, 2011; Metzler, 2006). These writers point to the analytical redundancy of trying to impose largely Western and contemporary meta-categories like impairment or disability onto people, events and cultures in which these did not pertain. Even when we make allowances for this kind of misapplication, the very idiosyncratic and “scattered evidence” available to us, onto which to project such notions, make for highly questionable and unreliable analysis (Winzer and Mazurek (2014, p. 24).

Fourthly, traditional histories of special education have been disparaged for relying disproportionately on official evidentiary sources (Armstrong, 2002). For Armstrong (2003, p. 69), “the multi-layered complexity and paradoxes of social life” simply cannot be captured “through a recitation of legislation, government reports and public records, the setting up or closing down of institutions, the development of formal assessment procedures and the introduction of training programmes”. Burch and Nielsen (2015) take this a step further, when they argue that within official policy documents, certain interest groups can use documentary evidence and official statistics to selectively retain or rid themselves of those aspects of the past they find problematic. While such sources can add epistemic lustre to traditional histories, they can also be used to silence or discredit representations of events that run counter to their interests. For this reason, effective histories must be predicated on a wide range of historical sources (Burch & Nielsen, 2015) including for example, designs for institutional buildings and examples of how people with disability were represented in novels, films, paintings and other historically situated materials (Armstrong, 2002, p. 445). Most importantly, they should privilege, wherever possible, first-hand accounts from people deemed to have disability (Armstrong, 2002). Yet Armstrong (2002, p. 438), points to the “almost total absence” of such voices in traditional accounts of special education, a fact she



sets in sharp contrast to the ubiquity of accounts from official sources and interested professionals (Armstrong, 2002).

Finally, Armstrong (2002, p. 451) critiques the assumption implicit of traditional histories of special education, that policy is rationally made and “passed down” in relatively unproblematic ways from central government to schools and classrooms. She sees the policy adoption process as much more circuitous and contested than that and reminds us that policy documents themselves can rely on inappropriate scientific methodologies and social theories to tell an over-simplified story of the past, present or future that is “emptied of meaning and filled with ... social myths” (Armstrong, 2002, p. 451), such as the dis/ability binary.

### **3.4 Effective Histories of the Education of Learners deemed to have Disability.**

To address these shortcomings, Foucault (1977) proposes the development of *effective* histories, which seek to understand the systems of thought (or discursive structures) that produce particular representations of phenomena in the service of particular interests. Applying his ideas involves critically examining the epistemologies that underpin traditional historical accounts of special education and inclusive education (Armstrong, 2002, p. 438). It also involves critical examination of how hegemonic discourses from the present may have been used to represent processes and events from the past (Armstrong, 2002). It forces consideration of a previously subjugated, and sometimes oppositional, knowledge that is gleaned from a broad range of sources and the interrogation of this from a multiplicity of perspectives (Hook, 2005). This is not to say that general readings of the history of special education are jettisoned. Rather the multiplicity of viewpoints emerging from this variety of sources is juxtaposed with official accounts to unsettle, and where necessary disrupt, their “familiar and comfortable narratives” and hegemonic interpretations (Armstrong, 2002, p. 447). Official histories are regarded as just one set of texts “through which to trace the descent of the object [of study] from general to local conditions of possibility” (Bowman & Hook, 2010, p. 68).

#### **Scientism**

One of the first ways in which Foucault’s ideas about *effective* histories were used in relation to the education of those deemed to have disabilities was to critique the link between special and inclusive education and positivist epistemologies that privileged scientific regimes of truth (Allan, 1996, 2005, 2010; Brantlinger, 1997; Gallagher, 2007; Iano, 1986; Skrtic, 1986; Slee, 2007; Thomas, 2007; Thomas & Loxley, 2007; Tomlinson, 1982). Gary

Thomas argues that the adherence of special education to the conceptual and philosophical frameworks of positivism, empiricism and behaviourism, came about largely because these were the ontologies and epistemologies that prevailed in the early years of its development (Thomas, 2007, p. 251). Thus special education adopted and used these frameworks to refute challenges to its legitimacy, to develop a body of privileged knowledge and to assemble a group of experts who could administer and defend the bureaucracies needed to operationalise it (Thomas, 2007). However, Thomas (2007) believes that, in recognising them as a key mechanism by which to secure its own reputation as a rational and effective way to go about educating a sizeable portion of the school-going population, special education adopted these frameworks to an exaggerated degree (Thomas, 2007).

In this connection, Thomas (2007, p. 250) distinguishes between the legitimate use of science and what he describes as “scientism”; and the questionable use of scientific methods to investigate areas and subjects for which they are entirely unsuited. He suggests that psychology and education, especially special education, are fields in which the ontologies and epistemologies of science are misapplied. His concerns are echoed by Cohen, Manion, and Morrison (2007, p. 18) who refer to the limitations of positivism in answering questions about “important areas of life”. They point to the inability of scientific methods to take account of the profound differences that exist between natural and social phenomena, most notably the exercise of human agency. As noted earlier, many believe that those who persist in defending scientism within special education display a near total disregard for the work of some of the most eminent philosophers of the past fifty years (Gallagher, 2007, p. 521). Acknowledging its pervasive influence on the field of special education, Thomas (2007, p. 250) singles out psychology for particular criticism in this connection, asserting that its reliance on “inappropriate kinds of discourse” and experimental studies, causes it to add relatively little to what is known already about human nature and learning. Yet, as will be seen in Section 3.7, the positivist epistemologies and essentialist discourse they engender, remain deeply rooted in schools, where they exert a profound influence on attempts to develop inclusive practice, including team-teaching.

### **Flawed, Reductionist and Deterministic Conceptualisations of Ability**

Florian (2007, p. 13) asserts that the close adherence of special education and inclusive education to positivist regimes of truth “bounded” these fields to faulty and deterministic notions of ability. The use of bell curve thinking and the concept of the norm was singled out for particular criticism here (Davis, 2017), with normalcy being characterised as reflecting “the ideological and political goals that conditioned its construction” (Gallagher, 2007, p. 523). Critics of norm-referenced thinking within education asserted that it had

profound moral consequences for those who are not assigned a *normal* status, including social stigmatisation (Goffman, 1963), separation, lowered educational and employment expectations and significantly reduced life chances. So long as education continued to employ such thinking, noted Florian (2007, p. 9), normal could be defended “as an appropriate standard”, a benchmark of what is acceptable, appropriate, proper and good, while those deemed to fall below this standard could be marked as deficient or lesser in some way.

Iano (1986) criticises norm-referenced thinking for allowing the separation of theory and practice and making the categorisations of learners appear value free. In a similar vein, Allan (2003, p. 177) believes bell curve thinking insulates those who act as “designators of disability” from any moral responsibility for their judgements. Florian (2007, p. 10) argues that in using norm-referenced conceptualisations of ability and disability within education, we are “colluding” with the very processes that produce marginalisation in the first place. One domain in which use of the norm has been particularly criticised is the area of intelligence. Gould (1996) asserts that the notion of fixed intelligence arose from fundamental errors of science that occurred as we strove to understand this complex phenomenon. Such errors included the reification of intelligence as an entity rather than an abstract concept, through for example, the use of IQ scores. Thomas (2007, p. 250) believes that psychometrics “in symbiosis with flawed notions” of intellectual development legitimated simplistic and erroneous views of intelligence as a fixed and normally distributed entity. Poplin (1988) argues that scientific reductionism of this kind, de-contextualised the concept of intelligence and distracted us from taking account of the full spectrum of issues that impact on thinking and learning.

Despite such criticism, the idea of the *norm* has proved stubbornly resistant to change within the field of education generally and within special education and inclusive education in particular (Riddell, 2007). Many have wondered why it has not been abandoned and have called for a change in differential and unjust application of positivist discourse (Booth, 1998; Booth & Ainscow, 2002; Florian, 2007, 2014; Florian, Young, & Rouse, 2010; Hart, Dixon, Drummond, & McIntyre; Thomas, 2007; Thomas & Loxley, 2007) to broader conceptualisations of ability that are capable of describing all learners “without the shame of marking some as different or deviant” (Florian, 2007, p. 13).

In this context, the use of concepts such as “transformability” have been encouraged (Artiles, Kozleski, Dorn, & Christensen, 2006; Hart et al., 2004; Hart, Drummond, McIntyre, & Florian, 2007). This view of ability sees children’s capacity to learn as a product of the interplay between internal factors, such as a person’s social, emotional and cognitive

resources (feelings of competence, confidence, relevance, belonging and identity), on the one hand, and external factors that impact on the learners' states of mind (their willingness to learn, the curriculum, the language of instruction, management styles, teacher and peer expectations and learning opportunities), on the other. The capacity to learn is deemed *transformable* because those subscribing to this view believe that patterns of achievement can change in response to adjustment of any of these factors. In other words, if teachers can identify the limits on a student's learning, they can work to remove, reduce or compensate for particular factors. Equally, they can work to create or enhance conditions that empower students to engage more fully as active learners or agents in joint learning enterprises (Hart et al., 2007). The concept of *transformability* emphasises achievement for all within communities of learning. It focuses on co-agency and the establishment of mutual trust and privileges epistemologies based on social constructivist and emancipatory perspectives of learning. It offers a potent alternative to fixed and deterministic views of ability and will be referred to later in this work, when alternatives to such thinking are discussed in Section 10.8.

### **The Power of Experts and Expertise within Special Education**

The adherence of special education and inclusive education to positivist epistemologies and faulty notions of ability may have satisfied systemic demands to define physical, cognitive, social or emotional difference in quantitative and descriptive terms (Government of Ireland, 2004, 2005). This task was performed by a range of professional groups, the proliferation of which led to the deployment of a very significant amount of educational resources (Goodley, 2016; Thomas, 2007). The close link that emerged between educational difference and positivist regimes of truth also conferred on certain professional groups "the authority to interpret normality, and thus the power to define and classify others as abnormal and to treat their bodies and minds" (Skrtic, 1995, p. 41). For Skrtic (1991, p. 170), the proliferation of these professional groups was integral to the exercise of special education "as a legitimizing device" that distorted "the anomaly of school failure" and placed responsibility of this firmly at the feet of individuals, while preserving "the prevailing paradigm" of mainstream education and reproducing "the functionalist presuppositions of organizational rationality and human pathology in the profession of education and in society" (Skrtic, 1991, p. 170).

For Deborah Gallagher (2007), the continued use of essentialist discourses in relation to difference, allowed the educational system to continue with the routine stratification of learners into binary categories - normal/abnormal, impaired/non-impaired and able-bodied/disabled - on the basis of professional judgement. The *Report of the Committee*

*of Enquiry into the Education of Handicapped Children and Young People* (Department of Education and Skills -UK, 1978), which recommended replacing within-child categorical determinations of disability with a new all-encompassing category called Special Educational Needs (SEN), did little to thwart the growth of professional power (Riddell & Watson, 2014). Rather, it speeded up the transfer of “[c]ontrol of the special education terrain ... from medical practitioners to educational psychologists” (Riddell & Watson, 2014), into whose hands the assessment and identification of school children was increasingly placed. Teachers were “accorded only a subordinate role” here.

Ball (2013, p. 15) reminds us that “[k]nowledges are produced within power relations”, and that “the professional” is “brought into being by the knowledge that makes them expert”. It is in this sense that some groups or institutions become invested with the power “to speak knowledgeably about ‘others’” (Ball, 2013, p. 15). As Kauffman and Hallahan (2005) put it,

... in the end disability for special education purposes is a professional judgement, based on accumulated evidence that a student needs to learn something other than the general education curriculum or needs instruction other than that which can be provided by the regular classroom teacher, *or both*. Failure to make the judgement – to draw the line, to take action that recognizes [*sic*] the difference – merely denies the child special services. (p. 19, original emphasis)

Thus, for Kauffman and Hallahan (2005), definitions of special educational needs, including disability, are reduced to a tautology: the child has a disability because they need special education services; the child needs special education because they have a disability. Gallagher (2007, p. 517) believes that this tautology creates a “hazy space” between “fact and value” that “drives the concept of disability as a neutral, inherent condition into an intellectual *cul-de-sac*”.

Positivist epistemologies have also been seen as a key device for privileging the opinions of para-educational professionals over teachers, administrators, learners and their families, and for relegating educational planning to what is available in the schools rather than what may be most beneficial to students deemed to have disability (Baglieri et al., 2011). In the case of teachers and administrators, the professional networks of power that operate in and around schools privilege so-called *objective* forms of knowledge and relegate personal and tacit knowledge-types to an inferior status Thomas and Loxley (2007 p. 250). For Thomas and Loxley (2007), this systematically undermines the confidence teachers have in the judgements they make about learners on the basis of tacit or *craft* knowledge

(Black-Hawkins & Florian, 2012) knowledge that is developed over years of experience in complex and dynamic teaching and learning situations.

Despite the fact that their views are given inferior status, these groups are still drawn into disciplinary technologies operating in schools that result in the assignment of disability identities. For example, principals as well as learning support teachers, resource teachers and/or special education teachers are expected to be able to screen for, and identify (though not diagnose definitively), a range of cognitive, social and physical differences *within* students (Government of Ireland, 2004; Department of Education and Science, 2005, 2007, 2017). They are also expected to be able to identify and plan responses to such differences that are additional to or different from what is “normally” provided to “ordinary” students in their schools (Government of Ireland, 2004). While it seems that schools and teachers regularly act in ways they consider to be in the best interests of learners, they may, in fact, be unwittingly colluding in the very processes that produce disableism in the first instance (Allan, 2003).

### **3.5 Critiques of Essentialism within Irish Education**

Critiques of the influence of essentialism and positivism within the Irish education system have been on-going for some time. As far back as the 1980s, Lynch (1987, p. 107), conducted an analysis of contemporary academic and government-funded publications and concluded that the “most pervasive understanding of the individual ... in Irish education is one which defines the person in terms of fixed, or given (sometimes innate) talents, abilities or intelligence”. She asserted that such fixed and deterministic beliefs depended not only on one’s perceived ability but also one’s social class. In this regards, she took particular aim at standardised testing, drawing attention its propensity to discriminate against those from lower socio-economic groups and represent them as less intelligent. For Lynch (1987 p. 107) essentialist discourse provided “an ideological façade behind which policy makers and ... practitioners can hide when they wish to eschew public accountability.”

She asserted that essentialist discourse has gained sway in Irish society at that time for a number of reasons. Firstly, the Irish intelligentsia has been drawn primarily from a rural society in which naturalistic explanations held particular sway. Secondly, their thinking was disproportionately influenced by the teaching of the Catholic church teaching, which were predominantly based on natural law. Thirdly, Irish educational was significantly influenced by the US-based psychometric movement of the time, partly because there was little or no tradition of sociological critique in Ireland that could provide alternative explanations of school failure and success (Lynch, 1987). Lodge and Lynch (2004a) also asserted that essentialism was inextricably entwined with “a deep and persistent attempt to create an

image of cultural and political homogeneity”, a culture that was “realised in great part through education, hence the neglect, and even negation, of difference in educational life” (pp. 3-4). For Lodge and Lynch (2004a), this drive towards homogeneity was matched by a zeal for institutionalising differences into segregated educational settings.

Other Irish writers have also drawn attention to and critiqued the pervasive deployment of essentialist discourse within Irish education over the years. In particular, MacRuiric (2009b, 2013a), Feely (2016a, 2016b) and Van Aswegen and Shevlin (2019) have critiqued this from a Critical Disability Studies perspective. For example, MacRuiric (2009b) called for “a critical discourse of schools as socially constructed sites of contestation” (p. 125) that “individualise failure and legitimise inequalities” (p. 130). Feely (2016a p. 871) warned against “a return to essentialism ... whilst allowing us to recognise the very real limitations some bodies face”. He suggests that a focus “on the context-dependent capacities, rather than essential identities” has the potential to open up a whole vista of theorisation for disability researchers that makes redundant the traditional obsession with categorisation. Van Aswegen and Shevlin (2019 p. 7 original emphasis) recommended the replacement of essentialist thinking with a “capabilities *through* education” approach that focuses on education for the acquisition of skills and knowledge that generate socio-economic benefits. Despite such critique, Sections 3.7 and 3.8 of this chapter will suggest that the vestiges of positivism and essentialism continue to predominate discourse use within the fields of mainstream, special and inclusive education in Ireland, where they continue to facilitate the marginalisation of learners, including learners deemed to have disabilities.

### **3.6 Genealogical Critiques of the Education of Learners deemed to have Disability**

In addition to archaeological analyses of the history of education for learners deemed to have disability, Foucault’s idea of genealogy has also been applied within the CDS theoretical framework to critique what Allan et al. (1998, p. 28) refer to as the “micro-physics of power”, in other words, how disabilities evolved as objects of understanding within the local and specific conditions of schools. They shed light on how the identities and experiences of those deemed to have disability are routinely constructed through their daily interactions with administrators, teachers and peers and how the epistemological and political structures of schools work to construct them as objects of the “gaze” of a range of disciplinary technologies associated with special education in particular. They also showed how these subjectivities were eventually internalised by the “conscience and self-knowledge” of these learners (Allan, 1996, p. 220).

Allan (1996, p. 222) focussed particularly on how Foucault's "techniques of surveillance" worked within the "local centres of power/knowledge" within schools, to exert a disproportionate *individualising* effect on learners deemed to have disability. The techniques they identified comprised hierarchical observation, normalising judgements, the examination and spatialisation (Allan, 1996). Allan (1996) argued that, while *all* children were subjected to these mechanisms, they appeared to shape many of the experiences of children deemed to have disabilities to an exaggerated degree and in particular ways.

### **Hierarchical Observation**

In relation to *hierarchical observation*, Allan (1996) argued that learners deemed to have disabilities were placed in smaller classes, where their application and progress could be subjected to increased scrutiny. Where this did not occur, they were often accompanied to mainstream classrooms by specialist co-teachers or special needs assistants. They routinely came in contact with a range of educational and para-educational professionals with whom other children did not interact, including special needs assistants, learning support teachers and coordinators, resource teachers, special education teachers, psychologists, occupational therapists, speech and language therapists and the like. Principals were also specifically mandated by legislation (Government of Ireland, 1998, 2004) to keep themselves informed of the well-being and progress of these learners. Moreover, educational attainment was not the only area in which intensive hierarchical observation of these students occurred. Allan (1996) puts it:

They are observed ... during break times. The way in which they interact with mainstream peers or integrate socially is often viewed as equally important, if not more so, than their attainment of mainstream curricular goals. All aspects of the child's interpersonal relationships can, therefore, be brought under the vigilance of staff. The emotional well-being of a child with special educational needs is also cited as an important aspect of special education. This legitimises the search within the child for signs, for example, that he or she is happy or gaining confidence, to a degree that teachers would not scrutinise mainstream pupils. (p. 222)

Thus records tend to be kept to document all of this observation and surveillance occurs and to communicate its analysis at meetings with parents and others (Allan, 1996, p. 222). This all serves to create "a network of reciprocal power relationships" that is replete with "effects of power that derive from one another: supervisors, perpetually supervised" (Allan, 1996, p. 222). Within these networks, learners are not the only ones who come under hierarchical observation. Within the constant cycles of assessment and examination that



transpire, parents and professionals alike all become “caught by a gaze which is `always receptive to the deviant” (Allan, 1996, p. 224), and which works constantly to confirm the existence of *abnormalities* and provide a rationale for continued surveillance and disciplining of the general population (Allan, 1996, p. 224).

### **Examination**

Similarly, learners deemed to have disability and other special educational needs tend to be subjected to much higher levels of examination than students who are not so designated. Moreover, these examinations tend to be predicated on either norm-referenced or criterion-referenced bases, that are closely associated with socially constructed ideas about *norms* of human performance and normal trajectories of human development, within which “cut off points for categorisation, statements of need or individualised planning” are “in no sense clearly defined” (Allan, 1996, p. 223). They also tend to be highly forensic and focus almost exclusively on qualities that are thought to be intrinsic to individuals.

### **Normalising Judgements**

For Allan (1996, p. 223), such techniques work to impose “compulsory visibility” on particular learners and to document difference, form categories, fix norms, and establish individuals as “cases” to be “described and judged, measured, compared with others” (Allan, 1996, p. 223), thus rendering them as objects of knowledge and power. Even multidisciplinary assessment practices tend to be primarily political and social processes that mark certain learners out “for perpetual surveillance” throughout their school careers and beyond (Allan, 1996, p. 224). At the post-primary level, a wide range of norm- and criterion-referenced screening and diagnostic tests as well as informal assessments are used as a basis for the disproportionate examination of this group (Department of Education and Skills, 2019). Great emphasis is also placed on levels of classroom adjustment and behaviour, as well as performance in state examinations, in relation to this group, as a basis for exercising normalising judgements about *their* ability and evaluating the efficacy of their placement in mainstream settings (National Council for Curriculum and Assessment, 2018). These are issues to which the author will return in the latter stages of the work, when discussing analysis of the discourses deployed by teachers to represent learners deemed to have disability in Section 7.2 through 7.5 and in Section 10.3.

### **Spatialisation**

Finally, Allan (1996) looks at the spaces within which examination of learners deemed to have disability and other special educational needs occurs, and where support

tends to be provided. She points out that their withdrawal into small groups, results in teacher-pupil ratios that allow increased opportunities for hierarchical observation, examination and the deployment of normalising judgements. Importantly for this work, Allan (1996) also contends that, even where supports are offered that maintain the presence of students deemed to have disability within mainstream classes, their physical proximity to learners deemed non-disabled, results in the former being subjected to maximum levels of surveillance. This usually occurs through the deployment of additional specialist teachers, special needs assistants, or both. She wonders in whose interest this occurs.

Allan's genealogical analysis was useful in providing this work with a structure for the discussion of findings about teachers' use of discourse around team-teaching as a support to the inclusion of students deemed to have disability. The categories of hierarchical observation, examination, normalising judgement and spatialisation proved especially useful in the context of arguments that will be made shortly about the colonisation of inclusive education by positivist epistemologies and essentialist discourses characteristic of special education.

Skrtic (1991, p. 154) also used Foucault's "box of tools" (archaeology and genealogy) in tandem with organisational theory to critique the policies, practices, and grounding assumptions of special education "as an institutional practice". His investigation led him to argue that schools were structurally incapable of adapting to the needs of students deemed to have disability because their rational-technical approach to change constrained teachers' ability to think and respond in innovative ways. He concluded that special education worked as "a politically rational system for targeting ... educational services to designated students, even though the targeting process stigmatizes [*sic*] the students and the services do not always benefit them instructionally" (Skrtic, 1991, p. 169). In fact, Skrtic (1991) asserted that special education was responsible for "an increase in the number of students classified as disabled, a disintegration of instruction, and a decrease in personalization [*sic*] in regular and special classrooms" (Skrtic, 1991, p. 173). This led him to conclude that, '[i]n terms of the adequacy of its grounding assumptions, special education cannot be considered a rational and just response to the problem of school failure' (Skrtic, 1991, p. 174). It also led him to conclude that special education was little more than "an organizational [*sic*] artefact" put in place to symbolise "compliance with the public demand for universal public education" (Skrtic, 1991, p. 172) and to suggest fundamental change in the organisation of schools where very little had transpired. Thus, for Skrtic, special education "functions as a legitimizing device" that not only fails to serve the interests of marginalised learners, but also "distorts the anomaly of school failure" and reaffirms "the functionalist presuppositions of

organizational rationality and human pathology in the profession of education and in society” (Skrtic, 1991, p. 170). This analysis also has important implications for the current work.

### **3.7 The New Epistemological Base of Inclusive Education**

There seems to be a general consensus within the literature pertaining to inclusive education that it emerged out of, and in reaction to, many of the shortcomings of special education outlined in the preceding section (Graham & Slee, 2008; Hegarty, 2007; Riddell & Watson, 2014). There is also an acknowledgement that it sought to do more than just correct these errors (Gallagher, 2004). For example, (Barton & Armstrong, 2008) have asserted that the roots of inclusive education are

deep and widely spread – reaching back into the aspirations and community values embodied in the ideal of comprehensive education in the UK – and to notions of civil rights and equity from the emancipatory struggles in many parts of the world during the 1960s. (p. 5).

Thus, inclusive education is thought to aspire to new ontologies and epistemologies of difference, based on the principles of belonging, respect, equity, human rights and social justice (Connor, 2014; Thomas, 2007). As Barton & Armstrong (2008 p. 5) put it, “[t]he idea which emerged in the 1990s came as a gust of fresh air, breathing life into tired debates and struggles. Inclusive education became – and remains – a flagship idea” that has the potential “to transform cultures and practices in schools in celebration of diversity”. For them,

Inclusive education is not an end in itself, but a means to an end. It is about contributing to the realisation of an inclusive society with a demand for a rights approach as a central component of policy-making. Thus the question is fundamentally about issues of human rights, equity, social justice and the struggle for a non-discriminatory society. These principles are at the heart of inclusive educational policy and practice. (Barton & Armstrong, 2008 p. 6)

At the same time as these ideas were emerging to challenge the epistemological roots of special education, social and economic changes were occurring that left the larger educational community struggling to respond to growing diversity in race, culture, language, family structures ‘and other dimensions ... beyond ability or disability’ (Ferguson, 2008, p. 100). One response to this increasing pressure was to call for schools to become more inclusive of a broad variety of learner differences and to adopt a critical stance towards injustice and discrimination (Booth, 1998; Booth & Ainscow, 2002; Fullan, 2001; Mittler, 2000). Thus, while the concept of inclusion continued to encompass differences in personal

factors such as levels of physical, cognitive and affective development (Ainscow, Booth, & Dyson, 2006; Liasidou, 2012), it broadened out to consider also learners who do not share the language of their host countries, travellers, refugees, asylum seekers and children of lower social, economic or cultural status and any group thought to be marginalised by educational policies, structures, procedures and cultures that privilege some ways of being, knowing or learning over others. In this way, it rose to become a dominant discourse within global education debates as well as educational policy and practice at national and local levels (Farrell & Ainscow, 2002).

At the centre of the philosophical base of inclusive education lay a drive to celebrate and capitalise on individual differences rather than to *normalise* these (Farrell 2000). As Kozleski et al. (2014, p. 233, original emphasis) put it, ‘inclusive education constituted a systemic alternative to the previous institutional response to so-called *different* learners ... that kept the spotlight on the individual learner with distinct deficits’. Inclusion became about providing appropriate learning for *all* learners within local mainstream schools that were properly equipped for this purpose, regardless of learners’ perceived differences (Ferguson, 2008; Florian et al., 2010). As Florian (2008) puts it,

... inclusive education is distinguished by an *acceptance* of differences between students as ordinary aspects of human development ... The key point is that, while there are differences between learners, the salient educational differences are found in learners’ responses to tasks and activities, rather than in the medical diagnostic criteria ... used to categorise them in order to determine their eligibility for additional support. (p. 202)

For Göransson and Nilholm (2014, p. 266), inclusion is about what “school systems, schools and classrooms *should* accomplish”, in other words it is an ideology. Ainscow (2016) characterises it as ensuring that all learners enjoy equitable access to, participation in and benefit from education available in local mainstream schools. Inclusive education was built on the epistemological foundations of equity, belonging, social justice and ensuring citizens access to the full range of human rights available to their fellow members of society.

### **3.8 The Cultural Colonisation of Inclusive Education by Positivist Epistemologies**

Evidence of successful enactment of inclusive education has been equivocal to date (Baglieri et al., 2011). At face value, it seems to have resulted in positive outcomes for many learners previously excluded from local mainstream provision, including students with disabilities. Winter and O’Raw (2010) have summarised a range of the perceived benefits to

these students, claiming they experience higher levels of academic engagement and achievement, improved social interaction, reduced dropout rates, improved leadership skills, increased access to stimulating and challenging lessons and reduced social exclusion. However, many of the studies cited describe these improvements as marginal (Winter & O’Raw, 2010).

On the other hand, critics of inclusive education point to its many failures, especially in countries that have a long track record of trying to implement its principles (Allan in MacRuaric, 2013a). They point to the dubious educational experiences reported by learners deemed to have disability, who have been educated in apparently inclusive settings, and reference the poor educational outcomes that continue to be recorded in connection with these students (Skrtic, 1991; Zigmond, 2003, 2006; Connor 2014). Such criticisms have led seasoned observers to suggest that the inclusive education movement has stalled (Ferguson, 2008; Lindsay, 2007; Nind et al., 2004; Slee, 2014; Warnock, 2005), while others have asserted that it has evolved into a “troubled and troubling educational and social project” (Slee, 2014, p. 217), in which the journey “from rhetoric to implementation has been, at best serpentine and, at worst, it has lost sight of its destination” (Kozleski et al., 2014, p. 234).

Graham and Slee (2008, p. 287) have asserted that looseness in the language of inclusive education has been pivotal in creating “rhetorical inertia” and reducing initiatives in the field to tokenistic efforts and “instrumental accommodations”, that serve only to reinforce and reify notions of “otherness” within an otherwise unchanged education system. Despite widespread use of the language of inclusive education, a commonly accepted meaning of this term remains elusive and its aims, principles and terminology vary greatly across different social, cultural and historical contexts (Black-Hawkins, Florian, & Rouse, 2007). For Graham & Slee (2008, p. 279), this has caused the field to remain “troubled by the multiplicity of meanings that lurk within the discourses that surround and carry it”, allowing contested, and often conflicting, claims to emerge about what it comprises (Winzer & Mazurek, 2014). Ireland has not been immune to such contestation, with Griffin and Shevlin (2011, p. 73) asserting that the term continues to be overused and applied “to practices that are far from inclusive”. Slee (2014, p. 218) points to the tendency of education systems to appropriate the “once rebellious call for inclusive education to describe a normalising function of schooling” and deploy this “counter democratically to maintain institutional equilibrium ... [and] unequal power relations” that “disenfranchise vulnerable people” (Slee, 2014, pp. 224-225).

The greatest concerns expressed in the literature relates to the cultural stronghold of positivist epistemologies that seems to have established itself with the borders of the inclusive education movement (Baglieri, 2017; Florian, 2014; Graham & Slee, 2008; Liasidou, 2012; Riddell & Watson, 2014; Thomas & Loxley, 2007). This is thought to be a key factor in hampering efforts to reposition the location of disability from individual learners to broader society and its cultures and institutions (Baglieri, 2017; Florian, 2014; Graham & Slee, 2008; Liasidou, 2012; Riddell & Watson, 2014; Thomas & Loxley, 2007).

As already noted in Section 3.4, the move from segregated to more inclusive educational provision for learners deemed to have disability was characterised by the confluence “of older beliefs” with newer ones that rendered the inclusive education movement as a highly contested field of knowledge (Armstrong, 2002, p. 437). Liasidou (2012) has argued that while the movement has laid claims to being new and radically different to its predecessors, it actually embodies ideas and issues that have been debated for many years across a variety of disciplines, including the field of special needs education. Grant (2005) contended that the meaning and function of a lot of the language that is used in relation to inclusive education relates directly to terms previously used within special needs education and that its use has remained largely unchanged. Finally, Allan (2003) has asserted that many of the *practices* that go on in schools in the name of inclusion are, in fact, associated with special needs education. She concluded that the *grand narrative* of special needs education as still deployed extensively within mainstream schools, and that this represented a significant barrier to the realisation of truly inclusive education (Allan, 2003).

Somewhat ironically, it seems that the colonisation of inclusive education by the epistemologies of special education was well-anticipated by those who worked to promote inclusion as an educational philosophy during the early years of its development. For example, shortly after attempts to implement *The Salamanca Statement and Framework for Action on Special Needs Education* (UNESCO, 1994) began, Booth (1998) warned that terms such as inclusion and inclusive education were in danger of being used in ways that simply reproduced traditional notions of special educational under a new name. Later, Graham and Slee (2008) asserted that this is exactly what transpired, noting

If we listen to teachers, education administrators and academics as they discuss inclusive education ... we soon hear that we are a long way from where inclusive schooling should take us. There remains a firmly embedded notion of what a regular school is and more particularly, who it is for. Others may be allowed in but theirs remains a conditional entry and

tenure, for inclusion by no means 'guarantees inclusiveness'. (Graham and Slee, 2008, p. 280)

As did Skrtic (1991) before her, Hart (1996) contended that the language of special needs education worked to constrain teachers' thinking to a narrow set of possibilities, limited their ability to innovate in inclusive ways and caused them to become complicit in functionalist and managerial agendas. This was because the language of special education tended to be deployed in circumstances where the "difficulties of students exceeds the capacity of the school to respond" appropriately to them (Black-Hawkins et al., 2007 p. 18). It allowed schools to pathologise individual students and diminished the responsibility of schools to respond to them in ways that are consistent with inclusive principles. This has led some commentators (Biklen, Orsati, & Bacon, 2014; Connor, 2014; Florian, 2014; Graham & Slee, 2008) to suggest that the cultural stronghold of essentialist discourse within inclusive education had resulted in the field becoming "instrumental in the polity process of exclusion" (Slee, 2014, p. 218), since it has come to rely on the very (positivist) discourses that produced the exclusions to which they claimed to respond 'in the first place' (Florian, 2007, p. 10).

Ashby (2010, p. 345) asserted that the focus placed on positivist epistemologies by initial and continuing professional development courses for teachers compounded this problem. The promotion of practices such as screening, testing, profiling, referral and needs-based teaching were seen as particularly problematic in this connection (Lewis & Norwich, 2001), since they reified and reinforced essentialist understandings of difference and made teachers complicit in establishing the parameters of these. Such practices were also thought to be instrumental in the deconstruction of learner identities and the redirection of school responses to the fragmented identities created but them. Thus schools responded, not to the holistic identities of learners or the identities that students would choose for themselves, but to the reconstructed "kinds of self" that it could manage (Henry in McDermott, Goldman, & Varenne, 2006, p. 16). As we have seen, once *individual* difference is defined and reified, non-standard learners become the embodiment of exceptional variation and the focus of disciplinary technologies aimed at returning them, insofar as is possible, to normalcy (Allan, 1996). Failure to achieve this goal is rarely associated with inaccurate examination or inappropriate educational responses but with the inability of learners to cope with or respond sufficiently to available supports.

There is also ample evidence of the influence of essentialist thinking on legislation and guidance around the education of learners deemed to have disability (Government of Ireland, 2004, 2005), where definitions of these students continue to be expressed in

essentialist terms that outline deficits “in relation to a person” (Government of Ireland, 2004). While there have been significant moves away from systematic identification of disability on the basis of intrinsic deficits (National Educational Psychology Service, 2007), and attempts to break the link between these deficits and the allocation of resources to schools (NCSE, 2014; DES, 2017), the use of individual categories is still linked to the educational placement of students, especially in special schools, classes and units, and to the nature and timing of interventions within the “staged approach” (Department of Education and Science, 2005; National Educational Psychology Service, 2007). It is also linked to advice and guidance given to teachers in relation to the instructional and other accommodations and modifications espoused in relation to particular subcategories of learner disability (Department of Education and Science, 2005, 2007; National Council for Curriculum and Assessment, 2007; National Educational Psychology Service, 2007).

Finally, only in recent times have there been significant attempts to begin the process of creating a unified curriculum that is available to all. Such endeavours can be seen, for example, in the design of the new draft Primary Language Curriculum (NCCA, 2019). Similar thinking has yet to impact on post-primary education however, where rather than trying to apply the principles of universal design, restrictive *mainstream* syllabi tend to be augmented with additional programmes, such as the Leaving Certificate Applied (NCCA, 2001) or additional *levels* of programmes and assessment, such as the Level 1 or Level 2 programmes (NCCA, 2014). All of these are provided in addition to the traditional *ordinary* and *higher* level programmes undertaken by the majority of post-primary students.

Of similar concern is the fact that the research base of inclusive education seems to have remained profoundly influenced by positivist and essentialist discourses of difference. Danforth & Naraian (2015), for example, point out that the research base of special education, which was originally developed to make segregated schooling more effective, now seems to have “been repurposed toward the aims of inclusion”. Brantlinger (1997 in Danforth & Naraian, 2015 p. 71) asserts that this has resulted in “the new field of inclusive education” becoming decorated “with the intellectual furniture of special education”. Thus, far from being associated with any radical imperatives for change, inclusive education has been “framed as a politically neutral professional activity, denying the complex role of schools and teachers in political questions of access, participation, and equality in regard to young people with disabilities” (Danforth & Naraian, 2015 p. 71).

Graham and Slee (2008) summarise their concerns about the “spectral” passing of positivist epistemologies into the language and processes of inclusive education as follows:



The maintenance of notions of normalcy results in an exercise of disciplinary power where alterity [otherness] is subjected to perpetual rehabilitation through an intensification of normalising practices ... Perhaps this is inclusion but it is not inclusive. First, talk of 'including' can only be made by those occupying a position of privilege at centre. Second, that talk seldom revolves around recognising and dismantling that vantage and the relations of power and domination sustaining it. Third, talk has constitutive and material effects that can function either as cultural work in a refusal of what is ..., or as a strategic rhetoric that functions to obscure and (re)secure the existing order of things. (p. 298)

In this excerpt Graham and Slee neatly sum up some of the key impediments to achieving truly inclusive education. First, these aspirations work against ableist interests, secondly ableist interests will not easily give up their privileged position easily and thirdly they will deploy rhetoric in strategic ways to avoid doing so. Such dynamics are of central interest to this study.

Slee (1997) believes that this spectral colonisation of inclusive education by positivism only became possible because this philosophy had become so dominant during the lifetime of special education that it had assumed the status of common sense. This allowed its translation into inclusive education to appear logical and unproblematic. The scale of this translation has been so complete that, even a cursory "survey of inclusive education policy documents across education authorities reveals a sheer screen that barely conceals traditional approaches to segregated special education" (Slee, 2014, p. 221). Similarly, Ashby (2010, p. 345) found that positivism and normalcy were profoundly embedded and routinely reconstructed and internalised by social actors within second-level schools, with the result that these institutions often operated as "sites where ableist norms of performance" continued to "leave many marginalized [*sic*]", including students with disabilities.

While Armstrong & Barton (2008, p. 5) believe that inclusive education came like a gust of fresh air to the 1990s, they also believe that its initial momentum was quickly "colonised, hollowed out and transformed into an 'empty signifier' ... with powerful interest groups ... struggling to invest and shape it with their own values and agendas". The power centres that uphold positivist discourses appear to be deeply embedded in schools and sanctioned on the basis of scientific wisdom and seemingly humanitarian concerns (Slee, 2001). They obscure the inherently political nature of education and undermine attempts to challenge power inequities that operate within these sites (Slee, 2001) by continuing to

frame educational failure as an individual phenomenon that belongs to *others* (Ajodhia-Andrews, 2013). Outsider groups are made visible and stigmatised as *lesser*, while insiders remain invisible because they do not come under the “gaze” of positivism’s disciplinary technologies (Allan, 1996). As a consequence the taken-for-granted and internalised superiority of insiders and the cultural and political interests they pursue, remain largely un-interrogated (King, 1995). Essentialist discourses also make use of neoliberal notions of individual rights, autonomy, personal responsibility and meritocracy to absolve those in whose interest the status quo is reproduced from any responsibility to move to more equitable and just alternatives.

Graham and Slee (2008) assert that the very term *inclusion* pre-supposes the existence of categories such as the *already* included and the *yet-to-be* included (Graham & Slee, 2008). They ask where this centre into which the latter group must be included resides, asserting that this is a fictional place or category constructed on the historically, socio-politically and culturally constructed concept of normalcy (Graham & Slee, 2008). Hence, they demonstrate that the language of inclusion itself can produce both “margin and centre” (Graham & Slee, 2008 p. 279), and inadvertently collude with the naturalisation of normalcy.

In naturalising a particular mode of existence, we construct [inclusive education as] a universalised space free from interrogation, a ghostly centre which eludes critical analysis and thus recognition of the power relations embodied within notions of normalcy which exert influence over other ways of being. (Graham & Slee, 2008 p. 287)

Kozleski et al. (2014) concur with this analysis and, like Graham and Slee (2008) before them, ask the question: *inclusion into what?* Following from this question, Graham & Slee (2008) ask what could be the purpose of including historically marginalised children into educational structures specifically designed to segregate students through socially constructed notions of ability and disability, without first trying to “transform [these] educational systems to make them more equitable’ (Graham & Slee, 2008, pp. 238-239)? They draw attention to the increasing influence of “a normative accountability culture in educational systems globally” (Graham & Slee, 2008, p. 238) and worry about how this might “reify the very inequities that ... the policy aims to tackle” (Graham & Slee, 2008, pp. 239).

### 3.9 The Cultural Work to be Done

Since oppressive positivist and essentialist discourses seem to have established a *cultural* stronghold within inclusive education, then “a cultural shift in education’s normative centre” becomes “necessary work” for the field (Florian, 2014, p. 20). Like others (Baglieri, 2017; Baglieri et al., 2011; Graham & Slee, 2008), Florian (2014) believes that such a *shift* involves the disruption of inequitable discourses and oppressive educational arrangements. Graham and Slee (2008) put it succinctly when they assert that the question is not so much how do we move towards inclusion but “what do we do to disrupt the construction of centre from which exclusion derives” (Graham & Slee, 2008, p. 270). This includes “reimagining difference/diversity in education more generally” (Florian, 2007), and constructing a unitary system of education in which all learners are equally valued and equitably accommodated. It requires the questioning of what “we *mean* when we talk of including” (Graham & Slee, 2008, p. 290) and replacing inequitable and marginalising discourses of difference with more nuanced and valid conceptualisations. It also involves developing articulations of inclusive education that are congruent with the new epistemology of inclusion; epistemologies underpinned by values such as belonging, equity, human rights, social justice, transformability, universal design and quality education for all (Connor, 2014; Hart et al., 2007; Thomas, 2007).

### 3.10 Summary and Conclusions

This chapter discussed the application of Foucauldian discourse theory within a Critical Disability Studies framework to the education of learners deemed to have disability. It used Foucault’s *archaeological* approach to suggest an effective history of special education that drew attention to its propensity to privilege scientism and positivism, reductionist and deterministic conceptualisations of ability and the power of experts. It also applied Foucault’s concept of *genealogy* to discuss how disabilities can evolve as objects of understanding in the local and specific conditions of schools and how various disciplinary technologies have been used to increase the surveillance and control of students deemed to have disability in post-primary settings. The chapter discussed how, through their daily interactions with the epistemological and political structures of schools and with teachers, peers and administrators, these learners are routinely constructed as deficient or limited in some way, eventually internalising these subjectivities through their “conscience and self-knowledge” (Allan, 1996, p. 220). Positivist epistemologies, especially those of special education, were used to identify and document their difference, form categories, fix norms, and establish individuals as cases to be described, measured, compared with others and rendered as objects of knowledge and power (Allan, 1996).

While inclusive education emerged out of, and in reaction to, the shortcomings of special education (Graham & Slee, 2008; Hegarty, 2007; Riddell & Watson, 2014), it aspired to new epistemologies, based on belonging, respect, equity, human rights and social justice, transformability, universal design for learning and quality education for all (Thomas, 2007; Hart, Drummond, McIntyre, & Florian, 2007; Barton & Armstrong, 2008; Connor, 2014). At the centre of its philosophical base lay a drive to celebrate and capitalise on individual differences rather than to normalise them (Farrell 2000; Kozleski et al., 2014). Inclusion became about providing appropriate learning for all learners within local mainstream schools that were properly equipped for this purpose (Ferguson, 2008; Florian et al., 2010). It was “distinguished by an acceptance of differences between students as ordinary aspects of human development” Florian (2008 p. 202).

However, evidence of successful enactment of inclusive education has been equivocal to date (Baglieri et al., 2011). While it has had many benefits for students deemed to have disabilities (Winter and O’Raw, 2010), it has also had many failures (Allan, 2008). The latter have led many seasoned observers to suggest that the inclusive education movement has stalled (Ferguson, 2008; Lindsay, 2007; Nind et al., 2004; Slee, 2014; Warnock, 2005), and represents a troubling educational project (Slee, 2014) that has lost sight of its destination (Kozleski et al., 2014). Graham and Slee (2008) have asserted that looseness in the language surrounding inclusive education has allowed it to become colonised by positivist epistemologies which hampered the repositioning of disability from individual learners to broader society and its cultures and institutions (Baglieri, 2017; Florian, 2014; Graham & Slee, 2008; Liasidou, 2012; Riddell & Watson, 2014; Thomas & Loxley, 2007). These epistemologies are also thought to have constrained teachers’ thinking around inclusion, to a narrowly circumscribed set of possibilities (Skrtic, 1991; Hart, 1996), especially in circumstances where the difficulties of students exceed the capacity of the school to respond to them (Black-Hawkins et al., 2007).

Positivist epistemologies have proven stubbornly resistant to change amongst teachers, teacher educators and policy-makers (Ashby, 2010; Danforth & Naraian, 2015) with the result that even a cursory examination of inclusive education barely conceals traditional approaches to special education (Slee, 2014). It is profoundly embedded and routinely reconstructed and internalised by social actors within second level schools (Ashby, 2010, p. 345) which continue to operate as sites where ableist interests hold sway. This has led to claims that inclusive education has become an empty signifier that is used by powerful interest groups to their own ends (Armstrong & Barton, 2008). What is needed is a cultural shift in education’s normative centre (Florian, 2014; Graham & Slee, 2008). This, in turn involves reimagining difference/diversity within a unified system of education that responds

equitably and effectively to all learners (Florian, 2007). This suggests some key questions for this work, most notably whether team-teaching works in congruence with the new epistemologies of inclusive education or whether it operates as an organisational artefact of special education, which, while suggesting organisational change, reinforces the cultural stronghold of positivism that produce *ableism in the first place* and obviate the need for a comprehensive reform of special and mainstream education (Florian, 2014; Graham & Slee, 2008; Skrtic, 1991, 1995; Thomas & Loxley, 2007). The remainder of this work will seek to address such questions.

# Chapter 4: Team-Teaching as a Support to the Inclusion of Learners deemed to have Disability

## 4.1 Introduction

This chapter focusses the discussion from previous chapters on the use of team-teaching as a support to the inclusion of learners deemed to have disability. Section 4.2 looks at the idea of inclusive pedagogies in general and asks whether there is anything distinctive about specialist teaching and learning approaches for learners deemed to have disabilities. Sections 4.3 through 4.5 look at team-teaching in the context of this discussion and interrogate some of the claims made about team-teaching as a support to the inclusion of learners deemed to have disability, especially in academic, social and personal areas. These sections also looked at the role of team-teaching in the creation of inclusive learning classroom environments. Much is made of the relative paucity of research in this connection, especially at post-primary level (Sections 4.4 and 4.6). Section 4.7 reviews the history of policy rhetoric in Ireland relating to team-teaching in post-primary schools and the current state of play in this connection. Section 4.8 compares the gap between the positive policy rhetoric and the weak empirical base for this. It asks why, in the face of limited evidence about the efficacy of team-teaching as a support to the inclusion of learners deemed to have disability, this rhetoric is so positive? The chapter concludes with a summary and a statement of key orientating research questions that guide this research.

## 4.2 Inclusive Pedagogies

The preceding chapter suggested that inclusive education should focus on providing rich and appropriate learning experiences for *all* learners within local mainstream schools that are properly equipped to do so (Ferguson, 2008; Florian et al., 2010) and that it is “distinguished by an *acceptance* of differences between students as ordinary aspects of human development” Florian (2008 p. 202). However, it also suggested that evidence of progress towards such goals has been equivocal (Baglieri et al., 2011), with many believing it has stalled (Ferguson, 2008; Lindsay, 2007; Nind et al., 2004; Slee, 2014; Warnock, 2005), and become a “troubling educational and social project” (Slee, 2014, p. 217) that has “lost sight of its destination” (Kozleski et al., 2014, p. 234).

While many teachers report a high degree of commitment to the principles of inclusive education, they also say they feel “anxious” about their ability to respond to the increasingly diverse range of learners in their classes (Black-Hawkins, 2014, p. 389) and that they do not believe they currently possess the knowledge and skills to do so (Black-Hawkins & Florian, 2012). Black-Hawkins (2014, p. 390) reviews a range of studies to support her

assertion that such perceptions “are enduring in nature, consistent across different national settings, and shared by more or less experienced colleagues”. Yet teachers may be overly apprehensive in this respect, especially in the context of the wide range of findings that suggest that teaching strategies and approaches that work for most students, also work best for learners deemed to have disabilities and other special educational needs, especially when they are offered with varying degrees of intensity and emphasis on explicit teaching (Lewis & Norwich, 2001, 2004; Norwich & Lewis, 2007; Rix, et al., 2009; Rix, et al., 2013). They are also at variance with findings that suggest that teaching practices thought to be effective for students deemed to have special educational needs, work equally well with students who are not so categorised (Cook and Schirmer, 2003).

A three-year systematic review of literature pertaining to inclusive pedagogies in mainstream classrooms (Rix, Hall, Nind, Sheehy, & Wearmouth, 2009) and a subsequent international study commissioned by the National Council for Special Education in Ireland (Rix, Sheehy, Fletcher-Campbell, Crisp, & Harper, 2013), concluded that while internationally specialist approaches were referenced widely within literature, the only unifying characteristics of these approaches involved providing “additional or alternative” forms of “time or space” for learning (Rix & Sheehy, 2014, pp. 460-461). The only “impairment-specific” practices that were consistently referenced in international literature related to the development of communication skills, for example, among students deemed to have autism, visual impairment or hearing impairment. Even here, the effectiveness of specialist approaches was found to vary greatly across learners and the degree of good generalist teaching that occurred alongside them (Rix & Sheehy, 2014). For example, non-specialised approaches such as flexible grouping, the linking of new knowledge to previous experiences, the provision of engaging learning activities, the creation of rich, interactive and authentic learning contexts and cognitive scaffolding were all found to affect the delivery of specialist pedagogies.

Similarly, in relation to effective pedagogies for use with students deemed to have emotional and behavioural difficulties (NCSE, 2014), little empirical support was found for many popular and well-publicised specialist teaching and learning approaches. Of most impact were local classroom-level factors such as the development of peer relationships and ability of teachers to remain empathetic and positive in their general approach to learners (NCSE, 2014). Forness (2001), in a meta-analysis of twenty interventions focussing on students with special educational needs, found that the greatest improvements in learning resulted from general educational initiatives as opposed to those that focussed on specific deficits or relied on consultation with other professionals.

Reflecting on such findings Rix and Sheehy (2014, p. 466) concluded that the “weight of evidence” suggests that what works best for students with special educational needs are “relatively accessible everyday practices ... delivered in well-structured contexts, as opposed to highly specialized expertise requiring highly specialized [*sic*] environments”. A key factor thought to influence inclusive education was teachers’ ability to shape “interactions and influence learning opportunities through those interactions” which, in turn was thought to be highly influenced by teachers’ attitudes and commitment to inclusive education (Rix et al., 2009 p. 91).

Another systematic review of literature on inclusive pedagogies deployed in ‘ordinary classrooms in mainstream schools’ (Nind & Wearmouth, 2006, p. 116), found that effective inclusive pedagogy combined “adaptation of teaching/curriculum with attention to community participation, social grouping and roles within the group” (Nind & Wearmouth, 2006, p. 122). They viewed interactive peer group approaches, implemented within a constructivist rather than transmission model of learning, as an effective and ‘authentic’ way to go about this (Nind & Wearmouth, 2006).

For Rix et al. (2009), teachers’ ability to scaffold student engagement in the cognitive and social content of programmes, to plan carefully for group work, to make explicit the connections between new and prior knowledge, and to organise activities that allow learners to explore learning materials using different modalities, were thought to be key skills for the delivery of inclusive pedagogy that became reflected in the quality of students’ interactional patterns in the classroom and their self-concept as learners. These skills and abilities were linked to their “understanding of their role, their facility to adapt their teaching and curriculum and their willingness and ability to encourage participation in a communal learning experience through flexible groupings and roles” (Rix et al., 2009, p. 92). Like Florian and Black-Hawkins (2011), Rix et al. (2009, 2013) found that meeting the needs of diverse learners required a coherent ethos and support structure that included time and space for teachers to reflect on and develop their practice and to establish clarity about its purpose and implementation. The authors asserted that this is best provided within communities of practice involving staff, teacher educators and academics that develop and share curricular and pedagogic understandings of the characteristics, skills and knowledge associated with particular subject areas and programmes, in tandem with their understanding of the learning dispositions of students (Rix et al., 2009).

Hattie's recent emphasis on collective teacher efficacy (Hattie, 2019) seems to support this view. He describes this as “teachers working together to have appropriately high challenging expectations of what a year’s growth for a year’s input looks like – fed with the



evidence of impact” (Hattie, 2019, unpaginated) and asserts it as the number one factor that drives and sustains effective teaching for all. Findings such as these led Rix and Sheehy (2014, p. 468) to conclude that most studies of inclusive pedagogy actually just describe facets of “good teaching” for all; there was nothing distinctive about it. What was clear was that the class teacher played a key role through the effective implementation of the principles of good teaching, including proper preparation and planning, clear enunciation of learning intentions and expectations to students, allowing sufficient instructional time for individual and group work, focusing on secure understandings of key concepts, and developing generic thinking skills (Rix & Sheehy, 2014).

Rather than focusing on specific techniques and skills, Black-Hawkins & Florian (2012, p. 571) view “inclusive pedagogy as a lens through which judgements about the processes and activities associated with inclusive practice can be made”. Using Alexander’s (2004) framework for conceptualising inclusive pedagogy, Black-Hawkins & Florian (2012 p. 571) assert that teachers’ ability to make and justify such decisions is shaped, not only by their professional knowledge and skills as teachers, “but also by their values and beliefs that they hold about children and the nature of teaching and learning, as well as wider social processes and influences”. Thus, Black-Hawkins and Florian (2012, p. 571) define inclusive pedagogy as “the things teachers do to give meaning to the concept of inclusion”. They identify three themes that underpin this process:

- (i) A shift from focusing exclusively on individuals identified as having additional needs to learning for all.
- (ii) A rejection of deterministic beliefs about ability (and the idea that the presence of some will hold back the progress of others).
- (iii) A determination to work with and through other adults in ways that respect the dignity of all learners as full members of the class.

This imagines inclusive pedagogy in a very different way to what they call the “additional needs approach” (Black-Hawkins & Florian, 2012, p. 579). It does not rely on the identification of specific categories of disability or the generation of assessment data to establish the degree of deviation of learners from some pre-established norm. Rather it focuses on the selection of approaches and pedagogies that are responsive to the entire range of abilities and dispositions represented in a given learning group.

Florian and Black-Hawkins developed a research tool, or flexible methodological approach for the “collection, analysis and presentation of evidence about inclusive classroom practices” that allows exploration not only of what teachers do to give effect to

inclusive instruction, but how and why they do it (Black-Hawkins, 2014, p. 391) . The tool comprised four key sections, "each relating to an aspect of classroom participation: (i) access, (ii) collaboration, (iii) achievement and (iv) diversity" (Black-Hawkins, 2014, p. 391). Each section is accompanied by a series of questions intended to inform research and analysis. The current work will use this framework in the closing chapter to discuss the analysis of data emanating from teachers' discussions of team-teaching as a support to the inclusion of students deemed to have disability.

It is important to note that the ideas of Black-Hawkins, Florian, Lewis and Norwich about inclusive pedagogy (Black-Hawkins et al., 2007; Black-Hawkins & Florian, 2012; Lewis & Norwich, 2001, 2004; Norwich & Lewis, 2007) are not universally accepted. Mintz and Wyse (2015), for example, have used the concept of *social realism* to argue that these views are rooted in "over-socialised" post-modernist critiques of special education, that are largely "derived from Foucault (1977), first expressed in disability studies and then ... [related to] inclusion in the education system" (Mintz & Wyse, 2015, p. 1162). They assert that such views downplay "scientific knowledge" to the detriment of the field. Criticisms such as these remain rare however, and have not prevented the views of the above-listed writers about inclusive pedagogy becoming embedded in international and national policy in the area. For example, the European Agency for Development in Special Needs Education (2017) emphasises the ability of class teams to take responsibility for all learners and to collaborate in order to understand how to support their learning. Similarly, Teacher Education for Inclusion (TE4I) (European Agency for Development in Special Needs Education (EADSNE), 2011) has produced a Profile of Inclusive Teachers, that points to the importance of valuing learner diversity, supporting all learners and working collaboratively with others to do provide them with quality educational experiences (EADSNE, 2012).

### **4.3 Team-Teaching as a Support to Inclusive Pedagogy**

General research on inclusive pedagogies is interesting in relation to team-teaching in a number of ways. Firstly, in suggesting that inclusive pedagogy is to be found in "everyday practices ... delivered in well-structured contexts", Rix & Sheehy (2014, p. 466) recognise the central role of classroom teachers in its delivery. However, research on inclusive pedagogy also suggests that meeting the needs of diverse learners in mainstream classes comprises a "demanding brief for an unsupported classroom teacher" (Rix et al., 2009, p. 91) and that sharing this brief might considerably lessen this challenge. For example, it has been argued that team-teaching can allow teachers to scaffold student engagement with the social and cognitive content in line with the vision of inclusive

pedagogy outlined above (Fontana, 2005; Murawski, 2006; Hang and Rabren, 2009; O'Murchú, 2011; Villa et al., 2013).

Secondly, the literature on inclusive pedagogy stresses the importance of being able to offer learners the opportunity to explore understandings and to make explicit links between their new and prior learning using different modalities (Rix et al., 2009). The fact that team-teaching can be used to make available a range of options for classroom engagement and learning that would generally not be considered in single-teacher settings comprises a strength of the approach (Rix et al., 2009).

Thirdly, the need for team-teachers to develop knowledge around specific learners as *well as* specific learning programmes to provide effective and inclusive educational experiences, provided a convincing rationale for the development of in-class teacher collaborations that allow the exchanges that underpin the sharing of such knowledge to occur. Finally, the assertion that inclusive pedagogy is best developed and expressed within communities of learning in which curricular and student knowledge is shared through authentic social interactions (Rix et al., 2009), adds to this rationale. This section continues by examining some of the literature on how team-teaching is thought to support the inclusion of students deemed to have disability.

As discussed previously, the imperative to provide inclusive pedagogy in mainstream schools has come as a response to the increasing numbers of students with diverse learning dispositions who receive their education there, both in Ireland (Department of Education and Science, 2007; Griffin & Shevlin, 2011; Winter & O'Raw, 2010) and elsewhere (Winn and Blanton, 2005). This phenomenon has increased pressure on all teachers to enhance their capacity to facilitate more inclusive pedagogies that not only respond to, but capitalise on this increased diversity (Cramer & Nevin, 2006; Van Garderen, Stormont, & Goel, 2012). In recent decades, team-teaching has been put forward as a key space within which knowledge and experience around special and general education can come together (Bouck, 2007b) to "create a vision and capacity to educate all learners" (Winn & Blanton, 2005, p. 1). Both research (Friend, Cook, Hurley-Chamberlain, & Shamberger, 2010; Hourcade & Bauwens, 2002; Kloo & Zigmond, 2008; Pugach & Johnson, 1995; Villa, Thousand, & Nevin, 2013) and official policy and guidance (Department of Education and Science, 2007; Government of Ireland, 2004; National Council for Curriculum and Assessment, 2007; NCSE, 2014; OECD, 2009) have identified it as a site where, as Ainscow and Miles puts it, the "taken-for-granted assumptions about particular groups of learners", including learners deemed to have disability, "could be subjected to mutual critique" (Ainscow and Miles, 2008 p. 24).

Some writers have gone so far as to assert that the primary function of team-teaching is the inclusion of students with disabilities within mainstream classrooms (Walther-Thomas, 1997). They have identified the provision of services to these students in general education classrooms as a “hallmark” of inclusive education (Kilanowski-Press, Foote, & Rinaldo, 2010, p. 43). Team-teaching has been credited with facilitating the creation of inclusive learning environments (Klingner & Vaughn, 1999; Manset & Semmel, 1997; Mastropieri & Scruggs, 2007), raising levels of attainment in students with and without disability (Hang & Rabren, 2009; Idol, 2006; Jang, 2006; Keefe & Moore, 2004; McDuffie, Mastropieri, & Scruggs, 2009; Rea, McLaughlin, & Walther-Thomas, 2002), reducing the “stigma of being in special education” (Keefe & Moore, 2004, p. 85) and making available to groups who have been traditionally marginalised in local mainstream schools the same quality of educational experiences as is available to their non-marginalised peers (Bouck, 2007b; Lawton, 1999; Magiera & Zigmond, 2005; Zigmond, 2006). As a result, it has become widely deployed as an instructional response aimed at supporting the inclusion of students with disabilities (Dieker & Murawski, 2003; Magiera & Zigmond, 2005; Scruggs, Mastropieri, & McDuffie, 2007; Weiss, 2004; Zigmond, 2006).

Yet, the evidence in support of the efficacy of team-teaching as a support to the inclusion of learners with special educational needs, including disability, has been described as “sparse” (Murawski & Swanson, 2001 p. 266), “basic” (Hattie, 2009, p. 83), “equivocal” (Mastropieri et al., 2005 p. 260), “unclear” (Van Garderen et al., 2012, p. 483), nascent (Kloo & Zigmond, 2008; Weiss & Brigham, 2000; Zigmond, 2003), and “confusing at best” (Murawski & Goodwin, 2014, p. 293).

#### **4.4 The Critical Shortage of Literature of Team-Teaching at Second Level**

One of the key difficulties in standing over assertions about the efficacy of team-teaching as a support to inclusion has been the very limited research base upon which such assertions have been made, especially at the post-primary level. Over a decade and a half ago, Keefe and Moore (2004, p. 78) bemoaned the “critical shortage of research” at post-primary level, a lament they shared with other researchers in the field (Mastropieri & Scruggs, 2001; Scruggs et al., 2007) and which is echoed in more recent literature (Van Garderen et al., 2012). In their follow-on from Murawski and Swanson's (2001) meta-analysis of team-teaching research, Van Garderen et al. (2012) drew together a list of studies that focussed on the effects of teacher collaboration on academic or social outcomes for students deemed to have disabilities. Of the nineteen studies that fit their selection criteria, only four were carried out exclusively at post-primary level, with an additional two focussing on middle-school settings. It seems that post-primary education continues to

present a set of “unique issues” (Dieker & Murawski, 2003), that continue to work against the investigation of team-teaching at this level.

Having said that, a number of studies have focused entirely or partially on its deployment at this level (Bouck, 2007b; Cramer & Nevin, 2006; Dieker, 2001; Eisenman, Pleet, Wandry, & McGinley, 2011; Fontana, 2005; Hang & Rabren, 2009; Harbort et al., 2007; Keefe & Moore, 2004; Magiera et al., 2005; Magiera & Zigmond, 2005; Mastropieri et al., 2005; McDuffie et al., 2009; Murawski, 2006; Ó Murchú, 2011; Packard et al., 2011; Rea et al., 2002; Simmons & Magiera, 2007; Trent, 1998; Wallace, 2007; Wilson & Michaels, 2006; Zigmond, 2006). Some of these have attempted to collect primary source data, while others have offered syntheses or meta-syntheses of published studies (Austin, 2001; Cook, McDuffie-Landrum, Oshita, & Cook, 2011; Friend et al., 2010; Murawski & Swanson, 2001; Scruggs et al., 2007; Solis et al., 2012; Weiss & Brigham, 2000). Still others have sought to offer advice grounded in general surveys or anecdotal perspectives (Cook & Friend, 1996, 2010; Gately & Gately Jr, 2001; Kloo & Zigmond, 2008; Little & Dieker, 2009; Mastropieri & Scruggs, 2001; Zigmond, Kloo, & Volonino, 2009). Many of these studies have focused on the *logistics* of team-teaching through comparing different models of delivery, identifying factors associated with success and exploring positive outcomes for students and teachers (Friend et al., 2010). Others have explored the roles and responsibilities assumed by team-teachers (Friend et al., 2010).

It has been suggested that differences in academic performance between students with and without disabilities becomes more pronounced at secondary level (Dieker, 2001; Murawski, 2003; Smith, 1997; Weiss & Lloyd, 2002; Zigmond, 2006). It has also been posited that students with disabilities frequently come to secondary school with insufficient academic knowledge, poorly developed learning strategies and little confidence in their academic ability. Yet these learners are still expected to perform on standardised tests at a level comparable to their non-disabled peers, work independently and cope with a faster pace of learning and instruction (Dieker, 2001; Dieker & Murawski, 2003; Keefe & Moore, 2004; Murawski & Dieker, 2004; Vaughn, Wanzek, Woodruff, & Linan-Thompson, 2007). There have also been suggestions that teachers at post-primary level are particularly mindful that poor performance in high stakes examinations may reflect negatively on themselves as teachers (Keefe & Moore, 2004; Mastropieri et al., 2005), with the result that they are less positive toward inclusive education than their primary colleagues and more reluctant to engage in forms of inclusive pedagogy, such as team-teaching, that open them up to such criticism (Dieker, 2001; Mastropieri & Scruggs, 2001; Murawski & Dieker, 2004).

High stakes examinations, and preparation for them, were also seen as a “tangible factor” that affected disproportionately the team-teaching collaborations of post-primary teachers (Mastropieri et al., 2005, p. 268). Where pressures to perform well were found, teachers placed a higher priority on covering all relevant content than on other aspects of pedagogy, such as depth of knowledge or secure understanding. In particular, faster paced instruction resulted in a minimal “amount of extra practice or supplemental review activities” and diminution of the special educator’s role in modifying content and instructional activities for particular students. Such findings are in line with those of Gallagher (2005), who found that policies tying the work of teachers to overly scripted curricula and high stakes examinations resulted in inappropriate and often increasingly segregated provision for students deemed to have disabilities.

A consistent finding of research on team-teaching at post-primary level relates to the perception of special education teachers that they are insufficiently knowledgeable about the subject area in which they are expected to team-teach (Dieker, 2001; Keefe & Moore, 2004; Keefe, Moore, & Duff, 2004; Magiera, Smith, Zigmond, & Gebauer, 2005; Mastropieri & Scruggs, 2001; D. Rice & Zigmond, 2000; N. Rice, Drame, Owen, & Frattura, 2007; Zigmond, 2006). In addition, the subject-specific nature of many classrooms, including their layout and design, can result in forms of territorialism from teachers who are accustomed to playing the lead role in these settings (Murawski & Dieker, 2004). Given the importance that literature on inclusive pedagogy has placed on the ability of teachers to understand the key principles of what is being taught, this represents a significant issue for diverse team-teaching dyads, one to which we will return in the closing sections of this work.

Finally, a range of administrative factors specifically to second level settings have been found to influence the effective deployment of team-teaching. These include the scheduling of tokenistic efforts at team-teaching, which have been found to negatively affect students’ perceptions of team-teaching and teachers’ roles within it (Murawski, 2005; Sileo, 2011; Villa, Thousand, & Nevin, 2008; Zigmond, 2006). For example, when teachers are only scheduled to team-teach in two out of five Maths lessons, the team-teacher is usually viewed as having less authority in the class (Murawski, 2005; Sileo, 2011; Villa, Thousand, & Nevin, 2008; Zigmond, 2006). Teachers have also reported that time constraints associated with planning and preparation bind them to more traditional modes of team-teaching instruction (Malian & McRae, 2010b; Manset & Semmel, 1997; Moore & Keefe, 2001; Scruggs et al., 2007; Walther-Thomas, Bryant, & Land, 1996; Zigmond & Matta, 2004). Failure to provide sufficient time for planning and preparation for team-teaching has also been commonly reported by teachers as negatively influencing effective deployment of initiatives at secondary level (Villa, Thousand, & Nevin, 2004).

Overall, studies suggest a high degree of satisfaction amongst teachers and students about team-teaching targeted at supporting the inclusion of marginalised learners in mainstream post-primary classrooms (Murawski & Goodwin, 2014; Ó Murchú, 2011). However, they also suggest that it was “difficult to do well” and that it required careful co-planning, energy and enthusiasm, purposeful collaboration, high levels of administrative support and a high degree of compatibility between teachers in terms of both their personalities and educational philosophies (Kloo & Zigmund, 2008, p. 13).

#### **4.5 The Benefits of Team-Teaching as a Support to Inclusive Pedagogy**

Scruggs et al. (2007) reported that references to the benefits of team-teaching for learners deemed to have disability were common in the research literature, especially in qualitative studies. Similarly, Murawski and Goodwin (2014, p. 299) have suggested that the “message that appears to be coming through loud and clear” from teachers and students is that team-teaching can be beneficial for students. However, they concluded that this should only comprise a basis of “cautious optimism” (Murawski and Goodwin, 2014, p. 299). These positive dispositions to team-teaching notwithstanding, research into the benefits to students of participation in team-taught classes has produced varying, and sometimes contradictory, results (Fontana, 2005; McDuffie et al., 2009; Murawski, 2006; Murawski & Goodwin, 2014). Only a very tentative association has been reported between team-teaching and positive outcomes for learners, whether or not they were deemed to have disabilities (Hattie, 2009), which seems to have affected the uptake of team-teaching at the post-primary level (Van Garderen et al., 2012). Some of the claims that have been made for the benefits of team-teaching for learners deemed to have disability are outlined thematically in the sections that follow.

##### **Academic Outcomes**

Many studies have reported academic gains for learners, including students deemed to have disabilities. However, most of these have tended to be based on the *perceptions* of teachers and students (McDuffie et al., 2009; Wilson & Michaels, 2006) rather than empirical evidence (Solis, Vaughn, Swanson, & McCulley, 2012; Van Garderen et al., 2012). In fact, the lack of reliable empirical data on academic gains comprises a constant and recurrent theme within the extant literature on team-teaching, especially in meta-synthetic studies of team-teaching research ( Murawski & Swanson, 2001; Zigmund & Magiera, 2001: Van Garderen et al., 2012: Murawski & Goodwin, 2014). Where quantitative evidence has been generated, much of this has been inconclusive, partial or resulting in mixed findings (Murawski & Goodwin, 2014). For example, Murawski and Swanson (2001), in their

synthesis of a relatively limited number of studies during the ten years to that point, found that team-teaching exerted an overall effect size of 0.40, suggesting it was only “a moderately effective procedure for influencing student outcomes” (Murawski & Swanson, 2001, p. 264). The highest effect size, 1.59, was found in the area of reading and the language arts, with 0.45 reported for Maths, and 0.32 for overall grade improvement. Even here however, Murawski & Swanson (2001) advised cautious interpretation of findings due to the small number of studies deemed suitable for analysis (six out of the 89 studies originally thought to be relevant) and the even smaller number (three) that included effect sizes relating to students deemed to have disabilities. Similarly, Hattie (2009), found an effect size of just 0.19, though it was acknowledged that this could have been much greater when correlated with other processes that were likely to have been facilitated by team-teaching, such as collaborative learning, project based learning and the like.

Findings of other studies were similarly tentative in relation to the academic benefits of team-teaching for students deemed to have disability. For example, Rea et al. (2002) provided evidence that students with disabilities in team-taught lessons increased their course grades in language arts and maths, science and social studies relative to their peers with disabilities in withdrawal programmes. Despite differential results in *class* grades, the two groups ultimately achieved comparable scores in *state-wide* achievement tests (Rea et al., 2002). The fact that increased *class* grades did not translate into improved results on more objective measures, left the authors to ponder whether improvements were real or a reflection of teachers’ perceptions and aspirations. Fontana (2005) found that students with learning disabilities in co-taught classes earned significantly higher scores on standardised tests of English and maths than their peers in non-team-taught classes. However, again Fontana (2005) also found that they did not improve their scores in formal tests of writing, despite the fact that “writing skills and strategies were stressed throughout the investigation” (Fontana, 2005, p. 20). This finding was replicated in a study by Wendy Murawski (2006), who looked at 110 ninth grade students (of whom 38 were deemed to have learning disabilities) and measured improvements in reading comprehension and spelling for the latter group, but none in writing. The usefulness of such findings is often compromised by the short duration of team-teaching studies (O’Murchú, 2011).

Hang and Rabren (2009) gleaned the perspectives of 45 teachers, 31 general and 14 special education teachers, and those of 58 students with disability about their experiences of co-taught English, maths, science and social studies lessons in seven schools, including one junior high school and one high school. All of the teacher participants were described as being in their first year of team-teaching (Hang & Rabren, 2009, p. 260). They found that



students with disabilities who had been team-taught in the previous year achieved “significantly higher SAT NCEs in reading and maths” (Hang & Rabren, 2009, p. 267), than the year before team-teaching occurred. Moreover, their rate of academic attainment was found to be consistent with that of their peers, which suggested that the level of academic support received within co-taught lessons was at least “adequate” to their needs (Hang & Rabren, 2009, p. 267). Similarly, Villa et al. (2013, p. 16) found that in “school systems in which the authors have provided training and coaching ... the learning rate of both peers with and without disabilities was higher in all subject areas in co-taught classrooms” than similar students who completed the same courses in single-teacher classrooms.

The importance of looking at team-teaching as only one of an array of responses that can be used effectively to improve the academic outcomes of students deemed to have disabilities, was emphasised by Packard, Hazelkorn, Harris, & McLeod (2011), who compared pre- and post-test data from End of Course Tests for a ninth grade literature course. They found that students with learning disabilities who had received their instruction in resource classrooms, achieved better results than those whose preparation occurred in co-taught mainstream settings, and on the basis of this advised schools not to “totally abandon” intensive instructional approaches available using the “special education resource room model” (Packard et al., 2011, p. 107). All of the above has led researchers to call consistently for increased production and exploration of quantitative and qualitative evidence related to the effects on academic performance of team-teaching on students with and without disabilities (Austin, 2001; Malian & McRae, 2010b; Murawski & Swanson, 2001; Cramer & Nevin, 2006).

### **Social and Emotional Outcomes**

A number of studies have highlighted the social and emotional benefits to students, both with and without disabilities, of participating in team-taught instruction. These include more positive self-concept and self-esteem (Cramer, Liston, Nevin, & Thousand, 2010; Fontana, 2005; Hang & Rabren, 2009; Magiera et al., 2005; Rea et al., 2002; Schwab Learning, 2003; Scruggs et al., 2007; Trent, 1998; Wilson & Michaels, 2006), better quality relationships and increased social bonding with peers, teachers and others in the school community (Wallace, 2007) and greater development of social skills, as measured through behavioural referral records, referral to specialist services, attendance and attitudinal and other rating scales (Hang & Rabren, 2009; Schwab Learning, 2003; Vaughn, Elbaum, Schumm, & Hughes, 1998).

Data on social skills, development tended to emanate from qualitative studies (and syntheses of these) that reported the *perceptions* of teachers and students (Austin, 2001; Hang & Rabren, 2009; Murawski & Swanson, 2001; Scruggs et al., 2007; Vaughn et al., 1998; Walther-Thomas, 1997; Wilson & Michaels, 2006). For example, Wilson and Michaels (2006, p. 219) surveyed 346 secondary students, 127 of whom were deemed to have disabilities. Most students reported that they enjoyed co-teaching and “felt supported” (Wilson and Michaels, 2006, p. 219) within it, gaining in self-confidence and self-awareness. Students deemed to have disabilities also tended to personalise the support they received (Wilson & Michaels, 2006), with knock-on effects for their sense of support and belonging.

As with other aspects of team-teaching research, results relating to the social and emotional outcomes were mixed. While a number of studies reported increased attendance and lower referrals for misbehaviour amongst students with disabilities (Rea et al., 2002), Hang and Rabren (2009, pp. 266-267) found in their study that these students “had more absences during their co-taught year” and received “more discipline referrals”, despite teachers’ perceptions to the contrary. They acknowledged that this may have been because two teachers in a room were more effective than one in monitoring and responding to behavioural issues (Hang & Rabren, 2009). The disproportionate surveillance of students deemed to have disability (Allan, 1996) is an issue that will be revisited in the last chapter of this work.

Similarly, while some studies showed that students with disabilities demonstrated increased self-concept (Fontana, 2005), and greater peer acceptance (Cawley, Hayden, Baker-Kroczyński, & Cade, 2002) in team-taught classes, as opposed to segregated settings, others found quite the opposite (Elbaum & Vaughn, 2003). On balance, a preponderance of studies seems to show positive benefits for students deemed to have disability in the social and emotional areas.

### **The Creation of Inclusive Environments**

Perhaps more than anything else, studies have sought to associate team-teaching at post-primary level with the creation of more inclusive learning environments (Austin, 2001; Dieker, 2001; Keefe & Moore, 2004; Solis et al., 2012; Wilson & Michaels, 2006). A range of studies have suggested that it promoted less formal relationships (Ó Murchú, 2011), greater access to teacher attention (Scruggs et al. 2007; Wilson and Michaels, 2006), greater instructional adaptation (Scruggs et al., 2007; Wilson & Michaels, 2006), greater variety of teaching styles (Wilson & Michaels, 2006), more active learning (Dieker, 2001) and less

stigmatisation of students who struggle with learning, whether on the basis of disability or not (Cook & Friend, 2010; Keefe & Moore, 2004; D. Rice & Zigmond, 2000).

In particular, it was found to facilitate greater peer interaction through strategic grouping of students (Klinger, Vaughn, Hughes, Schumm, & Elbaum, 1998; Manset & Semmel, 1997; Scruggs et al., 2007). Klingner and Vaughn (1999) canvassed students, who reported that they greatly valued the opportunity for paired and small-group work, afforded to them by team-teaching. They preferred these activities to more formal whole-class instructional models and reported that pair and group work allowed them greater access to peer support and interaction (Klingner & Vaughn, 1999). Scruggs et al. (2007), in their meta-synthesis of 32 qualitative studies on team-teaching, reported a widely-held perception that team-teaching afforded greater opportunities for peer tutoring and co-operative learning; which, in turn, led to improved student learning outcomes. Fontana (2005) also found that team-teachers reported increased use of instructional adaptations across a variety of co-teaching models. Ó Murchú (2011) argued that team-teaching situations could be used to reposition teachers and students within less formal relations of learning that capitalised on interpersonal relationships and the shared student experiences to engage all students more successfully in the learning process. This view seemed to be shared by students. For example, in a recent study of the experiences of post-primary students deemed to have special educational needs in Irish mainstream post-primary schools, it was found that in-class support was “valued by students when there is good communication between the teachers” and where teachers are friendly, fair and know students well (Squires, Kalambouka & Bragg, 2016, p. 7).

Contrary to perceptions that team-teaching leads to more individualised instructional accommodations, Scruggs et al. (2007) found that actual teacher practices showed little evidence of this, whether in increased use of hands-on materials, peer support, peer mentoring or differentiated learning. Similarly, other studies found that team-teaching did not affect the instructional experiences of middle or secondary school students to a significant degree, whether they were deemed to have disabilities or not (Magiera et al., 2005; Magiera & Zigmond, 2005; Zigmond, 2006; Zigmond & Matta, 2004). It did not, for example, lead to smaller instructional groups, more access to teachers, increased student participation or better quality engagement in lesson activities. Likewise, Zigmond and Matta (2004, p. 73) found that, while team-teaching seemed to offer additional social and emotional support to both students and teachers, it did not make it more likely that “students with disabilities in the class would master the material”. For example, they reported that they “did not hear the SET chime in with carefully worded elaborative explanations ... rephrase something already said

... [or] provide explicit strategic instruction to facilitate learning or memory of the content material” (Zigmond & Matta, 2004, p. 73). They concluded that students with disabilities who mastered content better in team-taught classrooms did so, not because special education teachers were doing something special in terms of instructional accommodations, but because they were augmenting or replicating what generalist subject teachers were already doing. They observed that this sort of replication usually occurred where teachers had insufficient time to give adequate consideration to differentiated instruction targeted at individual students during planning.

Similarly, in their investigation of whether there were instructional advantages to students deemed to have disabilities of having a trained specialist educator present in a co-taught class, Magiera and Zigmond (2005) found that such students got less attention from the general educator, while the special educator “took up the slack” in the mainstream teaching role they vacated (Magiera and Zigmond, 2005 p. 84). They also found that whole class instruction remained the “most common instructional arrangement used”; being recorded in sixty percent of scheduled observations “when either one or two teachers were present” (Magiera & Zigmond, 2005). Zigmond (2006) also found that teachers in secondary co-taught social studies classes in which students with documented disabilities participated, tended to adjust their instructional demands downwards because of students’ literacy limitations. As a result, very little reading and writing activities occurred and “co-teachers spent a lot of time standing around, not interacting with students, and only occasionally providing a substantive contribution to the ongoing lecture or discussion” (Zigmond, 2006, p. 266).

A recurrent theme in the literature was the way in which the special educator tended to take on the role of instructional assistant rather than an instructional equal (Moin, Magiera, & Zigmond, 2009; Scruggs et al., 2007; Zigmond, 2006). Even where team-teachers engaged in authentic team-teaching the predominant model used was one teaches-one assists (Mastropieri et al., 2005); a model described as more suited to the early stages of team-teaching but as less effective than others (Magiera et al., 2005). Interestingly, it was found that teachers often fail to move beyond this initial stage model of delivery, even after several years of co-teaching (Magiera et al., 2005). This did not make for more engaging and interactive learning environments. Finally, teacher reports of their experiences of team-teaching often referred to their failure to access adequate professional development in the area (Avramidis & Norwich, 2002; Manset & Semmel, 1997; Scruggs & Mastropieri, 1996; Scruggs et al., 2007). Research suggested that even where teachers received input on the use of various team-teaching models, most were still unlikely to establish learning

environments in which students with disabilities could make significant “achievement gains” Kloo and Zigmond (2008, p. 14).

#### **4.6 Team-Teaching: Equivocal Evidence that can be Difficult to Interpret**

Overall, it seems that the extant empirical evidence on team-teaching, while encouraging, cannot supply even “tentative answers” to the most “basic” of questions (Hattie, 2009, p. 83) about the efficacy of team-teaching in supporting the inclusion of students deemed to have disability (Cook & Friend, 2010; Murawski & Goodwin, 2014; Murawski & Swanson, 2001; Scruggs et al., 2007; Volonino & Zigmond, 2007; Walther-Thomas, 1997; Zigmond & Magiera, 2001). This led Zigmond and Magiera (2001, p. 4) to conclude that, while the literature abounds with references about *how* team-teaching should be done, “there are virtually no convincing data that tell the practitioner that it is worth doing” as a support to inclusive pedagogy.

Murawski and Goodwin (2014, p. 296) locate the problem of insufficient evidence of efficacy, not in the lack of research studies, but in “trying to decipher the findings published thus far”. They remind us that team-teaching, by its very nature, is not very amenable to large scale or quantitative research. Since it is a model of service delivery and not a “treatment” of any kind, it is not something that can “be imposed with fidelity on an experimental group while being withheld with equal fidelity from a control group” (Zigmond, Magiera, Simmons, & Volonino, 2013, p. 116). Other writers have pointed out that many of the components considered essential to its success, such as high levels of collaboration and compatibility at the personal and professional levels, are difficult to discern and measure (Friend, 2007; Friend et al., 2010; Murawski & Goodwin, 2014; Zigmond et al., 2013). Still others blame terminological confusion and definitional uncertainty for the lack of empirical evidence gathered. For example, in the US, the most commonly accepted definitions (Cook & Friend, 1996; Cramer & Nevin, 2006; Friend & Cook, 1996; Gately & Gately, 2001; Sileo, 2003) refer to team-teaching as a collaborative undertaking between general and special education teachers, involving joint responsibility for instructional planning, delivery, assessment and management (Malian & McRae, 2010a). However, such factors do not always pertain in Ireland, where teams are often made up of different combinations of specialist and generalist teachers, sometimes with no specialist involved. The current research was keen to capture these localised aspects of team-teaching for inclusion.

Murawski and Swanson (2001, p. 295) emphasise the need to pay attention to “particular elements that were not always present in the research”, the absence of which may render some research invalid as studies of team-teaching *per se*. Similarly, Zigmond

and Matta (2004) draw attention to the need to demonstrate that initiatives studied showed fidelity to the principles of good team-teaching, including appropriate composition of dyads, flexibility around the adoption of team-teaching models, voluntary participation, sufficient equity around collaboration, parity of esteem and joint responsibility and accountability for planning, teaching, learning and assessment. Murawski (2009) reports that the teams surveyed in many studies either did not meet the criteria for authentic team-teaching, or the studies concerned provided insufficient information to allow the reader to determine whether or not this was the case. This research took measures to ensure it avoided similar weakness, see Section 5.2.

In addition, team-teaching studies varied greatly in relation to a wide range of factors thought to affect their implementation, including the subject area being taught, the number of students deemed to have disabilities as a proportion of the class, and the perceived level of difference thought to prevail in relation to this group (Vaughn et al., 1998). Finally, disparities in levels of administrative support, social milieu and school cultures, can make the comparison and generalisation of findings very difficult (Murawski & Goodwin, 2014). Friend et al. (2010 p. 21) consider that issues of validity, “treatment integrity” and rigour are unavoidable in doing research on team-teaching, “given the difficulty of achieving consistent implementation for similar amounts of time with students whose demographic and learning characteristics are similar and who are taught by educators with comparable professional preparation and experiences”. They caution against the drive to treat team-teaching as a “monolithic single intervention” (Friend et al., 2010, p. 19), reminding us that its primary effect should be in meeting the needs of students deemed to have disabilities and other special educational needs.

Friend et al. (2010 p. 21) also remind us that “[t]o provide a meaningful evidence base on which to construct efficacious practice”, researchers must begin to differentiate their work “across grade levels, subjects and student learning characteristics”. Murawski and Goodwin (2014, p. 298) sum up such issues nicely when they suggest that “co-teaching research needs to address fidelity, the impact of various characteristics, rigor, instructional practices of both general and special educators, and student outcomes” in a way that allows each of these to “add a piece to the puzzle” of what comprises effective team-teaching, especially for students deemed to have special educational needs, including disability.

Overall then, while team-teaching has been represented as a key site where knowledge and experience around special and general education *can* conjoin to increase the capacity of schools to educate all learners within inclusive environments, the evidence for such assertions remains equivocal, confusing and sometimes conflicting (Murawski &

Goodwin, 2014; Murawski & Swanson, 2001; Scruggs, Mastropieri, & McDuffie, 2007). Yet, research, policy and guidance literature continues to extoll the benefits of team-teaching without acknowledging sufficiently the contested nature of the empirical knowledge base on which it stands. This work considers why this is so, in the context of a growing consensus that the adoption of team-teaching has been driven more by philosophical beliefs about the best way to educate students deemed to have special educational needs, including disability, alongside their peers, than by any research findings (Friend et al., 2010).

#### **4.7 Rhetoric about Team-Teaching in Irish Post-Primary Schools**

In Ireland, the Department of Education and Skills has “long advanced” the idea of team-teaching as an appropriate response to the inclusion of learners deemed to have disability (Hislop, 2011 Unpaginated). This rhetorical support has set the tone for how team-teaching is viewed, discussed and implemented in schools. Some of the first references to the value of team-teaching in the context of supporting students deemed to have special educational needs, including disability, in Ireland were cited in the highly influential *Report of the Special Educational Review Committee* (Government of Ireland, 1993). This encouraged “ordinary” schools to “adopt a flexible approach to school organisation including team-teaching” in order to meet the needs of students with remedial (the terminology of the time) or special educational needs (Government of Ireland, 1993 p. 86). Griffin and Shevlin (2007, p. 45) remind us that this report “provided a blueprint for the development of special education” and a template for the allocation of resources right up to the recent reappraisal of this system in 2014 and thereafter.

The *Learning Support Guidelines* for primary schools, published in 2002 (Department of Education and Science, 2002, p. 9), emphasised the role of learning support teachers in providing “supplementary teaching”, that was “additional to a pupil’s regular classroom programme”. They suggested that this could “be provided in a pupil’s own classroom or in a learning support room” in line with “policies which emphasise the enhancement of classroom-based learning for all pupils” (Department of Education and Science, 2002, p. 9). A “central” principle of learning support (Department of Education and Science, 2002, p. 15), involved “close consultation between each pupil’s class teacher, learning-support teacher and parents” (Department of Education and Science, 2002, p. 23). Interestingly, even at this stage, guidelines referred to “an overemphasis ... on withdrawing pupils from their classrooms” (Department of Education and Science, 2002, p. 29), a practice that was thought to have “obvious disadvantages” (Department of Education and Science, 2002, p. 46). The guidelines suggested that, “[s]erious consideration ... be given to the planned implementation of shared teaching approaches, involving the class teacher and the learning-

support teacher, in the pupil's regular classroom" (Department of Education and Science, 2002, p. 46).

Thereafter, a range of Department of Education and Skills (DES) circular letters and guidance to schools have consistently encouraged the use of team-teaching as a support to the inclusion of students with special educational needs, including disability. Circular Letter 24/03 (DES, 2003, p. 3) stipulated that "[w]herever possible, schools should provide additional help for children in the mainstream classroom". Circular Letter SP ED 02/05 (Department of Education and Science, 2005) noted that additional resources allocated to schools to support the inclusion of student with special educational needs were to "enable schools to allow for in-class as well as out-of-class teaching support by the learning support/resource teacher". *Inclusion of Students with Special Educational Needs: Post-Primary Guidelines* (Department of Education and Science, 2007) devoted a number of pages to providing a rationale for the use of team-teaching for students deemed to have special educational needs, including disability. It advised post-primary schools "to strongly consider" supporting these students "through co-operative teaching" (Department of Education and Science, 2007, p. 53) and pointed to the "significant value" of using this as an "additional teaching support ... to students with special educational needs" that obviated the need to withdraw "them from the mainstream class groupings" (Department of Education and Science, 2007, p. 106).

There was some inconsistency in the way teaching teams were envisaged in this document. At one point, it was noted that teaching teams would "typically be made up of the mainstream teacher and either the resource teacher or the learning-support teacher", with the latter paying "particular attention to students with special educational needs or those with low achievement" (Department of Education and Science, 2007, p. 53). Elsewhere team-teaching was described as a situation in which, "[t]he mainstream teacher is supported by a colleague in providing the curriculum to a range of students, including those with special educational needs" (Department of Education and Science, 2007). There is no stipulation about the designation of this "colleague", for example, whether they should be a specialist teacher of any kind. This seemed to suggest a lack of clarity at official level about what the practice should entail in post-primary schools. It was also interesting that the 2007 documents also referred to the primacy of providing *the* curriculum to students with special educational needs, suggesting that the role of teaching-team was to support access to a single one-size-fits-all mainstream curriculum, as distinct from tailoring instruction to meet the needs of individuals. Finally, the document noted that team-teaching should be delivered within a community of learning that shared "a commitment ... to inclusion" (Department of



Education and Science, 2007, p. 107). There was no definition or description of what was meant by inclusion in this context.

These guidelines have recently been overhauled by the 'Guidelines for Post-Primary Schools Supporting Students with Special Educational Needs in Mainstream Schools' (Department of Education and Science, 2017a). It is noteworthy that the term "inclusion" has been deleted entirely from the title of this new publication. The document confines its comments to learners deemed to have special educational needs rather than all students. It notes that schools should "aim to provide additional targeted support to [these] students within the context of a mainstream subject lesson through team-teaching", though "group or individual withdrawal" are not abandoned (Department of Education and Skills, 2017a, p. 20). It asserts that, in doing so, "[p]rovision should be made for the special education teachers [previously referred to as learning support and resource teachers] to support subject teachers through team-teaching/in-class/co-operative teaching and joint planning" (Department of Education and Science, 2017a, p. 21). This document firmly sets out the role of the special education teacher as one of supporting the mainstream subject teacher.

DES Circular Letter 0014/2017 (Department of Education and Science, 2017a) was published in tandem with these guidelines, to inform schools about how to deploy the "special education teaching allocation" given to schools (Department of Education and Science, 2017a). It extolled Special Educational Needs Teachers to "work closely with the class teacher to provide additional teaching support for children with special educational needs" (Department of Education and Science, 2017a p. 17). While this relationship was initially portrayed as involving parity between two, who "worked closely *with*" each other, the role of the classroom/subject teacher was given a more central status later in the document, when it is stated,

The classroom teacher, in consultation with the Special Educational Needs Teacher as required, will consider ways in which the curriculum can be differentiated or adapted to suit the needs of individual students. This may also involve identifying the most appropriate teaching strategies and programmes to meet the students' needs, and whether additional teaching supports are required. Parents should normally be consulted as part of this process (Department of Education and Science, 2017a, p. 17).

In this view, it is the classroom teacher who consults with the Special Educational Needs Teacher as she/he deems necessary, so that she/he can be advised of what curricular adaptation and differentiation, or what additional teaching, may be required.

Much of the language of the new DES guidelines (Department of Education and Science, 2017b) and circular letter (Department of Education and Science, 2017a) can be traced back to the previous Circular Letter 70/14 (Department of Education and Science, 2014) issued to coincide with the publication of a National Council for Special Education (2014) document that reported on a review of additional teaching allocation to schools to support the inclusion of students deemed to have special educational needs. A key concern of the initial Circular letter (Department of Education and Science, 2014 p. 4) was to ensure that resources were deployed “in an inclusive school environment and to provide additional targeted support to students within the context of a mainstream subject lesson through team-teaching”, amongst other things. In this connection, it noted that “additional support ... provided for students with low achievement and students with special educational needs ... should include team-teaching” (Department of Education and Science, 2014) and that “[c]onfigurations of team-teaching have been shown to provide an appropriate model for engaging with individual needs in the collective setting of the classroom” (Department of Education and Science, 2014). Both of these phrases were repeated verbatim in the 2017 Circular letter (Department of Education and Science, 2017a), indicating a decision to represent this as consistent policy.

Some other stipulations of Circular Letter 14/17 (Department of Education and Science, 2014), that will be of interest later in this work, were that schools “should ensure that the additional Special Educational Needs Teaching Supports are used in their entirety to support students identified with special educational needs” and that they “cannot be used for mainstream class teaching, or to reduce the pupil teacher ratio in mainstream classes, or to provide additional subjects for pupils who do not have special educational needs”. The current study will return to this issue in Section 10.7, when the issue of maintaining the integrity of teaching resources allocated to support the inclusion of learners deemed to have disability will be discussed.

In addition to the DES, other state agencies have also encouraged the use of team-teaching as a support to the inclusion of students deemed to have special educational needs, including disability. For example, the National Council for Special Education (2014 p. 68) asserted that “[c]o-operative teaching within mainstream classrooms” was one of a group of methodologies that were “especially effective in promoting inclusive education”, along with co-operative learning, collaborative problem-solving, heterogeneous grouping and differentiation. All of these responses were originally listed by the NCSE in an earlier publication (NCSE, 2010), which was the only document in which assertions made about the efficacy of team-teaching were supported by reference to research (NCSE, 2010; D. Rice & Zigmond, 2000; Trent, 1998). This was done in the context of arguing that “[s]upport

through withdrawal from the mainstream is no longer seen as the default response to pupils with special or additional needs” (NCSE, 2010 p. 30).

The NCSE (2014, p. 50) set out a role for its Inclusion Support Service in relation to improving the capacity of schools “to meet the needs of students with special educational needs and to ensure that these students are included in mainstream classroom and school life to the maximum extent possible”. Part of this role was to get schools to ‘[e]ngage in team-teaching and other forms of cooperative teaching” (NCSE, 2014, p. 52).

In a similar, though more balanced way, the Chief Inspector of Schools in Ireland, Dr. Harold Hislop, proposed team-teaching as an appropriate response to the inclusion of students deemed to have disability. He noted that the inspectorate had “long advanced the view that additional resources to support the inclusion of students should be used in as inclusive a manner as possible” (Hislop, 2011 Unpaginated), and saw team-teaching as invaluable in “enabling teachers to share the classroom space” with colleagues, “ensuring that teachers can engage in responsible professional experimentation”, assisting them with “tracking student progress”, “capturing student successes”, and “encouraging constructive yet critical professional dialogue”, including dialogue about how the learning of all students “can and should be improved” (Hislop, 2011 Unpaginated). However, the Chief Inspector also acknowledged that team-teaching remained an “underused and undervalued approach to support learning among diverse learners”, and the form of classroom collaboration least used by teachers (Hislop, 2011 Unpaginated), a view reiterated in successive Chief Inspector Reports (Department of Education and Science, 2013, 2016). For example, the 2013 report noted that inspectors had repeatedly “advised schools to explore models of in-class support instead of relying exclusively on a model of support that involved withdrawing pupils from the mainstream classroom” (Department of Education and Science, 2013). The 2016 report referred to the fact that “[i]nspectors continue to encourage schools to explore models of support which allow the child to remain in the classroom (rather than being withdrawn)” (Department of Education and Science, 2016).

Yet despite such exhortations, team-teaching seems to have remained an underused response to the inclusion of those with special educational needs, including disability. Shevlin et al. (2009, p. 5) noted that it “continued to be for the most part either a new initiative or a practice that schools wished to introduce” rather than a commonly-deployed response. Travers et al. (2010, p. 189) found that, while “widespread support for the benefits of team-teaching as a means of facilitating inclusion” was articulated within the schools surveyed in their study, its deployment was very limited. Finally, Rose, et al. (2015 p. 168), found that while there was “some evidence ... of increased attention” to team-

teaching and some good examples of this that were “gradually emerging”, its implementation remained more aspirational than real.

This is a trend that seems to have been replicated in other countries also. In a *Teaching and Learning International Survey (TALIS)*, which focused on twenty-four OECD countries (OECD, 2009), findings suggested that team-teaching was the least used form of classroom collaboration by mainstream post-primary teachers. Similarly, Kilanowski-Press et al. (2010) found that, while mainstream teachers most frequently cite team-teaching as the support that best reflects inclusive educational principles, it was the model of support least commonly deployed in their classrooms, compared for example with whole-group, small group and one to one instruction. In their study of the frequency with which co-teaching was deployed in the comprehensive school system of one Finnish city, Saloviita and Takala (2010, p. 389) found only a “slight relative increase” in uptake of the approach since its original inception in the 1980s, and that it “has remained a marginal” strategy for the inclusion of students deemed to have special educational needs, including disability.

#### **4.8 Looking at Team-Teaching in Ireland from a CDS Perspective**

As noted in the introductory chapter of this work, team-teaching has been represented as a key space within which knowledge and experience around special and general education can coalesce to increase the capacity of schools to respond to the diverse learning dispositions of all learners within mainstream classes (Bouck, 2007a; Friend et al., 2010; Hourcade & Bauwens, 2002; Kloo & Zigmond, 2008; Pugach & Johnson, 1995; Thousand, Villa, & Nevin, 2006; Villa et al., 2013; Volonino & Zigmond, 2007; Winn & Blanton, 2005). In fact, many writers have asserted that its *primary* function is to support inclusion, especially that of students deemed to have special educational needs, including disabilities (Kilanowski-Press et al., 2010; Villa et al., 2008; Walther-Thomas, 1997). Official policy and guidance in Ireland (Department of Education and Science, 2005, 2007, 2014, 2015, 2017a; Government of Ireland, 2004, 2005; NCSE, 2010, 2014) has supported this view over a protracted period, and did so in a way that failed to acknowledge sufficiently the equivocal, sparse and sometimes confusing empirical base on which assertions relating to its efficacy are predicated (Weiss & Brigham, 2000; Murawski & Swanson, 2001; Zigmond, 2003; Mastropieri et al., 2005; Kloo & Zigmond, 2008; Hattie, 2009, Van Garderen et al., 2012; Murawski & Goodwin, 2014).

While team-teaching appears to have been deployed to support the inclusion of learners deemed to have special educational needs, including disabilities (Dieker & Murawski, 2003; Friend & Cook, 2007; Scruggs et al., 2007; Weiss, 2004; Zigmond, 2006), its adoption by teachers at the level of the classroom has been significantly less enthusiastic

than the rhetorical support given to it in official guidance and policy (Griffin and Shevlin, 2010; Travers et al., 2010; Rose, et al. 2015). There appears to be a growing consensus recently that, rather than being predicated on empirical findings about its efficacy, the deployment of team-teaching has been driven by ideological commitments to “the best way to ensure that students with disabilities interacted with their peers” and could be educated, wherever possible, alongside them (Friend et al., 2010 p. 10). This is a view shared by Thousand et al. (2007 p. 420), who asserted that the “primary sources for the examination of the rationale and benefits” of team-teaching have not come from educational or psychological theories, but from the ideological imperatives of inclusive education and the experiences of students and teachers. Indeed, Friend et al. (2010, p. 23) have gone so far as to suggest that team-teaching acts as an ideological “metaphor” for policy-makers, administrators and practitioners, within which the “blurring of traditional boundaries that separate students who experience significant difficulties in learning from their peers” can take place. Importantly, Murawski and Goodwin (2014, p. 295) have asserted that much of the “ethical confusion about team-teaching relates to ambivalence surrounding inclusion in general” and to a lack of ideological commitment to its principles.

The fact that the deployment of team-teaching has been predicated primarily on ideological commitments makes it an ideal subject for analysis using critical and postmodern social theories. Critical Disability Studies (CDS) is an approach that is particularly suited to such work. It allows analysis of institutional practices, such as team-teaching, in ways that “strictly clinical research rarely does”; ways that become instrumental in “fostering change towards democratic ends” (Biklen et al., 2014, p. 363). As we saw in Sections 2.5 and 2.6, while remaining attentive to the “lessons learnt from materialism”, CDS focuses predominantly on the “cultural location of disability”; a location “that evoke[s] violence, restriction, confinement” and oppression (Goodley, 2013, p. 633). It invites the cultural “unpacking” of disability as a concept (Gallagher et al., 2014, p. 1125) “crafted from the partial and mutually dependent knowledge of each person caught in the process” of its representation and “made of the voices of many, each brought to life and made significant by the others” (Baglieri, 2017, p. 17). This leads it to take a particular interest in the role of language and other semiosis (Gallagher, 2007), which are viewed as forms of social practice that do not simply label entities but conceptualise and engender them (Foucault, 1977; Wetherell, 2001b). It is through discourse that the members of a culture can assimilate the ready-made understandings of others and come to see the world and themselves as others do (Barton & Walker, 2012). They render “some things common sense and other things nonsensical” (Youdell, 2006 p. 36).

Section 2.7 argued that in relation to disability, discourses are predicated on particular “sets of assumptions about what counts as learning, achievement, and ability” (Rogers, 2002, p. 215) and hence perform ideological functions that inevitably lead to the exercise of power. CDS has drawn on Foucauldian discourse theory, and its methodological tools of archaeology and genealogy, to question “conventional and naturalized [*sic*] ways of thinking” about disability within education (Baglieri, Valle, Connor, & Gallagher, 2011, p. 268). It focused on how meanings about disability were made within educational interactions and institutions to alternatively increase or decrease the oppression experienced by those placed within the disability category (Biklen et al., 2014). It used the ideas and methods of Foucault to posit that positivist epistemologies and essentialist discourse have “passed spectrally into [the] language and processes” (Graham and Slee, 2008 p. 298) of inclusive education, where they have established a “cultural stronghold” (Graham and Slee, 2008 p. 298) and continue to hamper efforts to reposition the location of disability from individuals to broader society and its cultures and institutions (Baglieri, 2017; Florian, 2014; Graham & Slee, 2008; Riddell, 2013; Riddell & Watson, 2014; Thomas & Loxley, 2007).

Many have blamed the establishment of this cultural stronghold for the stalling of inclusive education (Ferguson, 2008; Lindsay, 2007; Nind, Benjamin, Sheehy, Collins, & Hall, 2004; Slee, 2014; Warnock, 2005), asserting that it has caused the movement to become a “troubled and troubling educational and social project” (Slee, 2014, p. 217) that may have “lost sight of its destination” (Kozleski, Artiles, & Waitoller, 2014). Graham and Slee (2008, p. 278) have asserted that these field has become mired in “rhetorical inertia” and tokenistic attempts to include that reduce to “instrumental accommodations” which simply reinforce and reify notions of *otherness* within an otherwise unchanged system. For Florian (2014, p. 20) this makes the disruption of positivist epistemologies and essentialist discourses “necessary work” for the field of inclusive education.

It is within such an analysis that the current work looks at the social practice of team-teaching. It uses CDS to address ideological questions about its use. In whose interests it is primarily deployed? Does it add to existing range of positive-based practices in school and thus reify and reproduce the problems it sets out to solve? Or does it offer a space within which taken-for-granted assumptions about disability and can be challenged and new theorisations developed? Does it allow disabled *identities* can be reimagined in ways that reduce the oppression of those on which they are conferred? Does it work to reproduced or deconstruct the normative centre of schooling (Florian, 2014; Graham & Slee, 2008) or does it reinforce the power relations of special and mainstream education and the normalizing practices and disciplinary technologies with which these are associated? These

technologies, which include hierarchical observation, normalising judgement, examination and spatialisation (Allan, 1996), are thought to operate on all learners in “local centres of power/knowledge” but to exert a disproportionate individualising effect on those deemed to have disability (Allan, 1996, p. 222).

In the past, Baglieri et al. (2011) used CDS to comment on how team-teaching can continue the partitioning students into *special* and *typical* groups, categories that “presume the ‘rightness’ of a *normal* (one-size-fits-all) curriculum” and a similar set of teaching practices (Baglieri et al., 2011 p. 272). They have asserted that such an “essentially static baseline” view of education leads to students with diverse needs being viewed as “*extra work*, particularly for the general educator in the inclusive setting” (Baglieri et al., 2011, p. 272). They have argued that such a view becomes reflected in the division of labour within teaching teams, which can serve to position certain students as marginal to the “regular” work of teaching and cause “a synthetic, detrimental division” between special and general educators that is highly problematic from an inclusive perspective (Baglieri et al., 2011, p. 272). Their analysis led them to conclude that inclusive provision for students deemed to have disability cannot be achieved by incremental improvements in special education, even where this involves the deployment of team-teaching (Baglieri et al., 2011).

Rather, they believe, it requires a complete re-conceptualisation of the field, in line with inclusive education’s new epistemological base (Baglieri et al., 2011). It involves a cultural shift, that disrupts the normative centre of education (Florian, 2014) from which all exclusion derives (Graham & Slee, 2008). If we accept Skrtic’s (1991) argument presented in Section 3.5, that special needs education is simply an organizational artefact put in place to symbolise structural change where none has actually occurred, then any form of team-teaching deployed within the positivist epistemologies of special education can only serve to reproduce the power relations inherent in that field and prevent the creation of truly inclusive learning environments.

## **4.9 Summary and Conclusion**

Chapter 3 of this work argued that a cultural stronghold of essentialist discourse based on positivist epistemologies had established itself within the inclusion education movement and that this has proven stubbornly resistant to change. The essentialist perspective asserts that there are specific essential qualities that attach to students deemed to have disabilities and that these require specific and exceptional responses, one of which is team-teaching. However, this chapter has argued that there is little distinctive about pedagogies that work for learners deemed to have disability that do not work equally well for

others and vice versa. It has also interrogated claims about the benefits of team-teaching for those deemed to have disability and found only equivocal evidence for these, usually gleaned from qualitative studies. Yet in comparison to the empirical evidence it noted that policy rhetoric within the field of Irish was disproportionately positive. It concluded that this was more the result of ideological commitment to where learners deemed to have disability should be educated than any empirical evidence of the effectiveness of team-teaching as a pedagogical approach that supported the inclusion of those with special educational needs, especially disability.

From a Critical Disabilities Studies perspective, challenging the cultural stronghold of positivism and essentialism represents necessary work for the field of inclusive education, if the interests of marginalised learners, including those deemed to have disability, are to be protected. Central to this work, is the disruption of traditional power relations inherent in the Faustian pact that is thought to exist between special education and mainstream education (Florian 2014). Within this pact, the two fields are thought to collude to reproduce positivist views of difference, including differences around disability, and with the disciplinary technologies that operationalise these and obscure the inherently political nature of schooling. This allows mainstream education to continue to maintain and protect ableist interests over those of marginalised learners, including students deemed to have disability (Slee, 2001; Graham & Slee, 2008; Baglieri et al., 2011; Florian 2014).

The first step in challenging essentialist discourse and the positivist epistemologies on which they are based, involves understanding how these discourses are produced, consumed, redistributed or resisted in the everyday interactions of discourse participants in schools. This requires genealogical analyses of the "micro-physics of power" (Allan et al., 1998, p. 28) that operating around learners deemed to have disability in these institutions. It requires the analyst to pay close attention to role of language to see how it works to represent learners deemed to have disability and how teachers use these constructions to frame their thinking about team-teaching that is deployed to support their inclusion. The work considers, *inter alia*, whether team-teaching works to reproduce traditional networks of power associated with special and mainstream education, or whether it comprises a practice within which these collaborative networks of power are disrupted in the interest of marginalised learners, including those deemed to have disability.

A substantive part of the remainder of this research will focus on such questions. Using Fairclough's Dialectical-Relational Model of critical discourse analysis (Fairclough, 2003; Fairclough & Chouliaraki, 1999), the study will identify and problematise the discourses that dominate teachers' representations of learners deemed to have disability. It



will provide an interpretation of how these discourses influence their conceptualisations of team-teaching as a support to these learners.

On the one hand, it will offer an analysis whether teachers' use of discourse to represent learners deemed to have disability led them to:

- conceptualise team-teaching in ways that reproduced traditional power relations of special and mainstream education (Allan, 1996; Florian 2014),
- suggest that there have been structural changes where no such changes have occurred (Skrtic, 1991, 1995)
- limit their thinking about inclusive provision, to a "narrowly circumscribed set of possibilities" (Hart, 1996), that were less to do with supporting the inclusion of diverse learners and more to do with protecting ableist interests and the normative centre of mainstream education from which all exclusion derives (Florian, 2014; Graham & Slee, 2008; Slee, 2014).

On the other hand, it will ask whether teachers representations of learners deemed to have disability led them to conceptualise team-teaching as a space in which

- oppressive discourses of disability could be challenged
- traditional power relations of special and mainstream education could be subverted, along with the disciplinary technologies that supported these
- the identities of learners deemed to have disability could be reimagined in positive and emancipatory ways

Consideration of these issues led to the development of the dissertation's main research questions, which were as follows:

1. What discourses deployed within team-teaching meetings in the schools studied, dominated mainstream post-primary teachers' representations of learners deemed to have disability?
2. Did dominant discourses reinforce the cultural stronghold of essentialism or were they congruent with the new epistemological base of inclusive education?
3. Did teachers' discursive representations of students deemed to have disability influence how they conceptualised team-teaching as a support to the inclusion of these learners? If so, how?
4. Did teachers challenge hegemonic discourses of disability during team-teaching meetings? If so, could examples of this be used to chart possible ways past the oppressive use of discourse in the future?

# Chapter 5: Methodology

## 5.1 Introduction

In order to answer these questions, the study needed an investigative strategy, methodology and analytical framework that enabled it to do so, while at the same time its critical commitments to learners deemed to have disability meant retaining an ability to deploy a critical disability studies perspective within its analysis and interpretation of findings. The use of Critical Discourse Analysis within a multiple case study research design was seen as the best way to achieve these objectives. The remainder of this chapter will focus on providing a description of how this strategy was operationalised.

Section 5.2 introduces the ideas of a multiple case study research design and offers a rationale for its use in this work. It looks at how cases were purposively chosen and how principals and team-teaching participants became involved in the research. Section 5.3 offers a detailed description of these schools and participants, which are summarised in Table 1. Section 5.4 is by far the largest section of the chapter. It describes Critical Discourse Analysis, especially the Dialectical-Relational approach to this (Chouliaraki & Fairclough, 1999; Fairclough, 2003, 2016). It also gives a rationale for using the latter as both a research methodology and a framework for data analysis. In doing so, it outlines the three-tiered approach to analysis of discourse proposed within the Dialectical-Relational approach and describes how this was operationalised within the study. This involved subjecting selected transcripts of team-teaching meetings to micro-level textual analysis; to meso-level analysis of discourse practices (including analysis of genre, discourse and style) and, to macro-level analysis of socio-cultural practice, using a Critical Disability Studies theoretical framework.

Decisions about where to establish a starting point for analysis are also outlined in this section and some limitations of adopting the approach used are discussed. Section 5.5 gives a description of the data sources used and how these were generated. Section 5.6 outlines the piloting of data collection instruments. Section 5.7 discusses the timing of data collection and analysis. The final sections discuss specific ethical (Section 5.8) and methodological (Section 5.9) issues that arose in relation to the study, including issues relating to validity, reliability, generalisability and reflexivity. The chapter concludes with a short summary (Section 5.10).

## 5.2 Research Design

### Multiple Case Study

A multiple case study design was considered highly congruent with the goals and purposes of this study, the majority of which related to providing an “empirical inquiry” into “real-life” instances of discourse, in a way that maintained the holistic attributes of these and of the context in which these were produced and consumed (Yin, 2009, p. 18). For Yin, “the distinctive need for case study research arises out of the desire to understand complex social phenomena” (Yin, 2003, p. 2) where “the boundaries between phenomena and context are not clearly defined” (Yin, 2009, p. 18). Since discourse is a highly abstract, complex and situated social phenomenon, that is often obscured by concealment and illusions of common sense, the fine grained approach taken by case study research was seen as particularly appropriate for its investigation.

Yin (2009, p. 1) also asserted that the case study approach is useful for answering *how* and *why* questions where “the investigator has little control over” processes, events, conditions and behaviours or when this kind of control is undesirable. Moreover, Stake (2006, p. 29) recommended that, to get the most out of multiple case studies, researchers should focus on “the ordinary happenings for each case”. For him, the “details of life that the researcher is unable to see for himself can be found in such activities” (Stake, 2006). Since this work was interested in capturing samples of semiotic exchange, that were as close as possible to the typical exchanges that occur in schools around authentic examples of team-teaching, the multiple case study approach was deemed most appropriate. It allowed the researcher to produce thick descriptions of complex and nuanced semiotic exchanges that took place between teachers when representing learners deemed to have disabilities. It also allowed him to identify *how* particular disability discourses were reproduced or resisted. Finally, it allowed him describe in detail the unique historical, socio-cultural and physical contexts in which these discourses were deployed, and over which he neither had nor desired control.

The real power of the *multiple* case study research design however, lies in its ability to retain its analytic force in producing thick descriptions of individual cases, while focusing on a “collective target” of some kind across those “categorically bound together” cases (Stake, 2006, p. 6). Stake calls the collective target a *quintain* (Stake, 2006, p. 4). He asserts that by viewing the collective target of one’s research across different cases and situations, we can “study what is similar and different” about these “in order to understand the *quintain* better” (Stake, 2006, p. 6). The *quintain* that comprised the focus of this work were the disability discourses deployed by teachers during meetings that focussed on team-teaching

initiatives that were put in place to support the inclusion of learners deemed to have disabilities.

### **The Selection and Recruitment of Cases and Participants**

Stake (2006, p. 22) believes that key to designing successful multiple case study projects is to select enough cases to show “the interactivity between activities and their situations”, while not so many that researchers and readers are unable to understand the “uniqueness” of each (Stake, 2006, p. 6). To do this the current work used “stratified-purposeful sampling” (Mertens, 2014, p. 332). In this approach, subgroups are chosen on the basis of specific criteria “and a sample of cases is then selected within those strata”. Taking Stake’s advice, it was decided that three schools would provide sufficient data to demonstrate the uniqueness of each situation while allowing for comparison of similarities and differences between these.

For convenience and to enable easy access to the sites concerned, the sample of schools was restricted to the province within which the researcher lived and worked, namely the Leinster area of Ireland. Within this geographical area the author decided to select schools from the three largest sectors within the Irish post-primary education system; voluntary secondary, community colleges and community schools. In addition, it was decided to select at least one school from an area designated as *disadvantaged* and one from relatively advantaged area. Given that the majority of people in the chosen area lived in the greater Dublin area, it was also decided that at least one school would be from here and one would be from outside of this region.

Much of the literature pertaining to team-teaching at second-level, conceptualises this as a collaboration between a Special Education Teacher and a subject or class teacher, both of whom work together in a mainstream class. However, this is not how team-teaching is conceptualised, deployed and resourced in the Irish post-primary context. In Ireland, any teacher who is qualified, probated and working in a Department of Education and Skills-funded position can be allocated hours on their teaching timetable that require them to team-teach to support the inclusion of students deemed to have special educational needs, including disability (Department of Education and Science, 2017). Moreover, official policy states that the primary responsibility for the inclusion of these students rests with the *class* teacher (Department of Education and Science, 2017). As a result of his policy, the composition of team-teaching dyads often varies considerably in terms of teachers’ training qualifications and roles. The research design set out for this study wanted to capture how discourse was used to represent disability in a range of dyads that reflected this diversity, hence it chose case study sites that put different combinations of teachers in place to staff

the team-teaching initiatives they set up for 2015-16 academic year. Specifically, it sought to include one team-teaching dyad that comprised a subject teacher and a trained special education teacher, one made up of two special education teachers, and one that involving two subject teachers, neither of whom had completed recognised CPD in the area. Finally, in order to capture a variety of gender combinations within the dyads concerned, an attempt was made to include at least one mixed-gender dyad and one same-gender dyad in the study.

To achieve this sample, the author first selected schools at random from the official Department of Education and Science list of post-primary schools in the geographical area mentioned. Having stratified these in terms of sector and socio-economic designation, he contacted schools in each category to see if they were contemplating putting a team-teaching initiative in place for the 2015-16 academic year that focussed on the inclusion of students deemed to have disability (Department of Education and Skills, 2017). For ethical reasons, it was important to gain a commitment in advance from all participating schools that they had already intended to put this in place in response to student needs, rather than at the request of the researcher. In all, the principals of nineteen schools were contacted by telephone. In many cases, schools could not assure the researcher that such provision was either anticipated or possible. This was usually because they had no established history of team-teaching, no plans to use this approach in the near future, or no confirmation from the NCSE about their final teacher allocation for the 2015-16 school year.

Once a number of schools had responded to him to indicate that they were planning a team-teaching initiative such as that set out above, and that their principal was willing to discuss the school's participation in the study, the researcher offered to meet with each principal to provide all necessary information about the study and to answer any questions they might have about this (see Appendix A). When the researcher had established that certain principals were in a position to put in place an authentic instances of team-teaching in terms of the criteria established for this (see Section 5.8), the author sent each principal a formal letter inviting them to take part (see Appendix B), along with a consent form (see Appendix C) and a plain language statement that outlined the aims, scope, scale of participant involvement and right to decline or withdraw participation (see Appendix D). It was made clear at this time that each principal's participation (or that of their nominee), was entirely voluntary but that it was a necessary condition for the school's involvement in the study. The participation required of *all* participants was also outlined to them at this stage.

Principals who agreed in writing to participate were also given time to reflect on this, to liaise with their boards of management, and to request and be given any further

clarifications they needed. As schools conforming to these criteria agreed to become involved, the criteria for remaining schools became more selective. Ultimately, the researcher secured the participation of three schools that filled each of the criteria set. At this state, each school was asked to confirm that the criteria supplied to them around what comprised an authentic instance of team-teaching (see the relevant part of Section 5.8 below) would be adhered to.

Once written confirmation was received from principals, that school authorities were willing to let their schools to take part in the study, each principal was asked to make initial inquiries of the teachers involved in a team-teaching initiative that fulfilled the above criteria, to see if they would agree to be approached by the author regarding their participation in the study. In each of the cases eventually selected, the teachers involved agreed to this and allowed their work contact details could be forwarded to him. Each teacher was then contacted by telephone to explain the nature and scope of their proposed participation and, with their permission, each was sent a letter of invitation (see Appendix E) and plain language statement (see Appendix D). All participants were also given the option of contacting the researcher by telephone with any questions or queries they might have or to meet with him at their school, either individually in with their team-teaching partner. In the event, every teacher requested that the author meet with them, along with their team-teaching partner, at their school. He was happy to facilitate this. After this meeting, teachers were asked to sign a consent form to indicate their willingness to participate in the research (see Appendix F). In all, nine individuals took part in the study: three principals and six teachers comprising three team-teaching dyads, one in each school that focused on an instance of team-teaching put in place to support the inclusion of at least one student deemed to have disability.

### **Last Minute Changes**

Due to unforeseen resourcing issues, one of the schools that had originally agreed to participate in the study, elected to withdraw just before the first data collection phase was due to begin. This was a single-sex girls voluntary secondary school. As a consequence, the researcher had to approach other schools at short notice. In the event, it was not possible to find a single sex or voluntary secondary school that fulfilled the remaining criteria for selection. However, a suitable community college was found that agreed to take part. This meant that ultimately each of the case study sites was a co-educational community school or colleges, which represented a limitation of the study. All of the procedures outlined above in relation to recruitment were followed in relation to the newly selected school.

Detail of each case study school is offered hereunder, including information about the school and its environs and curricula; a review of its published promotional materials and relevant policy documents; a narrative on the history of team-teaching at each venue; and a description of the context in which each team-teaching initiative studies transpired, including details of the teachers who participated in it, its stated purpose, and the subject area and group on whom it focussed. All of his information is summarised in Table 1 below, which includes all of the last minute changes already noted.

### **5.3 Description of Team-Teaching Initiatives, Participants and Contexts**

#### **Hazel Park Post-Primary School**

At the time of the study, Hazel Park Post-Primary School described itself within its general publicity materials, as a multi-denominational co-educational school operating under the patronage of its local Education and Training Board. It was one of the largest schools in the country, employing over 100 teachers and catering for over 1200 students, most of whom came from the town in which it was located and its hinterland. School buildings were situated on a large site and include extensive sports facilities. General publicity materials noted the policy of the school to admit *all* students from its catchment area who wish to enrol into first year (Hazel Park, 2015a). These materials also refer to the school's determination "to provide a just and caring environment in which we all achieve our potential" (Mission Statement, Hazel Park, 2015 p. 1).

Curricular provision at the school included JCSP, LCAP, LCVP and TY as well as the traditional Junior Certificate and Leaving Certificate programmes. Its publicity materials at the time, stated that it had sufficient specialised facilities and labs to "allow for the widest range of subjects to be offered and maintained to Leaving Certificate level" (Hazel Park - General Publicity Materials, 2015). The school participated in the Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools (DEIS) action plan for inclusion and is placed in Band 1 of this initiative. It had over 100 teachers, including two Guidance Counsellors and a Home School Community Liaison teacher. In terms of extra-curricular activities, general publicity materials (Hazel Park, 2015 unpaginated) referred to a "significant tradition" in sports and other extra-curricular activities, including drama, musicals, chess, debating, subject clubs and reading club.

Hazel Park's Inclusion Statement noted that the school "welcomes all students irrespective of gender, marital status, family status, sexual orientation, religion, age, disability, race or membership of the traveller community" (Hazel Park – School Inclusion Statement, unpaginated). It also noted that the school "provides an inclusive school and

learning environment in which all students will become part of the school community and learn to grow to achieve their full potential” (Hazel Park – School Inclusion Statement, unpaginated). At the time of data-gathering, the school’s admissions policy stated that it had been “informed by the principles of inclusiveness, equality of access and participation in the school, parental choice and respect for diversity of traditions, values, beliefs, languages, ethnic origins and ways of life” (Hazel Park, Admissions Policy, 2015 p. 1). This policy asserted that the “application process for a pupil with special educational needs will be the same as that of any other applicant” (Hazel Park - Admissions Policy, 2015 p. 1). However, it notes also noted that “[i]f special resources are required, it may be necessary to defer enrolment until these are provided by the Department of Education and Skills” (Hazel Park - Admissions Policy, 2015 p. 1). It claimed the right to refuse enrolment in exceptional cases. Examples of exceptionality quoted in the policy include where a “student has special educational needs such that even with additional resources available from the Department of Education and Skills” the school cannot “provide the student with appropriate education” (Hazel Park - Admissions Policy, 2015 p. 5) and where a “student poses an unacceptable risk to other students, school staff or school property” (Hazel Park - Admissions Policy, 2015 p. 1).

Subject to such provisions, the Special Educational Needs Policy at Hazel Park states its aim to offer students placed in this category, “access to and appropriate education, within parameters of the limited resources provision laid down in the 1998 Education Act” (Hazel Park- Draft 2, Special Educational Needs Policy, 2015 p. 1). The policy states that the school supports “a policy of inclusion for all students with special educational needs” (Hazel Park -Admissions Policy, 2015 p. 4) by offering “a broad and balanced curriculum” (Hazel Park -Admissions Policy, 2015 p. 2) and “access to resource teaching”, mainly “in English and Mathematics” (Hazel Park - Admissions Policy, 2015 p. 4). The school’s Anti-Bullying Policy made reference to the its aspiration to create a “culture and climate which ... is welcoming of difference and diversity and is based on inclusivity” (Hazel Park - Anti-Bullying Policy, 2014 p. 1) and which addressed “identity-based bullying” (Hazel Park - Anti-Bullying Policy, 2014 p. 1) including that related to students “with disabilities or special educational needs” (Hazel Park - Anti-Bullying Policy, 2014 p. 2)

### **The team-teaching context.**

During the semi-structured interview conducted with the principal of Hazel Park, he reported that the school had a history of team-teaching that went back some 24 years. Team-teaching was now deployed within a general model of school organisation in which classes were established on the basis of mixed ability across the school. Support was



provided through “team-teaching; small group tuition; three-way class splits and individual support” (Hazel Park - Admissions Policy, 2015 p. 4). However, it was clear during for this interview that some classes were also established on the basis that their members struggled academically, and that in such cases these classes were often allocated two teachers. The group on which the Hazel Park initiative focussed was such a group. The principal reported that over half of the staff at the school had been involved in team-teaching to date, with 15 or 16 teachers, mostly coming from the English, Mathematics, and Learning Support departments, operating as a core group of team-teachers where between a third and a half of their timetable were devoted to this approach.

### ***The team-teaching initiative.***

The class group in Hazel Park school, that is the focus of this study was a first year English class, that contained at least eight students who had been assessed as having disabilities of various kinds. During the interview with the principal, it became apparent that the class was formed after discussions between the Special Educational Needs Coordinator and the Principal before the beginning of the academic year. A decision was made to create three first year groups out of two existing groups, in order maximise the support given to a range of first year students who had an expectation of additional teaching support on the basis that they have been assessed as having disability *and* required high levels of support, in academic, but also in the social and emotional domains. As we will see later, the composition of the group changed substantially during the course of data collection period. The class was described as “the class above JCSP” (HP Mgt.2: Turn 30), with all but one or two students hoping to engage with the Junior Certificate English curriculum Ordinary Level.

### **The team-teaching dyad.**

Denise had been teaching for eighteen years, fourteen of which were at her current school. During the interview with Denise, she reported that she had been made aware of, and had extensive experience of teaching, students deemed to have special educational needs, including disability within her mainstream classes. She noted that while traditionally students would have been assessed with dyslexia and learning disability, more recently the numbers of those assessed as functioning on the autistic spectrum, and with Down Syndrome had increased. Because of this, she reported having undertaken a number short courses that focused on how to respond to students deemed to have specific speech and language disorders; social emotional and behavioural issues; and dyslexia. She had also just completed the year-long, DES-sponsored and recognised Postgraduate Diploma in

Learning Support and Special Educational Needs course in the year prior to data collection for this work.

Denise reported during interview that she had team-taught many times in the years prior to the current study. She also reported that she was involved in two other team-teaching situations during the year in which data collection occurred for the current study; one with a third-year English group engaged in the Junior Certificate Schools Programme, and the other with a second-year English group containing students deemed to have disabilities, she described as the class above JCSP level.

Saoirse was in her sixth year of teaching at the time of data collection and was entering her seventh. All of this time had been spent teaching at Hazel Park school. During the interview, she reported having taught students deemed to have special educational needs in her first year as a full time teacher only, since thereafter she had been teaching Spanish, a subject chosen by few, if any students deemed to have disabilities, who were typically exempt from the study of languages. While she had taught what she terms as *beginners* Spanish to so-called *weaker* groups, she felt that these were of very limited value. She had only one previous experience of team-teaching, which had been with Denise when the two of them had co-taught an English group during her first year in a full-time teacher at the school.

### **Maple Lodge Post-Primary School**

In general publicity materials, Maple Lodge Post-Primary School described itself as a co-educational community school catering for over 1100 students living within its local geographical area. The school also ran day and evening adult education programmes for some 2000 persons annually. There was evidence of great cultural diversity within the student population, with the school's Intercultural and Inclusion Policy (which is concerned with cultural diversity only) referring to the representation of thirty-one countries and thirty first languages within the student population. In an interview with Andrew, a participant in the study and the school's special educational needs coordinator, he reported that at the time of data gathering, there were 120 students listed on the school's Special Educational Needs Register, as well as a range of students depicted as falling into no particular category but who struggled significantly with the academic demands of the post-primary curriculum.

The school's Mission Statement noted that the school strives "to create an atmosphere of mutual respect which promotes excellence in all aspects of school life and allows individuals to realise their full potential" (Maple Lodge - Mission Statement, 2015, unpaginated). The Special Educational Needs Policy operating in the school had been in

place since 2011. An “Intercultural and Inclusion Policy” had also been developed to work alongside this in relation to inclusion, that was dated May 2014. It referred mostly to issues of race, religion and culture, based on the objectives of intercultural education (Maple Lodge Intercultural and Inclusion Policy, 2014 p. 2). It was significant that there was no mention of disability as a distinct cultural group, either the Special Educational Needs or Intercultural and Inclusion policies.

While the policy on racial, religious and cultural diversity highlighted that discrimination on these grounds had implications for marginalised and non-marginalised groups alike (ML- Intercultural and Inclusion Policy, 2014 p. 2), this position was not extended to those covered by the Special Educational Needs Policy. Rather, discussion here was premised on positivist ideas of difference and assessment criteria associated with this epistemology. In semi-structured interviews with the teachers involved in the Maple Lodge Post-Primary School team-teaching initiative, teachers reported that the Mission Statement was the *umbrella* statement that guided school policy and practice in this. They also averred that most school policies contained statements relating to inclusion, which was a principle inherent in each.

#### **The team-teaching context.**

The team-teaching initiative at Maple Lodge occurred within the context of a model for distributing additional teaching hours allocated to the school to support inclusion of students deemed to have learning support needs, which typically involved the withdrawal of these student from mainstream classes. This was used predominantly to support the development of literacy, numeracy and personal and social skills and knowledge, as well as to support students in coping with the mainstream syllabi of specific subjects. During an interview, the principal stated that team-teaching had been in operation at the school for about ten years prior to this study, only a very small number of instances of team-teaching had put in place for the data-collection year. The school had a small core team of teachers who held DES-recognised qualifications in relation to the inclusion of students deemed to have special educational needs, including disability. A very large number of teachers without these qualifications were also involved in this work, though with much fewer support hours represented in their time-tables. In fact, this latter group provided the majority of support available to students in the school.

The principal reported that teachers were allocated learning support hours, only after the main time-table had been established. This was offered, only in cases where the teachers involved in learning support hours, requested this option over others, such as reducing the size of existing classes or withdrawing agreed groups of students, from individual or multiple whole-class groups. The principal intimated that she thought such

decisions were made largely on the basis of teachers' perceptions of their personal and professional compatibility.

### **The team-teaching initiative**

The class at Maple Lodge that comprised the focus of this study, was a sixth-year Leaving Certificate Applied group, following the English and Communication programme. The team-teaching initiative seems to have been initially set up because the attendance policy of the LCA programme stipulates a minimum attendance period for each module, which made the withdrawal of students impossible. In talking about the entire group, Andrew referred to the fact that all its members "bar two", had "psychological assessments with issues" (ML Mtg. 1: Turn 274).

### **The team-teaching dyad.**

In the interview carried out with Andrew, he indicated that he had been teaching for thirty-eight years at the time of the study, the last thirteen of which he had completed at Maple Lodge Post-Primary school. In the same interview, he stated that he had been working with students thought to have learning support needs, including disability, since completion of a course of CPD in learning support in 1985. He had been working more comprehensively with students deemed to have disabilities since he completed an additional DES-sponsored Postgraduate Diploma in 2003, shortly after which he moved to Maple Lodge Post-Primary School. From that time, he worked exclusively with students deemed to have disabilities. He reported having worked as the school's Special Educational Need Coordinator for the ten years prior to the current study and that he had not engaged in any team-teaching during that time.

In the semi-structured interview in which she engaged with the researcher, Claire reported that she had been teaching for a total of six years, all of which had been spent at her current school. She reported have spent the last four years of this teaching students deemed to have special educational needs, including disabilities. She had completed a DES-sponsored Postgraduate Diploma in Learning Support and Special Educational Needs course of training in the year prior to that in which data was collected for this study. She had participated in one team-teaching initiative in the previous year in the area of Mathematics, but reported that this had not been a successful pairing. Claire and Andrew had never team-taught together before.

## **Willow Way Post-Primary School**

Willow Way Post-Primary School is located in the south-western suburbs of the city of Dublin, Ireland. According to a recent Whole-School Inspection report, which will not be referenced to protect the anonymity of the school, its catchment area is “very contained and almost all of the students are able to go home during the hour-long lunch break” (DES Inspectorate, 2014). In its general publicity materials (Willow Way, 2015a), the school described itself as “a highly regarded and progressive co-educational and multi-denominational” post-primary institution. It operates under the joint trusteeship of three bodies: the local Catholic archbishop, a Catholic religious order and the local Education and Training Board. At the time of data collection, it had 467 students enrolled.

The curriculum provided by the school included the Junior Certificate programme, the Junior Certificate School Programme, the traditional Leaving Certificate programme and Leaving Certificate Applied (LCA) programme. It also participates in the Delivering Equality of Opportunity in our Schools (DEIS) scheme, in which it was placed in the Band 1 category, and contributes to the action plan of this initiative. A whole-school evaluation report completed prior to the period of data collection for this work, recommended further development of its Transition Year and Leaving Certificate Vocational Programmes (DES Inspectorate, 2014). Again, this report is not specifically referenced in this work in order to protect the school’s anonymity. Extra-curricular activities take place in the areas of dance, music, art and drama as well as in connection with the Young Entrepreneurs Programme, the Junior Achievement Programme, the school magazine and various organised sports, including basketball, soccer, GAA, handball and athletics.

General information documents published by the school, asserts the Board of Management’s belief “that education flourishes in an environment where good relationships are encouraged and people feel valued” (Willow Way, 2015a, unpaginated). They also assert the school’s aspirations to create a “climate of mutual respect and understanding, an excellent standard of educational curriculum, high and realistic expectations for students, and partnership between the home, school and community” (Willow Way, 2015a, unpaginated). The school’s Mission Statement notes the school commitment “to providing an inclusive learning environment, enabling students to achieve their full potential, promoting excellence and fostering respect for each individual as well as the entire community” (Willow Way - School Mission Statement, 2015). Its draft admission policy notes that the school accepts “all students who apply from Sixth Class in our three feeder schools” as well as applications for all of its courses and programmes (Willow Way - Updated Admission Policy, Willow Way, 2013 pp. 1-2). It also notes that the school “does not discriminate against any

applicant” on any of the nine grounds referred to in equality legislation, including, and that it “operates and inclusive philosophy based on caring” (Willow Way - Updated Admission Policy, Willow Way, 2013 p. 2). However, it also notes that admission “must necessarily have regard to such resources as are available in the school” (Willow Way - Updated Admission Policy, Willow Way, 2013 p. 2), incorrectly suggesting that admission could be refused if sufficient resources are not forthcoming.

The school has a draft Special Educational Needs Policy (Willow Way - Draft Special Educational Needs Policy, 2013) which sets out the procedures for identification of special educational needs, including disability, and responding to these. It also has an anti-bullying Policy (Willow Way – Anti-bullying Policy, 2008) that refers to the unacceptability of “Racial comments or discrimination including comments about; colour, nationality, social class, religious beliefs, ethnic or Traveller background”. This policy does not extend to those deemed to have disability. In relation to the school’s Code of Behaviour, dated 2011, it contains a significant reference to the role of the Behavioural Support Classroom in promoting positive behaviour. There is no explicit reference to learners deemed to have disability in this.

#### **The team-teaching context.**

Additional resources allocated to the school in respect of students in need of learning support and who have special educational needs, including disability, are deployed to support a school-wide literacy and numeracy initiative, the Junior Cycle Schools Programme, small group teaching, team-teaching and supplementary teaching for individuals and small groups, where needs have not been met within the mainstream classroom. “Where appropriate, cooperative teaching is also implemented” (Draft Special Educational Needs Policy, Willow Way, 2013 p. 2). At the time of data collection, the school reported having eight special needs assistants. It also ran a Behavioural Support Classroom, as part of support offered under the auspices of the National Behavioural Support Service (NBSS). This unit was named after the number of the room in which its administration was located, G26. Finally, the school offered supplementary language support to those for whom English was not their first language. This was usually offered in a small group or individual setting (Draft Special Educational Needs Policy, Willow Way, 2013 p. 4).

During the interview with the principal, she noted that team-teaching had been deployed in the school since its opening over 30 years ago. She intimated that while it focussed at first on the management of difficult classes, it was now targeted almost exclusive at supporting students with special educational needs. She stated that it generally involved a collaboration between a learning support teacher and a subject teacher,

especially where particular combinations of these are seen to work well together or they are available in a particular subject area at the same time. She noted that these combinations were chosen because they both taught the subject in which support was offered. The principal also noted a general positivity from staff around becoming involved in team-teaching. She noted that towards the end of each year, she invited requests from subject departments or programmes for team-teaching, which she then forwarded to the Special Education Department to come up with suggestions for how this could be scheduled. The Special Educational Needs Coordinator then decided on combinations of teachers whether team-teaching or withdrawal was most appropriate or possible.

### **The team-teaching initiative.**

The class group in Willow Way in respect of whom data for this study was collected was a “middle band” third year English class, most of whom were pursuing the Junior Certificate English syllabus at Ordinary Level. The group contained only one student, Phillip, who had been assessed as having a Social, Emotional and Behavioural Disorder (DES, 02/05; DSM IV, the classification manual in use at the time of this assessment). In addition to the presence of Phillip, it was asserted that the “particularly low” scores attained by many in the group on recent standardised tests of reading, was also a reason for the establishment of the team-teaching initiative at Willow Way. The author was unable to access data that confirmed the veracity of this assertion. The team-teaching initiative came about at the instigation of the Special Educational Needs Coordinator in line with process for this, outlined above.

### **The team-teaching dyad.**

Prior to the study Fiona had been teaching for six years, five at her current school. She had been involved in teaching students deemed to have disabilities during the entirety of that time. She listed a number of categories of disability into which these learners had been placed, including those of dyslexia, AD/HD, ADD and Mild General Learning Disability. She had not completed any DES-sponsored or recognised teaching qualification relating to the teaching of learners with disability or other special educational needs but reported that had completed an SNA training course before she had begun her teaching career. Fiona was involved in only one team-teaching initiative in the year in which data was gathered, though she had been involved in two such situations in the previous year.

Meadhbh had been teaching for five years, the last two of which were at the current school. She reported teaching learners deemed to have disabilities “more so this year than the first year. The first year I think I only had one class that I was aware of with a student

who actually had an assessment and who had access to an SNA ... Now there may have been other students I did have and wasn't aware" (WW Meadhbh Interview, p. 1). Meadhbh had no DES-sponsored or recognised training in relation to students deemed to have disabilities or other special educational needs but had done some short courses with a private training provider, "kind of off my own bat during the summer" (WW Meadhbh Interview, p. 1). In addition to the initiative that comprised the focus of this study, Meadhbh was involved in another initiative twice per week with an Environmental and Social Studies group. She did not report team-teaching in the previous year.



**Table 1: Summary of Details Relating to each Case Study School, Team-Teaching Dyad and Team-Taught Group**

<b>School Information</b>						
<b>School pseudonyms</b>	<b>Hazel Park</b>		<b>Maple Lodge</b>		<b>Willow Way</b>	
<b>Location</b>	Dublin City (North)		Outside Dublin (Urban – Town)		Dublin City (South)	
<b>DEIS status</b>	Band 1		None		Band 1	
<b>* Total number of post-primary students enrolled</b>	> 1000		>1100		467	
<b>School type</b>	Community School		Community College (Local Education and Training Board)		Community School	
<b>Gender of Students</b>	Co-educational		Co-educational		Co-educational	
<b>Principal Information</b>						
<b>Years in role as principal in current school</b>	4 Years (DP there Previously)		4 Years (DP there Previously)		15 Months (Principal elsewhere previously)	
<b>Gender</b>	M		F		F	
<b>Teacher Information</b>						
<b>Teachers, team-teaching positions and gender</b>	Denise (T1)	F	Claire (T1)	F	Fiona (T1)	F
	Saoirse (T2)	F	Andrew (T2)	M	Meadhbh (T2)	F
<b>Years teaching in total</b>	Denise -	18	Claire -	6	Fiona -	6
	Saoirse -	6	Andrew -	38	Meadhbh -	5
<b>Years teaching in current school</b>	Denise -	14	Claire -	6	Fiona -	5
	Saoirse -	6	Andrew -	13	Meadhbh -	2
<b>Previous experience of team-teaching</b>	Denise -	Yes	Claire -	Yes	Fiona -	No
	Saoirse -	Yes	Andrew -	Yes	Meadhbh -	No
<b>Learner Information</b>						
<b>Year Group on with the team-teaching focussed</b>	First Year		Sixth Year (LCA)		Third Year	
<b>Learner who was the focus of analysis of discourse</b>	Darren		Julia		Phillip	
<b>DES categories in which above students assessed</b>	Physical Disability		Moderate General Learning Disability		Social, Emotional and Behavioural Disorder	
<b>• Number of students in Team-taught group</b>	• 19 (Ultimately)		• 20		• 26	
<b>• Number assessed as having disability</b>	• 8		• 18		• 1	

<b>Other DES categories of SEN represented in this group</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Developmental Coordination Disorder/Dyspraxia</li> <li>• Specific Learning Disability/Dyslexia</li> <li>• Speech and Language Disorder</li> <li>• Queried Elective Mutism.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Specific Learning Disability/Dyslexia,</li> <li>• Severe Speech and Language Disorder</li> <li>• Borderline Mild General Learning Disability</li> <li>• Developmental Coordination Disorder/Dyspraxia</li> <li>• Queried Elective Mutism</li> <li>• Moderate General Learning Disability</li> <li>• Physical Disability.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Social, Emotional and Behavioural Disorder</li> </ul>
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**All data noted above were correct as at the time of data collection (August/September, 2015)**

**\* Exact numbers in larger school are not supplied so as not to identify the schools concerned.**

**\*\* At time of data collection a number of previously differentiated roles (learning support teachers and resource teacher) were being subsumed in a new Special Education Teacher designation.**

## **5.4 Analytic Framework - Critical Discourse Analysis**

### **Introducing Critical Discourse Analysis**

Given the critical focus on discourse inherent in its research questions posed, Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) was seen as a particularly suitable approach for investigating these. CDA is a problem-oriented interdisciplinary research tradition that focuses on the semiotic aspects of social problems (Fairclough, 2009). It emerged during the late 1980s, from a wide range of research traditions including anthropology, linguistic anthropology, ethnography, linguistics, philosophy, pragmatics, semiotics, conversation analysis and sociolinguistics as well as psycholinguistics and social psychology (Van Dijk, 2009). It brings together social theory and discourse analysis to “describe, interpret, and explain the ways in which discourse constructs, becomes constructed by, represents, and becomes represented by the social world” (Rogers, 2004b, p. 366).

At the level of socio-political analysis, CDA, like Critical Disability Studies, is strongly influenced by the post-structuralist writings of Foucault, Bourdieu and Bakhtin (Gee, 2004) and by Neo-Marxist critical theory. In this respect, it relies more on traditional Marxism (Gee, 2004) than other discourse theories, for example, those of Jørgensen & Phillips (2002) and

Laclau & Mouffe (1985). It also borrows from neo-Marxist critical theories such as those of Althusser (1971) and Gramsci (1971) which place particular emphasis on the role of culture in the reproduction of capitalist social relations (Fairclough, 2009)

On the linguistic side, CDA has its roots (Rogers, 2004b) in critical linguistics of Fowler, Hodge, Kress, & Trew, (1979), Kress & Hodge (1979) and Kress (1985), and Halliday's Systematic Functional Linguistics model of textual analysis (Halliday, 1978, 1988, 1994; Halliday & Hasan, 1989). This emphasises its social character of text and the relationship between discourse and discursive practices. It acknowledges the structuralist view of language which holds that words and signs are arbitrary and that meaning depends on how these are positioned in relation to each other. It builds on these views however, by encompassing the poststructuralist idea that signs (including linguistic signs) acquire new meanings through their ongoing use within social practice. Thus CDA emphasises *language in use* and posits that it is only "through conventions, negotiations and conflicts in social contexts that structures of meaning are fixed and challenged" (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002, p. 25). The aim of CDA then, is not only to assemble an interpretation of discourse but to develop a systematic and empirically-founded analysis of this 'that can be repeated' or 'used in other types of analysis' of empirical material (Krzyżanowski, 2010, p. 68).

Because it frames *objects* of research (discourses) as simultaneously material and semiotic, CDA encourages a *trans-disciplinary* approach to the investigating social problems (Fairclough, 2011). This requires simultaneous use of analysis by disciplines "whose primary concern is with material facets of social realities *and* disciplines whose primary concern is with semiotic facets" (Fairclough, 2011). As we will see shortly, this was a particular advantage of CDA, from the perspective of this work; it offered a semiotic *point-of-entry* for the simultaneous application of linguistic theory and Critical Discourse Studies in a way to keep the two in constant dialogue (Fairclough, 2011). It does this through detailed examination of linguistic/semiotic artefacts and of the social, cultural and political contexts in which these are produced, consumed and distributed (Huckin, Andrus, Clary-Lemon, & Communication, 2012), as captured through the implementation of a multiple case study approach. In this way, it could investigate critically how social inequality around disability was "expressed, constituted, and legitimized by language use" (Huckin et al., 2012 p. 108).

For this reason, CDS has been described as a "problem-oriented" rather than a "theory-oriented" approach to research (Van Dijk, 2009, p. 63). It gives the analyst a way of reading, analysing and thinking about social problems in their discursive aspects (Van Dijk, 2009). James Paul Gee (2011, pp. 9-10) sums it up neatly, when he notes that while discourse analysis looks at how people use language in context, *critical* discourse analysis

can illuminate “who gets helped or who gets harmed” by this process. CDA ties “language to politically, socially, or culturally contentious issues”, with a view to “intervening in these issues in some way” (Gee & Handford, 2012, p. 5). It looks at how “discourse structures enact, confirm, legitimate, reproduce, or challenge relations of power and dominance in society” (Van Dijk, 2009, p. 353), through detailed analysis of texts. For Fairclough (2003), this is a particularly productive aspect of CDA, since it addresses the tendency within social research not to emphasise the importance of textual analysis, and the tendency of textual analysis not to engage sufficiently with social theory.

As a problem-oriented approach, CDA necessarily “pre-supposes an *ethical* assessment” that some discourse use may be illegitimate or harmful “according to some fundamental norms” (Van Dijk, 2009 p. 62). This is what gives the approach its critical focus. The critical positioning of CDA also requires that it be deployed in ways that are consistent with its critical ethical principles, such as to improve the lot of those it identifies as being oppressed by the dominance of certain discourses (Wodak & Meyer, 2015, p. 7). This makes it highly congruent with the critical orientation of Critical Discourse Studies. Given its critical objectives, Van Dijk (2009) suggests that CDA would be more accurately described as Critical Discourse *Studies* (CDS). This idea has now been adopted widely in the field. The author concurs with this Van Dijk’s assertion, as echoed by Fairclough (2003), Krzyżanowski (2010) Wodak and Meyer (2015). However, a practical issue pertained to the use of the terms Critical Discourse Studies, namely that its acronym (CDS) is the same as that used for Critical Disability Studies (CDS). Out of concern the fact that applying the same acronym to two distinct but key concepts would cause the reader unnecessary confusion, it was decided to retain the CDA acronym and the term Critical Discourse *Analysis*. This should be taken to comprehend the broader theoretical aspirations of the field referred to which Van Dijk (2009).

### **Choosing an Approach to CDA**

Because CDA represents a critical perspective that characterises scholars rather than research methods (Van Dijk, 2009), its approaches vary greatly. Krzyżanowski (2010, p. 68) characterises it as “a group of research traditions” that “build on a similar philosophical background” and “a shared ‘critical’ stance on the role of discourse in society” The main approaches developed to date include, the Dialectical-Relational approach (Chouliaraki & Fairclough, 1999; Fairclough, 1992, 1995), the Socio-Cognitive Approach (Van Dijk, 1997, 2001, 2009, 2016), the Discourse-Historical Approach (Wodak, 1996; Wodak & Meyer, 2015; Wodak & Reisigl, 2001) the Social Actors Approach (Van Leeuwen, 2005, 2008) and Foucauldian dispositive analysis (Jäger & Maier, 2016). Each approach borrows differently from structuralist and post-structuralist social theory and from critical

linguistic theory to explain and analyse the workings of discourse (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002).

Krzyżanowski (2010, p. 70) groups the traditions listed above into two categories; a “core CDA” group and “a set of more peripheral approaches”. He places the Discourse-Historical, Socio-Cognitive and Dialectical-Relational approaches within the core group because they have developed rapidly since the mid-1980s, have stayed in constant contact with each other, and have remained committed to a joint emphasis on both critical linguistic and critical social theory (Krzyżanowski, 2010). Because of their commitment to develop in dialogue with each other, the researcher paid particular attention to these in choosing an approach for his own work.

Yet, these core approaches differed in important ways (Rogers, 2004a). For example, while all assume that the relationship between discourse and society is *mediated* in some way (Wodak & Meyer, 2015), Wodak’s Discourse-Historical method and VanDijk’s Socio-Cognitive approach posit that this can be explained in terms of social cognition theories (Wodak & Meyer, 2015). Fairclough’s Dialectic-Relational approach, on the other hand, drew on Halliday’s multi-functional linguistic theory and Foucault’s ideas about discourse to explain the connection between discourse and society. The current research was more interested in *what* discourses dominated teachers’ meaning-making about disability and what were their *effects* were on conceptualisation of team-teaching as a support to inclusion. It was less interested in *how* these were represented socio-cognitively. Fairclough’s approach was seen as the most useful in seeing how certain discourses came to dominate meaning-making processes relating to disability in schools, and in problematising the ideological and material effects of this domination.

Another consideration was the emphasis given to history within different approaches. For example, the Discourse-Historical Approach (Wodak, 1996; Wodak & Reisigl, 2001), emphasises collecting large bodies of material, often over decades (Rogers, 2004a), in order to examine how continuities and differences in discourse and discourse practices come about and to detect the discursive *events* within which their development was embedded (Krzyżanowski, 2010). However, the main research questions that guided this work were largely genealogical; they were less to do with the historical development of meaning-making about disability, than about the ideological and material effects of *current* representations of this. Again, the Dialectic-Relational approach was seen as the most suitable approach to this.

Approaches to CDA also vary in how they conceptualise power and ideology. VanDijk's and Wodak's models characterise ideologies as mental representations of the world; a form of social cognition that becomes shared by groups and which forms the basis of their group representations and social practices (Van Dijk, 2009). Fairclough's understanding of ideologies is more *critical* than this. It sees ideologies as more than psychological configurations of "positions, attitudes, beliefs, perspectives, etc." (Fairclough, 2003, p. 9) but as "a process which articulates together particular representations of reality and particular constructions of identity" (Fairclough, 2011, p. 372) that "contribute to the establishing, maintaining and changing of power, domination and exploitation" (Fairclough, 2003, p. 9). This way of framing ideology makes the Dialectical-Relation model congruent with Critical Disability Studies' ontologies of disability. It encourages the joint application of textual and social analysis in ways that consider the "effects of power relations" (Fairclough, 2003).

Full application of CDA requires the use of critical social analysis as well as linguistic analysis. In the case of this work, social analysis is framed within a Critical Disability Studies perspective which problematises the "ideological loadings" (Fairclough, 2011, p. 358) of dominant discourses of disability deployed in schools, especially their effects on teachers conceptualisation of team-teaching as a support to inclusion. The ability of the Dialectical-Relational model to incorporate Critical Disability Studies into its analytical framework, was a key reason for its adoption.

Finally, the treatment of context varies greatly between different approaches to CDA. We have already seen Wodak and VanDijk believe that social structures and discourse structures are connected through a social cognitive interface. For VanDijk, this means looking at the cognitive processes that take place in episodic memory which control the production and consumption of text. He believes that no connection between discourse and society can occur without these mental models (Van Dijk, 2009; Wodak, 1996). However, the mental models within which teachers represented students deemed to have disability were not a primary concern to this work. Rather, it focussed on the power relations embedded in these discourses (Fairclough, 2001). Such phenomena were more fruitfully illuminated by Fairclough's model.

### **The Three-Tier Approach to Analysing Discourse within the Dialectical-Relational Model**

For Fairclough (2003), discourse is an irreducible part of social life that is dialectically related to its non-discursive elements (Fairclough, 2003). While discursive and non-discursive elements are different they are not fully separate from each other. Rather they

combine dialectically to produce the social process (Fairclough, 2016). It is this feature that gives the Fairclough's Dialectical-Relational Approach its name. The idea that discursive and non-discursive elements of the social process are dialectically related is drawn from Halliday's Systemic Functional Linguistics theory (Halliday, 1988; Halliday & Hasan, 1989). In this view, the analyst must consider both discourses and the social events, practices and structures within which they acquire meaning, along with the relationship between the two, if she/he is to provide a comprehensive account of meaning-making.

To facilitate the dual analysis of discursive and non-discursive meaning-making, Fairclough proposes that "social process can be seen as the interplay between three levels of social reality: social structures, practices and events" (Fairclough, 2016, p. 88). At the most concrete level of social *events*, semiosis takes the form of texts and here social agents are free to configure semiosis or discourse in particular ways through their choice of words, grammar, cohesion and text structure. However, this can only be done within the constraints imposed by social *structures*. Social *structures* are very abstract entities that influence what is structurally possible to express. For example, the things we say are limited by the structural properties of the language we speak or membership of a particular social group (Fairclough, 2003). Fairclough (2003) believes that the relationship between the structural possibilities for expression and what *actually* express in social *events*, is highly complex and determined by intermediate organising entities that he calls social *practices*, different types of social elements that work together to control the structural possibilities for expression. He asserts that at this intermediate level, there is an "over-determination of language by other social elements", in other words, linguistic variation is highly socially controlled by social factors (Fairclough, 2016, p. 24). As an irreducible element of the social process discourse works dialectically across all three levels of this process.

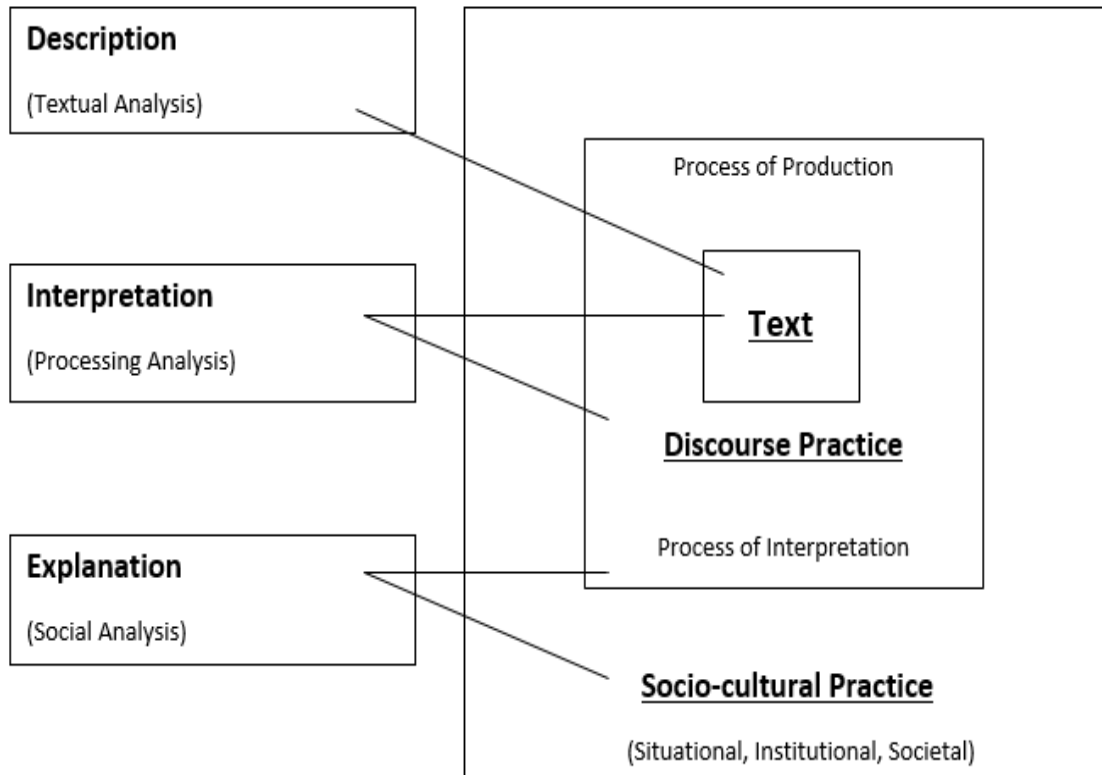
Applying this view of the social process, Fairclough (1992) asserts that any instance of discourse (or semiosis) comprises a '*discursive event*' that can be analysed across three dimensions:

1. As text
2. As discursive practice
3. As an instance of socio-cultural practice

These elements comprise the main dimensions of Fairclough's three-dimensional approach to CDA, which will now be explained. The diagram below is an adaptation of a graphic produced by Fairclough (2001). It represents the various levels at which analysis

must be carried out when using his approach and how the goals of analysis change to reflect the changing role of discourse at each level (see Figure 1).

**Figure 1: Schematic of Fairclough’s Approach to Critical Discourse Analysis**



Adapted from Fairclough (2001, p. 21)

### Analysis of Text

The first goal of the critical discourse analyst is to *describe* the “formal features” of the text; those features “from which discourses are realised linguistically” (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002, p. 69). This kind of textual analysis focused on describing how things are actually said, including how propositions were structured, combined and sequenced to represent disability and the grammatical and semiotic choices made by participants to do so. Analysis here occurs at the level of *words* and how they were configured. Fairclough (1995) organised this process under four headings, moving from small to bigger linguistic units:

- Vocabulary or lexis deals mainly with individual words: word choice, word meaning, patterns in vocabulary, metaphor
- Grammar deals with words combined into clauses and sentences, especially sequencing of information, passive and active position and voice, use of modal verbs, nominalisation, transitivity, modality



- Cohesion, syntax and sentence coherence deals with how clauses and sentences are linked together, using, for example certain conjunctions or synonyms
- Text structure deals with large scale organisational properties of text that frame it, for example, problem-solution or cause-effect structures. It also refers to things like turn-taking and interactional control, sentence length and complexity, etc.

In describing the grammatical resources that constitute these relations, Fairclough (2003) recommends asking basic questions such as: Who produced the text? Who is the audience? What motivated its production / consumption? What exactly is being said? What are key features of how it is produced/interpreted? What is the text type?

The above headings and questions were used within this work to analyse the transcribed texts of team-teaching meetings deployed to support the inclusion of students deemed to have disabilities. While attention was paid to text features on an on-going basis, for example, to see what words were used to describe learners deemed to have disability and how these were co-located with others, initial attempts at discrete analysis of these things, using MAXQDA software (VERBI Software, 2019) revealed little. As we will see shortly the subsection entitled “Establishing a Starting Point for Analysis” below, the entry point for analysis in this work was discursive practice. Textual analysis was used in tandem with this and with socio-cultural practice rather than as a discrete set of procedures on its own. Such an approach is entirely congruent with the methodological injunctions of the Dialectical-Relational approach, which encourage the researcher to move recursively between one level of analysis and another. In particular, it encourages discursive analysis to build on textual analysis, but broaden this out to at how meaning is made in production, consumption and distribution of texts.

### **Analysis of Discursive Practices: Genre, Discourse and Style**

The second goal of CDS is to *interpret* the configuration of discourse practices evident in a discursive event (Fairclough, 2001). For Fairclough (1995, p. 60), “discursive practice straddles the division between society and culture on the one hand, and discourse, language and text on the other”. As alluded to briefly above, it builds on textual analysis but tries to interpret the ways in which text becomes meaningful through the processes by which it is produced, reproduced, distributed and interpreted. It focuses on how “authors of texts draw on already existing discourses and genres to create a new text and ... how receivers of texts also apply available discourses and genres in the consumption and interpretation of ... texts” (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002, p. 69). A key objective of this work, for example, was on how teachers drew on ready-made discourses

relating to disability and how their deployment of these influenced their conceptualisations of team-teaching as a support to students placed in the disability category.

Fairclough's ideas about discourse practices are based on Halliday's Systemic Functional Linguistics approach to textual analysis (Halliday, 1978, 1988, 1994; Halliday & Hasan, 1989). For Halliday (1978), language is shaped by its social functions, which he believes can be listed as *ideational*, in that it functions to represent phenomena; *interpersonal*, in that it is used enact social relations between people and insert attitudes and evaluations into their exchanges; and *textual*, in that it links discourse to the co-text and context in which it occurs; connecting parts of text together and creating coherent units of meaning.

Instead of talking about the *functions* of language, Fairclough refers to the major *types of meaning* produced by semiosis, which he calls "*representation*", "*action*", "and "*identification*" (Fairclough, 2003, p. 27). Representation corresponds to the Halliday's *ideational* function. Action is closest to Halliday's *interpersonal* function, "though it puts more emphasis on text as a way of (inter)acting in social events" and incorporates social relations (Fairclough, 2003 p. 27). Fairclough does not propose a discrete *textual* function. Rather he incorporates aspects of this into a function that he refers to as *action*. He also adds a category called *identification*, which includes much of what Halliday had assigned to the interpersonal function (Fairclough, 2003).

For Fairclough, action, representation and identification represent the three main types of meaning-making within texts (Fairclough, 2003); they are the major ways in which semiosis relates to other elements social practices and events (Fairclough, 2016). *Action*, is to do with social relations and "actions on others" or relations of power; *representation* is to do with knowledge and "control over things"; *identification* is to do with relations with oneself as an ethical and "moral subject" (Fairclough, 2003, p. 28). These three do not operate discretely but dialectically in that each internalises the other. However, Fairclough, believes that it is useful to distinguish them for analytical purposes and to focus on their semiotic or discursive features (Fairclough, 2003, 2016). He proposes three semiotic categories that corresponding to the three types of meaning proposed. He calls these genre, discourse and style respectively. By far the greatest part of the analysis carried out by this work, focuses on interpreting discursive practice, with an entire chapter devoted to investigating each type of meaning-making (genre, discourse and style) and one devoted to how these were articulated together as orders of discourse and applied to conceptualising team-teaching as a support to inclusion. The following sub-sections outline how each type of meaning-making was analysed.

## Analysis of Genres

Genres are particular “ways of (inter)acting discursively [*sic*]” (Fairclough, 2003, p. 26). For Rose (2012), a genre represents a “recurrent configuration of meanings, which enact the social practices of a culture”. They are types of social interaction that use particular language and language structures, in particular ways. They represent an important, if sometimes less visible and less researched type of meaning-making within discourse. Examples of genres are newspaper editorials, lectures, television advertisements, internet pages, business meetings and wedding speeches. The form and function of each genre works to either enable or constrain particular types of meaning-making and does this in ways that reflect the social relations being enacted between participants (Luke, 1997; Bhatia, 2012). They act as scripts that guide how social practices are enacted in particular social settings. Genres become highly “conventionalised” over time within particular social practices and are “important in sustaining the institutional structure of contemporary society” (Fairclough, 2003, p. 32).

For Fairclough (2003, p. 70), the “individual genres of a text” can be analysed in terms of

- Activity
- Social relations
- Communicative technologies

Since the team-teaching meetings were held in face-to-face settings, there was no need to consider the how the affordances of communicative technologies affected meaning-making. Rather he

1. Examined the full transcript of each team-teaching meeting in terms of the activities to which it contributed and the social relations that were enacted within it.
2. Then looked across all of the transcripts pertaining to each individual case study site.
3. Then looked across those of all the cases to see what was the same or different about how the genres of team-teaching meetings influenced the types of meaning-making that went on in these in relation to learners deemed to have disability.

### **Analysis of the Activity of Team-Teaching Meetings.**

Because genres are thought to comprise “a class of communicative events, the members of which share some set of communicative purposes” (Swales, 1990 p. 58), initial analysis of *activity* focused on participants’ shared sense of communicative purpose around team-teaching meetings. To gain insight into this the author looked at a number of features,

including the types of linguistic exchanges that occurred. He also looked at whether meetings adhered to a particular genre structure and, if so, whether this structure was rigid and worked to constrain possibilities for meaning-making about disability, or whether it was flexible and hence open to a variety of representations of disability.

Fairclough (2003), describes a semiotic exchange as:

“a sequence of two or more conversational ‘turns’ or ‘moves’ with alternating speakers, when the occurrence of move one leads to the expectation of move two, and so forth, with the proviso that the ‘expected’ does not always occur” (p. 106).

He proposes two types of exchange: knowledge exchange and activity exchange. Knowledge exchanges are to do with exchange of information or making factual and other claims. Activity exchanges are oriented towards doing non-textual things or getting things done. Knowledge exchanges are divided into knower-initiated knowledge exchanges and other-initiated knowledge exchanges. Knower-initiated knowledge exchanges are initiated by the person who possessed the knowledge being interacted. Other-initiated knowledge exchanges are initiated by the person who wishes to acquire particular knowledge from others. Similarly, activity exchanges can be subdivided into actor-initiated exchanges which are initiated by a person offering to perform an action, and other-initiated exchanges which are initiated by a person requesting that an action be performed by another. This gives us the following categories by which to analyse the types of exchange that occurred in team-teaching meetings, and hence the types of semiotic activity that went on there:

- knowledge exchange
  - knower-initiated
  - other-initiated
- activity exchange
  - actor-initiated
  - other-initiated

The idea of genre structure or “staging” goes along with that of communicative purpose (Fairclough, 2003, p. 72). Staging refers to the sequence in which elements of a discursive interaction occurs. Swales (1990) developed a *move and step* analysis of staging, “where each element performs a ... specific function, which serves the overall communicative purpose of the genre” (Koester & Handford, 2012, p. 252). This is a useful way to map the sequence in which the discursive interactions of team-teaching meetings occurred. By orienting texts towards particular communicative purposes, their genre structure becomes more evident. The general point here is that the more rigid the generic

structure of a set of interactions becomes, the greater is the degree of social control exercised over semiotic variability for meaning-making about particular phenomena. Analysis of both communicative purpose and staging were used in this work to give insight into the “discursive goings-on” of team-teaching meetings about disability and the degree of social control exercised over meaning-making processes in this connection.

### **Analysis of Social Relations of Team-Teaching Meetings.**

As forms of interaction, genres also facilitate the enactment of particular social relations between social agents, including relations of power. Use of the term *social agents* here, refers not only to individuals, but also groups and organisations, such as schools, local educational authorities and governments (Fairclough, 2003 p. 75). Scollon (1999) asserts that “any social encounter ... has as its ongoing highest priority to position the participants ... in relationship to each other”. In the case of team-teaching meetings, emphasis was placed on the social relations enacted between the teachers involved. Drawing on Brown and Gilman (1960), Fairclough (2003) proposes that social relations vary in two dimensions; power (or social hierarchy) and solidarity (or social proximity). He suggests that one way to analyse activity in these dimensions is to set the genre of particular texts against a “co-operative and egalitarian template” in which they are distributed equitably amongst discourse participants (Fairclough, 2003). Schematically, Fairclough (2003) suggests that, within meetings in which power is equally distributed, people can reasonably expect to:

1. Take turns
2. Use turns to act in various ways (e.g. to ask questions, make requests, complain)
3. Speak without interruption
4. Select and change topics
5. Offer interpretations or summaries of what has been said (p. 79)

However, Fairclough (2003) also acknowledges that inequities often exist in how these things are actually exercised within particular social practices, which he ascribes to unequal power relations. This analysis of the genre of team-teaching meetings also focused on the use of turns and how these were used to interrupt, suggest, confirm, contradict or clarify propositions. Particular emphasis was given to features that contributed alternatively to the development of commonality and acceptance of difference about disability (solidarity), or that accentuated difference (power and social hierarchy). For example, the use of personal pronouns (‘we’) was scrutinised, as was the use of categorical or impersonalised representations of social actors (‘the teacher’, ‘students’, ‘they’), imperatives (‘they had better’, ‘they should’), transitivity (‘it is expected that’) or pre-supposition (‘given that’) to increase or decrease social distance? The researcher looked for evidence of patterns in the

use of turns across the full transcript of each meeting, then across each set of transcripts associated with a particular setting, then across all transcripts. His findings of genre analysis are presented in Chapter 6.

### **Analysis of Discourses**

The second type of meaning-making proposed by Fairclough that occurs within discourse practice was *discourse*. Discourse refers to the “semiotic ways of construing aspects of the world (physical, social or mental) which can generally be identified with different positions or perspectives of different groups of social actors” (Fairclough, 2013, p. 4). A key objective of this study was to identify and problematise teachers’ representations of learners deemed to have disability within team-teaching discussions. It used a two-part approach to do this (Fairclough, 2003). Firstly, ‘the ... parts of the world represented’ or the ‘main themes’ in a discourse used by teachers to represent learners deemed to have disability were identified (Fairclough, 2003, p. 129). Secondly, the discursive perspectives from which these themes were deployed were established (Fairclough, 2003).

Rather than analysing every instance of where students deemed to have a disability were constituted in discourse, it was decided to focus on all instances in which a single learner deemed to have disabilities was represented in discourse within each case study. It was hoped that this approach would give insight into the discourses from which teachers at each site drew as they represented all learners deemed to have disability. Data collected and analysed later in the work in relation to *style* was used to triangulate and affirm that this was the case (see Chapter 8).

For reliability, it was decided to choose the student deemed to have disability at each case study site, in relation to whom the greatest amount of discussion occurred within transcripts. This had a number of advantages. Since the instance of students assessed as having disability varied between the team-teaching initiatives studied, it helped to ensure equitable comparison between sites within this multiple case-study design. It also ensured that the study focused on the students deemed to have disability who were likely to be uppermost in the minds of the teachers concerned. Finally, it ensured there would be a sufficient volume of text for reliable analysis of how disability discourse was deployed across each series of meetings at each site and how this was negotiated and changed over time.

To select a student in each school, the author used a search function within MAXQDA (VERBI Software, 2019) to enumerate the amount of times teachers used the names of each student deemed to have disability within transcripts. Taking the top three students in each case, he extracted the text that related to these discussions and performed

a word count on these. This allowed him to identify the learner about whom most discussion occurred in each case. For a summary of all of the data used to affect these choices, see Appendix H.

All of the instances of discourse across each meeting, that related either explicitly or implicitly to the chosen student at each site, was gathered into a single document for that students and coded within MAXQDA (VERBI Software, 2019). This involved engaging in multiple *readings* of the documents, and using a grounded theory approach (Glasser & Strauss, 1967; Miles & Huberman, 1984). During this process the themes that emerged were refined and reworked, code names were modified and different codes were collapsed or separated out. The final set of themes was then analysed to try to ascertain the broader discursive perspective from which discourse relating to these was deployed, if any. In light of discussions outlined in Chapters 2, 3 and 4 relating to the colonisation of inclusive education by positivist epistemologies, a key focus was placed on the degree to which teachers drew on essentialist or non-essentialist discourses to represent students deemed to have disability. Finally, the ways in which teachers represented learners deemed to have disability across cases was analysed, with particular attention to the types of representation that dominated this process. The findings of this analysis are set out in Chapter 7.

In linguistic terms, analysis of representation involves focusing on the semiotic features of texts that “allow us to place people in the social world and to highlight certain aspects of identity we wish to draw attention to or omit” (Machin & Mayr, 2012, p. 77). Since this work focuses on how students deemed to have disability were construed (Fairclough, 2013), the first level of this analysis involved looking at how teachers chose “to lexicalize [*sic*]” these learners “in particular ways” (Fairclough, 2003, p. 129). This included analysis of the predominance of particular words and the co-location of pairs or groups of words. It also included analysis of how these learners were named or classified (Fairclough, 2003). For this the work used Van Leeuwen's (1996) inventory of classification strategies and the ideological effects of these. This inventory looks, for example, at whether social actors are represented in personalised or impersonalised ways, individually or collectively, specifically or generically (using a category), or by name or function (e.g. “Junior Certificate students”). Van Leeuwen (1996) also suggests that looking at whether or not people were objectivated, anonymised, aggregated into vague groups (e.g. “some people”) or suppressed within or omitted from texts also has ideological effects. In many cases, rather than setting up new semantic relations such as these, discourse users draw on “pre-constructed classificatory schemes or systems of classification” (Caldas-Coulthard, 1994, p. 130) associated with particular discourses and ideologies (for example, as patients, students with special needs, dyslexics, the disabled). Van Dijk (1993) calls the use of pre-constructed schemes

“ideological squaring”. Since a key concern of the current research was the degree to which teachers drew on already-constructed discourses of disability to represent students deemed to have disability in their team-taught classes, the researcher was particularly attentive to this form of classification.

People can also be discursively represented according to the grammatical *role* in which they are placed, for example, as actor or acted upon. Their grammatical *positioning* within clauses or sentences can also have ideological effects on how they are represented. Placing actions later in sentences or embedding them in less prominent clause, can play down their agency and significance. Putting them in the first position gives them extra prominence. In addition, Richardson (2007) argues that, in providing context for dominant clauses, prepositional phrases (containing the preposition “for”, “at”, or “after”) have the effect of reducing the responsibility for social actors for their actions. Finally, the level of abstraction assigned to actions affects how they are represented. Thus, when actions are generalised or phrased in non-specific ways, their detail is obscured and responsibility for them is elided, for example, in the phrase “staff are encouraged to make every effort to include children with disabilities”. In this statement, no detail of what precisely is required is supplied. These statements are often used with “what is actually done” is less important than giving the appearance that something is being done (Machin & Mayr, 2012, p. 115).

Social actors can also be represented through the degree to which they are depicted as participating in social action (Machin & Mayr, 2012). Hence, this work attended to who was given a subject, agent or participant position and who was characterised as the object or person affected by a particular social action (e.g. the disabled student). It also looked at how text-makers conceal or texture their representations of who was the subject or object of social actions, who was imbued with agency, and who was depicted as playing a passive role relative to others. For example, the agency of social actors can be elided through representing either them or their actions in relatively abstract ways that are generalised, non-specific, or offer little detail. Similarly, social actors can be characterised in terms of the degree to which positive or negative characteristics or processes are associated with them. Further, they can be implicitly characterised by the reactions that are attributed to them or by failing to specify reactions that might be expected of them, for example, in order to conceal their agency or responsibility.

Certain forms of argumentation and rhetoric can position clauses in particular causal, comparative, or contrastive relations to portray people in particular ways. The researcher was mindful of such strategies and how they were used by teachers to position learners and other social actors as more or less powerful, culpable or deserving.



Transitivity can also be used to attribute agency to some social actors and to elide that of others. Transitivity is the degree to which social processes are depicted as involving a transaction of some kind. Halliday (1985) suggest six verb types or processes which attribute different degrees of agency to social actions, and hence, actors. These indicate whether actions are thought to have material or purely behavioural consequences, whether they occur at the mental or verbal level, whether they are like or unlike other phenomena, or whether they just refer to the existence of something, without giving ascribing any consequences to it whatsoever. Those portrayed as agents are usually attributed with material or verbal process types. Individuals or groups not involved in such processes are represented as weak agents (Halliday, 1985). The current study was mindful of these verb processes used to imbue students deemed to have disability with agency, or not.

Agency or power can also be ascribed to social actors through “the way in which people are represented as speaking” (Machin & Mayr, 2012, p. 57). Quoting verbs can be used in ways that, not only reports what others have said, but also allow the reporter to attribute status, meaning and interpretation to this, without explicitly signalling this to the text consumer. For example, “Mark said” connotes a very different message than “Mark grumbled”. Quoting verbs can also be used to signify broader discourses, ideas and values without overtly articulating these (Machin & Mayr, 2012). Caldas-Coulthard (1994, pp. 305-306) give a systematic breakdown of quoting verbs that became the basis of analysis of their use within the texts studied by this work. Neutral structuring verbs report what was said without evaluating it (e.g. “he said”, “told”, “asked”). Metapositional verbs mark the author’s *interpretation* of what the speaker said. Metalinguistic verbs specify the *kind* language they used (e.g. “grumbled”). Descriptive verbs characterise the *type* of interaction in which the speaker spoke, (e.g. “whispered”). Transcript verbs relate the quotation to other parts of the discourse (e.g. “she added” or “he continued”). All of these were referred to during analysis of the texts of team-teaching meetings studied.

Nominalisation is the grammatical transformation of a process into a noun construction. For example, we can change the phrase “the students were excluded” to “the exclusion of students” and, in the process, remove all sense of agency from it. While the action remains, all sense of agency is removed. Rather than remaining a verb, “exclusion” now becomes a noun we can now point to, describe, classify and qualify to create nominal groups such as the excluded or those in danger of exclusion. Thus “the exclusion of students” becomes a unit for discussion, in which all agency is removed the interests of some become remote. Nominalisation can be used to portray some social actors as agentic and others as incapable of action. Again, analysis of nominalisation as a discursive strategy was incorporated into analysis.

Finally, adjuncts are thought to exercise “a significant impact upon the actors” status as social agents” (Machin & Mayr, 2012, p. 113). Adjuncts are optional parts of a clause or sentence that add extra meaning to it but, if discarded, do not affect its structure. For example, in the sentence, “They waited outside the principal’s office for ages!” the adjunct “for ages” adds meaning to “waited”, without affecting the structure of the sentence. Adjuncts add qualifications to the agency of social actors that make them seem central or peripheral to a given social action. For example, teachers can be described as having a key responsibility for educational assessment *processes* rather than a key responsibility for educational assessment. These were also included in analysis.

All of these features were attended to, both during the identification of themes and in determining the discursive perspectives of disability from which these were deployed. To help him attend to these discursive features of text, the researcher developed a set of eight questions that provided a framework for more fine-grained examination of excerpts that were deemed particularly significant in terms of representing students deemed to have disability. A copy of this can be found at Appendix I. As already noted, the findings of analysis of discourse or representational meanings that teachers used to construct learners deemed to have disability are reported in Chapter 7.

### **Analysis of Style**

Representations often depends on the “positions in the world” and the “social and personal identities, and the social relationships” of those who deploy them (Fairclough, 2003, p. 124), in other words matters of style. Styles “are identities, or ‘ways of being’, in their semiotic aspect” (Fairclough, 2013, p. 4). They refer to meanings that are created within social interactions as social agents enact particular identities within discourse practices. For example, when representing a learner, one can do so while enacting the identity of a teacher, parent, child, student or manager. How people identify or position themselves when representing aspects of the world can affect the meanings that are attached to these representations. Style represents the third major type of meaning-making proposed within the Dialectical-Relational model of CDS. It refers to ways of being and the creation of subjectivities.

In analysing style, the same excerpts selected for analysis in terms of discourse were examined to see what these say about the identification of people involved in meaning-making about students deemed to have disability. Analysis here focused on evaluative statements about what was good or bad, desirable or undesirable. It looked at how particular value positions drew on particular identities and historical understandings of disability and how they positioned text producers and consumers in this connection. For

example, it looked at how pronouns were used to position discourse participants in solidarity with or in opposition to particular social actors or actions.

Since language is about concealing as well as revealing, there are components of grammar that people use to hide or misdirect attention, including modality and hedging. Modality refers to the degree to which text producers commit themselves to particular truth claims and the levels of certainty with which they do so (Fairclough, 2003; Hodge & Kress, 1993). Analysis of modality gave the analyst a sense of the power discourse participants perceived they exerted within team-teaching meetings around meaning-making activities relating to disability. Textual markers of modality included the use of modal auxiliaries; verbs like *may*, *would*, *should*, *will* and *must*. They also include adjectives like *possible*, *probable*, and *certain*. The extent to which these were used to assert or deny a particular truth assertion about disability was analysed. Modals using high degrees of certainty are generally used to convince people, while modals expressing ambiguity can be used to protect the author from possible contradiction.

Hedging is where a speaker is less than direct in their communication or where they fail to commit whole-heartedly to an assertion, in order to give the impression of definitive input, while cushioning the speaker from possible adverse response to what they have said. People hedge through the use of terms such as *I think* or *kind of*. They pushed important information into subordinate clauses behind long noun phrases. They use modal verbs, such as *may* and *perhaps*, or auxiliary verbs such as *seem to* or modal adverbs such as *especially*. The use approximators, such as *some* and *somewhat* or the compounds of these, for example *to a somewhat lesser extent*. They also use factive verbs, such as *report*, *suggest* or comparative adverb, such as *more concerned than ever*. They qualify their statements by reference to other times, for example, *since last year* or *in 2011*. They reference official bodies, reports or experts. They add connectors, such as *while*, *although*, *nonetheless*, *moreover* to imply they is covering alternative explanations, when often they are not. They also use strategies such as excessive defining of terms and over-lexicalization, for example male nurse or female doctor to indicate that something deviates from social expectation or is ideologically contentious. The current study was mindful of all of these hedging strategies, when analysing how learners deemed to have disabilities were represented, to give insight into the style with which this occurred.

Examination of style also looked at how speakers use pre-suppositions to embed values into texts without any explicit reference to their use. Pre-suppositions are things that have not been said explicitly, but are assumed to have been said earlier in an utterance or elsewhere in an interaction. They usually form the basis for something that text-producers go

on to say. Routine examples can be found in statements such as, “Every reasonable person knows” or “The real issue here is”. It is basically impossible to avoid using presupposition when we produce text; we cannot constantly re/establish precisely what we mean in relation to each element of what we say. Rather we rely on shared and often value-laden presuppositions about these things that support particular ideological positions about them and build a basis for what sounds like a logical argument. Chapter 8 of this work reports on the findings of analysis of style.

### **Analysis of orders of discourse**

For Fairclough (2003) genre, discourse and style work together in relatively stable, identifiable and predictable ways within the process of producing and consuming texts, which he calls *orders of discourse* (Fairclough, 1995). He believes that analysis of the orders of discourse can assist with developing understandings of how social relations, including power relations, are reproduced and/or transformation with social interactions. Orders of discourse represent the semiotic ways in which discourse figures in social action (Fairclough, 2003, p. 26). They provide a conceptual space within which to consider how the semiotic and social aspects of social practices interact to produce material effects; for example, how language and power/knowledge interact in texts to produce oppression for students deemed to have disability.

The fourth phase of the analysis of discourse practices therefore, involved an examination of how genre, discourse and style were ordered together within the texts of the various team-teaching meetings studied, to control what was sayable or unsayable about students deemed to have disability. It also involved looking at how this ordering affected teachers conceptualisations of team-teaching as a support to the inclusion of these learners. This analysis was done at the level of each case and then across all of the cases to identify similarities and differences in the orders of discourse that pertained in and between schools.

### **Analysis of Socio-Cultural Practice**

The third goal of CDA is to use interpretations of how discourse use can *explain* “why and how social practices are constituted, changed and transformed in the ways that they are” (Rogers, Malancharuvil-Berkes, Mosley, Hui, & Joseph, 2005, p. 371). It looks at the wider social practices to which communicative events belong and tries to understand the relationship between specific texts (or group of texts) and the situational, institutional and societal contexts in which these were produced, interpreted and distributed (Fairclough, 1995). It is conducted at the level of societal norms, including the social practices, standards and structures within which texts are realised. It looks at what texts

say about society and what impact they have on the social relations that operate there (Fairclough, 1995). It asks whether “*discursive* practice reproduces or, instead, restructures the existing order of discourse and about what consequences this has for broader *social* practice” (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002, p. 69).

To give effect this broader level of analysis, the Dialectical-Relational approach suggests that socio-cultural theory are deployed in a “recursive-abductive” process that links these theories to discourse (Wodak & Meyer, 2015, p. 14). It proposes that the researcher should move back and forth between broader socio-cultural theory and empirical linguistic data to relate micro-level textual analysis to macro-level social analysis and *vice versa*. Critical Disability Studies provided the main basis for socio-cultural analysis in this work. Its deployment will provide the main basis for analysis set out in Chapter 10 around how disability was made socially and culturally meaningful in the schools concerned, how this affected teachers’ conceptualisations team-teaching, and how these conceptualisations affected the material conditions of learning for students deemed to have disability.

In interpreting social practices, Fairclough (2003) suggests asking questions such as: What is said in a discourse? What is not said? How many discourses are being drawn upon within a text? With whom do texts seek to build rapport? What does it define as a social problem? What explanations and solutions does it offer or ignore? Which discourses are privileged and which are not? Is there evidence of negotiation with / resistance to discourses within the text? Can the impact of deploying certain discourses be assessed? What access or lack of access is there to the discourse for insiders or outsiders? Is there a shift or break in the continuity of a discourse? What relationship is there between the discourses under study and conflict, hierarchies of credibility and power relations?

### **Establishing a Starting Point for Analysis**

Janks (1997) suggests that it “is easier to capture the interdependence of Fairclough’s boxes if one thinks of them three-dimensionally, as boxes nesting one inside the other”. This allows the researcher to appreciate that any “analytic move to examine a single box necessarily breaks the interdependence between the boxes and requires subsequent moves which re-insert that box into its interconnected place” (Janks, 1997, p. 330). This is congruent with Wodak & Meyer’s (2015) suggestion that the analyst should move constantly in an abductive way between all three dimensions. Thus, “any one box ... has to be seen as a relatively arbitrary place from which to begin” (Janks, 1997). Janks (1997, p. 329) asserts that this is a key feature of the Dialectical-Relational Approach, it allow for “multiple points of analytic entry”. It does not matter whether one begins at the level

of text, discursive practice, or socio-cultural practice, “as long as in the end they are all included and are shown to be mutually explanatory” (Janks, 1997).

Since this work was particularly interested in how disability discourses affected teachers’ conceptualisations of team-teaching, it chose the level of discursive practice as its entry point for analysis. It began by looking at how genre, discourse and style were articulated together in orders of discourse to control the semiotic possibilities for meaning-making about disability within team-teaching meetings. It drew on textual analysis to emphasise the linguistic devices and strategies used within these practices before moving abductively to develop a socio-cultural analysis (using Critical Disability Studies theory) of the influence of dominant disability discourse on the learning of those deemed to have disability within team-teaching contexts.

### **Criticisms of Critical Discourse Analysis**

While it is clear that CDA is now “part of the intellectual landscape” of research and is “widely used to denote a recognisable approach to language study” (Breeze, 2011, p. 493), it is not without its critics and limitations. Some have argued that in its movement towards “respectability” (Breeze, 2011, p. 518), CDA has taken on the status of an academic *brand* (Billig, 2002) and become part of the power structure of academia. Breeze (2011, p. 518) warns that, as such, it is in danger of becoming “as inflexible, dogmatic and exclusive as other orthodoxies of the past”. Blommaert (2005) sees this orthodoxy as essentially Western-centric, First World-centric, and failing to pay sufficient attention to texts outside of these societies.

Others have suggested that the term *critical* has been used in such a multiplicity of ways that it has lost its intellectual precision and resulted in a lack of cohesion within CDA (Hammersley, 1997; Breeze, 2011). Widdowson (1995, p. 169) suggests that the unquestioning commitment of CDA to the critical paradigm, has caused it to select “for analysis such texts as will support the preferred interpretation”. He argues that analysis should involve several interpretations of data, a process that is not possible within CDA. Hammersley (1997) reminds us that many the mechanistic Marxist ideas on which CDA relies, are now considered deficient, especially since the revisions wrought of these by Adorno and Hochheimer. Breeze (2011, p. 497) contrasts CDA’s structuralist orientation, based on the theories of the Frankfurt School, Gramsci, Habermas, and Bourdieu, with the “inherently destabilising relativist message” of Foucault. He wonders how these two positions can be reconciled. Hammersley (1997) criticises CDA’s claims to a superior understanding of the workings of society on the basis of its self-reflexive qualities, and suggests that many CDA researchers pay scant attention to the reflexive aspect of their

work, a failing that this work will seek to redress. The latter sections of this chapter and those of the concluding chapters will attend to issues of reflexivity.

CDA has also been criticised for paying insufficient attention to language theory (Widdowson, 1998, 2005) and linguistic analysis (Stubbs, 1997; Toolan, 1997; Verschueren, 2001; Breeze, 2011). For example, Breeze (2011, p. 503) has suggested that CDA often focuses “randomly” or “intuitively” on particular grammatical features of text, while ignore other aspects of text that may contain contradictory data. Widdowson (1998) urges CDA to adopt a more critical attitude to its own purposes, methods, practices and procedures, and to ensure that these are more systematically applied and replicable. With this in mind, the current work sought to provide sufficient explicit detail about its linguistic and social elements, to make it methodology as comprehensible and replicable as possible.

Many researchers, including CDA practitioners themselves (Caldas-Coulthard & Coulthard, 1996; Kress & Van Leeuwen, 1996; Martin, 1992), have criticised the tendency of CDA to observe distasteful social phenomena and to produce persuasive analyses of why they are oppressive, while failing to suggest practical remedial action for these. As a response to this, Martin (2004) proposed the used of Positive Discourse Analysis as a way for scholars to identify spaces where emancipatory and transformative discourses can emerge. Similarly, Luke (2002) exhorts CDA scholars to look beyond ideological critique to an identification of where productive power can be used “to demonstrate what ‘should be’ as well as what is problematic” (Luke, 2002, p. 98). In response to these suggestions, the concluding sections of this work will provide an identification of instances where oppressive use of disability discourse was challenged or resisted, and offer an analysis of how these might be used to develop conceptualisations of team-teaching that are more congruent with the principles of inclusive education.

Finally, Breeze (2011) criticises CDA for analysing texts outside their social and intertextual contexts, which he feels can result in findings that are predicated more on conviction than analysis. Others have also criticised CDA for not taking enough account of the social context of the texts studied (Schegloff, 1997; Widdowson, 1998; Verschueren, 2001; Breeze, 2011). Schegloff (1997) argues that this can lead to insufficient linking of discursive elements to issues of power and domination and an insufficient binding of critical analysis to data. It is anticipated that the deployment of CDA within a multiple case study research design, which mandates the collection of detailed data on the contexts in which the texts are produced and consumed, will address this issue sufficiently.

## 5.5 Data Sources

Fairclough's approach to critical analysis of discourse is a text-oriented one (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002). For Fairclough (2003), texts are the primary unit of analysis for making sense of the workings of knowledge/power. He uses the term text to refer to the semiotic dimensions of social events; events which are themselves shaped by social agents on the one hand, and social structures and practices on the other (Fairclough, 2003). Texts are seen as graspable representations of discourses (Lemke, 1995) that are produced and consumed by social participants as they engage in both explicit and implicit meaning-making within social practices (Fairclough, 2003). As Lemke (1995) puts it, when we want to focus on the specifics of an event we speak of text, when we want to look at the relationship within and between texts and events we speak of discourses.

Text are thought to contain within them the structures, institutional markings and relations of power of those who produce, consume and distribute them (Fairclough, 2003). They also have material effects in that they are acted upon, according to the interpretations of their users and the rules and norms that govern this process. It is in texts that meanings are formed, assigned and grouped into the larger systems of understanding and acting (Weninger, 2008). Over the longer term, texts are thought to shape the identities and subjectivities of their producers and consumers (Weninger, 2008).

This research was interested in identifying and problematising the discourses that dominated teachers' constructions of students deemed to have disability. It was also interested in how these influenced teachers' conceptualisations of team-teaching as a support to the inclusion of learners thought to have disability. Such an explication depended on the selection of texts that contained empirical evidence of the production, consumption and of distribution of disability discourse and the application of this to team-teaching in post-primary schools.

This study investigated the use of discourse within team-teaching initiatives, each operating within one of three different purposively-chosen post-primary schools. In each case the team-teaching initiative concerned was explicitly set up to support the inclusion of learners deemed to have disability. In the case of each initiative, three team-teaching meetings held over the course of one academic year were observed by the researcher, who audio-recorded the meeting and took field notes on this. Meetings usually lasted for about 40 minutes or one class period. Audio-recordings were then transcribed by the researcher and member-checked their content and accuracy with the participants within a few days of their occurrence. These texts became the primary source of data for analysis of discourse about disability within the meetings concerned.



Team-teaching meetings were chosen as a useful source of data, because they had some unique affordances. Firstly, their focus on classes containing students deemed to have disability increased the likelihood that they would contain evidence of teachers use of discourse relating to these learners. The nature and purpose of these meetings, and their dialogic structure, made it highly likely that both team-teachers would share information, ideas, opinions and beliefs about these students and respond (usually in the affirmative) to the contributions of their colleagues.

Secondly, their dyadic nature and the minimal level to which the researcher was involved in them (except as an observer, the methodological implications of which will be discussed later), gave them a naturalistic, almost conversational, quality that was of interest to this research. Naturalistic interactions are more useful to CDA, since they retain the structural features of teachers' typical use of discourse, and allow analysis of these, along with the institutional markings and relations of power that pertain to them (Fairclough, 2003).

Thirdly, the fact that team-teaching meetings were held in, and focused on teachers in their own social, institutional and cultural surroundings, increased their analytic suitability in this regard. Structural analysis of this kind necessarily involves analysis of the genre of the team-teaching meetings, which worked along with other elements of the social process, to control the semiotic resources available to teachers to create meaning about disability, and hence team-teaching for inclusion. It was important to look closely at the apparently informal tone and structures of team-teaching meetings, to see if these concealed rigid participant structures that limited options for meaning-making in relation to these concepts.

Fourthly, it was essential that the author was able to capture examples of disability discourse relating to instances of authentic team-teaching targeted at the inclusion of students placed in the disability category. Otherwise no link between deployment of discourse and conceptualisations of team-teaching could be investigated. A focus on authentic incidents of team-teaching was likely to reveal forms of disability discourse that were regularly applied in the schools studied and the complex and nuanced dynamics that surrounded this process. It was also likely to reveal the relative positions of individual teachers around their used of disability discourse.

Each of these features made team-teaching meetings highly suitable sites for data collection and analysis. Since these were generally dialogic in nature, the mode of transcription used to record them reflected this quality; each complete teacher turn was recorded in a single unit in sequence. It was hoped that this form of transcription would assist with the *move and step* analysis of genre (Swales, 1990) anticipated in the early

phases of critical discourse analysis, especially the analysis of communicative purpose (Fairclough, 2003; Koester & Handford, 2012).

## **5.6 Piloting the Research Instruments**

To ensure that the data collection instruments chosen were fit for purpose, they were piloted in a purposively chosen school during April and May of 2015. The school concerned was an urban community college, set in an area of disadvantage and holding DEIS Band 1 status. It was known to the researcher for its commitment to team-teaching for over twenty years and was a school in which he has previously worked for number of years. It was selected primarily because of its extensive experience of team-teaching and because of the researcher's on-going professional relationship with its teachers, in his capacity as a teacher educator. It was hoped that these qualities would allow for greater, and perhaps more candid and informal levels of feedback to the researcher on the efficacy of his research instruments, than might have occurred in a school that was unknown to him. The depth and quality of the feedback he received led him to believe that this decision was justified.

The principal participated in the trialling of the semi-structure interview for principals and gave detailed feedback on this. She also provided policy documents for scrutiny by the researcher that allowed him to pilot the analysis of these, giving feedback and clarification in this connection. Two experienced team-teachers who were scheduled to team-teach together during the 2015-16 academic year, also helped the author to trial the schedule of questions devised for teachers' semi-structured interviews. The teachers involved in the pilot study also allowed the researcher to sit in on and record a sample team-teaching meeting. They also allowed themselves to be interviewed in relation to their participation in the meeting and semi-structured interview in which they participated, and they supplied feedback on their perceptions of the effectiveness of these. All of this feedback was recorded in writing by the author and has been retained by him for this lifetime of this study.

## **5.7 Timing and Sequencing of Data Collection**

All data was gathered on-site within schools, with the exception of information elicited from school websites. Pertinent policy documents were collected and collated in Late August/ Early September 2015. School website information was also collected and semi-structured interviews with principals held at this time. The idea was to hold interviews with busy principals before the school year began and when they might have more time to reflect on and respond to questions posed. Semi-structured interview with a principal lasted for approximately 40 minutes.

The timing of team-teaching meetings was decided by each teaching dyad in conjunction with the researcher. Teachers were asked to hold a minimum of three meetings during the year. It was suggested that suitable dates might be chosen in late September 2015, March 2016 and May 2016, though ultimately this was left entirely to the team-teachers concerned. The researcher attended and audio-recorded each team-teaching meeting, most of which lasted for approximately one class period.

Most of the one-to-one interviews with teachers were held during the months of May and June 2016, in other words, towards the end of the year in which data collection occurred. This was to allow the research scope to explore or clarify with teachers, issues that arose during the principal interviews and during meetings. Most lasted for between forty minutes and one hour. Each transcript was transcribed by the researcher within a week or so of the team-teaching meeting or interview concerned. Each transcript was then sent to each person involved in the meeting or interview with a cover letter inviting them to review, verify, provide clarification to or add to its contents (see Appendix G).

## **5.8 Ethical considerations**

Tier 2 ethical approval was granted by the Social Research Ethics Subcommittee of Maynooth University in May 2015, having satisfied all requirements laid down by the university. Tier 2 ethical approval relates to research involving adults (with the exception of those identified *vulnerable*) where the material is of a non-sensitive nature or involving non-routine but standardised educational or psychological testing, in which the anonymity of participants is guaranteed<sup>1</sup>. The study also conforms to British Educational Research Association (2011).<sup>2</sup>

### **Ethical Issues around Participants**

The procedures for selecting participants have already been outlined. Signed consent forms were received from all participants, a copy of which has been retained by the researcher and each participant. On-going oral consent was also sought in the days coming up to each interview or meeting. In addition, *member checks* were carried out by telephone in the two days after each research event to ensure that participants were happy with the conduct and tone of these events and to ensure that no issue had emerged that caused participants stress or concern. Similarly, participants were given the transcript of each meetings when drafted, usually within one week of the event. This was accompanied by a

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.maynoothuniversity.ie/research/research-development-office/research-ethics>.

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.bera.ac.uk/researchers-resources/publications/bera-ethical-guidelines-for-educational-research-2011>

letter inviting participants to review the transcript to confirm its accuracy, to correct anything they considered inaccurate and to check that their input had been properly represented (see Appendix E). They were also invited to clarify anything said during meetings that they wished to clarify or add further to, or to append any note to the transcripts before returning them. A stamped and addressed envelope was provided for their convenience in this connection. Similar arrangements were put in place for the transcripts of all semi-structured interviews, whether with teachers or principals.

### **Data Handling and Storage**

Data was recorded on electronic devices, the files for which were transferred to a password protected and encrypted laptop in the days immediately following the recording of interviews or meetings. Original recordings were then deleted from recording devices. Identification keys for anonymised data were held in hard copy in a separate and secure location, away from the data itself. Towards the final stages of the research, participants were provided with a summary of the analysis, highlighting (in a general manner, contextualised with existing research) key issues and recommendations for the school. These findings were presented in a way that did not identify participants or schools. Each participant was offered an opportunity to have findings presented to them by the author and discussed with them, and to have their reactions recorded anonymously within the study. All data recorded, including the author's observations, records and field notes, were kept in a locked filing cabinet when not in use. When they were being worked on, every care was taken to ensure they remained confidential to the author. Since, in exceptional circumstances data and records may be accessed through the courts, participants were informed of this from the outset in the Plain Language Statement provided (see Appendix D). In line with Maynooth University research integrity guidelines, participants were also informed that all data relating to this study would be kept for a period of ten years from the date of its publication, before being destroyed, along with any identifiers.

### **Risks to Participants**

No serious risks to participants were anticipated and as the study transpired, none were detected. However, the researcher remained vigilant throughout that his presence, especially during team-teaching meetings, did not cause concern or discomfort to participants. This was achieved through positioning himself in as peripheral and passive a way as possible within the meetings concerned and being careful to remain as quiet, still and unobtrusive as possible during interactions, so as to interfere with that natural rhythms of talk and interaction that characterised these events.

At times, it was necessary for teachers to talk about individual students assessed as having disabilities. They were also asked to supply data regarding the number of students within the team-taught group about whom their discussions transpired, who had been assessed as having disabilities and the specific categories into which they had been placed (Department of Education and Science, 2005). The names of all students discussed, along with the names of and staff and any school mentioned, were replaced within transcripts with pseudonyms, to protect their anonymity. They are also given pseudonyms in the main body of this work. Where it was felt necessary to conceal their identities more completely, the sex of some staff and students was also changed.

Some of those participating in the teaching teams were qualified learning support/teachers and, as such, were aware of the researcher's background as a lecturer in this area. There was a risk that these participants may have felt an imbalance in power in the participant-researcher relationship, for example, they may have felt under scrutiny in terms of the thoughts and ideas they expressed within meetings and interviews and experienced pressure or stress in this connection. To minimise any potential for discomfort, the researcher declared from the outset that he wished to capture data relating to *authentic* discussions of team-teaching put in place to support learners deemed to have disability, so that he could capture the complexity of the practical issues involved. He also noted that, in his role as researcher, he had to adopt a non-judgemental approach to research activities and encourage participants to be candid, honest and realistic in their contributions. He worked proactively to build trust with participants by repeatedly returning to them to check the veracity of transcripts, to see on-going consent for their participation, and to remind them of their right to withdraw for any reason or none. He also repeatedly offered them time to discuss any issues of concern to them, reminding them of his duty of care as a researcher to protect their wellbeing. Finally, he repeatedly assured participants of the central importance of their contributions to his research and reassured them of the measures taken to preserve the confidentiality of the data they supplied.

It was possible that information could come to light during interviews or meetings, about inequitable or unethical practices or provision that is at variance with local and national guidance and policy or with legislation. In such cases, especially those involving children, participants were informed that the researcher was obliged to take action in line with the Maynooth University Child Protection Policy and with best practice in research. No such instances occurred.

## 5.9 Methodological Considerations

### Reliability

Within qualitative studies, reliability refers to the consistency with which instances are assigned to the same category (Hammersley, 1992) or whether or not some future researcher could repeat the research and come up with the same results, interpretations and conclusions (Silverman, 2015). To allow this, the research process has to be made as transparent as possible, though sufficient description of the research strategy and methods of data analysis. This chapter has sought to provide just such a description. It has also made explicit the theoretical stance from which interpretation is carried out, noting the limitations and criticisms of this and how it supports some interpretations, while backgrounding or ignoring others.

Meyer (2001, p. 30), reminds us that strict objectivity cannot be achieved through discourse analysis, since each *technology* of research serves to embed the beliefs and ideologies of the analyst towards her or his preconceptions. Mertens (2014, p. 268) suggest replacement of the concept of objectivity with *confirmability* in qualitative research. For her (Mertens, 2014), objectivity is a matter of minimising the influence of the researcher's judgement, while confirmability means establishing that the data and its interpretation are not figments of the researcher's imagination. To address such issues within qualitative research, is a matter of allowing data to be traced back to its source through what Yin (2009) calls a *chain of evidence* or Mertens (2014) calls a *confirmability audit*. It is also essential that the logic used to interpret data be made explicit. All of these things are provided throughout this work. All of the data relating to this work can be confirmed and audited back to its source.

### Validity

Hammersley (1990) characterises validity as the extent to which an account accurately represents the social phenomena to which it refers. A key issue in this work centred on the degree to which analysis was predicated on authentic instances of team-teaching, as described in relevant literature. To address this, principals were asked to ensure, when proposing instances of team-teaching for inclusion in the study, that these initiatives conformed to the following criteria:

- That they would be organised in respect of full class groups that contained at least one student who had been assessed as having a disability of some kind.

- That the principal would make known to team-teachers her/his intention that both teachers involved in the teaching team would enjoy parity of esteem and shared responsibility for the class.
- That the principal undertake to continue the team-teaching initiatives for the entirety of the 2015-16 academic year and that it be time tabled for a minimum of three lessons per week.
- That each team-taught lesson would involve the same two teachers, who would remain in the class for the entirety of each lesson.
- That the student composition of each team-taught group would remain predominantly the same for each lesson, especially in relation to students deemed to have disability.

Another key issue that might have affected the validity of this work, centred on the issue of observer paradox (Labov, 1972), specifically the degree to which the presence of the researcher at team-teaching meetings affected the deployment of disability discourse. Goodwin (1981) believes that the effects of this phenomenon may be overstated, asserting that sensitivity to observation is a natural feature of human interaction. He posits that “participants never behave as if they were unobserved”, rather “they organize [*sic*] their behavior [*sic*] in terms of the observation it will receive from their co-participants” (Goodwin, 1981 p. 44). Similarly, Clayman and Gill (2012) point out that the effects of the observer’s presence tend to be limited to the surface content of their talk, leaving its underlying structure intact. Similarly, Ten Have (2007) asserts that, while research participants are often sensitive to recording machines and other paraphernalia, they tend to respond to these in ways that are amenable to discourse analysis, where their effects can be noted. Moreover, Ten Have (2007) asserts that *hyper-consciousness* about recording paraphernalia tends to recede quickly as participants become enmeshed in communicative purposes and interactions. In the experience of the researcher, whose job it is to observe teachers in classrooms on a regular basis, the cognitive demands of educational interactions very often leave little time or space for consideration other things, including the presence of observers. Nevertheless, he remained sensitised to these issues. For example, he noted times where it appeared that the language deployed by teachers, was less to do the exchange of information between them, and more to do with informing the researcher about determinations made about learners. For example, in the following excerpt taken from the second meeting at Maple Lodge School, Andrew says to Claire

5        Andrew        You’ve been looking at the results that are coming through, particularly for people like Joanne Forrester. Joanne has a physical disability; a

neurological problem with her hand and, em, it looks like Joanne really didn't strike out very well at all in the exam.

(ML Meeting 2: Turn 5)

From Claire's reaction, it was clear that she already knew this information and that its reiteration seemed to be targeted at me. While substantial latitude was given to interpretation of such instances, this work was more concerned with how the student was being represented than to whom, so the representation was still treated as significant.

In considering issues of validity, Silverman (2006) suggest triangulation of data from different sources. However, many CDA scholars (Fairclough, 1992, 2001; Scollon, 1999; Wodak, 1996) have suggested that the structure of CDA, with its simultaneous focus on three different levels of analysis (text, discourse practice and socio-cultural practice), has triangulation built into it. The way in which analysts are encouraged to move *abductively* between one level and another, is thought to further strengthen the validity of findings (Wodak & Meyer, 2015, p. 14).

Mertens (2014, pp. 273-275) also asserts that validity within the critical perspective should be determined by an entirely different set of criteria than is used in other paradigms, including fairness, ontological authenticity, community, reciprocity and attention to voice. All of these issues have been addressed throughout the ethical and methodological sections of this chapter. She also asserts that reflexivity must be carefully attended to. A separate section on reflexivity is outlined hereunder that is the culmination of ongoing reflexivity was practiced within the author's field notes and research diary. Finally, Mertens (2014) suggests that, in order for it to be valid, critical research must attend to issues of praxis (Krzyżanowski, 2010). In this work, these are addressed through a commitment to positive critique and the identification of instances of discourse where inequitable power relations were challenged and resisted. This is offered with the view to augmenting and expanding the instances and effect of these.

### **Generalisability and Limitations**

External validity enables generalisation of findings on the assumption that the sample studied represents a particular population. In relation to qualitative studies, (Mertens, 2014, p. 270) prefers to use the term "transferability". Transferability allows the researcher to make judgements based on similarities and differences between different research situations or between the research situation and one's own (Mertens, 2014). To facilitate such evaluation, thick descriptions are produced of the research sites, including information of "time, place,



context and culture” (Mertens, 2014). Yin (2009) suggests that the study of multiple cases strengthens the external validity of results. They away from trying to understand the case to trying to understand a “collective target” (Stake, 2006, p. 6). While they “abstain from formal projection to cases that are not examined” (Stake, 2006, p. 6), they should continue “to disclose whatever generalizations [*sic*] appear evident from the data, in a tentative way” as hypotheses to be tested. For Stake (2006, p. 89), they are “grist for deliberation and debate”, especially during “preliminary stages of an investigation”. Thus he asserts that Stake (2006, p. 90), “What multicase [*sic*] studies have most to offer is a collection of situated case activities in a binding of larger research questions”. As such, they can provide readers with “case-based contextual understanding to add to their own direct and vicarious experience” (Stake, 2006).

Stake (2006, p. 90) contents that it is the responsibility of the researcher to provide information on pertinent physical, historical, social, cultural and political aspect of case contexts and the action that occurs therein. As he puts it (Stake, 2006), “[b]ecause the reader knows the situations to which the assertions might apply, the responsibility of making generalization [*sic*] should be more the reader’s than the writer’s”.

### **Reflexivity**

In using CDA, the role of the analyst is not to find out “what people really mean when they say this or that, or to discover the reality behind the discourse” deployed; rather it is to identify “the social consequences” of the domination of “different discursive representations of reality” (Rogers et al., 2005, p. 21). It is interesting that, that Rogers et al. (2005) found that those involved in the application of CDA within educational contexts were predominantly members and ex-members of school communities similar to those that comprised the focus of their analysis. This was also the case with the author of this study. Rogers et al. (2005, p. 382) asserted that such researchers have a tendency to bring with them the “histories of participation in those institutions”, which, while equipping them with member resources (Fairclough, 1992) and cultural models (Gee, 1999) that are useful in facilitating deep critical insights, also imbue them with the “beliefs, assumptions and values of these contexts” that create a “classic tension between distance and closeness” and often blur research findings (Rogers et al., 2005, p. 382).

For Rogers et al. (2005) these users of CDA tend to acknowledge insufficiently their positioning within the research process and their affiliations with the culture being researched. This can challenge their ability to *make strange* the naturalised discourses pertaining to these cultures and treat certain practices and beliefs as “socially constructed meaning-systems that could have been different” in other circumstances (Rogers et al.,

2005, p. 21). For this reason, a reflexive component is essential to the application of CDA; a component in which the researcher makes clear his position in relation to the discourses under investigation and the possible effects of these (Rogers et al., 2005). Rogers et al. (2005) recommend that, rather than trying to write themselves out of the research, investigators locate themselves firmly within it, not just in terms of their analysis of text, but also in terms their role in data collection, preparation, presentation and interpretation and their choice of research design and methodologies. Similarly, Wodak and Meyer (2001, p. 30) assert that “each ‘technology’ of research must itself be examined as potentially embedding the beliefs and ideologies of the analysts and therefore prejudicing the analysis toward the analyst’s preconceptions”.

I reflected on these issues in field notes and a research journal during the completion of this work, turning the analytic framework back on myself (Rogers et al., 2005), to consider how my participation in the research may have contributed to the reproduction or disruption of existing relations of power. I also considered the power relations operating within the research process, and how issues of accountability were addressed within data collection, analysis, interpretation, the drawing of conclusions, and evaluation of these (Sultana, 2007).

One element of this reflexivity involved reflecting on and acknowledging my position as a non-disabled researcher and making sure I did not compound the oppression of those deemed to have disability through my work (Linton, 2005). To be as transparent as possible, I self-identify as a middle class, urban dwelling white, Irish, hetero-sexual, married, father whose primary and second-level education occurred in largely non-disadvantaged urban single-sex contexts in which, to the best of my recollection, I did not encounter a single example of team-teaching and few, if any, people I identified at that time as having a disability, bar one school friend I had who had modest physical impairments associated with what I now assume to have been Spina Bifida.

During my early career as a teacher, I taught in a number of single-sex (male) co-educational mainstream post-primary schools and single-sex (male) special schools. In the 1990s I re-entered the mainstream education system from the special school system to work as, what was then called, a *resource* teacher in a mainstream school in an area that was designated as disadvantaged. Only then did I come in contact with more collaborative models of teaching, including team-teaching as it is currently understood. Working as a resource teacher in this final setting afforded me the opportunity to team-teach with a wide variety of colleagues across a range of subject areas.

In 2000, I began working as a lecturer in education (learning support and special educational needs) at a teacher education college in Dublin city. Along with other members of a small team, I was tasked with devising, co-ordinating and delivering a national training programme for the postgraduate professional development of post-primary resource teachers (as specialist teachers working with students assessed as having a disability were called at the time). The course expanded and developed in line with increasing resource provision and the concomitant increase in the demand for professional development in the area. In late 2016, the college in which I worked was incorporated, along with other colleges of education, into a large Dublin university. I now work within that institution, where I am the *Chair* of a large post-graduate professional training programme for teachers, that provides them with accreditation to teach as Special Education Teachers in primary, post-primary and special schools and in other DES-recognised education centres. Thus, I have spent most of my life working in the field of education, in primary, post-primary and special schools as well as third level educational colleges and universities. The focus of most of this work has been on learners deemed to have special educational needs, including disability.

My status as a non-disabled researcher, requires me to address questions relating to the potential for me to exploit this area in pursuit of my own interests and career (Aspis, 1997; Oliver, 2013). I acknowledge the incentives for current research funding models that increase the likelihood of this (Oliver, 2013) and I am mindful of the positionality demanded by critical disability studies, that non-disabled researchers both acknowledge their privileged position relative to disabled participants, and go out of their way to assuage their concerns of this group, that they will not compound their oppression through their work (Linton, 2005). Goodley (2016, p. 32) suggests that many disabled researchers and activists “have embraced the contributions of non-disabled researchers”. He quotes Lennard Davis (1995) who having been asked the question “Are you disabled?”, retorted that his “aim is to confound the question and by extension the category that the question begs”. This is an aim around which those deemed to lie either side of the dis/ability binary can coalesce. As Goodley (2016) puts it, whatever about disability, “Disableism should be a concern shared by all”.

Responding to disableism involves framing disability as a cultural construction and endeavouring to trouble its provenance as a legitimacy category (Goodley, 2016). This is a cultural project in which both abled and disable citizens should be interested and involved. For Goodley (2016) it is more important to articulate informed solidarity with the aims of the disabled movement than to identify on either side of the dis/ability binary. As he puts it “one should come to disability studies with a profound desire to understand and change the

conditions of contemporary society. If not, why bother?" (Goodley, 2016, p. 34). It is in this context that I frame my involvement with this research.

## **5.10 Summary and Conclusion**

This chapter sought to outline the overall approach of the study, which was set within a multiple case study research design (Yin, 2003, 2009; Stake, 2006). It also offered a description and a rationale for the use within this study of the Dialectical-Relational Approach to CDA (Chouliaraki & Fairclough, 1999; Fairclough, 1992, 1995, 2003, 2009, 2016). It described the texts on which this analysis was based, namely transcripts of three meetings that took place over the course of one academic year in each of three purposively chosen case study sites. All of these pertained to team-teaching initiatives put in place to support the inclusion of students deemed to have disability. Data from policy documents, publicity materials and semi-structured interviews with the principals and participating team-teachers of each case study school was used to develop thick descriptions of the contexts in which discourses were deployed. Finally, a range of ethical and methodological issues was addressed, that included issues relating to reliability, validity, generalisability and reflexivity. The chapters that follow will present findings around the areas of investigation outlined in this one.

# Chapter 6: Genre: How the Actional Meanings of Team-Teaching Meetings affected Teachers' Constructions of Learners deemed to have Disability

## 6.1 Introduction

As already outlined, Fairclough (2003) asserts that genre is one of the three major ways in which discourse operates within meaning-making. Genre is expressed in ways of interacting that become highly “conventionalised” over time within particular social practices (Fairclough, 2003, p. 26) and act as scripts that guide how these are enacted in particular social settings. In doing so, they enable and constrain the use of particular semiotic resources for meaning-making within these (Bhatia, 2014). Fairclough (2003) proposes that the genres of individual texts can be analysed in terms of three elements: activity, social relations and communicative technologies. Since the meetings that are the subject of this analysis took the form of two-way, face-to-face dialogue between team-teachers, analysis of communicative technology was not attempted. The remainder of this chapter will report on analysis of the activity and social relations of team-teaching meetings and how these influenced teachers meaning-making about learners deemed to have disability in their classes. This was done with a view to investigating (in Chapter 9) how genre worked along with other types of meaning-making about disability, including discourse (Chapter 7) and style (Chapter 8) affected teachers' conceptualisations of team-teaching as a support to the inclusion of learners placed in the disability category.

The chapter begins with some general observations about the novelty and apparent informality of meetings (Section 6.2). It goes on to provide an interpretation of the activity of meetings, as gleaned from an analysis of the hierarchy of communicative purposes that attached to them. Indicators of communicative purpose were distilled from an analysis of the types of exchange that occurred during team-teaching meetings and the participant structure within which these occurred (Section 6.3).

Since, as Scollon (1999) asserts, the highest ongoing priority of any social encounter is to position participants in relationship to each other, the genre of meetings is also analysed through an examination of the *social relations* that pertained to these. These are examined through analysis of topic control, turn-taking and teachers use of turns. Findings of this analysis are set out in Section 6.4. In Section 6.5 the finding relating to the activity and social relations of meetings are summarised and drawn to address the following questions:

1. What actional meanings were produced and consumed within the conventionalised discursive interactions of teachers during team-teaching meetings?
2. How did these actional meanings enable and/or constrain particular types of meaning-making about learners deemed to have disability in their team-taught groups?

The reader is advised that throughout this chapter, the terms T1 and T2 are used to refer to different types of teachers. In all settings, the T1 teacher is the teacher who was assigned first to the group being team-taught, who taught them during every lesson during the week, and who was invariably qualified to teach in the subject area on which the team-teaching initiative focussed. The teacher operating in the T2 position was invariably assigned to the group after the T1 teacher, they saw the group less often than the T1 teachers per week, and they were not necessarily trained to teach in the subject on which the team-teaching initiative focussed. In only one of the three case study schools, was the T2 teacher a trained SET teacher.

## **6.2 Initial Observations on Team-Teaching Meetings**

### **The Lack of Formal Structural Devices**

Before engaging in a more structured analysis of the genre of team-teaching meetings, two brief points are worth noting. Firstly, the genre structure of team-teaching meetings was not set out in any formal way, such as using agendas, previous minutes or lists of issues to be addressed. There were only very few instances in which documents were used within the meetings observed. In one instance, Denise (T1) of the Hazel Park dyad, brought a list of curricular objectives relating to the new Junior Certificate curriculum to the first meeting for Saoirse's (T2) information. She also used some informal notes relating to the results of formal assessment of group members. All dyads used class lists or student profiles at various times to structure their discussion of particular issues, such as students' performances in school-based examinations. They also used students' examination scripts for this. Overall however, any documents produced during meeting, were used less to structure meetings than to address specific issues within them. The structure of meetings tended to be agreed by participants at the start of each meeting. In general, this was done tentatively through the use of interrogative (sometimes rhetorical) statements. Rarely were suggestions for the treatment of particular issues refuted, as the following excerpts from the beginning of each meeting at each venue will now show. The first set of excerpts is taken from the initial interactions of each meeting at Hazel Park, where issues proposed for discussion tended to be determined by Denise (T1), who generally used declarative statements to do so.

- 4 Denise So a lot has changed since this class went on your timetable [both teachers laugh]
- 5 Saoirse I can imagine, yeah.
- 6 Denise So the class are actually called 1F; I think you will have them as 1 Fullerton.

(HP Mtg. 1: Turns 4-6)

- 8 Denise Well it's good to have this chance, I suppose, just to have a review, which isn't always possible ...
- 9 Saoirse Absolutely!
- 10 Denise To sit ...
- 11 Saoirse A hundred percent; to actually get the time.
- 12 Denise What did you think?

(HP Mtg. 2: Turns 8-12)

- 4 Denise Em, so Saoirse, what do you think now that we're at this stage, would we do it [team-teaching] again? [Laughs gregariously]
- 5 Saoirse I know, em, well to work with you, as I said, yes; a hundred per cent!
- 6 Denise Likewise!

(HP Mtg. 3: Turns 4-6)

At Maple Lodge, it was Andrew (T2) who proposed a broad agenda for each meeting, and, by implication, the suggested purpose and structure for each. This was interesting in that it was the only venue in which the T2 teacher did so. This was largely accounted for by Andrew's role as the Special Educational Needs Coordinator in the school, and Claire's role as a core member of the Special Educational Needs Team that he coordinated.

- 4 Andrew Will we begin with where we're at, at the moment and work back from ... [there]
- 5 Claire Work back from that, okay. So, at the moment we just started *radio* on Friday.
- 6 Andrew Yeah, and that seemed to go well.
- 7 Claire Actually it did!

(ML Mtg. 1: Turns 4-9 original emphasis)

- 4 Andrew I suppose the area of concern to us at the moment is

the fact that we've had our mock exams [Leaving Certificate Applied] just completed and eh ...

5 Claire Yeah, they're here [the scripts].

(ML Mtg. 2: Turns 4-5)

4 Claire Em, Okay!

5 Andrew So, I suppose in the beginning, we might just think about the planning that has to be done between now and the end of the year, eh, with the LCA.

6 Claire Yeah. Uh-hum.

(ML Mtg. 3: Turns 4-6)

At Willow Way, it was Fiona (T1) who made suggestions about what each meeting would address. She used a mixture of questions and declarative statements to do so, such as in the following:

4 Fiona Will we just talk about yesterday first?

5 Meadhbh Yeah, we'll see what went well yesterday and what didn't.

6 Fiona Well, first of all the exam question; they seem to be out of their depth with that!

(WW Mtg. 1: Turns 4-6)

4 Fiona Okay, so, first of all exam results!

5 Meadhbh Yeah.

6 Fiona It was good idea actually [to] split the corrections, wasn't it?

7 Meadhbh Yeah, it was.

(WW Mtg. 2: Turns 4-7)

4 Fiona So how did it [the team-teaching initiative] go?

5 Meadhbh Em, I suppose it changed slightly towards the latter part of the year. Kind of, at the start it was more, it was shared, we were both working together, kind of, as equals ...

6 Fiona Yeah.

(WW Mtg. 3: Turns 4-6)



## The Novelty of Team-Teaching Meetings

The second point to note about team-teaching meetings, before getting into a more detailed analysis of their communicative purpose, is that teachers seemed to have had little previous experience of being involved in any formal meetings of this kind. In fact, data from principals' interviews, teachers' interviews and team-teaching meetings refers consistently to the fact that *none* of the teachers involved in the study had previously taken part in formally organised team-teaching meetings, even when the time they required for these was minimal, as suggested by Claire in the following excerpt:

- 108 Claire Em, I suppose I just wish we *did* have planning [time] and stuff to ... Meetings!
- 109 Andrew It makes such a difference really, you know.
- 110 Claire And they *wouldn't actually* have to be that often; it Could be module-to-module, you know?
- ...
- 114 Claire Like it *really* doesn't need to be a weekly thing, I don't think.
- 115 Andrew Once a month maybe even, yeah, yeah, yeah.
- (ML Mtg. 3: Turns 108 - 115)

The lack of any prior of experience teachers around team-teaching meetings meant that the communicative purposes and structure of these events was being established and comprehended by teachers for the first time through their involvement with this study. As a result they are likely to have been less adept at using the genres of these meetings in a way that met their own strategic objectives, which tends to be a feature of the expert use of genres in other settings (Bhatia, 2014).

### 6.3 The Activity of Meetings

As noted in the introduction, interpretation of the *activity* of meetings was predicated on analysis of the hierarchy of communicative purposes that pertained to these. Insights into this hierarchy were gleaned from an analysis of the types of exchange that occurred during team-teaching meetings and the genre structure of these meetings. As we saw in the Fairclough proposed the following analytical categories in relation to types of exchange, knowledge exchange, which he spit up in to knower-initiated and other-initiated types, and activity exchange, which he subdivided into actor-initiated and other-initiated types. Data relating to the instances of each type of exchange recorded in each meeting in each case

study setting, are outlined in Appendix J. Table 2 summarises the aggregated numbers and percentages of each type of exchange across all settings.

**Table 2: Instance of Different Types of Exchange Across All Meetings and Settings**

Type of Exchange	Across All Meetings and Settings	% of Total
<b>Knowledge Exchanges</b>		
Knower-initiated knowledge exchange	351	53.26%
Other-initiated knowledge exchange	129	19.58%
Sub-total (knowledge exchanges)	480	72.84%
<b>Activity Exchanges</b>		
Actor-initiated activity exchange	47	7.13%
Other-initiated activity exchange	132	20.03%
Sub-total (activity exchanges)	179	27.16%
<b>Total Exchanges</b>	<b>659</b>	<b>100%</b>

### Knowledge Exchanges

From Table 2 it can be seen that instances of knowledge exchange accounted for almost three-quarters (72.84%) of all exchanges across all team-teaching meetings. For example, it occurred about three times as often as activity exchanges (27.16%). This suggested that teachers spent most of their time engaged in exchange of information and opinions rather than the logistics of team-teaching *per se*. This was a surprising finding, since it was reasonable to assume that these would have focussed, at least in the early phases of meetings, on the practicalities of establishing and maintaining the team-teaching initiatives, including making decision about roles, responsibilities, resources, teaching approaches and various actions that would need to be taken to implement these. Yet this was not the case. The transcripts of meetings showed evidence of a profusion of knowledge exchanges, which, as we will see shortly, seemed to generally comprise assertions about inherent student characteristics, including the characteristics of students deemed to have disability, and information about the mainstream programmes they followed. These knowledge exchanges became a key site for the deployment of discourse.

Drilling down into this data, it was interesting to note the proportion of *knower*-initiated knowledge exchanges (initiated by the person who possessed the knowledge) to *other*-initiated knowledge exchanges (initiated by the person who wishes to acquire knowledge). Knower-initiated knowledge exchanges were by far the most prevalent form of exchange, not just in relation to other-initiated knowledge exchanges, but also across all

types of exchange combined. They accounted for more than half (53.26%) of all exchanges across all meetings (see Table 2), outnumbering all other types of exchange in every meeting studied, and occurring more than twice as often as the next largest category in each setting (see Appendix J). This suggested that most of the talk of team-teaching meetings revolved around exchanges of information and opinion that were initiated by the person in possession that knowledge, who volunteered to share this with their team-teaching colleague without being solicited to do so.

On the face of it, the prevalence of knower-initiated knowledge exchanges seemed innocuous and even benevolent on the part of the person who volunteered most information during meetings. Indeed, generosity may well have been the intention behind these exchanges. However, such volunteering of information, not only allow teachers who possessed information to share this, but also to frame the discourses within which they did so. In particular, it allowed them to assert particular truth claims about students, including students deemed to have disability.

A good example of this is contained in the following sequence of knowledge exchanges that occurred in the first team-teaching meeting at Hazel Park:

- |     |         |   |
|-----|---------|---|
| 224 | Denise  | ... Okay, so number one, Gemma, she is just a real wee leader. She has already taken on extra work; she's brilliant! She came in today and she's waking in the door, she goes, 'Can I spell poem for you Miss?' She's great, she is great!  |
| 225 | Saoirse | Very engaged so?  |
| 226 | Denise  | And also very, very realistic about her work. Like she said, "I really like the way ...", you know her drawing was up [on the wall], she says, "I really like the way ... I like my carriage but I'm just not happy with the homework I'm after giving to you there now!"                       |
| 227 | Saoirse | Really? Very mature?  |
| 228 | Denise  | So she's very realistic about what she does. She's very impressive now! She's great; she's a great wee character. And she's up and she's giving out scissors and she's ... And again she'll walk around the class, passing no remarks because everything that she's doing is really productive. |

(HP Mtg. 1: Turns 224-228)

In this excerpt, Denise began by volunteering general information about Gemma and her learning disposition. From turns 224 to 228 Saoirse not only accepted the truth of what she said, she also accepted the essentialist premises upon which her claims were based, in other words, that Gemma had a set of inherent qualities that positively predisposed her to learning. This propensity to accept, not only the topic introduced but the discursive basis on which this was made, was a key feature of the genre of team-teaching meetings that worked to influence the production and consumption of discourse related to disability. In short, whoever got to assert knowledge claims also got to assert the discourses context within which the truth of these claims was set. We will return to this feature of genre again during discussion of genre structure of team-teaching meetings set out hereunder.

Another interesting finding relating to knower-initiated knowledge exchanges, was that in each dyad, the person occupying the T1 position, initiated more of these than the T2 teacher (see Table 3).

**Table 3: Instance of Knower-Initiated Knowledge Exchange per Teacher Across All Meetings**

School Name	Instances of Knower-Initiated Knowledge Exchange		
		T1	T2
Hazel Park	117	86	31
Maple Lodge	121	85	36
Willow Way	113	83	30

In fact, in all settings the T1 teacher initiated just under three times as many knower-initiated knowledge exchanges than the person in the T2. This meant that T1 teachers, tended to dominate the introduction of topics within team-teaching meetings and the discursive context within which these were subsequently discussed. It gave them substantial and disproportionate influence over the deployment of discourse, including discourse relating to learners deemed to have disability; an important finding.

The disproportionate flow of knowledge from T1 to T2 teachers resulting from their tendency to dominate knower-initiated knowledge exchanges, was augmented by how other-initiated knowledge exchanges occurred. These are exchanges in which a speaker solicits information or opinion from a discourse partner, who provides it. A typical example, outlined below, was taken from Maple Lodge, where Claire operated as the T1 teacher and Andrew as the T2.

- 160 Andrew Have they done role play with you before?
- 161 Claire We did role play last year when we were looking at non-verbal and verbal communication. That was at the start of the year but they're doing role play in Drama so that's why I was thinking possibly ... And I know they're doing Communication again in Drama so it links in with us.
- 162 Andrew Okay, we might be able to use it then and do a bit of cross-curricular on it! Who's doing the Drama with them?
- 163 Claire Mandy Jones.
- 164 Andrew Oh yeah, yeah, good!

(ML Mtg. 3: Lines 160 – 164)

Other-initiated knowledge exchanges accounted for just over a fifth of all knowledge exchanges across all of the team-teaching meetings (see Table 2). In two of the cases studied (Hazel Park and Maple Lodge), they were initiated three and a half and four times as often by T2 teachers than those in the T1 position (see Table 4). This reflects a significant demand from T2 teachers for information from their T1 counterparts. When added to how T1 teachers tended to dominate knower-initiated knowledge exchanges, a picture emerges of meetings in which there is a very disproportionate flow of information and opinion from T1 to T2s teachers, a process that seemed to be supported by both designations.

**Table 4: Instance of Other-Initiated Knowledge Exchange per Teacher Across All Meetings**

School Name	Other-Initiated Knowledge Exchange	T1	T2
Hazel Park	72	16	56
Maple Lodge	54	11	43
Willow Way	45	31	14

Only at Willow Way, was a greater number of other-initiated knowledge exchanges initiated by the teacher operating in the T1 position (see Table 4). This was interpreted as resulting from the fact that both teachers were equally qualified to teach the subject on which the team-teaching initiative focussed (English), thus neither teacher required information from the other about this. In addition, both teachers had similarly limited

experience of both teaching and team-teaching, with limited advice to offer to each other here. Both teachers had also taught the class group in question before, which meant that they were relatively familiar with the students involved and did not have to solicit information in this connection. Finally, neither had completed a recognised qualification in the inclusion of learners deemed to have disability, which meant that neither had a great deal to contribute in this area. On the other hand, Meadhbh (T2) liaised closely with the school's behavioural support team in relation to Phillip. This allowed her access to information about the approaches and programmes that the team were using in connection with him. A lot of requests for information from Fiona to Meadhbh related to these. This seemed to account for the disproportionate use of other-initiated knowledge exchanges initiated by Fiona.

### **The Topics of Knowledge Exchanges**

We will also see shortly, the genre structure of meetings meant that interactions usually (though not always) began with the introduction of a topic. This meant that there was a very high degree of correlation between the total number of topics introduced and the number of exchanges initiated (see Table 5). The two are not entirely congruent because, in some instances, more than one topic was introduced within a single exchange, and in others several exchanges related to a single topic.

**Table 5: The Number of Exchanges Compared to the Number of Topics Introduced during each meeting**

School	Meeting		
	Meeting 1	Meeting 2	Meeting 3
<b>Hazel Park</b>			
Total of All Exchanges	88	69	62
Total Topics Introduced	76	63	61
<b>Maple Lodge</b>			
Total of All Exchanges	69	84	80
Total Topics Introduced	77	87	91
<b>Willow Way</b>			
Total of All Exchanges	91	83	33
Total Topics Introduced	89	87	41
<b>Total number of topics introduced across all meetings:</b>			<b>659</b>
<b>Total number of exchanges initiated across all Meetings:</b>			<b>672</b>

This correlation allowed the analyst to use MAXQDA (VERBI Software, 2019) to extract the text segments coded associated with each instance of *Topic Introduction*, and to correlate this with the type of exchange to which it belonged. Through a grounded theory approach, codes were established for those topics introduced during knowledge exchanges. These were refined into the following themes:

- Addressing general classroom management issues, especially behavioural and logistical ones, e.g. correction of exam scripts
- Covering or revising curriculum content and how this should be done, including the preparation of materials and activities.
- State assessment and examination, especially the requirements for success in these, recent revisions to modes of assessment, and preparation of students for assessment.
- Student characteristics, in terms of classes, groups or individuals and differentiation mainstream curriculum for these learners in terms of content, process and product
- Team-teaching issues especially those relating to teacher roles, the value of and need for planning, the benefits to students and teachers and the purpose and direction of team-teaching meetings

Hence, because knowledge exchanges (which accounted for more than half of all exchanges) were dominated by T1 teachers, they tended to focus on areas around which T1 teachers had most responsibility, in other words issues relating to general classroom management, getting the whole class through mainstream curricula and preparing them for assessment of this. They did not tend to focus on issues related to the inclusion of learners deemed to have disabilities, either individually or collectively. The fact that issues of concern to T1 teachers dominated knowledge exchanges, meant that *both* team-teachers became more focused on these, at the expense of issues relating to inclusion.

### **Activity exchanges**

Across all meetings, activity exchanges accounted for 27.16% of all linguistic exchanges. About a quarter of these were actor-initiated activity exchanges, which are initiated by a person offering to perform an action. About three quarters were other-initiated activity exchanges, which are initiated by a person requesting that an action be performed by another (see Table 2).

Actor-initiated activity exchanges, where someone commits to a unilateral action, was the least numerous type of exchange, across all meetings and within each meeting (see Appendix J). It accounted for just 7.13% of all exchanges (see Table 2). A typical example

actor-initiated activity exchange that took place in the first meeting of the Willow Way dyad is outlined below. In this, Meadhbh offered to liaise with the staff of the behavioural unit at the school, to see what support they could give to Phillip, a student in the class who had been assessed as having Social Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties.

- 195        Meadhbh    Well then, I'll work with G26 [the room number of the Behavioural Support Unit] to see what they're doing with him ...
- 196        Fiona        Yeah, yeah.
- 197        Meadhbh    And see if there's any way they can help him with his English as well in G26. And then when he's in class, whatever skills they're going through with him, we'll try, I'll try to work with him, beside him, in the class and make sure I write down stuff in his [student] journal ...

(WW Mtg. 1: Turns 195 – 197)

In this instance, Meadhbh offers to liaise with the school's behavioural support unit to get ideas about how to support Phillip better within team-taught lessons. As we will see later in the work (Section 8.4), Fiona poured cold water on this unilateral commitment and Meadhbh ended up enacting a very different role in the team-teaching dyad than the one she suggested here.

There was no consistent pattern in the use of actor-initiated activity exchanges. In fact, their use often varied within a given setting from one meeting to another in terms of the type of teacher that initiated these. Teachers' reluctance to commit to unilateral action within team-teaching meetings was universal and applied whether they operated in the T1 and T2 position. This suggests that the genre of meetings discouraged teachers from committing to unilateral action. This may have been because, to do so would risk a perception that they were undermining the pre-eminent communicative purpose of meetings, the preservation of the cohesion and solidarity of the team.

The only time when commitments to unilateral action seemed to be deemed appropriate was when they were offered as a sign of the commitment of a particular teacher to the agreed work of the dyad; an expression of one's willingness to pull one's weight. This may have been more about building the cohesion and solidarity within the team, than asserting one's power within the team. Example of this were captured in the following excerpts. The first is from the first meeting at Willow Way.



- 333 Fiona Well we'll split the copies though, in fairness, to correct the essay? [both teachers laugh] Do you mind?
- 334 Meadhbh Yeah [we'll split the copies].
- 335 Fiona Just, you know, I wouldn't like you to have a lazy few days [again both laugh good-humouredly]. So we'll both take half-and-half
- 336 Meadhbh Yeah.
- 337 Fiona And it'll give us a good idea of their composing skills.
- 338 Meadhbh I hope so.
- (WW Mtg. 1: Turns 333-338)

The second is from the first meeting at Maple Lodge.

- 46 Andrew I wonder at some stage would it be interesting for us to stop and let me do one of the ...
- 47 Claire Yeah, yeah.
- 48 Andrew Now I'm not saying I want extra work or anything like that but just from their perspective; to see if there would be a change in perception, you know?
- 49 Claire Definitely, like to change roles; you would become ...
- 50 Andrew Just to try it!
- 51 Claire Yeah, definitely!
- 52 Andrew Because, just for one thing, I'm a passenger some of the time, you know? And I'd much prefer really if I had a more active role; even in the preparation because sometimes I'm not quite sure the direction [in which] we're going.

(ML Mtg. 1: Turns 46-52)

### **The Topics of Activity Exchanges**

Analysis of the topics with which actor-initiated activity exchanges were associated was carried out in the same way as analysis of knowledge exchanges (in the section entitled *The Topics of Knowledge Exchanges* above). This suggested that, where teachers did commit to unilateral action this was usually to:

- Communicate with a teaching colleague or other individual, such as a parent or student, which accounted for over half of all such exchanges

- Cover curricular content on one's own, for example, during lessons in which a team-teacher was not present
- Prepare classroom materials for activities
- Perform a classroom management task, such as collecting key assignments, collecting copies, correcting work
- Volunteer to perform some meeting-related task, such a taking note of information or decisions

T1 teachers tended to commit to unilateral action in relation to teaching, preparing for lessons, communications with other outside the team-teaching dyad, and other general classroom issues. T2 teachers tended to commit to preparing to differentiate lessons for specific individuals, especially those deemed to have disability, and communicating with others outside the teaching team about these learners.

Other-initiated activity exchanges, which are initiated by a person requesting that an action be performed by another, was recorded approximately three times as often as actor-initiated activity exchange (see Table 2). It is important to note here, that in relation to the coding of activity exchanges, where a speaker committed the team (i.e. both the speaker and colleague) to a certain course of action, this was recorded as other-initiated activity exchange *only*. It was not, for example, double coded as both actor-initiated activity exchange (committing self) and other-initiated activity exchange (asking other/s to commit), as it might have been. This coding decision was made to emphasise how the power to commit others to action was exercised within meetings. It may have had the effect of increasing the representation of other-initiated activity exchange at the expense of actor-initiated activity exchange.

A typical example of an other-initiated activity exchange is set out hereunder.

- |     |         |   |
|-----|---------|---|
| 154 | Denise  | The other thing I was wondering about Saoirse is, could the Wednesday class, because confidence does seem to be one of their biggest issues, could the Wednesday classes be, kind of, a time for them to show off. So every Wednesday, if we could start the class by saying, "Miss, guess what we've covered this week!" and [they could] show off to you. |
| 155 | Saoirse | Yeah, that's really good.   |
| 156 | Denise  | And I can fill you in.  |
| 157 | Saoirse | Yeah, with a bit more on what you've done [since I  |

was last in the class]. Yeah, that would be really good, yeah.

158 Denise So if, even if, we could even set that as the homework for Wednesday, “So remember, this week you need to be really paying attention because Miss [Saoirse] won’t be with us next week and you’re going to be telling her what we’ve learned during the week; one thing each about what we’ve learned”.

(HP Mgt. 1: Lines 154 - 158)

In this exchange Denise (T1) attempted to influence the way in which Saoirse (T2) acted in her role of team-teacher. Denise had a particularly strong position in this negotiation. Not only was she the teacher in the T1 position, but she was also the only teacher with an official DES-recognised professional qualification relating to the inclusion of students deemed to have disability. She extolled Saoirse to in the role of an enjoyable guest, who came into the class to hear what students had learned during the week, with a view to reinforcing their learning and giving students a sense of their progress. This was one of the few instances in which one teacher explicitly prescribed the actions or role of another. Such attempts were very rare, with the majority of activity exchanges committing *both* speaker and listener to particular courses of action. Even commitments to joint action were suggested with a degree of caution, such as in the following example, where Meadhbh tried to solicit Fiona’s agreement to use Junior Certificate examination questions as a means of revision.

31 Meadhbh The sample answers worked I thought.  
32 Fiona It did work, didn’t it?  
33 Meadhbh Doing the plans. So maybe we could do another question and do a plan like we did before?  
34 Fiona Yeah, yeah.  
35 Meadhbh And then let them try to answer it.  
36 Fiona Yeah. So actually, I felt that, as well, showing them how to do a plan, and we divided the board, and obviously we put the two characters [up] ...  
37 Meadhbh Mmm.

(WW Mtg. 1: Turns 31-37)

Meadhbh was cautious in introducing an idea that both teachers would have to implement, suggesting that this approach had worked before and hedging her suggestion with words like “maybe”, “could” and “try”.

As with knowledge exchange, only in exceptional circumstances was a suggested course of *action* ignored or rejected by a listener. When this did happen, it was done with a great deal of hedging, such as in the excerpt below.

- 296 Fiona Well, we could do a few more poems.  
297 Meadhbh Yeah.  
298 Fiona Do you know, just to ...  
299 Meadhbh Okay, maybe focus on poetry and maybe  
comprehensions or, or the ...  
300 Fiona Yeah, yeah. I think the comprehensions are okay so  
we don't need to, we can leave that for right now.  
301 Meadhbh Yeah, I think we can leave that for, maybe, revision  
and we can, maybe, discuss what poems then we  
want to do with them.  
302 Fiona Yeah. The poetry then, would be a big one because,  
like, it's nice for them to have different poems ...  
303 Meadhbh Yeah, just even get the practice in writing the question.

(WW Mtg. 2: Turns 296-302)

In this excerpt, we say that Fiona (T1) asserted the need to revise poetry but rejected Meadhbh's (T2) suggestion that comprehension needed similar attention. It is worth noting how tentatively Meadhbh made her suggestion about the need to cover comprehension in the first instance. She preceded this by expressing her agreement with Fiona that poetry needed revision and then added her own suggestion about comprehension in lesser grammatical position (WW Mtg. 2: Turn 299). She also hedged her suggestion with "maybe" and "or", leaving her room to retreat from this position, if she needed to. Rejection of the suggestions of a team-teaching colleague were very rare and quickly followed by repair statements. All of this evidenced the high priority attached to maintaining team solidarity within team-teaching meetings. It showed how attention to this communicative purpose constrained the semiotic variability available to participants to make meaning about learners deemed to have disability.

### **The Genre Structure of Team-Teaching Meetings**

As noted in Section 5.3 of the Methodology chapter, that the activity of meetings was examined not only through analysis of the types of exchange that occurred within them, but also through an analysis of the genre structure or "*staging*" of semiotic interactions (Fairclough, 2003, p. 72). Rigid genre structures are associated a high degree of social

control and stability in the use of discourse. They tend to prescribe who says what and when, as well as what contributions are deemed sayable, valid or meaningful and which are not. They are associated with the reproduction of dominant ideologies and with protecting the status quo (Gee & Handford, 2012). Flexible genre structures are associated with lower levels of social control over meaning-making, and hence, transformation of and resistance to dominant discourses and ideologies (Gee & Handford, 2012).

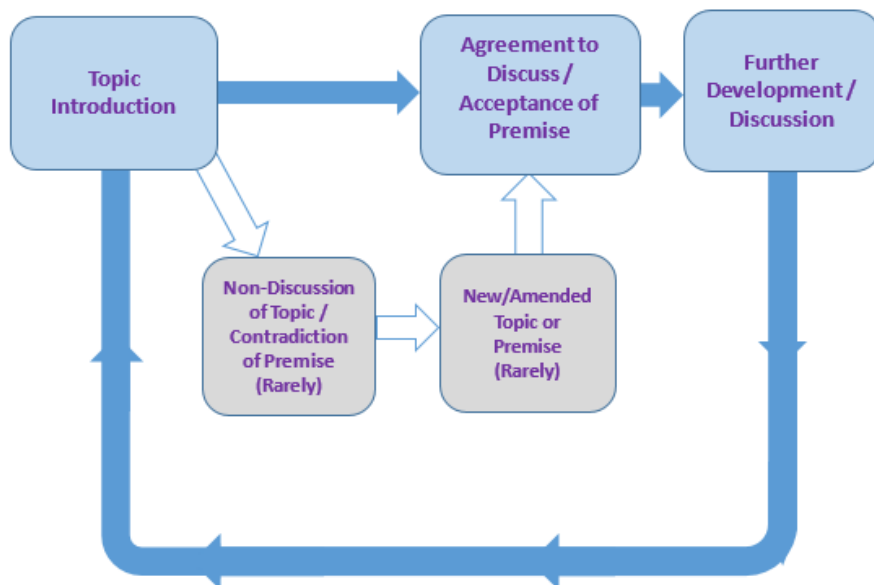
Swales (1990) suggests a move-and-step analysis, that allows the analyst to map the sequence in which the various elements of a discursive interaction transpire. This, in turn allows them to assess whether this sequence transpires in in rigid or flexible structure. Since team-meetings were conducted in the form of dialogue between the teachers concerned, transcripts were set out sequentially to reflect their dialogic structure. A turn was taken to occur from the point at which one person began speaking to another until they either introduced a new topic or were interrupted or responded to their discourse partner.

To identify the types and sequence of *steps* involved in a particular segment of discourse, the researcher first engaged in multiple readings of each text, using a grounded theory approach (Glasser & Strauss, 1967; Miles & Huberman, 1984). He then coded the functions of different segments of text into categories of discernible steps using MaxQDA to apply and then reorder, collapse and refine these codes, until he arrived at the following list:

- Topic Introduction
- Topic Clarification (Sought or Given)
- Agreement to Discuss Topic (-/+ agreement/acquiescence re: its premise)
- Non-discussion of Topic (-/+ disagreement re: its premise)
- Repair
- Further Development of Topic
- Decision/s
- Legitimation of Decision/s

At its most basic level, the interactions of team-teaching meetings comprised three steps, rising to five on the rare occasions when topics were controverted (See Figure 2).

**Figure 2: Basic Model of the Structure of Knowledge Exchanges During Team-Teaching Meetings**



This basic structure was generally expressed within simple knowledge exchanges. It had three basic steps: the introduction of a topic, expression of the listener's agreement to treat with this topic, and further development of the topic. The interaction usually ended with the introduction of a new topic. The following excerpt is a typical example of this.

- |   |         |  |
|---|---------|--|
| 4 | Denise  | So a lot has changed since this class went on your timetable [both teachers laugh]   |
| 5 | Saoirse | I can imagine, yeah.   |
| 6 | Denise  | So the class are actually called 1F; I think you will have them as 1 Fullerton.  |
| 7 | Saoirse | Well, I have the list of 1 Fullerton; I don't have the list of your students, so ...   |
| 8 | Denise  | So it's 1F is the class. And basically, it's an amalgamation of two classes. And there are twelve students in it. And the reason the students were picked is that they really are entitled to learning support/resource hours. And the hours have gone into dividing the class, making them into small classes so that they get as much attention as possible. |

(HP Mtg. 1: Lines 4 – 8)

Here Denise introduces a topic relating to the composition of the group on the premise that this had changed considerably since the class was initially constituted; a premise which Saoirse accepts readily. The rest of the interaction involves developing and clarifying this point.

In the great majority of exchanges, when a topic was introduced, it was accepted by the listener as valid issue for discussion. Only in two instances (out of 830 topics introduced), did a listener fail to engage with a topic introduced. One of these two instances is set out hereunder. Here, Meadhbh failed to engage in a discussion about whether Phillip's behaviour was affecting the dynamics of the class to such a degree that he should be excluded. Instead, she introduces a related but new topic that focuses on his need for one-to-one support.

417        Fiona        ... But I still believe, even though I really do not want to exclude him from the class, I just believe the dynamics are so different when he's ... [absent].

418        Meadhbh    Yeah and he needs a lot of help as well. I think he needs some one-on-one help too.

419        Fiona        Of course he does!

420        Meadhbh    There's a few kids who do [need help] to catch up because when you miss so much time ...

421        Fiona        Do you know, it's actually funny because there's a lot more than him that needs help in that class. Well it's brilliant that the two of us are there.

(WW Mtg. 1: Lines 417 – 421)

Here, rather than controverting Fiona explicitly, Meadhbh moved to change the topic of conversation from a discussion of the benefits of Phillip's exclusion to a discussion of his disproportionate need for support. For her part, Fiona seemed to sense the possibility of a difference of opinion and a threat to team solidarity, and so she enthusiastically endorsed Meadhbh's view. In response, Meadhbh softened her position and moved the discussion a more general direction, focussing on the "few kids" in the class who needed her help, rather than on Phillip's isolation. This reduced the possibility of disagreement around Phillip's inclusion. Fiona signalled that she has followed this move by agreeing that there were "a lot more than him" who needed help. This allowed her, on the one hand, to maintain her agreement with Meadhbh's position, while on the other, limiting Meadhbh's access to the argument that Phillip warranted greater individualised attention than others.

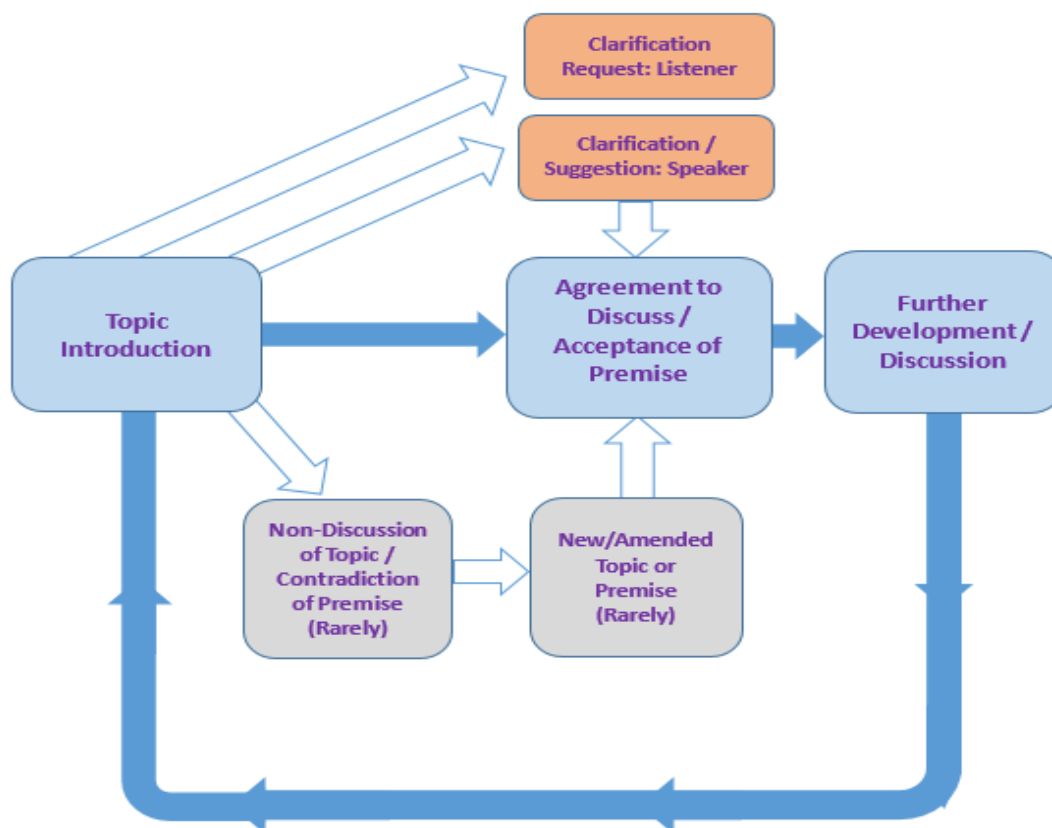
Instances of explicit disagreement were very rare. Not only did listeners tend to engage with the vast majority of topics introduced by speakers, they also rarely questioned or controverted the discursive basis on which these were asserted. This was a key feature of the genre of team-teaching meetings. Only in 47 of the 830 topics introduced (less than 6%) was the premise on which this was done challenged in any way. Where this occurred, it was usually followed immediately by contributions targeted at repair and the preservation of team solidarity, including further explanation or legitimation on the part of the contradictor and explicit acceptance of this explanation by the person contradicted. The example given above about the need to revise poetry or comprehension at Willow Way is a good example of this (WW Mtg. 2: Lines 299 – 302).

The tendency to accept uncritically, both the validity of topics for discussion and the *presuppositions* on which they were introduced, gave those who introduced topics, not only control over *what* was discussed, but also control over *how* topics were framed discursively. As meetings progressed, and speakers became aware that they could introduce topics with a minimal expectation that these would be challenged or resisted, it was reasonable to assume that the opportunity to become more strategic about the introduction and framing topics, including those relating to students deemed to have disability and team-teaching as a support to their inclusion, could become more strategic. That said, no evidence of increasing strategic use of the generic features of team-teaching meetings was found, perhaps because of the fact that participation in such meetings were a relatively novel experience for teachers, as outlined earlier.

In some cases, the introduction of a topic had to be augmented by clarifications, because the speaker notices that her/his initial attempt to introduce the topic was not fully understood or because the listener signalled their lack of comprehension through a pause, linguistic *filler* such as “em” or “eh”, or non-linguistic cues such as adopting a puzzled facial expression. In such cases, clarifications offered were usually accepted unquestioningly. Instances of this type of interaction were sufficiently numerous to be represented in and expanded model of staging outlined in Figure 3 below.



**Figure 3: Expanded Model of the Staging of Knowledge Exchanges During Team-Teaching Meetings, including Clarification**



This relatively basic configuration of steps accounted for most instances of knowledge exchange within team-teaching meetings, which as we know represented about three quarters of all exchanges. While the model applied fairly consistently, some variations were noted. For example, the naturalistic nature of discussions meant that the introduction of new topics was did not always offer the listener the opportunity to signal her/his agreement that a topic or the premise upon which it was based. At other times, new topics were introduced in a summary fashion, for example, as Claire does in Turn 13 of the following except:

- |    |        |  |
|----|--------|--|
| 11 | Claire | ... I think they've become really complacent though.   |
| 12 | Andrew | Very.  |
| 13 | Claire | You know, getting key assignments ... [in]. But thankfully Friday went well.   |
| 14 | Andrew | It did, yeah. And it's a brand new piece. And I suppose the piece that we had the previous week; it was great to be able to give them the feedback; they did so well on the Wednesday! |
| 15 | Claire | Oh, that was brilliant!  |

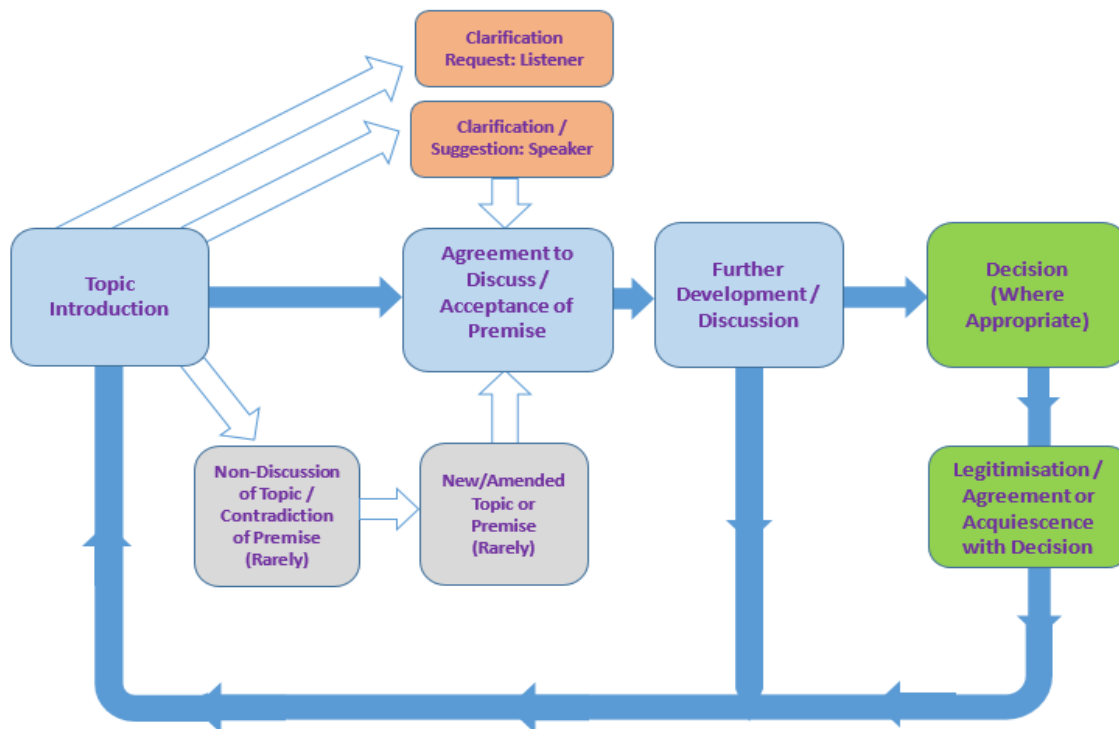
(ML Mtg. 1: Lines 11-20)

In this extract, the initial topic introduced (that students are becoming complacent around getting their key LCA assignments submitted) was summarily changed by Claire to the topic of how successful a recent Language and Communication lesson had been. This summary changing of topics was exceptional however and thus was not incorporated into the model.

In cases where the introduction of a topic involved a commitment to, or a request for, *action* (in actor-initiated or other-initiated activity exchanges), this often resulted in an agreement about an action to be taken and who would give effect to this. As we have already seen, most activity exchanges involved decisions that committed teachers to *joint* action and usually involved the articulation of legitimisations, *warrants* or *backing* for these (Fairclough, 2003, p. 81). Warrants and backing are typically features of the genre structure of arguments (Fairclough, 2003, p. 81). Warrants justify an assertion or inference, while backing gives support to these. In this work, both were coded under *legitimation* and it is this category that is used in the further expanded model outlined in Figure 3. Typical examples of activity exchange have already been outlined within the section entitled *Activity exchange*. All include elements of legitimisation, though placement of this in the order of interactions is not consistent.

The addition of activity exchanges to the model essentially involved the addition of a decision-making module, which came into use, only in where topics introduced involve commitments to action. The expanded model of interaction incorporating this, is outlined in Figure 4. While legitimisation is placed at the end of the cycle, it was a highly mobile structural element. The fact that participants took the time to legitimise their decisions, may have been further evidence of the primacy within the hierarchy of communicative purposes pertaining to meetings, of maintaining team solidarity. However, legitimisation is particularly important in discursive terms, because the types of warrants and backing used to legitimise decisions, are often “specific to particular discourses” (Fairclough, 2003, p. 82). This means that legitimisation offered a significant opportunity for the deployment of discourse, including discourse related to the inclusion of learners deemed to have disability.

**Figure 4: Overall Model of the Generic Structure of All Exchanges During Team-Teaching Meetings**



The above model of the genre structure of team-teaching meetings accounted for vast majority of their linguistic interactions that transpired within them. It suggested a surfeit of knowledge exchanges over activity exchanges and suggested a tendency on the part of teachers to acquiescence, not only with the topics raised by their discourse partners, but also with the presuppositions on which these were based. Finally, it suggests that, while knowledge exchanges often culminated in additional discussion and concluded with the introduction of a new topic, activity exchanges generally ended in a commitment to some sort of joint action, that was usually accompanied by some legitimisation of this.

All of this suggested that, not only was the participant structure of meetings highly predictable, it was highly rigid, resulting in a high degree of social control over the semiotic resources available to discourse participants for meaning making about disability. Those who controlled the introduction of topics, which was usually the T1 teacher, held a pre-eminent position around the deployment of discourse. Since this tended to be the *lead* or *class* teacher, analysis of the topics they focused on suggested that these related to whole class issues and issues relating to the programmes followed by the entire group. This seemed to limit their conceptualisations of team-teaching “to a narrowly circumscribed set of possibilities” (Hart, 1996) in which *both* teachers focused their team-teaching efforts on getting the entire class through mainstream curricula and assessment of this, at the expense

of focussing on those for who the team-teaching arrangement was put in place in the first instance (Baglieri et al., 2011).

#### **6.4 The Social Relations of Team-Teaching Meetings**

As mentioned in the introduction to this chapter, Fairclough (2003) proposes that analysis of social relations between participants also gives insight into the genre of discursive events. Scollon (1999) asserts that “any social encounter ... has as its ongoing highest priority to position the participants ... in relationship to each other”. Drawing on Brown and Gilman (1960), Fairclough (2003) proposes that social relations vary in two dimensions; power and solidarity. Insight into the role of these dimensions within social relations is gained by looking at the degree of social hierarchy, and the degree of social intimacy or social distance, that pertains to these. Fairclough (2003) suggests that a good way to analyse these phenomena is to set the genre of particular texts against a “co-operative and egalitarian template” (Fairclough, 2003, p. 79) in which they are distributed equitably amongst discourse participants (Fairclough, 2003). Thus, the social relations of team-teaching meetings in which power is equitably distributed should allow discourse participants equal access to semiotic resources that allow them to:

1. Take turns.
2. Speak without interruption.
3. Select and change topics.
4. Use turns to act in various ways – question, make requests, complain, etc.
5. Offer interpretations or summaries of what has been said.

(Fairclough, 2003, p. 79)

This work used Fairclough’s heuristic to given insight into the social relations enacted within the team-teaching meetings studied. In terms of the number of turns taken by discourse participants, the linguistic interactions of meetings generally took place within a dialogic structure, which tended to afford each teacher a roughly equal *number* of turns. In addition, teachers rarely interrupted each other, except to agree and support points made by their discourse partner. At times this resulted in overlapping speech that had the effect of increasing how they coalesced around issues, with concomitant effects for team solidarity. In terms of teachers’ ability to select, introduce and change topics, this has already been analysed in relation to genre structure. Analysis at that point suggested that topics to be introduced to a disproportionate degree by T1 teaches. This is further corroborated by data outlined in Table 6 below, which allow comparison of the number and proportion of topics introduced by each team member during each meeting.

**Table 6: Number of Topics Introduced or Changed by Each Participant in Each Meeting**

<b>School/Teacher</b>		<b>Meeting 1</b>	<b>Meeting 2</b>	<b>Meeting 3</b>	<b>Totals</b>
<b>Hazel Grove</b>					
Denise	(T1)	40	37	35	<b>112</b>
Saoirse	(T2)	36	26	26	<b>88</b>
<b>Maple Lodge</b>					
Claire	(T1)	45	50	44	<b>138</b>
Andrew	(T2)	32	37	48	<b>117</b>
<b>Willow Way</b>					
Fiona	(T1)	62	61	27	<b>150</b>
Meadhbh	(T2)	27	26	14	<b>67</b>
<b>Total</b>					<b>672</b>

The tendency of T1 teachers, to dominate the introduction and changing of topics, was evident across all meetings at Hazel Park. In Willow Way, it was particularly pronounced, with Fiona controlling will over twice as many topics as Meadhbh. At Maple Lodge however, control over the introduction of topics was much more evenly distributed. In this dyad both teachers concerned were equally qualified to teach the subject that was the focus of the team-teaching initiative, they had both completed recognised training in the inclusion of learners deemed to have disability and both worked closely together as part of the Special Educational Needs team in the school. This seemed to lead to a remarkable degree of equity in both teachers control over the introduction of topic and the discursive congruence with which this was done.

**Using Turns in Variety of Ways (including offering interpretations or summaries).**

The author coded for seven different uses to which turns are typically put by discourse participants, based on Fairclough's (2003) egalitarian template for this. The seven analytic categories used were: suggesting, confirming, clarifying, contradicting, interrupting, interpreting/offering opinions and summarising. The research was interested in whether or not each of these uses was available to each discourse participant. It was not interested, for example in the total number of instances of each use demonstrated by each participant. Thus, he simply looked for a minimum number of (three) instances of each type of use by

each teacher in each meeting. Once he reached this number for each type of use in each meeting, he moved onto the text type of use or the next meeting. The maximum possible number of each type of use was fifty-four (three instances of each use, by each of two teachers over three meetings across three case study schools). A copy of the completed checklist used for this task can be found in Appendix K. A summary of this data is set out in Table 7 below.

**Table 7: Use of Turns by Discourse Participants During Team-Teaching Meetings**

<b>Types of Use to Which Turns were Put</b>	<b>Total Number of Uses for Analytic Purposes (Max. 54)</b>
Suggestions	54
Confirmation	54
Clarification	54
Contradiction	36
Interruption	54
Interpretation/Opinion	54
Summary	44

Data in Table 7 suggests that almost all types of turn, were available to all participants during meetings, except contradiction and, in the case of one specific team-teaching dyad, summary. This was irrespective of whether teachers occupied the T1 or T2, positions and regardless of their training or the gender composition of dyads. It was suggestive of close, informal, collegiate and participative social relations within the dyads studied. The aversion to using turns to contradict colleagues seemed to corroborate findings presented earlier regarding that the pre-eminent communicative purpose of team-teaching meetings was to maintain team solidarity. The fact that the researcher could not find even three instances of contradiction in most meetings (see Appendix K) provided empirical evidence of the degree to which potential conflict was avoided by teachers. A failure to use turns to summarise discussions, seemed to occur only in two meetings at Willow Way. A facility in MAXQDA (VERBI SOFTWARE, 2019), allowed the researcher to recover the text of each instance of a code relating to each type of use. Analysis of this revealed that the meetings concerned were dominated by evaluation of the team-teaching initiative, which did not involve, nor was it enhanced by the use of summaries.

Overall, findings about the social relations of meetings, as indicated by teachers' access to a variety of uses to which they put their turns, suggested that they enjoyed fairly

equal access to semiotic resources for meaning-making, including meaning-making about disability and team-teaching to support the inclusion of those placed in this category. The use of turns also suggested relatively informal, deferent and collegiate social relations between teachers. However, access to various types of turn for various uses, did not offset the tendency of T1 teachers to dominate knowledge exchanges, especially the introduction of topics and the basis on which this was done. Nor did it diminish their ability to influence how the legitimisation of decisions was framed. It was within these genre features of team-teaching meetings, not any hierarchy of formality or social distance, that control over the semiotic variability available to teachers for meaning-making about disability was exercised.

## 6.5 Summary and Conclusion

This chapter looked at how ritualised and recurrent features of discourse use within team-teaching meetings enabled and constrained the range of semiotic resources available to teachers to assert particular truth claims about learners deemed to have disability. It suggested that these *actional* meanings had an important role to play. Initial observations suggested that teachers were new to these types of meetings, which was thought to affect both their awareness of their genre features and how these could be used to their advantage. The fact that few organisational devices, such as agendas or minutes, were used seemed to attest to a fairly informal approach to the conduct of team-teaching meetings. Yet, it became clear during analysis that the participant structure of these meetings was far more rigid than they first appeared. This rigidity worked to limit significantly the semiotic variability available to participants to make meaning about learners deemed to have disability.

Analysis of the semiotic *activity* of team-teaching meetings suggested that their preeminent communicative purpose was to preserve team solidarity. Otherwise, activity focussed in the main on knowledge exchanges, which accounted for almost three-quarters (72.84%) of all exchanges recorded across all meetings. Knowledge exchanges mostly involved teachers exchanging information and opinions about student characteristics, including the characteristics of students deemed to have disability. They also focused on exchanging information about the curricula and programmes followed by all students. Teachers did not spend anything like the same amount of time discussing the practicalities and logistics of team-teaching *per se*, which was a surprise to the researcher.

Knowledge exchanges allowed teachers not only to share information and opinions about students and programmes, but to frame the discourses within which discussions about these things took place. As well as allowing them to assert particular truth claims, including claims about students deemed to have disability, it also allowed them to frame the discursive perspectives within which these claims were set. In other words, it gave them significant

control over the deployment of discourse. For analytical purposes, knowledge exchanges were split into knower-initiated and other-initiated types. In all settings, T1 teachers initiated almost three times as many knower-initiated knowledge exchanges as T2 teachers. This meant that they dominated not only the introduction of topics to be addressed within team-teaching meetings, but also the discursive context within which these were discussed. Thus T1 teachers exerted a substantial influence over the deployment of discourse within team-teaching dyads, including discourse relating to learners deemed to have disability.

T1 teachers' dominance over the deployment of discourse within knower-initiated knowledge exchanges was augmented by how other-initiated knowledge exchanges transpired. These latter types of exchange are initiated by a person who wishes to acquire knowledge from another. In two of the cases studied, other-initiated knowledge exchanges were initiated by T2 teacher three and four times as often (respectively) as T1 teachers, reflecting a disproportionate demand by T2 teachers for information from their T1 colleagues. In the third case, the T2 teacher's (Meadhbh) close relationship with the school's behavioural support team, and the specific knowledge about Phillip to which this gave her access, helped to mitigate the T1 teacher's (Fiona) domination of other-initiated knowledge exchanges.

The domination by T1 teachers of both types of knowledge exchange, meant that many of the topics introduced by them for discussion tended to focus on issues of interest to them, which often reflected the specific responsibilities they had within their team-teaching initiatives. We will look further at the implications of this shortly. This domination also left those occupying the T2 position having to negotiate with their T1 counterparts to gain access to discursive power, an objective that, as we have already seen, had to be balanced with maintaining the solidarity of the teaching team. This balancing act meant that it was essential for them to secure the acquiescence of the T1 teacher in relation to any truth assertions they might make and remain mindful of signals from prior discussions about what types of discourse would be acceptable or uncontroversial. This, in turn, introduced an element of social hierarchy into each team, which privileged the person in the T1 position. While power inequalities of this kind are seen as detrimental to the effectiveness of team-teaching as a support to inclusion (Department of Education and Science, 2017a), they were found to persist within two of the teams studied in this work, despite the apparently equal access to semiotic resources for meaning making, suggested by analysis of teachers use of turns.

Across all meetings, activity exchanges accounted for a little over a quarter of all linguistic exchanges (27.16%). Actor-initiated activity exchanges, that are initiated by a person offering to perform an action, comprised a quarter of these. It was the type of



exchange least enumerated in each meeting. Other-initiated activity exchanges, that are initiated by a person requesting that an action be performed by another, amounted to about three quarters. The only time actor-initiated activity exchanges seemed to be deemed appropriate by teachers, was when they were offered as a sign of the commitment their team-teaching dyad. Otherwise they seemed to be discouraged within the genres of team-teaching meetings, as posing a threat to the solidarity of the team. Other-initiated activity exchanges, were recorded approximately three times as often as actor-initiated activity exchanges. These usually committed *both* teachers in a dyad to a particular courses of action. Attempts to commit others to unilateral action were very rare. Again these seemed to have been interpreted as a threat to the solidarity of teams.

Analysis of genre structure of team-teaching meetings showed that decisions and commitments in relation to activity exchanges were usually accompanied by some form of legitimisation of these. These legitimisations tended to involve warrants and backing associated with particular discourse perspectives on disability to support them. Thus legitimisations provided a second key site for the deployment of disability discourse. Unlike knowledge exchanges, control over the legitimisation of decisions seemed to be evenly distributed between team-teaching partners, which left overall control of the deployment of discourse largely in the hands T1 teachers.

Overall, the participant structure of team-teaching meetings seemed to conform to a rigid and predictable sequence that was characteristic of a high degree of social control over semiotic resources for meaning making and the reproduction of dominant discourses (Gee, 2012 p. 565). In other words, whatever the dominant use of discourse tended to be (as explored in Chapter 7), the generic structure of team-meetings, as outlined above, was likely to reproduce and reinforce this. Within this structure, instances of explicit disagreement were rare. Not only did listeners tend to engage with the vast majority of topics introduced by speakers, they also rarely questioned or controverted the discursive basis on which this was done. Only in two instances, out of a total of 830 topics introduced, did a listener fail to engage with topic introduced. Only in less than 6% of cases, was the premise on which a topic was introduced, challenged in any way. This was a crucial feature of the generic structure of team-teaching meetings. It allowed whoever controlled the introduction of topics, control over the agendas of team-teaching meetings and control over discursive basis on which issues raised were discussed.

Since it was the T1 teacher in each dyad that dominated knowledge exchanges, the topics of these exchanges tended to focus on issues of particular interest to them and congruent with responsibilities they exercised within their teaching-team dyad. As noted

earlier, T1 teachers invariably exercised a *lead* or *class* teacher role within team-teaching dyads. This led them to assume primary responsibility for the engagement of the whole class in mainstream curricula, preparing students for assessment of this, preparing of materials and activities, and discussing group learning characteristics might be need to be responded to. This meant that a lesser focus was placed on issues related to the deployment of inclusive approaches to instruction such as Universal Design for Learning and differentiating learning activities for individuals. The important thing to note here is a focus on general classroom issues tended to occupy the majority of *both* teaches' attention. The genre of meetings tended promoted joint commitments to action and discourage unilateral ones. Thus, even at this early stage of analysis, there were signs that both teachers' conceptualisations of team-teaching was being limited "to a narrowly circumscribed set of possibilities" (Hart, 1996) that focussed on whole class issues and engagement of all students, including those deemed to have disabilities, in mainstream instructional programmes, rather than facilitating increased participation of students deemed to have disabilities in learning that was appropriate to their abilities and needs. From a CDS perspective, this propensity could have been construed as refocussing resources originally targeted as support the inclusion of students deemed to have disability towards *ableist* interests (Bagleri et al. 2011).

## Chapter 7: How Teachers Represented Learners deemed to have Disability within Team-Teaching Meetings

### 7.1 Introduction

Building on the findings of the previous chapter, this chapter sheds light on the discourses used by teachers to represent students deemed to have disability, as they discussed real instances of team-teaching deployed to support the inclusion of these learners. To do so, it adopts Fairclough's (2003) two-part approach to analysis of representational meanings, which involves first identifying the discursive themes deployed by teachers to represent learners deemed to have disability, and then identifying the broader discourse perspectives on disability from which these were deployed (see Section 5.3 of Methodology chapter).

Rather than focussing on all instances of where students deemed to have disability were represented in discourse within the text of each team-teaching meetings, the study focuses on the discourses pertaining to a single student assessed as having a disability in each case study site. To operationalise this, analysis focuses on the student deemed to have disability, about whom most discussion occurred between the team teachers concerned – namely, Darren at Hazel Park, Julia at Maple Lodge, and Philip at Willow Way. Phillip was the only student in the Willow Way group reported to the author to have been assessed as having a disability. Coincidentally, he was also the student about whom most discussion occurred within this setting. All instances of text, that referred to these students, either directly or indirectly, were extracted into a single document for each, which was subjected to critical discourse analysis.

The multiple cases study approach mandated that each case, in all its complexity, was investigated on a case by case basis, so that elements of text and context could be adequately explored. Only then, are cases compared. To reflect this process, findings of analysis in relation to how each individual learner was represented in discourse are presented sequentially in Sections 7.2 (for Darren), 7.3 (for Julia) and 7.4 (for Philip). The chapter concludes with an analysis that looks across all the cases, to see what was the same or different about how these learners were represented in discourse (Section 7.5). Throughout this process, particular attention is paid to the discourse perspectives that gained hegemony in this process. The key orientating questions that guided the chapter were:

- What themes permeated teachers' representations of students deemed to have disabilities within the team-teaching meetings studied?

- What were the discourse perspectives from which these were deployed?
- What discourse perspectives dominated meaning-making about learners deemed to have disabilities and how was this dominance achieved?

## **7.2 Discursive Representation of Darren in the Hazel Park Dyad**

At Hazel Park, Darren was the student assessed as having disabilities, about whom most discussion occurred during team-teaching meetings. All instances of text, that referred to him, either directly or indirectly, were extracted into a single document which was subjected to critical discourse analysis. The following themes emerged from this analysis.

### **Exceptionality Through Group Membership**

Representation of Darren's exceptionality occurred against the background of his placement in a group that had been initially established on the basis of deviation from postulated norms for human development. As Denise (T1) made clear at the beginning of the first meeting at Hazel Park, "twelve students" (HP Mtg. 1 Turn 10) had been taken out of two first year groups to form the group in which the team-teaching initiative under study focusses, based on the fact that they all had "psychological assessments" (HP Mtg. 1: Turn 12) and thus, were "entitled to learning support/resource hours" and "as much attention as possible" (HP Mtg. 1: Turn 8). The innateness and exceptionality of their difference was confirmed within a class profile document, a copy of which was supplied to the researcher in connection with the study. It was also asserted through repeated references to the categories of need into which individual students had been placed.

That said, an interesting feature of the discourse used at Hazel Park to represent student difference, was the latitude taken by teachers in their interpretation of exceptionality. Sometimes this was deemed to be related specifically to disability; sometimes it did not. Thus, Denise noted that, while the class "started off with about eight students" with "psychological reports", its existence soon became evident to other teachers, who "complained that their classes were too big" by comparison (HP Mtg. 1: Turn 14). This led to the addition of four more students to the group, who were selected not on the basis of professional assessments, but on the basis of needs such as lack of competence in the English language or general misbehaviour (HP Mtg. 1: Turn 282). This led Denise to assert that, without vigilance, the class could become a dumping ground for students deemed to have behavioural difficulties. As she put it, "this would be my big worry ... that maybe more students will be put in" (HP Mtg. 1: Turn 20). She entreated Saoirse (T2) to work with her to ensure that this did not happen, saying, "I've already heard different stories of different

students who aren't getting on in the class they're in and that maybe they could go into me ... So we're going to have to watch" to avoid that (HP Mtg. 1: Turn 20).

Later in the meeting Denise (T1) returned to this issue, stating, "I'm going to try to fight my corner to keep this [group] as small as possible" (HP Mtg. 1: Turn 222). This implicit acknowledgement of latitude taken by mainstream teachers and school management, to the criteria for admission to the group was significant. It marked this process out as a site where tensions played out between the interests of learners deemed to have disability and those without such a designation.

The fact that placement in small classes conferred on learners an attribution of exceptionality, was not lost on Darren or others in his group. Evidence of this can be found in Denise's report of a classroom discussion that occurred in the very first classes in which she engaged with them:

- 36 Denise Darren, one of the lads in the class, he has already asked why the class is so small.
- 37 Saoirse Really? So he's obviously noticed then.
- 38 Denise "Are they the weakest class?" and "Why is it so small?" and "Why is there SNA support in the room?" and so on.

(HP Mtg. 1: Turns 36-38)

In this excerpt, teachers acknowledge the perception of Darren and his peers, that the school had engaged in surveillance of difference, that it used determinations of difference as a basis for establishing class groups (of different sizes), and that the membership of certain groups had the potential to stigmatise learners. For Saoirse, the only surprise was that learners themselves seemed to notice the operation of this process.

Denise attempts to respond to their concerns in the following excerpt.

- 54 Denise ... like straight away you could see the rest of the class, when he asked that question, the rest of them, their little heads appearing, "Why are we in this small class?"
- 55 Saoirse Yeah, yeah; good question!
- 56 Denise They obviously were worried [too], so it was brilliant that I could say, "Look, we're all working at the same level now!"
- 57 Saoirse Yeah, yeah.

58 Denise And the reason that I said that they were in such a small class was obviously that literacy is so important and their English is the most important subject in the school.  
(HP Mtg. 1: Turns 54-58)

Clearly, Denise's assertions that the class was put together to support the development of students' language and communication skills in English, were at variance with those she outlined to Saoirse earlier, and which is set out in the opening paragraphs of this section. Her explanations to students did not assuage their concerns about why the class was so small and why it had been assigned two teachers and an SNA. Their concerns about stigmatisation remained.

### **Exceptionality through Personal Difference**

Darren was also represented as exceptional in ways that were specific to him. These were not always negative or associated with his physical disposition. For example, in reporting Darren's concerns about the size of the class, Denise made no reference to the fact that he was a wheelchair-user or anything that might result in him being assigned an identity on the basis of his physical differences. Rather she represented him as able, empathetic, insightful, capable of leadership, and, as we have already seen, highly sensitive to the ways in which difference can be made visible through differential treatment. It was significant that Darren was represented as the spokesperson for the group, with the rest of "their little heads appearing" only after he has posed insightful questions relating to stigmatisation that concerned all of them (HP Mtg. 1: Turn 54).

This was in contrast to Saoirse's tendency to focus explicitly on Darren's physical difference, such as whether his SNA, Danielle, had been asked to assist Darren exclusively or whether she had been assigned to a wider range of learners. Once she had broached this issue, Saoirse went on to inquire further about the intrinsic nature of Darren's difference, for example, though her modalised and unfinished question in Turn 45 below (HP Mtg. 1: Turn 45).

43 Saoirse ... does she have a list of students as well or is she with the whole class as such?  
44 Denise She's with the whole class but really she's with Darren the most.  
45 Saoirse And is Darren, what's ...  
46 Denise Darren is in a wheelchair, so really it's physical needs more than anything.

- 47      Saoirse    Okay.
- 48      Denise      Okay? So that's why she's with Darren.
- (HP Mtg. 1: Turns 43-48)

The above excerpt represented the beginning of a divergence between the two teachers in the Hazel Park dyad, in how they chose to represent Darren. The divergence between the teachers involved here was greater than in any other dyad. This finding will be addressed in more detail in the next chapter, which reports on issues of style. For now, it is sufficient to note that there was a fundamental difference in how Denise and Saoirse represented Darren in discourse. Denise focused on Darren's abilities. She cast Darren's unwillingness "to accept Danielle's [SNA] help" in a positive light, asserting that this was because "he's so independent" (HP Mtg. 1: Turn 48). She signalled her solidarity with his position by adding immediately, "He's brilliant, like, he's brilliant" (HP Mtg. 1: Turn 48). She reinforced her assertion of his capacity for independence by reporting that she had "seen him in the corridors, he's whizzing [around]" adding again "he's brilliant. He's a really independent little man ..." (HP Mtg. 1: Turn 50).

### **Commonality versus Difference**

This characterisation, emphasised Darren's agency and resilience, and his ability to negotiate his physical, social and cultural environments successfully and independently. It also emphasised aspects of his character that he held in common with other students, namely his liveliness and *joie de vivre*. Finally, in foregrounding Darren's successful negotiation of any physical barriers operating at the school, Denise reinforced his right to belong in the group and the school. At the same time, she alluded to the fact that Darren was "in a wheelchair", that he had "physical needs" and that he tired "very easily at the moment" (HP Mtg. 1: Turns 46-50 and 236). However, she tended to qualify such assertions with adjuncts or additional statements that counter-balanced any of their negative connotations. This usually involved making references to Darren's capabilities (HP Mtg. 1: Turns 48-50, 184-185, 244) or characteristics he shared with his peers, such as his capacity to worry in the following excerpt.

- 236      Denise      ... that's Darren that's in the wheelchair. So we've  
already mentioned him and he's just a worrier. He's  
a really serious wee man, so serious!
- (HP Mtg. 1: Turn: 236)

Conversely, Saoirse tended to focus on essentialist representations of Darren's difference, such as in the excerpt below where, despite Denise's efforts to counter-balance her one-dimensional focus on his physical differences, Saoirse singled out the fact that he had "physical" deficits and was "[s]low to accept help" (HP Mtg. 1: Turn 48) to record in her teacher's journal.

- 243 Saoirse Wow! But again it's just the physical ...?  
244 Denise Very capable, very capable but he's very slow to accept help.  
245 Saoirse Slow to accept help [writing this down].  
(HP Mtg. 1: Turns: 243-245)

### **A Resource to Other Students**

Darren was also discursively represented through his relationship with his peers, which was used to foreground his agency. For example, he was portrayed as someone who drew on his personal strengths to enrich the learning experiences of others. In the following excerpt, Darren's positive and humorous disposition, his ability and willingness to listen actively, and his well-developed oral language skills, were all highlighted as resources that he could mobilise to support the social and academic inclusion of some of his peers.

- 179 Saoirse ... Would he work well with Claire or is that putting in too many together do you think?  
180 Denise Do you know, because Darren, Darren is quite vocal, isn't he?  
181 Saoirse Yeah. He does ...  
182 Denise So he could actually bring Claire ...  
183 Saoirse Along!  
184 Denise And he's funny.  
185 Saoirse And he lets people talk.  
186 Denise And Claire likes a little laugh as well; she likes her little giggle so ...

(HP Mtg. 2: Turns 179-186)

Not only was a very benign and positive view of Darren evident in the words used, but the congruence of the language used and the overlapping deployment of this by teachers, reinforced this as a jointly held view. The representation of Darren as a valued member of the class was also ascribed to his peers in this excerpt.



Additional weight was given to representations of Darren as a valuable resource to his classmates, through Saoirse's assertion that she really liked the way "he does speak but he lets others speak as well" (HP Mtg. 1: Turn 189). Darren was also seen as a potentially valuable support to Lauren, another student in the class who had been assessed as having dyslexia as evidenced in the following excerpt.

- 200 Denise ... he definitely has good background knowledge in drama.
- 201 Saoirse Ye-ye-yeah. Yeah.
- 202 Denise So I think that will give Claire and Lauren a little bit of confidence also that ...
- 203 Saoirse Yeah, absolutely because Lauren would be very quiet. She, would she, I mean, she has not been diagnosed with anything?
- 204 Denise Lauren? Eh, Lauren has eh, eh, dyslexia.  
(HP Mtg. 2: Turns 200-204)

### **A Charitable Case**

While, Darren's relationship with his peers was often used to represent him as someone with considerable agency, who could extoll confidence in others and facilitate their engagement with learning, it was also used to background his independence and any sense of his control over his learning environment. In such instances, he was grammatically positioned in a way that emphasised the role his peers played in facilitating his inclusion backgrounding his own role in this. In such instances, his peers were portrayed as sensitive, worthy and powerful in responding proactively to issues related to his mobility and his access the physical infrastructure of the school. A female student, Carrie, was singled out for particularly mention in this regard.

- 246 Denise ... the class are amazing with him. Like there's one particular girl, Carrie, I see her; she's walking in, she's lifting the chair out of the way [for him] before I even see it's there, before I even know he's coming in, because she knows Darren's on his way, you know? Brilliant, brilliant!
- 247 Saoirse That's lovely, isn't it? Lovely! You really see the goodness in people when you see ... You know, you might think they're really bold and they misbehave but

when you see someone with, like, physical disability or whatever, you know? It's great to see that!

(HP Mtg. 1: Turns 246-247)

In assimilating Darren's difference into the large generic category of *physical disability*, Saoirse accentuated his difference from his peers and foregrounded his similarity with an abstract and absent group, with whom he shared some essential and generalisable physical quality. This had the effect of associating him with an unfortunate generic physical condition, and worthy of the good deeds of others on account of this. Within this charity discourse, Darren was grammatically positioned as an object of care rather an integral, valuable and agentic member of the class. Its deployment had the effect of eliding his inalienable right to participate in the class and to be facilitated in doing so as a matter of right.

At the same time, Carrie was characterised as "fabulous" and "a little lady" (HP Mtg. 1: Turn 252) for her proactive interventions in clearing the way for Darren. While this characterisation was primarily deployed to depict Carrie as having a caring, sensitive, proactive and virtuous disposition, it had collateral effects. It foregrounded Darren's physical differences and reinforced representations of him that emphasised his dependence on others, while backgrounding his agency and right to belong with appropriate levels of support. Textually, this effect was achieved by foregrounded Carrie grammatically within teachers' contributions, which had the effect of foregrounding her agency in these events and backgrounding that of Darren. Thus she was depicted as "walking in" ahead of Darren and "lifting the chair out of the way", even before a teacher would have seen "it's there" or knew he was "coming in" (HP Mtg. 1: Turn 246). As we will see shortly, Darren tended to reject any suggestion that he was worthy of charity, along with any "sick role" ascribed to him (Parsons, 1951 p. 455). Valorisation of Carrie and others made this rejection appear unappreciative at the very least, as opposed to a legitimate expression of his right to be consulted about supports put in place to support him and his entitlement to unfettered access to an inclusive learning environment designed for all.

### **Representations of Daren's Rejection of the Sick Role**

As we have just seen, Darren rejected the ascription to him of the *sick role* (Parsons, 1951). This was most evident in his refusal to accept SNA support, unless this was provided in a highly unobtrusive and non-stigmatising way. The sick role is thought to operate as a culturally manufactured "institutional location" within which essentialist types of knowledge about disability can be articulated (Mitchell & Snyder, 2006). It carries many exemptions for

the person to whom it is ascribed, including the power to legitimately relinquish “performance of certain types of responsibility” for one’s “own state” (Parsons, 1951, p. 456). However, there is a price to be paid for divesting oneself of these responsibilities, namely ceding to institutions, including schools, the power to determine the nature of one’s sickness and the supports provided to contend with this.

In Darren’s case, the deployment of support involved assigning an SNA to assist him. SNA support is applied for by schools, and allocated on behalf of the state by the NCSE, a statutory agency tasked with providing special educational resources and services to schools. At the time of the study, the NCSE allocated this support *inter alia*, on the basis of the categories of need into which a student had been placed. At no point in this process was Darren consulted about what he required. When he did express an opinion, it was to reject any overt assistance. This called to mind the warning of Henry (in McDermott, Goldman, & Varenne, 2006 p. 16) that schools tend to metamorphose the exceptional learner, assigning them “the kind of Self the school can manage, and then proceeds to minister to the Self it has made”. The only basis on which SNA support might have been justifiable in Darren’s case, was to assist him, in the most covert of ways possible to negotiate his reportedly high levels of physical fatigue. Otherwise, it seemed more about satisfying the school’s need to be seen to respond to his apparent disability, than a meaningful and sensitive support to his learning.

The deployment of SNA support to Darren, and his reaction to this, became a significant site for the negotiating of discourse relating to disability at Hazel Park. On the one hand, Saoirse noted Darren’s reluctance to talk about his physical differences or to accept help as the most salient points to record about him in her journal. On the other, Denise empathised with his position that actions intended to support his participation in school often rendered his physical difference more salient to others. She represented his eschewal of SNA support as an indicator of his overall abilities and his strong desire for independence. Her support of Darren’s right to reject such social arrangements can be seen in the following excerpt:

- |     |         |   |
|-----|---------|---|
| 174 | Denise  | ... he’s more than willing to work with you but he sees, particularly when he’s working with em, John, with the alternate SNA ... |
| 175 | Saoirse | It’s not working.   |
| 176 | Denise  | He sees, he feels that he’s losing his independence. You’re okay because you’ve got [responsibility for] everybody in the class.  |

177           Saoirse   Ye- ye-yeah, it not just him, ye-ye-yeah.

178           Denise    You don't just help him ...

(HP Mtg. 2: Turns 174-178)

The divergence between Denise (T1) and Saoirse (T2) in this issue was not as straight forward as might have first appeared. For example, Darren also acknowledged that the support that Saoirse *actually* gave him in class was offered in a sensitive and discrete way that showed she was well aware of the possible stigmatising effect of this.

As well as showing a divergence in how teachers viewed Darren's rejection of SNA support, the above excerpt seems to show evidence that both teachers were able to frame issues relating to Darren's inclusion, in a context that was wider than just his innate and exceptional differences; one that included the importance of social relationships with others, including staff. This capacity was reiterated elsewhere, for example, when Saoirse asserted that in order to benefit from inclusion, students with "learning difficulty" needed to be able "to respond well to the teacher, [and] the SNA that's assigned to them" (HP Mtg. 3: Turn 80). Denise agreed with Saoirse, that the relationship between students and their teachers and SNAs was crucial to successful inclusion, arguing that "the whole atmosphere is changed" (HP Mtg. 3: Turn 83) where such relationships are incompatible. Yet, she felt that incompatibilities could easily occur, especially where "the SNA changes in the course of the year" (HP Mtg. 3: Turn 85) or where suitable teachers or SNAs are unavailable (HP Mtg. 3: Turn 166). Such assertions were congruent with social and cultural perspectives on disability which recognise that barriers can be created by the mismatch between perceived impairments and the supports made available to respond to these, including the personal dispositions of those tasked with providing them.

### **Dissonance in the Deployment of Non-Essentialist Discourse at Hazel Park.**

The foregoing discussion contain several examples of where the use of non-essentialist discourse to represent Darren was accompanied simultaneously by the deployment of essentialist types. For example, in discussion of his successful negotiation of the physical barriers operating at the school (a social model perspective), Denise reinforced his right to belong in the group and the school (a rights-based approach). These points were made however, at the same time as statements that referred to his being "in a wheelchair", having "physical needs" and tiring "very easily at the moment" (HP Mtg. 1: Turns 46-50 and 236), factors directly associated with his innate and exceptional differences. In fairness, Denise only asserted this deficit-based representation when specifically requested to do so by Saoirse (HP Mtg. 1: Turns 43-48).

Similarly, Darren's relationship with his peers was often used to represent him as someone with considerable agency, who could engender confidence in others and facilitate their inclusion and participation in learning. At the same time, the help he received from them in order to negotiate his physical environment was used to background his agency, independence and that sense that he could fully control his learning environment. Finally, simultaneous deployment of dissonant discourses of disability were applied to the issue of Darren's entitlement to SNA support. On the one hand, this was represented as an indicator of his rejection of the *sick role*, his eschewal of supports that were "not working" for him (HP Mtg. 2: Turns Turn 175), that increased the salience of his difference, and that compromised his strong desire for independence (HP Mtg. 2: Turns 176). On the other, both Denise and Saoirse asserted a need for this support, where it was offered in a way that was "focused not just him" (HP Mtg. 2: Turns 177) and did not increase the visibility of his innate physical difference.

For her part, Saoirse generally acquiesced with Denise's representations of Darren as an agentic and valued member of the class. At the same time, she focused on his physical difference and whether he needed an SNA (HP Mtg. 1: Turns 43-45) and why (HP Mtg. 1: Turn 45). She seemed to *require* information from Denise about the intrinsic nature of Darren's difference and his categorical construction in order to make sense of her own support role. As we will see in Section 8.2, this kind of dissonance persisted in Saoirse's representations of all of those deemed to have disability in the class.

### **Discourse Perspectives in the Representation of Darren.**

Overall, examination of the perspectives from which discourse was deployed to represent Darren, suggested that teachers in the Hazel Park dyad drew largely but not exclusively on positivist epistemologies and essentialist understandings of human difference. This was true whether Darren was depicted in a positive or negative light. Negative essentialist representations of Darren included his exceptionality by virtue of his membership of an exceptional group and exceptionality on the basis of him being a wheelchair-user who tired easily. Darren's relationship with his peers also provided an opportunity for the deployment of charity discourse that foregrounded his difference from other students and backgrounded his independence and control over his learning environment. This construed him as someone who was a legitimate object of the care and good deeds of his classmates, which, in turn elided his right to belong in the class without the need to depend on his classmates to do so.

Positive essentialist representations of Darren depicted him as exhibiting lots of innate characteristics in common with his peers or to a superior degree than them, including intelligence, sensitivity to the learning dispositions of his peers, leadership qualities, social insight, and a drive for independence. These served to foreground Darren's agency and resilience, and his ability to negotiate his physical, social and cultural environments, and reinforce his right to belong in the class. Whether he was depicted in a powerful or dependent light, Darren was predominantly represented in terms of characteristics that were innate to him. There were differences in the way individual teachers drew on essentialist discourse, which made it difficult to determine whether or not a particular discursive orientation attached to the dyad as a whole. This issue will be revisited in the chapter that follows, which discusses the role of style in meaning-making about disability.

### **7.3 Discursive Representation of Julia in the Maple Lodge Dyad**

Julia was the student deemed to have disability about whom most discussion occurred during team-teaching meetings at Maple Lodge. The same approach as used for analysis of discourse pertaining to Darren at Hazel park was used in relation to Julia. The following themes emerged from this analysis.

#### **Exceptionality through Group Membership**

As in the case of Darren, representation of Julia's exceptionality occurred against the background of her placement in an LCA group that had already been formed on the basis of student difference. As with Hazel Park, the innateness and exceptionality of her differences was confirmed within a class profile document, a copy of which was supplied to the researcher in connection with the study. It was also asserted through repeated references within meeting transcripts to the categories of need into which individual students in the group had been placed (DES, 2005).

#### **Exceptionality through Personal Difference**

Given the exceptionality of the group, the fact that it was deemed necessary to assign a second teacher to this class primarily to offer additional support to Julia and another student Aoife (initially at least), gave an early indication of the degree to which her needs were seen as very exceptional indeed, even in relation to others in the class. In addition, the amount of time given over to discussion of Julia and Aoife during meetings, also contributed to representations of her exceptionality. Of a total of thirty-five instances in which codes were applied to segments of text relating to Julia, eighteen of these were assigned to the

*exceptionality* code. This was a clear indication of the degree to which her learning disposition was deemed remarkable by the teachers involved.

The issues of Julia's innate exceptionalism, emerged early in the first meeting at Maple Lodge, when Claire (T1) observed that Andrew (T2) had first become involved in the team "to help Aoife and Julia" (ML Mtg. 1: Turn 9). Andrew concurred, adding that he was seen by students as "more like Aoife's and Julia's helper" than a second teacher in the room (ML Mtg. 1: Turn 18). This discussion suggested that both teachers and students believed that Julia (and Aoife) required exceptional levels of support. Andrew's use of the term *helper*, connoted very rudimentary levels of support in basic areas more congruent with the role of an SNA.

Discourses of exceptionalism were also rooted in discussions relating to Julia's limited ability of to function independently, both in school and outside. This was evident in discussions about whether or not she (and Aoife) would be able to independently conduct a survey relating to an LCA task, which involved the collection of oral responses from students in other classes. For example, Andrew wondered if they would be capable of going "[u]nsupervised, just down the corridor?" (ML Mtg. 1: Turn 38). For her part, Claire asserted that they had "done it before ... with Mr. Smith" and hence should be able to do it again (ML Mtg. 1: Turn 39). Yet, in the end, Andrew thought that it would be important "to make sure that the two girls, my two, [Julia and Aoife] would be included" in the task in a meaningful way (ML Mtg. 1: Turn 100). He expressed his belief that "the likelihood is that, if they go out together, Julia is going to shy away from it anyway and Aoife won't engage" (ML Mtg. 1: Turn 104). Not only does this discussion depict Julia's need for support as exceptional, but Andrew's representation of her and Aoife as "my two" (ML Mtg. 1: Turn 100) draws a clear distinction between them and other students in the group, many of whom also had assessed disabilities. While Andrew noted that, as sixth-years, it was not age-appropriate to supervise them closely, in the end both teachers agreed that they should "be around" to "point them in the right direction" (ML Mtg. 1: Turn 110).

This example provides evidence that, while teachers did not represent Julia as a student who presented behavioural problems, they did perceive a need to monitor her engagement with learning tasks closely, in order to scaffold their engagement with these and protect them against failure. However, as we will see in shortly, acceptance of the need for constant surveillance comes at a cost.

Representation of Julia also seemed to be influenced by references to her exceptionally low levels of perceptual reasoning and other types of cognitive processing. For

example, during planning for a media studies module on soap operas as a genre of television programmes, the following discussion took place:

- 209 Claire ... Then they have to look at soap operas!
- 210 Andrew Yeah, well some of them will know loads of those anyway. But the likes of Julia doesn't watch any television!
- 211 Claire Nothing?
- 212 Andrew Nothing. A buzzing television maybe but I don't know. She doesn't really follow the stories you see, so they're not really that interesting to her, you know?
- 213 Claire Does she watch movies?
- 214 Andrew Not really, no!
- 215 Claire What does she do at home?
- 216 Andrew Very little I imagine.

(ML Mtg. 1: Turns 209 -216)

Julia's inability to engage with what were represented as commonly accessible television programmes, depicted her innate cognitive abilities as different to other to an exceptionally degree. Similarly, discussions of Julia's attempts to complete her *mock* Leaving Certificate Applied examination paper conveyed this view. The discussion opened with a review of her overall grade for the paper.

- 87 Claire Seven-teen per cent! And that was, I was ...
- 88 Andrew Seventy? Seventeen? [Intake of breath through teeth] Mmm.
- 89 Claire Seventeen! And I think that was me being ...
- 90 Andrew Generous?
- 91 Claire Generous. Now in saying that, like, she left out a lot of the paper, you know. The actual visual ...
- 92 Andrew Yeah, she's a girl with moderate intellectual disability, so ...
- 93 Claire The Audio-Visual [section] was fine; it was fine. Like it wasn't brilliant but I think she did as well as she could have done.
- 94 Andrew Mmm. She'll find it hard to extract the information.

(ML Mtg. 2: Turns 87-94)



A little later they continued:

- 99 Claire Em, but she was better with the reading comprehension  
... it's the memory there that's going to ...
- 100 Andrew Yeah, she has no retention, yeah.
- 101 Claire Yeah, no retention, yeah. So em, [she] would leave out  
massive chunks.

(ML Mtg. 2: Turns 99-101)

During these discussions, Julia was characterised as finding it “hard to extract the information” from text-based and visually presented materials (ML Mtg. 2: Turn 94), experiencing memory difficulties and having little “retention” (ML Mtg. 2: Turn 100), leaving out “massive chunks” when trying to read (ML Mtg. 2: Turn 101), making “poor” attempts at answering questions requiring comprehension (ML Mtg. 2: Turn 96), and achieving very low “marks” on examinations (ML Mtg. 2: Turn 95). In addition, there was an explicit reference to Julia’s placement in the “moderate intellectual disability” category (ML Mtg. 2: Turn 92). Caution needs to be exercised here, since this reference may have been made as much to inform the researcher of this category than to articulate a personal discourse position. Even if this was true however, Andrew’s use of categorical terminology to position Julia as exceptional in the mind of the researcher was significant. Not only did Andrew tie representations of Julia into a category of exceptionality, it seemed that he saw this categorisation as a “natural” basis for grouping students together, as suggested in the following excerpt.

- 154 Andrew Uh-hum. I mean if you were even to separate them  
into, you know, the way they fall naturally into groups;  
say Joanne and Ciara together ...
- 155 Claire Yeah.
- 156 Andrew Aoife and Julia.

(ML Mtg. 2: Turns 154-156)

Moreover, the exceptional characteristics upon which placement in such a category was predicated, were seen as self-evident.

- 365 Andrew ... So eh, em, there's no individual in particular that we  
need to speak about now? You're okay?
- 366 Claire Em, well like you know, I think it's safe to say, you know,

we know the difficulties with Julia.

367 Andrew Yeah, yeah.

(ML Mtg. 3: Turns 365-367)

Finally, these characteristics were depicted as permanent and immutable, as is evident in this discussion below, of Julia's need for "a lot of extra time" compared to her classmates (ML Mtg. 3: Turn 89).

88 Claire Em, obviously Julia ...

89 Andrew She needs a lot of extra time ...

90 Claire You know. And she'll always need that; I don't think ...

91 Andrew Yeah, [that] that's going to change, you know.

(ML Mtg. 3: Turns 88-91)

Representations of Julia's difficulties as innate, exceptional, permanent and immutable were also evident in teacher discussions of her need to transition to on-going specialist provision after secondary school.

367 Andrew ... She did very well in NLN, the National Learning Network, over Easter.

368 Claire Oh, brilliant. Brilliant.

369 Andrew You know, she has a session there. And on Thursday of this week we're going down to [Local Area] to the NLN section there. They're giving us a kind of a guided [tour of the] set up as to what courses they have on offer and so on. So it might be useful; Mandy might come as well from guidance and em, and get that done, you know.

(ML Mtg. 3, Turns 367-369)

The NLN describes itself as a registered Irish charity that provides flexible training courses and support services for people who need specialist support (NLN, 2019).

### **Personal Tragedy**

Personal tragedy discourse was also used in relation to Julia to express concern about the suitability of any service in meeting her perceived needs. In the following extract, these concerns focused on the efficacy of post-school provision that was being contemplated for her.

- 216 Andrew ... she's going to be leaving school now, you know ...
- 217 Claire What's going to become of her?
- 218 Andrew Well that's it! I mean she is linked to [Name of Local Service Provider] and we have a meeting with Máire next week just to look at the idea of centre planning so that when she moves on that there'll be some kind of continuity for her. It is tough but I'm just conscious of her, you know.

(ML Mtg. 1: Turns 216 - 218)

The concerns articulated about appropriate post-secondary provision for Julia were mirrored by worries expressed in relation to her ability to engage with the school-based programmes in which she was currently involved. Clearly, there was a mismatch between the demands of these and Julia's ability to negotiate these. Discussion here, was again laced with tragedy discourse.

- 209 Claire But like, you know, [there were] easy questions in the audio [-visual section] that she completely missed, like [she] didn't even ... [attempt]. Like this is where they should be getting full marks.
- 210 Andrew Yeah, it's a worry, isn't it?
- 211 Claire A massive worry!

(ML Mtg. 2: Turns 209 - 211)

Overall, phrases such as "What's going to become of her?" (ML Mtg. 1: Turn 217) and representations that depicted her as capable of "Very little" (ML Mtg. 1: 216), watching a "buzzing television" (ML Mtg. 1: Turn 212) or "always need"[ing] (ML Mtg. 3: Turn 90) "a lot of extra time" (ML Mtg. 3: Turn 89), all served to construct Julia as a passive individual, who required high levels of surveillance and individualised care. While concern for her seemed very genuine, it inhibited representations of her as an agentic learner who had a right to belong in the class and participate in appropriately-pitched learning activities, and to be empowered to vindicate these rights (Holt, 2004).

### **Lack of Appropriate Supports**

There were also themes that emerged in team-teaching discussions at Maple Lodge that were incongruent with essentialist discourse. Some focused on factors affecting Julia's inclusion that were unrelated to her perceived inherent traits, such as the insufficiency of support made available to her. In the extract that follows, Andrew and Claire ascribed Julia's

lack of success in her LCA *mock* examination paper, to a failure on the part of the school to provide her with sufficient support to allow her to do so.

- 203 Claire ... Like Julia, she'll have passed before she's gone into the exam but ...
- 204 Andrew She doesn't have the support, does she?
- 205 Claire She doesn't have support ... Em, and I forgot I suppose how limited she is in an exam situation because of the Key Assignments, you know?
- 206 Andrew Uh-hum. Yeah. See we don't see too much evidence of it, you see.
- 207 Claire No, we don't because we're there to support them.
- 208 Andrew And we're rushing through the, we're rushing through the actual programme.
- 209 Claire Programme, that's it! Because the three [periods per week], yeah ...

(ML Mtg. 2: Turns 203- 209)

As with Willow Way, discourses deployed at Maple Lodge that were incongruent with essentialist representations of disability, were often deployed in tandem with essentialist discourse. So in the above extract, while Julia's difficulties were ascribed in the one hand to "how limited she is", (not how limiting her impairments are) in line with essentialist discourses, the visibility of these difficulties was linked to the inability of the school to offer levels of support that could effectively minimise their salience. This inability was linked with the insufficient number of lessons devoted to this area of the curriculum and to the inordinate pressure on teachers to "rush" the whole group through mandated curriculum content. This analysis was associated, not with traits thought to be inherent to Julia, but with the organisation and delivery of curriculum at school and national levels. In other words, Julia's difficulties were associated with functional limitations that emanated from barriers erected by the ways in which society chose to organise itself (Baglieri, Valle, Connor, & Gallagher, 2011; Gallagher, 2007); ways that failed to take account of her difference. Such analyses are congruent with social and minority models of disability.

### **Commonality**

As in Hazel Park, essentialist discourses were controverted in the Maple Lodge dyad through the foregrounding of characteristics that were universal to all learners and unrelated to ability or disability. In Julia's case, these characteristics included the need for friendship and the ability to collaborate with others. For example, during their first meeting, Claire

responds to Andrew's query about the degree to which Julia and Aoife might be able to cope with collecting data together in an unsupervised setting for a class survey. As we saw earlier, Claire focused on these students' previous success in undertaking similar tasks. Andrew suggested grouping these two students on the basis of their close friendship and propensity to collaborate rather than their ability levels, saying "Julia, [could go] along with, maybe, Aoife because they pal together and they would be a support for each other" (ML Mtg. 1: Turn 106). The reader will recall that he also referred to the desirability of developing their capacity for independent action in light of their age and current position in their learning careers; objectives that have been asserted as universal to all learners (ML Mtg. 1: Turns 106-109). The removal of surveillance and scaffolding designed to support and monitor learning, as soon as this was no longer needed, is also highly a highly inclusive objective. These discourses served to collapse difference between Julia and her peers.

### **The Right to Belong**

In Meeting 3, when it is asserted that Julia needed extra time to engage with all types of learning and that this was unlikely to change in the future (in line with fixed notions of inherent ability), the discussion was counterbalanced by emphasis on her right to be represented within the social fabric of the school, a condition that could only "continue" within the Leaving Certificate Applied programme, through the provision of team-teaching.

- |    |        |  |
|----|--------|--|
| 92 | Claire | But still, being in the room with her peers, you know. That's something!   |
| 93 | Andrew | Absolutely, yeah! No, I mean the programme has been great for those, you know, young people. Otherwise they wouldn't have been able to continue. |

(ML Mtg. 3: Turns 92 - 93)

### **Dissonance in the Deployment of Non-Essentialist Discourse at Maple Lodge**

We have already seen that there was a protracted discussion between Claire and Andrew about Julia's ability to carry out a survey of student opinions related to a Leaving Certificate Applied task independently. Within this, dissonant discourses were simultaneously deployed by individual teachers, which, on the one hand, suggested that Julia's innate and exceptional difficulties could prevent her from completing the task, and on the other, asserted her right and ability to do so, in collaboration with others and with appropriate levels of support. The first position was predicated on essentialist views alone. The second looked to Julia's capabilities, given the right material and social supports in line with more social model explanations of disability. This seemed to indicate that teachers were not necessarily

wedded exclusively to one particular discourse position, but could change positions depending on the topic under discussion.

The use of dissonant discourses also crystallised around teachers' discussion of Julia's engagement with formal assessment procedures relating to the LCA programme. In the extract that follows, Claire and Andrew worry about whether or not it is ethical or useful to inform Julia of her overall *mock* examination result in English and Communication, of just 17%. Claire was concerned that this might impact adversely on her self-esteem and motivation, a risk of that she thought was all the more likely, given that she recently received a similarly low scores in Maths and Hotel and Catering.

- 101 Claire So, I don't know what to use, I don't know when to give this back to her.
- 102 Andrew Uh-hum, uh-hum.
- 103 Claire I'm afraid to give it back to her because she's been very upset.
- 104 Andrew She failed her maths and she failed something else as well, you know?
- 105 Claire Home Ec.
- (ML Mtg. 2: Turns 101-105)

Claire also expressed her belief that Julia's recent absence from school may have been as a result of her having received these poor results.

- 115 Claire ... See, that was Tuesday and she hasn't been in; she wasn't in Friday and I was kind of ...
- 116 Andrew She was out sick actually.
- 117 Claire I was kind of glad she wasn't in on Friday.
- 118 Andrew Yeah, yeah.
- 119 Claire Em, and she asked for it [her result] so I don't think ...
- 120 Andrew Well, do you want me to talk to her about it?
- 121 Claire Yeah, I don't think she ...
- 122 Andrew Because I see her, I see her one-to-one anyway so ...

(ML Mtg. 2: Turns 115-122)

Claire's reservations about returning Julia's result to her, focused on the fact that these would not only highlight the extent of her difference from her peers, but also expose her to possible trauma and the stigmatising effects of failure; effects that issued from

positivist epistemologies that require a cohort of exceptionally to confirm the validity of the *normal* range. At the very time such implicit critiques of essentialist discourse were occurring, teachers also referred to the fact that Julia (and others) would pass their LCA programme on the basis of continuous assessment, even without passing its terminal examinations.

- 106        Andrew    ... Daithí [LCA Co-ordinator] was saying too, that, eh, she will still *get* her LCA, you know?
- 107        Claire        Oh, a hundred per cent. She'll em ... [pass the course].
- 108        Andrew        Just to realise that the paper is not going to be a friend to her in a sense, like, you know?
- 109        Claire        Yeah, em ...
- 110        Andrew        It'll be the continuous assessment that's gone on that's [inaudible] ...
- 111        Claire        Oh, no she'll have passed English and Communications. Em, the interview now in May will probably be another ... [difficult area for her]. But look, she's been fine in the other ... [oral tasks].
- 112        Andrew        Yeah ...
- (ML Mtg. 2: Turns 106-112)

Both teachers seemed uncomfortable about the fact that she would, in all probability, fail most terminal written and oral examinations and that setting her up for this was somewhat unethical, in line with socio and cultural models of disability that seek to identify barriers to participation and interrogate the need for unhelpful binaries based on essentialist representations of difference. On the other hand, they asserted that her ability to pass the programme on the basis of continuous assessment, had resulted in her recent disengagement from course activities that were focused on her preparation for summative assessment of the programme. She, and other students, were characterised as having “become quite disaffected and switched off” (ML Mtg. 3: Turn 240), in this connection. Claire and Andrew suggested a need to reassert *control* over these students through a number of specific measures, including assemblies focused on discipline, threats to withhold school references, and somewhat ironically, using norm-referenced scores from *mock* papers to advise students on how to improve their scores in the real examinations.

- 253        Andrew        So what do you think *might* motivate some of these now, you know?
- 254        Claire        Maybe their mock paper, you know. Maybe the fact

- that we've held it back, and actually seeing where they went wrong and, you know, no one did *extremely* well so maybe the mock itself might ...
- 255        Andrew    Yeah. Yeah, yeah. And I suppose the idea that having a reference from the school plus a good LCA [report] is going to be important, like you know.
- 256        Claire        It might be no harm to touch in with Mr. Lawrence to say that maybe we should have, you know, some kind of ... [assembly]

(ML Mtg. 3: Turns 253-256)

The simultaneous deployment of dissonant discourse positions in relation to Julia, indicated a degree of malleability in teachers' use of disability discourse, which seemed to vary according to the types of pragmatic issues they encountered as they went about trying to include these learners in meaningful ways.

### **Discourse Perspectives in the Representation of Julia**

Overall, the themes of exceptionality and personal tragedy predominated discussion of Julia's inclusion within the team-teaching context. These themes were congruent with essentialist meta-discourses that depict disability as a universal set of real and objective deficits that are intrinsic to individuals and directly observable, in terms of their deviation from established norms (Gallagher, 2007). Ultimately, the themes of exceptionality through membership of an already exceptional group and through *possession* of exceptional personal characteristics (including low levels of reasoning, very memory, and an inability to attend to learning) represented Julia as a passive and apathetic learner, who did not have the capacity to influence the tragedy of her personal situation. Her personal characteristics were depicted as so fixed and extreme that she was unlikely to ever be able to function independently in the world.

The deployment of these essentialist and tragedy discourses afforded little agency to Julia and there were only two weak references to her having any personal views, opinions or voice. Once was when it was acknowledged that she might care about who she was paired with for a shared learning activity, when Andrew suggested that she and Aoife could work together because "they pal together and they would be a support for each other (ML Mtg. 1: Turn 106). The other was when she was said to have "moved on in her own mind" to a state of disengagement with the LCA programme, once she realised its continuous assessment element had ended (ML Mtg. 3: Turn 249). The latter was not positively connoted. Personal tragedy discourse was used to increase the salience of essentialist constructions of Julia



and the *fact* that these were preventing her from accessing, participating in, and benefitting from the types of educational provision available in the school and thereafter (ML Mtg. 1: Turns 216-218).

A number of essentialist themes that emerged in the discourses deployed in other settings, did not materialise in discussions about Julia. For example, non-compliance and indifference were seldom mentioned. Only once did Andrew observe that, having completed most of her continuous assessment tasks, Julia, like other students, had become quite disaffected with school (ML Mtg. 3: Turns 240-249). Similarly, there was no discussion of how her presence in the class compromised educational services to others. In fact, the converse was true, with teachers expressing concern about how others in the group might have affected Julia's learning adversely. For example, they acknowledged in their evaluation of the team-teaching initiative during their final meeting, that while Julia and Aoife "were our main students ... we were supporting the whole room" really (ML Mtg. 3 Turn: 94). Finally, there was no discussion of any worsening of Julia's condition or of her inexorable progress towards exclusion, as in other settings.

Overall, a smaller number of deficit-based essentialist discourses was observed at Maple Lodge than any other setting. A greater number of representations of Julia that ran counter to essentialist constructions of disability was also recorded. These tended to focus on a range of systematic barriers to Julia's inclusion, such as how the organisation, delivery and assessment of curriculum placed serious functional limitations on this. These barriers were postulated at many levels, including at the level of the classroom, the school and the state. At the level of the school and classroom, insufficient provision of appropriate supports was postulated (ML Mtg. 2: Turns 203-209). At the broader systemic level, teachers were depicted as "rushing through" programmes designed for the majority of students (ML Mtg. 2: Turn 208), with the result that they had little time to deliver the types of individualised instruction required by learners like Julia. Representations asserting that schools and society organise in ways that fail to take account of naturally occurring learner difference, is congruent with social and cultural analyses of disability that emphasise social and cultural processes of disablement (Baglieri et al., 2011; Gallagher, 2007).

Another feature of discourse use at Maple Lodge that worked to counter the dominant position of essentialist discourse, was the tendency of team-teachers to emphasise universal learner outcomes at the expense of those predicated on "bell curve" thinking. For example, it was deemed essential that Julia develop friendships, experience success and increase her ability to collaborate effectively with others (ML Mtg. 1: Turn 106). Her ability to work independently, engage in age-appropriate learning (ML Mtg. 1: Turns 106-

109) and experience continuity in the transition between her secondary and post-school settings (ML Mtg. 3, Turns 367-369) were also emphasised. These aspirations could have applied equally to all students. Focusing on them in Julia's case worked to collapse difference between her and her peers and to foreground her right to be represented within the social fabric of the school. Vindication of this right was seen as possible in the Leaving Certificate Applied programme, only where appropriate levels of in-class support could be provided (ML Mtg. 3: Turns 92-93).

As in other settings, counter-essentialist discourses tended to be articulated in tandem with essentialist ones, which suggested that, while teachers tended to default to essentialist interpretations, they were not wedded exclusively to these and could simultaneously adhere to different, and even competing, perspectives on disability, depending on the topic under discussion, the interests affected and the practical difficulties encountered.

#### **7.4 Discursive Representation of Phillip in the Willow Way Dyad**

Phillip was the only student in the Willow Way group that was reported to have an assessed disability. He was also the student about whom most discussion occurred within this setting. Thus, no profile of the class was made available to the researcher.

As with other settings, all instances of text directly or indirectly relating to Phillip in the transcripts of meetings at Willow Way, were extracted and collated in a single document that was subjected to Critical Discourse Analysis. The following are the themes that emerged from this exercise.

##### **Exceptionality through Personal Difference.**

The first mention of Phillip occurs very early in the initial Willow Way team-teaching meeting in November of the school year. The timing of this discussion so early in the first meeting is strong evidence of the salience of issues relating to Phillip's inclusion in the minds of the teachers concerned. Even at this early stage, the discussion related to his return from suspension.

- 62            Fiona     ... Phillip; he's suspended?  
63            Meadhbh Phillip, I think, is coming back on Monday.  
64            Fiona     Monday.  
65            Meadhbh I have that written here anyway, he's coming back on  
Monday.

- 66           Fiona     Right!
- 67           Meadhbh So he's going to be ...
- 68           Fiona     He'll be there for ...
- 69           Meadhbh He'll be there Monday and I imagine he's going to be  
difficult enough to get back into the swing of things.

(WW Mtg. 1 Turns: 60 - 70)

A key characteristic of early interactions between teachers in the Willow Way dyad, was their initial reluctance to use language (especially adjectives) that commit them to particular representations of Phillip. We will return to this issue when discussing issues of style in the next chapter. In the end, it was Meadhbh (T2) who committed first to a representation of Phillip that was predicated on essentialist discourse. While Meadhbh acknowledged that it was the responsibility of teachers to settle him back into school, she located difficulties with his inclusion firmly within the person of Phillip himself, saying that it was *he* not his difficulties, that would present difficulties, in terms of getting “back into the swing of things” (WW Mtg. 1: Turn 69, authors emphasis). A little later in the same meeting, Meadhbh asserted that he, along with other suspended students, would “be back with a bang!” (WW Mtg.1: Turn 412) and that he would be “giddy” on his return (WW Mtg.1: Turn 414). Fiona (T1) concurred, declaring he would “be raring to go!” (WW Mtg. 1: Turn 415) once he returned, in a way that was not positively connoted. While these remarks seemed innocuous enough, they began a process of representing issues with Phillip's inclusion, as located firmly within Phillip and his exceptional and innate personal traits.

The association of difficulties with Phillip's innate and exceptional differences with his continued inclusion, was escalated significantly during the second meeting at Willow Way, when his behaviour was depicted as having been so “obnoxious” (WW Mtg. 2: Turn 210), that Elsie, an experienced specialist teacher in the Behavioural Unit who was “very calm and very patient with him?” and known for her empathy with students (WW Mtg. 2: Turn 210, original emphasis), was affronted by it. Fiona remarked that this instance of misbehaviour “really, kind of, *sealed the deal*” in relation to his on-going inclusion because “thus far he's been given so many chances” (WW Mtg. 2: Turn 210, original emphasis). The implication here was that on foot of all these chances, it was reasonable to anticipate that escalated action of some kind would need to occur.

It was in the third and final team-teaching meeting at Willow Way however, that the greatest number of references was made to the exceptionality of Phillip's misbehaviour. It was significant that this meeting occurred after his permanent exclusion from the class. In this meeting, teachers' were at their most emphatic in their assertions that, even with the

deployment of significant team-teaching and other support measures, the school was ill-equipped to respond adequately to the exceptional nature of Phillip's innate difficulties and that, it could not, as a result, have been reasonably expected to continue with his inclusion, especially given reports of the negative effects of this on his peers.

- 63 Meadhbh Yeah, I think, with reference to Phillip then, I don't know. I kind of think he was so extreme.
- 64 Fiona Yeah.
- 65 Meadhbh I don't know, kind of, even with two of us in the class ...
- 66 Fiona It just wasn't ... Yeah!
- 67 Meadhbh You could have four people in the class and you were never going to be able to, em ...
- 68 Fiona No.
- 69 Meadhbh To give him the focus he needs, he really needed.
- 70 Fiona Yeah, yeah.
- 71 Meadhbh It's something that we weren't able to provide ...
- 72 Fiona Yeah.

(WW Mtg. 3 Turns: 63-72)

Part of the discourse included an assertion that all staff at the school found Phillip's misbehaviour equally challenging. For example, when Fiona asserted that Phillip had not handed up a single piece of homework to her in two years, it was noted that everybody was "in the same boat" (WW Mtg. 1: Turn 176) and that this occurred "across the board" (WW Mtg. 1: Turn 177). Such statements had the effect of confirming the stability and innateness of his difficulties on the one hand, and their pervasiveness and extremeness on the other. Phillip was also depicted as having been in receipt of a wide range of intensive supports, but that these were insufficient to respond adequately to the exceptional level of difficulty *he* exhibited, despite the best efforts of the entire school community to support his inclusion.

- 208 Fiona ... I think everybody and all staff have tried their best, like even G26 [School's Behavioural Support Unit], you know.
- 209 Meadhbh Yeah, I think so as well. Like, he's had an awful lot of intensive help.

(WW Mtg. 2 Turns: 208-209)

Similarly, in the following extract the team-teachers concerned are depicted as having done all in their power, as part of a wider attempt by the whole school community to include Phillip.

- 89 Meadhbh ... But em, yeah, as you were saying, I don't think there's anything really we could have done to, to help Phillip more.
- 90 Fiona No, no.
- 91 Meadhbh Or even with the exam or to think of the school, even the whole school, everyone was trying to support him and just ...
- 92 Fiona Everyone did their best. It was ... They went down every avenue, there was every channel [explored].
- 93 Meadhbh G26 [school behavioural support unit], the NBSS like ...
- 96 Fiona He was even on a reduced, kind of ...
- 97 Meadhbh Timetable.
- 98 Fiona Timetable, yeah!
- 99 Meadhbh But I don't think there was much more we could have done together to help him succeed.

(WW Mtg. 3 Turns: 89-100)

This dual line of representation painted a picture of Phillip, in which his innate behavioural difficulties were simply too severe for the school community to accommodate.

As well as being depicted as “difficult enough to get back into the swing of things” (WW Mtg.1: Turn 69), “extreme” (WW Mtg. 3 Turns: 63-72) and non-compliant in relation to school rules, for example, those relating to homework (WW Mtg.1: Turns 175-176), Phillip was also depicted as non-compliant in other areas of school life. For example, when Meadhbh offered “to work ... beside him in the class and make sure I write down stuff in his journal” (WW Mtg.1: Turn 197), Fiona retorted, “Well, if he even has a journal” (WW Mtg. 1: Turn 198), to which Meadhbh replied “I know. That's the thing!” (WW Mtg.1: Turn 199). Overall, there seemed to be a low expectation of Phillip's adherence to everyday school rules.

A subtle but important feature of discourse use in relation to Phillip's non-compliance, was the way in which his misbehaviour was conflated with that of the whole class. For example, while the following excerpt begins with a general discussion of

misbehaviour or suspension, it transitioned seamlessly into a specific discussion of Phillip, without any overt linguistic marker of this transition. There was no specific reference to Phillip in the lines preceding Turn 413.

- 411        Fiona        So, I don't know. And they'll all be back on Monday, won't they?
- 412        Meadhbh    They'll all be back with a bang!
- 413        Fiona        How long was *he* suspended for, three days was it? Three days, okay! Yeah. I worry because ...
- 414        Meadhbh    That's a long time for him to be out. When he comes back in, he'll be giddy.
- 415        Fiona        Oh, he'll be raring to go.
- (WW Mtg. 1 Turns: 411 -415, author's emphasis)

This subtle transition from a general discussion of a group of students returning from suspension, to a specific discussion about Phillip's return, provided evidence of the central position Phillip's misbehaviour occupied in the minds of the teachers concerned. Such instances also served to foreground Phillip's presence as the single most important impediment to the progress of the entire class and backgrounded the contribution of teachers and other students in this regard. Representation of this kind depended on depicting the difficulties of the entire class as emanating from characteristics thought to be innate to Phillip, rather than, for example, a mismatch between Phillip's learning disposition and the demands of the educational setting in which he found himself, including the quality of teaching and learning that pertained there.

### **Indifference**

As well as being characterised as non-compliant, Phillip was also depicted as being indifferent to school. This depiction was reinforced by Fiona, when she declared that he was "not getting involved at all" in school (WW Mtg.1: Turn 180) and reported on a conversation with him after a poor showing in his Christmas examination during the previous year when he reportedly said that he "Can't be bothered!" (WW Mtg. 1: Turn 204). Ironically, this was one of the very few times that Phillip was assigned any voice whatsoever within teachers' discussions of him. It was ironic that, in this instance, his voice was used to cast him in a negative light. Caldas-Coulthard (1994) reminds us that representations of people and events can be shaped by the meaning potentials of quoting verbs. In this instance, the quoting verb "he said" necessitated a verbatim account of the words Phillip used to Fiona. This type of reported speech connotes objectivity, and is usually used to add validity to assertions made. Representations of Phillip as non-compliant and ambivalent to school

provided substance for the argument that any negative consequences that might accrue to him as a result of his exclusion, would be minimal.

While indifference and non-compliance with school rules were key elements in teachers' representations of Philip, these could not be associated uniquely with students placed at the upper end of any spectrum of misbehaviour or category of disability. Their attribution to Phillip, offered an insufficient basis for the assertions relating to the level of disruption he was said to exert over his peers, and by extension, calls for his exclusion. Thus, his misbehaviour was also depicted as getting worse and exerting a significant negative effect on the wellbeing and progress of classmates.

### **Getting Progressively Worse and Moving Inevitably towards Exclusion**

Very early in the first meeting Fiona asserted that the previous lesson may have gone "so well" (WW Mtg. 1: Turn 60) because of the fact that the group was "missing quite a few" students, including Phillip.

60 Fiona Now, I am also concerned as well, that yesterday we  
were missing quite a few. So that's probably why it went  
so well! [laughs]

61 Meadhbh I know!

62 Fiona You know?

(WW Mtg. 1 Turns: 60 - 62)

Despite the fact that this point seemed to be made in an ironic or humorous way, it explicitly linked the successful progression of lessons to the suspension of particular students. The non-inclusive nature of this observation was not lost on the teachers concerned, one of whom hedged her commitment to the suggestion through laughter, while the other responded with a somewhat ironic "I know!" that allowed her to resile from affirmation if challenged. As things transpired, neither participant had to resile from Fiona's assertion, and neither did so. While the idea that a lesson can go *well* because of the exclusion of a member of the class clearly ran counter to inclusive principles and practice, the benefits to the class of Phillip's absence became a recurring theme in discussions about the progress of the group.

The theme of inevitability in relation to Phillip's exclusion, was also introduced in the early part of the first meeting, when Fiona observed that something was likely to "happen" as a result of Philip's recurrent suspensions, though she said she did not know what this might be (WW Mtg. 1: Turns 186). There is a sense that most options available to the school had





- 92 Fiona ... Just as a matter of interest, so Phillip obviously did not sit the exam?
- 93 Meadhbh No.
- 94 Fiona Okay so, em, I suppose we may as well, you know, the chances maybe, of him coming back, we don't know yet what the story is?
- 95 Meadhbh No.
- 96 Fiona I must check with Aideen [principal] now but I, reading between the lines, I don't know if he'll be back.
- 97 Meadhbh Mmm.
- 98 Fiona Did anybody say? Were you talking to anyone about it, no?
- 99 Meadhbh No.
- 100 Fiona I just, I know that there's been a few meetings with his Mam and I don't know if it's going to work out too well for him, you know. So, we'll see ...

(WW Mtg. 2 Turns 92-100)

While teachers were unwilling at this stage to jump to conclusions about Phillip's ultimate fate, it was clear that "reading between the lines" (WW Mtg. 2 Turn 96), they surmised that things were "not going to work out too well for him" (WW Mtg. 2 Turn 100). They also conjectured that "the chances ... of him coming back" to the class after his latest suspension were highly unlikely (WW Mtg. 2 Turns 94).

Since, by the time of the third meeting, Phillip had already been permanently removed from the class, discussions of his misbehaviour were laced with legitimisations for this. As already alluded to, they represented him (not his behaviours) as so "extreme" (WW Mtg. 3 Turn: 63) that, "having four people in the class" would not have been sufficient to "give him the focus ... he really needed" to remain in the group (WW Mtg. 3 Turns: 66-69). These representations, depicted the school community as "simply" not "able to provide" educational responses consistent with his needs. This was represented as unfortunate tragedy for Phillip (WW Mtg. 3 Turn: 71). The deployment of tragedy discourse will be discussed in more detail shortly.

### **Having a Significant Negative Effect on the Wellbeing and Progress of Classmates**

The degree to which Philip was characterised as having a deleterious effect on the wellbeing and academic progress of his classmates was absolutely central to

representations that led to his eventual exclusion. These representations were asserted through statements that referred to

- The intimidatory effects of his presence on his peers
- The liberating effects of his absence on his peers
- Imaginaries of the improved group dynamics and group learning *likely* to occur in the event of his permanent exclusion
- The positive effects of his *actual* permanent exclusion on his peers

In terms of the intimidatory effects of his presence, Phillip was represented as having a deleterious effect on the behaviour, wellbeing, personal safety, and academic engagement of his peers. At the centre of such representations was the idea of *menace*, a vague but powerful attribution that served to foreground Phillip's agency in the disruption of everyday classroom processes, while backgrounding the role of other students in instances of misbehaviour, and eliding the responsibility of teachers to prevent or mitigate these. The notion of menace allowed discourse users to emotionally augment representations of Phillip's detrimental power, while obviating any need to be specific about how this was exercised. For example, in the instance of misbehaviour reported in relation to Elsie, the general term "obnoxious" was used (WW Mtg. 2: Turn 210), giving no detail on what exactly transpired. In contrast, Elsie's virtues were described in detail. She was characterised as an experienced, "calm and very patient" teacher who had experience of working in the behavioural unit (WW Mtg. 2: Turn 210). Despite the lack of detail, we are assured Phillip's misbehaviour was so serious that it "sealed" his exclusion (WW Mtg. 2: Turn 210).

On another occasion, during a discussion of the worsening behaviour of one of Phillip's classmates, John Dunne (pseudonym), Meadhbh reported that, while his behaviour had worsened, other students were "not intimidated by John as much they would have been by Phillip" (WW Mtg. 2: Turn 203). Again, this served to reinforce representations of Phillip's menace, without having to be specific about the behaviours involved. Perhaps the most detailed account of Phillip's menacing behaviour was offered during the second meeting, when Fiona declared that when it came to Phillip, his peers "were completely afraid. It's like if they put up their hand or whatever, he'd look over and a look would be given and it's like, "Oh my God!" (WW Mtg. 1 Turn: 204). Even here, there was little sense of a misbehaviour that would have triggered teacher intervention. Given the central role played by constructions of Phillip's misbehaviour in legitimations of his eventual exclusion, the general lack of detail provided in this respect, was significant.

In contrast to these vague descriptions, accounts of the liberating effects of Phillip's absence on his peers were detailed and specific. These included evaluations of how his classmates had benefitted from Phillip's absence in the past and imaginaries of how they might benefit from this in the future. They were evident from early in the first meeting.

- 188        Fiona     ... he's a bit intimidating in the class for the rest of them as well, you know? Like, I noticed as well, I know it's something different again but when the guest speaker came in, they all had no problem asking questions because he wasn't there. So unfortunately, I don't want to exclude him but he's definitely, he's a big impact on the class; they're afraid of him. Do you notice that?
- 189        Meadhbh    Yeah, oh yeah, absolutely!
- 190        Fiona     You know like, so the likes of John O'Shea and John Dunne, I'm not saying they're completely well-behaved but they're definitely different ...
- 191        Meadhbh    It's like they're freer almost ...
- 192        Fiona     Of course, to ask ...
- 193        Meadhbh    To do things without looking to impress him in things.
- 194        Fiona     No, no. And they actually do their work!
- (WW Mtg. 1 Turns: 188-194)

Later in this meeting Fiona declared ominously, "I still believe, even though I really do not want to exclude him from the class, I just believe the dynamics are so different when he's ... [absent]" (WW Mtg. 1 Turn: 417).

Similarly, in Mtg. 2, when discussing a relatively withdrawn student named Robbie (pseudonym), Meadhbh concurred with the above position.

- 196        Fiona     Robbie is very, I'm worried about him as well, he's very quiet.
- 197        Meadhbh    He's very quiet. Now, I think he's come out of his shell a little bit more ...
- 198        Fiona     Yeah.
- 199        Meadhbh    I think since Phillip hasn't been there.
- 200        Fiona     He's got ... yeah, yeah, yeah.
- 201        Meadhbh    I think it allows the quieter kids to feel a bit safer, to say something ...
- (WW Mtg. 2 Turns: 2196-201)

Both teachers indicated that Robbie felt safer and was able to engage better in classroom activities, when Phillip was not present in the class. This representation was restated more explicitly later in the same meeting, when, Fiona declared, “[i]t sounds bad to say this ... it’s had a real positive impact on the class, him [Phillip] not being there” (WW Mtg. 2: Turn 204). In this relatively emphatic statement, the “positive impact” of Phillip’s exclusion on the wellbeing of the class was offered as a justification for his exclusion (WW Mtg. 2 Turns: 201). Such evaluations took greatest shape during the final meeting, by which time his permanent exclusion had been confirmed.

- 12            Fiona        And I do think the behaviour really improved towards the last part of the year. And, you know, unfortunately the exclusion of Phillip did help ...
- 13            Meadhbh    Yeah.
- 14            Fiona        To a degree, because the rest of the pupils didn’t feel as intimidated, I felt.
- 15            Meadhbh    Yeah.
- 16            Fiona        You, did you feel that as well, yeah?
- 17            Meadhbh    Yeah, that’s true, yeah.
- 18            Fiona        And there was major improvement, you know, with John and, you know, a few different people as well.
- 19            Meadhbh    Uh-hum, yeah!
- (WW Mtg. 3 Turns: 12-19)

Overall then, detailed accounts of the benefits of Phillip’s absence were combined with vague references to the menacing effects of his presence, to construct a rationale for Phillip’s eventual exclusion and to legitimise this. Ultimately, his exclusion was presented as a natural and inevitable consequence of his innate and exceptional behavioural difficulties; one that was warranted in terms of the minimal costs to Phillip, the comprehensive benefits to his classmates, and the fact that all other avenues of support had been exhausted. Argumentation of this kind was given considerable power by the conflation of several of these themes within discourse. For example, in the extract that follows, the themes of inevitability (“as I said from the beginning”), intimidation (“they all really felt intimidated”), personal tragedy (“you don’t want to exclude anybody ... from school but ...”), and the liberating effects of Phillip’s absence on his peers (“it was needed for the class to try it” and “you really saw some people work better”) were all interwoven to produce a powerful and convincing narrative that legitimised his exclusion.

- 74            Fiona        Yeah. And I do feel, obviously, that you want to include

everybody and you don't want anybody, like, excluded from school but really, if I'm being honest in this particular case, I think it was, it was needed for the class to try it.

75 Meadhbh Yeah.

76 Fiona Because, as I said, from the beginning I felt they, they all really felt intimidated when he was in the class. And you really saw some people work better and even put their hand up more often.

77 Meadhbh Speak up a bit more.

78 Fiona Yeah, you know, because they felt, 'Okay, now I can actually, you know, be myself now!' So I mean, it did ... I can't wait for the [Junior Certificate Exam] results actually.

79 Meadhbh Oh God, yeah.

(WW Mtg. 3 Turns: 74 -79)

Later in the same meeting the two team-teachers went on to assert that Phillip's exclusion had resulted in a dramatic positive impact on others in his class.

210 Fiona But it's, just from our perspective, the class is ... Have you seen a dramatic change?

211 Meadhbh I think so, yeah. Yeah.

212 Fiona And I think it's all just ... Now he isn't there like? Yeah

213 Meadhbh No, there is. It's a different dynamic.

(WW Mtg. 3 Turns: 210 -213)

A particularly salient feature of the discourse deployed around Phillips exclusion, was the way in which legitimisation of this (outlined above) was conflated with positive statements about the future prospects of the students who remained in the class. For example, descriptions of the improved dynamics that were thought to pertain in the class after Phillip's exclusion, were followed immediately by imaginaries of positive futures for those remaining in the group and undertakings by the teachers concerned to develop a more supportive classroom climate.

214 Fiona ... this is going to be good as well going forward, this is such positivity for them, they're going to be delighted with these results!

215 Meadhbh Yeah, I hope so.

216 Fiona You know, it can't go bad, it can only get good. No, I

think, and obviously yes, we were giving out an awful lot, but we had to because they were a very difficult class, but maybe now we might take another ...

217 Meadhbh Yeah, like a step back almost.

218 Fiona Yeah and just be a little bit more, I feel sometimes we need to be a little more positive.

219 Meadhbh Yeah.

(WW Mtg. 2 Turns: 214 -219)

Meadhbh went on to suggest that, now that Phillip had left, they should both begin to “praise them a bit more” (WW Mtg. 2: Turn 221), with Fiona suggesting that they encourage them by saying “we ... know what you’re capable of” (WW Mtg. 2: Turn 224). Thus Phillip’s exclusion was linked to imaginaries of brighter futures for remaining students, without needing to make an explicit (and perhaps untenable) causal connection between the two. This leaves the analyst to wonder why, given the fact that Phillip was reported to respond well to praise and encouragement (WW Mtg. 1: Turns 204-205), this approach was not incorporated into classroom practice before his exclusion.

### **Experiencing Personal Tragedy**

From the outset of meetings, Phillip’s misbehaviour was depicted as a personal misfortune for him and something that was likely to lead “unfortunately” but “definitely” to his permanent exclusion from the class (WW Mtg. 1 Turn 188).

For example, in discussing his non-compliance, Fiona acknowledged somewhat cryptically that, “obviously, there are reasons” for this (WW Mtg. 1 Turn 182). While these reasons were never rehearsed, there was tacit acknowledgement that they lay outside Phillip’s power to control and represented a legitimate cause for concern.

While Meadhbh initially seemed confident that she could respond to these by volunteering to “work with G26 to see what they’re doing with him” (WW Mtg. 1: Turn 195). She also committed to working with him in class, saying “whatever skills they’re going through with him, we’ll try, I’ll try to work with him” (WW Mtg. 1: Turn 197). This commitment was made in the context of helping Phillip to avoid the tragic and inevitable consequences anticipated by Fiona earlier in the meeting; namely his permanent exclusion from the class. It was significant that she saw the need to supplant the pronoun “we” with “I” in the above excerpt (WW Mtg. 1: Turn 197), thus amending the team commitment to a personal one. While this may have been done to avoid damage to team solidarity, that might have been caused by presupposing Fiona’s commitment to this course of action. Whatever the reason,

it had the effect of affirming Fiona's essentialist construction of Phillip's difficulties. Meadhbh went on to assert that "he needs a lot of help" and "some one-on-one help too" (WW Mtg. 1: Turn 418). While Fiona agreed with these assertions (WW Mtg. 1: Turn 419), she refused to cede to Phillip sole occupancy of the personal tragedy space, a status that might work against arguments for his exclusion. Instead, she reminded Meadhbh that, "there's a lot more than him that needs help" (WW Mtg. 1: Turn 421), help that was being denied them because of the domination of available resources by students like Phillip.

425          Fiona      ... And it's really sad because there are a few of them that really do want to do well and it's unfair that there is a few [students], kind of, dominating everything really. But ...

426          Meadhbh   Taking over!

427          Fiona      Taking over ...

(WW Mtg. 1: Turns 425-427)

The fact that teachers were discussing Phillip's rights took them beyond exclusive reliance of essentialist discourse. Moreover, the argument that Phillip's right to be included had to be balanced with the rights of those with whom he was being educated was consistent with pertinent legislation (Government of Ireland, 2004). While this idea of a balance of rights is a recurring theme within inclusion discourse in Ireland (Drudy and Kinsella, 2009; Shevlin, Winter, and Flynn, 2013), the argument contrasts sharply with essentialist constructions of Phillip's behaviour as being so exceptional, that no amount of school resources could accommodate it. It was interesting that in this instance, arguments about balancing Phillip's rights with those of his peers were deployed to collapse difference between the two and emphasise equal access to available resources. This was in stark contrast to representations of his innate behavioural difficulties, that were deployed to accentuate his difference from his classmates and build a case for his exclusion. Such depictions were greatly influenced by personal tragedy discourse, for example when Fiona avers, "I know that there's been a few meetings with his Mam and I don't know if it's going to work out too well for him" (WW Mtg. 2 Turn: 100). By the final meeting at Willow Way, the notion that Phillip's exclusion comprised a personal tragedy for him rather than for the whole school community, was well established in discourse.

206          Fiona      And it's a failure obviously on our ... [part], well not on our, you know, because ...

207          Meadhbh   We couldn't make it work for him.

208          Fiona      You know, it's sad, it *really is*. But I think everybody

and all staff have tried their best, like even G26  
[School's Behavioural Support Unit], you know.

209 Meadhbh Yeah, I think so as well. Like, he's had an awful lot of  
intensive help.

(WW Mtg. 3 Turns: 206-209)

The selective alternating between accentuation and collapsing of difference showed that teachers could be strategic in their use of disability discourses, depending on the specific outcomes they pursued. As can be seen from the above excerpts, the use of essentialist discourse was closely interwoven with the themes of inevitability within personal tragedy discourse, to increase the warrant of arguments for Phillip's exclusion. This was particularly apparent in a remark made by Fiona in during the final meeting, in which she conjectured that his exclusion was, "just disability in the end, you know!" (Willow Way Mtg. 3: Turn 104). This remark had the effect of conflating several different strands of the essentialist representation of Phillip, including that his exclusion was a result of innate and exceptional personal differences, inevitable, and a personal tragedy for him.

### **Ability and Commonality with Peers**

While essentialist discourse was primarily used to represent Phillip's perceived difficulties, they were also used in other ways, as is show in the following excerpt.

200 Fiona ... I've noticed, you've probably noticed yourself, he  
loves reading, reading aloud.

201 Meadbhh That's right! Remember he read the whole of the last  
scene, the whole Friar Lawrence scene.

202 Fiona And that's not easy!

203 Meadbhh Uh-un.

204 Fiona And that language, the Shakespearean language ...  
But in saying that though, I do feel that he can do it.  
I'm not saying he's very able but he can ... But he  
does like a bit of praise too, so if we say ...

205 Meadbhh So maybe if we even get him to read, maybe a  
paragraph or something, [it] might be a good way to  
get him to engage a little bit. And then we can praise  
him. So ...

206 Fiona Exactly!

(WW Mtg. 1 Turns: 200-206)



Hence teachers posited using his love of reading aloud (WW Mtg. 1 Turn: Turns 200-206) and the fact that he was thought to amenable to praise (WW Mtg. 1 Turn: 205) and academically able to “do it” when motivated (WW Mtg. 1 Turn: 204), to re-engage him with learning (WW Mtg. 1: Turns 425-427). While this was positive, it showed how deeply essentialist discourse was engrained in their thinking.

### **Dissonance in the Deployment of Non-Essentialist Discourse at Willow Way**

Only occasionally did representations of Phillip run counter to the essentialist discourse. On these few occasions, such narratives were deployed in tandem with the very essentialist discourses they sought to counteract.

For example, Fiona asserted that Phillip’s inclusion required levels of support that were so exceptional, that the school could not have been reasonably expected to provide these (WW Mtg. 2: Turn 208). This focused on the conditions that surrounded Phillip, such as resourcing issues, in line with social modes of disability. At the same time, she expressed her belief that other students were entitled to equivalent levels of support, which they were denied as a result of Phillip’s continued disruption of the group (WW Mtg. 1 Turn: 421). Thus at the same time as essentialist discourse was used to emphasise *Phillip’s* part in the problem, a rights-based discourse was used to emphasise the interests of others, especially their entitlement to freedom from Phillip’s menacing presence.

Meadhbh also deployed non-essentialist and essentialist discourses in a simultaneous way, when, on the one hand, she asserted that Phillip “needs a lot of help” (WW Mtg. 1 Turn: 418), while on the other, agreeing with Fiona that he was “dominating everything” (WW Mtg. 1: Turn 425) and preventing other students from accessing the support to which they were entitled. The tendency to deploy essentialist discourses in tandem with counter-essentialist ones, had the effect of tempering disruption of the former, and ensuring that they continued to hold sway within discussions about disability.

The only other instance in which factors extrinsic to Phillip were referenced as contributing to difficulties with his continued inclusion, occurred in the first meeting when Fiona acknowledged that “obviously” there were “reasons” for his failure to hand up homework (WW Mtg. 1 Turn 182) that were outside his control. We never heard what these were. Of all of the dyads studied, Willow Way was the one most exclusively wedded to positivist and essentialist thinking. There were very few attempts to link the difficulties pertaining to his inclusion with anything other than factors intrinsic to him.

## **Discourse Perspectives in the Representation of Phillip**

These essentialist discourses served to characterise Phillip as someone whose innate capacity for misbehaviour was exceptional and fell well outside expected and accepted norms. Such normalising discourses worked to construct a particularly negative discursive space for Phillip, an identity that was characterised as menacing to both teachers and peers in ways that infringed on their rights. This othered him to a huge degree and provided a justification for his eventual disavowal (Graham & Slee, 2005). The ability of dominant groups to define the subjectivities of oppressed individuals and groups is considered a key condition of oppression (Adams, Bell, & Griffin, 1997).

From the very start of meetings, essentialist normalising discourses were used to offer a powerful portend of Phillip's eventual fate, what seemed to have been "sealed" from the very start of the academic year (WW Mtg. 2: Turn 210). As meetings progressed, a significant shift occurred in Meadhbh's deployment of discourse around Phillip. This moved her from discussions of how his inclusion could be more effectively supported, to consideration of his exclusion, as a logical and inevitable result of his increasingly menacing, non-compliant and disruptive behaviour. Yet little precise evidence or detail was provided in relation to his misbehaviour. Instead the vague notion of his menacing influence was introduced, in tandem with detailed depictions of how the wellbeing, progress and behaviour of others would be positively served by his absence. All of this was used to construct his exclusion as not only viable, but as inevitable desirable, with little collateral damage to Phillip himself.

His difficulties were constructed as entities in themselves that existed in a real and objective sense (Vehmas, 2008, p. 23) and emanated from extreme personal characteristics that were innate to Phillip, though these were only vaguely described. Where detail was provided, he was depicted as non-compliant of basic school rules, indifferent to school, failing to benefit from classroom activities, and exerting a menacing and deleterious influence on the wellbeing, safety and academic progress of classmates. All of these things were depicted an affront to the rights of the teachers and students alike. They were also characterised as getting progressively worse and leading Phillip inevitably towards exclusion. At the same time, Phillip's difficulties were represented as comprising a personal and unavoidable tragedy for him. All of this was presented as having transpired despite substantial the committal of substantial amounts of time, goodwill and resources by the school to prevent this, through its pastoral, behavioural support and disciplinary structures.

Since the discourses used to represent Phillip drew attention to his person rather than the material, social or cultural conditions of his disablement, it was unsurprising that this person became the main focus of responses relating to difficulties associated with his inclusion. In discursive terms, since Phillip did not fit into the normative spaces constructed for him by dominant interests in the school, the very discourses that constructed this untenable space for him in the first instance, postulated his exclusion as the only and inevitable outcome of his failure to occupy this.

## **7.5 Across All of the Cases**

### **The Dominance of Essentialist Discourse**

Looking across all cases, findings suggested that the predominant vehicle for representing the students deemed to have disability, was essentialist discourse. In some instances, essentialist discourse was used to construct predominantly negative representations of these students. In others, it was used to develop more balanced representations, that emphasised both positive and negative intrinsic qualities.

In the Hazel Park dyad, this tended to focus on representations of exceptionality associated with placement in a group comprised, in the first instance, of learners who have been placed in particular categories of disability on the basis of psychological and other professional assessments (HP Mtg. 1 Turn 12). It also relied on depictions of what were perceived as students' innate and exceptional personal differences, the quantum of which was often outlined in these reports. While both teachers drew significantly on essentialist discourse to represent learners, Saoirse drew on these to a disproportionate and relatively one-dimensional degree. Her representations of Darren, singling him out as having exceptional "physical" characteristics in relation to which he was "[s]low to accept help" (HP Mtg. 1: Turn 48). Denise, on the other hand, while acknowledging that Darren was "in a wheelchair", had "physical needs" and tired "very easily" (HP Mtg. 1: Turns 46-50 and 236), counter-balanced deficit-based representations of him, with references to his (equally inherent) capabilities (cf. HP Mtg. 1: Turns 48-50, 184-185, 244) and those characteristics she thought he shared with his peers (HP Mtg. 1: Turn 236). She depicted him mostly as able, confident, insightful, humorous, imbued with leadership qualities, sensitive to the needs of classmates and aware of how difference can be made visible through differential treatment. All of this served to imbue him with considerable agency and resilience, and reinforce representations of him that emphasised his ability to negotiate his physical, social and cultural environments and his right to belong in, and contribute to, the class.

In the Maple Lodge dyad, Julia was also represented predominantly through the deployment of essentialist discourse. Again, this was done through marking her as a member of an already exceptional group, by virtue of the fact that it contained a large number of students deemed to have disability and were deemed unable to cope with the rigours of the traditional Leaving Certificate programme. Given this already assigned indicator of difference, the degree to which Julia was represented as exceptional through what were perceived as her exceptional personal differences, was significant. Julia was explicitly referred to as having a “moderate intellectual disability” (ML Mtg. 2: Turn 92). This categorical reference gave epistemic authority to assertions of her difference. The label was seen as a “natural” basis (ML Mtg. 2: Turns 154-156) on which to group her with others in the class who were represented as of similar intellectual capacity. Her personal differences were thought to manifest as exceptional cognitive difficulties in the areas of perceptual reasoning and working memory, as well as deficits in social and affective domains that impacted on her ability to cope with the demands of everyday life in school and elsewhere. These traits were also considered to be permanent and immutable (ML Mtg. 3: Turns 88-91) and likely to continue during her transition from second-level to specialist post-school provision (ML Mtg. 3, Turns 367-369).

Though essentialist discourse was also deployed extensively to represent Julia, the use of such discourse at Maple Lodge appeared to be less pervasive than in other settings. This may have related to the fact that *both* teachers in the Maple Lodge Dyad, had completed recognised post-graduate professional development in relation to the inclusion of learners deemed to have disabilities and other so-called special educational needs. Thus *both* of those in the team-teaching dyad had been exposed to a greater range of epistemological positions relating to disability than others involved in the study.

The deployment of essentialist discourse seemed to be at its most sustained and strategic in relation to constructions of Phillip at Willow Way. Here, they were used to construct Phillip as someone whose innate and extreme personal difficulties, resulted in non-compliance with school rules, indifference to school, failure to benefit from instruction, and the exertion of a menacing and deleterious influence on the wellbeing, safety and academic progress of classmates. Moreover, his misbehaviour was depicted as getting worse, leading to repeated suspension and moving him inevitably towards exclusion. Yet, this representation was affected without offering details about the precise misbehaviours concerned. Instead, teachers made repeated reference to the powerful but vaguely notion of menace. They also offered detailed accounts of the negative effects of his presence on others, and augmented this with equally detailed reference to a variety of benefits (both real

and imagined) that accrued to his peers as a result of his various absences from the class and from his anticipated permanent exclusion.

Since essentialist discourses drew attention to Phillip's person rather than the material, social or cultural conditions of his disablement, it was unsurprising that the presence of his person in the class became the primary focus of responses to *his* difficulties. Along with rights-based arguments, essentialist discourse provided a cogent rationale for Phillip's eventual exclusion, that depicted this as a natural and inevitable expression of his innate and exceptionally behavioural difficulties and a logical and even desirable educational outcome that would benefit his classmates enormously, with minimal collateral impact on Phillip himself. In discursive terms, it was used to construct a discursive space for Phillip, that was untenable for him, if the rights and interests of others to an appropriate education were to be upheld.

### **Augmentation of Essentialist Discourse by Charity and Tragedy Discourses**

Charity and tragedy themes were also used across all of the cases to augment essentialist constructions of students deemed to have disability. For example, at Hazel Park charity discourse was used in relation to Darren's relationship with his peers. Within this discourse, those peers who offered him daily assistance with this were grammatically foregrounded. They were valorised and imbued with an agentic, sensitive and proactive dispositions. Darren, on the other hand, was given a lesser grammatical position and represented as the legitimate object of this care and attention. This worked to foregrounding his physical difference, while eliding his agency and his right to participate in, and benefit from inclusive educational provision, without the need to rely on the charitable acts of fellow students to do so.

Tragedy discourse was also deployed at Maple Lodge to support essentialist representations of Julia. This occurred in relation to discussion of her transition to post school provision and evaluations of whether or not services provided at the school included her adequately. Phrases such as "What's going to become of her?" (ML Mtg. 1: Turn 217) and those that depicted her as capable of "Very little" (ML Mtg. 1: Turn 216), and needing "a lot of extra time" to perform the most basis of academic and social tasks (ML Mtg. 3: Turn 89), constructed her as a passive, apathetic and tragic case. The use of certain images served to reinforce this view, such as that of her sitting at home in front of a "buzzing television" (ML Mtg. 1: Turn 212). Charity discourse was also deployed with discussions of her transition to post-school services, and constructed her as someone who would continue to be passive, dependent and the subject of high levels of monitoring and surveillance, which was deemed sad, since her immediate family were thought to be unable or unwilling to

acknowledge the extent of her needs. This depiction of Julia's vulnerabilities as representing a personal tragedy for her going forward, inhibited any possibility of the development of depictions that framed her as someone who had a right to benefit from appropriately supported mainstream provision, and to be assisted and empowered in vindicating this right (Holt, 2004).

Finally, at Willow Way Phillip's innate behavioural difficulties were thought to represent a personal misfortune for him. While Meadhbh initially thought she might be able to respond effectively to early anticipations of his tragic but inevitable exclusion, she eventually agreed the even "four people in the class ... were never going to be able to ... give him the focus ... he really needed" (WW Mtg. 3 Turns: 67-69). While Fiona subscribed to this position when arguing for the need for his exclusion, she denied Meadhbh access to this representation when it looked like being used in arguments that supported his on-going inclusion, with augmented resource provision. In the latter case, she asserted that he was not the only student who needed additional support and depicted him as someone who was "[t]aking over" the resources that were being made available to the whole class for this purpose (WW Mtg. 1: Turns 427-426). The use of tragedy discourse at Willow Way, suggested that teachers could use this in strategic ways, according to particular strategic interests. In the end, both teachers used tragedy discourse to agree that Phillip's eventual exclusion had been "sad" but unavoidable, in that "everybody and all staff" had "tried their best" (Willow Way Mtg. 3: Turn 104), but "in the end" it was "just disability" that was inherent to Phillip, that was his undoing (WW Mtg. 3 Turn 208).

### **Discourse that Ran Counter to Deficit-Based Essentialist, Charity and Personal**

#### **Capabilities**

One of the key functions of discourses that sought to counteract deficit-based essentialist discourses, was to collapse difference between those with disability and their non-disabled peers though emphasising things that all students shared in common. This obviated the need to refer to understandings framed with the ability/disability binary. It occurred across all three settings to varying degrees. Sometimes it was affected through non-deficit-based essentialist discourse and sometimes it was achieved through deployment of other discourses entirely.

In the Hazel Park dyad, it was mostly done through positive use of essentialist discourse, which teachers (especially Denise) used to depict Darren as capable rather than incapable. Reference to positive within-learner attributes drew attention to Darren's intelligence, sensitivity to the learning dispositions of his peers, leadership skills, well

developed social insights, and desire for self-reliance, autonomy and independence. Such representations foregrounded his agency and resilience, his right to belong in the class, and his ability to negotiate his physical, social and cultural environments. The Hazel Park dyad (especially Denise) was unique in that it extended positive use of essentialist discourse, to represent Darren as exhibiting many of the above qualities to a superior degree than his peers. In fact, he was depicted as someone who enriched their learning experiences and contributed to their wellbeing.

In the Maple Lodge dyad, team-teachers referenced objectives in relation to Julia, that could be seen as aspirations that teachers would have for any and all learners. These included her need to develop friendships, to collaborate with others and to develop a capacity for independent action commensurate with her age and current position in her educational career (ML Mtg. 1: Turns 106-109). The removal of surveillance and scaffolding designed to support and monitor learning, as soon as this was no longer required, was also said to have been a highly desirable goal for Julia, just as it was for other learners. The setting of these objectives had the effect of collapsing difference between Julia and her peers.

Finally, at Willow Way, there was a small number of instances was recorded in which Philip was depicted as sharing characteristics with his peers, including a love of reading (WW Mtg. 1 Turn: Turns 200-206), being amenable to praise (WW Mtg. 1 Turn: 205), and being academically capable when motivated sufficiently (WW Mtg. 1 Turn: 204). Like depictions of his shortcomings, these characteristics were seen as inherent to Phillip.

### **Insufficient material resources**

The emphasis given in some dyads to the insufficiency of resources necessary to affect meaningful inclusion was more congruent with social model thinking than essentialist epistemologies. This perspective was deployed to different degrees within the three cases studied. It was, for example, conspicuously absent in the discourses deployed at Hazel Park, except in-so-far-as Darren himself was seen as a valuable resource to his peers. It loomed large however, in the discussions pertaining to other dyads.

At Maple Lodge, while difficulties around Julia's inclusion were predominantly set out in terms of exceptional and innate cognitive differences, the visibility of these was ascribed to the ability (or otherwise) of the school to offer her relevant individualised support. For example, the school was admonished for not allocating to the area of Language and Communication, a sufficient number of lessons to allow appropriate levels of support to be

offered to her. In addition, it was noted that the inordinate pressure on teachers to “rush” through the mandated LCA curriculum with the whole group also militated against offering her such support (ML Mtg. 2 Turns: 203- 209). This analysis was predicated, not on a discussion of Julia’s intrinsic traits, but on a consideration of the organisation and delivery of the curriculum in which she was involved and how these formed barriers to her engagement (Baglieri, Valle, Connor, & Gallagher, 2011; Gallagher, 2007). Such analyses were more congruent with social and minority models of disability than essentialist ones.

Finally, at Willow Way, while the same social models of disability were used by Meadhbh in the early part of the first team-teaching meeting to construct difficulties associated with Phillip’s inclusion, resulting from the school’s inability to provide him with appropriate levels of support, rather than from any inherent deficit he might have had. As we saw, the use of this kind of thinking was short-lived. As meetings progressed, it was replaced with discourses that focussed on essentialist representations of Phillip and *his* difficulties. Fiona seemed to be particularly strategic in her argumentation here. Her deployment of arguments foregrounded the rights of Phillip’s peers to an appropriate education and access to supports that were equivalent to those he was receiving, seemed to limit the semiotic variability available to Meadhbh to justify providing him with the level of support to which he was entitled. This strategy also thwarted Meadhbh’s ability to outline a role for herself in providing increased levels of support for him within the team-teaching context. Ironically, Phillip was the only student in the class who had been assessed as having a special educational need and so he was the only one entitled to additional teaching support. His exclusion from the class had the effect of re-tasking this additional teaching allocation to supporting the engagement of the generality of learners in mainstream curricula.

## **Rights**

One counter-hegemonic discourse deployed across all of the cases related to the right of learners deemed to have disability, to belong in the team-taught classes studied. At Hazel Park, Denise used positive images of Darren to depict him as someone who negotiated his physical, social and cultural environments successfully and had a right to belong in the class. The representation of Darren as someone who positively contributed to the inclusion and well-being of his peers further cemented this sense of his right to belong.

At Maple Lodge, team-teachers referred to the importance of team-teaching in facilitating the maintenance of Julia’s presence “in the room” with their peers (ML Mtg. 3: Turn 92) and that fulfilment of this right was really “something”, and “great” for “young people” such as her (ML Mtg. 3: Turns 92-93). As we have seen, this representation was undermined by deficit-based essentialist discourse (ML Mtg. 1: 216, 212; ML Mtg. 3: Turn



89-90). The tendency of team-teachers to focus on universal learner outcomes in relation to Julia (ML Mtg. 1: Turns 106-109) worked to collapse difference and foreground her right to be a part of the social fabric of the school. Team-teaching was seen as a key instrument for the vindication of this right within the Leaving Certificate Applied programme (ML Mtg. 3: Turns 92-93).

At Willow Way, Phillip was depicted as someone who had a right to be included within the group, with appropriate levels of support. As we saw however, this right was progressively backgrounded as meetings went on. It was replaced by arguments that foregrounded his deleterious influence of Phillip's presence on the rest of the class, and set this in opposition to their right to an education free from his negative influence on their wellbeing, safety and academic progress. Ultimately, Phillip's continued inclusion was represented in terms of balancing Phillip's right to be included with the rights of others to a safe and unfettered learning environment, free from his menacing presence. This representation was instrumental creating the conditions that allow Phillip's exclusion to occur.

In some instances, reference was made to students' right to reject the disabled identities manufactured and ascribed to them by the schools in which they found themselves. Darren's rejection of a "sick role" (Parsons, 1951, p. 455) that portrayed him as deficient and worthy of charity (HP Mtg. 1: Turns 48-50) was an important example here. While, valorisation of those who offered him unsolicited support made this rejection seem unreasonable at times, Denise cast in a very positive light, his unwillingness "to accept Danielle's help" or that of other SNA, asserting that this was emblematic of his general drive for independence (HP Mtg. 1: Turn 48) which she thought was "brilliant" (HP Mtg. 1: Turn 48). Overall, the degree to which team-teachers acknowledged the right of learners deemed to have disability, to belong within well-resourced learning environments and to reject the limiting identities manufactured for by schools, provided a robust platform for the tempering of essentialist discourse.

Having said that, it is important to remember that the deployment of discourse that ran counter to deficit-based essentialist depictions of disability, as well as charity and tragedy ones, was the exception rather than the rule. In addition, these discourses were usually deployed in tandem with elements of the very discourses they worked to subvert. This tempered their effects, leaving them weak and unable to challenge in any robust way, the positivist versions of the *truth* about disability that had achieved the status of common sense within team-teaching meetings.

## 7.6 Conclusion

This chapter sought to identify the discourses deployed by teachers within each of the team-teaching meetings studied as they discussed the inclusion of a specific students deemed to have disability in the context of a team-taught group. To do this, it used Fairclough's two-part approach to the analysis of representational meanings, which involved identifying "the main themes" in the discourse used and then ascertaining the larger discourse "perspectives" within which these were deployed (Fairclough, 2003, p. 129). It was particularly interested in the discourses dominated meaning-making about learners deemed to have disabilities and how was this dominance achieved. Rather than focussing on all instances of where students deemed to have disability were represented in discourse, analysis focussed on the discourse pertaining to a single student in each setting. The individuals in respect of whom discourse analysis occurred had been assigned to a variety of disability categories on the basis of expert assessment. These categories were physical disability, moderate learning disability and social, emotional and behavioural disorder, respectively.

Overall, the chapter set out to identify the themes within the discourses of disability used to by teachers within team-teaching meetings to represent each student chosen for study. It set these out sequentially for each student sequentially. In the case of each, it offered and interpretation of the boarder discursive perspectives from which these themes were deployed. Findings suggested that essentialist discourse predominated teachers' representations of these learners and reinforced understandings of disability that represented this as a set of innate and exceptional personal differences that drew a distinction between these learners and their peers. Charity and personal tragedy discourses were used to augment such representations. In some instances, predominantly negative representations of students emerged from this process. In others, more nuanced and balanced representations emerged. Sometimes essentialist discourse was used to link innate learner characteristics to both positive effects on the wellbeing of peers (e.g. Darren), in others it was used to link these to negative ones (e.g. Phillip).

The combination of essentialist and tragedy discourse that seemed to predominate teachers' representation of the students studied in all settings, seemed to be most extensively and strategically deployed at Willow Way in relation to Phillip. A key difference between the Willow Way team-teaching dyad, and those of other case study sites, was that nether teacher had completed a DES-recognised course of postgraduate around the inclusion of students deemed to have special educational needs, including disability. In the other two settings, at least one of teachers involved in the study had received this kind of

training. The exclusive used of essentialist discourse was lowest at Maple Lodge, where both teachers had undertaken the training outlined. It is to this and other differences in the identities of teachers and the styles with which they deployed discourse in relation to learners deemed to have disability that we will now turn.

# Chapter 8: Style – How Teachers Committed to Particular Disability Discourses and how this was Affected by the Team-Teaching Identities Enacted.

## 8.1 Introduction

Once the discursive themes were identified, along with the perspective from which these were deployed, attention turned to the style with which these were deployed to depict each group being team-taught and the individuals deemed to have disability within it. This examination was guided by the following questions:

1. To what degree did individual teachers commit to particular discourse positions around disability, how did they handle congruence and incongruence between them, and what did this say about the distribution of discursive power within their dyad?
2. How did teachers use of disability discourse relate to the team-teaching identities and roles they adopted or were ascribed?

In seeking to capture the nuanced ways in which discourse relating to disability was deployed within team-teaching dyads, a single learner deemed to have disability was chosen in relation to whom detailed analysis of discourse was conducted. In order to establish the *style* in which this was achieved by each teacher, the full transcripts of each meeting was reread and coded for instances of evaluation and assumption relating to *all* of the students deemed to have disability who were discussed.

A number of writers have described how individuals can enter processes in which meaning is made about disability from very different discourse positions but emerge articulating highly congruent perspectives (Ashton, 2010; Mehan, 1996; Rogers, 1997). Thus, for Mehan (1996, p. 272), discourse is a cultural tool with which social actors construct “clarity out of ambiguity” within meaning-making processes. He asserts that, when people hold competing conceptualisations of a phenomena, “one or other of the protagonists relinquishes his or her representation of the world as the preferred version, after having heard superior information or having been convinced of the efficacy of an argument” that asserts a different version (Mehan, 1996, p. 272). A key focus of this work was on how discourse practices facilitated the negotiation of congruence and incongruence around truth claims related to disability. To do this, the full transcript of each meeting was coded again

for instances of convergence and divergence in the styles with which individual teachers used language to deploy disability discourse.

Finally, the relationship between the use of disability discourse and the enactment of various team-teaching identities and roles was examined. To do this, it was necessary to capture the widest possible range of identities and roles enacted. This again involved re-reading the entire transcript of each meeting in order to code for evidence of how various identities were articulated and enacted, and then relating these identities to the styles with which teachers deployed disability discourse. All of this provided a basis for the analysis that follows.

The chapter will begin by outlining sequentially the findings in relation to each case (Sections 8.2 through 8.4). For each, this will include findings relating to the congruence and incongruence with which individual teachers used disability discourse. It will also include an evaluation of how teachers negotiated the congruence and incongruence and how their deployment of disability discourses related to their individual team-teaching identities and roles. The chapter will conclude (in Section 8.5) with a discussion of how links between the teachers' deployment of disability discourses and their enactment of particular team-teaching identities (if any) were replicated (or not) across cases.

## **8.2 Issues of Style in the Discourse used at Hazel Park**

### **Congruence and Incongruence in Individual Teacher's Use of Disability Discourse**

The ways in which Darren was discursively represented, were reported in the previous chapter. This made it clear that the teachers in the Hazel Park teaching dyad, deployed discourse in very different ways.

#### **Representing the class.**

Denise (T1) spent a large proportion of meeting time initiating and affecting knowledge exchanges that sought to construct relatively balanced representations of both the class group and the individuals within it who were deemed to have disabilities. As we will see later in this section, her depiction of group characteristic was particularly influential in the Hazel Park dyad's conceptualisation of team-teaching. She represented the class in a way that foregrounded students' strengths and shared characteristics, only occasionally referring to individual limitations around learning. In the social domain she referred to the class as "ab-solute dotes ... just gorgeous; lovely kids" (HP Mtg. 1: Turn 26). At the same time, she noted that there were "a few serious heads" in the group (HP Mtg. 1: Turn 238) who

collectively exhibited a range of limitations not evident in the other classes. For example, Denise intimated that in “one of the classes I realised that they hadn’t got their teachers’ names ... so I spent the whole class giving them their teachers’ names” (HP Mtg. 1: Turn 68). Similarly, she reported that she had to set up activities that enabled them “to come to terms with each other’s names” (HP Mtg. 1: Turn 90). Elsewhere, she represented the students in the class as “very, very slow to speak up” (HP Mtg. 1: Turn 84), “slow to mix with one another” (HP Mtg. 1: Turn 96), and having little confidence (HP Mtg. 1: Turn 86).

In terms of their collective academic ability, Denise asserted that “their work is actually very good from what I’m seeing” (HP Mtg. 1: Turn 88) and that “they would be good wee concentrators” (HP Mtg. 1: Turn 192). She qualified this later by adding that this was the case, only “if they have time!” (HP Mtg. 1: Turn 88) and went on to clarify, “[w]e’re working at a very slow pace but, once they have time, what [work] they’re handing up is very, very good” (HP Mtg. 1: Turn 88). Elsewhere she confirmed that the pace [of lessons] is very, very slow” and that “repetition is just so important with them” (HP Mtg. 1: Turn 26). She also confirmed that their literacy and language skills were basic, intimating that “even ... spelling” and use of simple vocabulary (HP Mtg. 1: Turn 160) presented significant difficulties for them. This meant that they didn’t get an “awful lot covered in a class” in any one lesson (HP Mtg. 1: Turn 161-162). Thus overall, Denise represented them as an industrious and willing group that exhibited lower ability levels and lacked the social and task-engagement skills of other classes.

### **Representing Individuals.**

Denise also spent a considerable amount of time constructing, either positive or balanced representations of *individuals* deemed to have special educational needs, including disabilities. We have already seen that she depicted Darren as an integral and valuable part of the class group; someone who was involved in the normal cut and thrust of school life and who represented a resource to the class that enriched the inclusion of many of his peers. Where Denise did reference Darren’s physical difference, she did so in a positive light, depicting him as “in the wheelchair” (HP Mtg. 1: Turns 46 and 236), but “whizzing” around “corridors” in a way that was “brilliant” and “really independent” (HP Mtg. 1: Turn 50). Reference to his physical limitations occurred in restrained ways that referred only to the fact that he was likely to tire “very easily” (HP Mtg. 1: Turn 50) or resist SNA help to avoid stigmatisation (HP Mtg. 1: Turn 48). Otherwise Denise foregrounded traits he was thought to share with his peers, for example, that he was “a worrier, a really serious wee man” (HP Mtg. 1: Turns 236) and one of “a few serious heads” in the group (HP Mtg. 1: Turn 238). His difficulties were characterised as “a lot [to do] with confidence” (HP Mtg. 1: Turn

242) rather than any discernible physical difference. Finally, she imbued him with a range of strengths, such as good academic ability, an independent spirit, good humour, well-developed social insights, and an ability to facilitate the inclusion of others. All of this served to collapse difference between Darren and others in his classmates and to foreground the value of his presence in the group.

Denise displayed a similar style of representation with other individuals deemed to have disability in the group. She depicted Gemma, a student thought to have dyslexia, as “a real wee leader”, who had “already taken on extra work” (HP Mtg. 1: Turn 224) and who was “brilliant!”, “[v]ery mature” (HP Mtg. 1: Turn 227), “very impressive”, and “really productive” in her approach to work (HP Mtg. 1: Turn 228). She localised Gemma’s difficulties to “her spelling” and “her homework” (HP Mtg. 1: Turn 230). Only when pressed by Saoirse (T2), did Denise refer to the fact that she had been assessed as having a “specific learning difficulty” (HP Mtg. 1: Turn 232), adding immediately that, while “she has a diagnosis ... she’s a great wee kid” (HP Mtg. 1: Turn 234). Having said that, she also asserted later that Gemma, was “probably the one that needs the most [support], even though she’s the one who helps out the most” (HP Mtg. 1: Turn 286).

Lauren, a student listed on the class profile made available to the researcher as also having a “specific learning disability” was discussed by Denise without any reference to this category, even when prompted her to do so by Saoirse (HP Mtg. 1: Turn 285). Instead, she represented Lauren as “a lovely wee girl” but “[v]ery, very shy in herself and slow to put up the hand” (HP Mtg. 1: Turn 282). She referred to her academic ability as “very impressive” (HP Mtg. 1: Turn 286). In a similar way, Barry, a student depicted as having “problems with organisation”, was represented by Denise as “very, very confident” and having “a lot of other involvements outside school which added to his confidence” (HP Mtg. 1: Turn 296). Claire, a student queried with elective mutism, was depicted by Denise as “so quiet” but capable of great “initiative” (HP Mtg. 1: Turn 302). Tom, listed as having dyslexia and developmental coordination disorder, was only referred to by Denise as “a really easy going wee man” (HP Mtg. 1: Turn 288) and being “[v]ery quiet” (HP Mtg. 1: Turn 290). Similarly, Aaron, who had received an assessment of developmental coordination disorder, was only referred to in terms of being one “of the livelier boys” (HP Mtg. 2: Turn 268) who “can be in a bit of trouble” at times (HP Mtg. 2: Turn 117). Significantly, he was also depicted as “funny” (HP Mtg. 2: Turn 117) and achieving “above expectations already” (HP Mtg. 2: Turn 250).

Two particularly instructive examples of how Denise represented learners deemed to have disability, related to Conor and Luke. Conor was represented as “the one in the class who we’re going to have to help out the most; not organised at all; complete vacant look;

definitely a speech and language difficulty; [and] ... very slow to even follow instruction" (HP Mtg. 1: Turn 312). While, Denise marked him out as in need of "a serious amount of support", she also characterised him as a "great kid, great kid", who, despite what he told them, "didn't get into any trouble in primary school ... [b]ecause he's lovely" (HP Mtg. 1: Turn 316).

Similarly, Luke was described by Denise as "very well behaved" (HP Mtg. 2: Turn 50) and "[v]ery, very bright" (HP Mtg. 2: Turn 58), though she understood how he may have had "difficulties in other classes", since "he finds it hard to stay quiet" (HP Mtg. 2: Turn 51). Only when Saoirse inquired directly, "Has he any learning difficulties?" (HP Mtg. 2: Turn 59), did Denise mention the fact that he had a "diagnosis for dyspraxia", as well as "speech and language difficulties" (HP Mtg. 2: Turn 62), and "AD/HD, I would imagine" (HP Mtg. 2: Turn 64). All of this was again qualified by a reassertion from Denise that he was "very, very, very, very, very bright, *very bright!*" (HP Mtg. 2: Turn 66). Importantly, Denise did not depict either Conor or Luke as liabilities in the class, despite their reported propensity for misbehaviour. Rather she focuses on Conor's likeability and Luke's brightness to assert "it's just nice to have that addition" to the group. (HP Mtg. 2: Turn 69).

All of the above, suggested that Denise was consistently committed to representing students deemed to have disability, in ways that subverted deficit depictions of them, and promoted more positive or balanced characterisations of their abilities. An irony of this approach, was that it was almost entirely predicated on essentialist depictions of commonality and difference that placed emphasis on innate personal attributes, whether positive or negatively connoted. In Denise's case, positive attributes were invariably seen as outweighing negative ones, both at the individual and group levels. Nevertheless, they tended to focus attention on qualities thought to be intrinsic to individuals rather than on the material, social, cultural and historical determinants of acquiring a disability identity.

### **Negotiation of Congruence and Incongruence.**

As we have seen, despite being highly conversant in their use and trained in their interpretation, Denise avoided the use of deficit- and category-based disability discourse wherever possible, preferring to focus on positive aspects of their personalities and learning dispositions. She only shared this kind of information, when prompted to do so by Saoirse. In such instances, she almost invariably supplied the information requested, in spite of her obvious reluctance to do so and her apparently unassailable positional power in the dyad. This power accrued through her occupancy of the T1 position; her knowledge of the rationale for the establishment of the group; her more extensive teaching experience; her



long service at Hazel Park and her knowledge of its structures, personnel, local setting and student backgrounds; her training as a qualified special education teacher, and that fact that she was the only teacher in the dyad qualified to teach English.

Despite the fact that the disparity in positional power was greater between Denise and Saoirse than between the teachers who comprised any other team, Saoirse still seemed to be able to *require* Denise to engage in deficit-based categorical representations of learners deemed to have disability. From her perspective, Denise seemed to be unable to resist such demands, or was unwilling to do because she judged that this might jeopardise the central communicative purpose of meetings; to maintain the solidarity of the team. There seemed to be a perception that this solidarity would have been compromised by Denise's withholding of this information in the face of, what were seen as, legitimate requests from Saoirse to share it. Alternatively, it may have been that Denise acceded to Saoirse's requests so that both teachers could share a common language in which to focus on the *needs* of particular students thought to have disability. Whatever the reason, the inability of Denise to resist Saoirse's demands for her to engage in positivist representations of these students deemed, despite Saoirse's relatively weak positional power in the dyad, suggested that essentialist discourses were institutionally inscribed and sanctioned more broadly within the school. It was not so much a question of negotiating the use of discourse as it was a matter of resisting the hegemonic power of essentialist discourse within the school. It seems that Denise, despite all her positional power, seemed to hold a relatively weak position within this struggle.

### **Discourses of Disability and the Construction of Team-Teaching Identities and Roles**

The foregoing suggests a strong relationship between teachers' deployment of disability discourse and their articulation and enactment of particular team-teaching identities and roles.

#### **Denise.**

Denise was the teacher who occupied the T1 position. She was also the only trained special education teacher in the dyad. This gave her a high degree of epistemic authority both around the delivery of the curriculum and in relation to students deemed to have disability.

#### ***Class teacher of English.***

Analysis of teacher exchanges during meetings, showed that Denise spent a huge amount time volunteering information about the general class profile, the characteristics of

individual students (with and without disability), and the curriculum the class was to follow (HP Mtg. 1: Turns 23-35 & 68-76, 84-100, 108-111, 126-138, 161-194 and 195-204), namely the new Junior Certificate English syllabus that was being rolled out nationally at the time. Finally, it included information about the history and rationale for the establishment of the team-taught group (HP Mtg. 1: Turns 4-23). This all tended to confer on her a very strong identity as a class teacher of English. She asserted this most forcefully through exercising control over the content of lessons.

In the first meeting, Denise asserted that it was “the new Junior Cert course that we’re going to be working on” with the group (HP Mtg. 1: Turn 28), adding that “we started looking at *From a Railway Carriage*, Robert Louis Stevenson, that poem!” (HP Mtg. 1: Turn 98), and concluding that she “was going to keep going with that” (HP Mtg. 1: Turn 110). Later, when Saoirse asks Denise to let her know what they will be covering in subsequent lessons, Denise stated emphatically, “we’re going to stick with that poem Saoirse” (HP Mtg. 1: Turn 196), and then reiterating “we’ll be sticking with that poem and pulling it apart; we haven’t got there” yet (HP Mtg. 1: Turn 200). No negotiation was invited around these assertions.

Similarly, in relation to Drama and fiction during their second meeting, Denise was categorical about what content was to be covered, saying “The drama is working really well for them” (HP Mtg. 2: Turn 124). When the time came to move on from drama, it was she who decided that the team would “combine the fiction and drama” within an integrated approach to the study of these, and informed Saoirse she had already selected “a lovely fiction piece” that she “was going to give them to read” (HP Mtg. 2: Turn 130) in order that they would “come up with an alternative ending that they dramatise” (HP Mtg. 2: Turn 134). Her assertiveness in relation to content, left Saoirse inquiring meekly, “do you know what the piece of fiction is about?” (HP Mtg. 2: Turn 137). Finally, in relation to the study of literature, Denise selected the novel to be studied, along with the schedule within which this was to be done (HP Mtg. 3 Turn 368), adding that her “plan was to keep going hell for leather” to complete this (HP Mtg. 3 Turn 396). Almost all decisions in relation to content were presented to Saoirse as a *fait accompli*.

Control over content was augmented by control over the setting of objectives, especially those set out within official Junior Certificate documentation (HP Mtg. 1: Turn 126). Denise asserted that she was “going” to work from these from early the first meeting (HP Mtg. 1: Turn 128). She characterised these objectives as a reflection of “what we’re doing already”, as “brilliant”, as “a really good guide”, and as “more exciting” than the objectives set for the previous iteration of the Junior Certificate programme (HP Mtg. 1:

Turns 128-132). Finally, Denise saw these objectives as consistent with the areas of development she considered important for all the students in the group, including the development of “written work” (HP Mtg. 2: Turns 100 and 246), “the building of oral skills” (HP Mtg. 2: Turns 242 and 248), and being able to communicate effectively with others (HP Mtg. 3: Turn 189). Interestingly, she framed her objectives in these areas in terms of the normed criteria set out in Junior Certificate programme documentation, namely that students should be “meeting expectations” in these areas (HP Mtg. 2: Turn 246).

Denise also seemed to have placed great emphasis on the development of personal and social skills and improving the behaviour of those who had been reported as misbehaving in other classes (HP Mtg. 1: Turns 46-50; HP Mtg. 2: Turns 405-407 and HP Mtg. 3: Turns 122-128). Finally, she dominated the setting of objectives in all areas of development. In only one instance, did Saoirse equivocate with any of the objectives set for students by Denise. This was in relation to what could be expected of Claire, a student deemed to have been selectively mute, in terms of her participation in a drama lesson (HP Mtg. 2: Turns 422-430). Saoirse wished her to take on an acting role, Denise declared “I don’t expect Claire to sit up there and act, you know” (HP Mtg. 2: Turns 423). While Saoirse persisted, “Even if it’s just one line” (HP Mtg. 2: Turns 426), by the end of the meeting, the issue remained unresolved. It transpired later, that Denise addressed the issue of Claire’s unwillingness to volunteer information orally in class, on her own and in an entirely different context (Mtg. 3: Turns 169-183). This provided even further evidence of the comprehensive control Denise exerted over students’ learning objectives.

Denise’s tendency to dominate the selection of content and objectives was augmented by her commitment to her responsibilities as a class teacher. At various stages during meetings she committed to making detailed preparations for lessons in relation to poetry (HP Mtg. 1: Turns 100, 202-204, 334), drama (HP Mtg. 2: Turns 194, 234 and 406-408) and the Novel (HP Mtg. 3: Turns 432-436 and 460-462). She also agreed to prepare materials, appropriate laptops, book rooms, and the like (HP Mtg. 3: Turns 432-436 and 460-462). All of this was evidence of her commitment to her identity as a class teacher of English.

### ***Special education teacher.***

Analysis of teacher exchanges showed that Denise was also that main source of information about the learning dispositions of individual students in the group, the majority of whom were deemed to have a disability on one kind or another. Over a third of the first meeting (2730 of 8045 words), were devoted to this task. This pattern was repeated a little

less comprehensively in other meetings also. The fact that a lot of this discussion related to the out-of-school lives of these learners, was evidence that she deemed her responsibilities to extend well beyond a classroom, to more holistic issues.

Her knowledge of their domestic and social circumstances was considerably augmented by information given to her by Danielle, an SNA who worked closely with the group and lived in the local area (HP Mtg. 1: Turns 42, 54 and 282). Thus Denise was able to impart information to Saoirse about the out-of-school lives of Luke (HP Mtg. 1: Turn 149), Barry (HP Mtg. 1: Turns 296), Conor (HP Mtg. 1: Turns 314-316), Jack (HP Mtg. 1: Turns 318-327, 356, 360), Rachel (HP Mtg. 2: Turn 415) and Claire (HP Mtg. 2: Turns 78, 90-94 and 433). Only once did Saoirse reciprocate with information about Louise, gleaned from her mother at a parent-teacher meeting (HP Mtg. 2: Turn 291). The importance Denise attached to such information, was indicative of the holistic nature of the role she conceived for herself in relation to the class. It also articulated an understanding of disability, that included an appreciation of its intersection with other social issues, such as disadvantage. This appreciation was indicative of an understanding of disability, that went far beyond essentialist conceptualisations alone. The most explicit reference to intersectionality was as follows:

- |     |         |  |
|-----|---------|--|
| 285 | Denise  | Because I think again, because we're in the situation that we're a DEIS Band One school, that there's a huge amount of disadvantage and disadvantage is a special educational need to me. I'm very ...   |
| 286 | Saoirse | Hugely!  |
| 287 | Denise  | It definitely impacts on their education because the communication that's going on at home or the lack of communication, the lack of support for homework. So I think all of our students deserve ex..., extra supports, I feel, in the school for that very reason. |

(HP Mtg. 2: Turns 285-287)

### ***Mammy.***

Another indicator of the way in which Denise conceived her role in the team-teaching dyad (both as the main class teacher and as a special education teacher) related to her role as a *Mammy* to students in the class. She used discussion of a previous experience she had had of team-teaching, to suggest she enact this role in the current initiative also (HP Mtg. 1: Turns 210 and 212).

210 Denise I was team-teaching last year with Pat Coffey [pseudonym] and I think it worked really well because again, he was a young teacher coming in who had different ideas than me and it worked brilliant! .... And I was, kind of, the Mammy figure and it was grand, you know, we got on great because I was the Mammy and he was coming in [to me], he was cool, you know, so it worked.

She continued a little later:

212 Denise So Pat was coming in and he was *Mr. Cool* and they were listening to him, whereas I was *Mammy* and they're saying 'Aw, sure God love her!' and then they were listening to me.

(HP Mtg. 1: Turns 210- 212).

While on the face of it, the Mammy role seemed to represent an unflattering one for Denise, it actually conferred considerable power on her. This was recognised by Saoirse when she commented, "So you were doing all the heavy stuff ..." (HP Mtg. 1: Turn 213). Ultimately, Denise adopted the *Mammy* role as evidenced numerous times during meetings by both teachers. For example, late in the first meeting, Denise expressed her belief that Jack, a student described as having additional English language needs, warranted "extra loving" because he was living away from his mother with his sister (HP Mtg. 1: Turn 324). Saoirse responded to this by saying that Denise would be "a great Mammy for them" all (HP Mtg. 1: Turn 325), with no protest from Denise.

### **Saoirse.**

#### ***Class Teacher of Spanish.***

For her part, Saoirse identified predominantly as a class teacher of Spanish. From the outset she asked if any of the group were "doing Spanish" (HP Mtg. 1: Turn 61) or whether they were "all Irish" by nationality (HP Mtg. 1: Turn 91). She did so in an attempt to find a basis upon which to build rapport with learners in the group. She was delighted to hear that John was a "Spanish-speaking" Argentinian boy (HP Mtg. 1: Turn 259) and undertook to "link with him through the language", noting "I've been to Argentina. I spent three months there so I can always try to link that in with him" (HP Mtg. 1: 269). She also made numerous references to how the approaches and methods she had used in the teaching of Spanish, could have proved useful in team-teaching English to the group. For example, in relation to

Denise's assertion that the group needed lots of repetition in learning poetry-related terminology, Saoirse asserted that "that's how I would cover things as well. If they're learning new words they're not going to learn them all in one go so you have to do them [again] the next day, but just do them so they think it's not the same thing" (HP Mtg. 1: Turn 169).

Later in relation to Conor's speech and language difficulties, she praises his persistence, because "sometimes teaching languages; sometimes kids just stop and they don't want to say anything when they've said it wrong once or twice" (HP Mtg. 2: Turn 35). Finally, when evaluating the team-teaching initiative during their last meeting, Saoirse acknowledged that she had "enjoyed working and learning from the English point of view" (HP Mtg. 3: Turn 7), since, "[w]ith English you can really show what's going on in your mind" (HP Mtg. 3: Turn 381). She went on to lament, "I don't get that in teaching Spanish at all" (HP Mtg. 3: Turn 383). All of this indicated that Saoirse identified strongly as a mainstream class teacher of Spanish and used this as a lens to consider many issues associated with the team-teaching initiative under study, including issues relating to students deemed to have disability. For her part, Denise was happy to concur with Saoirse's predominant identification as a Spanish teacher. For example, when discussing the need for "a lot of repetition" in relation to "keywords", Denise intoned, "which again, you're very used to in Spanish" (HP Mtg. 1: Turn 166).

### ***Support Teacher to those on her 'Target List'.***

Saoirse also identified as a support teacher to those students deemed to have disability in relation to whom Denise asked her to take a particular interest, in other words, those put on her "target list" (HP Mtg. 3: Turn 278). At various stages during discussions, different students were placed on this list (for example, HP Mtg. 2: Turns 30 and 98). These learners included Conor (HP Mtg. 2: Turns 22-23 and 30), Claire (HP Mtg. 2: Turn 98), Darren (HP Mtg. 2: Turn 170-176), Lauren (HP Mtg. 2: Turns 204-208) and Tom (HP Mtg. 2: Turns 401-402). While Saoirse reported in her evaluation of the initiative during the final team-teaching meeting, that "the target list was good ... because I kind of had more of a focus ... on what students particularly needed my help" (HP Mtg. 3: Turn 278), there was little discussion of her precise role in this connection, other than giving particular learners extra attention and encouragement. As a result, Saoirse felt that her function in the class had become very generalised and lacked focus, as captured in the following extract.

- |     |         |  |
|-----|---------|--|
| 278 | Saoirse | ... I think the family background, you know, just their situation, I would feel that they needed just that little of extra attention ... |
| 279 | Denise  | Encouragement, that's right.   |

- 280 Saoirse And encouragement and I suppose that became a little  
bit more of my focus than the actual learning.
- 281 Denise Than the list, yeah.
- 282 Saoirse Than the list.
- 283 Denise Than the actual letters after everyone's name!  
(HP Mtg. 3: Turns 278-283)

In addition to capturing Saoirse's frustration with her role, this excerpt also suggested that by the time of the third meeting, she was beginning to question the value of using categorical definitions of disability (or letters after one's name) to direct thinking about the types of support that students required. She seemed to suggest that this be predicated on social as well as educational needs.

***Enjoyable guest.***

One area in which Denise seemed to be able to use her positional power to substantial effect was in her ascription of a particular team-teaching role to Saoirse. While originally the initiative at Hazel Park involved three team-taught lessons per week, in line with parameters set out for participation in the study. However shortly after the study began, the teaching resource for one of these lessons was redistributed elsewhere. In this new context, Denise suggested that Saoirse take up the role of "a guest coming that they enjoy; an additional teacher in the room and they enjoy showing off to" (HP Mtg. 2: Turn 74). The discussion here is captured in the following excerpt.

- 154 Denise ... So every Wednesday, if we could  
start the class by saying, 'Miss, guess what we've  
covered this week!' and [they could] show off to you.
- 155 Saoirse Yeah, that's really good.
- 156 Denise And I can fill you in.
- 157 Saoirse Yeah, with a bit more on what you've done. Yeah, that  
would be really good, yeah.
- 158 Denise So if, even if, we could even set that as the homework  
for Wednesday, 'So remember, this week you need to  
be really paying attention because Miss [Saoirse]  
won't be with us until next week and you're going to be  
telling her what we've learned during the week; one  
thing each about what we've learned'.

159           Saoirse   Yeah, because obviously I won't know what they've done and I need to learn too, so it's like they're teaching me! Yeah, that works well.

160           Denise    I think that we can praise them that way and say, "Brilliant!" Because what I'm finding also is, that repetition is just so important with them.

(HP Mtg. 1: Turns 154-160)

As well as justifying the role of enjoyable guest in terms of the repetition and reinforcement, Denise also suggests that it "would be a brilliant way of evaluating the teaching and learning because I'll know exactly if they're able to tell you the information back" (HP Mtg. 1: Turn 192). Saoirse agreed that this would be a good idea (HP Mtg. 1: Turn 193), but continued to entertain the possibility "that maybe I would lead" lessons at times (HP Mtg. 1: Turn 205), especially in relation to poetry (HP Mtg. 1: Turn 123). Despite Denise's assertion that it would "be brilliant ... if you would lead" at times (HP Mtg. 1: Turn 122), there was no evidence that this ever happened at any stage during the team-teaching initiative.

Denise saw Saoirse's experience as a football coach in the school as a real advantage to her in enacting the role as *enjoyable guest*. For example, Denise asserted that "Joanna ... shows off when you're there because of the ... football" and "because she knows that she's looking for a place on the team" (HP Mtg. 2: Turns 216-224). In relation to Gemma, a student with dyslexia, Denise asserted that she, "participated more" when Saoirse was around "because of the relationship with the football" (HP Mtg. 3 Turns 241-242). Finally, Denise averred that Mike was more engaged with the English curriculum, "because of the relationship you have with his cousin, again through football" (HP Mtg. 3 Turns 263).

For her part, Saoirse acknowledged that the role of enjoyable guest was one that worked well, in that it allowed the teachers concerned to "make it ... a bit of a performance class ... so they're trying to show all that they have learned" (HP Mtg. 2: Turn 71). Ultimately however, it assigned her a lesser power position in the dyad and meant she had to defer to Denise on issues of classroom planning to the extent that she had to request that Denise "even just, maybe the day before, just [let me know] what you've done in the class" (HP Mtg. 1: Turn 331), "just so I know where you're at" and can engage appropriately (HP Mtg. 1: Turn 333).



## Summary

Overall, the style in which teachers deployed disability discourse to represent Darren was replicated in their representations of other students deemed have disability within the class. Since the class contained a preponderance of students deemed to have special educational needs, it was also replicated in representations of the whole class group. The individual style within which this was done, closely reflected the team-teaching identities and roles that teachers adopted or were assigned during team-teaching meetings

Denise deployed discourse consistent with someone who identified strongly as a class teacher, special education teacher and *Mommy*. She seemed to commit herself to representing students deemed to have disability, in ways that consistently portrayed them in a positive, or at least balanced light, and to subvert exclusively deficit-based characterisations of them. This approach remained rooted predominantly in the use of essentialist, though not necessarily deficit-focussed, discourse, which worked to maintain a focus on their innate personal attributes of individuals, rather than a product of material, social, cultural and historical determinants through which individuals are thought to acquire a disability identity.

As someone who identified as a class teacher of Spanish working out of her subject space, Saoirse saw her role as a support teacher, with the narrow parameters forced on the dyad by a reduction in the number of lessons available to team-teach. Within this scenario, Denise was able to assert on Saoirse, the identity of *enjoyable guest*, part of which involved drawing on her youth, relative to Denise, and her experience as a football coach in the school. This identity was built around offering academic and emotional support to students selected for her by Denise. Within it, Saoirse seemed a little unsure of the precise nature of the support required. She had little say in the planning and content of lessons or the setting of learning objectives. She seemed to depend on categorical constructions of learners deemed to have disability in order to work out where precisely she should intercede with them and repeatedly requested this information from Denise. Ultimately the types of support she was able to deliver, and the ways in which this occurred, were determined for her by Denise.

Despite the fact that Denise's positional power and positive style of representation seemed to limit the semiotic variability available within the dyad to deploy alternative views, she was unable to resist Saoirse's demands to engage in deficit-based categorical discourse about learners deemed to have disability. Analysis of genre and discourse suggests that this was because she feared that withholding information seen as a focus of legitimate inquiry,

would negatively affect the solidarity of the team. In this way, she was unable to resist the power of the institutionally-sanctioned essentialist discourses within which Saoirse framed her requests.

### **8.3 Issues of Style in the Discourse used at Maple Lodge**

#### **Congruence and Incongruence in Individual Teacher's Use of Disability Discourse**

Unlike teachers in the Hazel Park dyad, those at Maple Lodge exhibited a striking degree of congruence in their representation of students deemed to have disability from the very early stages of the first meeting. As in other dyads, the teachers at Maple Lodge spent a large proportion of their meetings engaged in knowledge exchanges about students, a preponderance of whom had been deemed to have disability. Thus they developed detailed representations of both the class group and *individuals* within it. A key vehicle for the development of congruence within teachers' representations of individual students at Maple Lodge, was the forensic review carried out of students' results in their written *mock* LCA examinations and the discrepancies between these results and perceptions of their ability to do better in the *real* examinations.

#### **Representing the class.**

When Andrew (T2) spoke about the group as a whole, it was usually in the context of misbehaviour and ill-discipline. Thus from the opening exchanges of the first meeting, he noted his concern that "the main problems within the group are ... the behavioural issues" (ML Mtg. 1: Turn 9). Later he declared "We know the ones who are causing some of the problems (ML Mtg. 1: Turn 248) and he expressed his belief that "a lot of people [were] being held back" because of these individuals (ML Mtg. 1: Turn 252).

Yet, he believed that "the usual discipline system ... doesn't seem to always work with them" (ML Mtg. 1: Turn 254). Claire (T1) agreed, noting that it was counter-productive to suspend students for misbehaviour, since "we have to get them through this LCA. If they miss a key assignment, they can't make that up at home" (ML Mtg. 1: Turn 269). Thus she declared, she would "prefer them to be in class than out" (ML Mtg. 1: Turn 269). Andrew agreed that there was "pressure to get them finished" and acknowledged that this meant taking a less formal approach to discipline (ML Mtg. 1: Turn 270). Andrew also represented many of those in the class as still unable "to self-regulate at this stage" even though "they're out of school this time next year" (ML Mtg. 1: Turn 273). He ascribed some of their misbehaviour to the fact that "a lot of them now feel that they have passed already" on the

basis of continuous assessment, and that the examination “doesn’t really matter” to them (ML Mtg. 3: Turn 309)

When not talking about misbehaviour, Andrew referred to the fact that “all these kids in here bar two have psychological assessments with issues” (ML Mtg. 1: Turn 274). As a result, he asserted that the content of lessons often had to be reduced and simplified (ML Mtg. 2: Turn 384). Similarly, he reported that many of the group had been “taken by surprise at the mock” LCA examinations because they had no idea of how difficult it would be or “the urgency of it” (ML Mtg. 3: Turn 182). He also asserted that learners in the group “don’t voice very much ... because ... if one speaks the other one is slagging” them off (ML Mtg. 1: Turn 179). As a result, “Everything is a question or maybe a response to a question”, with few students ever volunteering information or opinions (ML Mtg. 1: Turn 184).

Claire agreed with Andrew that behavioural issues were a cause for concern, adding that it was “the same bunch of people” who were usually at fault (ML Mtg. 3: Turn 280). She also asserted that “the girls in general are getting frustrated” with this situation (ML Mtg. 3: Turn 281). She also asserted that the group had become “really complacent”, especially around getting key assignments” submitted (ML Mtg. 1: Turn 13) and believed that they could “do better” in this connection if they tried (ML Mtg. 1: Turn 175).

She also reported that “they don’t do a lot of writing for me”, that they tended to be “lazy after break” (ML Mtg. 1: Turn 132), and that, even when they were attentive, they needed constant “reinforcement” of what they had learned (ML Mtg. 1: Turn 203). Finally, Claire “worried that a lot of them ... that have readers or scribes, they’re not using them efficiently” (ML Mtg. 3: Turn 310).

In general, the class was represented mainly with reference to a group of regularly disruptive students, who were interrupting the ability of others to complete essential course work for continuous assessment and preventing them from preparing properly for summative LCA assessment. Otherwise, it was depicted as having a preponderance of learners who had been assessed as having disabilities of some kind, and who found it difficult to engage with the LCA curriculum as a result, which required the reduction and simplification of course content and lots of reinforcement of this. All of this was achieved predominantly through the deployment of essentialist discourse that maintained a focus on the innate difficulties of class members and the need for teachers to respond to these.

### **Representing Individuals.**

In terms of individuals, we have already seen that Andrew represented Julia as one of “my two” (ML Mtg. 1: Turn 100) and as “a girl with moderate intellectual disability” (ML

Mtg. 2: Turn 92), both of which marked her out as exceptional within an already exceptional class. The way in which he referred to his initial role as her (and Aoife's) "helper" augmented this depiction (ML Mtg. 1: Turn 18). All of these references helped to construct Julia as someone with exceptional cognitive differences, who tended to "shy away from" academic tasks (ML Mtg. 1: Turn 104), find it "hard to extract ... information" from a wide range of media types (ML Mtg. 1: Turn 212; ML Mtg. 2: Turn 94), who was capable of attending to "very little" (ML Mtg. 1: Turn 216), who retained very little of what she learned (ML Mtg. 2: Turn 100), and who was likely to perform "very poor[ly]" in state examinations (ML Mtg. 2: Turn 96). Thus Andrew depicted her as a largely dependent, passive, apathetic, voiceless learner, who was powerless to influence the trajectory of her own life and whose intrinsic deficits were self-evident (ML Mtg. 3: Turns 365-367) and immutable (ML Mtg. 3: Turns 89-91 and 367-369) in ways that created a "massive worry" for all who dealt with her (ML Mtg. 1: Turn 210).

Claire represented Julia in very similar terms and almost always deferred to, what she saw as, Andrew's superior knowledge of Julia. She also used her knowledge of the LCA programme and Julia's engagement with the *mock* examinations associated with this, to offer additional evidence of Julia's exceptionality. She referred to the fact that she "forgot how limited she [Julia] is in an exam situation" (ML Mtg. 2: Turn 205), pointing out that there were "easy questions in the audio [-visual section] that she completely missed" or did not attempt; questions on which LCA students "should be getting full marks" (ML Mtg. 2: Turn 209). She agreed that Julia's difficulties represented a "massive worry" (ML Mtg. 2: Turn 211), and that Julia needed constant monitoring and surveillance as a result (ML Mtg. 1: Turn 111). She also acquiesced with his assertion that Julia needed "a lot of extra time" to complete tasks of any complexity, and added that "she'll always need that" (ML Mtg. 3: Turn 90), reflecting congruence with Andrew around the idea that her limitations were fixed and immutable.

Unlike Andrew however, she sometimes qualified assertions about her limitations, with statements such as "it was a hard paper" (ML Mtg. 2: Turn 123) and the fact that Julia "wasn't the only one that failed" it (ML Mtg. 2: Turn 125). She also noted that, though her engagement with exams "wasn't brilliant", she worked hard and "did as well as she could have done" (ML Mtg. 2: Turn 93). That said, there was no sense from either teacher, that Julia had a voice of her own that she was entitled to be supported in exercising towards vindication of her rights. Any such representation was lost in largely essentialist deficit-based representations of her, her engagement with the LCA programme and the types of specialist post-school provision she might require.

There was also considerable congruence between how the two teachers at Maple Lodge represented other students deemed to have disability. For example, Adam, a student who was listed to on the class profile supplied to the researcher as having dyslexia, was reported to have scored 60% on his *mock* LCA examination paper. While Claire thought this result was “[v]ery good!”, she also noted that if he had been a little less “lazy” he “he probably could have gotten a hundred per cent” (ML Mtg. 2: Turn 223). Andrew concurred immediately, adding “No, I wouldn’t worry about him” (ML Mtg. 2: Turn 224).

Similarly, the two concurred that Robert, another student deemed to have dyslexia and queried with dyspraxia was hard working and had “a very steadying influence on Adam” (ML Mtg.1: Turn 114), but struggled in his *mock* examination, attaining “forty-two [per cent]”, with Claire having to go “looking for the answers” in order to pass him (ML Mtg.2: Turn 129). She reported being “actually quite shocked” (ML Mtg. 2: Turn 131) that he missed so many “really obvious things”. When Andrew inquired “Did you get a sense that he understood the questions?” (ML Mtg. 2: Turn 134), Claire responded emphatically, “No, he didn’t”, citing examples of where this occurred (ML Mtg. 2: Turn 139). The discussion of Robert provided examples of how teachers came to agreement about student representations. For example, the was agreement about how his perceived disability affected his involvement in classroom (ML Mtg. 1: Turns 223-225) and the fact that he was “the *only* one” falling behind his peers in relation to the completion of his key assignments (ML Mtg3: Turns 128-131).

The following excerpt in relation to his performance on his mock examination, shows semiotic features that were typical of exchanges between the two in relation to Robert:

- |     |        |   |
|-----|--------|---|
| 167 | Claire | I haven’t got to speak to Robert yet. Em, he wasn’t in on Friday again so that’s a worry;     |
| 168 | Andrew | Mmm, mmm.   |
| 169 | Claire | But yeah, he really needs to, like ...  |
| 170 | Andrew | Explain the answers.  |
| 171 | Claire | Underline the key word in the questions. He’s not seeing the end part “Explain your answers”. |

(ML Mtg. 2: Turns 167-171)

Here we see examples of overlapping speech and teachers finishing each other’s sentences (ML Mtg. 2: Turns 169-170), We also see Claire extending a point made by Andrew (ML Mtg. 2: Turns 169-170), and both teachers use verbatim terminology to echo each other’s ideas. All of these techniques served to signal congruence with the need to express this explicitly within dialogue.

As with others, Harry, a student deemed to have a severe speech and language impairment, was represented primarily through performance in his *mock* examinations. He was said to have achieved just 30% (ML Mtg. 2: Turn 229), a result that was associated with the perception that he was “still acting up ... even at this stage” (ML Mtg. 2: Turn 230) and taking little responsibility for his performance. Rather he was reported by Claire to have blamed this in “on the paper” itself, that “he didn’t have enough time”, and that teachers “didn’t go through it” sufficiently beforehand (ML Mtg. 2: Turn 233). Andrew immediately acknowledged the irony inherent in Claire’s tone here, adding, “It was somebody else’s fault, really” (ML Mtg. 2: Turn 234). He went on to say,

314 Andrew Yeah. And I think we’re going to have to speak with ...  
Daithí [LCA programme Co-ordinator] as well around  
Harry and that. Because he can’t really *steal* any more  
time from that group.

315 Claire ... No, a hundred per cent, I agree with you, yeah.

316 Andrew He’s taken too much of their time already.

317 Claire Yeah ...

(ML Mtg. 2: Turns 314-316, original emphasis)

Andrew’s analogy of Harry *stealing* time from others was immediately accepted “a hundred per cent” by Claire (ML Mtg. 2: Turn 315). Later, Harry faced disciplinary action in relation to this, which was characterised as “tough” on him, which he “handled ... reasonably well” (ML Mtg. 3: Turn 291) and which had the effect of re-engaging him in his work, while also resulting in increasingly withdrawn behaviour (ML Mtg. 3: Turn 298).

In the same way, Louise, a student deemed to have a severe specific speech and language impairment, was also primarily represented through her engagement with LCA examinations. Claire reported that “there was a few tears” when Louise received her results on this examination, mainly because “she didn’t finish ... Section Four ... And she left out a few questions in each section” (TT Mtg. 2: Turn 199). Thus, Claire concluded that “[h]er comprehension isn’t there in anything” (TT Mtg. 2: Turn 199) and that “she does not understand questions that are being asked ... and it’s a huge worry” (TT Mtg. 2: Turn 202).

The interactional style here, was typical that used in this dyad, Firstly, Andrew agreed with Claire’s assertion, adding, “She just totally miscued” on certain questions (214). Claire retorted by agreeing “completely” with Andrew’s interpretation of her initial point. Andrew then echoed Claire’s original concern, “That’s worrying for her” (ML Mtg. 2: Turn 218), with Claire repeating “Worrying for her” (ML Mtg. 2: Turn 219), reflecting their verbatim

agreement here. Again, we see the establishment of congruence through expressions of explicit agreement, completion of the sentences and the echoing of phrases used teaching partners

By the end of the third meeting, there was a high degree of consensus about Louise that, while she needed help to engage successfully with her LCA examinations, she would get “nothing ... in terms of ... a reader or anything like that ... because of her... low level of ability in the first place” (ML Mtg. 3: Turns 379-381). This discussion focused on the material conditions of Louise’s disablement, by acknowledging that the allocation of support on the basis of deficit-based categories that pre-determined a “low level of ability” (ML Mtg. 3: Turn 381) were neither equitable nor efficient. As well as representing Louise in terms of her performance in examinations, Louise was also represented by Claire and Andrew, as exceptional through their placement of her in a group with Aoife and Julia (ML Mtg. 1: Turn 37) and their assertion that she would benefit from the same type of specialist post-school provision as was envisaged for Aoife (ML Mtg. 3: Turns 385 and 405).

Jack, who was deemed to have severe dyslexia, was also primarily represented through his engagement with a *mock* written LCA examination, with Claire reporting that “his paper wasn’t too bad” (ML Mtg. 2: Turn 71). While his score of “forty-two” per cent didn’t seem great, she reported being able to “see the effort he had put in” (ML Mtg. 2: Turn 179) and that “he’d ... filled every space that I told him to. He’d really listened to me ... If he’d finished it, I’d say he would have got sixty” per cent (ML Mtg. 2: Turn 189). As always, Andrew concurred with her evaluation of his performance, adding “I would say Jack would be very able, orally. Because he’s not really good on paper but orally he’s well able to discuss things” (ML Mtg. 1: Turn 180). Claire also reported that Jack saw his slow rate of writing and poor spelling as his “biggest issue” but noted that this was, in the context of the fact that he would have a spelling waver in the real examination “not an issue. I was able to read everything”, a point with which Andrew readily agreed (ML Mtg. 2: Turn 187). That said, Andrew also pointed out that Jack was well capable of “acting up”, especially in response to “Jason’s bad behaviour” (ML Mtg. 1: Turn 258).

The use of mock examination results was particularly salient in representing Jason, a student deemed to function within the borderline range of mild learning disability. Claire began by reporting that he had scored just “four per cent” on his examination paper, and that “He only answered ... some of the Audio-Visual and some of Section One. He didn’t ... bother with the rest of the paper. But, em, I believe it was like that for most of his exams” (ML Mtg. 2: Turn 235). Andrew was quick to point out the significance of this failure to engage, saying “He’s in danger of falling out of it [the LCA programme], isn’t he really?” (ML

Mtg. 2: Turn 236), a view with which Claire concurred, saying, “Fully, yeah” (ML Mtg. 2: Turn 237). Prior to this, Jason had already been characterised as someone whose “bad behaviour” (ML Mtg. 1: Turn 258) had warranted his withdrawal from class (Mtg. 1: Turns 248). He was also represented as someone who had fallen behind others in his completion of key assignments and who would benefit from “one-to-one exam support” from a competent SNA, which he would probably not receive (ML Mtg. 3: Turns 298-305).

Even Joanne’s neurological difficulties, which manifested in a significant “tremor” (ML Mtg. 2: Turns 9, 33 and 324) in her hands, were discussed almost exclusively in the context of how these affected her engagement with LCA written examination papers. Claire reported a deterioration in her typing speed that would affect this, a development that a colleague had attributed to her not keeping up her practice (ML Mtg. 2: Turn 7). Claire was dubious about this explanation, as is evident in the excerpt below.

- 7      Claire      ... so I completed, so basically that was the typing Test that I did [with her] on Friday, so it came out at seventeen words per minute. I spoke to Noreen Cooper, who said for Junior Cert it was thirty; around the thirty. Em, Noreen kind of suggested that Joanne hadn’t been keeping up the practice but I think it’s a bit of ...
- 8      Andrew      Yeah, maybe a bit of both.
- 9      Claire      Yeah, the tremors have ...
- 10     Andrew      There’s been a deterioration as well, like you know?

(ML Mtg. 2: Turns 7-10)

Again, semiotic features such as overlapping speech, alternating completion of sentences and reiteration of the views of discourse partners, contributed to the co-articulation of a congruent discourse position here. Only on one occasion was Joanne’s tremor discussed outside the context of her engagement with examinations, when Claire acknowledged that “she missed six weeks before Christmas because of the tremor” and Andrew noted that this was because “[s]he was very conscious of it at that stage” (ML Mtg. 2: Turns 29-34). There was no disagreement on this issue. In addition, both teachers agreed that “extra support for IT at this point” was not what was required (ML Mtg. 2: Turn 331), rather Andrew agreed to continue in his efforts to secure a scribe for her in the state examinations (ML Mtg. 3: Turns 220-227).



Claire represented Ciara, a learner deemed to have a specific learning disability, as keen “to get it [her work] done” and “serious” about this (ML Mtg. 1: Turns 124-126). As with others, evidence for such assertions was offered in the context of examination results. She scored “sixty” per cent and was reported as being “disappointed” with this result (ML Mtg. 2: Turn 71). Claire concurred with Ciara, asserting “I know she’ll do better” and saying that her main problem was that she wasn’t “using her scribe” effectively (ML Mtg. 2: Turn 73). Andrew undertook to “talk to her about” this (ML Mtg. 2: Turn 80). Overall, Claire depicted Ciara as one of “the people that have really been here putting the work in” (ML Mtg. 2: Turn 321), a view with which Andrew concurred, saying she would have “No bother!” doing well in LCA examinations (ML Mtg. 3: Turn 407).

Finally, Aoife was referred to on the class profile supplied to the researcher, as a student who was operating in the borderline range of mild learning disability, with a specific learning disability in literacy, dyspraxia and queried selective mutism. She was represented as one of the two students, in relation to whom Andrew’s team-teaching involvement in the class had initially been put in place (ML Mtg. 1: Turn 9). This characterised her as someone with very exceptional intrinsic differences indeed. Overall, she was characterised as being highly withdrawn (except in relation to Julia, ML Mtg. 1: Turn 106), socially unsure of herself (ML Mtg. 1: Turns 27-31), and unable to “engage” easily in academic tasks (ML Mtg. 1: Turn 104).

Despite all of this however, Claire noted that she was “delighted” with her performance in her mock examinations (ML Mtg. 2: Turn 39) in which she scored “fifty [per cent], like one of the highest grades” (ML Mtg. 2: Turn 51) a fact that Andrew acknowledged as “a very good result” (ML Mtg. 2: Turn 56). Interestingly, Andrew associated her success with the fact that she had “a reader and a scribe” and was “coming out of her shell a little bit” (ML Mtg. 2: Turn 42). Claire agreed that she had been engaging more in conversation “in the corridor” (ML Mtg. 2: Turn 45) and that she was doing well “at the comprehension questions” (ML Mtg. 2: Turn 59). She thought that the team-teaching initiative had been particularly good “with the likes of Aoife... she can work independently now and she asks us for help, where a year ago, you know, she didn’t do that” (ML Mtg. 3: Turn 84), an opinion that Andrew agreed was “true” (ML Mtg. 3: Turn 87).

### **Negotiating Congruence and Incongruence**

Both relied predominantly on deficit and tragedy discourses, that foregrounded “otherness” and elided the agency of learners. That said, Chapter 7 reported a greater range of discourses that ran counter to essentialist ones, deployed at Maple Lodge than at any

other settings. There was also a high degree of congruity between teachers in the deployment of these discourses.

This could be seen, for example, in discussions that focussed on the inadequacy of resources available to affect meaningful inclusion for Julia in current and post-school settings. There were also instances where Julia's right to belong in a mainstream, albeit in an already stratified LCA class, was asserted. For example, when Claire asserted that team-teaching had been a key factor in enabling Julia to remain "in the room with her peers", an outcome she saw as quite "something" (ML Mtg. 3: Turn 92), Andrew, concurred with Claire on this, saying that team-teaching had "been great for those ... young people" such as Julia; meaning those with significant disabilities (ML Mtg. 3: Turn 93). He speculated that, without such provision, these students simply "wouldn't have been able to continue" to participate in the LCA programme (ML Mtg. 3: Turn 93).

### **Discourses of Disability and the Construction of Team-Teaching Identities and Roles**

Even though the deployment of discourse was highly congruent between the teachers in the Maple Lodge dyad, it remained a key site for the articulation of teaching identities and roles.

**Andrew.**

#### ***Julia and Aoife's helper... not!***

In terms of teaching identities, we see that from the very early stages of the first meeting at Maple Lodge, Andrew invited a discussion about behaviour of the group, which he used to signal his wish to negotiate a greater role for himself in this connection. He conflated this discussion with his rejection of the role of "helper" to Julia and Aoife, saying about the students, "I don't think they really see me sometimes as being involved directly in the teaching" (ML Mtg. 1: Turn 18). While Claire did not reject this perception outright, she responded with equivocations such as "possibly" and "probably" (see below) to signal gently her lack of agreement here. She also suggested that the teaching identity initially assigned to him, had expanded substantially since then. Andrew seemed happy, if not reassured, by Claire's assessment and Claire moved quickly to reinforce agreement here, by suggesting that the teaching identities of both team members was likely to align even more in the future.

- |    |        |   |
|----|--------|---|
| 19 | Claire | Possibly, that's probably how it started, that I'd been there from the start. But I definitely think [that] your role has developed and I think ... |
| 20 | Andrew | It has changed.   |

- 21 Claire You know, I really enjoyed the day we broke up into two teams. I think that really worked and I think going forward ...
- 22 Andrew Yeah, maybe more of that would be good.
- 23 Claire Yeah, more of that because it especially hits all of the behaviour and all the needs as well.

(ML Mtg. 1: Turns 19-23)

For his part, Andrew made it clear that he wanted to be involved in responding to the learning of the entire class, including getting involved in group work (ML Mtg. 1 Turn 22), the maintenance of discipline (ML Mtg. 1 Turns 8, 10, 23 and 316) and the planning of learning activities (ML Mtg. 1: Turns 34-35).

### ***Special educational needs coordinator.***

While Andrew wanted to shed any teaching identity that pigeon-holed him as Julia's and Aoife's helper, he was also keen to retain overall responsibility for their inclusion, or as he put it, "I'll stay with Julia and maybe Aoife but broaden it out a little" to assist others also (ML Mtg. 1: Turn 26). Thus, when organising learning activities for the whole class, he was keen "to make sure that the two girls, *my two*, would be included" (ML Mtg. 1: Turn 100, author's emphasis). Andrew also articulated a specific advocacy role in relation to trying to give these two students the maximum latitude during a survey task, saying "it would be nice if they could do it without that kind of supervision; I mean they're sixth years" (ML Mtg. 1: Turn 108). He drew again on his identity as their advocate, during discussion of Julia's post-school placement, when he asserted his intention to ensure that "there'll be some kind of continuity for her" between current and future placements (ML Mtg. 1: Turn 218). All of this was consistent with a teacher identity that reflected his position as a trained special education teacher and a special educational needs coordinator in the school. The latter position conferred a responsibility on him to monitor and plan for all students deemed to have disability in the school. His tendency to deploy discourse in a way that reflected both Julia's in-school and out-of-school experiences, was highly congruent with this role. It was also clear that Andrew was known to exercise this role in the school, including by students (ML Mtg. 1: Turn 318).

### ***Supporting everyone, while retaining a particular responsibility for some.***

Andrew seemed to become more involved in decision-making around curriculum delivery to the whole group, including students deemed to have disability, as meetings progressed. Even as early as the latter stages of the first meeting, he became increasing

involved in making decisions about grouping (ML Mtg. 1: Turns 196-198). He also became more involved in decisions about content to be covered and resources to be used, including “documentaries that would be worth looking at” for media studies (ML Mtg. 1: Turn 236-242). What seemed to impede Andrew most in this connection, was his lack of knowledge of the LCA programme and its objectives and requirements, to the extent that Claire suggested he go for LCA in-service training to familiarise himself with these (ML Mtg. 1: Turn 63-67). Andrew noted that he had not been advised of such training (ML Mtg. 1: Turn 68), because the learning support team had not previously been “seen to be teaching on the programme really” (ML Mtg. 1: Turn 170). He committed to completing this training (ML Mtg. 1: Turn 172) in order to increase his involvement in the future.

By the third meeting both teachers were agreed that “the exam” would “be the focus” of their work going forward (ML Mtg. 3: Turns 140-141). By this stage, Andrew had taken a more active role in planning for the entire class, saying, “we’re going to have to revise all content and get them ready for the papers” (ML Mtg. 3: Turn 149). He also committed to “looking at the mock paper” to “see where the gaps were and where they might need to put in a little extra effort” (ML Mtg. 3: Turn 155). At the same time, he stated that he wanted to retain a particular interest in Julia and Aoife, as evidenced in discussions about whether or not to inform Julia of the grade she received in her *mock* written examination paper. While Claire expressed discomfort about doing so, saying “I’m afraid to give it back to her because she’s been very upset” at having “failed her maths and ... something else as well” (ML, Mtg. 2: Turn 113), Andrew signalled that his close relationship with Julia would make this an easier task for him (ML, Mtg. 2: Turn 120-122).

Eventually, Andrew characterised the dynamic of the team as one in which the two teachers involved, had exerted both lead and support teacher identities to varying degrees and in ways that became more nuanced as their team-teaching relationship evolved. This may have been aided by the fact that both teachers had dual training, both as English teachers and special educational needs teachers. Hence, by the final meeting, Andrew could assert that, “while they [Julia and Aoife] were our main students there, we were supporting the whole room” (ML Mtg. 3: Turn 94). A little later he added to this saying, “there was *nobody* really ... within the group that didn’t need a good level of support” (ML Mtg. 3: Turn 97).

**Claire.**

***Lead teacher.***

From the outset, Claire identified predominantly as the *lead* teacher in relation to LCA English and Communication programme and took primary responsibility for engaging the entire class in this. She made all of the important decisions about the content to be covered and how this would be done (ML Mtg. 1: Turns 4-7). Even though, Andrew, as SENCO, seemed to exert significant control over the conduct of meetings, it took him until midway through the first meeting to assert his discomfort with this situation.

Andrew noted that “it was great” to have two teachers in the room “to be able to give them ... feedback” on their work (ML Mtg. 1: Turn 14), an opinion with which Claire agreed, saying it wouldn’t have happened “if I was on my own” (ML Mtg. 1: Turn 15). However, it became clear that Andrew was unhappy with how roles were distributed within the team. Even in the early interactions of Meeting 1, he asserted, “You’re carrying the [main work]load of this; you do all the preparation” (ML Mtg. 1: Turn 44), which made him “wonder ... at some stage would it be interesting for us to stop and let me do one of the” modules (ML Mtg. 1: Turn 46), “[j]ust to try it!” (ML Mtg. 1: Turn 50). He then became more direct, reporting his belief that he had become “a passenger some of the time” and wanted “a more active role; even in the preparation” of lessons, because he was often “not quite sure the direction” in which these were going (ML Mtg. 1: Turn 52).

Claire agreed that trying “to change roles” (ML Mtg. 1: Turn 49) was “definitely” a good idea (ML Mtg. 1: Turn 51). She empathised with Andrew’s situation, saying “I’ve been in your position before and that’s horrible” (ML Mtg. 1: Turns 53), and suggested that Andrew “roll on the next module ... Television” (ML Mtg. 1: Turns 57-63). Not only did Claire accede to all of Andrew’s suggestions about his increased role in supporting the class (ML Mtg. 1: Turns 8, 10, 22, 23, 34-35 and 316), she also agreed that he should continue to exercise a disproportionate role in supporting “Aoife and Julia”, which she felt had been “good” for them (ML Mtg. 1: Turn 27).

On the face of things then, Claire seemed happy to accede to Andrew, any identity or role that he suggested for himself. Yet her flexibility in this regard did not extend to a change of role for herself. Her own role continued to be aligned very closely with that of lead teacher and class teacher. For example, in the first meeting she stated that, “ideally if we’d more classes, I’d get them to type up the survey but that would take another class and I don’t have the time, I think” (ML Mtg. 1: Turn 81). The predominant use of “I” in this excerpt, suggested that she was both thinking and acting in a lead capacity from an early stage. Even after this, she continued to dominate the planning and delivery of lessons, as exemplified in the extract below.

- 133 Claire ... So we probably won't get all the results of the Survey completed by the end of Wednesday so that might carry on to Friday.
- 134 Andrew Yes. And then on Friday, just pull it together, is it?
- 135 Claire Maybe yeah! That's when we could probably split up into groups to discuss the survey, write a piece about it, as a group maybe, and then feedback.
- 136 Andrew And that's to happen then on the Friday?
- 137 Claire What do you think?
- 138 Andrew No, that sounds good!

(ML Mtg. 1: Turns 133-138)

Clearly, Claire was taking the lead role in most discussions about content and how this would be delivered, while Andrew mostly sought clarification and offered affirmation for her decisions. As the conversation went on Andrew acknowledged this fact when he declared "I'm taking your lead; I suppose I have done, in terms of [the fact that] you have the research done and the piece done already" (ML Mtg. 1: Turn 140). In response Claire outlined her written planning to Andrew.

- 143 Claire So this is the actual plan [introducing a planning document]. I can put it up here on my iPad; it's up on line. Have you seen those plans?
- 144 Andrew No, so I'll need to look at those, will I?
- 145 Claire No, they're only up on line now because at the last LCA meeting, Daithí asked us to put up our plans by the end of October.

(ML Mtg. 1: Turns 143-145)

The concept of *lead* teacher seemed to become an important discursive concept at Maple Lodge. Andrew returned to it again at the end of the first meeting, when he declared, "you're the lead teacher there and if I do step in like that, then I don't want to be undermining of your role" (ML Mtg. 1 Turn 312). While on the face of it, Claire rejected this *lead* identity (ML Mtg. 1 Turn 313) she also reported finding it hard to cede control over the selection and delivery of content to Andrew, saying "I should really just give it over. I don't really know why I feel like I have to do it" (ML Mtg. 1 Turn 293). This reluctance did not seem to dissipate as meetings continued. For example, she corrected all of the group's *mock* written examination papers by herself, and wrote "in every answer that they missed or even where they could

have got extra marks” (ML Mtg.2: Turn: 153) in order to provide students with feedback on how they might improve on their performance in the *real* examination. This did not only represent a huge commitment on her part, it also meant that Andrew had no access to this information except through Claire. He requested this information from her, in a somewhat indirect way, saying “You’ve been looking at the ... results that are coming through and what kind of outcomes” the students have achieved (ML Mtg. 2: Turn: 6).

Similarly, in the third meeting, when Andrew suggested they “look to ... the next number of weeks and see where we’re going” (ML Mtg. 3: Turn 121), it was Claire who directed where this coursework should focus (ML Mtg. 3: Turns 122 and 130). She also noted that she had already established when and where LCA assessment interviews would take place (ML Mtg. 3: Turn 134) and already had made all the arrangements necessary for official submission of key assignments. She fully apprised Andrew of all of these matters in advance of her imminent uptake of maternity leave (ML Mtg. 3: Turns 184-189). All of this suggests that Claire identified very strongly as the *lead* teacher of the class and was committed fully to the workload associated with this.

### ***Support teacher.***

Claire also seemed to take on some of the role of support teacher for those deemed to have disability, especially where this related to their engagement with curriculum and assessment of this. This was evident in the degree to which she tried to scaffold their engagement in learning activities, including writing scripts for them to use in undertaking a survey (ML Mtg. 1 Turn 89) and hand-picking “what groups will they go into” (ML Mtg. 1 Turns 90-91). She expressed a wish to have “more time with them to sit down on a one-to-one” basis “to talk about grammar and punctuation and things” that might improve their performance in assessment (ML Mtg. 1 Turn 273). Both teachers thought that this kind of support was something students deemed to have disability did “really need” and would have received as a matter of course, “[i]f they were doing the established Leaving Cert” (ML. Mtg. 1 Turn: 275). However, rather than sharing her lead role with Andrew and taking up extra support functions, she seemed to look at offering support to students deemed to have disability as an extra layer to her existing work.

This meant that the support Claire offered was invariably related to students’ engagement with the LCA programme. This support included assisting with the procurement of *reasonable accommodations* for students deemed to have disability in state examinations, as in the case of Jack (ML Mtg. 2: Turn 193) and Joanne (ML Mtg. 2: Turns 7-14 and 327), and preparing them to use these effectively, such as in the case of Aoife (ML Mtg. 2 Turn:

47) and Ciara (ML Mtg. 2 Turns: 73-77). All of this showed evidence of Claire's willingness to undertake roles typically exercised by special education teachers. This was entirely in line with her training and qualifications in the area.

## Summary

Just as at Hazel Park, the style in which teachers deployed disability discourse to represent Julia at Maple Lodge, was replicated in their representations of both the class group and other students deemed have disability within it. While it was suggested that they drew largely on essentialist discourses that foregrounded *otherness* and elided the agency of learners, it was also noted that a greater range of non-essentialist ones, was deployed at Maple Lodge than at any other setting. Unlike Hazel Park, there was a striking degree of congruence in how the two teachers deployed both essentialist and counter-essentialist discourse. Again, this closely reflected the team-teaching identities and roles that they adopted or were assigned during team-teaching meetings.

Claire deployed discourse consistent with someone who identified strongly as the *lead* teacher of English and Communication. She made all of the important decisions about the content to be covered and how this would be delivered. Even though, Andrew, as the school's SENCO, exerted considerable control over meetings, it was Claire who carried the main workload in relation to the planning and delivery of instruction, with Andrew having to negotiate his way into more active participation in these areas. While Claire agreed that Andrew should play a larger role here and acceded within team-teaching discussion, to all of his demands in this connection (ML Mtg. 1: Turns 8, 10, 22, 23, 34-35 and 316), in reality she found it very difficult to relinquish her lead identity (ML Mtg. 1 Turns 293 and 313). She corrected and annotated all *mock* LCA examination papers by herself (ML Mtg.2: Turn: 153) and continued to retain overall responsibility for the vast majority of course content and delivery (ML Mtg. 3: Turns 122 and 130). Finally, she organised most of the logistics relating to assessment of the subject within LCA structures (ML Mtg. 3: Turn 134 and 184-189).

Claire also took on some support teacher functions in relation to students deemed to have disability, including scaffolding their engagement in learning activities (ML Mtg. 1 Turn 89), grouping students for specific classroom activities (ML Mtg. 1 Turns 90-91), assisting with securing reasonable accommodations for them in state examinations (ML Mtg. 2: Turn 7-14, 193 and 327), and preparing them to use these effectively (ML Mtg. 2 Turn: 47 and 73-77). However, these supports were exclusively in relation to their engagement with the LCA English and Communication syllabus and its assessment and without reducing her lead teacher responsibilities in relation to the whole class. This meant that this latter role



remained the one that most influenced her deployment of discourse in relation to students deemed to have disability. This was predominated by largely sensitive, but nonetheless essentialist and deficit-based representations of them, that focused on their engagement with the LCA programme, assessment of this (including reasonable accommodations to be put in place for this), and the types of specialist post-school provision that some students might require.

From the very early stages of the first meeting Andrew tried to expand his role as Julia's and Aoife's "helper". Identifying strongly with his role as Special Educational Needs Coordinator at the school, he retained an advocacy role for these and other students deemed to have disability, and tended to deploy discourse in a way that reflected categorical and practical assessment knowledge about them. This tended to be articulated predominantly through essentialist discourse. Because of his extensive interaction with them over many years, his knowledge of these students extended to both their in-school and their out-of-school lives and experiences.

Having said that, Andrew also tried to negotiate a greater role for himself in the behaviour and learning of the entire class (ML Mtg. 1 Turns 8, 10, 22-23, 34-35 and 316). While he seemed to become more involved in decision-making in these areas as meetings progressed, including the grouping of students (ML Mtg. 1: Turns 196-198) and content to be covered (ML Mtg. 1: Turn 236-242), he also seemed to be constrained in adopting this role by his lack of knowledge of the LCA programme and its objectives and requirements (ML Mtg. 1: Turn 63-67), and by Claire's reluctance to devolve responsibility in these areas, despite her oral commitment to doing so. Nevertheless, by the third meeting Andrew seemed to have enacted a more comprehensive role in the planning and delivery of instruction to the whole class, especially in terms of preparation for "the exam" (ML Mtg. 3: Turns 140-141, 149 and 155). This increased the degree of congruence between teachers in how they deployed discourse in relation to students deemed to have disability, which seemed to be filtered predominantly through the lens of the degree to which they could engage with the LCA English and Communication curriculum and assessment of this.

Within this frame of reference, both teachers adopted class teacher and support teacher identities to varying degrees, aided by the fact that both teachers had trained as both English teachers and special educational needs teachers. This Andrew could assert that, "while they [Julia and Aoife] were our main students there, we were supporting the whole room" (ML Mtg. 3: Turn 94) since everyone within the group needed "a good level of support" (ML Mtg. 3: Turn 97). The striking degree of congruence observed in how they deployed disability discourse seemed to reflect this overlap in team-teaching identities.

## **8.4 Issues of Style in the Discourse used at Willow Way**

### **Congruence and Incongruence in Individual Teacher's Use of Disability Discourse**

In relation to the two previous cases, the author returned to the full transcripts of each meeting and coded for instances of evaluation and assumption relating to *all* students were deemed to have disability who were discussed. This was done in order to establish a broader discursive context for analysis of *style* than that provided in Chapter 6, which focused on the use of discourse in relation to one particular student in each case. Since Phillip was the only student deemed to have any kind of assessed disability in the class group that comprised the focus of the Willow Way team-teaching initiative, there were no additional students deemed to have disability who representation needed to be considered. Similarly, there was no need to consider representations of the class, since, unlike in other settings, this did not contain a predominance of students deemed to have disability. Only one point is made in this connection. That said, the task of identifying points of convergence and divergence in the individual styles with which teachers deployed disability discourse around Phillip still needed to be addressed.

#### **Representing the group.**

In relation to how the group was represented in discourse, it is worth reiterating the subtle way in which the misbehaviour of the whole class was conflated with that of Phillip (WW Mtg. 1 Turns: 411 -415) and how this worked to maintain a focus on his perceived differences and suggest that these were the *key* factor in maintaining an unsafe and disruptive climate in the class. This negative and menacing climate was then depicted as compromising the wellbeing and academic progress of the whole group, as well as contravening their right to an appropriate education. It allowed teachers to background other factors that might have been at play, including the role of other students and teachers in this connection. Since factors associated with Phillip's person were seen as the main negative influence on the wellbeing and progress of the class, the removal of his person became the primary focus of teachers' responses to these issues. More will be written about his shortly in the context it became one of the issues around which congruence was achieved between teachers in their discursive representations of Phillip.

#### **Representing Individuals.**

Chapter 6, suggested that, despite some initial hedging (WW Mtg. 1: Turns 62-69), initial convergence in the use of discourse in relation to Phillip, considerable divergence emerged mid-way through the first meeting. This divergence seemed to be short-lived

however, with convergence being reasserted by the end of that meeting and reinforced in subsequent ones. By the end of the third meeting there was a striking degree of congruence between both teachers in how Phillip was represented and the discourse used to do so. As previously argued, it is not unusual for individuals who engage in meaning-making about disability to enter such processes with divergent discourse positions and emerge from them with highly congruent ones (Ashton, 2010; Mehan, 1996; Rogers, 1997). In the case of the Willow Way dyad, the author wanted to understand how the temporarily incongruent positions of teachers became resolved, through the relinquishing of one discourse position in favour of another, through exchange of “superior information” or “argument” (Mehan, 1996, p. 272). A number of types of *argumentation* were identified as pertinent here, all of which were consistent with essentialist and personal tragedy discourses of disability. Each will be addressed in turn hereunder.

### ***Phillip's unfair domination of available resources.***

As we have seen, Fiona depicted Phillip as non-compliant of basic school rules and indifferent to school, as well as failing to benefit from it in any meaningful way. She also asserted that everybody was “in the same boat” in terms of the difficulties they were experiencing with him (WW Mtg. 1: Turn 176). Fiona represented these difficulties, not only as an affront to the rights of the teachers and students with whom he came in contact, but as getting progressively worse and leading inevitably towards his exclusion (WW Mtg. 1: Turn 184-188). At the same time, she characterised Phillip's situation, as a personal and unavoidable tragedy for *him*; a situation that had transpired despite the best efforts of the school to prevent it. It was in response to this representation, Meadhbh asserted that “he needs a lot of help as well. I think he needs some one-on-one help too” (WW Mtg. 1: Turn 418). She suggested that she work closely and intensively with Phillip (WW Mtg. 1: Turns 179- 183), in order to prevent his seemingly inevitable exclusion.

The discussion here represented a key turning point in the negotiation of discourse at Willow Way. While Fiona responded “Of course he does!” (WW Mtg. 1: Turn 419), she also added that “there's a lot more than him that needs help in that class” (WW Mtg. 1: Turn 421). She was careful here, not to contradict Meadhbh's assertion that Phillip needed support. In fact, on the face of it, she seemed to endorse this position (WW Mtg. 1 Turn 419), perhaps in an attempt to preserve the solidarity of the team. At the same time, Fiona controverted any implication that Phillip's need for support was greater than his peers. These assertions worked simultaneously to limit Meadhbh's access to the argument that Phillip needed exceptional levels of support as a matter of right, to thwart her ability to establish a role for herself in this connection, and to cede to Phillip sole occupancy of the

personal tragedy space. She also linked the inability of all class members to access the support they needed, to the presence of students such as Phillip, who were depicted as unfairly “taking over” resources made available to support the class (WW Mtg. 1 Turns 425-427).

Ironically, arguing that other students were deserving of support equivalent to what Phillip received was at variance with assertions that his needs were so exceptional that no amount of support could respond adequately to them. Moreover, the additional resources given to the class that Phillip was said to be “taking over”, were exclusively allocated on the basis of his presence, since he was the only student assessed as having a disability in the group. Despite this, Meadhbh seemed swayed by these arguments and signalled her agreement by providing closure to Fiona’s assertion that some students, including Phillip, were “[t]aking over” available resources (WW Mtg. 1 Turn: 426). Fiona seemed sufficiently mindful of the potential damage that prosecuting her argument more fully might do to team cohesion, to point out how “brilliant” it was that both teachers were present to provide the lass with the support it needed (WW Mtg. 1 Turn: 421).

#### ***Effects of Phillip’s presence and absence on the rest of the class.***

A key site for the establishment of congruence between teachers at Willow Way in relation to discourse use around Phillip, was in relation to the perceived intimidatory effects of Phillip’s presence on his peers. From the very first meeting, Fiona characterised Phillip as “a bit intimidating in the class for the rest of them” (WW Mtg. 1: Turn 188), an assertion with which Meadhbh agreed “absolutely” (WW Mtg. 1: Turn 189). Often, such discourse was deployed from the perspective of Phillip’s peers, who were depicted as being “completely afraid of him” (WW Mtg. 1 Turn: 204). Similarly, in their second meeting, teachers discussed the benefits to his peers of Phillip’s absence from the class. This argument was deployed from the perspective of a student named Robbie who was seen as vulnerable and withdrawn (WW Mtg. 2 Turns: 196-201).

The fact that both teachers contributed in roughly equal measure to this representation by the time of their second meeting, signalled a high degree of congruence at that stage. Both depicted Robbie as “very quiet” (WW Mtg. 2: Turns 196-197, a phrase echoed by both) and in need of a safe learning environment. This characterisation was augmented by talk of him having “come out of his shell” (WW Mtg. 2: Turn 197) and feeling “a bit safer” when Phillip was not around (WW Mtg. 2: Turn 200). Interesting, it was Meadhbh, not Fiona, who dominated this representation. Congruence was also signalled through the way in which teachers co-constructed the final assertion of the interaction (WW Mtg. 2: Turns 199-201), in which the argument made in relation to Robbie was extended to

all of “the quieter kids”. Fiona reiterated this point again a little later in the meeting, by declaring that Phillip’s absence “had a real positive impact on the class” (WW Mtg. 2: Turn 204). The congruence with which teachers used discourse around this issue was striking.

By the third meeting, congruence was even more pronounced around the benefits of Phillip’s absence from the class. By this time his exclusion had been confirmed and all references to his right to remain in the class with appropriate levels of support, had been abandoned. In this context, Fiona felt so assured that her opinions would not be controverted that she could assert, “the behaviour really improved” and “the exclusion of Phillip did help” (WW Mtg. 3: Turn 12). Similarly, Meadhbh felt bold enough to respond, “Yeah ... because the rest of the pupils didn’t feel as intimidated” (WW Mtg. 3: Turns 13-14). The third meeting also saw striking congruence in how teachers drew on essentialist discourse to legitimise Phillip’s eventual exclusion. Again, it was Meadhbh, not Fiona, who took the lead in these discussions, signalling her complete assimilation of Fiona’s initial discursive representation on Phillip.

- 63            Meadhbh    Yeah, I think, with reference to Phillip then, I don’t know. I kind of think he was so extreme.
- 64            Fiona        Yeah.
- 65            Meadhbh    I don’t know, kind of, even with two of us in the class ...
- 66            Fiona        It just wasn’t ... Yeah!
- 67            Meadhbh    You could have four people in the class and you were never going to be able to, em ...
- 68            Fiona        No.
- 69            Meadhbh    ... to give him the focus he needs, he really needed.
- 70            Fiona        Yeah, yeah.
- 71            Meadhbh    It’s something that we weren’t able to provide.
- (WW Mtg. 3: Turns 63 -77)

Later, Fiona added “I do feel, obviously, that you want to include everybody and you don’t want anybody ... excluded from school but really, if I’m being honest in this particular case, I think it was, it was needed for the class to try it” (WW Mtg. 3: Turn 74). She went on to remind Meadhbh of the fact that she had anticipated Phillip’s fate from the very start of the initiative, saying, “as I said, from the beginning I felt they, they all really felt intimidated when he was in the class” (WW Mtg. 3: Turn (76)). Both teachers continued to contribute in roughly equal measure to a single narrative that foregrounded the benefits to the class of Phillip’s exclusion in the latter sections of the final meeting, as follows:

- 89 Meadhbh ... I don't think there's anything really we could have done to, to help Phillip more.
- 90 Fiona No, no.
- 91 Meadhbh ... to think of the school, even the whole school, everyone was trying to support him and just ...
- 92 Fiona Everyone did their best. It was ... They went down every avenue, there was every channel [explored].
- 93 Meadhbh G26, the NBSS like, I don't think you had ...
- 94 Fiona Yeah, of course!
- 95 Meadhbh Like you worked with them, you got the NBSS in. I think that was really good that that happened.
- 96 Fiona Of course it was, yeah, yeah! He was even on a reduced, kind of ...
- 97 Meadhbh Timetable.
- 98 Fiona Timetable, yeah!
- 99 Meadhbh But I don't think there was much more we could have done together to help him succeed.
- 100 Fiona Yeah, yeah.

(WW Mtg. 3 Turns: 89-100)

As in Maple Lodge, congruence here was signalled by emphatic explicit agreement, running on of sentences, completion of the sentences of others, sharing of lexis and precise echoing of the language of the last speaker.

### **Positive imaginaries of student outcomes as a result of Phillip's absence.**

There was also congruence in the way teachers articulated their belief that Phillip's exclusion would lead to positive outcomes for his peers in the future. This can be seen in the following excerpt.

- 210 Fiona ... But it's, just from our perspective, the class is ... Have you seen a dramatic change?
- 211 Meadhbh I think so, yeah. Yeah.
- 212 Fiona And I think it's all just ... now he isn't there like? Yeah.
- 213 Meadhbh No, there is. It's a different dynamic.
- 214 Fiona ... this is going to be good as well going forward, this is such positivity for them, they're going to be delighted with these results!

- 215 Meadhbh Yeah, I hope so.  
216 Fiona You know, it can't go bad, it can only get good ...  
(WW Mtg. 2 Turns: 210 -216)

From a linguistic perspective, this congruence was achieved in a number of ways. Firstly, Fiona asserted that a “dramatic change” (WW Mtg. 2 Turns: 210) had come about in the behaviour and application of the group. This statement was made “from *our* perspective” (WW Mtg. 2 Turns: 210). Moreover, Fiona explicitly invited Meadhbh’s agreement, asking, “Have you seen a dramatic change?” (WW Mtg. 2 Turns: 210), perhaps in the knowledge that the required response was unlikely to be withheld in the context of the centrality of maintaining team solidarity within team meetings. Thirdly, Fiona uses emphatic language in her assertions about positive future outcomes for students, saying definitively “this is going to be good”, “they’re going to be delighted” and “it can’t go bad, it can only get good” (WW Mtg. 2 Turns: 214 -216). While Meadhbh was initially less sure, saying “I hope so” (WW Mtg. 2 Turns: 215), she later augmented her agreement with these forecasts and suggested that both teachers “praise them a bit more” (WW Mtg. 2: Turn 221) by way of motivation towards these goals. For her part, Fiona agreed that they should “be a little more positive” to those remaining in the class and remind them, “we ... know what you’re capable of” (WW Mtg. 2: Turn 224). It was interesting that, while a similar approach was discussed in relation to Phillip during the first meeting (WW Mtg. 1 Turns: 205), there was no evidence that this had ever been tried, and no positive imaginaries were ever expressed in relation to Phillip by either teacher. This gave insight into congruence between teachers in relation to discourses that were left unused in relation to representation of Phillip.

**Conflation of Phillip’s perceived difficulties with those associated with the entire class.**

As already noted, Phillip’s role in the misbehaviour of the entire class was foregrounded by the tendency of both teachers to conflate difficulties thought to relate to the whole class group, with those related exclusively to Phillip. This also provided a site for the development of congruence in relation to how he was represented, as evidenced in the following excerpt. This occurred early in the first meeting, and related to the imminent return of various students, including Phillip, from suspension.

- 60 Fiona Now, I am also concerned as well, that yesterday we were missing quite a few. So that’s probably why it went so well! [laughs]  
61 Meadhbh I know!  
62 Fiona You know? I was obviously on in-service for two days,

so you know! Phillip; he's suspended?

(WW Mtg. 1: Turns 60-62)

In this excerpt, a very general discussion of suspended students transitioned seamlessly into a specific discussion of Phillip. The same occurred in the excerpt below.

411        Fiona     So, I don't know. And they'll all be back on  
Monday, won't they?

412        Meadhbh   They'll all be back with a bang!

413        Fiona     How long was he suspended for, three days was  
it? Three days, okay! Yeah. I worry because ...

414        Meadhbh   That's a long time for him to be out. When he comes  
back in, he'll be giddy.

415        Fiona     Oh, he'll be raring to go.

(WW Mtg. 1 Turns: 411 -415)

These examples showed the relatively unconscious level at which teachers achieved congruence in relation to the centrality of Phillip's misbehaviour in the misbehaviour of the entire class. There were no cohesive devices used to mark the transition between discussion of the group and discussion of Phillip; rather "a few" suddenly became "Phillip", and "they" (WW Mtg. 1 Turns: 411-412) suddenly became "he" (WW Mtg. 1 Turns: 413). The fact that this occurred without any loss of coherence to the discourse participants concerned, suggested that Phillip occupied a central position in both of their minds, when they were engaged in general discussions of misbehaviour. There were other instances of unmarked transitions of this kind (WW Mtg. 1: Turns 282 -285; WW Mtg. 2: Turn 197). These served to establish congruence around the role Phillip's presence in all that went wrong in the class, while backgrounding the role of others in this connection. This congruence, in turn, made it easier to deploy discourse that depicted Phillip's exclusion as a logical, inevitable and even desirable solution to the misbehaviour of the entire class.

Overall then, Phillip's unfair domination of available resources, the perceived influence of his presence on the rest of the class, positive imaginaries of student outcomes as a result of Phillip's absence, and, to a less explicit degree, the conflation of his misbehaviour with that of the whole class, all comprise sites within which consensus was developed around representations of Phillip. It was through the relinquishing of Meadhbh's (transient but earnest) discourse position in favour of Fiona's seemingly "superior" arguments (Mehan, 1996, p. 272) that the high level of consensus recorded in the final meeting was established.



## **Discourses of Disability and the Construction of Team-Teaching Identities**

**Fiona.**

### ***Class teacher of English.***

From the outset of the first meetings, Fiona seemed to identify almost exclusively as a class teacher of English, whose role it was to get the entire class through the Junior Certificate syllabus and formal assessment of this. Her deployment of discourse showed very little variation from this position. This was no doubt influenced by the fact that the class on which the team-teaching initiative focussed, was a third year “middle band” English class in their final year of preparation for their Junior Certificate examinations (WW Mtg. 2: Turn 226). In the opening interactions, she directed discussions towards consideration of “the exam question” students had just attempted, noting that they seemed “to be out of their depth” in trying to answer this (WW Mgt. 1: Turn 6) even though it “was not too difficult” in her eyes (WW Mgt. 1: Turn 20). She also directed the attention towards the level at which each student was to engage with summative Junior Certificate examinations, saying “We’re going to give them an ordinary level paper ... and see how they get on with that first and then we can decide” (WW Mgt. 1: Turn 8) what “level” each will undertake (WW Mgt. 1: Turn 9).

Fiona’s tendency to foreground issues relating to the Junior Certificate syllabus and its assessment, became the predominant theme of topics introduced by her into team-teaching discussions throughout all meetings. In the first meeting, she proposed that “next week we’ll we have to focus, just for now, on the [Junior Certificate exam] paper for the moment” (WW Mgt. 1: Turn 122). This was in preparation for Christmas exams, the results of which would be used to decide the level at which each student would undertake the final state examination (WW Mgt. 1: Turns 8-18). Thus, Fiona proposed that, because students were experiencing “difficulty” in relation to the “the Suspense and Conflict” examination question (WW Mgt. 1: Turn 28), the team should “do another question and model how to “do a plan” with them to help them in answering similar questions in the future (WW Mgt. 1: Turn 33). In relation to poetry, Fiona proposed looking “at whatever exam question we’re putting up” and going “through what quote would be suitable for the answer” (WW Mgt. 1: Turn 88). Similarly, she identified composition as a “big area we need to work on, because they all struggle with the essays” in exam situations (WW Mgt. 1: Turn 144). She decided that assessment of their skills in this area would be done through correction of a “Suspense and Conflict” question in their Christmas exams (WW Mgt. 1: Turn 437). Finally, she targeted the whole area of exam technique as one that needed to be addressed explicitly, with a particular need to “emphasise timing” in the answering of questions (WW Mtg. 1 Turn: 124).

The emphasis placed on achieving success in state examinations continued into later meetings. The first of these occurred shortly after the Christmas holidays, when Christmas *mock* examinations had been corrected. This opened with Fiona declaring, “Okay, so, first of all exam results!” (WW Mgt. 2: Turn 4), and a lengthy review of the performance in their mock English paper. This discussion accounted for almost half of the meeting, or 200 of the 444 turns taken. It culminated in a declaration by Fiona that, while “obviously they’re not fantastic results” (WW Mtg. 2: Turn 42), they were ones with which she was “actually really happy” (WW Mtg. 2: Turn 84) and she anticipated that the students were “going to be delighted” with them also (WW Mtg. 2: Turn 214). Having said that, she still expressed concern about the quality of their responses to the drama question (WW Mgt. 2: Turn 230), their failure to read “questions properly” (WW Mtg. 2: Turn 238), their tendency to write all “they know” about topics rather than answer the question posed (WW Mgt. 2: Turn 240), their weak fictional writing (WW Mtg. 2: Turn 276) and their limited skills around “answering comprehension questions” (WW Mgt. 2: Turn 306). All of this was indicative of Fiona’s singular focus on the class teacher role in preparing students for state examinations.

Where Fiona did not link lesson content directly to answering examination questions, she still spoke about it in the context of covering sufficient material in order to do so. For example, she outlined her concern (WW Mgt. 1: Turn 20) about the slow rate at which the class was covering syllabus content, outlining her belief that they had “spent too long on the *Romeo and Juliet*” (WW Mtg. 1: Turn 18-20). She noted that she wanted to “go over” the novel studied last year with the entire group (WW Mgt. 1: Turn 54) and intended to “give them sample essays” and “show them actually” (WW Mtg. 1 Turn: 148) how to plan these (WW Mtg. 1 Turn: 156) in a “creative” way (WW Mtg. 1 Turn: 148). She suggested that particular emphasis be placed on structure, paragraphs and use of full stops (WW Mtg. 1 Turn: 281) in order to improve their skills and scored in the area of composition. Finally, she also suggested that the team “emphasise ... the difference between a formal letter and an informal letter” in covering functional writing (WW Mtg. 1 Turn: 317).

Fiona’s constant and exclusive focus on preparing the class for imminent Junior Certificate examinations, was a clear indication of her identification with the role of class teacher. This was also evident in her belief about how she should liaise with other mainstream teachers in relation to the ability of the group to cover content (WW Mtg. 1 Turn: 355) and their examination performance in other subjects (WW Mtg. 1 Turn: 401).

### ***Support Role.***

Only occasionally did Fiona seem to contemplate the delivery of support to specific individuals or the individualisation of learning programmes. Where this occurred, it generally

took the form of suggestions about how to improve behaviour, such as in the case of John Dunne (WW Mtg. 1 Turn: 80) or Phillip (WW Mtg. 1: Turns 200-206). It also involved making relative vague assertions about what students needed to allow them to cover the mainstream English syllabus in preparation for their examinations. Thus, while she acknowledged “there’s a lot more than him [Phillip] that needs help in that class” (WW Mtg. 1: Turn 421), she offered few suggestions about what kind of individualised support they required. Rather, she made generalised statements about the need to differentiate materials for the class (WW Mtg. 1: Turn 263 and WW Mgt. 2: Turns 186-188), to offer more feedback to them on their homework (WW Mtg. 1: Turn 222-227), and to develop their basic literacy skills (WW Mtg. 1: Turn 244-258). Finally, she made suggestions about how team-teaching might be deployed to improve the on-task behaviour of the class, which she considered “shocking” (WW Mtg. 1: Turn 389).

Even during the second team-teaching meeting at Willow Way, where a review of each individual’s engagement with Christmas exams took place, this generally just involved announcing each student’s score, along with evaluating whether or not this was in line with teacher expectations, and making a recommendation about the level at which the student should undertake the state examination (WW Mtg. 2: Turns 44, 48, 69, 152 and 423). Most of this was more in line with the perspective of general subject teacher than the support teacher.

### **Meadhbh.**

#### ***Class Teachers of English.***

Meadhbh seemed highly susceptible to the deployment of discourse by Fiona, which, as we have already seen, focussed attention on the engagement of the whole class in imminent Junior Certificate English examinations. From early interactions in the first meeting, she acquiesced with Fiona’s assertion that the team would “have to start prepping them” for state examinations (WW Mtg. 1: Turn 17). She agreed that this should receive the immediate attention and “best effort” of both teachers (WW Mtg. 1: Turn 123). To this end, she too suggested working through sample questions and answers (WW Mtg. 1: Turns 31 and 376), some of which could be given as “homework” (WW Mtg. 1: Turn 173). She also made suggestions about developing students’ examination technique, especially their ability to select questions to answer (3 WW Mtg. 1: Turn 17) and their ability to plan their answers to Junior Certificate questions (WW Mtg. 1: Turns 33 and 280). Finally, she suggested that students, especially “our SEN kids”, should be made more aware of timing for examination papers (WW Mtg. 1: Turn 135).

A key development in the evolution of teaching identities at Willow Way, occurred when Meadhbh undertook to share equally in the correction of homework copies (WW Mtg. 1: Turn 333) and examination scripts (WW Mtg. 2: Turns 6-7). This allowed her to declare herself pleasantly “surprised by a lot of their results” (WW Mtg. 2: Turn 9) and make recommendations about the level at which certain students should engage with the Junior Certificate examinations. She recommended that Cian undertook these at Ordinary Level (WW Mtg. 2: Turns 44-47), that Lorna took them at Foundation Level (WW Mtg. 2: Turns 69 and 422), and Sarah Jane should try Higher Level (WW Mtg. 2: Turn 153). Moreover, Meadhbh’s involvement in corrections, allowed her to make suggestions about how classroom practices might be altered in order to improve examination results. Hence, she was able to recommend that comprehension answers in examination scripts required a little more work (WW Mtg. 2: Turn 251), that students needed to be shown how to put “more examples from the ... actual poem” in their answers (WW Mtg. 2: Turn 259) and learn “a couple of new poems” (WW Mtg. 2: Turn 265), and that they needed to be given sample marking schemes for answers in the examination, that included “how many lines to actually write” in relation to each part of each question (WW Mtg. 2: Turn 305). Finally, she advised going “over the media studies” section of the course and giving students “exam paper questions” to test them on this (WW Mtg. 2: Turn 393). All of these recommendations were made more from the perspective of a class teacher of English concerned with getting students through their mainstream state examinations, than that of a support teacher.

The nett effect of Meadhbh’s team-teaching focus, was to create a situation in which both teachers worked predominantly as class teachers of English, rather than support teachers, whose role it was to support individual learners in building on their individualised strengths and meeting their individualised priority needs. This joint orientation may have been influenced by the fact that neither teacher in this dyad, had received specific training in relation to the inclusion of students deemed to have special educational needs, including disability. Whatever the reason, its effect was to give all (remaining) students access to additional generic mainstream class teaching that assisted them in preparing to engage with formal assessment of mainstream, norm-referenced, ableist curricula. Even at this level, the efficacy of this use of resources was severely diminished by the fact that the only person (deemed to have disability) in respect of whom additional teaching resources had been allocated to the group, was permanently excluded from it.

### ***Support Teacher.***

As we have seen, the first significant attempt by Meadhbh to assert a role for herself as a support teacher within the dyad, occurred during the first meeting, after an assertion by

Fiona that Phillip had not “been doing homework lately” (WW Mtg. 1: Turn 175) and that this and other aspects of his behaviour might hasten his inexorable progress towards exclusion. In response, Meadhbh made some suggestions about her role in trying to avert this. G26 is the (anonymised) number of the room in which the school’s behavioural unit was located.

179 Meadhbh So, even if I could maybe take him out or maybe I could give the comprehension [homework] to someone in G26 even, and see if they can get it done with him or ...

180 Fiona Yeah. But you see, he needs to, we need to, we need to [sighs], we *have* to figure this out because, you know, it’s just [that] he’s not getting involved at all.

181 Meadhbh No.

182 Fiona He’s not doing his homework, he’s ... I know obviously, there are reasons for that but, at the same time like, we probably need to speak to G26 to see what, what to do going forward.

183 Meadhbh And work some way.

184 Fiona And to be honest, I can see things getting a little bit, you know, I don’t know!

185 Meadhbh Worse?

186 Fiona Yeah. I don’t know what’s going to happen because, em, he’s been suspended too much and ...

187 Meadhbh He’s missed a lot of time.

188 Fiona ... he’s a bit intimidating in the class for the rest of them as well, you know? ... I don’t want to exclude him but he’s definitely, he’s a big impact on the class; they’re afraid of him. Do you notice that?

189 Meadhbh Yeah, oh yeah, absolutely!

(WW Mtg. 1 Turns: 179 - 189)

In this extract, rather than seeing non-completion of homework as a cause for further suspension or exclusion, Meadhbh depicts this as something that can be addressed adequately through joint intervention between her (through one-to-one support) and those working in the school’s behavioural unit. The degree of modality is noteworthy here. It signalled Meadhbh’s acknowledgement that any such action needed to secure the advanced permission or agreement of Fiona. This is evidence that key decision-making power, both in

relation to the class group and in relation to Phillip, was perceived as residing with Fiona (T1). Hence, Meadhbh's (T2) suggestions were made tentatively, using adjuncts like *even* and *maybe* when she says, "even if I could, maybe, take him out or maybe ..." (WW Mtg. 1 Turn 179). Similarly, she used these *modals* to keep the nature of any intervention deliberately vague and open to discussion. For example, she suggested that "someone in G26", "could" help to "see if they can get" the work done with him (author's emphasis). All of this modality and hedging allowed Meadhbh to equivocate her suggestions so that, if Fiona deemed these to be at variance with her view of how Phillip's needs might best be addressed, or indeed how the team might work best together more generally, Meadhbh could easily amend or abandon these, without affecting the solidarity of the dyad.

In the event, Fiona did not endorse Meadhbh's suggestions or the likely effectiveness of these. Discussion of the genre of team-teaching meetings, has already suggested that such non-engagement with ideas of one's team-teaching partner, was a very rare occurrence indeed. It generally signalled a divergence of opinion between team members on an issue. Instead of going with Meadhbh's suggestions, Fiona suggests that they defer to the expertise of the behavioural unit on this matter (WW Mtg. 1: Turn 182). This allowed Fiona to re/assert essentialist interpretations of Phillip's difficulties, by characterising them as beyond the competency of the teaching team to deal with alone. It also allowed her to avoid supporting Meadhbh's suggestions, without explicitly refuting or denigrating these. Finally, it allowed her to defer any decision about what action should be taken and, thus, the decisions about the roles that each teacher would enact within the dyad.

In the final lines of the excerpt, Fiona privileged the interests of the group, whom she characterises as "afraid of him" (WW Mtg. 1: Turn 188), over those of Phillip. She also invited Meadhbh to align with her in this view, by asking her directly "Do you notice that?" (WW Mtg. 1 Turn: 188), a strategy she also used elsewhere as we have seen (WW Mtg. 2 Turns: 210). Given the high status of solidarity in the communicative purpose of meetings, one can assume that she fully anticipated the affirmative response from Meadhbh to this question, a response she eventually received (WW Mtg. 1 Turn: 189).

Despite this, Meadhbh seemed to try to again re-align herself with the role of a support teacher, with specific and disproportionate responsibility for the inclusion of individuals in need of particular support, especially Phillip, later in the meeting. This time she gives more detail on how she might actually affect this role.

- 195            Meadhbh ... I'll work with G26 to see what they're doing with him ...
- 196            Fiona     Yeah, yeah.
- 197            Meadhbh And see if there's any way they can help him with his

English as well in G26. And then when he's in class, whatever skills they're going through with him, we'll try, I'll try to work with him, beside him, in the class and make sure I write down stuff in his [student] journal and ...

198 Fiona Well, if he even has a journal, which is, you know ...

199 Meadhbh I know. That's the thing!

(WW Mtg. 1: Turns 195-199)

A particularly salient feature of the above excerpt was the pronouns within it. For example, Meadhbh's restatement of "we'll try" to "I'll try" (WW Mtg. 1: Turn 197) amended the commitment to Phillip's inclusion from a team obligation to a unilateral one. It was evidence of a reluctance on Meadhbh's part, to unilaterally commit the entire team to a proposed course of action. Firstly, she did not seem to feel she had the power to do so. Secondly, her amended proposal was unlikely to run the risk of threatening team solidarity. Meadhbh was also able to provide more detail on what her proposed role might entail in terms of classroom practice, in other words, working "beside him, in the class", making sure things were written down and ensuring that he had his journal available at all times (WW Mtg. 1: Turn 197). For her part, Fiona quickly (and highly unusually) articulated her misgivings about Meadhbh's suggestions (WW Mtg. 1: Turns 180-188), making known her preference for an arrangement in which both teachers tried to support all students in the class (WW Mtg. 1: Turns 36, 205-207, 252-255, 321, 333, 337).

Once Fiona signalled her lack of support for Meadhbh's suggestions, Meadhbh quickly acquiesced to this (WW Mtg. 1 Turn 189). Despite this she reiterated her aspiration to exercise a support role at some stage, later in the meeting when she declared "we'll just have to, I'll keep an eye on him during the day and talk to Elsie [behavioural support teacher] and see how he's getting on" (WW Mtg. 1 Turn 416). Again, Meadhbh's perceived need to correct her pronoun use from "we'll" to "I'll" was significant here. It changed the commitment implied in this statement from a team to a unilateral one. Ultimately, while she went on to assert that "he needs a lot of help" and "some one-on-one help too" (WW Mtg. 1: Turn 418), she never exercised such a role in relation to him.

The above excerpt provides evidence that, despite wishing otherwise, Meadhbh was unable to resist taking up the identity created for her by Fiona within the team-teaching dyad; one of a second class teacher of English. By the time of the second and third meetings there was a striking degree of congruence in the way teachers referred to their team-teaching roles and how these should operate jointly. As we have already seen this tended to revolve

around giving their preparation for state examinations (WW Mtg. 1: Turn 17) their “best effort” as a team (WW Mtg. 1: Turn 123), by working through sample questions and answers (WW Mtg. 1: Turns 31 and 376), developing students’ examination techniques (3 WW Mtg. 1: Turn 17), improving their ability to plan answers to examination questions (WW Mtg. 1: Turns 33 and 280), and making them more aware of the timing examination papers (WW Mtg. 1: Turn 135). It also involved sharing equally in the correction of copies (WW Mtg. 1: Turn 333) and examination scripts (WW Mtg. 2: Turns 6-7), evaluating their results (WW Mtg. 2: Turn 9), making recommendations about the level at which they should engage with the Junior Certificate examinations (WW Mtg. 2: Turns 44-47, 69 and 153), and making suggestions about the delivery of lessons and lesson content (WW Mtg. 2: Turn 251, 259 and 265).

### **Summary**

Since Phillip was the only student deemed to have any kind of assessed disability in the class group that comprised the focus of the Willow Way team-teaching initiative, analysis of teachers’ use of disability discourse was predicated entirely on that used in relation to him. While initially both teachers relied on deficit-based disability discourse to represent Phillip, divergence in its use began to emerge mid-way through the first meeting, when Meadhbh began to use discourse that referenced Phillip’s right to belong in the class with sufficient levels of support. Rather than seeing his indifference and non-compliance as a cause for further suspension or exclusion, Meadhbh depicts these as something that can be addressed (WW Mtg. 1 Turns: 179 - 189) and proposes a role for herself in this connection (WW Mtg. 1: Turns 195-199).

Fiona quickly articulated her misgivings about Meadhbh’s suggestions (WW Mtg. 1: Turns 180-188), making known her preference for an arrangement in which both teachers tried to support all students in the class (WW Mtg. 1: Turns 36, 205-207, 252-255, 321, 333, 337). Meadhbh seemed unable to resist adopting the identity created for her by Fiona. This revolved around preparing all students for state examinations (WW Mtg. 1: Turn 17, 31, 33, 123, 135, 280 and 376) and sharing equally in the correction of copies (WW Mtg. 1: Turn 333) and examination scripts (WW Mtg. 2: Turns 6-7). It also involved evaluating examination results (WW Mtg. 2: Turn 9) with a view to deciding the level at which students would undertake Junior Certificate examinations (WW Mtg. 2: Turns 44-47, 69 and 153) and making suggestions about content and delivery of lessons (WW Mtg. 2: Turns 251, 259 and 265).

Meadhbh’s adoption of this role meant that divergent use of disability discourse was short-lived and convergence was re-established by the end of that same meeting and



reinforced in subsequent ones. By the end of the second meeting there was a striking degree of congruence in the way teachers referred to their team-teaching roles and how these should operate jointly. It continued into the final meeting and was matched by a very high degree of congruity in their deployment of disability discourse. This congruence was developed within discussions that related to Phillip's unfair domination of available resources, his negative influence on the rest of the class, positive imaginaries of student outcomes as a result of his absence, and the conflation of his misbehaviour with that of the whole class. It was through these issues, that Meadhbh's discourse position was abandoned in the face of Fiona's "superior" argumentation (Mehan, 1996, p. 272).

## 8.5 Conclusion

This Chapter sought to gain insight into the styles with which individual teachers deployed discourse relating to disability by trying to determine the degree to which each committed to a particular discourse position. It also sought to explore how teachers handled the congruence and incongruence that arose between them in relation to the deployment of disability discourse, with a view to understanding what this told us about where *discursive* power lay within team-teaching dyads. Finally, it sought to explore how teachers use of disability discourse related to the teaching identities and roles they enacted within their teaching dyads.

Findings suggested that the styles within which discourses were deployed to represent all students deemed to have disability within specific team-teaching initiatives, were very similar to those observed to represent the individual students discussed in Chapter 7. In other words, teachers represented all students at Hazel Park in similar styles to the way in which they represented Darren and they represented all students deemed to have disability in Maple Lodge, in a similar style to that used in relation to representing Julia. Since there were no students, other than Phillip, who were deemed to have disabilities in the Willow Way initiative, this extended analysis was not necessary. In all cases, just as with the individual students concerned, this involved the predominant use of essentialist and charity discourses.

That said, congruence in the commitment with which individual team-teachers adhered to particular discourse positions around disability, varied greatly from dyad to dyad. A close relationship was found between the styles with which individual teachers deployed discourse and the team-teaching roles and identities they adopted or were ascribed to them.

At Hazel Park, there were considerable differences between Denise and Saoirse in how they deployed discourse to represent students deemed to have disability. While both

relied predominant on essentialist discourses to do so, they used this in very different ways. Denise identified strongly as a class teacher, special education teacher and *Mammy*, and hence used discourse to portray students deemed to have disability (and others) in a positive light and subvert representations that were based exclusively on deficit characterisations of them. Saoirse, on the other hand, identified predominantly as a mainstream teacher of Spanish, as well as an untrained support teacher and an enjoyable guest. The latter identity was ascribed to her by Denise and built around offering academic and emotional support to students she (Denise) recommended to her. Saoirse seemed a little unclear about what precisely this role required of her, and so depended on categorical constructions of these learners to make sense of it. This profoundly affected her use of discourse. Though she accepted Denise's constructions of learner, she relied heavily on categorical definitions of them. There was some evidence that, by the end of meetings, she was beginning to see the limitations inherent in thinking. Despite Denise's general aversion to the use of deficit-based discourse, and the disproportionate positional power she exercised in the dyad, she was unable to resist Saoirse's seemingly legitimate demands to engage in this. This was interpreted as a sign of the of the institutionally-sanctioned power of essentialist discourse at the school.

At Maple Lodge there was a very high degree of congruence between Claire and Andrew in their use of disability discourse throughout all meetings. While they drew largely on positivist epistemologies and essentialist understandings of difference, they also drew on a greater range of counter-essentialist discourses than any other setting. There was a striking degree of congruence between the two teachers in how they deployed both essentialist and counter-essentialist discourse. As with Hazel Park, this seemed to relate closely to the team-teaching identities and roles that they adopted or were assigned during team-teaching meetings. Claire deployed discourse consistent with someone who identified strongly as the *lead* teacher in the dyad. She made all of the important decisions about the content to be covered and how this would be delivered.

Andrew, identified strongly as the school's Special Educational Needs Coordinator and he exerted considerable control over the conduct of meetings. Yet it was Claire who carried the main workload in relation to the planning and delivery of instruction for the class, with Andrew having to negotiate his way into more active participation in these areas. While she agreed that Andrew should play a larger role in this connection and acceded to all of his demands in this connection (ML Mtg. 1: Turns 8, 10, 22, 23, 34-35 and 316), she found it very hard to relinquish this *lead* teacher identity (ML Mtg. 1 Turns 293 and 313), continuing to correct all copies and annotated all *mock* LCA examination papers by herself (ML Mtg.2:

Turn: 153), to make the vast majority of decisions about course content and delivery (ML Mtg. 3: Turns 122 and 130), and to organise all logistics around summative assessment of the subject (ML Mtg. 3: Turn 134 and 184-189).

The dynamic in which Claire tended to adhere to the *lead* teacher identity and Andrew tended to negotiate an increasing role for himself in this connection, seemed to affect profoundly the way in which disability discourse was used in the team-teaching dyad and the congruence between teachers with which this was deployed. Both teachers adopted class teacher and support teacher identities to varying degrees, aided by the fact that both teachers had trained as English teachers and special educational needs teachers. This overlap in team-teaching identities and roles seemed to contribute to the striking degree of congruence that was recorded in relation to how teachers making up the Maple Lodge dyad deployed both essentialist and counter-essentialist discourse.

Finally, at Willow Way, both teachers relied almost exclusively on essentialist discourse to represent Phillip, with the exception of a brief period when Meadhbh seemed to deploy a rights-based discourse to argue for more in-class support for his inclusion. Fiona seemed to be able to provide argumentation that caused Meadhbh to abandon this position, supplanting her rights-based arguments with essentialist ones that foregrounded Phillip's innate difference and depicted as unfair, his domination access to resources ostensibly put on place for him. While ultimately the congruence observed at Willow Way in how teachers deployed discourse, was similar to the congruence demonstrated at Maple Lodge, there were two important differences between the settings. Firstly, since no divergence emerged at Maple Lodge, the negotiation and domination evident at Willow Way, was not required. Secondly, the congruence achieved at Willow Way related to a much narrower range of discourses, focussing almost exclusively on deficit-based essentialist representations of difference. This came about in no small way by Fiona's insistence that Meadhbh adopt the role additional class teacher, rather than support teacher.

Not only did discourses of disability relate to the team-teaching identities of individual teachers, they also influenced how teachers conceptualised team-teaching as a support to the inclusion of students deemed to fall within the disability category. The chapter that follows will address such issues.

# Chapter 9: Meaning-Making about Disability and Teachers' Constructions of Team-Teaching

## 9.1 Introduction

Previous chapters reporting on analysis of the “discourse-analytical categories” of genre, discourse and style (Fairclough, 2016, p. 88) provided insight on how actional, representational and identificational meanings (Fairclough, 2003, p. 27) contributed to teachers constructions of students deemed to have disability within team-teaching meetings. While genre, discourse and style were separated for analytical purposes, Fairclough (2003, 2016) posits that they work together dialectically and are “socially ordered” (Fairclough, 2016, p. 89) in “relatively stable and durable ways” (Fairclough, 2003, p. 28) he calls “orders of discourse” (Fairclough 2003, p. 26). It is through orders of discourse that disparate elements of the meaning-making process are woven together within texts to achieve unified representations of phenomena.

Chapter 9 offers an interpretation of how these different types of meaning-making worked together to influence teachers' representations of learners deemed to have disability and their construal of team-teaching as a support the inclusion of these learners. Congruent with the multiple case study approach taken by this work, the chapter will first look at how the different types of meaning-making came together within the texts from each individual case study site. Sections 9.2, 9.3 and 9.4 looks at how this occurred in relation to Hazel, Maple Lodge and Willow Way respectively. Section 9.5 looks at how each type of meaning making worked across the cases to influence conceptualisations of team-teaching as a support to the inclusion of learners deemed to have disability. The chapter concludes with a summary of findings and a discussion of how all types of meaning making worked together across all sites within particular *orders of discourse*, to affect how teachers conceptualised team-teaching as a support to inclusive pedagogy.

## 9.2 Hazel Park

### Actional meanings and conceptualisations of team-teaching at Hazel Park

Actional meaning were examined through an analysis of the genre of team-teaching meetings. The goal of genre analysis was to discover how ritualised linguistic forms controlled the semiotic variability available to discourse participants to represent students deemed to have disability within the team-teaching meetings studies. This analysis was predicated on an exploration of the activity and social relations of meetings (Fairclough, 2003). Since it was evident from an early stage in this analysis that the genre of all meetings

worked in a very similar way, analysis of this was carried out in all cases across all of the cases simultaneously. A brief reiteration of this is set out hereunder for the Hazel Park setting, so that finding in relation to this type of meaning-making can be integrated with that of other elements within the treatment of orders of discourse towards the end of the chapter. To avoid repetition, his analysis will not be repeated for each setting.

Analysis of the semiotic *activity* of team-teaching meetings suggested that their preeminent communicative purpose was the preservation of team cohesion and solidarity. Otherwise, activity focussed mainly on knowledge exchange (72.84% of all exchanges), which focuses mainly on exchanging information about student characteristics, including learners deemed to have disabilities, and the curricula and programmes they followed. Instances of knowledge exchange allowed those who introduced topics for discussion, not only to share information and opinions on these topics, but to frame the discursive context within which their discussion took place; it gave them significant control over the deployment of discourse. In all settings, T1 teachers initiated almost three times as many knower-initiated knowledge exchanges as T2 teachers. They also dominated the exchange of information within other-initiated knowledge exchanges. When both of these types of knowledge exchange were combined, it became clear that T1 teachers dominated the introduction of topic and control over discourse within each case study setting, including discourse relating to learners deemed to have disability.

The domination of knowledge exchanges by T1 teachers meant that many of the topics they introduced for discussion focussed on issues related to the areas for which they felt they had particular responsibility. Since T1 teachers invariably exercised a *lead* or *class* teacher role, they tended to assume primary responsibility for the engagement of the whole class in mainstream curricula and preparing students for assessment of this, and to take disproportionate responsibility for the setting of lesson objectives and the preparation of lesson materials and activities. As a consequence, *both* teaches spent a majority of the time devoted to knowledge exchanges talking about these issues at the expense of those relating to, for example, differentiating for individuals, universal design for learning or specific arrangements and accommodations targeted at increasing the participation of learners deemed to have disabilities in learning programmes designed to maximise their learning.

The domination of knowledge exchanges by T1 teachers also meant that those in the T2 position had to negotiate with their T1 counterparts for increased access to discursive resources within dyads, an objective that had to be balanced with maintaining the solidarity of the teaching team. This meant that they had to secure acquiescence of the T1 teacher, about the types of contributions they could make. This introduced an element of social

hierarchy into the teams studied, which privileged the person in the T1 position. This inequality persisted, despite evidence within analysis of teachers use of turns, that teachers enjoyed roughly equal access to semiotic resources for meaning making.

Across all meetings, activity exchanges accounted for a little over a quarter of all linguistic exchanges (27.16%). Of these, actor-initiated activity exchanges (initiated by a person offering to perform an action) were the least common type of exchange recorded in every meeting. They seemed to be viewed within the genres of team-teaching meetings, as posing a threat to the solidarity of the team. Other-initiated activity exchanges (initiated by a person who wants an action to be performed by another or jointly by the team) made up about three quarters of activity exchanges. They usually committed *both* teachers a particular courses of action. Attempts to commit one's discourse partner to unilateral action were very rare. The tendency of teachers to commit to joint, as distinct from unilateral, action augmented their tendency to focus disproportionately on whole class issues identified by T1 teachers during knowledge exchanges. This indicated even greater pressure to take action on whole-class issues rather than those relating to individual learners.

Analysis of genre structure of team-teaching meetings showed that decisions and commitments in relation to activity exchanges were usually accompanied by legitimisation of these, which involved the use of warrants and backing associated with particular discourse perspectives, for example perspectives on disability. These legitimisations provided a second key site for the deployment of discourse, including discourse about disability. Unlike knowledge exchanges, control over the legitimisation of decisions seemed to be evenly distributed between teachers, which meant that the overall control of T1 teachers over the deployment of discourse was not diminished. Overall, the participant structure of team-teaching meetings seemed to conform to a rigid and predictable sequence that was characteristic of a high degree of social control over semiotic resources for meaning making and the reproduction of dominant discourses (Gee, 2012). Instances of explicit disagreement either in relation to topics introduced or the discursive basis on which this was done were very rare indeed. This augmented T1 teachers' disproportionate control of the discursive agenda.

At Hazel Park, Denise operated in the T1 position. Not only was she assigned to the group in question before Saoirse, giving her advanced knowledge of the learning dispositions of those in the group, she had been able to augment this knowledge from her own research and from interaction with an SNA with whom she had a well-established relationship. While Denise saw the group across the week, Saoirse only saw them twice during that time. This affected both the continuity of her interactions with them and students'

perceptions of her teaching role. Denise's decision to suggest to her the role of *enjoyable guest* may be in direct response to this situation.

Denise was also the only qualified teacher of English in the dyad (English being the subject on which the team-teaching initiative focused). Thus she had more knowledge and opinions about, for example, the new Junior Certificate English syllabus and how this might be delivered and assessed, than Saoirse. Finally, Denise was also the only teacher to have completed professional development around the inclusion of students deemed to have special educational needs, including disability. This gave her a high degree of epistemic authority in relation to students deemed to have disability. It allowed her to identify as either the group's only qualified mainstream English teacher or its only qualified Special Education Teacher (SET), or both. It meant that she was the primary initiator of information exchanges about all students in the group and about the curriculum they followed. This allowed her to dominate the deployment of discourse relating to all students, including those deemed to have disability.

The tendency within team-teaching meetings for teachers to privilege the maintenance of team solidarity above any other communicative purpose, and the fact that the participant structures of meetings tended to reflect this, limited the degree to which Saoirse could challenge Denise's discursive power. Nevertheless, as will be seen shortly, Saoirse still seemed to be able to require Denise to engage in institutionally-inscribed category-based discourse to discuss learners deemed to have disability, despite her apparent unwillingness to do so.

## **Representation meanings and conceptualisations of team-teaching at Hazel Park**

### **Essentialist discourse.**

Denise's positional power meant that as well as dominating discursive constructions of students deemed to have disability, she also dominated constructions of team-teaching as a support to the inclusion of this group. As was seen earlier, her predominant mode of representing students deemed to have disability was through essentialist discourse. While she sometimes used to focus on learner deficits, her general tendency was to focus on inherent student characteristics that constructed them in a positive and agentic light or to collapse differences between them and their non-disabled peers. Instead of focusing on individual exceptionality, she tended to collapse differences between learners into what she saw as a common set of group needs. Because of this, she tended to view team-teaching as a facility that allowed teachers to respond effectively to these group needs. She envisaged focusing on "the building of oral skills" (HP Mtg. 2: Turns 242 and 248) and students' ability

to communicate with others (HP Mtg. 3: Turn 189), the improvement of students' ability to engage competently in "written work" (HP Mtg. 2: Turns 100 and 246), and the development of confidence, as well as personal and social skills (HP Mtg. 1: Turns 46-50; HP Mtg. 2: Turns 405-407 and HP Mtg. 3: Turns 122-128).

The tendency to focus on the group needs was congruent with Denise's strong identification as a class teacher of English (see Section 8.2). As we saw earlier, her decision to focus on these areas influenced the selection of content for team-taught lessons, the setting of objectives for the class, the choice of methods and resources used to facilitate the achievement of these objectives and the ways in which progress towards them was assessed. A key point here was that Denise saw the new Junior Cycle English syllabus as a key resource that could enable all students, including students deemed to have disabilities, to develop the levels of skill, for example in oral language, that would allow them to engage in functional tasks and real life situations, such as interviews (HP Mtg. 3: Turn 187), making speeches at weddings (HP Mtg. 3: Turn 189), and making oral presentations associated with Classroom-Based Assessment (CBA) of the Junior Certificate programme (HP Mtg. 2: Turns 240-242). She introduced a document early in the first meeting that outlined the "Junior Cert. objectives" for the English syllabus (HP Mtg. 1: Turn 126), characterising these as "brilliant", "a really good guide" for planning, and "more exciting" than those set out for previous iterations of the Junior Certificate programme (HP Mtg. 1: Turns 128-132).

Similarly, Saoirse alluded to how "amazing" it was that the Junior Certificate English syllabus was "changing now, from [being] focussed purely on writing, to be[ing] more orally" focussed (HP Mtg. 3: Turn 184). Both teachers thought that the increased focus on oral skills development was a very positive development and congruent with their perceptions of the shared needs of the entire group, as long as the development of "written work" was also emphasised (HP Mtg. 2: Turns 100 and 246).

Conflating the needs of the group with the objectives of the Junior Certificate English syllabus profoundly affected the team's conceptualisation of their team-teaching initiative, especially in relation to the inclusion of students deemed to have disability. It allowed them to frame this as an extension of what they were already "working on" with the group (HP Mtg. 3: Turn 166). Denise seemed to subscribe to this conceptualisation from the opening interactions of the first meeting, when she declared it's "the new Junior Cert course, that we're going to be working on with these kids" (HP Mtg. 1: Turn 28). This left little room for equivocation by Saoirse. Denise cemented this representation by describing the group as "the class above JCSP" (HP Mtg. 2: Turn 30), a Junior Certificate programme designed to cater for those who were unlikely to be able to cope with the demands of the traditional Junior



Certificate Programme (Department of Education and Science, 2007). The inference here was that all students in the class, including those deemed to have disability, were deemed capable of engaging successfully with the Ordinary Level Junior Certificate syllabus, with some being capable of taking “higher level” (HP Mgt.2: Turn 30). Team-teaching then, was seen as a key resource for support all students in this endeavour.

Representations of homogenous group needs, also framed the ways in which teachers thought about how team-teaching was to be enacted. From the outset, Denise noted that the pace of learning in the class was “very, very slow” but that team-teaching could enable teachers to respond effectively to this (HP Mtg. 1: Turn 192). She also noted that fewer learning objectives should be selected for the group than would typically be the case for other classes. When Saoirse sought to clarify whether “one main objective per class” would be sufficient (HP Mtg. 1: Turn 163, original emphasis), Denise confirmed, ‘That’s it!’ (HP Mtg. 1: Turn 164).

The selection of a small number of objectives per lesson was linked closely with the need for “a high level of repetition” in relation to skills’ development (HP Mtg. 1: Turn 184). The need for constant repetition of what was to be learned was a recurrent theme during the first meeting (HP Mtg. 1: Turns 96-110, 160, 164, 184, 196-200, 208). In addition, Saoirse asserted that “a lot of variation of activities covering the same thing” would be required (HP Mtg. 1: Turn 167), with teachers suggesting that this could occur though employing “a little bit of art” (HP Mtg. 1: Turn 100), “songs” (HP Mtg. 1: Turns 111-112), multisensory approaches to the learning of poetry, and the assignment of roles in relation to the staging of plays, such as actor, director, producer, and scribe (HP Mtg. 2: Turns 194, 198, 234-235, 391, 395, 422-431). A lot of thought was also given to the selection of lesson content, with Denise’s views predominant here. Finally, there was discussion of how to make the links between different parts of the English syllabus more explicit, for example, how to “combine the fiction and drama” (HP Mtg. 2: Turn 130).

All of these approaches were seen as responding to the configuration of particular characteristics shared by the group, a key objective of the team-teaching initiative. They provided evidence of how profoundly conceptualisations of team-teaching were embedded in essentialist discourse that sought to normalise students within available mainstream curricula.

### **Non-essentialist discourse and conceptualisations of team-teaching.**

As we saw in Section 7.2, Denise deployed the vast majority of non-essentialist discourse at Hazel Park. This may have been an indicator of the value of experience and formal continuing professional development, in broadening teachers’ knowledge and

understanding of various models of disability. While Saoirse seemed to agree with Denise whenever she did so, she rarely initiated instances of counter-essentialist discourse herself. This may have been because the genre of meetings limited the semiotic variability available to her to controvert Denise, or because she had limited experience of teaching students deemed to have disability and had not yet completed continuing professional development in this connection. Whatever the reason, the very limited number of instances in which Saoirse engaged in counter-essentialist discourse left the researcher unclear about whether, and the degree to which, she might have subscribed to such discourses in Denise's absence.

There were many examples of where Denise engaged in counter-essentialist discourse, all of which seemed to exert an effect on how teachers conceptualised the team-teaching initiative in which they were involved. For example, social model thinking was in evidence in her discussion of how Darren's difficulties became more or less visible, depending on the suitability of the supports available to him. She also referenced Critical Disability Studies and minority model thinking in her discussion of Darren's right to reject the *sick role* ascribed to him, along with the supports that attached to this and the loss of agency and status they implied. This interpretation allowed both teachers to be highly flexible in their attitude to the deployment of SNA support for Darren within the team-teaching situation. It also allowed them to think about Saoirse's role in the class, in ways that did not draw attention to his physical difference.

Moreover, Denise's focus on the out-of-school lives of students with and without disability showed an understanding of intersectionality, especially the interplay between disability and disadvantage (HP Mtg. 2: Turns 285-287), that went far beyond essentialist conceptualisations of disability. Exchange of information about students out-of-school lives comprised a substantial part of team-teaching meetings. This kind of exchange was seen as integral to offering the kinds of holistic support envisaged within this team-teaching initiative.

Perhaps most importantly, the effects of deploying broader representations of disability than those encompassed by essentialist discourse allowed Denise to move from simply responding to group needs, to focusing the team-teaching initiative towards the creation of a supportive, participatory and inclusive learning environment that was accepting of difference. To this end, a huge amount of time was invested in discussing student grouping and the social and educational compatibility of learners, including learners deemed to have disability. In the first meeting, Denise asserted that it would be best to divide them "on the basis of mixed ability" (HP Mtg. 1: Turn 78). Saoirse agreed that this was a "good because it cuts both ways. They can obviously learn from ... the person beside them and then somebody feels more important if they're helping another person in their team" (HP

Mtg. 1: Turn 81). While it was agreed to “keep the same groups together” (HP Mtg. 1: Turn 139) for a term at least (HP Mtg. 1: Turn 144), it was also decided that it would “probably might be a good thing to change” groups thereafter, to allow students to get “different exposure” to different individuals within the class (HP Mtg. 1: Turn 141). This kind of forensic attention to grouping was indicative of the centrality of social participation within the initiative (HP Mtg. 2: Turns 105-123, 179-203, 215-216, 228-229).

It was also in the context of establishing a nurturing and inclusive classroom environment that Denise encouraged Saoirse to act as an *enjoyable guest* to the class, the value of which was presented in terms of providing all students with time to show what they had learned during each week and make them more aware of their learning and more confident that they were achieving mastery (HP Mtg. 1: Turns 154 and 206). As we saw in Section 8.2, Saoirse agreed to play this role, though somewhat reluctantly, (HP Mtg. 2: Turn 71), because of her commitment to creating a positive learning environment in the class.

Overall, we saw that Denise deployed a much wider range of discourses to represent students deemed to have disability than Saoirse. These referenced essentialist, charity, social model, minority model and Critical Disability Studies perspectives on disability. The diversity of disability discourses from which she drew, and the willingness of Saoirse to accommodate to them (while also defaulting to deficit-based essentialist understandings) affected the latitude with which both teachers conceived of team-teaching as a support to inclusion. In the end, it became as much about offering a safe and supportive learning environment as about improved academic outcomes.

### **Ideational meanings and conceptualisations of team-teaching at Hazel Park**

Analysis of the degree to which ideational meanings about disability influenced teachers’ conceptualisation of team-teaching was predicated largely on examination of their use of presupposition, their articulation of particular teacher identities and their evaluations of how successful their team-teaching initiative had been and why. Each of these will be addressed hereunder in turn.

#### **Presuppositions.**

From the outset, a clear pre-supposition seemed to have been established in the minds of teachers that a team-teaching initiative was established to support the inclusion of students deemed to have disability. The first indication of this came early in the first meeting as they discussed the rationale for establishing this initiative, when Saoirse inquired whether all group members had undergone “psychological assessments” and whether they had been “chosen for that reason” (HP Mtg. 1: Turns 11-12). Denise reported that this had been the

case for eight students originally assigned to the class. She also asserted that the class had been established as “a withdrawal class” that obviated the need to give “the students hours in resource [teaching] outside the classroom” (HP Mtg. 3: Turns 113). The term “hours in resource” was code for additional allocations assigned through a centralised national process that, at the time of the study, was predicated on being placed in an official category of disability (DES, 2005). This made it clear that the initiative was established ostensibly to offer students assessed as having disability alternatives to small group withdrawal.

Further evidence of the link between the team-teaching initiative established and the inclusion of students deemed to have disability could be found in how the teachers concerned discussed threats to the interests of these students by the tendency to add students not deemed to have disability to the class group. For example, during the first meetings, Denise alluded to the fact that four extra students had been added to the class recently on the basis of criteria that did not relate to disability (HP Mtg. 1: Turn 282). This led both teachers to express their concern that the class could become one to which students deemed to have behavioural difficulties in other classes would be summarily dispatched. They represented this as a “big worry about the class” (HP Mtg. 1: Turn 20) and expressed their determination to fight their “corner to keep this [group] as small as possible” (HP Mtg. 1: turn 222) to protect the interests of the learners deemed to have disability, in support of whom the class had been initially set up. All of this suggested that teachers saw the main purpose of their team-teaching initiative as supporting the inclusion of students deemed to have disability.

### **Team-Teaching Identities.**

Not only did Denise seem to exert disproportionate control over how students deemed to have disabilities were represented as social subjects, this dominant discursive position seemed to confer on her disproportionate power over how subjective positions and social identities were adopted by team-teachers in relation to supporting the inclusion of this group.

As already seen in Section 8.2, Denise identified strongly as the *lead* class teacher of English, an identity she asserted most forcefully through control over the assertion of group learning characteristics, the choice of lesson content and the setting of group learning objectives. Denise also committed to an identity as an inclusive education teacher, especially through her control over information about the learning dispositions of individual students, most of whom were deemed to have disability. Most information exchange relating to this, involved the assertion of truth claims about various positive and negative innate personal learner characteristics. These were eventually woven into assertions of group

characteristics by Denise. She did not seem to see the subject teacher and inclusive education teacher roles as distinct. Instead she incorporated them into an overall “mammy” identity (HP Mtg. 1: Turns 210-212). This was presented as casting Denise in a role that was less “cool” than that of the “young teacher coming in who had different ideas” (HP Mtg. 2 Turn 210), in other words, as a foil to Saoirse’s “engaging guest” role. In reality, the role conferred distinct discursive privileges on Denise. It allowed her to take up the role of the expert in relation to all the students in the class and to do all the discursive heavy lifting around learners deemed to have disability (HP Mtg. 1: Turn 213). For example, it allowed her to maintain a simultaneous focus on objectives derived from both Junior Certificate syllabus and those gleaned from her determination of the particular needs of the group. It also allowed her to deploy the language of motherhood (HP Mtg. 1: Turn 324), along with that pertaining to a wide range of non-essentialist perspectives on disability, that took account of extrinsic and intersectional social factors, including disadvantage.

Saoirse’s weak discourse position left her with little epistemic authority, either in relation to the teaching of English or the assertion of truth claims about students deemed to have disability. In addition, she occupied the T2 position which meant that she had to negotiate with Denise (the T1 teacher) for access to discursive power. This severely reduced her ability to resist taking on the role of “enjoyable guest” (HP Mtg. 2: Turn 74) devised for her by Denise. In doing so, she formalised her inferior power position and left herself entirely dependent on Denise in relation to the selection of those on her *target list*, as well as the type of support she should give to these within learning activities. While towards the end of the meeting studied Saoirse acknowledged that her guest role had been useful in increasing the social and academic engagement of targeted students (HP Mtg. 2: Turn 71), she also reasserted her aspiration to act as a “lead” teacher within any future team-teaching arrangement since she had not had the chance to do so in this one (HP Mtg. 3: Turn 226).

### **Evaluations.**

There was evidence that both teachers believed team-teaching had “worked well” (HP Mtg. 3: Turns 36-37) as an alternative to the withdrawal of students as individuals or in small groups (HP Mtg. 3: Turns 113). Both agreed that the students concerned had loved “the fact that” they were “withdrawn from their base” class into a smaller *class* (HP Mtg. 3: Turn 115). This point was reinforced by reports of the “look of pure worry” that had come across their faces when it was suggested that they might have to return to their larger classes at the end of the initiative (HP Mtg. 3: Turn 115). Both teachers expressed their belief that the “smaller class-size” model (HP Mtg. 3: Turn 39) allowed students to “work so well together” (HP Mtg. 3: Turn 121), without experiencing some of the “discipline issues”

that pertained in other classes (HP Mtg. 3: Turn 117) where no team-teaching was provided (HP Mtg. 3: Turn 52). Thus Saoirse could report to Denise that individuals who “would have been involved in problems in the other classes ... barely say anything in your class” (HP Mtg. 3 Turn 124).

Denise reported that in relation to a class she taught on her own containing students deemed to have disability, she had spent “so much time preparing” for that class (HP Mtg. 3: Turn 56), “just to make sure that they’re all getting what I’m doing” (HP Mtg. 3: Turn 58). She noted that this was a “very, very difficult” task (HP Mtg. 3: Turn 60), in contrast to the current initiative. Similarly, Saoirse reported that, from her limited experience of team-teaching in larger classes, these had been much more difficult to implement than the current one (HP Mtg. 3: Turn 9).

Summative evaluations of the team-teaching initiative were very interesting, in that unlike their representations of disability, essentialist discourse did not predominate them. Rather factors such as class size and the professional and personal compatibility of teachers were cited, especially in relation to their teaching styles and values. Denise asserted that both teachers’ background in language instruction helped them in collaborating around the teaching of English, declaring “we do so much oral communication ... that even though we’re different subjects, we probably have a lot of similarity” (HP Mtg. 3: Turns 12-14). She also averred that “even though Spanish and English are very different, there are similarities in our teaching styles” (HP Mtg. 3: Turn 30). Similarly, Saoirse asserted, “I think the relationship that we both had ... was very, very easy ... we’re working together ... we’re trying our best and we, kind of, had the same objectives, the same goals at the end” (HP Mtg. 3: Turn 90). This allowed Denise to reply that they were “both singing off the same hymn sheet” (HP Mtg. 3: Turn 91) “from the very beginning” (HP Mtg. 3: Turn 97), especially “with regard to respecting students” (HP Mtg. 3: Turn 93) and having belief in their abilities (HP Mtg. 3: Turn 109). Denise also pointed to the fact that “neither of us shout” in class (HP Mtg. 3: Turn 119) as another indicator of their shared values and beliefs about teaching.

Another factor that was seen as a key to the success of the team-teaching initiative was the commitment of both teachers to the approach and their belief in its value in obviating the need for student withdrawal from class. Thus Denise was able to assert that “we’re both keen for it to work because we both probably believe in team-teaching” (HP Mtg. 3: Turn 105) and the fact that “it *does* work when it’s done well” (HP Mtg. 3: Turn 107). Overall, Denise felt that their team-teaching partnership had evolved to the extent that “we don’t have to work on our relationship” any more, “it’s already built up” (HP Mtg. 3: Turns 271-276). All of these factors were seen as pivotal to the success of team-teaching and none were related

to students' innate qualities. In a similar vein, suggestions relating to the development of team-teaching in the school into the future avoided reference to the essential qualities of individual students. Rather, they referred to the importance of teaching teams to "stay together" over a number of years (HP Mtg. 3: Turn 210) and being scheduled with "the same class" (HP Mtg. 3: Turn 200), comprised of the "same students" (HP Mtg. 3: Turn 202) in a consistent way that allowed teachers who had "established the relationship" with them, to capitalise on this in a consistent way (HP Mtg. 3: Turn 207).

It was also recommended that team-teachers be scheduled to team-teach more than twice per week (HP Mtg. 3: Turn 199) and that team-taught lessons be spread out across the week (HP Mtg. 3: Turn 211) to allow for continuity of instruction. The provision of adequate "planning time" (HP Mtg. 3: Turn 214) was also seen as "key" (HP Mtg. 3: Turn 346) to effective implementation of team-teaching. It was suggested that this should be scheduled by "management" as a matter of course (HP Mtg. 3: Turns 219 and 343-347). Finally, it was felt that management should avoid withdrawing teachers from team-taught lessons to cover for absent colleagues (HP Mtg. 3: Turn 219), a practice that "defeats the purpose" of team-teaching, especially if advanced planning had already taken place (HP Mtg. 3: Turn 350).

Again, none of these recommendations relate to within-learner factors. That is not to say that teachers were not mindful of the benefits of team-teaching for specific individuals deemed to have disability, including Claire (HP Mtg. 1: Turns 296-298 and Mtg. 2: Turns 75-83 and 179-188), Gemma (HP Mtg. 3: Turns 255-261), Louise (HP Mtg. 2: Turns 289-293), John (HP Mtg. 1: Turns 262-273), Conor (HP Mtg. 1: Turns 312 and HP Mtg. 2: Turns 268-284), Jack (HP Mtg. 1: Turns 316-324 and HP Mtg. 2: Turn 339), Darren (HP Mtg. 2: Turns 174-176) and Joanna (HP Mtg. 2: Turns 216-227). Perhaps the most telling interaction in this regard related to Luke, a student represented as having "difficulties in other classes" (HP Mtg. 2: Turn 50), finding "it hard to stay quiet" and having a "hopping" disposition (HP Mtg. 2: Turns 65-66). He was reported to have been assessed eventually with dyspraxia and queried as having speech and language difficulties and AD/HD (HP Mtg. 2: Turns 62-64). Denise reported that when Luke was asked by a teacher to write a number of things he liked about his English class, he wrote, "I like being in this class because I am accepted and not judged" (HP Mtg. 3: Turn 139). Denise deduced from this that he had found the learning environment of the class "comfortable", nurturing and accepting of difference (HP Mtg. 3: Turn 155). She seemed to take great pride in recounting this story as a reflection of the pre-eminence placed by the teaching team on this inclusive value.

Overall, both teachers agreed that the nurturing element of their team-teaching initiative had been a "huge" element of the support it offered to students (HP Mtg. 3: Turn

262), reporting that the initiative had become increasingly focused on this function, at the expense of, for example, “actual learning” as time progressed (HP Mtg. 3: Turn 280). This gave a clear indication of how teachers at Hazel Park conceptualised team-teaching, in terms of obviating the need for the stigmatising withdrawal of students deemed to have disability from mainstream classes and their support with inclusive classroom climates that promoted the best engagement possible with mainstream curricula and their assessment.

### **9.3 Maple Lodge**

#### **Actional meanings and conceptualisations of team-teaching at Maple Lodge**

As already reported in relation to Hazel Park, findings of analysis of genre across all three cases showed that activity and social relations of meetings constrained the semiotic variability available to teachers to represent students deemed to have disability. Central to this analysis was the way in which particular teachers were positioned. In the Maple Lodge dyad Claire operated in the T1 position. She had been assigned to the team-taught group first and taught them more often each week. While both she and Andrew were trained English teachers, Claire had attended in-service training in relation to the English and Communication elements of the LCA programme and had more experience of teaching on it.

Andrew acknowledged Claire’s superior understanding of the goals, content, structure, and modes of assessment of the LCA programme (ML Mtg. 3: Turns 17-19) and deferred to her *lead* role in relation to this (ML Mtg. 1: Turn 140). While he constantly reiterated his desire to develop his teaching identity in the class beyond Julia’s and Aoife’s “helper” to one of a “teacher” (ML Mtg. 1: Turn 18) with “an equal role” to Claire’s in relation to the whole group (ML Mtg. 1: Turn 316), his enactment of this identity was constrained both by his lack of detailed knowledge of the LCA programme (ML Mtg. 1: Turn 63-67) and by Claire’s reluctance to share her lead teacher responsibilities with him, despite various commitments to do so (ML Mtg. 1: Turns 8, 10, 22, 23, 34-35 and 316). It was also constrained by the fact that Andrew had to negotiate access to an expanded class teaching role without jeopardising the solidarity of the team. As he put it himself, “I don’t want to be undermining of your role” in the class (ML Mtg. 1: Turn 312).

Despite this, as meetings progressed Andrew seemed to become more involved in decision-making about in-class grouping of students (ML Mtg. 1: Turns 196-198), as well as the selection of content and some elements of its delivery (ML Mtg. 1: Turn 236-242). By the time of their third meeting, both teachers had become focussed exclusively on the preparation of all learners for the summative LCA “exam” (ML Mtg. 3: Turns 140-141, 149 and 155). This change in the exercise of team-teaching identities was not as complete as



Andrew would have liked. Claire still retained predominant responsibility for these areas and for logistics associated with the various forms of assessment involved (ML Mtg. 2: Turn: 153; ML Mtg. 3: Turns 122, 130, 134 and 184-189). Yet, it seemed to have a significant effect on the way in which discourse was used to depict learners deemed to have disability. This was done in the context of an increasing focus from both teachers on preparation of the entire group for LCA summative examinations. The increased congruence in their focus was matched by increased congruence in the way they deployed discourse to represent students deemed to have disability which, by the time of their third meeting was achieved largely through discussion of their ability to engage with LCA English and Communication curriculum and assessment of this.

In terms of their support teacher identities, both teachers had completed the same DES-recognised course of continuous professional development in relation to the inclusion of students deemed to have special educational needs, including disability; yet Andrew had more experience in this connection. He also held a formal Assistant Principal position in relation to coordination of activities related to the students in need of support for their learning, including those deemed to have disability. Because of this, and because the majority of her timetabled hours were scheduled in the area of learning support and special needs education, Claire deferred to Andrew's knowledge of individual students deemed to have disability, including Julia and Aoife, on foot of working with them over many years (ML Mtg. 3: Turn 17). As she put it herself, Andrew was her "boss at the end of the day" in this connection (ML Teacher's Interview, Claire: Turn 145). Her tendency to defer to Andrew in this way seemed to counteract some of the discursive power she exercised by virtue of her occupancy of the T1 position and her expertise in relation to the LCA programme.

Overall then, a complex network of deference operated in the Maple Lodge dyad, which led to a very nuanced enactment of team-teaching identities and roles. As a result, there was a relatively egalitarian distribution of discursive power between the two teachers, who constantly acknowledged each other's relative experience and knowledge. Andrew seemed to enjoy disproportionate control over meaning-making about learners deemed to have disability, while Claire's enjoyed this in relation to the LCA programme and its delivery and assessment. This was summed up nicely by Andrew when he acknowledged to Claire, "your experience of the [LCA] course; eh, my experience with the kids maybe from the time they were in first year, second and third ... blended ... and it helped us to get some insights from each other's points of view" (ML Mtg. 3: Turns 17-19). This relationship increased their interdependence, their apparent need for team solidarity and hence the deference with which they deployed discourse around both disability and team-teaching. It limited discursive

incongruence between the teachers concerned and made controverting one's team-teaching partner even more unlikely.

## **Representational meanings and conceptualisations of team-teaching at Maple Lodge**

### **Essentialist discourse.**

Andrew's disproportionate control over representations of students deemed to have disability was expressed predominantly through essentialist discourse that involved the use of naming and classifying strategies. These had the effect of foregrounding the perceived difficulties of those to whom they referred and framing these as innate, permanent, immutable and exceptional. In the case of Julia, such representations tended to elide any sense of her agency and rendered her as a dependent, passive, apathetic and relatively powerless learner, whose limitations were fixed and readily apparent to others (ML Mtg. 2: Turn 156; ML Mtg. 3: Turn 91). He extended this style of representation to other students deemed to have disability also. In talking about the entire group, he referred to the fact that all, "bar two", had "psychological assessments with issues" (ML Mtg. 1: Turn 274). He also said that a number of students (ML Mtg. 1: Turn 9), who were well known to the teachers concerned (ML Mtg. 1: Turn 248), were interfering with the progress of the entire class (ML Mtg. 1: Turn 252). Moreover, he characterised the class group as not having developed an ability "to self-regulate", even though they would be "out of school" soon (ML Mtg. 1: Turn 273). Finally, he reported that, in terms of their views and opinions, they "don't voice very much" (ML Mtg. 1: Turn 179). All of these group attributes were based on what were seen as inherent characteristics of students.

Claire agreed with Andrew that behavioural issues were a cause for concern for the group, agreeing that it was "the same bunch of people" who were usually at fault (ML Mtg. 3: Turn 280). She also characterised the group as "really complacent" in terms of submitting work (ML Mtg. 1: Turn 13), saying that "they don't do a lot of writing for me" (ML Mtg. 1: Turn 132) and that they needed constant "reinforcement" of what they learned (ML Mtg. 1: Turn 203). Finally, Claire worried that many of them would not be able to use "efficiently" the reasonable accommodations they had been given in state examinations (ML Mtg. 3: Turn 310). Again, all of these were seen as within-learner limitations. As has been shown in Section 8.3, Claire and Andrew extended this essentialist style of representation to their representation of individual students deemed to have disability also, including Jack, Ciara, Julia, Robert, John, Louise, Adam, Caoimhe, Harry and Joanne. A key vehicle for this was to represent them primarily in terms of their performance on norm-referenced mock examinations and their perceived ability to cope with the demands of the *real* ones.

Such representations maintained a focus on the innate difficulties of class members and the need for teachers to respond. Congruence between Claire and Andrew in their representations of learners deemed to have disability was evident in the considerable overlap that occurred between the vocabulary used by the two to articulate discourse and by other semiotic features such as overlapping speech, completion of each other's sentences, *verbatim* reiteration of phrases used by the other and the co-construction of points, arguments and legitimisations within dialogue.

Because of the degree to which mock examinations were used to represent students deemed to have disability, this also became a focal point for developing conceptualisation of team-teaching in the Maple Lodge initiative. Teachers seemed to construe its main purpose in terms of supporting all students, including students deemed to have disability (who predominated the class), in their engagement with the LCA programme and its assessment.

Moreover, in these terms, they deemed their team-teaching initiative to have been a great success. It was credited with allowing them to cover more LCA material and promote higher standards of academic progress, with Claire stating emphatically in the third meetings, "looking back ... I wouldn't have gotten through ... as much work and I would have struggled massively" had Andrew not been present in the class (ML Mtg. 3 Turn 42). Team-teaching was also credited with facilitating more comprehensive feedback to students (ML Mtg. 1: Turns 14) in relation to their on-going LCA coursework (ML Mtg. 1: Turn 290) and their preparations for state-mandated assessment of the programme (ML Mtg. 1: Turns 268-271; ML Mtg.2: Turns: 6, 59, 153, 238, 242-244, 320, 408). Again, this allowed Claire to state explicitly that the level of feedback she was able to give students during the year would not have been impossible "if I was on my own" (ML Mtg. 1: Turn 15).

Similarly, team-teaching was deemed to have been useful in allowing teachers to utilise a wider range of learning activities and differentiated teaching approaches in relation to the LCA programme than would otherwise have been possible (ML Mtg. 1: Turn 225). For example, it was credited with enabling them to be more flexible around "pairing and grouping" learners (ML Mtg. 1: Turns 21-24, 135, 185). Finally, teachers asserted that team-teaching had led to better management of disciplinary issues (ML Mtg. 1: Turns 268-271) and of learning spaces (ML Mtg. 1: Turns 248, 259-268). In all of these respects, it was deemed to have "definitely" been "effective" (ML Mtg. 3: Turn 106) and "well worthwhile" (ML Mtg. 3: Turn 11). All of this was congruent with assertions made in Section 3.4, that reliance on essentialist discourse was a key device for relegating educational planning to what was already available in schools, rather than what may be most beneficial to students deemed to have disability (Baglieri et al., 2011).

This is not to say that the team-teachers concerned were not highly committed to the students in their care. Analysis of the texts of team-teaching provided clear evidence that both teachers in the Maple Lodge dyad worked proactively to further what they perceived as the best interests of their students. This was evident in the attention they paid to the welfare, rights and feelings of learners deemed to have disability, as exemplified in their discussion of the damaging effects of using norm-referenced grading in relation to many of these learners and of returning poor results to them on foot of this (ML, Mtg. 2: Turns 113 and 120-122). At the same time, reliance on essentialist discourses meant that teachers were (perhaps unwittingly) colluding in the very processes that produced the marginalisation of these learners in the first place (Allan, 2003) and limited their conceptualisations of team-teaching to activities that worded towards the achievement of better test results.

### **Non-essentialist discourse.**

As already noted in Section 7.3, discourses were also identified at Maple Lodge that referenced the right of students deemed to have disability to be “in the room” with their peers and that this in itself was an important outcome of team-teaching as a support to their inclusion (ML Mtg. 3: Turn 92). It was stated that, without team-teaching, such students “wouldn’t have been able to continue” with the LCA programme (ML Mtg. 3: Turn 92). Like so many instances of counter-essentialist discourse, this one was deployed in tandem essentialist discourses that viewed the main function of team-teaching as offering support to students deemed to have disability within existing school programmes exclusively. The latter was more about normalising such students (Florian, 2014, p. 13) and getting them to “fit into the spaces constructed for them by normative imperatives of dominant discourses” (Ngcobo & Muthukrishna, 2008, p. 361), than it was about reconfiguring classroom structures and practices to respond to the unique learning strengths and needs of all learners within, for example, universally designed programmes (Baglieri et al., 2011).

Having said that, there were instances in which the principles of Universal Design for Learning (UDL) were pursued over those relating to the LCA programme. For example, both teachers saw team-teaching as a key factor in the development of a positive and inclusive classroom climate (ML Mtg. 1: Turn 287), with Andrew asserting that it was “worth it from that point of view alone” (ML Mtg. 1: Turn 288). Again, such discourse was deployed alongside essentialist forms that focused on reducing the misbehaviour of particular students (ML Mtg. 3: Turn 280), especially “John and Jason” (ML Mtg. 1: Turns 8 and 248-258, ML Mtg. 2). The link between team-teaching and UDL has been explored previously. For example, Dymond *et al.* (2006 in O’Mara *et al.* 2012) evaluated the implementation of a UDL approach to the teaching of science in a team-taught high school class in the United States

of America. Their results showed that this allowed the class teacher to better direct the instruction of students with special educational needs by co-teachers. It also allowed co-teachers to move from simply adapting the curriculum for specific individuals to co-planning and co-delivery of the curriculum for all learners. The benefits of this approach for students' deemed to have disability were outlined by the teachers concerned in terms of improved social skills and improved interaction with peers.

### **Ideational meanings and conceptualisations of team-teaching at Maple Lodge**

#### **Presupposition.**

Within discussion of the rationale for establishing the initiative studied at Maple Lodge, both teachers acknowledged that team-teaching was relatively "new" to the school and that it was only "trying to learn about team-teaching at the moment" (ML Mtg. 1: Turn 323). They also reported that previous experience of team-teaching at the school had been mixed (ML Mtg. 1: Turns 299 and 321, Mtg. 3: Turns 50 and 245), as had been their own experience in various settings (ML Mtg. 1: Turn 333 and 324-330, Mtg. 3: Turns 50-54). Andrew reported that the team-teaching initiative was originally not "meant to happen", but was put in place by way of "a revision" to the way in which teaching resource were allocated "for certain students" (ML Mtg. 3: Turn 24), namely "Aoife and Julia" (ML Mtg. 1: Turn 27). This revision was necessitated by the fact that these students could not be supported through withdrawal from class, since the attendance requirements of the LCA programme did not allow for such withdrawal. The task of providing in-class support was initially entrusted to Andrew, so that he referred to these students as "my two" (ML Mtg. 1: Turn 100).

From this discussion, it was clear that teachers pre-supposed that the purpose of their team-teaching initiative was to support the inclusion of specific students deemed to have disability within the LCA programme. As Andrew put it, "we were kind of forced into it by, almost by accident, in that we needed to access those kids and not being able to take them individually or in very small groups ... meant that we had to do it this way" (ML Mtg. 3: Turn 43). This view was thought to have been shared by students in the class, who were reported to have viewed Andrew as "more like Aoife's helper or Julia's helper" than "being involved directly in the teaching" of the class (ML Mtg. 1: Turn 100).

#### **Team-Teaching Identities.**

As noted above, Claire identified predominantly as the *lead* teacher in the dyad, the teacher with primary responsibility for the planning and delivery of the LCA programme to the whole class. She deployed discourse in ways that were highly congruent with this

identity, making the majority of decisions about content to be covered and how this would be done. Even though Andrew, as the school's SENCO, exerted considerable control over the conduct of meetings, he had to negotiate with Claire to exercise any role in these decisions. While Claire agreed that Andrew should play a larger role in these, and while she acceded to all of his demands to do so (ML Mtg. 1: Turns 8, 10, 22, 23, 34-35 and 316), in reality she found it very difficult to relinquish her lead identity (ML Mtg. 1 Turns 293 and 313). Her conceptualisation of her support teacher identity was framed within, and in addition to, this *lead* teacher identity. As a result, she conceptualised team-teaching predominantly in terms of supporting all students, including those deemed to have disability, in their engagement with the LCA programme. She put a huge amount of effort into scaffolding their engagement in LCA activities (ML Mtg. 1: Turns 89 and 90-91) and their acquisition of the skills and knowledge assessed in relation to this (ML Mtg. 1 Turn 273-275). This included securing reasonable accommodations for students deemed to have disability to ensure that they could demonstrate the acquisition of such knowledge and skills, including for Aoife, (Mtg. 2 Turn: 47), Ciara, (ML Mtg. 2 Turns: 73-77), Jack (ML Mtg. 2: Turn 193) and Joanne (ML Mtg. 2 Turn: 327). It also included preparing them in the use of these accommodations and taking responsibility for the logistics of assessment (ML Mtg. 3: Turn 134 and 184-189). Finally, Claire paid forensic attention to the correction of the written *mock* examination scripts (ML Mtg.2: Turn: 153) with a view to offering feedback about how to improve their performance in the *real* examinations. She believed that all of these as supports to learners deemed to have disabilities would not have been possible had she been teaching the class on her "own" (ML Mtg. 1: Turn 15).

While Andrew initially adopted a limited role in the dyad (as Julia's and Aoife's helper), he worked progressively to expand this into one that involved greater responsibility for teaching the entire class (ML Mtg. 1: Turn 18; ML Mtg. 3: Turn 25), while retaining specific responsibility for the inclusion of his "two girls" (ML Mtg. 1: Turn 100). He drew on his status as a SENCO for epistemic authority in this connection. Claire concurred that this was important for Julia and Aoife that Andrew kept a particular eye on them, but asserted that his role had "definitely ... developed" into something more than this by the end of the first meeting (ML Mtg. 1: Turns 91 and 236-242). The only factor that seemed to limit Andrew's expanding teaching role was his own lack of knowledge in relation to the content and structures of LCA programme.

Overall, Claire's propensity to defer to Andrew around individual students deemed to have disability and Andrew's tendency to defer to Claire on matters relating to the LCA, led to the development of a complex, interdependent and deferential relationship that was reflected in a relatively equal distribution of discursive power. Team solidarity was further

strengthened by the fact that both teachers worked “together so often in other areas” and were members of “the SEN department” (ML Mtg. 3: Turn 60). This also had implications for the degree of congruence with which they deployed both essentialist and non-essentialist discourse.

The roles and identities adopted by teachers during their discussions of students deemed to have disabilities profoundly affected how they viewed team-teaching as a support to the inclusion of this group. By the time of the third meeting both teachers reported having become primarily focussed on supporting them in engaging with the LCA programme and its assessment (ML Mtg. 3: Turns 140-141). Thus Andrew was able to assert that, while Julia and Aoife were his “main students”, the teaching team was focussed on “supporting the whole room” in undertaking the LCA (ML Mtg. 3: Turn 94). The pressure that both teachers felt around getting students “through this LCA” (ML Mtg. 1: Turn 269) was captured in Claire’s discussion of the need to avoid using the school’s usual disciplinary procedures, since recourse to these would involve student missing submission of “a key assignment, they can’t make that up at home” (ML Mtg. 1: Turn 269). Andrew agreed that this “pressure to get them finished” with LCA key tasks (ML Mtg. 1: Turn 270) would necessarily involve taking a less formal approach to discipline that would have otherwise been the case.

### **Evaluations.**

Team-teachers at Maple Lodge asserted that a range of benefits had accrued to individual students deemed to have disability as a result of the team-teaching initiative at Maple Lodge. Claire asserted that it had been “good for Aoife and Julia” (ML Mtg. 1: Turn 27) since, by the time of the last meeting, Aoife was reported as working more independently than “a year ago” (ML Mtg. 3: Turn 84-86) and Julia had been enabled to remain “in the room with her peers” (ML Mtg. 3: Turns 55-57 and 88-93), which would otherwise not have been possible. Thus, Andrew could assert that it had “been great for those ... young people” (ML Mtg. 3: Turn 93). Implicit in these assertions was an assumption that students deemed to have disability had a right to access support that maintained their presence in their general subject classes and that team-teaching was a key instrument in vindicating this right.

Outside of the benefits to these two students, evaluations of team-teaching tended to focus on the benefits that accrued to the whole class which, given the fact that a preponderance of these learners had “psychological assessments with issues” (ML Mtg. 1: Turn 274), effectively meant learners deemed to have disabilities. Overall, teachers concluded that, given the programme’s stringent attendance requirements, it had been “really good for us to see it as a different way” of supporting students “rather than

withdraw[ing] the kids” (ML Mtg. 3: Turns 40 and 48) and that team-teaching would be “really important” in terms of supporting these students in “the future” (ML Mtg. 2: Turn 347-349).

As with Hazel Park, a number of factors was seen as key to the effective deployment of team-teaching to support the inclusion of learners deemed to have disability. These included the development of a positive professional teaching relationship and “understanding” between teachers, (ML Mtg. 1: 333-334, ML Mtg. 3: Turn 61-62). The fact that both teachers were “trained in what we are doing” (ML Mtg. 1: Turn 322) was also seen as significant, as was the compatibility between their teaching philosophies and styles (ML Mtg. 1: Turn 333). Thus, Andrew could assert that both teachers “worked in kind of harmony a lot” and that “there was a lot of ... convergence of ideas” (ML Mtg. 3: Turn 13). Certainly, this assertion was borne out in the semiotic features of text described in the current work. Andrew went on to conclude that “we think alike” (ML Mtg. 3: Turn 15), an assertion with which Claire agreed (ML Mtg. 3: Turn 18). It was asserted that for team-teaching to be successful, teachers “have to want to do it” (ML Mtg. 1: Turn 335) and be willing to be flexible and accommodating in their teaching approaches. In this respect, both teachers believed they had been learning about team-teaching from each other as they went “along” (ML Mtg. 1: Turn 338-9), with Claire declaring “I’ve learned a lot from you as well Andrew” (ML Mtg. 3: Turn 118) and Andrew replying, “Likewise, you know. And I mean that’s the thing about teaching I suppose; ... we never stop” learning (ML Mtg. 3: Turn 119).

In relation to improvements that might be put in place in the future, it was recommended that these team-teaching initiatives be “set up” well in advance (ML Mtg. 3: Turns 23 and 28), so that discussion of issues relating to philosophies around inclusion, understandings of disability and conceptualisations of team-teaching (including identities and roles) could be discussed. It was felt that this would obviate the need for them to be addressed *in situ* (ML Mtg. 3: Turns 35-38). In particular, Andrew felt that his “coming in after the beginning of the process didn’t really help” team cohesion (ML Mtg. 3: Turn 37).

In terms of difficulties, both teachers agreed that they did not “have any time on our time-table” to do the necessary planning required to make this work smoothly (ML Mtg. 1: Turn 295) and that any planning they had “been doing to date ha[d] been really just *ad hoc*” (ML Mtg. 1: Turn 298), “on the hoof” (ML Mtg. 1: Turn 298) and “uncoordinated” (ML Mtg. 1: Turn 306). As a result, Andrew reported that he had no option but just to “row in with whatever’s going on, on the day” (ML Mtg. 1: Turn 308). Interestingly, the teachers at Maple Lodge anticipated that if they asked for designated planning time, whether in terms of “a period a week” (ML Mtg. 1: Turn 300) or a period “at the start of each [LCA] module” (ML Mtg. 1: Turn 303), this was unlikely to be forthcoming. As Claire put it, “if we asked for it,



they might look at us like” we were mad (ML Mtg. 1: Turn 297). Finally, teachers in Maple Lodge thought that using the budget provided to the school to support learners deemed to have special educational needs to shore up the LCA programme (ML Mtg. 2: Turn 278), comprised a misuse of these resources and a significant barrier to the inclusion of this group. Overall however, both teachers agreed that their experience of the initiative had been very positive and that it had “definitely opened [their] eyes to team-teaching” and its possibilities in supporting inclusion (ML Mtg.3: Turn 50). They also reported that it left them feeling that they would “have no problems taking part in it again” (ML Mtg. 3: Turn 116).

As in Hazel Park, while essentialist discourse seemed to predominate teachers’ representations of students deemed to have disability at Maple Lodge, they were rarely mentioned in evaluations of the success or otherwise of team-teaching. Rather, factors such as teachers’ compatibility, commitment to the approach, role flexibility and a willingness to engage in on-the-job professional development were cited as key, along with factors such as the provision of a modest amount of time for advanced planning, evaluation and review of initiatives. While some of these factors referenced compatibility between the inherent characteristics of individual teachers, none referred to the innate or exceptional characteristics of students.

#### **9.4 Willow Way**

This dyad comprised of two teachers who were equally qualified to teach English, both of whom had similar (and relatively short) levels of teaching experience and both of whom had previously taught the group on which the study focussed. In addition, neither had completed a recognised course of continuing professional development in relation to the inclusion of learners deemed to have special educational needs, including disability. Phillip was the only student deemed by the school to have a disability in the Willow Way group. Coincidentally, he was also the student about whom most discussion occurred during team-teaching meetings at this setting.

##### **Actional meanings and conceptualisations of team-teaching at Willow Way**

As elsewhere, the deployment of discourse at Willow Way was limited by a hierarchy of communicative purposes that privileged the maintenance of team solidarity and focused predominantly on the exchange of knowledge and opinions. Participant structures offered little scope for teachers to challenge the introduction of topics by their team-teaching partners or the discursive basis on which this was done. This privileged the person who had most control over the introduction of topics, usually the T1 teacher. There was also a tendency to follow up activity exchanges by legitimisations of any decisions made, which

offered additional opportunities for the deployment of discourse, including discourse relating to students deemed to have disability. Since Fiona held the T1 position at Willow Way, she tended to dominate the introduction of topics and, thus, the deployment of representations of students in the class with and without disability and conceptualisations of how team-teaching should be used to support the inclusion of these learners. As already seen in Section 6.3, the issues of most concern to T1 teachers tended to relate to general classroom management, covering mainstream curricula with the whole class and preparing all learners for state assessment of this. Thus the focus of the team-teaching initiative tended to remain on the engagement of the whole class in the Junior Certificate English syllabus and its assessment. Insofar as this engagement was being interrupted by the misbehaviour of the group, it also focussed on discipline.

In other settings, this disproportionate control over discourse was augmented by other-initiated knowledge exchanges initiated by the T2 teacher. This was not true of Willow Way, where more other-initiated knowledge exchanges were initiated by Fiona (T1) than by Meadhbh (T2). This may have been because both teachers were equally qualified, with similar levels of teaching experience and both had taught the group in question before. Thus neither had epistemic advantage over the other in relation to the group concerned, students within it deemed to have disability, or the English syllabus being followed. This reduced the general need for other-initiated knowledge exchanges. In addition, Meadhbh liaised closely with the behavioural support team, which worked closely with Philip. Examination of other-initiated knowledge exchanges, revealed that a large number of other-initiated exchanges were begun by Fiona (T1) in order to gather information about how the unit was responding to him. This afforded greater epistemic authority to Meadhbh than she would otherwise have had as a result of holding the T2 position, which offset some of Fiona's discursive dominance over representations of Phillip. It allowed Meadhbh to (briefly) deploy discourse that focused on his right to be included with appropriate levels of support.

Thus, Meadhbh was able to assert (briefly) that her role in the team-teaching initiative should focus predominantly on ensuring that Phillip was engaged in lesson activities and preventing him from interfering with others in this connection. As we saw, this role was framed in terms of Meadhbh staying "beside him, in the class" (WW Mtg.1: Turn 197), writing "down stuff in his journal" (WW Mtg.1: Turn 197), offering him "one-on-one help" (WW Mtg. 1: Turn 418) and liaising with the behavioural unit to ensure continuity between strategies used with him in the unit and classroom settings (WW Mtg. 1: Turns 179- 183). We also saw that Meadhbh's vision of team-teaching did accord with Fiona's presuppositions of how this would transpire. In response, Fiona seemed to reassert representations of Phillip that foregrounded his innate and exceptional differences and reconceptualised the purpose of

team-teaching from a practice that offered him individualised support in the class to one that involved supporting the engagement of the entire class in the Junior Certificate syllabus and its assessment. At the heart of this change lay the deployment of essentialist representations that depicted Phillip's difficulties as emanating from within and (incorrectly) characterised him as dominating unfairly resources that had been offered to the whole class.

## **Representational meanings and conceptualisations of team-teaching at Willow Way**

### **Essentialist discourse.**

The predominant use of essentialist discourse to represent Phillip has already been noted. These representations centred on the deleterious effects of his presence on his peers (WW Mtg. 1: Turns 188-189; WW Mtg. 3 Turns 12, 63-71 and 89-97), the "positive impact" his absence could have on the class (WW Mtg. 2: Turns 204-209, 216 and 2; WW Mtg. 3 Turn 12), positive imaginaries of his exclusion (WW Mtg. 2: Turns 216 and 221-224) and conflation of his misbehaviour with that of the entire group (WW Mtg. 1: Turns 60-62, 282-285 and 411 -415; WW Mtg. 2 Turn: 197).

While this representation was challenged briefly by Meadhbh in the first team-teaching meeting, it was soon reasserted by Fiona. She used several forms of argumentation to assert her representations of Phillip as "superior" to Meadhbh's (Mehan, 1996, p. 272) and to get her to relinquishing her discordant position all of which were consistent with essentialist and personal tragedy discourses of disability. They included narratives that (incorrectly) posited Phillip's unfair domination of resources made available to the entire class, that pitted his right to belong in the group against the right of others to an education unfettered by his apparently menacing presence, that conflated his misbehaviour with that of the whole class and that promoted positive imaginaries of his exclusion from the group.

Ultimately, Phillip's position was represented as "sad" but (WW Mtg. 2: Turn 208) moving inevitably towards his exclusion because of exceptional behavioural difficulties that were innate to him and despite the manifold efforts of the school to support his inclusion (WW Mtg. 3: Turns 89-92). Thus, Fiona could assert that while "[i]t sounds bad to say this", Phillip's exclusion "had a real positive impact on the class" (WW Mtg. 2: Turn 204). Similarly, she could declare that while "obviously ... you don't want anybody ... excluded ... in this particular case, I think it was ... needed for the class" (WW Mtg. 3: Turn 74). Because Meadhbh had been convinced by the validity of Fiona's arguments (above), she was also able to assert that "everyone was trying to support" Phillip (WW Mtg. 3: Turn 91), but that his

misbehaviour “was so extreme” (WW Mtg. 3: Turn 63) that it was “something that we weren’t able to” respond to effectively (WW Mtg. 3: Turn 71).

Such findings were congruent with those of other studies that showed teachers’ tendency to focus on unwanted behaviours and the rights of better-behaved students when making assertions about the need for “classroom control” (Orsati & Causton-Theoharis, 2013, p. 518), rather than focussing on the difficulties students experienced as a result of their assessed difficulties. Since Phillip’s person became “marked” as the “problem” to be solved, his misbehaviour became conflated with that of the whole class (Orsati & Causton-Theoharis, 2013, p. 515) and his exclusion became a key focus of teachers’ discussions.

Phillip’s ultimate exclusion from the class meant that the team-teaching initiative became focused, not on the person for whom it was initially put in place, but on the rest of the class and their engagement with the Junior Certificate syllabus. It became less about supporting the rights of students deemed to have disability to gain access to, participate in and to benefit from inclusive educational provision available to others, and more about ensuring that this “weaker than ... average middle band” class performed in line with expectations of it, on normed assessment of the Junior Certificate programme (WW Mtg. 2: Turn 226). Thus it was more concerned with privileging the rights of seemingly *able-bodied* and able-minded students than those deemed to have disabilities.

### **Non-essentialist discourse.**

As we saw earlier, representations of Phillip that ran counter to the essentialist discourse were rare. Where they did occur, such as in Meadhbh’s depiction of Phillip as someone with a right to be supported in his mainstream group with appropriate levels of support (see above), they were affected briefly and in tandem with essentialist discourses that mitigated their effects. Thus, at the same time as arguing that appropriate levels of support needed to be provided if Phillip was to be meaningfully included, the level of resources required for this was represented as so substantial that the school could not be reasonably expected to provide this (WW Mtg. 2: Turn 208, Mtg. 3). In addition, Phillip was represented as monopolising the finite supports already available to students to support their engagement with mainstream curricula (WW Mtg. 1: Turn 425).

The fact that team-teaching resources available to the class were allocated ostensibly to facilitate Phillip’s continued inclusion, was entirely lost in these discussions. Rather, Meadhbh’s team-teaching role was depicted as one of offering the generality of students’ extra assistance (WW Mtg. 3: Turn 32), especially learners who had missed “a lot of time” (WW Mtg. 3: Turn 33), “were in real trouble” (WW Mtg. 3: Turn 35) or “needed a bit

more intense work” (WW Mtg. 3: Turn 37) to bring them to mastery of knowledge and skills mandated by mainstream curricula as distinct from a UDL-based approach such as that discussed in Section 10.6 of this work. Fiona saw Meadhbh’s role as freeing her “up to work with others” (WW Mtg. 3: Turn 37), namely mainstream students, in order to prepare them for their state examinations. All of this served to reinforce team-teaching as a support to non-disabled students at the expense of those assessed with disabilities for whom it was initially put in place.

### **Ideational meanings and conceptualisations of team-teaching at Willow Way**

#### **Presupposition.**

From the outset of the first meeting, it seemed that there was divergence between the team-teachers at Willow Way in the presuppositions they had about the key purpose of their team-teaching initiative. Meadhbh seemed to assume that the reason for her presence in the class with Fiona, was to work closely with Phillip, sitting “beside him, in the class” (WW Mtg.1: Turn 197), writing “down stuff in his journal” (WW Mtg.1: Turn 197), offering him “one-on-one help” (WW Mtg. 1: Turn 418) and liaising with the behavioural unit (WW Mtg. 1: Turns 179- 183). She seemed to construe her role in terms of monitoring and micro-managing his behaviour and engagement with his work and with other students. She was sufficiently convinced of this that she explicitly suggested this during the first meeting. She clearly saw herself in the role of support teacher to a specific student deemed to have disability.

Fiona, on the other hand, seemed to presuppose that Meadhbh had been allocated to the class was to act in the role of a second English teacher, whose job it was to help her in supporting the entire class in engaging with the Junior Certificate syllabus and preparing them for assessment of this. She also presupposed from the beginning (though she did not intimate this until later in the series of meetings) that of that all the issues that the team-teaching initiative was put in place to address, “the major thing was the behaviour” (WW Mtg. 3: Turn 48). Finally, she saw a key role for Meadhbh in assisting her with managing the behaviour of the entire group. The discrepancy between the two teachers in their presuppositions about the purpose of team-teaching had to be negotiated carefully, often through the enactment of particular team-teaching identities.

#### **Team-Teaching Identities.**

Fiona’s strong identification as a class teacher of English worked to maintain the focus of team-teaching discussions on the whole class issues, especially the engagement of all learners with the Junior Certificate English syllabus and its assessment. Thus, the

majority of Fiona's suggestions focused on making assertions about how team-teaching might help with developing differentiated materials and approaches (WW Mtg. 1: Turn 263 and WW Mtg. 2 186-188), offering greater feedback on homework (WW Mtg. 1: Turn 222-227), supporting the development of basic literacy and task-engagement skills (WW Mtg. 1: Turn 244-258) and enhancing students' examination techniques (WW Mtg. 1: Turns 33-36, 58, 122-123 and 273). Only occasionally did Fiona focus on the delivery of support for individuals or on the individualisation of learning programmes. Where this occurred it generally involved supporting particular students in terms of behaviour or helping them with what were seen as innate limitations that were inhibiting their progress, or that of the entire group, in terms of covering the mainstream English syllabus (WW Mtg. 1 Turn: 80 and 200-206).

For her part, Meadhbh agreed that improving behaviour and engaging mainstream students better in the Junior Certificate syllabus and preparation for its assessment, were important team-teaching goals (WW Mtg. 1: Turns 17, 123). She volunteered to undertake various roles and responsibilities in this connection (WW Mtg. 1: Turns 31, 33, 135, 173, 280, 333, 376), including the correction of examination scripts (WW Mtg. 2: Turns 6-7) and making decisions about the level at which students should be entered for formal examinations (WW Mtg. 2: Turns 9 and 44-47). As already noted in Section 8.4, while Meadhbh attempted to identify as a support teacher for Phillip during the first meeting (WW Mtg. 1: Turns 195-197), she failed to win Fiona's support for this view (WW Mtg. 1: Turns 180, 198 and 204).

In making her case, Fiona was careful not to contradict Meadhbh's assertion that Phillip needed considerable support. Rather she asserted that, "there's a lot more than him that needs help in that class" (WW Mtg. 1 Turn, 421), thus, forestalled any attempt by Meadhbh to allow Phillip sole occupancy of the personal tragedy space. We also saw how Fiona was able to get her to abandon this view, through strategic deployment of essentialist discourse about Phillip and replace it with her own characterisation of what team-teaching should entail, namely the two teachers concerned focussing on offering support to all students in the class in relation to their preparation for Junior Certificate examinations (WW Mtg. 1: Turns 36, 252-255, 321, 333 and 337). By the time of the second meeting a striking degree of congruence had emerged around this view.

The effect of this was that, once Phillip's deleterious presence had been removed from the class, resources intended to support the inclusion of students deemed to have disability were effectively re-tasked towards supporting mainstream students who were deemed to be non-disabled. While Meadhbh acknowledged that this was not the "desired

thing” (WW Mtg. 3: Turn 11) and “probably not the spirit of team-teaching” (WW Mtg. 3: Turn 39), she felt that “it had to happen!” (WW Mtg. 3: Turn 11). As previously noted, Fiona agreed with this statement, asserting that her decision to “take more of a lead role” in teaching the class (WW Mtg. 3: Turn 30), would leave Meadhbh free to give more assistance (WW Mtg. 3: Turn 32) to those who had missed a lot of time (WW Mtg. 3: Turn 33) and “were in real trouble” (WW Mtg. 3: Turn 35) around preparations for their Junior Certificate examinations (WW Mtg. 3: Turn 37). Thus, the eventual identification of both teachers as class teachers of English was pivotal in how the team-teaching initiative ultimately transpired, a version of the approach that was only deemed possible in Phillip’s absence (WW Mtg. 3: Turns 71-74).

### **Evaluations.**

We have established that the overriding view of team-teaching at Willow Way was not as a support to the student deemed to have disability in that group, but as a support to the engagement of able-bodied and able-minded students with the mainstream English syllabus and its assessment. It was also seen as a support to reducing incidents of misbehaviour that interfered with these objectives. Consequently, evaluations of the success or otherwise of the initiative reflected these priorities.

For example, teachers believed that team-teaching had allowed them to deploy a range of methodologies that would not otherwise have been available to engage students more comprehensively with curricular content (WW Mtg. 3: Turns 150-155) and to revise content more effectively (WW Mtg. 1: Turn 355-358). They could “split the copies” for correction of homework (WW Mtg. 1: Turn 333), “go around then and correct” these with students (WW Mtg. 1: Turn 220-223), have “that bit more time to spend with each” student giving them feedback (WW Mtg. 2: Turn 184) and get “around them individually” to address specific concerns (WW Mtg. 2: Turn 185).

In terms of preparation for state examinations, it allowed them to model to students how they should plan their answers to examination question (WW Mtg. 1: Turns 33-36 and 58). It also gave them the opportunity to demonstrate to learners, using sample questions “from a previous exam paper” (WW Mtg. 1: Turn 271), “how to structure an essay” (WW Mtg. 1: Turn 237). Finally, it allowed them to provide more immediate feedback to students on their skills development than would otherwise have been the case (WW Mtg. 1: Turn 273).

It also allowed teachers to “focus ... on the paper” more effectively (WW Mtg. 1: Turn 122) and “go through” it more forensically (WW Mtg. 1: Turn 162), putting “it on the white board” (WW Mtg. 1: Turn 169) so that students could “see the timing” and go “through ... the

marking scheme” (WW Mtg. 1: Turn 170) as well as see how the “paper was laid out” (WW Mtg. 3: Turn 42). Overall, both teachers felt that they “got through to them” in relation to these things (WW Mtg. 3: Turn 44). Finally, they felt that team-teaching allowed them to “split the corrections” of *mock* examination scripts (WW Mtg. 2: Turns 6), which gave them “a sense of what’s going on really” in relation to the students’ readiness to undertake the examination (WW Mtg. 2: Turn 7). Thus they could “decide very quickly ... who’s doing what level” in the examination (WW Mtg. 1: Turn 212).

Significantly, the fact that “a lot of them” requested “two booklets” to answer questions in their *mock* examinations (WW Mtg. 2: Turn 173) and that students’ results exceeded teachers’ expectations here, were seen as further evidence that team-teaching was “working” (WW Mtg. 2: Turn 176). Fiona reported being “a bit shocked” at the high grades achieved (WW Mtg. 2: Turn 176). Fiona reserved her final evaluation until she could “see the results” of the actual Junior Certificate examinations (WW Mtg. 3: Turn 120), viewing these normed figures as a key indicator of the success or otherwise of the team-teaching initiative. None of these criteria for success related to the inclusion of students deemed to have disability.

Finally, the fact that team-teaching was seen as successful in reducing incidents of misbehaviour, largely as a result of affecting Phillip’s exclusion, was significant. In the early stages of meetings, Fiona had described levels of misbehaviour in the class as “shocking” (WW Mtg. 1: Turn 389), seriously affecting the amount of content covered during lessons and likely to lowering the examination results students attained (WW Mtg. 1: Turns 401-403). In the same vein, Meadhbh saw the misbehaviour of the group as frustrating (WW Mtg. 1: Turn 390) and something that “cut time with your class in half” (WW Mtg. 1: Turn 404). She also represented this as having a negative effect on classroom climate and resulting in constant “arguments” between teachers and students (WW Mtg. 2: Turn 79) that required “tough love” (WW Mtg. 2: Turn 79).

By the time of the third meeting, when Phillip’s exclusion had been announced, Fiona could assert that, of all the issues that the team-teaching initiative sought to address, “the major thing was the behaviour” (WW Mtg. 3: Turn 48). Both teachers agreed that this had improved “dramatically” when “compared to the start of the year” (WW Mtg. 3: Turn 50). While improvements here were attributed to the fact that there were “two people backing each other up”, who were “both on the same page” in terms of acceptable standards of discipline (WW Mtg. 2: Turn 180), both teachers agreed that the most significant factor here was Phillip’s exclusion from the class. Thus, Fiona asserted that, “unfortunately the exclusion of Phillip did help ... [t]o a degree, because the rest of the pupils didn’t feel as



intimidated" (WW Mtg. 3: Turn 12), with Meadhbh agreeing that was "true" (WW Mtg. 3: Turn 17). This attribution marked a clear point of divergence between evaluations at Willow Way and those articulated in other two dyads. Willow Way was the *only* setting in which factors thought to be innate to a particular student deemed to have disability were cited as being pertinent to the success or otherwise of the team-teaching initiative. In all of these terms, Fiona declared herself "a fan of team-teaching" (WW Mtg. 3: Turn 62) and expressed her desire to go "team-teaching again" with Meadhbh in the near future (WW Mtg. 2: Turn 114). Similarly, Meadhbh asserted that team-teaching in an English class "was actually really good" (WW Mtg. 3: Turn 147), "because there's so much in that kind of curriculum" that team-teaching can facilitate (WW Mtg. 3: Turn 149).

Of course, factors other than those thought to reside within Phillip were also cited as influencing the success of the Willow Way initiative. Collegiality and professional compatibility have already been mentioned, especially in relation to the management of misbehaviour. Recommendations made in relation to future deployment of team-teaching, referenced factors similar to those cited in other dyads. For example, Fiona suggested that there should be "more time to sit down and plan" (WW Mtg. 3: Turns 179 and 181) as early as possible (WW Mtg. 3: Turn 114). Meadhbh suggested that this be "formally" scheduled, so teachers could bring their "schemes of work together" when doing so (WW Mtg. 3: Turn 182). Fiona proposed that planning should include how to combine teachers' "resources" (WW Mtg. 3: Turn 183). She also felt that team-teaching should occur in appropriate teaching spaces, including being timetabled regularly in the same "classrooms because ... it starts to get mixed up with going and coming" (WW Mtg. 3: Turn 185), which can lead to "carnage" in terms of misbehaviour (WW Mtg. 3: Turn 189). Finally, both teachers agreed that team-taught lessons should be scheduled to provide continuity of instruction (WW Mtg. 3: Turn 169-178) and not being set too far apart. As with other cases, all of these latter factors were related to organisational issues rather than the innate or exceptional characteristics of students.

## **9.5 Across the Cases**

The foregoing discussion suggests that each type of meaning-making in which teachers engaged to represent learners deemed to have disability (actional, representational and ideational) contributed to their conceptualisation of team-teaching as a support to the inclusion of these learners. The following sections will look at what was similar or different in how this occurred across settings.

## Actional Meanings

In terms of actional meanings, the T1 teacher in every dyad introduced the most topics and, hence, held a privileged position in relation to the deployment of discourse. The fact that they were always assigned to team-taught groups first and were invariably specialists in the subject being taught meant that they usually had an advantage over their T2 teaching partners, who had to negotiate access to meaning-making in these areas from the outset. This task had to be balanced with the maintenance of team solidarity. All of this closed off opportunities for T2 teachers to challenge the assertions of their discourse partners and the discursive basis on which these were made. This constraint applied equally to any assertions about team-teaching as it did to representations about students deemed to have disability. In addition, analysis of the themes introduced by T1 teachers suggested that these focussed disproportionately on issues related to covering mainstream curricula, preparing students for state examinations, and general classroom management and discipline. Hence, the same issues tended to dominate knowledge exchanges about team-teaching.

In the Hazel Park dyad, Denise operated in the T1 position. She was also the only qualified English and special education teacher in the dyad. This conferred on her a high degree of epistemic authority in relation to both of these areas. Saoirse, on the other hand, was an English or special education teacher and, hence, could claim little epistemic authority in this connection. What authority she did claim was in relation to skills thought to be generic to language teaching generally. Thus it was Denise who dominated discussions about how team-teaching should be deployed within the initiative. This was evident in how she was able to use her positional and discursive power to dictate the specific team-teaching identity that Saoirse enacted, that of *engaging guest*. While Saoirse saw some merit in this role, she also explicitly expressed an aspiration to work in more expansive ways with the entire class. Ultimately, these aspirations were never realised. The assignment of the role of *engaging guest* to Saoirse, and of the roles of *lead teacher* and *mammy-of-the-class* to Denise, profoundly affected the model of team-teaching that transpired at Hazel Park. This will be returned to shortly during discussion of the role of ideational meaning-making in conceptualisations of team-teaching.

In the Maple Lodge dyad, it was Claire operated in the T1 position. She had been assigned to the team-taught group first, was engaged with it more often, was a trained English teacher, and had attended continuing professional development relating to the LCA programme, which Andrew had not. Andrew, on the other hand, had more experience in this connection, he held a formal Assistant Principal position as a SENCO, was the head of the

learning support department at the school, of which Claire was a member. This resulted in the development of a complex set of power relations at Maple Lodge that was characterised by increased levels of deference between teachers and a relatively egalitarian, but not entirely equal, distribution of discursive power. Andrew tended to defer to Claire in matters relating to the LCA and the whole class group, while Claire tended to defer to Andrew around specific individuals deemed to have disability.

Within this dynamic, Andrew constantly aspired to increase his subject teacher identity but was constrained in this by a number of factors, including his lack of knowledge around the LCA programme (ML Mtg. 1: Turn 63-67), Claire's reluctance to relinquish *lead* teacher responsibilities and by the imperative to negotiate increased access to lead teacher responsibilities without jeopardising the solidarity of the team. Despite these constraints, he negotiated more involvement in decision-making about whole-class issues by the time of the second meeting. By the third, both teachers had become focussed exclusively on the preparation of all learners towards the LCA "exam" (ML Mtg. 3: Turns 140-141, 149 and 155) this had become the main focus of the team-teaching initiative.

At Willow Way, the two teachers involved were equally qualified to teach English, had a similar and relatively short length of teaching experience, had both previously taught the group on which the study focussed and had not completed recognised continuing professional development around the inclusion of learners deemed to have special educational needs. While Fiona held the T1 position, some of her discursive power in relation to representing Phillip was offset by the fact that Meadhbh liaised closely with his behavioural support team and enjoyed a lot of epistemic authority in relation to discussions about him. Meadhbh's attempts to use this position to represent Phillip in terms other than essentialist ones was short-lived, with both teachers reverting to almost exclusive use of essentialist discourses to represent Phillip by the end of the first meeting.

This allowed them to represent Phillip as someone who was unfairly dominating the resources made available to the entire class and whose right to remain in the group was at variance with the rights of others to benefit from an education unaffected by his apparently menacing presence. It also allowed them to conflate his misbehaviour with that of the whole class and deploy positive imaginaries of his exclusion for the group. A large part of these imaginaries related to how successful team-teaching could be, in terms of the engagement of other learners in mainstream curricula, if Phillip was removed from the class. Thus, when this eventually happened, Fiona could assert that it "had a real positive impact" (WW Mtg. 2: Turn 204) and "was ... needed for the class" (WW Mtg. 3: Turn 74). Both teachers indicated their support for this view by referring to how the behaviour of the entire class had

improved “dramatically” once Phillip was excluded (WW Mtg. 3: Turn 50) because they “didn’t feel as intimidated” (WW Mtg. 3: Turn 12).

Analysis of the social relations of meetings suggested that team-teaching meetings were relatively informal affairs in which teachers enjoyed similar access to semiotic resources for meaning making about students deemed to have disability, and hence team-teaching to support their inclusion. However, the propensity of T1 teachers to dominate the deployment of discourse around learners deemed to have disability, the ways in which the participant structures limited scope they offered to individuals to challenge their discourse partners and the importance attached to maintaining team solidarity above, were all suggestive of highly rigid discursive structures. These, in turn, are associated with a high degree of social control over semiotic variability and the reproduction of dominant discourses (Gee & Handford, 2012). As we will see in the next section, it was essentialist discourses of disability linked to tradition notions of special education, that dominated teachers’ representations of disability. The use of these discourses tended to limit teachers’ conceptualisations of team-teaching to educational provision already available in the school.

## **Representational Meanings**

### **Essentialist discourse.**

Across all of the team-teaching dyads, essentialist constructions of students deemed to have disability were used predominantly to emphasise their positive traits and commonality with non-disabled peers. At Hazel Park, Denise used this to collapse differences between individuals deemed to have disability into a set of perceived group characteristics. Thus, team-teaching was seen as a facility that allowed teachers to respond effectively to these group needs, including the developing their oral, written, personal and social skills development. (HP Mtg. 1: Turns 46-50; HP Mtg. 2: Turns 100 246-248 and 405-407; HP Mtg. 3: Turns 122-128). Denise characterised the new Junior Cycle English syllabus as a key resource that could assist with this task. Saoirse acquiesced with this view.

The linking of hypothesised group needs with Junior Certificate objectives (HP Mtg. 3: Turn 166) was a pivotal moment in the negotiation of consensus around the function of their team-teaching initiative. It allowed Denise to assert that its purpose was effectively to continue working on things they were already “working on” (HP Mtg. 3: Turn 175) and legitimised the decision to use team-teaching to engage all students successfully in the mainstream Junior Certificate English syllabus. It also influenced how teachers thought about implementing team-teaching. While they had initially spoken about using it to offer students with “psychological assessments” (HP Mtg. 1: Turns 11) “resource” teaching that

they would have otherwise received in withdrawal settings outside the classroom (HP Mtg. 3: Turns 113), they ultimately settled on providing differentiated instruction that engaged all students in mainstream curricula.

The kind of differentiation they put in place included reducing the number of learning objectives set for the group (HP Mtg. 1: Turns 163-164), slowing the pace of lessons (HP Mtg. 1: Turns 26 and 88), providing more repetition of content (HP Mtg. 1: Turns 96-110, 160, 164, 184, 196-200, 208), adjusting the level of instruction for some learners (HP Mtg. 1: Turns 100, 111-112, 167 and HP Mtg. 2: Turns 194, 198, 234-235, 391, 395, 422-431) and carefully selecting the level at which content was presented (HP Mtg. 2: Turn 130). The fact that all students, including those deemed to have disability, were characterised as “the class above JCSP” (HP Mtg.2: Turn 30), reinforced representations of their right and ability to participate in the Junior Certificate English programme. Thus, this became the main focus of the initiative.

Despite the completion by both teachers at in the Maple Lodge dyad of a recognised course of professional development in the area, essentialist discourse still predominated these teachers’ representations of students deemed to have disability. These discourses worked to maintain the focus of their discussions on the intrinsic traits of individual learners and on using team-teaching to respond to these. The teachers concerned tended to see the main purpose of team-teaching as supporting the engagement of all learners, including individuals deemed to have disabilities, in the LCA programme and its assessment. This was the case, even for learners such as Julia, for whom they deemed the content of the LCA programme unsuitable.

As in the case of Hazel Park, meeting transcripts at Maple Lodge were replete with references of the kinds of differentiation that teachers thought had become possible through team-teaching. It allowed them to offer a wider range of LCA learning activities (ML Mtg. 1: Turn 225), to scaffold student engagement in these more effectively (ML Mtg. 1: Turns 89-91), to support the acquisition of basic skills (ML Mtg. 1 Turn 273-275), to pay greater attention to “pairing and grouping” of learners (ML Mtg. 1: Turns 21-24, 135, 185) and better manage disciplinary issues (ML Mtg. 1: Turns 268-271) and learning spaces (ML Mtg. 1: Turns 248, 259-268). They also felt that team-teaching had improved their ability to prepare students for summative LCA assessment and offer more productive feedback to them in this connection (ML Mtg.2: Turn: 153). They thought it helped with the procurement of reasonable accommodations in state examinations for individual students (Mtg. 2 Turn: 47, 73-77, 193, 327) and their preparation for using these effectively. Finally, they believed the presence of another teacher in the classroom had allowed them to attend more closely to

logistics relating to examinations (ML Mtg. 3: Turn 134 and 184-189). All of these accommodations were seen as having made the team-teaching initiative “effective” (ML Mtg. 3: Turn 106) and “well worthwhile” (ML Mtg. 3: Turn 11). Claire asserted that without the presence of another teacher in the room, she would not have been able to offer these additional services (ML Mtg. 1: Turn 15) and would have “struggled massively” with the class (ML Mtg. 3 Turn 42).

At Willow Way, apart from a brief period in which Meadhbh deployed discourse based on Phillip’s right to remain in the class with appropriate supports, teachers deployed essentialist and tragedy discourses more comprehensively, consistently and strategically than in any other case. In deploying this, teachers tended to presuppose that a key purpose of team-teaching was to control the misbehaviour of the group in order that they could engage more effectively in preparing for their imminent Junior Certificate examinations. Thus the use of essentialist discourse was used to represent Phillip, not his behaviours, as someone whose malevolent disposition fell well outside acceptable norms and was the cause of the majority of misbehaviour across the entire class. Phillip’s person became marked as the main *problem* pertaining to behavioural difficulties in the whole class and his removal became the main focus of teachers’ response. Thus, Phillip’s continued presence was characterised as something that worked in diametric opposition to the main purpose of the team-teaching initiative, a problem that could only be resolved through his permanent exclusion from the class. Ironically, evaluations of the success of the team-teaching initiative were ultimately predicated on his exclusion and the provision of support to students other than Phillip, the learner in respect of whom it was put in place in the first instance.

#### **Non-essentialist discourse.**

While essentialist and tragedy discourses predominated the construction of learners in each dyad, there were also instances in each that were not congruent with essentialist and tragedy discourses. At Hazel Park, there was evidence of application of a range of disability models to teachers thinking about students deemed to fall within this category. For example, social model thinking was used to discuss how Darren’s difficulties became more or less visible, depending on how suitable were the supports offered to him. Critical Disability Studies thinking was also in evidence in Denise’s discussion of Darren’s right to reject the sick role ascribed to him and the loss of agency and status that this implied. The discussion here had a practical impact on deliberations about team-teaching. It allowed both teachers to re-evaluate the deployment of SNA support for Darren and think about how Saoirse could best support him without drawing attention to his difference.

Deploying broader representations of disability than those encompassed by essentialist discourse allowed Denise to move from simply responding to group needs to focusing the team-teaching initiative towards the creation of a supportive, participatory and inclusive learning environment that was accepting of difference. Teachers at Hazel Park spent a great deal of time discussing student grouping and the social and educational compatibility of learners, including learners deemed to have disability (HP Mtg. 1: Turns 78-81, 139 and 141-144). This was indicative of the centrality of social participation within the initiative (HP Mtg. 2: Turns 105-123, 179-203, 215-216, 228-229). It was also in the context of establishing a nurturing and inclusive classroom environment that Denise encouraged Saoirse to act as “enjoyable guest”, the value of which was presented in terms of providing all students with time “to show off” what they had learned, thus making them more aware of their learning and more confident that they were achieving mastery in relation to this (HP Mtg. 1: Turns 154 and 206). Saoirse agreed to play this role, albeit somewhat reluctantly, (HP Mtg. 2: Turn 71), because of her commitment to these goals.

Finally, the importance attached by Denise to the out-of-school lives of students with and without disability, showed an understanding of intersectionality, including the relationship between disability and disadvantage. Such holistic consideration of student identities allowed Saoirse’s experience as a football coach to be seen as a resource that could be exploited in promoting confidence and academic engagement amongst a range of students deemed to have disability, including Joanna (HP Mtg. 2: Turns 216-224), Gemma, (HP Mtg. 3 Turns 241-242) and Mike (HP Mtg. 3 Turns 263).

Similarly, in the Maple Lodge dyad there were various instances of where non-essentialist discourse was used to refer to the right of students deemed to have disability to be “in the room” with their peers (ML Mtg. 3: Turns 92-93) and to pursue objectives that were universal to all learners, including developing the skills to make friends, collaborate with others, and work independently (ML Mtg. 1: Turns 106-109). In addition, both teachers related students’ lack of success in LCA *mock* examination paper to a failure on the part of the school to provide them with sufficient support to do so, rather than to the intrinsic qualities of students alone (ML Mtg. 2: Turns 203-209). Their thinking here, was more in line with socio and cultural models of disability that identify barriers to participation and interrogate unhelpful dis/ability binaries than intrinsic student differences.

Such ideas had implications for how team-teaching was conceptualised at Maple Lodge. For example, as at Hazel Park, both teachers at Maple Lodge saw team-teaching as instrumental in the development of a positive and inclusive climate in the class (ML Mtg. 1: Turn 287), with Andrew asserting that the initiative had been “worth it from that point of view

alone” (ML Mtg. 1: Turn 288). Having said that, such discourses were deployed in tandem with essentialist ones, that focused on reducing the innate misbehaviour of particular students (ML Mtg. 3: Turn 280), such as “John and Jason” (ML Mtg. 1: Turns 8 and 248-258, ML Mtg. 2). Overall, constructions of team-teaching remained focussed on the intrinsic traits of individual learners and on supporting their engagement with the LCA programme and assessment of this through the provision of differentiation that teachers felt would not have been possible in a single-teacher setting.

Fewer references to non-essentialist discourses were recorded at Willow Way than at any other setting. Where these occurred, they were deployed by Meadhbh for a limited period during the first meeting. They were used to depict Phillip as someone who had a right to be supported in the group with appropriate, if very substantial, levels of support. Their deployment was soon over-taken by the reassertion of exclusively essentialist depictions of him. Arguments alluded to in the early stages of the first meeting, that referenced the insufficiency of resources to accommodate Phillip became transposed into discourses that depicted the level of support needed to facilitate his inclusion as so substantial, that the school could not be reasonably expected to provide these (WW Mtg. 2: Turn 208, Mtg. 3). In addition, Phillip was represented as monopolising the finite supports available to the whole class to support their engagement with mainstream curricula (WW Mtg. 1: Turn 425), most notably the presence of two teachers in the room three times per week.

This argumentation allowed teachers to frame a new team-teaching role for Meadhbh, in which she offered learners who had missed “a lot of time” and “were in real trouble”, some “extra” assistance and “a bit more intense work” in preparing for their Junior Certificate examinations (WW Mtg. 3: Turns 32-37). This also allowed Fiona to be freed “up to work with others” (WW Mtg. 3: Turn 37), namely mainstream students preparing for their state examinations. Thus, team-teaching became a vehicle for delivering support to students who were not deemed to be disabled at the expense of those (namely, Phillip), in respect of whom it had been deployed in the first place.

Across all three settings non-essentialist discourses of disability were deployed alongside essentialist types that worked to temper their effects. Interestingly, non-essentialist discourses seemed to be deployed most often by teachers who had completed recognised continuing professional development in the inclusion of students deemed to have special educational needs. These were Denise at Hazel Park and Claire and Andrew at Maple Lodge. This finding suggests a need for research on the link between professional development that exposes teachers to a range of disability models and their subsequent deployment of disability discourse in schools and classrooms.



## Ideational Meanings and conceptualisations of team-teaching

### Presuppositions.

From the outset it was clear that teachers came to their team-teaching initiatives with certain pre-suppositions about the purpose of team-teaching. In general, they had already established a clear link between this and the inclusion of learners deemed to have disability. At Hazel Park, there was a pre-supposition that their team-teaching initiative was established primarily to support students with “psychological assessments” (HP Mtg. 1: Turns 11-12). The teachers concerned committed themselves to preserving the integrity of this link, by responding pro-actively to the threat that the interests of these learners would not be jeopardised by the addition of students who were not so labelled (HP Mtg. 1: Turns 20, 222 and 282).

At Maple Lodge, teachers noted their belief that the team-teaching initiative in which they were involved had been deployed as a replacement for individual and small group withdrawal models of support (ML Mtg. 1: Turn 27) necessitated by the attendance requirements of the LCA programme. At the same time, the fact that all students in the class “bar two” had “psychological assessments with issues” (ML Mtg. 1: Turn 274) became the basis on which Andrew expanded his class teacher role and Claire expanded her support teacher function within their team-teaching dyad. This allowed Andrew to assert during the final meeting that, while Aoife and Julia were the main focus of the initiative, they “were supporting the whole room” (ML Mtg. 3: Turn 94) since “there was *nobody* really ... that didn’t need a good level of support” (ML Mtg. 3: Turn 97).

Finally, at Willow Way, there was evidence that teachers assumed from the outset that a key purpose of their team-teaching initiative was to limit the misbehaviour of the group to a level at which all members could engage productively in the mainstream Junior Certificate syllabus and its assessment. The class involved was considered a little “weaker than ... your average middle band” class (WW Mtg. 2: Turn 226). Though there was commonality between teachers in relation to the purpose of team-teaching, there seemed to be a difference in relation to how this should be achieved. For example, Meadhbh seemed to think this would involve her working directly with Phillip and staying “beside him, in the class” (WW Mtg.1: Turn 197), writing “down stuff in his journal” (WW Mtg.1: Turn 197), offering him “one-on-one help” (WW Mtg. 1: Turn 418) and liaising with the behavioural unit (WW Mtg. 1: Turns 179- 183). She was sufficiently convinced of this approach to articulate it in the very first meeting. Fiona saw Meadhbh’s role as akin to a second English teacher, whose job it was to help her to support the engagement of the entire class with the Junior Certificate syllabus and overcome Phillip’s reported menacing presence in the class. She used her

dominant positional and discursive power to assert this conceptualisation. Most of the discursive heavy lifting in this connection was done through deployment of essentialist discourse that represented Phillip's exceptionality as the main cause of difficulties in the class. This allowed his removal was seen as a key factor in the success of the team-teaching initiative.

### **Identities.**

As well as constructing representations of students deemed to have disability, the deployment of disability discourse also worked to constitute the subjectivities and social identities of the teachers who deployed them. This included the team-teaching identities the enacted such as *lead* subject teacher, support teacher, class teacher of Spanish, *enjoyable guest*, SENCO and *mammy*. Each of these identities helped to constitute, and was constituted within particular conceptualisations of team-teaching. Each yielded insight into what teachers thought team-teaching was about, in terms of the inclusion of students deemed to have disability, and how it should transpire. In all schools surveyed, all team-teachers identified as teachers whose job it was to support all learners in their engagement with mainstream curricula. T2 teachers tended to combine this role with supporting specific students deemed to have disability in the group. T1 teachers tended to retain greater control over lead teacher responsibilities, while also offering support to individual learners at times.

At Hazel Park, while Saoirse aspired to a more active *lead* role in the class, she was denied access to this by Denise, through the latter's insistence that she play the support teacher *enjoyable guest* role. For her part, Denise used essentialist discourse to create a representation of the entire class group which she then conflated with the published objectives of the mainstream Junior Certificate English curriculum. This allowed her to characterise the purpose of team-teaching as simply an extension of what they were already "working on" in undertaking this programme (HP Mtg. 3: Turn 166). Denise's approach was entirely consistent with her predominant identification as a class teacher of English, who had also received training in the inclusion of learners deemed to have disability. She incorporated both these identities into an amalgamated one she referred to as the "mammy" (HP Mtg. 1: Turns 210-212). This allowed her to exercise considerable discursive power in relation to learners with and without disability and to define to a large extent how team-teaching transpired at Hazel Park (HP Mtg. 1: Turn 324).

Having qualifications in neither English nor the inclusion of students deemed to have disability, Saoirse had little epistemic authority in asserting truth claims about the teaching of English or students deemed to have disability. This severely reduced her ability to resist the roles ascribed to her by Denise. Ultimately, she agreed to accept this identity and the fact

that team-teaching would focus on supporting the group in meeting those Junior Certificate syllabus objectives that were thought (by Denise) to be most suited to their aggregated needs.

At Maple Lodge, predominant use of essentialist discourse by both teachers fed into conceptualisations of team-teaching that saw this in terms of facilitating the use of a range of learning activities and differentiated teaching materials and approaches that could not otherwise have been used to support the engagement of all learners in the group, but especially students deemed to have disability, with the LCA programme in the context of its highly rigid structures and procedures.

While the task of providing support to students deemed to have disability initially fell to Andrew predominantly, he worked constantly to realign team-teaching roles and responsibilities within the dyad to a situation in which both teachers focussed primarily on supporting all learners in the class in their engagement with the LCA programme. Yet Andrew also retained a key role in relation to Julia and Aoife, commensurate with his predominant identification as an SEN coordinator in the school. As a support to the engagement of all learners in the LCA programme, the team-teaching initiative was seen as having been a great success (ML Mtg. 1: Turns 15 and 225; ML Mtg. 3 Turns 11, 42 and 106). The teachers concerned reported being able to exercise more flexibility in terms of “pairing and grouping” learners (ML Mtg. 1: Turns 21-24, 135, 185), dealing with distracting disciplinary issues (ML Mtg. 1: Turns 268-271) and managing learning spaces (ML Mtg. 1: Turns 248, 259-268).

Finally, at Willow Way Meadhbh’s role as (another) *lead* teacher was prescribed by Fiona, despite early attempts by Meadhbh to develop a support teacher identity, especially in relation to Phillip. Fiona identified strongly as a class teacher of English, which meant that she saw the focus of the team-teaching initiative as focusing predominantly on the engagement of the whole class in the Junior Certificate English syllabus and its assessment (WW Mgt. 1: Turns 28, 33, 124, 144, 148, 317 and 441; WW Mgt. 2: Turns 230, 238, 249 and 306). Insofar as this engagement may have been interrupted by misbehaviour, it also focussed on this area (WW Mtg. 1: Turns 389-404). Initially, Meadhbh also asserted that it was important to “start prepping them” all for state examinations quickly (WW Mtg. 1: Turn 17) and saw a clear role for herself in this, declaring that it would require their “best effort” (WW Mtg. 1: Turn 123).

However, Meadhbh indicated that she saw her role in this as working predominantly with Phillip (WW Mtg. 1 Turns: 175-189). As we have seen, Fiona did not endorse this. Rather, she asserted her view that both teachers should work together to support all

students in the class in their engagement with the mainstream English syllabus and preparation for its formal assessment (WW Mtg. 1: turns 36, 205-207, 252-255, 321, 333, 337). This was done mainly through argumentation that referenced Phillip's capacity to intimidate his peers, vague accounts of his apparent misbehaviour and detailed accounts of the negative effects of these on his classmates. These arguments allowed Fiona to characterise Phillip's presence as the main *problem* with the group and his removal as the logical and inevitable response to this. She depicted his exclusion as something that was "needed for the class" (WW Mtg. 3: Turn 74) in order to see if the team-teaching initiative would work without him. This was despite the fact that it was originally put in place to secure Phillip's continued inclusion, as the only student deemed to have disability in the group. Ironically, both teachers ultimately characterised the team-teaching initiative as a great success, in terms of supporting students who were not deemed to have disability in their engagement with the mainstream Junior Certificate English syllabus and its assessment.

### **Evaluations.**

As already alluded to, evaluations by teachers of the success or otherwise of team-teaching initiatives gave insight into how these were conceptualised. While essentialist discourse had dominated their constructions of students deemed to have disability, it was rarely used during these evaluations or in making suggestions about changes that might need to occur to improve team-teaching practice in the future. In general, these factors related to things like class size, teacher compatibility, commitment, flexibility, a willingness to continue to develop professionally, the importance of advanced planning, time for on-going evaluation and appropriate resourcing. While some of these factors related to the inherent characteristics of individual *teachers*, they rarely referred to the innate or exceptional characteristics of students. This indicated an understanding by teachers that the success or otherwise of team-teaching initiatives usually relied on factors unrelated to individual student traits. Only once were such factors thought to influenced the success of a team-teaching initiative. This was at Willow Way, where it was asserted that "the exclusion of Phillip did help ... because the rest of the pupils didn't feel as intimidated" (WW Mtg. 3: Turns 12-17).

## **9.6 Discussion and Conclusion**

This chapter sought to examine how the actional, representational and identificational meanings created by teachers in three separated case study sites in relation to learners deemed to have disability, influenced their construal of team-teaching as a support to the inclusion of these learners. Analysis suggested that essentialist discourses predominated representations of both students deemed to have disability and of team-teaching to support them. Discourse of this type were augmented by personal tragedy discourses to construct

learners deemed to have disability predominantly in terms of innate, exceptional and unfortunate personal differences. This, in turn, tended to constrain teachers' thinking and practice around team-teaching "to a narrowly circumscribed set of possibilities" (Hart, 1996). It also relegated their educational planning to programmes already available in the school rather than what might have been "most beneficial to the student" (Baglieri et al., 2011, p. 273). All of the dyads ended up focussing on trying to maintain all students, including students deemed to have disabilities, within mainstream curricula and preparing them for its assessment. Where T2 teachers did not initially fulfil this role, they either elected to do so (as in the case of Andrew) or were obliged to do so by their team-teaching partner (as in the case of Saoirse and Meadhbh). For their part, T1 teachers tended to resist approaches to team-teaching that ran counter to this model, such as those proposed by Saoirse or Meadhbh.

The idea of conceiving team-teaching in this way may have been indicative of the power of rational-technical organisational structures in schools that render teachers incapable of adapting to needs of students who fall outside the "finite repertoire of standard programs" available (Skrtic, 1991, p. 169) and constrain the ability to personalise available programmes sufficiently to meet student needs (Skrtic, 1991).

From a CDS perspective, these responses could be construed as less to do with reconceptualising classroom practices around inclusive principles such as Universal Design for Learning (Baglieri et al., 2011) than about normalising learners deemed to have disability (Florian, 2014, p. 13) and getting them to fit "into the spaces constructed for them by normative imperatives of dominant discourses" (Ngcobo & Muthukrishna, 2008, p. 361). In these terms, the propensity of both teachers to focus on supporting all students in the group to engage with mainstream curricula and assessment may bear out Zigmond and Matta's (2004) findings that learners deemed to have disabilities, mastered content better in team-taught classrooms, not because special education teachers were doing something *special* in terms of instructional accommodations, but because they were replicating what generalist subject teachers were doing. It was also congruent with Magiera and Zigmond's (2005) finding that, within team-taught lessons, students deemed to have disability got less attention from the general educator while the special educator "took up the slack" (Magiera & Zigmond, 2005, p. 84). Finally, it accorded with their finding that whole class instruction remained the "most common instructional arrangement used" within team-taught classes (Magiera & Zigmond, 2005).

In most cases, students deemed to have disability seemed to have had a choice; they could either fit into the types of "Self" (Henry, 1965) that schools felt able to manage

(such as in the case of Darren and Julia), or they could accept their exclusion as an inevitable corollary of their inherent exceptionality (such as in the case of Phillip). In these terms, the construal of team-teaching in the three cases studied tended to be used to reproduce the relations of power associated with traditional forms of general and special education (Black-Hawkins & Florian, 2012) rather than to “transform cultures and practices in schools in celebration of diversity” (Barton & Armstrong, 2008, p. 5) and disrupt the normative centre of education (Florian, 2014).

The fact that teachers in Willow Way could construe their initiative as successful, even though it had resulted in the exclusion of the very student it had been set up to support, seemed to confirm Black-Hawkins, Florian, & Rouse's (2007, p. 18) assertion that essentialist language tends to be used to pathologise student difference in circumstances where the “difficulties of students exceeds the capacity of the school to respond” to these. More importantly, the failure of the Willow Way initiative to maintain Phillip's presence in his class, meant that all of the resources targeted at his inclusion, were now directed to supporting students who were not so labelled in their engagement in mainstream curricula and their assessment. Similarly, in Hazel Park, while the team-teaching initiative was originally focussed exclusively on eight students deemed to have disability, it was eventually redirected towards the needs of a much larger cohort of seventeen students, many of whom were not deemed to have disability. Finally, at Maple Lodge, resources initially targeted at Julia and Aoife were ultimately focuses on a wider range of learners, though admittedly most of these were also deemed to have disability. From a CDA perspective, this general redirection of resources away from learners deemed to have disability, toward learners who were not so categorised, comprised a redirection of resources away from its margins towards ableist interests and the normative centre of post-primary education. It is on such arguments that the study will focus in the final chapter.

# Chapter 10: Discussion and Conclusion: Team-Teaching as an Inclusive Educational Practice

## 10.1 Introduction

Within Fairclough's approach to CDA, the final level and goal of analysis is to explain the impact of text on society and society on text, in other words, how societal norms, standards and structures influence the deployment of disability discourse in Irish schools and vice versa (Wodak & Meyer, 2015). At this macro level of analysis Fairclough (2003) suggests the use of social theories that allow integration of the findings of textual analysis into broader explanations of how socio-cultural practices are constituted, changed and transformed by discourse (Rogers, 2004). To do this, the current work applies Critical Disability Studies theory within its approach to CDA. Critical Disability Studies theory is highly congruent with Fairclough's approach to CDA in two key ways. Firstly, it conceptualises power as operating in hegemonic ways within the production, distribution and consumption of discourse, where hegemony is seen as the integration of the consent of a subordinate group to the moral, political and cultural values of a dominant one (Gramsci, 1971). Secondly, it maintains a critical focus on the oppressive use of discourse and how this can be challenged and resisted.

Section 10.2 of this chapter provides the reader with a brief recap of Critical Disability Studies. Section 10.3 discusses how essentialist and personal tragedy discourses work to reproduce binary understandings of ability and disability and render learners deemed to have disability as subjects on whom normalising disciplinary practices are focussed. Section 10.4 examines how the genres of team-teaching meetings worked to bracket differences between team-teachers and limit the scope available to them to make meaning about disability. Section 10.5 discusses how the predominant use of essentialist discourse limited teachers' conceptualisations of team-teaching to models of support that try to engage all learners, including those deemed to have disabilities, in undifferentiated mainstream programmes already available in the schools studied. Section 10.6 discusses how teachers' conceptualisations of team-teaching reproduced the disciplinary technologies of special and general education, rather than transforming teaching and learning in line with the principles of inclusive education. Section 10.7 outlines how the deployment of team-teaching often led to the redirection of resources allocated to support learners deemed to have disabilities, towards *ableist* interests. Section 10.8 provides a positive critique of discourse use within the dyads studied. It uses examples of counter-essentialist discourse deployed during team-teaching meetings to make suggestions about how teachers might challenge hegemonic discourses of disability going forward. Section 10.9 summarises and concludes the thesis.

## 10.2 Recapping on the Critical Disability Studies' Perspective

To reiterate briefly, Critical Disability Studies (CDS) sees disability, not as a real and objective phenomenon but as a particular set of historically and culturally conditioned ideas about human difference that allow society to view particular physical and cognitive differences as deficiencies (Gallagher, 2007; Gallagher, Connor, & Ferri, 2014). Since CDS scholars assert that a phenomenon can only be known through what is upheld about it in discourse, disability is considered to be a cultural institution that has been historically and politically engendered through socio-cultural interactions and the discourses that permeate and enable these (Goodley, 2016). The enactment of these discourses is thought to confer on certain people a *disability* label, which generally connotes undesirable images and brings negative consequences. Because of this, it is believed that the acquisition of the disability label constitutes a social negation of particular ways of being, in the service of particular ideological and political interests (Connor, Valle, & Hale, 2014; Gallagher, 2007).

CDS problematises how disability has been manufactured as a category through the workings of social institutions such as schools (Vehmas, 2008) and how particular representations have gained the status of *truth*. It invites the deconstruction of assumptions that have allowed this to happen. It also invites interrogation of the social practices, intellectual conventions, cultural values, social arrangements and resourcing priorities that work within these institutions to turn perceived differences into disabilities (Booth & Ainscow, 2002; Linton, 2005). It is particularly interested in deconstructing culturally conditioned binaries, such as the dis/ability one, and in exploring concepts such as *ableism* and *disabelism*.

CDS characterises *disableism* in terms of the processes by which people, on whom a disability label has been conferred, are viewed as inferior to their non-disabled peers. It also looks at how these perceptions of inferiority are used to justify discriminatory attitudes and practices which limit the identities and life trajectories of people who acquire this label. *Ableism*, on the other hand is defined as “a network of beliefs, processes and practices that produces a particular kind of self ... that is projected as the perfect, species-typical and therefore essential and fully human” (Campbell, 2009, p. 5). To achieve its ideological goals, ableism must remain a *nebulous* category that lacks conceptual specificity and retains maximum invisibility. Yet, it must also “hunt down and name disability” and keep this in a constant state of visibility “in order to maintain” itself (Runswick-Cole, 2011 p. 115). Thus, it is important for ableist-orientated societies to represent disability as a “diminished state of being” (Campbell, 2009, p. 5) and those who are thought to have disabilities, not only as less valuable, but as less human than others (Goodley & Runswick-Cole, 2015). It is this



propensity that causes CDS to assert that “disability is centrally structured by social oppression, inequality and exclusion” (Thomas, 2004, p. 570) and commit itself to assisting disabled people “in their fight for full equality and social inclusion” (Thomas, 2004, p. 571).

One of the key social and cultural institutions in which individuals acquire disability identities is the school. CDS scholars assert that positivist epistemologies of disability are deeply inscribed within such institutions, where they work to obscure the inherently political nature of education and undermine attempts to challenge hegemonic ableist interests (Allan, 2003; Baglieri, Valle, Connor, & Gallagher, 2011; Graham & Slee, 2008; Norwich & Lewis, 2007; Slee, 2001). For Florian (2014, p. 20), challenging ableist networks of power within schools, requires “a cultural shift in education’s normative centre”. For Graham & Slee (2008, p. 279), it is not that we need to move “*towards* inclusion” but that we must “disrupt the construction of centre from which exclusion derives”. Florian (2014) and others (Connor, 2014; Hart, Drummond, McIntyre, & Florian, 2007; Thomas & Loxley, 2007) assert that, in order to represent a move towards inclusion, this disruption should occur on the basis of values such as belonging, equity, human rights, social justice, transformability, universal design for learning and quality education for all.

In recent years CDS has focussed on how positivist epistemologies and essentialist discourse work to reproduce the practices and technologies of special education as a cultural stronghold within the inclusive education movement (Baglieri, 2017; Florian, 2014; Graham & Slee, 2008; Liasidou, 2012; Riddell, 2013; Shevlin, 2016; Slee, 2014; Winzer & Mazurek, 2014). These epistemologies and discourses are underpinned by assumptions based on normalcy, exceptionality, innate deficits, fixed abilities and the viability of a one-size-fits-all curriculum (Biklen, Orsati, & Bacon, 2014; Connor, 2014; Florian, 2014; Graham & Slee, 2005; Graham & Slee, 2008). Some writers have suggested that the *spectral* colonisation of inclusive education by the master-narrative of positivism (Graham & Slee, 2008) has prevented the repositioning of disability from individual learners to the broader workings of society and schools (Connor & Valle, 2015) and reproduced “traditional notions of special educational needs under a new name” (Pearson, 2009, p. 52). Thus, far from fulfilling its potential as a forcer for radical reform within special and mainstream education, the “new field of inclusive education” has simply become decorated “with the intellectual furniture of special education” (Brantlinger, 1997 in Danforth & Naraian, 2015 p. 71) and become as “instrumental in the polity process of exclusion” as its predecessor (Slee, 2014, p. 218).

A key focus of this work then, was to explore whether team-teaching, as practiced within a range of mainstream Irish post-primary schools, had become yet another

embodiment of special education or whether a vehicle for the development of inclusive provision for learners deemed to have disability. Was it used to reinforce the traditional power relations and ableist-orientated disciplinary technologies of general and special education (Black-Hawkins & Florian, 2012), and to reproduce the normative centre of schooling from which all exclusion derives (Florian, 2014; Graham & Slee, 2008), or to facilitate critique (Ainscow, 2015) and transformation of the cultures and practices of post-primary schools “in celebration of diversity” (Barton & Armstrong, 2008, p. 5)? Critical Disability Studies provided a useful framework within which to address this question in a way that “strictly clinical research rarely does” (Biklen et al., 2014, p. 363).

### **10.3 The Dominance of Essentialist and Charity/Personal Tragedy Discourses of Disability**

The findings presented in the preceding chapters point to the dominant use of essentialist and charity/ personal tragedy discourses across all of the schools surveyed. These discourses generally served to create students as subjects on whom normalising disciplinary practices could be focussed in order to return them, wherever possible, to normal ranges functioning and engagement with mainstream curricula and syllabi. Such findings are consistent with those of Connor and Valle (2015, p. 1111) who concluded that “the overwhelming majority of professionals” working in the fields of special and inclusive education tended to view disability within an ability/disability binary that emphasises normalisation of individuals through “technical applications that remedy specific educational deficiencies” (Connor and Valle, 2015, p. 1111). Connor and Valle (2015) also concluded that such binary thinking is reflective of the embedding of essentialist and ableist assumptions and the *othering* of learners deemed to have disabilities in broader society. In similar terms, Campbell (2009) concludes that ableist assumptions and essentialist discourses are used primarily to ensure that atypical learners can be made fit into the normative spaces created for them by others, so they do not disrupt the provision of education to the majority.

Yet the use of these discourses varied greatly between settings, often in response to the different team-teaching identities and roles to which teachers ascribed, to the different levels of professional development they had completed relating to students deemed to have disabilities, to differences in the educational programmes in which learners were involved and in relation to a range of logistical factors related to team-teaching. At Hazel Park, while they were often used to depict learners in a positive light or in terms of traits they held in common with their peers, they were also used to maintain a focus on student differences, especially in Saoirse’s case, and to distil these into a determination of the needs of the entire

group. Charity discourse augmented constructions of these learners, and often involved the grammatical positioning of learners in ways that backgrounded their agency and right to participate, and foregrounded their physical or cognitive differences relative to classes of normal size and student representation. At Maple Lodge, both teachers drew predominantly on essentialist discourse to focus on what they saw as the innate, stable and objectively discernible differences of learners deemed to have disability. Again, personal tragedy discourse was used at Maple Lodge to augment these representations. This combination worked to background their agency, their inalienable right to benefit from appropriately supported education, and their right to be assisted and empowered in doing so.

Finally, essentialist discourse was deployed at Willow Way to construct Phillip as someone whose “extreme” negative personal traits resulted in non-compliance with normal school rules, indifference to learning, a failure to benefit from instruction, and the exertion of a menacing and deleterious influence on the wellbeing, safety and academic progress of his peers. Since essentialist discourses focussed primarily on his person, his removal became the primary response of teachers to the misbehaviour of the entire class. It also became the primary focus of their attempts to ensure the engagement of the class in mainstream curricula and its assessment. As elsewhere, essentialist representations of Phillip were reinforced by personal tragedy discourse that depicted his behaviour as getting worse and leading inexorably to his exclusion, which was seen as a matter of personal misfortune for Phillip, despite the best efforts of the school to avoid it. This representation was strengthened by reference to how he was “taking over” resources allocated to support the whole class, and how his exclusion would have only a minimal effect on his education.

The extent and the frequency with which teachers in *all* of the cases studied routinely represented students deemed to have disability through essentialist and charity/personal tragedy discourses, suggest that positivist epistemologies have indeed “passed spectrally” into these apparently inclusive initiatives (Graham & Slee, 2008, p. 289), where they have achieved the status of *common sense* and become a key vehicle for particular *truth* claims about disability (Vehmas & Shakespeare, 2014). These findings are congruent with those of Ashby (2010, p. 345), who concluded that essentialist discourse was a key mechanism by which schools operated as “sites where ableist norms of performance” were privileged and ableist interests were routinely prioritised over those of students deemed to have disabilities.

The pervasiveness with which essentialist and charity/tragedy discourses were deployed in *all* of the team-teaching initiatives studied is strongly suggestive of a broader deployment of such discourses in the wider Irish post-primary system. At the very least, it points to the need for research that investigates the degree and extent to which these

discourses have become embedded in Irish post-primary schools. The possibility of the colonisation of post-primary education by the master-narrative of positivism has been alluded to by influential scholars for some time now, both in Ireland (Drudy & Lynch, 1993; Lodge & Lynch, 2004a; Lynch, 1987, 2001; Lynch & Lodge 2001; MacRuairc, 2009; Van Aswegen, Hyatt, & Goodley, 2019) and elsewhere (Baglieri et al., 2011; Connor & Valle, 2015; Florian, 2014; Graham & Slee, 2008; Liasidou, 2012; Riddell & Watson, 2014; Thomas & Loxley, 2007).

A key effect of the dominant use of essentialist and charity/personal tragedy discourses, was the othering of learners deemed to have disability on the basis that they did not fulfil some notional and pre-determined norm or standard associated with the *real* child (Ngcobo & Muthukrishna, 2008) and so operated in some diminished state (Graham & Slee, 2008). This occurred in the team-teaching initiatives studies, despite the many strategies used by some teachers, especially Denise in Hazel Park and both teachers in Maple Lodge, to mitigate deficit-based representations of students through positive representations or the simultaneous deployment of non-essentialist discourse at times. Yet despite their efforts essentialist and personal tragedy discourses continued to dominate. From a CDS perspective, the ability of dominant groups to define and enact reality for less powerful groups fulfils a key condition of oppression (Adams, Bell, & Griffin, 1997).

#### **10.4 The Bracketing of Difference about Disability in Favour of Team Solidarity**

Gramsci (1971) conceptualised hegemony as establishing the consent of subordinate groups to the moral, political and cultural values of dominant ones. From a CDS perspective, in order for ableist hegemony to assert itself, disability must be created as a cultural institution through the deployment of particular discourses (Foucault, 1980); it must be framed within “a sign system that, by differentiating and marking bodies and minds, produces disabled people and maintains the ideal of inherently stable non-disabled body/mind” (Garland-Thomson, 2005 p. 5). For this reason, CDS focuses on the process by which certain form of human difference are constituted within discourse as disabilities and the injustices created by this. It seeks to “unmask ideologically permeated and often obscured structures of power, political control and dominance” that are inherent in the discourses through which hegemony is achieved (Wodak, 1999 p. 8).

In looking at the hegemonic effects of discursive practice, Fairclough (2003) suggests analysis of the *dialogicality* of texts, their openness to different representations of a phenomenon. One of the best ways to explore this is through looking at the degree of *intertextuality* that pertains to the text concerned. Intertextuality refers to the purposeful

engagement of a text with others and the degree to which it incorporates ideas and voices from these others into its semiotic realisation (Fairclough 2003). Thus the greater the intertextuality of a text, the more voices are articulated within it, and the greater is the range of meaning-making potentials available to discourse participants. Assumptions and presuppositions, on the other hand, serve to close down meaning-making possibilities within texts. This is because they imbue some sets of statements with the status of *truth* and deny this status to others. Fairclough (2003, p. 41) suggests five scenarios can be applied to a text, in different combinations, to make sense of its intertextuality, or its orientation towards difference. These are:

- a. an openness to, and exploration of difference, within a rich dialogue
- b. an accentuation of difference and struggles over meaning
- c. an attempt to resolve difference
- d. a bracketing off of difference in favour of solidarity
- e. consensus and acceptance of difference

Applying Fairclough's framework to the findings of this work, it seems that reliance on essentialist and personal tragedy discourses of disability, and the narrow range of positivist assumptions on which these were based (including assumptions about normalcy, fixed ability, and the intrinsic nature of disabilities), was congruent with option d. above. These discourses tended to focus attention on what were considered to be exceptional personal deficits rather than on the material, social or cultural conditions of disablement operating within broader society (Allan, 1996; Baglieri, 2017; Florian, 2014; Graham & Slee, 2008; Grant, 2005; Riddell & Watson, 2014; Thomas & Loxley, 2007). Teachers' evaluations of their team-teaching initiatives were a notable exception here.

The closing down of meaning-making possibilities in favour of team solidarity was also evident in analysis of the genre of team-teaching meetings. Despite the seemingly informal nature of interactions, as evidenced by the relatively informal range of language used and the egalitarian distribution of types of turn, in actual fact a highly rigid participant structure pertained to team-teaching meetings that privileged the maintenance of team solidarity over all other communicative purposes. This was, in turn, indicative of a high degree of social control over meaning-making about disability and team-teaching (Gee & Handford, 2012). Thus, the genre of meetings augmented the social effects of relying disproportionately on essentialist discourse to represent learners deemed to have disability. Once deployed, the generic features of team meetings made it extremely difficult for assertions framed within essentialist discourse to be controverted, since this ran the danger of being interpreted as a challenge to the solidarity of the team. The extreme rarity of

struggles between teachers over meaning-making about disability across all dyads seemed to confirm this. This bracketing off of difference seemed to occur equally in relation to conceptualisations of team-teaching as it did to representations of disability.

The propensity of teachers to bracket differences around representations of disability and team-teaching in this connection suggests a need for further research on whether this dynamic pertains in other situations where professionals make meaning about disability, to include a consideration of whose voice tends to dominate in such circumstances. Some research has explored the negotiation of disability discourse within classrooms (Ashton, 2010; Kang, 2009; Orsati & Causton-Theoharis, 2013; Wong, 2010), in leadership situations associated with inclusive education (Bristol, 2015; Scribner, Sawyer, Watson, & Myers, 2007), and in multi-disciplinary team-meetings (Rogers, 2002). It would be useful to add to these findings by shedding additional light on the role of discourse in other educational processes such as policy-making, time-tabling, and continuing professional development. Again, any such examination could usefully focus on the discourses that dominate such practices and the interests served by such domination.

## **10.5 Limited Conceptualisations of Team-Teaching as a Support to Inclusion**

Chapter 9 discussed the relationships between the teachers' uses of disability discourse and their conceptualisations of team-teaching. At Hazel Park, teachers hypothesised that group needs were linked with Junior Certificate objectives (HP Mtg. 3: Turn 166) to assert that the purpose of team-teaching was effectively to continue working on things they were already "working on" (HP Mtg. 3: Turn 175) and legitimised the decision to use team-teaching to engage all students successfully in the mainstream Junior Certificate English syllabus. Linking group needs to Junior Certificate objectives also influenced how teachers implemented team-teaching, which ultimately focussed on providing differentiated instruction that engaged all students more successfully in mainstream curricula.

As well as essentialist and charity/personal tragedy discourses, Denise also deployed minority model and Critical Disability Studies understandings of learners deemed to have disability, including those that took cognisance of their out-of-school lives and demonstrated a keen understanding of issues related to the intersectionality of disability and disadvantage (HP Mtg. 2: Turns 285-287). While Saoirse tended to default to deficit-based essentialist discourses she also simultaneously accepted as valid Denise's representations of these students and the discursive basis on which they were made. This allowed for a broader conceptualisation of the role of team-teaching as a support for inclusion. For example, it allowed them to focus on using available teaching and SNA resources to develop

a nurturing and inclusive learning environment in the classroom in which Saoirse operated as an *enjoyable guest* who providing all students with a chance to show off their recent learning and become more aware of, and more confident about, the fact that they were achieving mastery of mainstream curriculum content (HP Mtg. 1: Turns 154 and 206). Despite her reluctance to do so at times (HP Mtg. 2: Turn 71), Saoirse continued to enact this role for the duration of the initiative. This allowed the team to move beyond responding to individual and group needs through the provision of differentiated instruction, to focusing on the creation of a supportive, participatory and inclusive learning environment that was responsive to and accepting of difference (HP Mtg. 2: Turns 105-123, 179-203, 215-216, 228-229).

At Maple Lodge, teachers also deployed predominantly essentialist discourse to represent students deemed to fall within this category. This worked to maintain the focus of their discussions on the intrinsic traits of individual learners and on using team-teaching to respond to these. They tended to see the key purpose of team-teaching as supporting the engagement of all learners, including individuals deemed to have disabilities, in the LCA programme and its assessment, even when this programme was deemed unsuitable for some.

At the same time, discourses were used that referred to the right of students deemed to have disability to be “in the room” with their peers (ML Mtg. 3: Turns 92-93), to make friends, to collaborate with others and to work independently (ML Mtg. 1: Turns 106-109). In addition, the failure of the school to provide certain learners deemed to have disability with sufficient support to allow them to engage adequately with the LCA curriculum was also cited as a barrier to their inclusion (ML Mtg. 2: Turns 203- 209). The discussion here was more congruent with social model understandings of disability than essentialist ones. This kind of thinking was also in evidence during discussion of the value of entering students for summative oral and written examinations that they were unlikely to pass. These discussions affected how team-teaching was conceptualised. As with Hazel Park, both teachers at Maple Lodge saw it as an instrument by which an inclusive learning environment could be developed in the class (ML Mtg. 1: Turn 287). In fact, Andrew asserted that the initiative had been “worth it from that point of view alone” (ML Mtg. 1: Turn 288). Despite this however, team-teaching remained focussed, in the main, on responding to the intrinsic traits of individual learners in the context of the LCA programme and its assessment. This generally involved offering different types of differentiated instruction that teachers felt, would not have been possible in a single-teacher setting.

At Willow Way, apart from a brief period in which Meadhbh deployed discourse that focused on Phillip's right to remain in the class with appropriate supports, teachers deployed essentialist and personal tragedy discourses more comprehensively, consistently and strategically than in any other case. They presuppose that a key purpose of team-teaching was to control the misbehaviour of the group in order that they could engage more effectively in preparing for their imminent Junior Certificate examinations. In this context, Phillip's continued presence in the class was framed as something that worked in diametric opposition to the purpose of team-teaching, a situation that could only be resolved through his exclusion from it.

Thus overall, findings suggest that predominant use of essentialist discourse constrained teachers' thinking and practice to versions of provision already available in their schools rather than what might have been "most beneficial to the student" deemed to have disability (Baglieri et al., 2011, p. 273). All of the dyads tended to focus on maintaining all students, including students deemed to have disabilities, within mainstream curricula and preparing them for summative assessment of these. This finding is congruent with Skrtic's (1991) conclusions that a) the rational-technical organisational structures of schools tend to render teachers incapable of adapting to students whose learning dispositions fall outside standard programs and b) that this constrains their ability to personalise available programmes sufficiently to match these learning dispositions.

The tendency for team-teachers in each dyad studied in this work, to focus on supporting all learners in their engagement with existing mainstream curricula and preparing them for assessment of this, was also congruent with Zigmond and Matta's (2004) finding that learners deemed to have disabilities in team-taught settings tended to achieve better mastery of content, not because the additional teacher in the room was doing something *special* in instructional terms, but because they were replicating what generalist teachers were already doing. This had the effect of ensuring that the success or otherwise of team-teaching initiative was measured largely in terms of performance on real or *mock* assessment of ableist mainstream curricular that were not devised with a naturally occurring range of learner difference in mind. Such practices do not align easily with inclusive education imperatives and values.

## **10.6 Team-Teaching and Reproduction of the Disciplinary Technologies of Special Education**

The conceptualisation of team-teaching as a support to the engagement of all students within mainstream syllabi and programmes lent weight to the assertions of Baglieri et al. (2011), originally outlined in Section 4.8, that team-teaching predicated on essentialist



discourse can have profound unintended consequences on learners, including the partitioning of students into *typical* and *special* types and belief in a one-size-fits-all curriculum and an accompanying set of teaching practices through which this can be delivered effectively to all. Thinking of this kind is thought to reinforce the idea that, if some students struggle with the mainstream curriculum, it is they who represent the *problem*, not the curricular or pedagogic choices made for them (Baglieri et al., 2011). In such a scenario, diverse learners become viewed as *extra work* for those trying to ensure that the generality of students get adequate access to, and benefit from *the* curriculum. This, in turn, can lead to an artificial division of labour within teaching teams, that positions students deemed to have disabilities as marginal to the *regular* work of class (Baglieri et al., 2011).

Such reasoning led Baglieri et al. (2011) to conclude that adequate reform of educational provision for students deemed to have disability cannot be achieved by the incremental improvement of special education, even where this involves team-teaching. It can only be achieved by a complete re-conceptualisation of mainstream education, in line with the new epistemological base of inclusion (Baglieri et al., 2011). If team-teaching is allowed to become an organisational artefact of special education in this way (Skrtic, 1991) it can never deliver on its potential as an inclusive pedagogical approach. Many seasoned team-teaching researchers have acknowledged these concerns (Friend, Cook, Hurley-Chamberlain, & Shamberger, 2010; Thousand, Villa, & Nevin, 2006). While acknowledging that the adoption of team-teaching has been driven by ideological beliefs about inclusion, these writers remain highly sceptical about whether, in its current forms, team-teaching can support inclusive pedagogical approaches, especially in the face of the cultural colonisation of inclusive education by positivism and essentialism and the constant privileging of ableist-orientated, content-driven, and standard-based mainstream curricula and high-stakes examination of these (Ashton, 2010; Dieker & Murawski, 2003; King-Sears & Bowman-Kruhm, 2011; Mastropieri et al., 2005; Ó Murchú, 2011).

As we saw in Section 3.5, a central feature of the cultural colonisation of inclusive education by positivist epistemologies has been the reproduction of disciplinary technologies associated with these. Though the *gaze* of these technologies is not confined to learners deemed to have disabilities, it is thought that they exert a disproportionately individualising effect on them (Allan, 1996). These learners continue to be selected into highly visible outsider groups while insiders remain invisible and their cultural and political interests go un-interrogated (Allan, 2005; King, 1995). Ngcobo and Muthukrishna (2008, p. 361) have shown how the disciplinary gaze of positivist epistemologies is routinely deployed within mainstream schools to hold students deemed to have disabilities in a “state of continuous, conscious and permanent visibility”. Their findings accorded with the assertion of Graham

and Slee (2008, p. 289) that an “intensification of normalising practices” subjected learners whose difference has been made significant, to perpetual identification, scrutiny and rehabilitation (Graham & Slee, 2008, p. 289). Such scrutiny extends not only to their academic progress but to their well-being and social interactions also (Allan, 1996) and to the actions of their parents and the professionals who work with them (Allan, 1996). Key elements of these disciplinary practices were postulated in Section 3.5, as hierarchical observation, spatialisation, examination and normalising judgement (Allan, 1996). Allan (1996) suggests that these technologies are not only reproduced within team-teaching initiatives, but their effects are actually intensified within these. This is because team-teaching tends to increase the physical proximity of learners deemed to have disability to those who are not so labelled, thus requiring elevated levels of surveillance to ensure that ableist interests are not adversely affected by these arrangements (Allan, 1996). This work was interested in whether or not Allan’s (1996) assertions had substance. The following sections address this issue.

### **Hierarchical Observation**

Hierarchical observation was evident in the Hazel Park dyad in the very detailed knowledge Denise had been able to gather on this relatively new group of First Years. This not only related to what was known about their learning dispositions, but also informal information about their personal and social dispositions and their out-of-school lives. Denise spent a large part of the first and second meetings relating what she knew about these students to Saoirse.

Evidence of surveillance was also found in discussion of the rationale for setting up the group. The fact that it had initially been set up to respond to those with “psychological assessments” (HP Mtg. 1: Turns 11) implied that these students had been already been subjected to professional assessment and surveillance in previous settings. It also suggested that the results of this assessment had triggered continued monitoring in the post-primary setting, including the placement of these learners into a segregated group by those with overall responsibility for their inclusion, such as special educational needs coordinators and senior management. Evidence that Darren and others in the class were aware of this surveillance, and the fact that it had been responsible for their segregation (HP Mtg. 1: Turns 54-58) has already been discussed in Section 7.2. It was clear that other teachers were also aware of the level of surveillance to which these students had been subjected and the connection between this and their placement in a small class group. This was evident in the fact that they “complained that their classes were too big” by comparison (HP Mtg. 1: Turn 14), with the result that four more students (rising later to nine) were

added to this group on the basis of needs that were unrelated to disability *per se* (HP Mtg. 1: Turn 282).

Finally, there was evidence that the team-teaching initiative itself was conceptualised in terms of providing opportunities for on-going monitoring and evaluation of individual students. In the first instance, the small size of the original group (of eight students) was set with a view to offering the kind of surveillance and monitoring that would have been available in “a withdrawal class” where students received “resource [teaching] outside the classroom” (HP Mtg. 3: Turns 113). In addition, Saoirse’s role as *enjoyable guest* was construed by Denise as “a brilliant way of evaluating the teaching and learning” that took place in the class (HP Mtg. 1: Turn 192), especially if students were “able to tell you the information back” that had been covered in class during the previous week (HP Mtg. 1: Turn 192). In addition, Saoirse had a specific monitoring role in relation to those on her target list of students that “particularly needed my help” (HP Mtg. 3: Turn 278), all of whom were deemed to have disability. It seems surveillance here was targeted as much on personal and social development as academic progress, since in the final meetings Saoirse was able to declare that “encouragement” had been “a little bit more of my focus than the actual learning” (HP Mtg. 3: Turn 280). All of this was suggestive of a disproportionate level of hierarchical observation in relation to learners deemed to have disability within the team-teaching initiative at Hazel Park, relative to other learners.

At Maple Lodge, Andrew’s team-teaching role involved close supervision of Julia and Aoife, even when his role in relation to supporting the whole class developed further. This was evident in his reference to Aoife and Julia as “my two” (ML Mtg. 1: Turn 100), a term which, along with the use of official categories of disability (ML Mtg. 2: Turn 92 and ML Mtg. 2: Turn 92, respectively) marked these two students out for particular monitoring and surveillance. In characterising this role as that of “helper”, as distinct from their “teacher” (ML Mtg. 1: Turn 18), Andrew connoted a need for supervision and support in areas of basic academic and social functioning (ML Mtg. 1: Turn 38). For example, Julia was represented being capable of “[v]ery little” (ML Mtg. 1: 216) and “always need[ing] ... a lot of extra time” to complete even basic tasks (ML Mtg. 3: Turns 89-90), which constructed her as a passive individual, who was apathetic to her environment and required constant prompting to engage with it.

The perception that these students would continue to need close supervision, was echoed in Claire’s assertion that Andrew’s close monitoring of them had been “good for Aoife and Julia” (ML Mtg. 1: Turn 27). There was also a perception that this need would continue into their post-school lives (ML Mtg. 1: Turns 104, 217-218; ML Mtg. 2: Turn 40).

For example, Andrew alluded to the need for close monitoring and coordination of their transition to segregated post-school service provision. He noted that this would necessitate not only his involvement, as the school's SENCO, but also the involvement of Dathaí, the LCA coordinator (ML Mtg. 2: Turns 106-112) and Máire, the school's guidance counsellor (ML Mtg. 1: Turn 218), amongst others. Thus the degree and scope of surveillance was widened considerably in relation to these students, relative to those who were not deemed to have disabilities. Similarly, heightened levels of hierarchical observation and surveillance were discussed in relation to students such as Ciara (ML Mtg. 2 Turns: 73-77). Jack (ML Mtg. 2: Turn 193), Louise (ML Mtg. 2 Turns: 198-199) and Joanne (ML Mtg. 2 Turn: 327), who were also deemed to have disabilities. Sometimes this related largely to engagement with the LCA curriculum and reasonable accommodations pertaining to assessment of this. Sometimes it was more comprehensive. All of this additional hierarchical observation and surveillance of students deemed to have disability helped to depict them as more vulnerable and more dependent than other learners and helped keep them in an increased state of visibility.

The need for forensic surveillance of daily interactions was particularly evident in the discussion Julia's and Aoife's engagement in an out-of-class survey completed as part of an LCA task. Both teachers agreed that it would be wise for them to stay around for the duration of their participation in the survey, just to point these students "in the right direction" (ML Mtg. 2: Turns 110-111). The other area in which forensic surveillance of students deemed to have disability was greatly in evidence, was in relation to their engagement with LCA *mock* examinations, when Claire completed and fed back to Andrew on her detailed analysis of their "mock" examination papers, having written "in all the answers" (ML Mtg. 2: Turn 141) where students failed to do so. This issue will be addressed further in the next section.

Finally, there was evidence of a ubiquitous degree of hierarchical observation of Phillip and his misbehaviour at Willow Way. This seemed to occur at a range of levels in the school. At the level of the classroom, Meadhbh suggested that she support Phillip by sitting in close proximity to him, working "beside him in the class and mak[ing] sure I write down stuff in his journal" (WW Mtg.1: Turn 197). She seemed to construe her role as one of forensic surveillance and micro-management of his behaviour and engagement with work. Close surveillance of Phillip's behaviour also occurred at the wider school level, through the work of the school's behavioural support team, which not only monitored his behaviour across classes but also his academic engagement. Thus, when Meadhbh suggested working individually with Phillip, she acknowledged that this would also involve working closely with the behavioural unit "to see what they're doing with him" (WW Mtg. 1: Turn 195) and to "see if there's any way they can help him with his English" (WW Mtg. 1: Turn 197).

Importantly, the hierarchical observation carried out by the behavioural support team was depicted as both essential and benign. An indication of this was found in discussion of an incident that had occurred between Phillip and Elsie, a teacher working in the behavioural unit, in which Phillip's behaviour was characterised as so "obnoxious" (WW Mtg. 2: Turn 210) that Elsie could not have reasonably been expected to accept it. Conversely, Elsie was depicted as reasonable, calm and empathetic to students with behavioural difficulties. This incident was presented as something that really "*sealed the deal*" in relation to Phillip's exclusion eventual from the class (WW Mtg. 2: Turn 210, original emphasis).

Reference was also made to hierarchical observation of Phillip by the school's learning support team, especially in relation to whether or not he was entitled to "reasonable accommodations" in his impending Junior Certificate state examinations, such as "a reader" (WW Mtg. 1 Turns: 282) or special centre in which to sit his examination papers. Ultimately, the latter was provided. Similarly, it was reported that there had been "a few meetings with his Mam" which extended the hierarchical gaze of the school beyond Phillip and his teachers, to his family and out-of-school life (WW Mtg. 2 Turn 100). Finally, there was evidence of hierarchical observation of Phillip at the level of the school's senior management team. Thus, Fiona was able to say that she "must check with Aideen", the school principal, about "the chances ... of him coming back" to school after his latest suspension (WW Mtg. 2 Turns: 94-96). The fact that he had been put on a "reduced ... timetable" (WW Mtg. 3 Turns: 96-97) and repeatedly suspended (WW Mtg. 1: Turns 188), was further evidence that Phillip and his behaviour came under the constant "gaze" of senior management at the school. Again, all of this surveillance was characterised as a benign force, designed to help Phillip to improve his behaviour. Thus Fiona could assert that "everybody and all staff" (WW Mtg. 2 Turns: 208) had gone "down every avenue" and explored "every channel" (WW Mtg. 3 Turns: 92) in an effort to avoid Phillip's exclusion. Certainly, the degree of hierarchical observation of Phillip was very comprehensive indeed.

Overall, evidence gleaned from all three team-teaching initiatives suggested that a disproportionate degree of hierarchical observation and surveillance pertained to learners deemed to have disability in every setting than was associated with other students. This worked along with other disciplinary technologies to increase their visibility and reproduce ableist networks of knowledge/power and positivist epistemologies associated with special needs education.

### **Spatialisation and Examination**

While Foucault originally identified the clinic as the key cultural space in which examination of difference occurred, there can be many such spaces within which

*examination* of difference tends to be conducted in modern societies (Allan, 1996). The findings of this work concur with those of Ngcobo and Muthukrishna (2008) that team-teaching classrooms can also comprise *spaces* where *examination* and normalising judgements can occur. In the current research, team-teachers referred in their discussions to categorical and other data from professional examinations of students conducted in other settings. They used these data to make normalising judgements about the ability and learning dispositions of learners. They were also used to make instructional decisions about the *natural* grouping of students or about content and delivery of lessons.

However, team-teachers also produced data within the team-teaching spaces in which they worked, including data from *mock* Junior Certificate and LCA examinations. This was used to place students in various mixed ability and other groups and prepare them for the *real* examinations into which they were facing. The objective here was that they would score in these examinations within *normal* ranges. This was true, whether or not teachers deemed these examinations appropriate to the educational priorities and needs of particular students (such as Julia, for example). *Mock* examination papers were specifically designed so that forensic analysis of these could take place to produce information that would be used to guide learners to perform within normal ranges on state examinations. They were constructed from items taken from past examination papers, for which norms of performance and marking schemes had already been established. Teachers drew on students' performance in these test to make normalising judgements about their ability to perform in *actual* examinations in the future.

At Hazel Park teachers showed the greater propensity to use data from *examinations* carried out in other settings than in any other case. For example, data from psychological assessment were used as a basis for segregation of the learners that comprised the initial group on which the team-teaching initiative focussed (HP Mtg. 1: Turn 12). A large part of the first meeting at Hazel Park (HP Mtg. 1: Turns 223-328) was taken up by Denise exchanging her knowledge of the determinations of these examinations with Saoirse, who seemed to need this information to make sense of their *needs* and her role in supporting these.

At the same time, these teachers also referenced both the objectives of the Junior Certificate English syllabus and how these would be assessed, even at this early stage of students' engagement with the programme. They used these to stratify learners into groups and to make normalising judgements about them on the basis of their perceived (fixed) abilities. Thus, Denise could assert that the group would undertake "the new Junior Cert course" (HP Mtg. 1: Turn 28) at "ordinary level; with maybe one or two taking foundation"

and one or two taking “higher level” (HP Mtg. 1: Turn 28). She referred to the group as a whole as “the class above JCSP” (HP Mtg. 1: Turn 28), a school-based programme designed for students for whom the traditional Junior Certificate might prove too challenging. This represented them as operating with *normal* ranges of academic performance. This characterisation was reinforced by teachers’ judgements about the degree to which learners, including learners deemed to have disability, were moving towards common, and hence normalised, “Junior Cert objectives” (HP Mtg. 1: Turn 130). Finally, the Junior Certificate examination was used as a basis for determining what *reasonable accommodations* might be necessary in order that learners deemed to have disability could engage equitably in written state examinations, and the newly introduced class-based assessment of this that scheduled for “next year” (HP Mtg. Mtg. 2: Turns 240-243). Such accommodations included “spelling” waivers and the use of scribes and readers (HP Mtg. 1: Turn 173).

Overall then, while summative assessment was seen as “a long way away” (HP Mtg. Mtg. 2: Turns 240-243), it was still used as a basis for examination within team-teaching classrooms that led to the stratification of learners, the making of normalising judgements about their academic ability and deciding on how content would be covered. Thus when Denise suggested doing “a group project on a char[acter]” from a piece of drama they were studying (HP Mtg. 3: Turn 402), her rationale for doing so was that there would be “a question on the [state examination] paper” where students had to “create an ending to their story” (HP Mtg. 3: Turn 407). In such ways, preparations for summative state examinations that were scheduled to occur years away influenced teachers’ deployment of normalising judgements about all learners, including learners deemed to have disability.

At Maple Lodge, teachers also used data from examinations held in other spaces, and from examinations conducted within the spaces in which team-teaching took place. On the one hand, both Andrew and Claire referred extensively to the categories of need into which specific students had been placed through professional assessment. On the other, they placed huge weight on data emerging from Claire’s forensic analysis of *mock* LCA examination papers. Performance on these was seen as a key signifier of where and how support should be targeted at these learners to ensure that they would achieve scores within normal ranges of attainment in the *real* examinations. Thus, a unique feature of discourse use at Maple Lodge relating to students deemed to have disability was the way in which meaning-making about these students was constructed. This usually involved interpreting their *conditions* or *categorisations* within the narrow confines of their engagement with *mock* assessment of the LCA programme.

This led to Julia being depicted as “a girl with moderate intellectual disability” (ML Mtg. 2: Turn 92) who comprised a “massive worry” to teachers because she scored only “Seventeen per cent!” (ML Mtg. 2: Turn 87) in her *mock* examination and did not seem to have “the capability of comprehending” the paper (ML Mtg. 2: Turn 127). Aoife, on the other hand, though she was referred to on the class profile as operating in the borderline range of mild learning disability and having a specific learning disability, dyspraxia and selective mutism (queried), was also reported to have been “delighted” with her performance in the mock LCA examinations (ML Mtg. 2: Turn 39) in which she scored “fifty [per cent] ... one of the highest grades” (ML Mtg. 2: Turn 51), and hence of less concern.

Similarly, several students deemed to have specific learning disabilities in literacy were viewed differently on the basis of the scores they received in the *mock* LCA examination. Adam, who scored 60% on his mock examination was seen as someone teachers “wouldn’t worry about” (ML Mtg.1: Turn 114; ML Mtg. 2: Turn 224). Jack, was represented as not “too bad” (ML Mtg. 2: Turn 71) and having made a great “effort” (ML Mtg. 2: Turn 179). Ciara, who scored “sixty” per cent and was “disappointed” with this result (ML Mtg. 2: Turn 71) was depicted as keen “to get it [her work] done” and “serious” about making a success of this (ML Mtg. 1: Turns 124-126). On the other hand, Robert, while seen as a conscientious student and “a very steady influence on Adam” (ML Mtg.1: Turn 114), was depicted as having struggled in his mock examination, attaining just “forty-two [per cent]” (ML Mtg.2: Turn 129). Claire reported having been “quite shocked” at this result (ML Mtg. 2: Turn 131), and concluded that he had not understood the questions (ML Mtg. 2: Turns 134-139).

In a similar way, Harry, a student listed as having severe speech and language impairment, was reported to have achieved just 30% on his mock examinations (ML Mtg. 2: Turn 229), a score that could be brought back into normal ranges if only his behaviour would improve (ML Mtg. 2: Turns 314-316). This was in contrast to how Louise’s speech and language impairment was represented as limiting her access to the curriculum. Data from her *mock* LCA examination, was used to assert that “she does not understand questions that are being asked”, and hence represented “a huge worry” for teachers. (ML Mtg. 2: Turn 202). While the exact score she received is not mentioned, Claire reported that “there was a few tears” when this was presented to her (ML Mtg. 2: Turn 199). Jason, a student deemed to function within the borderline range of mild learning disability, was reported to have scored just “four per cent” on his examination paper, and as a consequence was seen as “in danger of falling out” of the programme (ML Mtg. 2: Turn 236). Finally, even Joanne’s neurological difficulties, which manifested in a significant “tremor” in her hands (ML Mtg. 2: Turns 9, 33 and 324), amongst other things, were discussed almost exclusively in the context of how this



affected her performance on *mock* examinations and the reasonable accommodations she would need as a result. All of these examples suggested that data from *examinations* carried out within the team-teaching setting at Maple Lodge were used as a basis to interpret categorical data already available to teachers, that had been generated outside of this initiative.

At Willow Way, extensive reference was made to examination that occurred in settings in relation to Phillip, the only student deemed to have disability in the class. Information supplied to the researcher make clear that Phillip had been diagnosed with a Social, Emotional and Behavioural Disorder, namely conduct disorder. There was also evidence that the school's behavioural support team engaged in on-going re-examination of his case and maintained a close eye on his behaviour (WW Mtg. 1: Turn 195-197). Similarly, the school's learning support team had conducted an examination of whether or not he was entitled to reasonable accommodations in state examinations on the grounds of this diagnosis (WW Mtg. 1 Turns: 282). Thus Fiona could assert that the school had gone "down every avenue" and explored "every channel" (WW Mtg. 3 Turns: 92) in an effort to explore and understand his difficulties.

As in other cases, external examination of this kind was augmented by forensic attention to the performance of all students in their *mock* Junior Certificate examination papers. In fact, the first 200 out of a total of 448 turns taken by teachers during the second team-teaching meeting at Willow Way were devoted to a review of individual students' engaged with this test. Teachers drew a very broad range of conclusions from this process, asserting that it gave them a clear sense of what students were "capable of" (WW Mtg. 2: Turn 224) and what they "should be doing better" (WW Mtg. 2: Turn 225). It allowed them to surmise that the group was "obviously weaker than, you know, your average middle band" (WW Mtg. 2: Turn 226). Student results in mock examinations were also used by teachers to "decide very quickly ... who's doing what level" of paper in the actual Junior Certificate examination (WW Mtg. 1: Turn 212). However, Since Phillip was the only student assessed as having a disability in the group, and since he was not present for the *mock* examinations scheduled, it was impossible to say whether this *examination* affected him disproportionately, relative to other students. It was clear however, that data from this process were used to make normalising judgements about every student in the class. It was ironic that teachers had to record their "shock" at the unexpectedly high attainment of many of these learners, relative to what teachers expected of them (WW Mtg. 2: Turn 323).

As in other settings, data from *mock* examinations was used at Willow Way to consider teaching responses designed to bring levels of performance as close to national

norms as possible. The tendency to focus on becoming more proficient at examinations rather than addressing content and objectives was significant. Thus, *mock* examination results were used at Willow Way to justify putting a greater “focus ... on the paper” (WW Mtg. 1: Turn 122) and going “through” it with students (WW Mtg. 1: Turn 162), so they could “see the timing”, “the marking scheme” (WW Mtg. 1: Turn 170) and “how the ... exam paper was laid out” (WW Mtg. 3: Turn 42). Later, it was agreed that the team-teaching initiative had been particularly successful, because “between the two of us, we kind of got through to them in that sense” (WW Mtg. 3: Turn 44).

### **Normalising Judgements and Practices**

As can be seen from the forgoing the use of normalising judgement permeated all of these other techniques of surveillance. Chapters 7 and 8 documented the essentialist discourses through which normalising judgements were put into effect in relation to learners deemed to have disability. These judgements focused on what were thought to be immutable and exceptional differences that resided within individuals, rather than the material, social or cultural conditions of their disablement.

At Hazel Park, normalising judgements led teachers to adjust the pace of lessons to respond to the “very, very slow” pace at which students deemed to have disability learned (HP Mtg. 1: Turn 192). They caused them to select fewer learning objectives for this class than others which did not contain such a preponderance of students deemed to have disability (HP Mtg. 1: Turn 163), to introduce “a high level of repetition” in instructional practices (HP Mtg. 1: Turn 184) and to repeatedly engage students in particular objectives and content (HP Mtg. 1: Turns 96-110, 160, 164, 184, 196-200, 208). All of these were targeted at bringing students’ “oral skills” (HP Mtg. 2: Turns 242 and 248), ability to communicate (HP Mtg. 3: Turn 189), “written work” (HP Mtg. 2: Turns 100 and 246), confidence and personal and social skills (HP Mtg. 1: Turns 46-50; HP Mtg. 2: Turns 405-407 and HP Mtg. 3: Turns 122-128) back within expected levels of normality.

At Maple Lodge, normalising judgements were used by teachers to justify homogenising the amount of LCA coursework to be covered by everyone in the class, including members deemed to have disability for whom this objective seemed unattainable and inappropriate (ML Mtg. 3 Turn 42). They were also used to focus on bringing the performance of all students on state-mandated assessments and performance into ranges consistent with normalised national standards (ML Mtg. 1: Turns 14-15, 268-271 and 290; ML Mtg.2: Turns: 6, 59, 153, 238, 242-244, 320 and 408). This preparation included securing reasonable accommodations for students deemed to have disability. Students with disability considered in this way included Aoife, (Mtg. 2 Turn: 47), Ciara, (ML Mtg. 2 Turns: 73-77),

Jack (ML Mtg. 2: Turn 193) and Joanne (ML Mtg. 2 Turn: 327). To this end, normalising judgements were also used to consider a wider range of learning activities and differentiated pedagogic approaches than would have been possible in a single-teachers class (ML Mtg. 1: Turn 225), including more flexible “pairing and grouping” of learners (ML Mtg. 1: Turns 21-24, 135, 185), more effective management of disciplinary issues (ML Mtg. 1: Turns 268-271) and better use of learning spaces (ML Mtg. 1: Turns 248, 259-268).

At Willow Way, normalising judgements focused on the apparently extreme nature of Philip’s misbehaviour (WW Mtg. 3: Turn 63) and its deleterious effects on the academic engagement and progress of the rest of his class (WW Mtg. 1: Turns 188-189; WW Mtg. 3 Turns 12, 63-71 and 89-97). Thus, Phillip’s exclusion was seen as a logical and even desirable normalising response that returned the behaviour of the group to acceptable levels and made sure that their scores in the Junior Certificate English examination would be in line with the group’s status as an “average middle band” class (WW Mtg. 2: Turn 226).

In all of the team-teaching initiatives studied, one of most potent effects of the deployment of normalising judgements on the delivery of team-teaching was the focus it seemed to place on providing differentiated teaching and learning. Given that national and international policy and guidance posit differentiation as a key strategy for the achievement of inclusive education (Department of Education and Science, 2017b), these responses were unsurprising. For example, in Ireland, official Department of Education and Skills policy suggests that,

The classroom teacher, in consultation with the Special Educational Needs Teacher as required, will consider ways in which the curriculum can be differentiated or adapted to suit the needs of individual students. This may also involve identifying the most appropriate teaching strategies and programmes to meet the students’ needs, and whether additional teaching supports are required. (Department of Education and Science, 2017a, p. 17)

Ryan (2015 p. 80) has argued that the discourse of differentiation has become “a staple feature of the discourse surrounding inclusive practices” in Ireland, where it has “become synonymous with the education of students with SEN”. She believes however, that its characterisation as something to be used solely with these learners “serves to confuse, mislead and misdirect teachers” (Ryan, 2015 p. 81). She suggests that, while attempts that focus on meeting the needs of all, they are admirable and laudable. However, other attempts provide only “artificial adaptations with little attention to learner differences” (Ryan, 2015 p.81); these are associated with separation, demarcation and segregation of learners deemed to have special educational needs, including disability. Similarly, Baglieri et al.

(2011, p. 273) warn that while differentiated instruction can be useful in developing lesson plans that incorporate diversity into whole-group design, “when narrowed into learning operations”, differentiation “too often materializes as a hierarchical tiering or tracking process” that “assumes a baseline and then modifies “up” or “down” for particular individuals” (Baglieri et al., 2011, p. 273). As a consequence, it has that the potential to recreate the very divisions it seeks to ameliorate in the first place. As Baglieri et al. (2011, p. 273) put it, “precision in levelling emerges as deterministic tracking and ability grouping ... rather than inviting fluidity in approach”. For Florian (2014, p. 15) such differentiation focuses on “something different or additional to that which is provided to others” and has come to represent an “[i]ndividualised hallmark of special needs” education. Finally, Ryan (2014 p. 81) reminds us that the term differentiation “is rooted in notions of normalcy, reminiscent of a psycho-medical discourse of special education ... which dictates a process of identifying, classifying and remedying students ... a reality which paradoxically serves to exclude rather than include”. It is often offered “as a panacea to inclusive education” (Ryan 2014 p. 81).

Authentic inclusive educational practice, on the other hand, requires “an important shift in thinking” by teachers, that includes extending “what is generally available to *everybody* rather than including *all* students by differentiating for *some*” Florian (2014, p. 16). It involves “[t]hinking about learning as a shared activity, where a single lesson is a different experience for each participant” and where “rich learning opportunities ... are sufficiently made available to everyone, so that all learners are able to participate.”

For Florian (2014, pp. 19-20), adopting an “inclusive pedagogic approach” means “embedding responsiveness to individual need within the process of whole-class teaching” in ways that foreground “the importance of participation in classroom activities”, especially “in terms of choice and relationships to others”. This idea is similar to that of Universal Design for Learning (UDL), which, at its simplest, “begins with a holistic conception of the potential for many possible learning experiences” (Baglieri et al., 2011, p. 273). It involves developing learning environments that provide multiple means of representation, engagement and action/expression (Rose, Gravel, & Gordon, 2013). Florian’s conceptualisation of inclusive education places even greater emphasis on the role of the learner “in directing the course of their own learning and encourages teachers to abandon practices the pre-determine what students can achieve” (Florian, 2014, p. 20). It shifts emphasis from “the benefits to an individual to the benefit of the whole community, from determined outcomes to those interpreted through open inquiry in assessment” (Baglieri et al., 2011, p. 273). Thus, instead of “tediously piecing together accommodations or modifications”, based on what they “believe a learner can or cannot do”, teachers should design teaching activities “in ways that

offer a spectrum of possibility; for the many ways that learners can engage in learning” (Baglieri et al., 2011, p. 272).

The disproportionate focus on differentiation observed in this study, at the expense of the types of inclusive pedagogies set out above, and the restricted versions of team-teaching that ensued as a result, seemed to link directly to essentialist discourses of disability deployed by teachers and the positivist assumptions of difference upon which these were based. Movement towards the use of team-teaching as a support to inclusive practices will necessarily involve a move away from this practice.

### **10.7 Team-Teaching and Re-Direction of Resources Allocated for Inclusion towards the Normative Centre of Post-Primary Education**

As already noted, the deployment of Critical Discourse Studies within a Dialectical-Relational approach to Critical Discourse Analysis placed this study firmly in the critical paradigm. Within this world view, research is not conducted merely “to understand situations and phenomena but to change them” in emancipatory ways (Mertens, 2014). For this reason, as well as looking at how particular disability discourses were deployed, the current work also sought to interrogate the interests served by this process and the legitimacy of the power relations that pertained within it (Mertens, 2014). It examined, not only at the relationship between teachers’ use of disability discourse use and their conceptualisations of team-teaching, but also at the material effects of this on the inclusion of learners placed in the disability category. One of these material effects was the redistribution of resources, originally allocated to support the inclusion of students deemed to have disability, towards learners who were not so categorised.

At Hazel Park, for example, the rationale for establishing the team-teaching initiative was to provide to those with psychological assessments, targeted “resource” teaching commensurate with support they would otherwise have received “outside the classroom” in withdrawal settings (HP Mtg. 3: Turn 113). Yet, Denise reported that on foot of complaints from other teachers (HP Mtg. 1: Turn 14), four other students were added to the group, using criteria other than disability (HP Mtg. 1: Turn 282) including Aaron (HP Mtg. 2: Turn 117) and Luke (HP Mtg. 2: Turn 51) who were put in on the basis of reported misbehaviour in other classes. As the year progressed, more students were added on the basis of an ever-widening range of criteria (HP Mtg. 1: Turn 282). By the time of the third meeting, the number of learners in the class had gone up to seventeen, with a roughly equal mix of those deemed to have disabilities and those who not so categorised (HP Mtg. 1: Turn 282). This happened despite the determination of Denise and Saoirse “to watch” out for such a development (HP Mtg. 1 Turn 20) and “fight ... [their] corner to keep this [group] as small as

possible” (HP Mtg. 1: turn 222) in the best interest of those for whom it was originally established.

In CDS terms, the flexibility used to place learners in the class became a site in which tensions between ableist interests and those of learners who were deemed to be disabled played out, to the detriment of the latter. The latitude eventually applied to entry criteria suggested a willingness on the part of management and mainstream teachers to exploit the malleability inherent in definitions of disability in strategic ways that served ableist interests. It allowed, for example, the re-tasking of teaching resources originally allocated to support the inclusion of students deemed to have disability (NCSE, 2010, 2014) towards students who presented general management difficulties that inhibited the learning of non-disabled students in mainstream classes. Moreover, this re-tasking was justified on the basis that creating a small class for learners deemed to have disability was seen as giving these learners unfair advantage over their non-disabled peers. The fact that the number of students in the class doubled by the end of the year through the addition of learners who were not deemed to have disabilities, suggested that team-teachers were relatively powerless to resist such ableist arguments.

At Maple Lodge, it was reported that the school was “forced into” adopting team-teaching in order “to access those kids” who needed additional support (ML Mtg. 3: Turn 43) but who could not be withdrawn from class to receive this, because of the high attendance requirements of the LCA programme. As a consequence, Andrew’s initial role focused primarily on delivering support to Aoife and Julia (ML Mtg. 1: Turn 100). By the end of the first meeting however, this role had “developed” (ML Mtg. 1: Turn 91) into one of supporting the whole class (ML Mtg. 1: Turns 21 and 23), including making decisions about lesson content and delivery (ML Mtg. 1: Turn 236-242). By the time of the third meeting both teachers reported having become primarily focussed on the LCA and its assessment (ML Mtg. 3: Turns 140-141). Both saw their role as “supporting the whole room”, including Julia and Aoife, in undertaking the LCA programme and assessment of this (ML Mtg. 3: Turn 94). To this end, they also focussed particularly on addressing misbehaviour and complacency (ML Mtg. 1: Turns 8-13, 248-258; ML Mtg. 3 Turn 280). Thus, again, it seemed that resources specifically targeted at offering support to students deemed to have disability, were spread more broadly across the whole group, becoming effectively re-tasked towards supporting the them in their engagement with mainstream curriculum.

Finally, in the team-teaching initiative at Willow Way Phillip was the only student in the class who had received a formal assessment of disability, under the category of Social, Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties (Department of Education and Science, 2005). It was

on the basis of his presence in the group that the team-teaching initiative had been put in place. This made the assertion that the initiative could only be successful if Phillip was excluded seem somewhat ironic. Team-teachers at Willow Way seemed aware of this irony. For example, before suggesting that Phillip's absence "had a real positive impact on the class", Fiona acknowledged that, "It sounds bad to say this" (WW Mtg. 2: Turn 204). Similarly, before asserting that Phillip's needs were "so extreme" (WW Mtg. 3: Turn 63) that school staff simply "weren't able to" respond to these appropriately (WW Mtg. 3: Turn 71), Meadhbh reassured Fiona that "everyone was trying to support" him (WW Mtg. 3: Turn 91) and everybody was "in the same boat" (WW Mtg. 1: Turn 176).

These qualifications were less about defending the inalienable rights of students deemed to have disability to participate in and benefit from education available to others, than about privileging the rights of non-disabled students to benefit from access to mainstream curricula, without being encumbered by the misbehaviour of others. Thus, while Meadhbh acknowledged that this was not the "desired thing" (WW Mtg. 3: Turn 11) and "probably not the spirit of team-teaching" (WW Mtg. 3: Turn 39), Phillip's exclusion "had to happen!" (WW Mtg. 3: Turn 11). It enabled Fiona to "take more of a lead role" in teaching the class (WW Mtg. 3: Turn 30) and Meadhbh to provide "extra" assistance (WW Mtg. 3: Turn 32-33) to those who had missed a lot of time (WW Mtg. 3: Turn 33) or "were in real trouble" (WW Mtg. 3: Turn 35), in terms of their preparation for the Junior Certificate examinations (WW Mtg. 3: Turn 37). In other words, it allowed re-tasking of resources originally allocated to support a learner deemed to have disabilities and towards non-disabled learners.

The fact that the initiative continued after Phillip's exclusion could be interpreted as a net redistribution of resources originally allocated to support learners deemed to have disability, away from this group and towards their non-disabled peers. What remained was an initiative that focussed on supporting "a middle band" class in undertaking the Junior Certificate English syllabus (WW Mtg. 1: Turns 33-36, 58, 237, 271-273, 355-358; WW Mtg. 3: Turns 150-155) and preparation for imminent assessment of this through formal state examinations (WW Mtg. 1: Turns 122, 169-170; WW Mtg. 2: 173-176; WW Mtg. 3: Turns 42-44). Since, of all the issues the team-teaching initiative sought to address, "the major thing was the behaviour" (WW Mtg. 3: Turn 48) and since teachers had foregrounded Phillip's role in the misbehaviour of the entire class, Fiona could assert the success of the team-teaching initiative as directly related to his exclusion, saying this was "needed for the class" (WW Mtg. 3: Turn 74), resulted in "a real positive impact" (WW Mtg. 2: Turn 204), and "dramatically" improved the behaviour of the group (WW Mtg. 3: Turn 50).

Conceptualisations of team-teaching that offer supports to all students within an inclusive learning environment are laudable and valuable, but only in cases where the integrity of any extra resources given to the initiative are used in the interests of those for whom they were initially provided, for example, to minimise stigmatisation or to implement the principles of UDL. From a CDS perspective, this was only partially the case at Hazel Park and not so in the other two settings.

## **10.8 Discourses of Disability and the development of Team-Teaching as a Support to Inclusive Educational Provision**

Section 5.3 alluded to the fact that Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) mandates its users, not only to identify the semiotic elements of “social wrongs” and how and why these function as they do (Fairclough, 2016, pp. 93-94), it also requires researchers to move beyond the negative critiques of discourse to more “positive” ones that chart “possible ways past” the semiotic barriers that prevent these “social wrongs” from being addressed (Fairclough, 2016, p. 95). This work has suggested that the pervasive deployment of essentialist discourses of disability in discussion of team-teaching has led to forms of this practice that reproduce traditional networks of power relations and disciplinary technologies associated with special education (Allan, 2005; Black-Hawkins & Florian, 2012). It has characterised this reproduction as a “social wrong” (Fairclough, 2016), since it allows for the perpetration of harmful individualising effects on learners deemed to have disability. As well as instances of oppressive use of discourse, the texts studied for this work showed evidence of semiosis where hegemonic “taken-for-granted assumptions” about learners deemed to have disabilities were resisted by teachers (Ainscow, 2015). Such instances provided a basis for reimagining disability identities assigned in ways that reduced the oppression of those to whom they were assigned (Danforth & Rhodes, 1997; Florian, 2014).

These instances are worth examining for two reasons. Firstly, it is only by searching for “points of resistance” to dominant discourses that their breadth and power can be discerned (Bowman & Hook, 2010, p. 67). Secondly, as instances of where “universalising discourses” have been “resisted or transfigured by local and specific practices” (Bowman & Hook, 2010, p. 67), they offer insights into *where* resistance to the “prevailing paradigm” of essentialist beliefs about disability might be focussed effectively (Skrtic, 1991). A number of themes were identified within the counter-hegemonic discourses pertaining to team-teaching meetings, that could usefully guide this “necessary” cultural work (Florian, 2014).

### **Capability and Commonality**

The first of these related to the tendency of team-teachers to focus on learner capabilities and on intrinsic qualities they were thought to share with their non-disabled



peers. At Hazel Park, Denise consistently represented Darren in terms of these characteristics. She credited him with a positive and humorous disposition, an ability to listen carefully to his peers, well-developed oral language skills, a high degree of sensitivity to the learning dispositions of others, leadership ability and an understanding of the workings of disablement through differential treatment. All of this served to foreground his agency, his ability to negotiate his school environment, his value as a net contributor to the class, and his right to belong in the class group, without recourse to the kindness by his peers.

Denise also depicted Darren as someone who possessed considerable personal resources that could be mobilised to support the inclusion of others (HL Mtg. 2: Turns 179-186 and 200-204). Her representation of him as the spokesperson for the rest of the class augmented this depiction of him. Even when he was accorded the disposition of a worrier" and a "serious wee man" (HP Mtg. 1: Turn 236), this was seen as a characteristic he shared with many others in the group. Finally, his reluctance to accept SNA support was characterised positively by Denise as an indication of his drive for independence (HP Mtg. 1: Turns 48-50).

Denise also chose to represent other students in a similarly affirmative light. She depicted Lauren as "a lovely wee girl" but "[v]ery, very shy in herself and slow to put up the hand" (HP Mtg. 1: Turn 282); Barry as "very, very confident", with "a lot of other involvements outside school" (HP Mtg. 1: Turn 296); Claire, as capable of great "initiative" (HP Mtg. 1: Turn 302); Tom as "a really easy going wee man" (HP Mtg. 1: Turn 288) and "[v]ery quiet" (HP Mtg. 1: Turn 290); Aaron as "funny" (HP Mtg. 2: Turn 117) and one "of the livelier boys" (HP Mtg. 2: Turn 268) who "can be in a bit of trouble" at times (HP Mtg. 2: Turn 117); Conor as in need of "a serious amount of support", but a "great kid" and lovely" (HP Mtg. 1: Turn 316); and, Luke as someone who found it "hard to stay quiet and had "difficulties in other classes" (HP Mtg. 2: Turn 51), but who was "very well behaved" (HP Mtg. 2: Turn 50) and "very bright" (HP Mtg. 2: Turn 58) in the team-taught class. Even though all of these positive representations were embedded in essentialist discourses, they still served to subvert deficit-based depictions of learners and foreground their capabilities. In general, Saoirse acquiesced in these representations (HP Mtg. 1: Turns 26-27, 42, 48, 202 and 224), though often in tandem with reference to the official categories of needs into which these learners had been placed.

While teachers at Maple Lodge tended to represent Julia in ways that set her apart from other students, they also depicted her as someone who could develop and maintain friendships, collaborate effectively with Aoife (ML Mtg. 1: Turn 106), work independently on age-appropriate materials (ML Mtg. 1: Turns 106-109) and transition effectively from

secondary to post-secondary provision. All of these related to aspirations they expressed for all learners in their care. Otherwise, as has been noted already, where the capabilities of students were referenced, this usually occurred in the context of evaluations of their engagement with the LCA curriculum and its mock examination.

Even at Willow Way, where high levels of convergence were recorded between the teachers concerned around the deployment of essentialist discourses, and where these appeared to be most consistently and strategically deployed, there were occasional references to some of Phillip's positive traits, including his love of reading (WW Mtg. 1 Turn: Turn 200), his tendency to respond positively to praise (WW Mtg. 1 Turn: 205) and his ability to achieve at a high academic standards when motivated to do so (WW Mtg. 1 Turn: 204).

From the foregoing, it is fair to conclude that, though the level of this varied greatly from setting to setting, all cases produced evidence of attempts by teachers to focus student capabilities. This may have indicate a readiness on the part of teachers to engage with a capabilities approach to inclusion that seeks to enable individuals to realise their "potential to achieve" and shape their own learning in ways that are meaningful to them, "rather than being passively shaped" by others (Ridley & Watts, 2013, p. 424). Hollenweger (2014) suggests that the capabilities approach can be deployed effectively within an Assessment-for-Learning framework, that places emphasis on removing barriers to participation. For Hollenweger (2014 p. 516), participation is defined as "being engaged ... in typical routines ... in typical settings ... towards personally or socially meaningful goals". Findings of this work, suggest that team-teaching can offer a vehicle to teachers by which they can work together to look holistically to learners and respond more comprehensively to their capabilities, without being unnecessarily distracted by normalising or categorical judgements about them (Hollenweger, 2014).

### **Transformability**

Section 4.2 used Black-Hawkins and Florian's (2012, p. 571) definition of inclusive pedagogy as "the things teachers do to give meaning to the concept of inclusion". It was postulated that a necessary part of this meaning-making process was a rejection of deterministic beliefs about ability and the idea that some students' *lesser* ability constrains the progress of those operating within *normal* ability ranges. The findings of this study suggest that, along with the majority of professionals working with students deemed to have disability, team-teachers in the initiatives studied tended to view students deemed to have disability predominantly in terms of a ability/disability binary that emphasises their normalisation through "technical applications that remedy specific educational deficiencies"

(Connor and Valle, 2015, p. 1111). They also tended to view ability and disability as fixed and immutable, which had the effect of limiting their thinking about the types and levels of learning opportunity they made available to these students.

For example, while team-teachers at Hazel Park saw Darren's cognitive and affective abilities as strong and amenable to further development, they viewed his physical attributes as immutable (HP Mtg. 1: Turn 46) or deteriorating (HP Mtg. 1: Turns 46-50 and 236). There was no sense that his ability to participate in the life of the school could change during the course of a school day, depending on the context of his learning. While he was depicted positively as "whizzing" around the school (HP Mtg. 1: Turn 50), it was also made clear that he often benefited from the charitable acts of peers, and that this was required and likely to continue (HP Mtg. 1: Turns 246-247).

At Maple Lodge, representations of Julia's inability "to extract the information" from text and visually presented materials (ML Mtg. 2: Turn 94), her memory difficulties and poor "retention" (ML Mtg. 2: Turn 100) and her poor performance in formal examinations (ML Mtg. 2: Turn 95) were interpreted in the context of her placement in the "moderate intellectual disability" category (ML Mtg. 2: Turn 92). This placement was seen as definitive, self-evident and fixed (ML Mtg. 2: Turns 154-156) She was depicted as someone who would "always need" extra time and support to complete tasks and that this was not "going to change" (ML Mtg. 3: Turns 88-91). Discussion of her transition to specialist post-school provision augmented the view that her low levels of intellectual and affective functioning were unlikely to change in the longer term (ML Mtg. 1: Turns 217-218). Finally, team-teachers at Willow Way believed that Phillip's "extreme" behaviour (WW Mtg. 3: Turn 63) remained impervious to change, despite the fact that "everybody and all staff ... tried their best" to help him, including specialist teachers like Elsie (WW Mtg. 2 Turn 208). Moreover, it was suggested that even having "four people in the class" was "never going to be able to ... give him the focus ... he really needed" (WW Mtg. 3: Turns 67-69).

Overall, teachers' adherence to fixed and deterministic beliefs about ability and disability seemed to be significantly entrenched across all settings. This finding pointed to an urgent need to a) disrupt the discourses that sustain and reproduce such beliefs, b) replace these with discourses congruent with beliefs about *transformability* (Artiles, Kozleski, Dorn, & Christensen, 2006; Hart et al., 2004; Hart, Drummond, McIntyre, & Florian, 2007). As already noted in Section 3.4, this view of ability sees children's capacity to learn as a product of the interplay between social, emotional and cognitive resources and external factors that impact on their willingness to learn, such as the curriculum, the language of instruction, and the teaching and learning activities offered. Learning is thought to be *transformable* because,

since limits on student learning can come from any of these sources, patterns of achievement can be affected by adjusting any one of them. Conceptualisations of transformability such as these, involve engaging learners as agents in joint learning enterprises (Hart et al., 2007) and achievement for all within communities of learning where outcomes can be different for each participant.

## **Rights**

A very positive feature of the counter-hegemonic discourses evident in the texts of team-teaching meetings was the degree to which teachers referred to the right of learners deemed to have disability to belong in the team-taught class in which they had been placed. At Hazel Park, Denise used positive images of Darren to depict him as someone who was successfully negotiating his physical, social and cultural environments and who had a right to belong in the class. It was made clear from the outset that, not only did Darren's presence not interfere with the education of his peers, but he positively contributed to their well-being and inclusion.

At Maple Lodge, team-teachers referred to the importance of maintaining Julia's presence "in the room" with their peers (ML Mtg. 3: Turn 92) as a fulfilment of her right to be included. This was depicted as really "something", "great" for "young people" such as Julia (ML Mtg. 3: Turns 92-93) and an end in itself. Team-teachers also selected learning objectives for Julia that were identical to those set for other learners of her age. These included developing her ability to make friends, experience success, collaborate effectively with others, work independently, engage in age-appropriate learning (ML Mtg. 1: Turns 106-109) and experience continuity in transitioning from secondary school to post-school life (ML Mtg. 3, Turns 367-369). Their selection collapsed difference between Julia and her peers and foregrounded her right to be a part of the social fabric of the class and the school. Team-teaching was seen as a key instrument for the vindication of such rights within the LCA programme (ML Mtg. 3: Turns 92-93).

Towards the start of the series of team-teaching meetings at Willow Way, Phillip was depicted as someone who had a right to be included within the group, with appropriate levels of support. While this right was never denied, it was progressively backgrounded and set against the rights of his classmates to an education free from his menacing and disruptive influence. His misbehaviour was also set against the rights of teachers to a healthy working environment, in which their "sanity" was not being compromised and they did not feel "abandoned or alone" or "dreading" going into the group (WW Mtg. 3: Turns 51-53). Ultimately, the balancing of these rights provided a rationale for legitimisation of his

exclusion. Conversely, when it came to vindicating his right to an appropriate education with appropriate levels of support, teachers tended to collapse difference between Phillip's and his peers to represent him as unfairly dominating available resources. At the same time, they asserted that no amount resources could meet his exceptional needs in order to realise this right. All of this suggests that what were represented as inalienable rights were not inalienable at all, but subject to interpretation and negotiation. As Hollenweger (2014) observes, the negotiation of rights often occurs "because ... circumstances often make it impossible for everyone's rights to be equally implemented". Hollenweger (2014) proposes that the adoption of a capabilities approach, that focuses on the *functionings* in which each learner places most value, can be a useful way of balancing competing claims to educational rights.

In some instances, reference was made to the right of students to reject the disabled identities manufactured for them by schools. Darren's right to reject the "sick role" (Parsons, 1951, p. 455) ascribed to him was an important example of this (HP Mtg. 1: Turns 48-50). His rejection of this role was made all the more difficult by the valorisation of those who offered him unsolicited support. This made his rejection of their efforts seem unreasonable and ungrateful.

Overall, the degree to which team-teachers acknowledged the right of learners who were deemed to have disability to belong within well-resourced learning environments and to reject the limiting identities manufactured for them by schools, pointed to a very useful site for critique of essentialist discourse (Ainscow, 2015) and the *conscientisation* of teachers around the negative effects of this in the future (Freire, 1985).

### **The Material Conditions of Disablement**

The greatest amount of counter-hegemonic disability discourse was deployed by team-teachers within evaluations of their team-teaching initiatives. At Hazel Park, factors that were seen as pivotal to the success of the team-teaching initiative included the "smaller class-size" that pertained there (HP Mtg. 3: Turn 39 and 121), the lower instance of "discipline issues" that occurred as a result (HP Mtg. 3: Turn 117), the shared experience of the teachers in relation to language instruction (HP Mtg. 3: Turns 12-14), their compatibility in terms of "teaching styles" (HP Mtg. 3: Turn 30), their commitment to the "same objectives" and "goals" (HP Mtg. 3: Turn 90), the fact that they appeared to be "singing off the same hymn sheet" (HP Mtg. 3: Turn 91) in terms of "respected students" (HP Mtg. 3: Turns 93, 109 and 119), their belief in the effectiveness of team-teaching as an alternative to withdrawal (HP Mtg. 3: Turn 105-107) and the fact that they had previously established an excellent working "relationship" between them (HP Mtg. 3: Turns 271-276). Finally, both teachers

agreed that the nurturing element of their team-teaching initiative had been a contributed in a “huge” way to its success (HP Mtg. 3: Turn 262), even at the expense of “actual learning” (HP Mtg. 3: Turn 280). None of these factors related to qualities thought to be innate to students, nor were they expressed in essentialist discourse.

Teachers at Maple Lodge also focussed on how curriculum organisation, delivery and assessment placed functional limitations on the inclusion of students deemed to have disability. In addition, they referred to the general insufficiency of supports available to these learners as affecting the ability of team-teaching to respond to their difference (ML Mtg. 2: Turns 203-209). Finally, they cited that the fact that teachers were “rushing through” programme content as a reason why they were unable to offer sufficient individualised support to these learners (ML Mtg. 2 Turns: 203- 209). Again, there was no reference to factors related to innate student characteristics in evaluations of the success of the initiative.

The Willow Way dyad was the only one in which, during evaluation, factors deemed innate to a particular student were thought to have been a significant factor in success or otherwise of the team-teaching initiative (WW Mtg. 3: Turns 12-17). That said, teachers at Willow Way also cited factors such as professional collegiality and compatibility, where the teachers involved were “backing each other up” and “on the same page” in terms of acceptable standards (WW Mtg. 2: Turn 180), including standards of behaviour (WW Mtg. 3: Turn 60). Sufficient time to plan (WW Mtg. 3: Turns 179 and 181) “formally” (WW Mtg. 3: Turn 182) and at an early stage in the team-teaching process (WW Mtg. 3: Turn 114) was also seen as pivotal, including how to best combine teachers’ learning “resources” (WW Mtg. 3: Turn 183). Finally, continuity in the allocation of team-teaching across each week (WW Mtg. 3: Turn 169-178) was seen as very important to success, along with scheduling team-teaching in appropriate teaching and learning spaces (WW Mtg. 3: Turn) to avoid behavioural “carnage” (WW Mtg. 3: Turns 185-189).

Overall, the emphasis placed by teachers in all three settings on the material, organisational and logistical factors associated with team-teaching as a support to inclusion was congruent with social models of disability rather than essentialist ones. The factors cited as having contributed to effective team-teaching emphasised things like the need for staff development, greater and more consistent resource allocation, the development of policy and the evolution of more effective logistics, practices and procedures. It was also congruent with social and cultural models of disability that emphasise the role of schooling in broader societal processes of disablement (Baglieri et al., 2011; Gallagher, 2007). The tendency for teachers to focus on alternatives to essentialist thinking when engaging in evaluations of

team-teaching, suggests that this might be a very useful place to begin the conscientisation of teachers about the negative effects of essentialist discourse on learners.

### **Intersectionality**

Through discussion of the out-of-school lives of students deemed to have disability, including Luke (HP Mtg. 1: Turn 149), Barry (HP Mtg. 1: Turns 296), Conor (HP Mtg. 1: Turns 314-316), Jack (HP Mtg. 1: Turns 318-327, 356, 360), Rachel (HP Mtg. 2: Turn 415) and Claire (HP Mtg. 2: Turns 78, 90-94 and 433), teachers in the Hazel Park dyad showed that they could frame disability in a wider context than just the classroom and school. For example, there was an implicit appreciation in their discussions of the interaction between disability and disadvantage. This moved discussion of disability well beyond essentialist understandings to issues of intersectionality and broader cultural issues.

There was also evidence of an appreciation of intersectional issues at Maple Lodge, where discussions relating to Julia linked to that fact that she came from a family that was newly arrived to Ireland to issues related to her inclusion. Thus Andrew referred to “the whole suspicion around institutions” that was thought to pertain in Julia’s family, a disposition he believed militated against “any kind of involvement” in a partnership with the school that focused on supporting Julia, since this was “culturally anathema to them” (ML Mtg. 1: Turn 216). Deliberations in relation to Phillip at Willow Way were noteworthy for their general lack of reference to factors other than his intrinsic qualities, except during evaluation of the team-teaching initiative. This was despite the fact that his school was located in an area designated as severely disadvantaged. The dearth of such references was interpreted as strategic on the part of the teachers concerned.

### **Continuing Professional Development**

Finally, it was noted that the majority of non-essentialist or counter-hegemonic discourse seemed to be deployed by teachers who had completed recognised continuing professional development in the inclusion of students deemed to have special educational needs. This included Denise at Hazel Park and Claire and Andrew at Maple Lodge. This finding may reflect the fact that these teachers were exposed to a broader range of understandings of disability as a result. Whatever the reason, it suggests a need for continued research on the link between professional development for teachers that includes input on a range of models of understanding in relation to disability and the subsequent deployment of disability discourse in schools and classrooms.

In all three settings, the deployment of counter-essentialist discourses was accompanied by the simultaneous use of essentialist ones that worked to temper their

effects. This suggested a lack of confidence by teachers in their use. It may well be that they need to be reassured of the legitimacy of counter-hegemonic discourses and their epistemological and moral basis in research, practice and knowledge production about disability (Allen, 1996). Programmes of continuing professional development might prove a useful starting point for such cultural work. Similarly, it may be possible to begin to introduce the language of counter-hegemonic discourse into policy and practice guidelines for schools.

## **Overall**

Overall, there was substantial evidence that, as well as using essentialist discourse in oppressive ways, team-teachers also used it to focus on the capabilities of learners deemed to have disabilities and emphasise characteristics they held in common with their peers. There was also evidence of the use a range of non-essentialist discourses, most notably rights-based ones that referred explicitly to the right of learners deemed to have disability to belong to, participate in and benefit from placement in mainstream settings. Other examples of counter-essentialist discourse focussed on how the pragmatics of team-teaching contributed to the enablement or disablement of learners deemed to have disability. These tended to be consistent with social and cultural models of disability and were most frequently deployed during evaluations of the team-teaching initiatives studied. They focussed on issues such as the need for things like personal and professional compatibility between team-teachers, sufficient time to plan lessons, adequate staff development, greater and more consistent resource allocation, managerial support (especially reassurances that team-teaching arrangements would not be interrupted by covering for absent colleagues) and the development of appropriate policies for the establishment and maintenance of team-teaching initiatives.

The preponderance of social and cultural explanations of disability used during teachers' evaluations of team-teaching, suggests that a more systematic approach to the evaluation of boarder school cultures (through the lens of inclusive education), might provide a useful starting point for the broadening of teachers' perspectives on disability and their conscientisation about the deleterious effects of using essentialist discourse to represent learners placed in this category. Discourses that focussed on intersectionality, especially the link between disadvantage and membership of a disability category, could also be capitalised upon to assist with the conscientisation of teachers about the multiplicity of factors (including factor that are extrinsic to learners) that affect the inclusion and exclusion of marginalised groups.

The most intractable issue militating against the disruption of hegemonic essentialist discourse is the adherence of all of the teachers who participated in this study, to fixed and



immutable views about learner ability and disability, even amongst those who had completed recognised continuing professional development relating to the inclusion of diverse learners. It is the number one issue to be addressed if essentialist notions of disability are to be disrupted and the limiting effects of these on team-teaching are to be controverted.

## **10.9 Thesis Summary and Conclusions**

This work focussed on team-teaching as a support to the inclusion of students deemed to have disability in post-primary Irish schools. It noted that the practice has been consistently, if uncritically referenced in Irish educational policy rhetoric as a pedagogic approach that is inherently inclusive and effective in supporting the inclusion of these learners (Department of Education and Science, 2005, 2007, 2014, 2015, 2017a; Government of Ireland, 1993, 2004, 2005; National Council for Special Education, 2010, 2014). It showed how much of the extant literature on team-teaching depicted the practice as a key space within which knowledge around special and general education could coalesce to improve teachers' pedagogic response to the increasingly diverse range of learners they encountered in mainstream classes (Bouck, 2007a; Friend, Cook, Hurley-Chamberlain & Shamberger, 2010; Hourcade & Bauwens, 2002; Kloo & Zigmond, 2008; Pugach & Johnson, 1995; Thousand, Villa, & Nevin, 2006; Villa et al., 2013; Volonino & Zigmond, 2007; Winn & Blanton, 2005). It noted how some scholars had asserted that this is the primary function of team-teaching (Kilanowski-Press, Foote & Rinaldo, 2010; Villa et al., 2008; Walther-Thomas, 1997).

Yet this work also noted that the empirical evidence for such assertions was equivocal, unconvincing, confusing and sometimes contradictory (Murawski & Swanson, 2001; Scruggs, Mastropieri, & McDuffie, 2007; Murawski & Goodwin, 2014; Hattie, 2019). In this context of these contradictory and inconclusive finding, the author wondered why there was such unequivocal support for team-teaching existed within policy rhetoric on inclusive education in Ireland. It noted the conclusions of some seasoned commentators, that this had emanated more from ideological beliefs about where such students should be educated (Friend et al., 2010) and an unwillingness to upset the normative centre of education (Florian, 2014), than any empirical evidence about the usefulness of team-teaching in supporting the development of inclusive pedagogical practice (Thousand, Villa, & Nevin, 2006; Friend et al., 2010; Murawski and Goodwin, 2014). It also noted Murawski and Goodwin's (2014, p. 295) assertion that much of the "ethical confusion about co-teaching" seemed to relate to "ambivalence surrounding inclusion in general" and to a lack of ideological commitment to its principles. The work sought to interrogate the veracity of this assertion.

The fact that the deployment of team-teaching seems to have been predicated primarily on ideological commitments rather empirical evidence of its effectiveness in supporting the inclusion of learners deemed to have disability, meant that it was an ideal subject for analysis within the critical paradigm. Yet, with a few notable exceptions (see, for example, Ashton, 2014; Narian 2010; Rogers, 2002), team-teaching research has paid scant attention to issues of power and ideology or to the development of theoretical understandings that take account of its broader social, historical and cultural contexts and functions. In particular, it has failed to provide an account of the role of discourse, including discourse related to learners deemed to have disability, within team-teaching initiatives or to explain how such discourse positions teachers within particular relations of power that tend to privilege ableist interests. This work set out to redress this imbalance. It responds to calls for closer examination of the discursive contexts of so-called inclusive settings (Naraian, 2010; Aston, 2016) and draws on Critical Disability Studies (Baglieri, et al., 2011; Connor & Valle, 2015; Gallagher et al., 2014; Goodley, 2013; Rogers, 2002) and Foucauldian critical discourse theory (Rogers, 2004b) to do so.

One of the key criticisms that CDS has levelled at the inclusive education movement is that it has allowed a cultural stronghold of essentialism, based on positivist epistemologies of difference associated with traditional forms of special education, to become firmly established within its borders (Allan, 2003; Baglieri, 2017; Florian, 2014; Graham & Slee, 2008; Liasidou, 2012; Riddell & Watson, 2014; Thomas & Loxley, 2007). These writers have suggested that this stronghold hampers attempts to reposition the location of disability from individual learners to broader societal and cultural registers and institutions. Others have suggested that it constrains teachers' thinking about inclusion to a narrow set of teaching and learning possibilities, limits their ability for pedagogic innovation and makes them complicit in the broader functionalist and managerial agendas of post-primary education (Ball, 2013; Hart, 1996; Lynch, Grummell & Devine, 2015; MacRuairc, 2013b; Skrtic, 1991).

Positivist epistemologies have been found to be routinely reconstructed by social actors in second-level schools (see, for example, Ashby, 2010). This has led researchers to conclude that these institutions operate not as inclusive entities, but as "sites where ableist norms of performance ... leave many marginalized", including students with disability (Black-Hawkins et al., 2007 p. 18). Positivist epistemologies are also thought to operate with team-teaching contexts, where they lead to the partitioning of students into *special* and *typical* categories that "presume the 'rightness' of a *normal* (one-size-fits-all) curriculum" and a set of generic teaching practices that can deliver this (Baglieri et al., 2011 p. 272). Baglieri et al. (2011) suggest that such epistemologies position those categorised as *special* as marginal

and cause them to be viewed as extra work for teachers, especially general education teachers (Baglieri et al., 2011).

The current study investigated these issues. In doing so, it followed on from the seminal work of Skrtic (1991), who concluded that special education is generally deployed as “an organizational [*sic*] artefact” that *symbolises* structural change where none has actually occurred (Skrtic, 1991, p. 172). Similarly, this dissertation wondered if team-teaching, when framed within the positivist epistemologies, was deployed in ways that simply gave the impression of underlying reform and allowed the expression of rhetorical support, while simultaneously reinforcing traditional networks of knowledge/power within mainstream and special education, that sustain the “normative centre” (Florian, 2014 p. 13) of Irish post-primary education from which all exclusion derives (Graham & Slee, 2008). In short, it asked whether team-teaching had become a vehicle for the development of inclusive pedagogies or whether it has simply become part of a delusion of inclusion (O’Donnell, 2014).

At the heart of this investigation was a focus on how teachers made meaning about students deemed to have disability, and how they drew on readymade discourses of disability operating in the contexts in which they worked to do so. The study was particularly interested in whether or not the discourses that dominated the processes by which learners deemed to have disability were represented, would show empirical evidence of the cultural colonisation of inclusive education by positivist epistemologies. It was equally interested in whether they would show evidence of discourses that were consistent with the new epistemological base of inclusive education, based on equity, belonging, human rights, social justice, transformability, universal design for learning and quality education for all (Hart, Drummond, McIntyre, & Florian, 2007; Thomas & Loxley, 2007; Connor, 2014; Florian, 2014). Additionally, it was interested in the effects of teachers’ use of disability discourse on their conceptualisations of team-teaching as a support to the inclusion of learners deemed to have disabilities and whether these learners were helped or harmed by the conceptualisations that emerged (Gee, 2004). Finally, it sought to move beyond negative critiques of discourse to a positive one that allowed teachers to chart “possible ways past” oppressive use of disability discourse and mitigate the negative effects of this (Fairclough, 2016, p. 95). Thus it posed the following research questions:

1. What discourses dominated the processes by which teachers in mainstream post-primary schools represented students deemed to have disability during team-teaching meetings?

2. Did these discourses reinforce the cultural stronghold of positivism and essentialism or were they congruent with the new epistemologies of inclusive education?
3. Did the ways in which teachers used discourse to represent learners deemed to have disability influence their conceptualisation of team-teaching as a support to the inclusion of these learners? If so, how?
4. Was there evidence that teachers challenged the use of oppressive discourse to represent learners deemed to have disability within team-teaching meetings? If so, could examples of this be used to chart ways past the use of oppressive discourse in similar team-teaching initiatives in the future?

The dissertation used Critical Discourse Analysis within a Multiple Case Study design to answer these questions. Focusing on three cases of authentic team-teaching, transcripts were generated of three meetings that were held over the course of one academic year pertaining to each. These were subjected to Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) using Fairclough's (2003, 2016) Dialectical-Relational approach. This was done in order to identify and problematise the discourses that dominated teachers' constructions of students deemed to have disability and to examine whether and how these discourses influenced teachers' conceptualisation of team-teaching as a support to the inclusion of such learners. Other data were collected to develop thick descriptions of the contexts in which discourses were deployed. All data were drawn together to analyse whether conceptualisations of team-teaching were grounded in positivist epistemologies or those congruent with inclusive educational goals. Critical Disability Studies theory was incorporated into the Dialectical-Relational approach, to provide a socio-cultural analysis of how learners deemed to have disability were affected by the conceptualisations of team-teaching developed.

Analysis of the genre of team-teaching meetings suggested that the most important factor that governed communication within these was the maintenance and preservation of consensus and solidarity within the teaching team. Otherwise, these meetings focussed mainly on exchange of knowledge about student characteristics, including what were thought to be the innate characteristics of learners deemed to have disabilities. The also focussed on exchange of information about the programmes followed by all learners in the class. This allowed those who controlled the introduction of topics to frame the discursive context within which this information was discussed. Thus knowledge exchange became a key site for the deployment of discourse, including discourse about those deemed to have disability. In all settings, it was the T1 teachers who dominated knowledge exchanges, either by volunteering information or responding to requests to do so. Hence it was these teachers

who dominated the deployment of discourse, including discourse relating to learners deemed to have disability.

Since T1 teachers invariably exercised a *lead* or *class* teacher role, they tended to assume primary responsibility for the engagement of the whole class in mainstream curricula and preparation of students for assessment of this. This meant that the topics they tended to introduce usually focussed on issues related to these things. Such issues tended to dominate the input of *both* teachers at the expense of, for example, discussing how the principles of Assessment for Learning, Universal Design for Learning or differentiation that sought to put specific individualised arrangements or accommodations in place to increase the participation of learners deemed to have disabilities.

The domination of knowledge exchanges by T1 teachers also meant that those in the T2 position had to negotiate with their T1 counterparts for increased access to discursive power within their dyad, an objective that had to be balanced with maintaining solidarity within the teaching team. This introduced an element of social hierarchy into dyads, which privileged the T1 teacher. Activity exchanges discouraged commitments to unilateral in favour of bilateral action. This augmented the tendency of both teachers to focus disproportionately on whole class issues.

Analysis of genre structure of team-teaching meetings showed that decisions and commitments in relation to activity exchanges were usually accompanied by legitimisation of these, which involved the use of warrants and backing associated with particular discourse perspectives on disability. These legitimisations provided a second key site for the deployment of discourse, including discourse about disability. Unlike knowledge exchanges, control over the legitimisation of decisions seemed to be evenly distributed between teachers, which meant that the overall control of T1 teachers over the deployment of discourse was not diminished.

Despite their apparently informal nature, analysis of the genre structure of team-teaching meetings revealed that these conformed to a highly rigid and predictable participant structure that was characteristic of a high degree of social control over semiotic resources for meaning making about disability and the reproduction of hegemonic discourses (Gee, 2012). The precise structure of participant interactions within team-teaching meetings was modelled. It was suggested that essentialist and personal tragedy/charity discourses, based on positivist epistemologies of difference, dominated teachers' representations of learners deemed to have disability *in all settings*. In some instances, these were used to create predominantly negative representations of the students concerned. In others, they were used to develop representations that also focussed on learner capabilities and commonality

between them and their peers. Yet these latter representations were also predicated on what were thought to be innate learner differences. Non-essentialist discourses were also used but to a lesser degree. The use of both essentialist and non-essentialist discourses of disability varied greatly from case to case, according to a number of factors including the teaching role and identity adopted by or ascribed to individual teachers.

For Mehan (1996), discourse is a key cultural tool by which social actors construct clarity out of ambiguity within meaning-making processes. He asserts that, when people hold competing versions of a phenomena, “one or other of the protagonists relinquishes his or her representation of the world as the preferred version, after having heard superior information or having been convinced of the efficacy of an argument” (Mehan, 1996, p. 272). Where teachers deployed dissonant discourses relating to disability, this was usually picked up through the genre features of meetings and resolved by one or other teacher relinquishing their particular discourse position in the face of argumentation presented by their discourse partner. In most cases, this involved the T2 teacher accommodating to the T1 teacher’s discourse representation of disability, which usually had implications for the type of role the T2 played in the team-teaching dyad. This was not the case in Maple Lodge, where Andrew (T2) seemed to enjoy particular epistemic authority in relation to learners deemed to have disability. However, he had to balance the exercise of authority this with his lesser knowledge about the LCA programme and his need to remain deferent to issues related to the establishment of consensus the maintenance of solidarity within the team.

Overall, the reliance of teachers on essentialist and personal tragedy/charity discourses tended to constrain teachers’ thinking and practice around team-teaching to supporting them within programmes already available in their schools (Hart, 1996) rather than what might have been most beneficial to them (Baglieri et al., 2011, p. 273). From a CDS perspective, this practice was construed as less to do with supporting the inclusion of diverse learners and more to do with protecting ableist interests and the normative centre of mainstream education from which all exclusion derives (Florian, 2014; Graham & Slee, 2008; Slee, 2014). In all of the dyads involved teachers elected to focus on trying to maintain all students, including students deemed to have disabilities, within mainstream curricula and preparing them for its assessment. Where T2 teachers were not initially assigned to this role, they either elected to exercise this function or were obliged to do so by their team-teaching partners. For their part, T1 teachers tended to resist approaches to team-teaching that ran counter to this model of team-teaching.

Thus teachers conceptualisations of team-teaching left students deemed to have disability little choice but to either fit into the types of normative identities created for them

and the programmes already in place in these institutions, or accept their exclusion as an inevitable corollary of their inherent exceptionality (such as in the case of Phillip). In these terms, the ways in which team-teaching was construed in the three cases studied, was deemed to be instrumental in reproducing relations of power associated with traditional forms of general and special education (Black-Hawkins & Florian, 2012) rather than to transforming school cultures and practices in celebration of diversity (Barton & Armstrong, 2008) and disrupting the normative centre of education (Florian, 2014). The tendency of teachers to conceptualise team-teaching in this way was also seen as instrumental in re-tasking resources originally deployed to support the inclusion of learners deemed to have disability, away from them and toward learners who were not so categorised. From a CDS perspective this was interpreted as a redirection of resources towards ableist interests and the normative centre of post-primary education.

It may seem difficult to reconcile the discursive dynamics reported above with the positive and genuinely committed nature of the teachers and principals who engaged with this study. Each of these was undoubtedly dedicated to what they perceived to be the best interest of learners in their care. Yet, it is towards the unconscious and hidden qualities of discourse that this dissertation addressed itself specifically. It focuses on the power of oppressive discourse, in the face of the daily acts of genuine solidarity, kindness and dedication of those working with learners deemed to have disability, to mark out and divide learners. It acknowledges that individual acts of this kind cannot counteract the power of positivist epistemologies. This power is too diffuse and too ubiquitous to present a stable target for attack. It is only through educating teachers about the pervasive and pernicious power of such epistemologies, that real transformation towards inclusive education can occur. As O'Donnell (2015 p. 265) acknowledges, it is difficult to create genuinely inclusive institutions that can "replace the asymmetry of a dominant ethos with a participatory ethos in which diverse voices can form and be heard". This involves subverting the power of those who benefit from the status quo and who "have learned to be ... responsive to the ways in which others may be silenced" (O'Donnell, 2015 p. 251).

Subverting the power of ableist interests in the Irish post-primary educational system in favour of the interests of all will be a difficult and long-term project, if it is to be achieved at all. For O'Donnell movement towards inclusive education comes from an ethical standpoint where "non-indifference to the other" provides the key impetus for change (O'Donnell, 2015 p. 251). In taking up O'Donnell's call for such non-indifference, this work presents a positive critique of discourse that can be used by teachers, academics and policy-makers to chart "possible ways past" (Fairclough, 2016, p. 95) the oppressive use of essentialist and

personal tragedy discourse in schools. In identifying instances of previous resistance to these discourses, this critique offers a basis for the *conscientisation* (Freire, 1985) of teachers and others about the inherent dangers of using positivist epistemologies in attempting to develop inclusive policy and practice, including that related to team-teaching. In presenting instances of how and where counter hegemonic discourse has been deployed in the past, this work hopes to offer guidance about where such discourse can be deployed in the future, perhaps with greater effect (Danforth & Rhodes, 1997; Florian, 2014). Only in such actions, can the “forms of structural violence and misrecognition” (O’Donnell, 2015 p. p. 266) that result from the cultural colonisation of inclusive education by positivist epistemologies be challenged. Given the comprehensive and negative ways in which these epistemologies have been seen to colour attempts at conceptualising and implement team-teaching as a support to the inclusion of learners deemed to have disability in this work, this exercise cannot begin soon enough.



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## Appendices

### Appendix A: Initial Email sent to Principals after Initial Telephone Contact from the Researcher

#### Team-teaching to Include: A Multiple Case Study of Teacher Discourse in Irish Second-Level Schools

Dear XXXX,

Thank you for agreeing to be involved in the above research during the 2015-16 academic year. I really appreciate it. Knowing how busy these times can be, I have waited to contact you further in this connection until after the last weeks of term and the opening days of state exams.

As promise during my initial discussion with you, I attach a range of documents for your attention. These include a formal letter inviting you to participate (personally) in the study, a Consent Form to be completed by you in this connection and a Plain Language Statement giving general details of the purpose, scope and general methodology of the study.

While the information attached will give you the general gist of the project I am keen to ensure that your involvement (and that of the staff members you nominate), is adequately explained and that any consent you give is fully informed. For this reason, I would love to meet briefly with you over the next week or so to answer any questions you might have on foot of reading the attached documents. Subject to you being fully satisfied about all aspects of the study, I would also hope to collect a completed Consent Form (attached) from you at that time. Finally, I would hope to get the contact details of teachers who, in your opinion, might also be willing to take part. These should be teachers who, during the 2015-16 school year, are scheduled to team-teach a class that contains at least one student who has been assessed as having a special educational need. Please do not worry if such time-tabling decisions have not been finalised, we can discuss this when we meet. It would be my intention, if are willing for the school to participate, to contact the teachers concerned in the very near future to invite them to participate, to meet with them to address any issues they might raise, and to ensure that any consent I request of them is fully informed.

I would be most grateful if you could respond by return or call or text me on [researcher's telephone number] with times/dates of when might be convenient for you to meet with me briefly.

I look forward to speaking with you soon.

Kind regards,

Eamonn McCauley

## **Appendix B: Letter Inviting Principals to participate in Semi-Structured Interviews**

### **Team-Teaching to Include: A Multiple Case Study of Teacher Discourse in Irish Second-Level Schools**

Dear XXX,

I am writing to follow up on our recent correspondence in connection with the above research. Thank you for agreeing to consider your personal participation and that of your school and in the study. To assist you in considering this matter, I enclose a Plain Language Statement that sets out its purpose and some of the research activities involved. I am happy to be contacted at any time, if further information or clarification is required (see Plain Language Statement for contact details).

As I mentioned during our initial discussion, one strand of the proposed study involves conducting a once-off interview with the principal of each participating school. I hope that you will agree to become involved in one of these. However, if you anticipate that you will not be able to do so, or if you deem it more appropriate that I speak to another member of staff in relation to the issues outlined below, I would ask you to nominate such a person and supply contact details for them. Should you decide to allow the school to participate in the study, I will then contact them directly to see if they will consent voluntarily to participate.

It is anticipated that any interview with you (or your nominee) will last for about thirty-five to forty minutes. I am happy to visit you at your school to complete it, if this is convenient for you. The main focus of the interview will be on your school's experience of team-teaching; especially as it is deployed to support the inclusion of students who have been assessed as having a disability. Information from the interview will be used to give context to other data gathered at the school, including interviews and meetings with teachers involved in a specific team-teaching initiative that will be set up by you. Since I intend to record the interview, I will need specific written permission from you for me to do so (see Consent Form attached).

As you will see from the Plain Language Statement attached herewith, all information provided by you will be treated in strict confidence and every effort will be made to protect your identity and that of your school. This document also emphasises the voluntary nature of your participation, your right to withdraw from the study at any time and your right to decline to engage with any element of it, without and negative consequence or inference as to the reason for you so doing. In addition, if you withdraw from the study, any data generated in relation to you, that you do not want used, will be destroyed immediately.

I will contact you by telephone shortly after the interview to ensure that you are happy with all aspects of how it was conducted. In addition, I will supply you with a transcript of the event so that you can interrogate its accuracy and clarify or add to any point you made during the interview. Finally, I am happy to be contacted throughout the research process, to discuss any aspect pertaining to your participation, or that of your school, in the study (again, see Plain Language Statement for contact details).

If you have already decided to participate, please complete the Consent Form attached and return it to me in the envelope provided. On receipt of this, I will contact you to confirm the date and time of the interview. Otherwise, I will contact you shortly to enquire about your thinking on this matter and to answer any questions or queries that might assist you in reaching a decision.

Thank you most sincerely for giving participation in this study your earnest consideration. I look forward to speaking with you soon.

Yours faithfully,

Eamonn McCauley

# Appendix C: Consent Form for Principals Participating in the Research

## Team-Teaching to Include: A Multiple Case Study of Teacher Discourse in Irish Second-Level Schools

### Consent Form: (Principal/ Key Staff Member)

Regarding the research I have outlined to you in the attached Plain Language Statement and which I am carrying out as part of my Ph.D. Studies at Maynooth University, I would be grateful if you would indicate by ticking the boxes below, whether or not you have been advised:

	Yes	No
• That ethical approval for the conduct of this research has been granted by Maynooth University	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
• That your participation in this research is entirely voluntary and that you can withdraw from it at any time and for any or no reason without negative consequences to you	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
• Of the potential benefits of the research in which you are participating	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
• Of the risks to you of partaking in the research and the safeguards put in place to minimise these risks	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
• That the structured interviews in which you will participate will be audio recorded	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
• That transcriptions made of these interviews will be sent to you and that you will have the opportunity to amend, correct or clarify these	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
• That excerpts from your responses may be included within the thesis report that emerges from this study and that this will be done in a way that safeguards your privacy and anonymity	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Please also sign below to indicate that you have read the **Plain Language Statement** provided and that you are willing to participate voluntarily in the research project explained to you.

If during your participation in this study you feel the information and guidelines that you were given have been neglected or disregarded in any way, or if you are unhappy about the process, please contact the Secretary of the Maynooth University Ethics Committee at [research.ethics@nuim.ie](mailto:research.ethics@nuim.ie) or +353 (0)1 708 6019. Please be assured that your concerns will be dealt with in a sensitive manner.

Yours faithfully,

Eamonn McCauley

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I have read the Plain Language Statement provided and I am willing to participate voluntarily in the research project outlined to me:

Participant's Name (Print): \_\_\_\_\_

Participant's Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

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

# Appendix D: Plain Language Statement for All Participants

## Team-Teaching to Include: A Multiple Case Study of Teacher Discourse in Irish Second-Level Schools

### Plain Language Statement

#### **Introduction**

How we talk about certain things can be a good barometer of our thinking and practice in connection with them. As part of my Ph.D. studies at Maynooth University, I am conducting research into how teachers talk about their involvement in team-teaching; especially when this deployed to support the inclusion of students who have been assessed as having disabilities. In doing so, I hope to shed light on the complex, and sometimes competing demands on teachers as they attempt to provide inclusive education to such students within Irish mainstream second-level schools.

#### **Methodology**

The research uses a multiple case study approach. This involves gathering information from a variety of sources within each of a set of purposively selected schools. Initially, each school will be studied as a case study in its own right. Thereafter all of the schools will be considered in unison, but with a specific focus; teacher discourse about inclusion.

#### **Team-Teaching Meetings**

Since the main focus of the study is on teacher talk, samples of this will be gathered from (at least three) meetings that will be held to discuss a specific team-teaching initiative in which they are involved during the 2015-16 academic year. Since at each meeting, teachers will discuss real and recent experiences of team-teaching, it is anticipated that their discussions will be highly grounded in these learning encounters.

#### **Other Data Sources**

To give context to the samples of teacher talk collected during team-teaching meetings, information will be gathered from other sources within each school. These will include: individual semi-structured interviews with each participant of each team-teaching dyad in each school, semi-structured interviews with the principal of each school or their nominee, published school policy documents and other materials. A very small amount of anonymised assessment data will be sought in relation to numbers of students who have been assessed as having disability within each team-taught class.

#### **Privacy and Confidentiality**

The research will be conducted within the parameters set out by the British Educational Research Association (BERA) in its *Ethical Guidelines for Educational Research (2011)*. It has received the approval of the Ethics Committee of Maynooth University. All information provided by you will be treated in strictest confidence. Any reference to you will be removed from transcripts. Codes will be assigned to individual participants, the key for which will be held securely and separately from recordings or transcripts of data. Every effort will be made

to preserve your anonymity and that of your school when reporting on the findings of the study. With your permission however (see attached), I will use anonymous quotations from the data to support assertions based on this.

All data gathered during the study will be kept securely in a locked filing cabinet and any data stored electronically will be kept on a password protected and encrypted laptop. Data pertaining to the study will be held for a maximum of one year after the completion of the author's PhD studies, after which time, it will either be destroyed or further permission will be sought from participants for its continued use.

While it is a highly unlikely circumstance, I am required by Maynooth University to inform participants that in some cases, the confidentiality of research data and records may be overridden by the courts, such as in the event of litigation or in the course of investigation by lawful authority. In such circumstances, Maynooth University will take all reasonable steps within the law to ensure that the confidentiality of data collected will be maintained, to the greatest possible extent.

### **Voluntary Participation**

It is important that you understand that your participation in this study is entirely voluntary. You should not feel pressurised in any way to take part. If you decide to participate, you may decline to engage with any question put to you during interviews or any element of discussions that takes place during meetings. No inference will be made as to the reasons for your declining to engage, which is your right. No adverse consequence will accrue to you as a result. In addition, if you decide to withdraw from the study, you may do so at any time and for any reason or none. Again, in such circumstances, no inference will be drawn from your action and you will experience no negative consequence as a result. In such circumstances all data gathered from you, that you do not wish used in the study, will be destroyed immediately. No significant risks to you are anticipated as a result of your participation in this study.

### **Further Questions or Queries**

If you wish to discuss any aspect of the study or if you would like additional information to assist you in reaching a decision about your involvement in it, please do not hesitate to contact me by telephone or e-mail using the details below. I am also available to meet with you by appointment if you so wish.

Whether or not you decide to become involved with this research, I would like to thank you most sincerely for consideration participation in it. If you do decide to take part, I look forward to speaking with you soon.

Yours faithfully,

Eamonn McCauley

Ph.D. Candidate, Maynooth University, Maynooth, Co. Kildare, Ireland.

E-mail:           XXXX           Mobile:           XXXX

# Appendix E: Letter of Invitation to Teachers to Participate in the Research

## Team-Teaching to Include: A Multiple Case Study of Teacher Discourse in Irish Second-Level Schools

### Invitation to Participate (Teacher)

Dear XXXX,

Thank you most sincerely for agreeing to consider participation in the above research. To assist you in coming to a final decision about this, I have attached a *Plain Language Statement* that sets out some detail on the purpose of the research, its rationale and some of the key activities involved. I would also like to assure you that the management authorities of your school have acceded to the research being carried out there.

There are two aspects of the study in which I would like you to engage directly. The first involves taking part in a once-off interview with me, to discuss your thoughts on team-teaching and your experiences to date of its practice. I am particularly interested in your thoughts on team-teaching as it is deployed to support the inclusion of students who have been assessed as having a disability. I anticipate that the interview will last for about forty minutes and occur in a location that is mutually agreed. For your convenience, I am happy for it to take place at your school; though this does not need to be the case. Since I intend to record the interview, I will need specific written permission from you for me to do so (using the *Consent Form* attached).

I would also ask you to participate in a series of three meetings with your team-teaching colleague, to occur by mutual agreement at specific intervals throughout the 2015-2016 school year. It is anticipated that each will last for approximately forty minutes and focus on a single team-teaching initiative in which you will be jointly involved. The general conduct of these meetings will be a matter for you and your colleague. However, I would ask that explicit discussion take during each meeting that is focused on the impact of team-teaching on the inclusion of students within the class who have been assessed as having disabilities.

I do not intend to take any active part in your discussions or deliberations. My role will be solely to observe, to take a few notes and to assist with the logistics of the meetings. Since I intend to audio-record them, I will require written permission from you to do so (again, see attached). It may be unrealistic to expect that you will be entirely unaffected by the presence of a voice recorder and an observer (myself) at your meetings. However, during the meetings, I would ask you to try to talk and act as if these things were not present. This is because I am interested in recording, to the greatest degree possible, the *natural* teacher talk that pertains to -teaching. As a course tutor who regularly visits teachers in their classrooms who are engaged in continuing professional development programmes, I notice that the impact of my presence progressively diminishes as such visits progress. I hope this will be your experience as I sit in on the above meetings.

In closing, may I note my belief that your contribution to this study will allow the perspective of the practicing teacher to be represented centrally in the data collected. As a result, I think that the findings of the study will be more authentic, more grounded and more credible than would otherwise be the case. In this way, you will contribute to greater understanding of the factors that influence teachers' thinking (and perhaps action) as they go about team-teaching to support of the inclusion of students who are deemed to have disabilities.

I will be in contact with you shortly to enquire about whether or not you intend to proceed with your participation in the study. Thereafter, we can, hopefully, confirm the date and time of my initial interview with you. Whatever you decide, may I take this opportunity to thank you again for taking the time to give earnest consideration to your participation in this study. I look forward to speaking with you soon.

I am happy to be contacted at any time, if further information or clarification is required (see Plain Language Statement for contact details).

Yours faithfully,

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Eamonn McCauley

# Appendix F: Teachers Consent Form for Participation in the Research

## Team-Teaching to Include: A Multiple Case Study of Teacher Discourse in Irish Second-Level Schools

### Consent Form: (Teacher)

Regarding the research I have outlined to you in the attached Plain Language Statement and which I am carrying out as part of my Ph.D. Studies at Maynooth University, I would be grateful if you would indicate by ticking the boxes below, whether or not you have been advised:

- |  | Yes                      | No                       |
|--|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| • That ethical approval for the conduct of this research has been granted by Maynooth University   | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| • That your participation in this research is entirely voluntary and that you can withdraw from it at any time and for any or no reason, without negative consequences to you            | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| • Of the potential benefits of the research in which you are participating   | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| • Of any risks to you of partaking in the research and the safeguards put in place to minimise these   | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| • That the structured interviews and meetings in which you participate will be audio recorded  | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| • That transcriptions made of these interviews will be sent to you and that you will have the opportunity to amend, correct or clarify these   | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| • That excerpts from your responses may be included within the thesis report that emerges from this study and that this will be done in a way that safeguards your privacy and anonymity | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

Please also sign below to indicate that you have read the **Plain Language Statement** provided and that you are willing to participate voluntarily in the research project explained to you.

If during your participation in this study you feel the information and guidelines that you were given have been neglected or disregarded in any way, or if you are unhappy about the process, please contact the Secretary of the Maynooth University Ethics Committee at [research.ethics@nuim.ie](mailto:research.ethics@nuim.ie) or +353 (0)1 708 6019. Please be assured that your concerns will be dealt with in a sensitive manner.

Yours faithfully,

Eamonn McCauley

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I have read the Plain Language Statement provided and I am willing to participate voluntarily in the research project outlined to me:

Participant's Name (Print): \_\_\_\_\_

Participant's Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

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



## **Appendix G: Letter that Accompanied Transcript sent to Participant for Review**

### **Team-Teaching to Include: A Multiple Case Study of Teacher Discourse in Irish Second-Level Schools**

#### **Letter to accompany Transcript of Interview / Meeting**

Dear XXXX,

I hope this letter finds you well.

As promised, please find enclosed a copy of the transcript of the recent interview/meeting, in which you participated as part of the above research.

I would be grateful if you would review this to confirm its accuracy, correct anything you consider inaccurate and check that your views and responses have been properly represented. If you would like to clarify any contribution that you made during the interview/meeting or if you wish to add any further comment, please do so on the transcript document itself and return this to me in the stamped and addressed envelope provided. Alternatively, you can append a note or statement to the transcript before returning it to me.

If you do not wish to make any change or comment, there is no need to return the transcript to me. If I do not hear from you in the coming weeks, I will assume you are happy with my record of the interview.

Can I take this opportunity to thank you again most sincerely for your invaluable contribution to this research. It is very much appreciated.

Yours faithfully,

---

Eamonn McCauley

## Appendix H: Selection of Individual Learners deemed to have Disability in each Case Study Site for Analysis of Discourse (Representational meanings)

### Selection of Individual Learners deemed to have Disability in each Case Study Site for analysis of Discourse (Representational Meanings)

School Name	Pseudonym	Category of Disability Referred to by Teachers	Times Each Student's Name was mentioned in meetings	Word-count explicitly discussing this student	Selected?			
			Mtg.1	Mtg.2	Mtg.3	Total		
Hazel Park *	1. Darren	Physical Disability, Specific Speech and Language Disorder.	10	9	1	20	1,491	√
	2. Tom	Specific Learning Disability (Dyslexia), Developmental Coordination Disorder	1	10	3	14	364	X
	3. Lauren	Specific Learning Disability (Dyslexia)	1	10	0	11	595	X
Maple Lodge	1. Louise	Specific Speech and Language Disorder	9	7	4	20	1,346	X
	2. Julia	Moderate General Learning Disability	11	4	4	19	2,778	√
	3. Aoife	Speech and Language Disorder; Borderline Mild GLD; Dyspraxia	12	3	3	18	1442	X
Willow Way	1. Phillip	SEBD	6	7	3	16	2,437	√
	2. N/A	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
	3. N/A	-	-	-	-	-	-	-

\* Note: Within the Hazel Part group there was one student who was spoken about more than the three learners outlined above (Elizabeth). While she had been queried as having selective mutism, no assessment of this had been attempted and no information was available to corroborate teachers' assertions that this might have been the case. Hence, she was not included for analysis and selection.

# Appendix I: Authors 8 Question Checklist for Analysis of Representational Meanings relating to Learners Deemed to have Disability and Others.

## Checklist Questions (Representational Meaning)

1. How were they lexicalised?

- predominance of particular words
- co-location of pairs or groups

2. How were they classified?

(a) Were they Classified in particular ways:

- personalised or impersonalised ways,
- individually or collectively,
- specifically or generically
- by name or function
- objectivated
- anonymised
- aggregated into vague groups
- suppressed or omitted

(b) Did classifications refer to “pre-constructed classificatory schemes/systems” (students with special needs, dyslexics)

3. How were they grammatically positioned?

- Were they placed early/late in sentences, embedded in more/ less prominent clauses?

4. How were they represented through social action?

- What grammatical *roles* were they put in, actor or acted upon, subject or object?
- What was the level of abstraction assigned to actions (generalised, non-specific, little detail, etc.)?
- Were they represented through positive or negative characteristics or processes associated with them?

- Did prepositional phrases (for, at, after) reduce responsibility for the actions of some?
- Were adjuncts added qualifications to their agency that made them seem more/less central to the action and affect their status/agency?

5. How did argumentation place them in causal, comparative, or contrastive relations?

6. Was transitivity used to attribute agency to some and not others? What kind of transaction was depicted?

- material or behavioural consequences (associated with considerable agency)
- mental or verbal level (associated with little agency)
- like or unlike other phenomena
- simply referring to the existence of something

7. How were people quoted?

- Neutral: little or no intervention by the author
- *Metapropositional: the author's interpretation of what was said*
- *Metalinguistic: the kind of language used (grumbled)*
- *Descriptive: the type of interaction involved*
- *Transcript relate quotation to other parts of the discourse (added, continued)*

8. Was nominalisation (transforming a process into a noun) used to elide agency, e.g. "the exclusion of students"

## Appendix J: Detailed Analysis of the Instance of Each Type of Exchange in Each Meeting and Dyad.

Table 1

### Types of Exchange Recorded within Hazel Park Team-Teaching Meetings

	Meeting 1		Meeting 2		Meeting 3		Totals		
<b>Knowledge Exchanges</b>									
<b>Knower Initiated</b>	<b>39</b>		<b>40</b>		<b>38</b>		<b>117</b>		
	T1*	T2*	T1	T2	T1	T2	T1	T2	
	31	8	32	8	23	15	86	31	
<b>Other Initiated</b>	<b>33</b>		<b>15</b>		<b>11</b>		<b>59</b>		
	T1	T2	T1	T2	T1	T2	T1	T2	
	4	29	2	13	2	9	8	51	
<b>Total Knowledge Exchanges:</b>							<b>176</b>		
<b>Activity Exchanges</b>									
<b>Actor Initiated</b>	<b>7</b>		<b>1</b>		<b>6</b>		<b>14</b>		
	T1	T2	T1	T2	T1	T2	T1	T2	
	5	2	1	0	6	0	12	2	
<b>Other Initiated</b>	<b>9</b>		<b>13</b>		<b>7</b>		<b>29</b>		
	T1	T2	T1	T2	T1	T2	T1	T2	
	7	2	9	4	6	1	22	7	
<b>Total Activity Exchanges:</b>							<b>43</b>		

\* Note: Where T1 = Denise, the teacher first assigned to the class and T2 = Saoirse, the teacher assigned later to team-teach with that class.

**Table 2**

**Types of Exchange Recorded within Maple Lodge Team-Teaching Meetings**

	Meeting 1		Meeting 2		Meeting 3		Totals	
<b>Knowledge Exchanges</b>								
<b>Knower Initiated</b>	<b>33</b>		<b>50</b>		<b>38</b>		<b>121</b>	
	T1*	T2*	T1	T2	T1	T2	T1	T2
	23	10	38	12	24	14	85	36
<b>Other Initiated</b>	<b>14</b>		<b>12</b>		<b>17</b>		<b>43</b>	
	T1	T2	T1	T2	T1	T2	T1	T2
	3	11	1	11	3	14	7	36
<b>Total Knowledge Exchanges:</b>							<b>164</b>	.
<b>Activity Exchanges</b>								
<b>Actor Initiated</b>	<b>4</b>		<b>8</b>		<b>5</b>		<b>17</b>	
	T1	T2	T1	T2	T1	T2	T1	T2
	2	2	4	4	4	1	10	7
<b>Other Initiated</b>	<b>18</b>		<b>14</b>		<b>20</b>		<b>52</b>	
	T1	T2	T1	T2	T1	T2	T1	T2
	10	8	5	9	8	12	23	29
<b>Total Activity Exchanges:</b>							<b>69</b>	.

\* Note: Where T1 = Claire, the teacher first assigned to the class and T2 = Andrew, the teacher assigned later to team-teach with that class.

**Table 3**

**Types of Exchange Recorded within Willow Way Team-Teaching Meetings**

	Meeting 1		Meeting 2		Meeting 3		Totals	
<b>Knowledge Exchanges</b>								
<b>Knower Initiated</b>	<b>36</b>		<b>49</b>		<b>28</b>		<b>113</b>	
	T1*	T2*	T1	T2	T1	T2	T1	T2
	31	5	32	17	20	8	83	30
<b>Other Initiated</b>	<b>11</b>		<b>13</b>		<b>3</b>		<b>27</b>	
	T1	T2	T1	T2	T1	T2	T1	T2
	9	2	12	1	1	2	22	5

**Total Knowledge Exchanges: 140 .**

**Activity Exchanges**

<b>Actor Initiated</b>	<b>10</b>		<b>6</b>		<b>0</b>		<b>16</b>	
	T1	T2	T1	T2	T1	T2	T1	T2
	3	7	4	2	0	0	7	9
<b>Other Initiated</b>	<b>34</b>		<b>15</b>		<b>2</b>		<b>51</b>	
	T1	T2	T1	T2	T1	T2	T1	T2
	22	12	9	6	2	0	33	18

**Total Activity Exchanges: 67 .**

\* Note: Where T1 = Fiona, the teacher first assigned to the class and T2 = Meadhbh, the teacher assigned later to team-teach with that class.

## Appendix K: Checklist of each type of use to which each teacher put their turns in each meeting (to a maximum of 3).

### 1. Suggestions

Hazel Park			Maple Lodge			Willow Way		
Denise			Claire			Fiona		
Meeting	1	\\\	Meeting	1	\\\	Meeting	1	\\\
	2	\\\		2	\\\		2	\\\
	3	\\\		3	\\\		3	\\\
Saorise			Andrew			Meadhbh		
Meeting	1	\\\	Meeting	1	\\\	Meeting	1	\\\
	2	\\\		2	\\\		2	\\\
	3	\\\		3	\\\		3	\\\

### 2. Confirmation

Hazel Park			Maple Lodge			Willow Way		
Denise			Claire			Fiona		
Meeting	1	\\\	Meeting	1	\\\	Meeting	1	\\\
	2	\\\		2	\\\		2	\\\
	3	\\\		3	\\\		3	\\\
Saorise			Andrew			Meadhbh		
Meeting	1	\\\	Meeting	1	\\\	Meeting	1	\\\
	2	\\\		2	\\\		2	\\\
	3	\\\		3	\\\		3	\\\

### 3. Clarification

Hazel Park			Maple Lodge			Willow Way		
Denise			Claire			Fiona		
Meeting	1	\\\	Meeting	1	\\\	Meeting	1	\\\
	2	\\\		2	\\\		2	\\\
	3	\\\		3	\\\		3	\\\
Saorise			Andrew			Meadhbh		
Meeting	1	\\\	Meeting	1	\\\	Meeting	1	\\\
	2	\\\		2	\\\		2	\\\
	3	\\\		3	\\\		3	\\\

### 4. Contradiction

Hazel Park			Maple Lodge			Willow Way		
Denise			Claire			Fiona		
Meeting	1	\\\	Meeting	1	\\\	Meeting	1	\\\



	2	\\		2	\\		2	\\
	3	\		3	\\		3	-
<b>Saorise</b>			<b>Andrew</b>			<b>Meadhbh</b>		
Meeting	1	\\	Meeting	1	\\	Meeting	1	\\
	2	\		2	\\		2	\\
	3	\\		3	-		3	-

## 5. Interruption

Hazel Park			Maple Lodge			Willow Way		
<b>Denise</b>			<b>Claire</b>			<b>Fiona</b>		
Meeting	1	\\	Meeting	1	\\	Meeting	1	\\
	2	\\		2	\\		2	\\
	3	\\		3	\\		3	\\
<b>Saorise</b>			<b>Andrew</b>			<b>Meadhbh</b>		
Meeting	1	\\	Meeting	1	\\	Meeting	1	\\
	2	\\		2	\\		2	\\
	3	\\		3	\\		3	\\

## 6. Interpretation/Opinion

Hazel Park			Maple Lodge			Willow Way		
<b>Denise</b>			<b>Claire</b>			<b>Fiona</b>		
Meeting	1	\\	Meeting	1	\\	Meeting	1	\\
	2	\\		2	\\		2	\\
	3	\\		3	\\		3	\\
<b>Saorise</b>			<b>Andrew</b>			<b>Meadhbh</b>		
Meeting	1	\\	Meeting	1	\\	Meeting	1	\\
	2	\\		2	\\		2	\\
	3	\\		3	\\		3	\\

## 7. Summary

Hazel Park			Maple Lodge			Willow Way		
<b>Denise</b>			<b>Claire</b>			<b>Fiona</b>		
Meeting	1	\\	Meeting	1	\\	Meeting	1	\\
	2	\\		2	\\		2	\
	3	\\		3	\\		3	-
<b>Saorise</b>			<b>Andrew</b>			<b>Meadhbh</b>		
Meeting	1	\\	Meeting	1	\\	Meeting	1	\\
	2	\\		2	\\		2	\
	3	\\		3	\\		3	-