

Acuminating Pedagogical Skills through Team Teaching

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Abstract: *The concept of team teaching presents interesting possibilities in terms of how faculty from same or diverse backgrounds can complement each other in a supportive team atmosphere. The emphasis of this paper is on the opportunities for cooperation where each professor can provide a unique strength to the teaching team which can be highlighted to help the students. Successful team-teaching provides a model for students with regard to cooperation, teamwork, positive interaction, and the results of collaborative efforts. It allows instructors to acuminating their pedagogical skills and develop efficiency in teaching-learning and research. Groups of students and teachers who learn collaboratively and build knowledge through intellectual interaction are judged to enhance student learning by increasing students' and teachers' interaction and satisfaction.*

Keywords: Pedagogical Skills, Team Teaching

1. Introduction

Improving skills as a teacher takes effort, but once a teacher begins to gain a better understanding of the tricks of the trade, he or she can implement countless simple measures to increase the effectiveness of the lessons in less time. The choice of teaching method or methods to be used depends largely on the information or skill that is being taught and it may also be influenced by the aptitude and enthusiasm of the students. Team teaching allows students and faculty to benefit from the healthy exchange of ideas in a setting defined by mutual respect of a shared interest in a topic and enhance the pedagogical skills of the teacher also contributes in improving learning outcomes by offering student teacher interaction as well as multidimensional approach to subject matter.

2. Definition

- **According to dictionary** team teaching is defined as: A method of classroom instruction in which several teachers combine their individual subjects into one course which they teach as a team to a single group of students.
- **Tompkins in a book (vars.1969)** defined team teaching as:
Means giving two or more teachers joint responsibilities for the education of a group of pupils larger than what is generally considered a normal class size. Inherent in this concept is the idea that there will be some type of differentiation in the functions of the various teachers, either as to subject matter specialization or methodology.
- **Shaplin and olds (1964)** stated that:
Team teaching is a type of instructional organization, involving teaching personnel and the students assigned to them, in which two or more teachers are given responsibility, working together, for all or a significant part of the instruction of the same group of students.
- **Olson (1967)** defined team teaching as: An instructional situation where two or more teacher possessing complementary teaching skills cooperatively plan and implement the instruction for a single group of students

using flexible scheduling and grouping techniques to meet the particular instructional needs of students.

- **Trump (1968)** says that: The term team teaching applies to an arrangement in which two or more teachers and their assistants, taking advantage of their respective competencies, plan, instruct, and evaluate in one or more subject areas a group of elementary or secondary students equivalent in size to two or more conventional classes, using a variety of technical aids to teaching and learning through large group instruction, small group discussions, and independent study.
- **Dieker & Murawski (2003)** define team-teaching as two or more teachers of equal status in the classroom providing instruction to one group of students at the same time.

3. Meaning

Team teaching is an opportunity to all the teachers who want variation in their teaching methods, enrich their pedagogical skills, enhance their area of knowledge and move to a collaborative meaningful curriculum to improve the student learning outcomes. Further team teaching results in the improvement of qualities like cooperation, team work, positive interaction, collaborative efforts, and scores as a model for the students to follow. This strategy not only employs a different way of teaching but also a different way of learning for the teachers. It is a strong tool in the hands of a teachers to acuminating their pedagogical skills and develop themselves into proficient teachers. The benefits of this strategy is not restricted to the teachers but extends its benefits to students as well, improving learning outcomes by offering increased student - teacher interaction, as well as a multidimensional approach to subject matter. Team-teaching is the practice of including two or more teachers of same discipline or different discipline in a classroom to provide instruction to same group of students in a combined manner. Conditions necessary for successful partnerships include common planning time, sequence of communication, definition of roles, accommodating schedules, symbiotic relationships, and teacher willingness. This also allows teachers to work closely together to discuss individual student strengths and weaknesses and can make the overall classroom more

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effective. This method of differentiated instruction enhances the teaching learning outcomes.

4. Principles of Team Teaching

Four basic concepts for effective team teaching are listed below. These principles are much more significant when the team teaching is interdisciplinary.

- **Organization**

There is need to highly organize course to be taught by the team members so that all the members have prior knowledge of the assignments to be carried out during the class. This requires proper distribution of syllabus, distribution of daily class schedule, time table and homework assignments. This organisation acts as a strong beginning for the working and success of team.

- **Supportive Atmosphere**

It is important that the teachers involved in team teaching convince the students about the benefits of team teaching and continually emphasize the value of the team concept to the students. All the members of team should support each other for proper success of course. For example: In the topic Remote Sensing, professor of geography can strongly tell about the special importance of the professor of physics in explaining the concept of spectrum involved in Remote Sensing. This support will further enhance the process of team teaching. Above all, professors must foster an atmosphere where there is respect for all members of the team.

- **Participation**

Depending on the number of professors comprising the team (2 or 3), all instructors/ professors should be present for the class meetings to continually be aware of all the activities which are to be held during team teaching like; course to be covered, aids to be used, assessment of objectives and smooth flow of the material. The support of one professor by the other in the classroom by using the examples and notations of each other help in enriching the overall learning environment.

- **Strengths**

It is important to understand that strengths and expertise of each team member should be fully explored to benefit the experiences of all the team members. The strategy is successful only if supportive environment is encouraged throughout the programme. Focus on organisation, supportiveness, participation, and the strengths of team members must be fostered throughout team teaching.

5. Structuring Team Teaching

Planning with the faculty team: The foremost step for proper success of team teaching is careful and extensive planning. This planning will help the instructors/professors to move in agreement regarding teaching strategies, teaching aids, course division, assignments, grading procedure etc. These planning meetings help the professors to familiarize themselves with their co-teachers and their overall strategies. All the elements of the course should pass through the hands of each member of the team.

Attending Colleagues lecture: It is imperative that the team members attend their colleague's lectures to get fully acquainted with each other's course content and strategies to make teaching platform stronger. Such presence acts not only as support but also helps in widening the perspectives at individual level.

Integration with colleague's idea: Agreement with each other to show integration of perspectives in each course to be delivered helps students to better understand instructor's expectations as well as help them improve their own learning outcomes. Showing respect for all members of team is must for ensuring students interest and engagement in the course.

Allowing intellectual debate among colleagues: There should be space for high level intellectual debate among the colleagues regarding methodological approaches, course material, to allow students to discover the advantages of different disciplines. Such debates allow students to gain practical knowledge of different academic disciplines.

Teammate as active participant: To avoid a chaos and confusion among students, the teachers involved in team teaching generally switch to one –in charge/Professor/Instructor at one time but this does not mean that the second instructor does not actively participate during the dialogue of present in-charge teacher/Professor/Instructor. The professor still has the opportunity to act as model learner, observer, discussion leader, or advocate i.e. the one raising challenging questions in the classroom. In any of the roles the other instructor can actively participate to enhance the teaching-learning environment.

Team partners should attend all meetings: Successful team teaching also requires time to time meetings among instructors to review and estimate their goals for the desired course to reflect upon their progress so far, and to throw light on student's response and engagement and also to ensure coherence among all the elements involved in the strategy.

Allowing space for open ended questions and participation: Presentation of content through different perspectives, dimensions, approach is the charm of this strategy, giving wider scope for cognitive development. The instructors must allow the students to freely satisfy the inquisitiveness by throwing a variety of questions which must be answered by the team in a united way. The positive interaction and participation between instructors/professors and students would provide highly positive impact on student learning outcome.

Instructors as active learners: There is no age to learn and strategy as team teaching provides such opportunities to the instructors to also become expert learners from expert teacher and expert learner from expert learners. The switch over from experts to learner is essential for an academic as well as professional growth. There is ample of opportunity to learn from each other during such teaching strategy.

6. Models of Team Teaching

- **An Interactive Teaching Model:** where all members of the teaching team are present during each course

meeting. This model provides the most opportunity for the integration of different subjects and disciplines.

- **Rotational Model:** only one instructor is present at a time, but a series of instructors rotate throughout the course, teaching only the course topics that fall within their specialty. Rotational model, allows students to learn each aspect of the course material from an expert in the field, it has the disadvantage of forcing students to adjust to a new teacher's style several times over the course of a quarter.
- **Dispersed Team Model:** The class meets two or three times a week, once with all faculty members present and once or twice more in sections with one faculty member present. This model "provides opportunities for integration and interaction" when the instructors teach together, but also provides "a small class environment" in a single-instructor scenario. However, this model can limit the opportunity for students to hear multiple perspectives on the same topic, one of the core learning advantages of team teaching.

7. Benefits of Team Teaching

1. Positive interaction with the audience is a key note of team teaching.
2. Team teaching involves collaboration between the members and this works on the principle of sea saw which needs balance on both sides; so that both the teachers keep each other on track.
3. Team teaching provides opportunity to teachers to uncover themselves from isolation and hold hands in collaboration to generate new ideas giving spark to teaching learning resulting in increased effectiveness and innovation in teaching.
4. Acts as an alternative to lecture fatigue by providing various physical and mental stimulations due to the presence of more than one instructor/professor.
5. Team teaching makes use of existing human resources, just requiring their re-organisation, not demanding expensive resources or equipments for implementation.

8. Limitations

1. There arises conflicting situations when one of the teachers want to make curriculum more comprehensive while other wants to delimit it to some extent. Such diversification in view of teachers becomes challenging for proper success of the strategy.
2. Human nature varies and so does their viewpoint, so the principle of co-operation on which team teaching rests at times becomes difficult task.
3. Lack of time on part of one of the members/instructors further raises problems in scheduling of the strategy.
4. Sometimes one of the teacher's in the team start having hedge over the ball, which at times becomes difficult to manage.

9. Conclusion

Team teaching has now found a place in many different departments, programs, and disciplines, at levels ranging from undergraduate lectures to postgraduate levels. Team teaching can help create a dynamic and interactive learning environment, provide instructors/professors with a useful way of modelling thinking within or across disciplines, and also inspire new research ideas and intellectual partnerships among faculty. The team teaching has a strong theoretical base but its success rest on the way it works in practice i.e. structuring and functioning of teams. However, its full meaning only emerge, when professors in different settings work it out in their own ways.

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