

IMPLEMENTATION OF TEAM TEACHING IN ECONOMIC EDUCATION

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Abstract: Teamwork is prevalent in business, industry and administration and is becoming common in classes. Team Teaching uses the principles and advantages of teamwork in relation of teaching team and students. Team Teaching is not only an alternative teaching approach, but an effective method of simulating real life conditions, full of conflicting demands and competing values, in the classroom. In this paper we attempt to assess advantages and disadvantages of Team Teaching and offer some examples of successful implementation of this approach in teaching of economic subjects.

Keywords: Team Teaching, economic subjects, training firm, models of Team Teaching, experiences with implementation

1 Theoretical aspects of Team Teaching

Team teaching is a strategy that many see as new and experimental and does not so far belong in Slovak secondary and higher education to often used and developed teaching approaches. Team Teaching can be defined, according to K. Goetz [2000, p. 2], as "a group of two or more teachers working together to plan, conduct and evaluate the learning activities for the same group of learners." I. Shafer [2001, p. 1] defines this term following: "Two or more instructors are involved in the same course". This definition is very general and is used for collaborative teaching (co-teaching), a broader category, as well. Experts describe from four to six common types of co-teaching, one of them is Team Teaching. This subcategory is defined by S. Quinn and S. Kanter [1984] as "simply team work between two qualified instructors who, together, make presentations to an audience." Teachers or instructors building a team may come from closely allied disciplines, or they may derive from different interdisciplinary interconnected fields. J. Skalková [2007, p.79] describes Team Teaching as a collaboration of teachers (e.g. teacher of theoretical subjects and master of vocational education, teachers of physics and chemistry) and as approach, which supports the interdisciplinary relations and contributes to the synthesis of cognition.

We can take in consideration three basic patterns of Team Teaching. In Category A the teachers, working together in team, share the responsibility for setting goals for a course, designing a syllabus, preparing lesson plans, teaching students and evaluating their results. They are in interaction with students; they discuss with them various topics from different points of view. Their specialization enables them to make their presentation more complex and attractive. They are teaching the same students at the same time within the same classroom. For Traditional Team Teaching is shared delivery of instruction typical, so in this case the teachers actively share the instruction of content and skills to all students, one may present new material to the students, while the other is setting up some important points drawing a concept or mind map and interjecting his own points.

In the category B is the responsibility for curriculum and grading shared as well, the team members work together, but they do not necessarily teach at the same time or the same group of students. They can share ideas and common resources, but function independently. They share planning, but each of them teaches his specialized skills area, or is applying different frame of reference. Other members of the team not presenting the content participate in discussion and monitor student understanding, activity and behaviour. In the category C is a person of coordinator involved in Team Teaching. This individual plans the instructions and designs the program for the entire team and

is responsible for the curriculum and grading. This pattern is missing the shared responsibility and the structure of category A and B and does not take the full advantage of the team concept.

2 Advantages and disadvantages of Team Teaching

In comparison with a conventional model of teaching, has Team Teaching a multitude of benefits and drawbacks for both, the teachers and the students. Working as a part of a team has a lot of advantages, which represent the positive consequences of team principles:

- Team knows more
- Team has a synergic effect
- Team incites, develops and cultivates
- Team teaches respect to the others
- Team gives to its members some kind of credit

These overall team benefits are transformed in the environment of Team Teaching to a synergy of knowledge, skills and experiences of the teachers, taking part in Team Teaching. They have got common goals, so they can inspire, support and motivate each other. They make use of different styles of planning, organization and class presentation. This gives them an opportunity to enhance their own teaching methods, allows them to develop new teaching approaches. Every participating teacher may emphasize different point of view on the issue, thereby interest and attention of the students increases. Team members complement each other. Teaching team provides students with essential models of team behaviour, teaching them principles of mutual respect and esteem. Students can benefit from seeing their teachers collaborate and cooperate on a goal, which is not possible in single-teacher classroom. In such environment students realize that important issues are complex and often raise a number of contradictory interpretations. Students should also come to conclusion that learning is sometimes of paradoxical nature. Expert opinion is not limited to the boundaries of their academic competence. Even if interdisciplinary boundaries are temporarily removed, students will return to them in the upper grades, when it will be closer to their specialization. Students learn to accept more than one opinion and to act more cooperatively with others. Team Teaching gives students the chance to develop independent critical thinking, as they learn to choose from alternatives in appropriate way. Plurality of opinions helps students to understand that absolute certainty and ultimate truth does not exist.

The successful teaching team does not bring only the expected measurable effects of pedagogical activity, but can also receive recognition from the school management, students, and last but not least from student parents. Another benefit of team teaching is that cooperation with one or more colleagues enables teachers to overcome the isolation inherent in teaching. By working together, team teachers can discuss not only professional issues and improve their solutions, but issues relating to students, like their expectations and motivation.

Just as we have indicated general positives of the team, which are reflected in Team Teaching, we can mention some of the general negatives. These include: risk of conflicts between teachers, who are involved in Team Teaching; risk of suppressing the individuality of team members, additional time needed for preparation of Team Teaching not only for individual lessons, but also for the whole concept. This requires awareness of constant information exchange not only previous to the start of Team Teaching program, but also during the whole program. Compared to traditional way of teaching, Team Teaching presentation requires thorough preparation in advance, to make the presentation output clear and without leaving any essential points disregarded. It is also important to learn, how to share giving instructions and discussion, to master cooperative and time management skills. Necessity of common goal may in

individual cases arise as counterproductive. Not all teachers are eligible for Team Teaching, as not all of them are able to conform to the rules of Team Teaching. Because of input from several team members, there may be too much material and too many activities in a course. This danger is considerably bigger among teachers with no Team Teaching experience. Team Teaching requires in comparison to traditional teaching much more introspection, teamwork and planning. In our opinion, the most of interpersonal difficulties are caused by insufficient planning and lack of coordination.

Team teachers are always confronted with fact, that they are being compared by students, who generally do not have the competence to evaluate the opinions of the teachers. They look at them, as if they were two rival "actors". This raises a risk of greater popularity or unpopularity of one of them. Some students are not satisfied with Team Teaching; they are too much accustomed to a single teacher teaching method, and they do not like changes and new methods. They may be surprised, even upset or frustrated by unusual atmosphere in the classroom, where Team Teaching takes place. On the other hand, it may happen indeed that one teacher is more responsible and demanding. Again, this can be a source of frustration and dissatisfaction of the second teacher's pedagogical performance. Any success as well as any failure is carried altogether by team members, which can once more lead to conflicts. Team teaching is very sensitive to the permanent communication of team members, with the school management, classroom teachers and with parents. Even communicating outside the classroom needs to be coordinated.

3 Implementation of Team Teaching

According to K. Goetz these "key elements appear to be necessary for a successful team teaching program:

1. compatibility of team members,
2. shared commitment to team teaching and ongoing communication,
3. keen interest in connecting the content or curriculum to real life,
4. strong desire to ignite students' thirst for knowledge." [2000, p.10 – 12].

These are very important points not only in the period the program is running, but during the project preparation and prior to implementation, too.

Decision-making process at the level of school management is an important part of the implementation of Team Teaching. Firstly, it is essential to make a decision on the issue, what subjects should be Team Teaching applied for and determine the staff composition including salaries. This is followed by defining the roles of team members, adaptation, curriculum, teaching goal setting, sharing of time and of teaching materials and adjusting the teaching schedule.

Decision on classroom size, material facilities, time management, and training management are also a part of the team teaching management. Not less necessary is to negotiate practical issues such as sharing of workspace, textbooks and teaching aid; and even the selection of suitable teaching methods is very important. In Team Teaching is the preference given to discussion methods (e.g. Socratic dialogue, Brainstorming, etc.). This approach is based on the premise that education should provide us with methods of approach, not definitive solutions. For that reason a frequent use of problem solving teaching is very important. Significant role in team teaching is played by modern information and communication technologies, which are used by the members of the team, so they can gain more time for the application of activating teaching methods.

As a potential barrier we can mention personal concerns, expressed by the teachers during the implementation period of Team Teaching. They expect that not all team members will contribute equally, what can cause personality conflicts. Some

teachers prefer working alone and do not understand how to share the team work; some of them are afraid, that team meetings will be only a waste of time and are in doubt whether this teaching method will be worthwhile.

4 Experiences with Implementation of Team Teaching in teaching of economic subjects

The first experiences with implementation of Team Teaching in Slovakia we have gained in the secondary school (Business Academy) environment by teaching the subject: Training Firm, where we have been experimentally verifying the participation of foreign language teachers (English and German) as members of teaching team for teaching Training Firm. We used pattern B, which permits team member's involvement also in another teaching unit, preferably in a part of the teaching block. The subject was taught in a block of four lessons. Foreign language teachers have been training students in international trade topics, focusing on improving their foreign language skills and competences, preparing them for high-quality processing of various marketing outcomes in foreign languages and in particular preparing them for direct communication with business partners during school lessons and at International Training Firms Fair. This model has met with a positive response among students as well as parents. It brought positive transfer to the teaching of general language lessons and on the other hand it had created more space for language teachers to apply their skills in teaching professional terminology and correspondence.

Currently, we apply the Team Teaching at the University of Economics in Bratislava in the subject Training Firm with the team of two teachers and in teaching the subject Creation of Scientific Papers there is a team of seven teachers. In Training Firm we use pattern B, i.e. teachers take turns throughout the semester. The only exception is the end of the semester, when students defend their business projects before two members of the team. In the subject Creation of Scientific Papers we apply pattern C. The coordinator in the role of professional sponsor is a member of the team, evaluating the outcomes of the students. Every of these two teaching teams has worked together to develop a plan of seminars in terms of content, goals, schedule and methodology of teaching. Team members have cooperated on several scientific projects together; they know each other's teaching styles and are motivated to improve the quality of their own teaching. They regularly inform each other about partial results, feedback from the students and they are constantly trying to find the way how to improve the motivation of students. Teaching in these courses is evaluated by the relevant faculty management and by the students. The responses and our experiences are so far positive.

We feel that Team Teaching is more than an alternative approach, because it leads to a new kind of relationships between teachers and their students.

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