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Situationally orchestrated pedagogy: Teacher reflections on positioning as expert, facilitator and caregiver

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Introduction

"When I look at myself now, I see someone with many more tools in the toolbox" was how one of the participants in a faculty development program at a large Danish business school described their increased awareness of the option to tactically mobilize different teacher positions when the situation calls for it. This ties into a central purpose of faculty development programs, namely to encourage teachers to reflect on what is "the 'wise' thing to do in each particular situation" (Jones et al., 2017: 120). Such reflections necessarily touch upon teachers' identity, including "what obligations [they] see as intrinsic to their role" (Hammerness et al., 2005: 383–384), and on their ability and willingness to experiment with undertaking shifts where appropriate (Lieff et al., 2012). Yet faculty development programs do not always explicitly consider such shifts, despite this being a recognized aspect of becoming a teacher; nor is it clear how these role shifts might be addressed in faculty development program design and activities (Beauchamp and Thomas, 2009).

This article regards teachers' identity construction as "a process of narrative positioning" (Søreide, 2006: 529). We posit that faculty development programs can raise teachers' awareness of their identity as a dynamic resource that they can purposefully mobilize on an ongoing basis to improve their teaching practice. Empirically we explore how, in connection with a faculty development program, teachers of first-year students at a large Danish business school articulate the

different positions they adopt in the classroom; and we further examine their awareness of the option to consciously shift between, or blend, those positions, thereby detaching from a possible "default" teacher identity. We propose that positioning theory, as articulated by Davies and Harré (1990), offers a promising tool which can help teachers to understand their assumptions about their own professional identities; and which can be used in faculty development programs to strengthen teachers' awareness that they can "situationally orchestrate" (Tapp, 2014) their teaching by consciously shifting between different positions instead of resorting to reactive, ad-hoc fixes less likely to foster reflective change (Jones et al., 2017: 124). Over time, this awareness may help to develop teachers' "situational wisdom" (Kreber, 2011), corresponding to the Aristotelian knowledge concept of "phronesis" or practical wisdom concerning how "to make decisions about how to act in concrete situations" (Kreber, 2014: 28).

Developing such an awareness can also potentially help teachers to support students during challenging phases, such as first-year students' transition to university—a vulnerable and stressful period that, if not carefully managed, can undermine their academic performance and psychological wellbeing (Dean and Jolly, 2012). It is not yet clear, however, how faculty development programs can support teachers in becoming more attuned to students' needs during such phases. We therefore pose the following research question: *Which reflexive positions do teachers articulate regarding their interaction with first-year business school students, and what are the implications for faculty development practice?*

This article draws on qualitative data to make four contributions. First, it adds to the few higher education studies that apply positioning theory (e.g., McVee et al., 2001) and, to our best knowledge, uniquely uses the concept in connection with faculty development at business schools. Second, we identify the meta-positioning skill of "pedagogical positioner," denoting teachers' ability to strategically select, blend, and shift between positions depending on the teaching situation.

Third, while the findings corroborate the teacher positions of “content expert” and “learning facilitator” (Kolb et al., 2014; Snowball, 2014) identified in previous research, with content expert often the “default” position for higher education teachers, this study also identifies the “supportive caregiver” position, previously only found by Søreide (2006) among elementary school teachers. Finally, we contribute to faculty development practice by illustrating the implications of positioning for the development of teachers’ situational wisdom.

The paper is structured as follows. First, we introduce positioning theory, followed by our methodology. We then present our findings and theoretical contribution, before discussing how positioning theory can be used in faculty development programs to promote awareness of the pedagogical positioner skill. Finally, we suggest how future research might investigate the potential implications of this skill for faculty development programs.

Teacher identity, roles, and positioning

Teacher identities, broadly defined as “the perception that teachers have of themselves as teachers” (Lamote and Engels, 2010: 4), have been found crucial in teachers’ practices, values and beliefs; in understanding how teachers make decisions and act in concrete teaching situations; and in framing and limiting learners’ identities in particular learning tasks (Beauchamp and Thomas, 2009; Cremin and Baker, 2010; Rahimi and Bigdeli, 2014; Williams, 2007). Insight into teacher identity and its implications for practice can, thus, potentially improve the design of teacher training programs; indeed, some scholars posit that identity should be “considered in planning and implementing the teacher preparation programme” (Lamote and Engels, 2010: 3; see also Beauchamp and Thomas, 2009).

Recent conceptualizations describe teacher identity as an ongoing process of identity construction that is dynamic, socially and culturally contingent, and negotiated by active subjects (Arvaja, 2016), rather than as an essentialist notion denoting a “singular teacher self” (Zembylas,

2003: 214). Such conceptualizations acknowledge that while teachers may claim an overarching or dominant professional role identity, their identity construction involves multiple "sub-identities," "subject positions," or "role identities" that different teachers may attribute different meanings to and shift between, and whose salience depends on the context and on teachers' interactions with students (Beijaard et al., 2004; Lamote and Engels, 2010; Rahimi and Bigdeli, 2014; Søreide, 2006).

Positioning theory has been used to study teacher identity as a contextual and relational phenomenon that is changing and dynamic, rather than stable and static (Vanassche, 2018; Vanassche and Kelchtermans, 2014). Søreide drew partly on positioning theory to explore how Norwegian elementary teachers construct their identities through multiple "subject positions" such as "dedicated to the job" and "a nice and kind person" (Davies and Harré, 2001 in Søreide, 2006: 532). These subject positions were not mutually exclusive but, rather, contingent on the narrative resources available in the context and on the person and situation concerned. The positions functioned as "narrative resources" on which teachers drew in telling stories about themselves and their professional lives, enabling them to articulate their identity projects, and shaping "what it is possible to do, think and feel" within each position (Søreide, 2006: 533, 542). Although teachers referred to similar positions, the way they combined them differed, as did the meanings they associated with them. A positioning approach, Søreide claims, enables "understanding…teachers as active agents in their own lives and the construction of teacher identity as a dynamic and changing activity" (Davies and Harré, 2001 in Søreide, 2006: 529).

Along similar lines, Rahimi and Bigdeli (2014) explored teachers' different *role identities*, defined as "the way in which individuals think about themselves as teachers—the images they have of self-as-teacher" (Knowles, 1992: 99). According to the authors, individuals can attach a range of meanings to themselves within these overarching teacher role identities. They identified nine such

meanings, or teacher "role identity claims" (e.g., an "authority" or "collaborator"), but noted that teachers may adhere to, or struggle with, multiple role identities that emerge depending on the support and the extrinsic and intrinsic rewards these identities engender: if one proves particularly rewarding, it may become dominant for them (Rahimi and Bigdeli, 2014). Like Søreide, these authors assert that teachers cannot freely generate their own role identities, since these are constrained by cultural expectations linked to social positions available in the given context; however, individual teachers may enact and perceive the same roles differently. Lamote and Engels (2010: 5) concur that teachers' professional identities appear to comprise various sub-identities, but note that the teacher's "landscape" features "ready-packaged traditions – ways of acting and thinking, patterned into practices and sets of practices – [that] are available to choose from," depending on what kind of teacher one wants to be. They highlight that student teachers' self-image can be "more or less resilient" and can, therefore, either be "a barrier to change or provide them with the self-confidence to try out alternative approaches and roles" (Lamote and Engels, 2010: 4).

Research suggests that business school teachers should be alert to the possibility of shifting their teaching approach to accommodate students' different and changing learning needs in different contexts (Kreber, 2010; Vanassche and Kelchtermans, 2014). Hussain and Ayub (2012: 1738) note that teachers should "mold their teaching styles, practice alternatives, and transform their strategies to meet varied learning situations," while Kaplan (2018: 607) asserts that business faculty must be ready to go beyond knowledge transmission and adapt to new roles as "coaches and facilitators." Bell and Clarke (2014: 250) draw on Goffman (1959) in describing how business teachers perform identity work to ensure convincing performance in teaching situations.

As the above overview shows, there is considerable evidence that teachers draw on multiple role identities, sub-identities, or positions (depending on the terminology used), though they may have a preferred or dominant position; and that effective teaching requires skill in shifting between

these. Yet research has struggled to grasp how teachers shift between positions, notably how they might learn to shift from their dominant or "default" positions (Beauchamp and Thomas, 2009).

Positioning theory can complement the identity concept to enable more fine-grained and hands-on analysis of how teachers apprehend their own positions, specifically the narratives, rights, and duties that accompany such positions; how positions (including default positions) and shifts between them can be identified and purposefully signaled in actual teaching practice; and the pedagogical implications of such shifts in a given teaching context. Originating in social psychology, positioning theory is based on a social constructionist approach to communication and its impact on identity (Kroløkke, 2009: 765). It derives from the work of Davies and Harré (1990), who contended that social psychology had failed to consider the moral dimensions of human life. Important omissions, particularly from role theory, included how rights and duties to act and speak in certain ways are assigned, based on beliefs about the competence, history, or personality of an individual or their perceived category (e.g., gender or race) (Harré, 2015). Positioning theory has been applied in various research areas, including feminist studies (Wilkinson and Kitzinger, 2003), organizational change (Zelle, 2009), minority/majority relations (Harré and Moghaddam, 2003), conflict resolution (Moghaddam et al., 2008), and strategic communication (James, 2014). In education research, it has been used to study teacher educators' identity and teaching approaches (Vanassche and Kelchtermans, 2014), as well as classroom interactions between teachers and high school students, and student positioning in group collaboration (DeJarnette, 2018).

Positioning theory: key concepts and the positioning triangle

Positioning theory focuses on continuous positioning through speech acts as multifaceted and contextualized fluid "dances" of interactions that allow for certain practices while precluding others. The *act* of positioning thus refers to the "assignment of fluid 'parts' or 'roles' to speakers in

the discursive construction of personal stories that make a person's actions intelligible and relatively determinate as social acts" (Van Langenhove and Harré, 1999a: 17).

Positioning theory offers a framework for conceptualizing teachers' identities as dynamic, discursive products of the local context, but does not provide specific suggestions for which positions teachers should take. Rather, it offers insight into multiple opportunities for positions and the value of changing between them (Harré, 2015). Positioning theory's attention to local context highlights that certain practices are not based on individuals' competences but, rather, on their right and/or duty to say or do certain things in certain contexts (Harré et al., 2009: 6). For example, in case-based teaching, students can give their opinion regarding what decisions to take, while teachers should acknowledge students' different opinions. This approach differs from other teaching situations in which teachers can reject students' opinions and students should display curricular or content knowledge rather than offer opinions. Positioning theory thus emphasizes teachers' ability and responsibility to accommodate certain speech acts (e.g. student opinions) by oscillating between different positions according to the teaching situation. As such, the framework enables teaching practices to be conceptualized as acts of meaning (Bruner, 1990) that must be both mastered and embedded in positions to render them meaningful and appropriate.

Positioning theory comprises three key concepts: *positions*, *speech acts*, and *storylines*, which together constitute the so-called "positioning triangle" (Harré and Moghaddam, 2003). The three concepts are mutually constitutive and combine to form "a dynamic stability between actors' positions, the force of what they say or do [speech acts], and the storylines that are instantiated in the sayings and doings of each episode" (Harré and van Langenhove, 1999: 10). We will now elaborate upon each concept within the context of university teaching.

Positions: Positions are discursive productions of a "diversity of selves" (Davies and Harré, 1990: 47), which informed practitioners may deliberately adopt, or be positioned in, through interaction

with others (Simblett, 2013). Unlike roles, positions recognize continuous shifts in situationally and contextually embedded self-constructions (Baert, 2012: 310; Van Langenhove and Harré, 1999b) that reflect the fluidity and multiplicity of positions characterizing the teacher–student relationship. Positioning theory extends social identity theory (Tajfel and Turner, 1986) by focusing on how different positions carry unique rights and duties, for example, the professor's right to give certain instructions and the student's duty to follow them (Harré et al., 2009; Sabat and Harré, 1999). The boundaries of such normative constraints and opportunities for speech acts unfold within particular storylines, which can be taken from a cultural repertoire or invented (Harré et al., 2009).

Storylines: These are patterns of development that social episodes follow. Slocum and Van Langenhove (2003) describe them as "the contexts of acts and positions" (p. 225) within which an action is interpreted as an act or given meaning (p. 227). They often exist prior to but can also be created in conversations (Harré and Moghaddam, 2003), and they enable certain speech acts while precluding others (Bruner, 1990; Harré and Moghaddam, 2003; Slocum-Bradley, 2010). For example, students' questions are usually welcomed in a classroom teaching storyline but not in an examination storyline, despite involving the same groups of teachers and students. Consequently, the same acts assume different meanings in different storylines (Davies and Harré, 1990), and storylines can be changed by different acts.

Speech acts: These acts of saying and doing have both illocutionary and perlocutionary force. The illocutionary (social) force manifests itself when the speech act is performative, such as a question, command, or comment; the perlocutionary force then manifests in the answer, denial, or counterargument (Davies and Harré, 1990; Van Langenhove and Harré, 1999b). Speech acts are usually part of meaningful storylines, but can also disrupt unfolding storylines and relocate interpretations of events within the logic of other storylines (Harré et al., 2009). For example, when

a professor delivering a traditional lecture (involving expert knowledge transmission) invites opinions, students only expecting to be asked to demonstrate their learning can be confused.

The three parts of the triangle – positions, storylines, and speech acts – are mutually influential since any specific speech act involves the simultaneous positioning of oneself (self-positioning) and other interlocutors (other-positioning), providing different opportunities to change the ongoing storyline (Hirvonen, 2016: 2). However, according to Harré (2012: 193), "not everyone involved in a social episode has equal access to rights and duties to perform particular kinds of meaningful actions at that moment and with those people. In many interesting cases, the rights and duties determine who can use a certain discourse mode." In line with this insight, students in most classroom settings have less power to influence teacher positions—and thereby alter the teaching storyline—than teachers have to influence student positions.

Methodology

We apply positioning theory in this study to make sense of the teacher reflections that emerged during a faculty development program. Teachers of first-year students were selected as a relevant case due to the latter's often challenging transition to university, which may be exacerbated by the massification of higher education, including business schools, resulting in larger classes, time pressures on faculty, and a larger student body with more diverse needs. All these factors can strain the teacher–student relationship, undermine attention to student needs, and cause disengagement and dissatisfaction (Kift, 2015). Teachers increasingly need to be able to "make judgments about what is the wise thing to do, meaning what to do with whom, when and to what degree" (Kreber, 2011: 53). Teachers' ability to mobilize situational wisdom is, therefore, increasingly vital (Biesta, 2004 in Vanassche and Kelchtermans, 2014: 123) for gauging and adapting teacher–student interactions, particularly in teaching first-year university students who are still undergoing a socialization process.

Two of the authors were engaged in the business school's faculty development program, and decided to conduct a case study (Merriam, 1988) of a new faculty development program for teachers of first-year students on the school's largest BSc Business Administration program (approximately 750 students a year). This faculty development program aimed to increase teachers' awareness of opportunities for interaction with students and thereby improve their actual teaching practices. The authors decided to investigate teachers' reflections on their own awareness about their classroom positions and the potential for shifting between these, as articulated during the faculty development program.

Selected lecturers on the BSc program were invited by the program organizers to participate. The selection was based on the teachers' perceived interest in pedagogy and in developing further as teachers. In total, six teachers participated in the full faculty development program. They represented four foundational courses (microeconomics, managerial economics, statistics, and organizational analysis) which were all taught during the first semester. The two women and four men ranged in age from 26 to 51. Their level of teaching experience varied from two to twenty-five years, and they had different academic backgrounds (see Table 1). However, they also shared experience of teaching on the same program, so the group had enough similarity and variety across individual cases to permit comparisons (Ragin, 2004).

Please insert Table 1 about here

The faculty development program ran over two semesters, with one semester comprising group-based workshops, and the other semester comprising one-on-one supervision of teaching, and a final workshop, as outlined below in Figure 1. Three workshops took place before the semester started, and were followed by supervision of teaching (including the first class in their course). The workshops were conducted by two of the authors, while supervision was performed by a member of

the business school's teacher training network. A final workshop at the end of the semester concluded the program. Each workshop lasted 3 hours and was held at the business school. The supervision sessions comprised 1-3 hours of observation, followed by a meeting between supervisor and supervisee. We gathered informed consent to collect data throughout the program, and were particularly careful to balance collecting research data with facilitating the learning of teachers in the program. For example, we decided not to collect data from the supervision dialog between teachers and supervisors, so as to respect privacy in that setting. However, the more formal written feedback was shared with us upon consent. We collected data from multiple sources to strengthen the validity of our findings (Yin, 2018) and aimed to further strengthen trustworthiness by providing transparency in the data collection and analysis process, and by providing as many samples of the data collected as limited space allowed for (Golafshani, 2003). Our data collection included interviews with individual teachers and the group, written statements, field notes, materials produced in workshops (collages), and profile information (Kolb's educator profile). The faculty development program and data collection are illustrated in Figure 1.

Please insert Figure 1 about here

At the first workshop, teachers discussed their perceptions of first-year students based on their own experiences and video illustrations of student types (Nielsen, 2013). Moreover, teachers' self-perceptions were discussed based on: (a) their answers to the question, "As a teacher I prefer to be …?"; and (b) their preferred teaching roles according to the Educator Role Profile (Kolb et al., 2014). In the second workshop, evidence-based teaching practices, including student activation, feedback, distributed practice, and cognitive elaboration, were discussed (Freeman et al., 2014; Nicol and Macfarlane-Dick, 2006). The third workshop was used to design concrete teaching activities for the coming semester and to define a focus for the supervision.

Following the supervision sessions, further data were collected at the end-of-semester workshop. Teachers were first asked to write a short account of their immediate teaching experience. This open assignment was followed by individual, in-depth, semi-structured interviews to prompt “thick descriptions” (Geertz, 1973). All interviews were recorded and transcribed. In a concluding session, participants were asked to individually create a projective collage (Vaughan, 2005) addressing the following question: “What is the perfect first-year teacher like?” It was emphasized that the participants should include everything that came to mind and which they found valuable when teaching first year students. This was meant to trigger discussion of different teaching roles and positionings without being either overly abstract or confined to their own current practice. The collage presentation was followed by a group discussion that was recorded and transcribed. In total, 72 pages of transcripts and written accounts were collected.

Two of the authors inductively coded the data, drawing on Braun and Clarke’s (2006) thematic analysis process to identify key themes in teachers’ reflections on themselves and their own teaching practices regarding first-year students. We first considered all data pertaining to each individual and then looked across individuals. Any coding differences were discussed and solved. In analyzing the data, iterative readings of the codes quickly sparked our interest in the speech acts of continuous positioning, rather than in the more stable notions of positions offered by role and social identity theory (Goffman, 1959; Tajfel and Turner, 1986). We interpreted the emerging discursive practices as multifaceted and contextualized, opening the door to certain teaching practices while precluding others. As the faculty development program progressed, teachers became increasingly aware of the illocutionary and perlocutionary power of their positioning and the implications for their teaching.

Positioning when teaching first year students

Existing positioning research distinguishes between *reflexive* and *interactive* positioning (Davies and Harré, 1990; Yoon, 2008). The former stresses the intentional, self-defining aspects of speech acts, and the latter emphasizes the importance of audience and interaction in any positioning attempt (cf. Davies and Harré, 1990; Goffman, 1959; Wittgenstein, 1953). We focus exclusively on *reflexive* positioning, since our data address teachers' accounts of the positions they adopt, and not teacher–student interactions. Interactive positioning, in which teacher and students co-construct their relative positions within certain pedagogical storylines, is addressed in connection with our suggestions for future research and for faculty development.

We identify a meta-positioning skill that we term the 'pedagogical positioner' which involves meta-reflection on the different positions outlined below, and on the shifts and conflicts between them (see Table 2 for an overview). Specifically, this skill involves i) increased *awareness* of different available positions, and ii) the *ability to engage certain speech acts* that enable re-positioning. This skill enables teachers to purposefully reflect on, and oscillate between, relevant positions that can enhance learning, select those that seem most appropriate in any given situation, and manage any conflicts that might arise as a result.

Please insert Table 2 about here

Moreover, we identify three dominant positions that teachers can oscillate between, each comprising speech acts, rights and duties, and a storyline: content expert, learning facilitator, and supportive caregiver. In line with positioning theory (Harré, 2012), these are not mutually exclusive but can change quickly and sometimes overlap. Two of the positions exist within well-researched teaching roles, including the expert and facilitator roles from Kolb's educator roles profile (Kolb et al., 2014) and from studies of positioning in teacher–student interactions (Bossér and Lindahl,

2019), with the content expert position clearly emerging as teachers' default in our study. The supportive caregiver position is less established in prior research on higher education. However, our findings suggest it has equal importance to the first two in the context of teaching first-year students. The three positions are presented below, followed by the meta-positioning skill.

Becoming a content expert

The content expert was articulated as the default position by all participating teachers and as the baseline for identifying other positions, and it clearly dominated the Educator Role Profile results (Kolb et al., 2014). Along these lines, Runa referred to the content expert as a fallback position where she can teach on "autopilot." Participants explicitly articulated the content expert as an authority with responsibility for student learning, who directs learning by providing knowledge, and is guided by aligning learning objectives, teaching, and exams. The teacher becomes the content expert by building knowledge through lecturing and providing examples that students can practice.

According to educational positioning research, some teachers "might position themselves as content teachers" (Yoon, 2008: 499). The content expert position is often described as the classic role of the teacher practicing a "traditional teaching" style in classroom narratives (Snowball, 2014: 826). Examples of *storylines* that support content expert positioning are large-class lecturing and oral exams.

In terms of *rights and duties*, positioning as content experts gave participants the right to present knowledge and the curriculum at their preferred pace. This position requires respect from students. As Thomas explained, "I have to be this kind of person that…they respect. You should be tough, but they have to see you as competent and I have to make a good impression for them to see that it is relevant that this person teaches them." Participants noted the accompanying duty to comply with the given structure and purpose of the course, providing students with an overview that

allows them to dig deeper on their own (Michael). As Timothy explained, "I like to provide examples…a case of some sort…but students need to feel that what I write on the whiteboard provides…a solid overview." Natalie similarly noted that teachers should ensure that everything is in order and that the teacher is in control.

Because participants implicitly described their preferred position of content expert as the archetypical positioning of higher education teachers, the *speech acts* of traditional classroom teaching reinforce the content expert position. Examples include facing students from behind a desk, using traditional teaching tools like PowerPoint and whiteboards, and focusing on curricular content. Natalie suggested that the content expert is reinforced by "going through everything on the whiteboard." Runa agreed, suggesting that course curricula are rather schematic and structured, requiring teachers to "stick to what has been designed beforehand." The content expert position is also reinforced through testing, such as using rubrics to ensure that students learn what is expected or providing feedback to verify learning (Timothy).

Becoming a learning facilitator

The learning facilitator emerged as an alternative position that participants generally valued in promoting learning, and they expressed a desire to adopt this position more frequently based on the understanding that "[teaching] is not only a preparation of content. But just as much preparation of pedagogy" (Sean). As learning facilitator, the teacher becomes the facilitator of the process of learning as opposed to the provider of content. This position recalls Dewey's (1916) work on learning promoted by active experience and engagement. Dewey argued that education and learning are social processes that require interaction with the curriculum. Dewey's work inspired Kolb's (1984) theory that experience plays a central role in learning. The learning facilitator position embraces this notion that students "can learn on their own and that [the teacher's] role is to remove obstacles and create conditions for active learning…not to instruct, provide answers and personal

advice, or tell people what they should learn" (Kolb et al., 2014: 207). In line with this, *storylines* supporting the learning facilitator position include, for example, small group tutorials and interactive classroom teaching.

In terms of *rights and duties,* the learning facilitator has the right to give responsibility for action to students. According to Natalie, "you leave some of the responsibility and authority to students by making them do something themselves. But when you do this, you also release some control." Natalie also believed it was her duty to let go and refrain from being the sole knowledge provider. However, she also emphasized that the teacher still has a duty to govern the classroom by facilitating learning and, in doing so, should strongly emphasize engaging, motivating, and involving students in the learning process (also mentioned by Michael, Sean, Thomas, and Timothy).

Speech acts that signal the teacher's position as learning facilitator take the form of activating teaching methods, even if these are just small things (Michael). Letting students define the discussion by asking them to explain what they find difficult is one example expressed by Thomas. Another way to mobilize the learning facilitator position is through facilitating group work and discussions, including feedback. According to Michael, students learn when they are able to explain something to someone else and to receive feedback. Participants generally described the tone between learning facilitators and students as more synchronous, informal, and fun than the tone between content experts and students. However, Michael cautioned against "having too much fun" as this might diminish the perceived importance of learning.

Becoming a supportive caregiver

The third position emerging from our data, the supportive caregiver, focuses on becoming more supportive of first-year students' wellbeing and self-development. Runa, for instance, felt good about "having created a safe space for learning where everyone is comfortable and there is

this feeling…of wanting to do good…and…we share the goal of getting the most out of this session." All participants described feeling responsible for helping students develop and learn. In the collages, this concern was illustrated through pictures of pain relief medicine, a thermometer, and a lap to sit on (see Figure 2 for an example of a collage).

Please insert Figure 2 about here

Notably, participants did not assign a gender to the supportive caregiver. For example, in Michael's collage, the lap is offered by an elderly man, presumably to his grandchild. Thus, the supportive caregiver does not imply a mothering role but, more generally, a position based on acts, rights and duties, and storylines of care from more mature actors toward less mature ones. Although potentially also relevant to other cohorts, we suggest that awareness of this position may be especially salient in teaching first years compared to more experienced students, since individual contact, facilitated by approachable teachers and a more personal study climate, have been found crucial in supporting students' transition to a new identity and growth (Briggs et al., 2012; Leese, 2010).

Inspired by Winnicott (1971, 1973), the supportive caregiver should create "a potential space" (Winnicott, 1973: 146) or a safe environment where teachers can help foster students' maturation, growth, and development (cf. Borden, 1992: 480), offering support and consolation to develop their confidence to explore the world themselves (de Carlo, 2012). The supportive caregiver continually strives to keep students within their zones of proximal development (Vygotsky, 1978). They also balance the critical mindset inherent in teaching with care, resembling what Winnicott (1971: 7) describes as "'The good-enough mother' [who] makes active adaptation to the infant's needs…that gradually lessens, according to the infant's growing ability to account for failure of adaptation and to tolerate the results of frustration." The basic idea is that a safe

environment and support are needed for first-year students to develop and learn, as “care without criticism destroys learning every bit as certainly as criticism without care” (Gabriel, 2009: 384). This also relates to more recent research on how the presence of compassion in work environments creates psychological safety and is crucial to learning and innovation (Eisler, 2017; Worline and Dutton, 2017).

Examples of *storylines* that create or confirm the supportive caregiver position are mentoring and supervision. Accordingly, all participants expressed the importance of being aware of students’ developmental stage. Runa noted that “they are extremely self-aware – even if they aren’t teenagers any longer, they were so very recently.” Natalie emphasized the need to support students during the transition to university and that they must learn to stand on their own two feet. Regarding *rights and duties,* participants articulated a self-ascribed duty to motivate students to develop confidence in learning, thereby implicitly positioning themselves as supportive caregivers. Runa suggested that care is shown by looking after students “to break the barriers to learning…created by anxiety,” while Michael stated, “You also need to be someone who can look after…and take care of them.” Sean believed that a supportive teacher’s responsibility is to provide rules and set direction. Examples resemble child-rearing, such as limiting use of Facebook, prohibiting eating in class, and ensuring punctuality. For example, Thomas stated that you also have to set limits; pointing to a picture of an overweight man in his collage, he added, “This guy needs that.”

The supportive caregiver position also raised important ethical concerns about giving each student enough time to fulfill their needs (Michael), and attending to the insecurities of every student (Sean). However, the provisioning of care is a balancing act. Natalie, for instance, considered it a duty to foster self-confidence by not offering too much help and support when students attempted activities independently: “I know you can do it, I am here to support you, but

play around with it yourself first." Consequently, being supportive requires refraining from spoon-feeding students in order to remain professional. So while teachers may be characterized as supportive and caring, the way they enact this support and care is of paramount importance for fostering learning. In this sense, support and care are "a collective knowledgeable 'doing', [not] an object or a quality…added to work" (Gherardi and Rodeschini, 2016: 266).

Participants adopt the supportive caregiver position by engaging in various *speech acts.* For example, Michael uses games, like Roshambo. He encourages fun, and motivates students to help one another: "[I] repeat the word 'help'…which makes them actually help each other and…feel part of the group." As Michael explained, another speech act includes "taking the temperature of students" and explicitly showing interest and compassion by telling students that he has been in the same situation.

We now turn to the meta-positioning skill of consciously shifting between positions, which we label the 'pedagogical positioner'.

Becoming adept at meta-positioning: the pedagogical positioner

The meta-positioning skill became evident when participants reflected on the different positions they mobilized in the classroom and on the perceived need to oscillate continuously between them if the situation called for it; and on the potential challenges involved. After the faculty development workshop, all participants noted increased awareness of this capability to purposefully identify different positions and oscillate quickly between them. Michael, for example, reported that completing the workshop gave him a broader repertoire of actions: "When I look at myself now, I definitely see someone with many more tools in the toolbox." He explained that although the tools were quite "commonsensical," rather than "sophisticated," being forced to try something out made

him feel more “secure and robust and capable of handling more situations than [before the workshop].”

Drawing on Wittgenstein, the positioner is “a skilled practitioner (a leader, a consultant or a teacher) [who] can change an inhibitory episode in which the other or oneself feels stuck to an episode in which new possibilities for action and understanding takes place. This would be an act of positionery. This is why you can think of communication and speech acting as ‘life as an art,’ the art of creating possibilities for action, for how to go on (Wittgenstein 1953)” (Holmgren, 2004: 95). This entails being able to judiciously select and move between different positions, i.e., to act as a “positioner”: a term that is, according to Holmgren (2004), based on Pearce’s (1994) notion of positionery. Teachers skilled at meta-positioning can deliberately leave one position and adopt another by adeptly managing speech acts in the classroom.

The pedagogical positioner differs from the three first-order positions in that it has no specific storyline but instead enables oscillation between storylines through two important characteristics: increased *awareness* of different available positions, and the *ability to engage certain speech acts* that support re-positioning. In his collage, Sean exemplifies his awareness of several positions with images of a clock, a casually dressed woman, and fireworks. He explained that “the clock symbolizes…to take the lead as teacher and to…be in charge and show the way. So there is a balance, which—in case of success—triggers an explosion of student knowledge and learning…and all of it in a safe and relaxed atmosphere…As a teacher, you have to be able to see that there are many different ways to create learning.” Runa remarked that she had “not been aware of the many different forms of activities you can use and the many ways in which you can actively engage students.” However, while most participants acknowledged the merits of oscillating between multiple positions, she expressed concern about disrupting her comfortable, default teaching practice: “For me this has triggered some insecurities. [I now] suddenly question some fundamental

principles that I did not question before... [This happened] because I could see how the other participants reflected on their teaching. So yes, it has been the most challenging thing to look at yourself from such a critical perspective." This resonates with Lamote and Engels' (2010) observation that teachers may differ in their confidence to trial new approaches.

Sean also articulated the ability to change between positions as a characteristic of the meta-position in his post-workshop interview: "Now, my focus is more on the students than on myself. I have been teaching for many years so I have somewhere known and heard [the need to do this] before. However, this [workshop] has sharpened my focus and made me remember to do it when a situation occurs in the classroom where I previously…would have done as I usually do. So, I think I now have an increased focus on reflection while in the classroom." Sean's greater attention to reflecting on how to act in the classroom shows the skill of meta-positioning in action. Instead of acting from his default position of content expert, he has become more aware of students' needs in the immediate situation and of the need to act differently. This is echoed by Natalie: "As I teacher I have become more aware of myself and I reflect more on what signals I convey to the students…So for me [the workshop] has had enormous impact." She then explained that she has gained the ability to create "a much more dynamic environment…and a variation in the way things are done." The workshop made her aware that she unconsciously sent to students "the indirect signal that I have to be in control because I don't believe that you are in control." The ability to be more relaxed about following pre-designed activities and, instead, be more attentive to the situation was expressed by Thomas: "I have learnt to be more relaxed about following [a predefined structure] in the classroom. Instead, I now take one step back and reflect before I decide on what to do…Taking this time and doing something differently has proven to be valuable." Runa also reported becoming better at "seizing questions" or being "spontaneous," instead of "just doing what I had planned in a

more schematic and structured manner, which only leaves room for what I had prepared beforehand."

As a meta-position, the pedagogical positioner has its own set of speech acts, rights, and duties. However, it differs markedly from the first-order positions by not having a situated, contextual, or commonly known *storyline* (such as "exam" or "mentoring"); instead, it represents awareness of the availability of different positionings and their available storylines, and the ability to select among them. The pedagogical positioner is characterized by being in-between, in flux, and in reflection, which adds to the dynamics of the speech acts that make room for reflection on the current situation and awareness of the potential for changing position. Re-negotiating positions and associated storylines and allowing rules to change during conversations requires positioner skills, i.e., speech acts of rhetorical sensitivity and curiosity (Holmgren, 2004: 99). Examples of such *speech acts* include pausing and meta-communicating about the teaching process through time-outs and posing questions. Michael notices "tone of voice, pace, and also the pauses" as speech acts that enable changes in his own and the students' positioning. Timothy specifically mentioned the importance of "stepping away" from the whiteboard to "encourage the students to be more active".

If discursive power is defined as the ability to perform particular speech acts, then some have more power than others (Pearce, 1994: 149). Participants displayed awareness that power imbalances occur in the classroom when teachers favor certain speech acts (their own or students') while limiting others, and that power is accompanied by certain duties. For example, Natalie stated the need to "look beyond yourself [as an authority] and realize which signals you send," and to find a "balance between being an authoritative figure and a human being." She hereby articulates the meta-reflection characterizing the pedagogical positioner.

Michael explicitly addressed the *rights and duties* of the pedagogical positioner. Referring to switching between student-centered and content-centered teaching, he stated, "If I have spoken

for 20 minutes—half of the time—then students should also have some [time]. So, [we] share the time and students should, in principle, have the same amount of time that I have." Explicitly allocating time for student-centered teaching helps navigate between different positions.

In sum, meta-positioning draws on meta-reflection to aid navigation between different positions from which the teacher can enact different discursive acts with distinct rules to promote learning. Teachers with this skill consciously reflect on, and oscillate between, all relevant positions that can promote learning, select the most appropriate for the particular context and situation, and address the potential conflicts that might arise.

Why does positioning matter at business schools?

So why do teachers need awareness of the positions they adopt in the classroom, and of the option to purposefully manage their positioning? First, articulating assumptions has an "enlightening and empowering force" by revealing what teachers take to be common sense, good, and valuable, thus potentially presenting opportunities for reflection and change (Søreide, 2006: 543–544). Second, in a climate pressuring teachers to transition from content expert toward learning facilitator, thus altering the power balance between teacher and students, the notion of positioning may help to mitigate teachers' potential unease about "identity undoing," i.e., relinquishing their dominant teacher identity and control (Iszatt-White et al., 2017). A positioning approach has less binding implications than role- or identity-based approaches, and allows teachers to mobilize and blend different positions as they see fit. Teaching is, by nature, a situated and unpredictable activity (Ruth, 2014), and the "non-repeatability of situations…means that a teacher is always improvising" (Phelan, 2005: 66). This makes flexibility crucial, especially in a context where pedagogical freedom is increasingly challenged (Perriton and Reynolds, 2018). Such an approach can also boost teachers' reflexivity, as well as their recognition of, and sensitivity to, differences among students in a context of increasing diversity in management classrooms (Perriton and Reynolds, 2018).

Finally, as Arain et al. (2017) assert, teachers become role models for students through their behavior, since they are perceived as legitimate sources of knowledge. In that sense, teachers who can deftly switch positions to support student learning are also modeling, situationally and relationally, sensitive leadership behaviors to their students as future managers (cf. Solansky, 2014). Such modeling is important to equip business school graduates with the ability to balance instrumental, profit-earning logic with wisdom and a social orientation (Koris et al., 2017: 175) including taking responsibility for showing care and enacting compassion (Worline and Dutton, 2017).

Third, our study also has implications for faculty development in business schools. According to Garnett and Vanderlinden (2011: 631), teaching is often viewed as "a generic instrumental activity," which leads to viewing faculty development programs as providing practical skills or what Kreber (2014) labels productive knowledge (the Aristotelian "techne"). This understanding has been criticized for producing over-general and de-contextualized knowledge; instead, a more reflexive pedagogy building on the teacher's identity and integrity, rather than pedagogical technique, is suggested (Palmer 1998 in Garnett and Vanderlinden, 2011). Consequently, meta-positioning may foster a more holistic and dynamic approach to faculty development, allowing teachers to reflect on new possibilities for action and understanding in a teaching environment that might otherwise remain stagnant. In a faculty development workshop, positioning theory could be explicitly deployed by encouraging teachers to (re-)construct different subject positions; identify the storylines, rights, and duties pertaining to each; and enact them in roleplay. This would allow them to practice meta-positioning and engage in dialog with other teachers about the underpinning values, norms, and assumptions, addressing "what it mean[s] to act well here and now?" (Kreber, 2014: 31). This could be accompanied by critical reflection on possible power issues and/or student distress or resistance that may arise when teachers engage in

conscious position shifts that may be said to constitute a 'direct manipulation of interpersonal relations' (Wright et al., 2019: 262), and on the accompanying ethical challenges. Students may, for instance, experience emotional reactions to teachers' enactments of particular positions, which teachers must be skilled at managing. Participants might also be encouraged to reflect on the possible pros and cons of explicitly discussing the practice of position-shifting with students (cf. Wright et al., 2019).

Another potential way to increase situational awareness is through systematic observation of other teachers in the classroom. Such "mini-ethnographies" would serve the dual purpose of providing feedback to the observed teacher and, equally importantly, encouraging the observing teacher's self-reflection on their own practice. Yet another possibility is to ask teachers in faculty development programs to design and conduct small experiments whereby they consciously change position in their own classrooms using speech acts characteristic of the pedagogical positioner. They could then share their experiences of the implications for their own rights and duties, as well as those of the students, with colleagues in faculty development programs. Over time, such experiments and reflections could prompt teachers to question their academic attitudes and beliefs, providing new ways to interpret their actions and, by extension, their ability to view themselves differently (Lieff et al., 2012: e212). Such "aware practice" should ultimately enhance situational wisdom (Kreber, 2011).

Final reflections

Although faculty development efforts can potentially increase *reflexive positioning*, i.e., faculty's ability to oscillate between different positions, it is important to recognize that all positions include *interactive positioning* of self and others (McVee et al., 2001; Yoon, 2008). Our sole focus on reflexive positioning could give the impression that teachers have full definitional power in the classroom, and consequently have the option of fully flexible positioning. This partial view on

positioning is fruitful for our theoretical purpose of exploring positioning opportunities from teachers' perspectives; however, it does not fully reflect classroom realities. Further, from a learning perspective, students' engagement would likely be limited if they had no definitional power over classroom activities and interaction (cf. Wright et al., 2019). Consequently, and fortunately, teachers and students co-depend to succeed in mobilizing different positions, which can limit the effect of teachers' positioning skills and definitional power in the classroom. Students can, for instance, actively refuse to participate in the offered storyline (Linehan and McCarthy, 2000) and breach the reciprocal duties of the "didactic contract" (Brousseau, 1986).

From our own practice, we know that students can oppose standard roles and teacher expectations through counter-narratives and counter-positionings with conflicting sociolinguistic cues (e.g., not following instructions, not listening, or falling asleep). However, teachers usually have the advantage of controlling most sociolinguistic cues in the classroom and can, therefore, somewhat manage students' positions (Yamakawa et al., 2009). For example, teachers can invite students to become listeners, contributors, experts, or opponents (Barnes, 2004; Yamakawa et al., 2009). Whether this succeeds, and how the differential distribution of power in interactive positioning affects the teacher–learner relationship, could be addressed in future research.

Clearly, students can not only reject but also invite certain teacher positions. In our own teaching practice, students call upon us as content experts, for example by explicitly inquiring about the theories applied in case-based teaching. Even if this interactive positioning is unintentional, Davies and Harré (1990) suggest that "One lives one's life in terms of one's ongoingly produced self, whoever might be responsible for its production" (p. 48). From a positioning theory perspective, faculty development efforts should consider teacher–student interdependence when asking teachers to reflect on self-positioning and its possible influence on the pedagogies they use (Kreber, 2010).

While we briefly refer to the literature on care and compassion in the article, the growing focus on humanity in the workplace (Worline and Dutton, 2017) could be further elaborated in the business education context. The participating teachers in this study articulated aspects of the experience of compassion when they talked about easing the pain of students and supporting them when they experienced hardship during exams or in constructing new identities as students. In relation to the position as supportive caregiver, it would be relevant to further investigate the concept of compassion as a social process, as well as the skills needed to create compassion in the learning process using particular kinds of practices.

Regarding limitations, as our study is based on qualitative data we cannot gauge either the extent of different positionings, or teachers' preferences across different contexts; neither can we offer statistical generalization. However, we hold that conceptual generalization (Golafshani, 2003) is possible: for instance, we expect that the supportive caregiver would surface in other first-year contexts. In other higher education settings, however, different positions not present in our study may emerge. For example, in executive education a "coach" position might emerge, or a "trickster" position that provides no guidance or answers, deliberately challenging post-graduate students to develop leadership competences (cf. Hawkins and Edwards, 2017). In contrast, we posit that meta-positioning is relevant in all teaching contexts, since consistently adopting this position constitutes the concrete enactment of situational wisdom and enables its development through trial and error (particularly for novice teachers). Consequently, while our findings are particularly relevant to first-year settings, they also offer useful insights for teachers and faculty development in general.

Another limitation is that our study does not include student evaluation data as they are confidential and inaccessible to us. Consequently, we cannot analyze the effect of participants' increased positioning awareness or skills on student satisfaction or on student achievement and performance. Relatedly, our study does not include student perspectives, so future research might

explore their awareness and perceptions of teacher positionings and meta-positioning skills, and how certain speech acts lead to interactive position shifts by both parties. Future faculty development programs could benefit from such studies, especially if they investigate teacher rationalizations of such shifts, thus enabling the explicit articulation and sharing of teachers' unique situational wisdom with their peers – though not with a view to generating prescriptive guidelines for the "right" thing to do in a given situation, as this would negate the key learning point that each teaching relationship and situation is unique. However, as Kreber (2010) remarks, good judgment requires not only sensitivity to context but also "universal and systematized knowledge," including the theoretical insights that might arise from systematic inquiry into what positions teachers mobilize, when, and why.

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Table 1. Participants

Alias	Age	Educational background	Experience (years)
Michael	36	MSc in Advanced Economics and Finance	3
Natalie	37	MSc in Advanced Economics and Finance	7
Runa	45	MSc in Political Science	5
Sean	51	PhD, MSc in Business Economics and Administration	25
Thomas	26	BSc in Business Economics and Administration	2
Timothy	37	MSc in Economics and History	3.5

Figure 1. Data Collected during Faculty Development Process

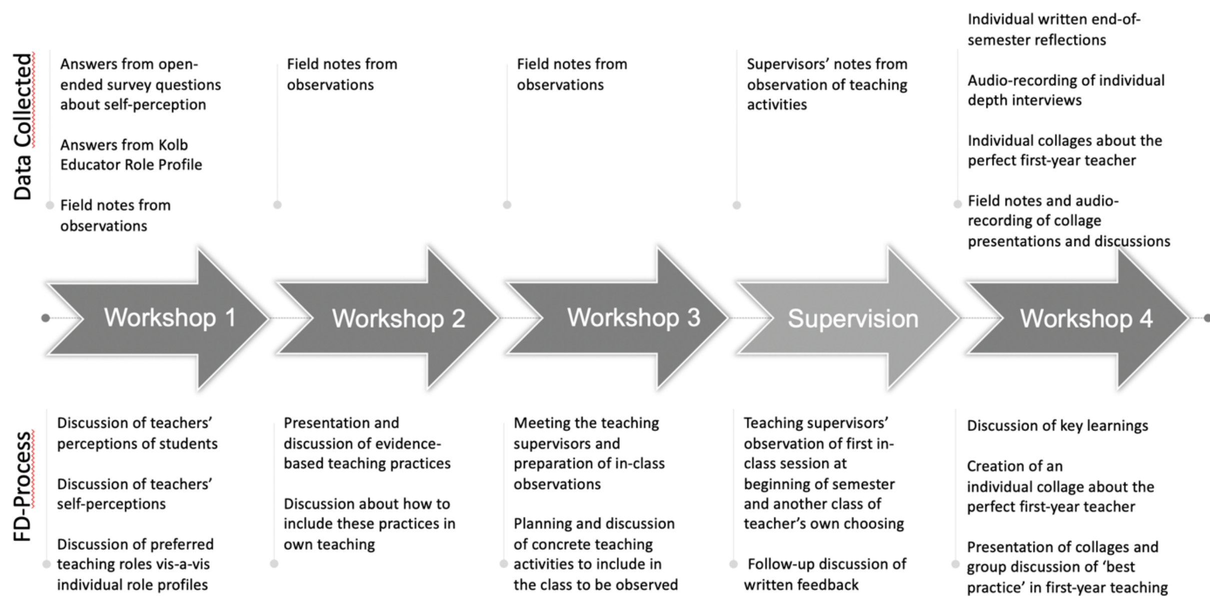

Table 2. Teacher positionings

The Pedagogical Positioner

Articulated as: *Awareness of different available positions and ability to engage certain speech acts that enable re-positioning*
Learning philosophy: *Opportunities for learning depend on the teacher's ability to purposefully reflect on, and oscillate between, relevant positions that can enhance learning and select those that seem most appropriate in any given situation.*
Rights and duties: *Allocating time to various positionings, deciding when to switch positioning*
Examples of discursive acts: *Time-outs, pausing, changing pace and tone of voice, meta-communicating about teaching process*

	Content Expert	**Learning Facilitator**	**Supportive Caregiver**
Articulated as	Someone who directs learning by providing knowledge, and is guided by the alignment between learning objectives, teaching, and exams.	Someone who focuses on the process of learning in relation to content rather than on content itself.	Someone who creates a safe environment in which students' maturation, growth, and development is fostered.
Learning philosophy	Learning depends on the teacher's ability to condense and convey knowledge	Learning is a social process that must be carefully planned, managed, and delegated by the teacher	Opportunities for learning are nurtured when teachers help and motivate students by creating a safe space for learning, while also challenging them to explore the world independently.
Examples of storylines	Large-class lecturing or oral exams	Small group tutorials or interactive classroom teaching.	Mentoring or supervision
Rights and duties	Right to present knowledge and the curriculum at their preferred pace Duty to comply with the given structure and purpose of the course, providing students with an overview.	Right to give responsibility to students and to make them act. Right to refrain from being the sole knowledge provider. Duty to adapt to students' needs, and engage, motivate, and involve them. Duty to plan and orchestrate learning processes.	Right to set classroom rules Duty to offer support and consolation (in order for students to trust that they can explore the world for themselves). Duty to motivate students to develop confidence in learning.
Examples of discursive acts	Facing students from behind a desk Using traditional teaching tools like PowerPoint and whiteboards Focusing on content outlined in the curriculum	Using activating teaching methods. Asking students to identify what needs to be discussed. Giving feedback.	Explicitly articulating 'help' as something that can be given/received. Explicitly showing interest and compassion. Taking the class 'temperature'.

Figure 2. Sample collage by teacher Michael