Kim L. Hudson, MURDOCH UNIVERSITY, K.Hudson@murdoch.edu.au
Samuel K. Teague, MURDOCH UNIVERSITY, Samuel.Teague@murdoch.edu.au

"Pairing is Crucial": Collaborative Reflective Practice and Team Teaching for Transforming Learning and Teaching

ABSTRACT

In this study, we explore two academics' critical reflective process as they transition from predominantly online solo teaching work into a shared classroom teaching arrangement, including the impact on their teaching approaches and practices. We employed an autoethnographic and action research methodology to facilitate the shift from critical reflection to collaborative action within a purposefully designed shared teaching classroom space. Leveraging Baeten and Simons' five-pronged team teaching model, we articulate the benefits and challenges of shared teaching responsibilities through the practices of adaptability, open communication, emotional intelligence, and the splitting of cognitive load and practical responsibilities. We suggest that the practice of shared teaching paired with a formal collaborative reflective process is central to authentically revealing teaching values and approaches and can form the basis for acquiring new knowledge and transforming effective learning and teaching practices. This serves as a powerful means to enhance educator professional development in order to support student learning in tertiary education.

KEYWORDS

collaborative reflective practice, shared teaching, paired teaching, team teaching, educator transformation, higher education

INTRODUCTION

This study began as a conversation between two academics about how to manage the unit coordination and teaching workload in a second-year interdisciplinary data analytics unit at an Australian university. As colleagues working together for two years in the same portfolio with a shared office—a context quite unique within this university—we had an opportunity to build trust through an unfolding narrative about career aspirations, the development of an academic identity in an interdisciplinary, centrally delivered "third space" context, and within a university undergoing strategic change. In a similar position to what Bennett, Hobson, Jones, Martin-Lynch, Scutt, Strehlow, and Veitch (2016) described as "occupying a strange place in the university," we found ourselves in the unique position of one academic "handing over" the unit coordination to the other at the same time as we transitioned from online teaching to the physical classroom. These changes prompted some individual self-reflection on our planning, coordination, and teaching abilities and provided an opportunity to share the teaching as well as to undertake a scholarly reflective process.

Prior to this, the advent and unfurling of events associated with the COVID-19 pandemic had significantly reshaped contemporary life (Pifarré i Arolas, Acosta, López-Casasnovas, Lo, Nicodemo, Riffe, and Myrskyla 2021) and informed a complete unravelling of our previous means of social

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connection. As higher education became rendered to the online space and language and social norms shifted as "social distancing" became a global preoccupation, so too did the construction of makeshift workplaces. Working from home became a necessity at the height of the pandemic, and even as the virus receded in its perceived threat in the popular imagination, particularly during 2022, work-from-home (WFH) arrangements remained commonplace.

In Western Australia, where the worst of the pandemic did not arrive until 2021, tertiary educators still found themselves delivering lectures and tutorials from makeshift workspaces in their homes, in part because of the need to protect the health of their peers and fellow citizens but also because the job no longer required their presence on campus. Without any formal directive to return to work on site in a permanent and organized capacity during 2023–2024, many academics still found themselves working within geographically dispersed teams, despite residing in the same local area, posing novel challenges for established and emerging leaders (Teague, Hudson, and Oyama 2025; Webb, Wagstaff, Rayner, and Thelwell 2016). The disruption of COVID-19 has since been compounded by several additional social, cultural, and technological changes, some more historically significant than others. Educators have had to contend with the growth and proliferation of generative AI. Some have had to adapt to a shift towards the development of STEM skills in undergraduate students, even non-STEM ones, and while the students may have adapted well, educators report feeling burnt out, overworked, and spread thin (Teague and Hudson 2024).

Over the past 30 years, reflective practice has emerged as an evidence-based professional development activity within the scholarship of teaching and learning (SoTL), woven through the broader tapestry of educational developments (Cruz, Grodziak, and Steiner 2023; Geertsema 2016; Mohd-Yusof and Samah 2022). Educators who reflect on their own teaching endeavors to develop creative and innovative approaches aim to transform teaching and enhance student learning (Geertsema 2016; Mohd-Yusof et al. 2022). The reflective practitioner thinks "in action" and reflects "post action" (Schön 1992) which involves two phases: the first in the classroom while teaching is occurring, and the second, a post class reflection on action (Cruz et al. 2023). It is against this backdrop that we began working together in a shared teaching arrangement and committed to undertaking a reflective approach to manage the transition from online teaching into the physical classroom, as well as to ascertain if working and reflecting together would translate to a transformation of our teaching practices.

Aim

Our study evolved during a time of broader institutional change and within that, a redistribution of staffing resources across unit delivery. The purpose of the shared-teaching approach central to this study was threefold. First, the authors hoped and believed that the best way to hand over leadership and curriculum ownership in a tertiary unit would be to support and facilitate content-related knowledge development in a collaborative environment. This sentiment arose as both authors had experienced working in teams successfully elsewhere and had worked with each other on projects in a productive and supportive manner. Second, and no less important, the authors believed that a partnership would divide emotion work and cognitive load, which is almost always handled by just one academic. This might mitigate some of the change related stressors often experienced. Third, by undertaking a reflective practitioner approach, we aimed to understand and learn more about our own teaching approaches—to share and transform ourselves as educators. This desire to share cognitive load and emotion work within the classroom had become necessary, given several internal organizational changes, combined with the broader disruptions outlined in the introduction to this paper.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The portrait of a tertiary educator in the minds of contemporary citizens is almost always one of a man, standing alone at the front of a room, mouth agape, mid-sentence. Certainly, the image might no longer reflect the tweed-jacket Hollywood style John Keating, portrayed by Robin Williams in *Dead Poet's Society* (1989), but an analysis of the cultural imagination does not yield an image of two educators, but one. Indeed, in the context of a western industrialized society, we are a highly individualized group of beings (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim 2002), and before a consideration of the collective often comes an awareness of ourselves as singular, particularly regarding our professional pursuits. Acknowledging there are differences in collective and individual tendencies across professional environments and within the university context, this perhaps helps explain why there is such reluctance on the part of many tertiary educators to embrace shared-teaching arrangements in the classroom. This reluctance is despite a growing institutional need and a belief that if students are to be adequately supported in their learning journey, then educator partnerships need to be normalized and accepted (Crawford and Jenkins 2015).

A review of the relevant literature pertaining to team-teaching, including paired and shared arrangements and the spaces within which educators work with students, is divided into two parts. The first summarizes the team teaching models drawn on and adapted for the present study; the second examines the growing need to embrace shared and team-teaching arrangements and the efficacy of such partnerships.

The team teaching model explained and adapted

The contemporary shift towards more open and collaborative classroom spaces has its roots in 1960s North America (Gray 1978). The United Kingdom implemented a similar approach shortly thereafter; closely followed by Australia in the 1970s (Freeman 1969). Despite the initial positivity infused into the team-teaching approach, the arrangement did not grow as anticipated. One prevailing issue cited was the reluctance on the part of some tertiary educators to teach in front of their peers; that is, to expose themselves (Crawford et al. 2015). As such, much of the research on team-teaching arrangements and models available for adoption in the classroom is quite new and continuously evolving. Baeten and Simons (2014) describe five unique team teaching models, some of which present as independent options for educators, while others are more malleable and fit neatly together. The observational model involves one passive teacher observing another educator performing their craft. There is minimal active involvement from the observer, and this first model presents as an entirely passive learning process wherein one educator learns through observation. The coaching model involves a more senior educator taking on significant responsibility in guiding the primary teacher, offering suggestions, assistance, and support where appropriate. The assistant-teaching model involves one clear leader within the classroom, complemented by another who supplements the learning experience for students, most often by way of moving from group to group and offering support and guidance when required. Other scholars have described this assistant-teaching model as "back-up teaching" (Smith 2004). In the equal status model, both educators are on even ground. In delivering curriculum to students, the educators can take on a sequential approach, alternating different aspects of the delivery; they can run parallel learning experiences where the class is divided into two groups, and both educators deliver the same content; or they can take a station teaching approach within the broader equal status model, where sub-groups within the class focus on different tasks, and the educators offer guidance and support. The fifth and final model, according to Baeten et al. (2014), is the teaming model, where educators genuinely and authentically share every aspect of the teaching experience. Both educators are in front of the student group, and in this model, educators often discuss ideas openly in real time.

Lev Vygotsky's zone of proximal development can underpin the notion that two educators, when working in tandem (teaming), can learn from each other. This developmental model suggests that the gap between a learner's skillset and what they are capable of mastering is filled when paired with the right support and assistance and within a space where that development is allowed to flourish (Walker 2010). While the definition of team-teaching varies, the educators central to this study entered an arrangement whereby they collaborated on the design, delivery, and evaluation of teaching materials for a course. They committed to sharing the experience together and then communicating their reflections through dialogue based on those experiences.

The need for team-teaching and how to make it work

While many tertiary educators continue to express a reluctance to embrace team teaching in the classroom, as well as citing the institutional expense of having two educators in the classroom rather than one (Rooks, Scandlyn, Pelowich and Lor 2022), there is a growing need and belief that educator partnerships are required if students are going to be supported in their learning experience. Educators handle the various challenges of delivering courses combined with developing approaches concerning Artificial Intelligence, the need for evolving and agile digital literacy skills, and challenges relating to developing communication skills in a growing market of international students. Crawford et al. (2015) describe team teaching as an innovative approach to learning and teaching, given these technological changes in the higher education sector, growing class sizes, shifting student expectations, and ongoing faculty/budgetary constraints more broadly.

Knights and Sampson (1995) articulate that team teaching is also presented as a largely untapped area for professional development because of the opportunity it offers for ongoing collaborative reflection. More recently, studies focused on "paired teaching" support the benefits of peer learning as a positive way to enhance an educator's skills to facilitate active learning (Moghtader, Strubbe, Stang, and Clarke 2022). For the partnership to work successfully, particularly in light of research suggesting tertiary educators are largely reluctant to expose their teaching practices to other academics, one of the fundamental tenets for successful collaboration is humility. To that, scholars have added empathy, openness to experience (which might suggest a personality dimension to a successful partnership), a willingness to admit when one is wrong and/or has made a mistake, and a readiness to embrace cohesion over competition (Fahey 2008). Additionally, Mansell (1974) added the following: respect and trust, the ability to listen and disclose, assertiveness, empathy, the normalization of a feedback process in the working relationship, and a willingness to challenge each other to action.

Adding to the broad cultural and institutional challenges that have impacted the lives of tertiary academics across the globe, it is suggested that time for professional development is often limited and particularly costly for the modern university (Birman, Carlson Le Floch, Klekotka, Ludwig, Taylor, Walters, Wayne, et al. 2007; Smith, Ralston, Naegele, and Waggoner 2020). As such, a team-teaching approach presents a valuable avenue for professional development, because it affords educators the opportunity to engage in self-improvement, to guide or share guidance of a hands-on learning experience, and to inform extensive teaching reflection. Garet, Porter, Desimone, Birman, and Suk Yoon (2001) developed the Team Teaching and Learning (TTL) framework and used it in secondary school teachers in the United States. They intended for the model to apply to teams of three or four teachers. We cite this model because many of its pillars were central to the present study, in addition to the model being a sound predictor of team-teaching success. The TTL framework includes: (1) development of content knowledge; (2) opportunities for active learning; (3) collective participation from teachers from the same department/school; (4) a duration of at least 20 hours of contact time in order to facilitate robust professional development; and (5) coherence with other learning activities and institutional goals (Garet et al. 2001). In the findings section of this paper, we discuss the extent to which we implemented each of these five pillars of the TTL framework within our team-teaching approach, and the reasons we found some easier to adhere to than others.

METHOD

For this study we used action research with its embedded individual and collective autoethnographic reflection. Pelton (2010) stated that one of the benefits of action research is that it embeds the scholar or educator into the "local conditions,"' outside of inconsistently generalizable truths presented in academic literature. The educator acts based on research, then reflects on their actions, and then acts again. What is also attractive about this methodological approach is the space it affords the educators to "read the mood of the room" and respond (Crawford et al. 2015). The cyclical and reflective nature of action research made it ideal in meeting the goals of the present study. Infused with Hendricks' (2006) "classroom action research" focus, the action research process involved acting, observing the action, reflecting on the action, planning, and then acting again. The process is systematic, well-organized, and not for scholars intolerant of structure (Alber 2011; Johnson 2012). When issues or problems arise in the learning experience, they are funneled like mice into the processual wheel identified above, where they are then acted on and ironed out. The result is often an improved teacher-education practice (Crawford et al. 2015). Finally, reflecting and writing together provided an opportunity to take pause, discuss, and reflect on our collective teaching story as both observers and contributors to the broader field of self-narrative research (Throssell and Lu 2023).

Data collection

In developing the tools for data collection, we were conscious of maintaining each individual narrative as well as being able to give voice to moments of collective learning. Our approach was twofold: (1) to pilot a reflective process that would allow us to explore our responses and thoughts and reactions to entering a new teaching space, and (2) to observe and document any resulting transformations within ourselves and each other as teaching academics. We aimed to explore the benefits and setbacks of shared teaching from an educator point of view.

Prior to the start of the semester, both authors committed to writing a reflective journal using a series of predetermined prompts to develop some basic themes for data collection and analysis. The prompts included feelings; thoughts; key observations; concerns or questions; changes (teaching knowledge or practice); observations of self-transformation; observations of others' transformation. Both authors completed an individual reflection prior to the start of the semester, before each class, and then together post class and post semester respectfully. We did not teach every class across the semester together, some were conducted solo, and these were discussed in comparison accordingly. Our collaborative class time and reflections included observations on our own or each other's transformation of teaching approaches and practice. We collated these reflections and formed an "Into the Classroom" series of journal entries, converted into a word document and analyzed using NVIVO. We then organized this data into themes, presented in the findings section of this paper.

Benchmark–teaching expertise

As most academics do, we came to this collaborative space with different levels of teaching expertise and classroom experience. As McKenzie, Hains-Weeson, Bangay, and Bowtell (2022) point out, in setting up a team-teaching approach, it is important to understand the various teaching skills and levels of each member. The second author (Educator 2) had been teaching online for at least five years before developing this data analytics unit and had transitioned to teaching back into the classroom for the two semesters prior to this study. With significant prior in-class experience in another university, meant a clear lead/follow dynamic naturally emerged as the starting point with Educator 2 leading and Educator 1 following, reflecting a mixture of Baeten et al.'s (2014) observation and coaching models. The mutual goal was to gradually transition from this arrangement, enabling both authors to lead or follow interchangeably, "teaming" in response to the students' learning needs.

FINDINGS

In analyzing the data, we found three core transformations, each with their own triad of revelations that form the basis of our key themes: (1) Emotion work—knowing the self, trusting the other, and letting go, (2) Disruption—differing teaching approaches, institutional barriers, developing and shifting roles, and (3) Creating "Place"—balancing energy, shifting space, and interchanging approaches. These are discussed in the sub-sections that follow.

Emotion work

Working collaboratively produced an initial high level of emotional work. Both educators expressed this through the processes of preparation, teaching, and reflecting and then backing up to repeat the process again the following weeks. This process required rigorous self-honesty, and honesty with each other, when providing feedback (how each session went and guiding each other forward towards the next session). The feedback process unsettled the educators at times, as it required a high level of vulnerability in disclosing inner thoughts and feelings, as well as not wanting to disappoint the other, despite having a strong foundational working relationship.

Before entering the classroom space, both educators described feeling "nervous" and "excited." There was a sense of the "unknown" and feeling "anxious" and "guessing" about how the other might approach the first session. At this early stage, these reflections were inward facing, about us as educators and the perceptions we held about how we teach in a face-to-face setting. Aligned with this, our levels of confidence differed. The first educator (Educator 1) was "uncomfortable" and "seriously doubted [their] abilities" whilst the second (Educator 2) looked forward to a split in workload but felt apprehensive at the prospect of "nurturing and supporting another staff member into the space." This highlights the benchmark lead/follow roles that we initially adopted as outlined above and mirror an apprenticeship model of paired teaching where one academic is to learn from another who is more experienced (Moghtader et al. 2022).

Underpinning this was a discomfort in "letting go" of the familiar way of doing things, which was for Educator 2, a "minimalism" that was central to how they liked to approach teaching in the classroom, which was especially evident during the preparation stage. In this stage, Educator 2 reported "still preparing as if [. . .] delivering solo [and had] not shared any documents or slides." This was at odds with Educator 1's need to prepare or "over prepare" to reduce the high levels of anxiety experienced with the thought of being back in front of the class. The difference in preparation and "not really knowing the learning activities beforehand" made it "hard to be ready for whatever is needed on the spot." As a result, the practical preparatory questions, such as facilitating student introductions, setting up the room, deciding who leads the learning activities, and organizing the necessary materials, were experienced by both educators as an additional emotional weight.

We anticipated that teaching as a pair would support increased learning about the unit content and active learning activities; however, this didn't translate into a reduction of anxiety until much later in the semester when our respective teaching approaches became practiced and more familiar to one another, and we established trust in this process. As we gradually let go of the lead/follow or co-teaching arrangement, emotional descriptions turned to increasing feelings of confidence in "'trusting myself and abilities." Changes in class preparation in response to post class collaborative reflections such as '[having] clearly defined roles, "sharing the emotional workload," and "being organized" highlight this development in our ability to work together. As we progressed, we began to focus less on ourselves and more on comparing approaches and learning from each other. Educator 1 reflected "I am prepared [but] find going with the flow difficult whereas [Educator 2] like to [go with the] flow and trust the performance. We can learn from each other here" whilst Educator 2 stated: "[Educator 1] is super relaxed, positive, and organized, and the organization levels in terms of running the unit are the best I have worked with in academia." Here, both educators acknowledge the strengths of each other and note how their practices are changing, however it is not yet fully realized.

Immersing ourselves into the collaborative arrangement and trusting that there was a learning process for each of us was the first step in developing new approaches and practices and recognizing self-transformation. The excerpts above suggest an internal growth and set of transformations on the part of each educator; an outcome of the reflective and open dialogue established as fundamental to the 'teaming' arrangement. However, we experienced significant disconnection in some areas.

Disruption

The differences in our teaching approaches, how we each prepare and engage in the classroom, emotionally, which was a significant disruptor to feeling effective in the classroom. Some institutional barriers further compounded this, as well as how we moved and managed the physical classroom space. Garet et al.'s (2001) five predictors of effective team teaching (content knowledge, active learning, collective participation from teaching area, 20 hours of contact time for professional development, and coherence of activities with broader and institutional goals) support the best outcomes for teaching together, yet it was against this, we found disjuncture.

As well as the emotional work, mainly due to different confidence levels and planning needs, we experienced a temporal and spatial disconnection with each other when facilitating the first class. Our decision for the second educator to lead the session generally went to plan, with Educator 2 "taking the lead and then throwing over questions" as appropriate. However, as we did not clearly map and agree upon the more granular details of co-facilitation, the plan to introduce both educators in an icebreaker activity did not happen. This meant only one educator established the initial relationship with the students with little to no "airtime" given to the other educator, reinforcing a lead/follow dynamic rather than working towards "teaming." Further, in a discussion with students on whether ChatGPT could be used, both educators assumed they had the same approach. Educator 2 reflected, while "we were on the same page in the terms of we don't use AI in this unit, […] we didn't clarify if they could use it to generate thoughts." In a similar vein, both educators differed in their opinion as to whether students should attend all class sessions or if they could "pick and mix" which ones they came to according to their study schedule and capacity. Reflecting on this together, we soon realized that the organization and coordination approach of the first educator was at odds with the intuitive and minimalist approach of the second, and we needed "more consultation with each other on where differences in interpretations or expectations might occur" (Educator 1).

Working collaboratively in a reflective action-oriented cycle to learn, action, develop, and implement new approaches requires time, energy, effort, and a willingness to be vulnerable. Against this backdrop, both academics had teaching scholar workloads that made this level of commitment difficult to sustain and posed a significant barrier to our development as paired educators. This reinforces Garet et al.'s (2001) assertion in the TTL Framework, that structural support from within the university for collaborative teaching and the hours needed to effectively team is a key factor in professional development and improving practice. Whilst we made a mutual decision to undertake this study, one of the anticipated outcomes was that it may reduce workload. However, after each session, both academics reported feeling "tired" and "exhausted" due to the high level of emotional work and the level of development and learning that occurred in our teaching practice. Part way through the semester, Educator 2 raised the question as to whether "the gains outweigh the extra planning and accommodation for each other?"

Our experience of the physical classroom space influenced how we felt about our teaching and the ability to create an energetic learning environment. The classroom setting was a technologically enhanced hybrid space for synchronous face-to-face and online cohorts. The layout was 360 degrees with projection screens at each end of the room, whiteboards stretching along one side, and windows showing the outside on the other. Educator 2 commented, "Spatial use of the room was difficult to navigate—the slides appear far away [. . .] it is supposed to be for collaborative learning, but the space is really big, and it is difficult to know where to stand to generate class energy." Moreover, both educators reflected feeling out of place when not leading the learning activities: Educator 1 stated, "I found it hard to know where to place myself, so I didn't interrupt the flow of the lesson" whilst Educator 2 commented, "I aimed to be a wallflower at particular moments [and] to really let go of the classroom [. . .] [but] felt out of control when I sat down," thus demonstrating an unexpected visceral discomfort stemming from within.

We reflected on how to manage both the embodied experience of co-teaching and the different learning energies generated by our distinct teaching styles, which we characterized as: charismatic and energetic (Educator 2), and quiet and reflective (Educator 1). This led us to question our perceptions as to how this team-teaching approach impacted our students. Did switching educators during class provide a cognitive break for students, or was there an "energy lag" that could have been potentially disruptive? While the parameters of this study did not afford us space to explore this question, we instead became aware that, as educators, we bring a pre-practiced intuitive spatial approach into the classroom, and that understanding this further, (how we navigate the classroom spatiotemporally) was a critical factor to effectively working together.

Creating "Place"

Our movements in and around the classroom and the shapes we formed reflect the transformation of our teaching, moving from uncertainty and disruption to the creation of a shared exchange of knowledge between each other and with the students. So far, we have described the temporal transformation in the way we reflected and actioned changes in response to our own learning and in response to each other, but there was also a visceral change: a purposeful, physical transformation where we collectively implemented change within the classroom.

We felt this discomfort in relation to where we stood in the classroom, where the students were seated, and who was leading the session; it highlighted the need to be more conscious of the structure and energy in the classroom. Our reflections showed a shift towards becoming spatially focused to create a space and a place for our learning as educators and for the students: “I wanted to generate discussion so opted to weave amongst the tables”—reflected Educator 2. Educator 1 added, “[In the] next few weeks I would like to get students to move and switch up who they are sitting with; bring some more energy and vibrancy to the room.”

Importantly, we made these practice-related changes in response to the physical experience of teaching and then reflecting together. We introduced a planning session ahead of each week’s class, enabling us to apply our learning in real time and continuously identify areas for change and growth. We shared lecture slides early and discussed who would lead which part of the session and what the expectations of the other educator would be. Sometimes this would result in an approach that was “very traditional in terms of clarification of roles and responsibilities [but] [we were] thinking more than ever before about what is taking place in the classroom, where [we] stood, and how the students were interacting with us” (Educator 2). Moreover, it provided a mechanism for us to confirm each other’s perceptions of how things went during class. For example, Educator 1 reflected, “I hit my stride, in winging it and being adaptive in the classroom to the learning needs.” Educator 2 validated this perception: “[There] was comfort in the room, [Educator 1] felt much more comfortable today. Probably the most comfortable they have felt.”

The following excerpt from Educator 2 illustrates the depth of both individual learning and the learning from each other:

> [I am] more organized and more often pointing to the benefits or purpose of what we’re discussing and exploring. So, it’s no longer just random learning activities and letting the students figure it out themselves. I’ve taken from [them] and put framework around bits and pieces.

When we moved away from Baeten et al.’s (2014) “assistant teaching” model, where one educator leads while the other acts in a support role, and closer to an “equal status” approach, we could plan learning activities according to each other’s strengths: “[We can] match the energy to the activity. So, if it’s something that requires high energy, and lots of vibrancy, [one leads it]. If it’s reflective and more professional/deep, [the other] leads it.” (Educator 1)

Most of the growth in working together was underpinned by developing trust, an understanding that the communication shared was honest, and that the interpersonal skills we each had enabled us to grow and learn together. Throughout the process of “adopting a growth mindset and learning” aside from the fact that it felt like more work allowed us “effective progression,” which felt “really pleasing.” We also recognized that “pairing was crucial” to facilitate the learning energy within the physical realm of the classroom and to enact growth and learning. Our collaborative practice created an adaptable and flexible space, both temporally and spatially, as our approaches continually shifted in response to our teaching practices and ongoing observations of students.

DISCUSSION

Reflecting individually and collectively was a powerful way to communicate what was happening within ourselves as educators as we shifted into a physical teaching space together. Whilst we did not set out to follow a particular teaching model, we were committed to ground up experiences and reflections, and the five models identified by Baeten et al. (2014) somewhat aligned with our approaches. We adopted aspects of all five models at different points. We employed the teaming model, although not without some disruptive aspects, at points where a discussion was worth having in front of the class as a starting point, such as a broader cohort discussion on ethics. Similarly, the equal status model was central to some weeks, while in others, we adopted an assistant teaching or observational model. The authors cycled between each of the models depending on the needs of the cohort, the learning outcomes of a particular topic, or where broader goals within the unit required multiple educators to have sound curriculum knowledge. These were all important for consolidating the long-term viability of the offering. Broadly, we subscribed to the notion that we would learn from one another, encapsulated in the following from Baeten et al. (2014, 92–93):

> During team-teaching, teachers learn through participating and engaging in a joint activity. By sharing ideas, providing alternative perspectives and receiving advice, they negotiate learning and learn from each other's knowledge and skills. In this way, they achieve more than [if they were to work individually].

With more thought given to planning and modelling teaching approaches from each other, paired teaching with collaborative reflection allowed us to co-learn and absorb the nuances of each other's teaching practices in a way we had not previously had the opportunity to do. Creating opportunities for shared teaching and to move through the various team teaching models and frameworks remains an untapped opportunity for professional development (Knights et al. 1995). Against the backdrop of a rapidly changing world, we need to be innovative and responsive to change. If we expect graduate outcomes for students that espouse adaptability and responsiveness to a changing workplace, academics need to role model collaborative and flexible teaching. Adding to Crawford et al.'s (2015) effectiveness model, it is both creating knowledge through shared practice, and modelling an effective approach for future workplaces, that creates an effective praxis for learning.

Here we foreground the importance of "creating place"—educators having temporal and spatial awareness and fluidity in a collaborative classroom. The way we move through space is the way we create an effective learning "place." As an educative practice, this involves having the courage to be vulnerable and the will to develop the skills of reflexivity, adaptability, and flexibility, as well as to creatively and responsively move around the other in a classroom space in continual adjustment. Underpinning this is the triad of transformations we have outlined: the ability to emotionally manage the self, trust the other, and to master the physical and energetic space between each other and the students. Educators need not subscribe to a particular model, as outlined by Baeten et al. (2014), but rather practice moving through and around them fluidly and responsively to the unit learning outcomes, class activities, and the transforming skill levels and abilities of teaching team members.

As we shift from the old style of three-hour lectures and a bunch of slides to blended learning environments, the findings in this paper offer a potential "training" model that could be useful for incoming educators adapting to new areas of knowledge or perhaps transitioning, like we did, from the online classroom to the face-to-face learning environment. This transition in learning supports Vygotski's zone of proximal development, where gaps in skillsets can be filled when paired with the right support and assistance. Moreover, team teaching offered us a mechanism with which to respond to the various cultural, institutional and personal disruptions experienced, and transform our pedagogical approaches to create a place for an active and responsive learning environment.

This aligns with one of the original thoughts we had at the start of this study: the best way to hand over leadership and curriculum ownership in a tertiary unit is to support and facilitate content related knowledge and development in a collaborative environment.

Initially, we did not realize the belief that a partnership would ease the division of emotion work and cognitive load. Instead, it intensified the emotional burden as we navigated the very common anxiety of teaching in front of peers (a frequently cited barrier to teaching explored in our review of literature). Yet as the semester progressed and individual transformations emerged, the partnership began to reveal its strength: the richness of co-development and the trust required to fully handover to each other fostered an emotionally and physically supporting teaching environment.

LIMITATIONS

As exploratory action research with autoethnographic reflection, we centered the focus of this research purely from an educator's subjective point of view. Further studies exploring the merits of team teaching as a method for transforming learning and teaching approaches and practices are needed to support these findings, as well as how integrating and modelling adaptability, flexibility, and teamwork in the classroom could be beneficial for both educators and students. A desire to examine the impact of just "teaming" on the educators themselves rather than on both staff and students means that there remains an unexplored, though no less important, part of this intellectual map: what were the students experiencing and thinking throughout this process? This gap in our study is most certainly a limitation, but a necessary one given the educators' initial aim to focus solely on their own experience. A follow-up study that engages with the student experience through a team-teaching approach and acknowledges a broader range of direct and indirect teaching activities would certainly be beneficial.

The authors missed an opportunity in this study to conduct a comparative analysis of team teaching across online and face-to-face environments, the latter of which can be an effective approach to team teaching because it allows for greater depth and breadth in shared reflection (Crawford and Jenkins 2017). The authors did not recognize this opportunity prior to beginning the study, but it would be a worthy area of inquiry for future scholars interested in team-teaching experiences online.

Finally, a study of the physical space within which the team-teaching arrangement took shape, and how the positionality of educators (race, sexuality, gender, culture) informs this is essential. It presents as an interesting conundrum for future scholars examining team teaching in blended learning environments, because how the socio-psychological components related to embodiment, wellbeing, and physical environment inscribe their way of being on us is simply not at play in this study.

AUTHOR BIOGRAPHIES

Kim L. Hudson (Australia) is a lecturer in real world learning and academic chair for the support for learning DVCE (deputy vice chancellor education) portfolio at Murdoch University. Her work focuses on graduate professional development, volunteerism, and unpaid carers contributions to the care economy.

Samuel K. Teague (Australia) is a lecturer and academic chair in sociology and dean of domestic engagement in the school of humanities and social science at Murdoch University. His work focuses on educational leadership, health, and applied social care.

DISCLOSURE

We did not use Generative AI software in the development of this research article.

ETHICS

As an autoethnographic study, this research did not require ethics review.

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