Innovative Team-Teaching: Faculty Perceptions and Administrative Policies

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ABSTRACT

Team-teaching is a classroom innovation with the potential to address many criticisms of business-school curricula (e.g., the "silo" mentality) and provide significant benefits to students and faculty members. While the existing team-teaching literature identifies the positive outcomes that are associated with team-teaching, less is known about the extent to which these positive outcomes are perceived by faculty at large and about the costs faculty members associate with team-teaching. This paper investigates faculty members' perceptions of team-teaching and the implications of those perceptions on administrative policies.

Business schools have been criticized for maintaining a departmental "silo" mentality (Corcos, Durschlag and Morris 1997; Chelte 2001; Lasher and Manners 2005; Ottewill, McKenzie and Leah 2005; Larange 2010 and Hunt 2011). The criticism of business schools reflects similar problems in business practices (Gorman 2006). In business schools, where faculty members' personal silos exist within a department or program, activities critical to the innovativeness, integration, and sustainability of curriculum are impeded. Curricular revisions may certainly be in evidence but, frequently these are individually undertaken micro revisions made by the individual faculty members to the courses that they are scheduled to teach. Individually undertaken revisions to existing courses and individually created new courses should be both encouraged and recognized. However, a total reliance on individual initiatives is at variance with achieving the frequently expressed objective of creating an integrated curriculum. If academic administrators are serious about new course and program development and the integration of curriculum within and across academic units then they must find ways to lure faculty members from the comfortable certainty of their personal silos and provide incentives which will stimulate cooperation between and among faculty members and, where necessary, between and among academic units.

The activities involved in team-teaching courses have been identified as potential mechanisms for stimulating cooperation between and among faculty members. Leavitt (2007) for example, has asserted that team-teaching does serve as a stimulus for faculty members to break out of their personal conceptual silos and to view concepts and topics from other than their personal perspectives. Additionally, Leavitt's work suggested team-teaching provides an opportunity for faculty to validate their personal perspectives.

This paper offers a look at team-teaching from the perspectives of both faculty and administrators. More specifically, qualitative and quantitative data are used to investigate the costs and benefits that faculty associate with team-teaching. Then, given these perceived costs and benefits, the paper discusses how administrative policies may be crafted in order to properly incentivize and support faculty members' team-teaching activities.

LITERATURE REVIEW
BENEFITS OF TEAM-TEACHING

Team-teaching has been the focus of several research studies from a variety of disciplines, and

these studies have identified several ways in which team-teaching benefits students and faculty.

Benefits to Faculty

Active participation in the activities that constitute the development and implementation of team developed and team-taught classes can represent an important addition to a faculty member's professional and intellectual development. Hornyak and Wagner (1995) reported that team-teaching moves participating faculty members beyond imparting basic knowledge and focuses their attention on application, analysis, synthesis and evaluation. Examining the manner in which existing assumptions, propositions, hypotheses, conclusions, models and theories included in the curriculum are supported or not supported by the collection and interpretation of empirical data opens participating faculty members to new directions and, importantly, may very likely engender cooperative research, publication and other intellectual contributions (George and Davis–Wiley 2000; Hunt 2011).

Benefits to Students

A number of studies have indicated that students who completed carefully planned and implemented team-taught classes were also likely to experience and to adopt broader topical perspectives. It was further reported that these classes also contributed to the development of the students' capacity for critical thinking, an outcome frequently sought when assessing academic programs (Cowen, Ewell and McDonnell 1995; Wentworth and Davis 2002; McDaniels and Colarulli 1997; Benjamin 2000; Wentworth and Davis 2002 and Vogler and Long 2003).

Team-teaching has also been demonstrated to yield other important positive learning assessment outcomes (Shafer,1983; Austin and Baldwin,1991; Robinson and Schaible, 1995; Watkins,1996; Anderson and Speck,1998; Hornyak and Wagner,1999; Benjamin, 2000; Buckley, 2000; George and Davis, 2000; Wentworth and Davis, 2000; Cohen, DeMichiell and Manning 2003; Helms, Alvis and Willis 2005 and Yellowley and Farmer 2005). Lasher and Manners (2005), for example, found that student achievement in advanced MBA courses was significantly higher when the students had completed integrated team-taught business foundation courses. Further, the same researchers reported that students who were enrolled in these classes reported an increase in their level of personal satisfaction with the team-taught foundation courses. Taking all these validated positive findings into account and considering the frequently stated importance and relevance attributed to working toward an integrated curriculum leads one to question why, in so many business schools, the silos within larger silos are so well insulated that team course development and team-teaching are considered more as the exceptional rather than the conventional approach to both course and curricular revisions.

FACULTY PERCEPTIONS OF TEAM-TEACHING

Qualitative Data

While the literature identifies many benefits of team-teaching, team-teaching activities also come with a number of costs. Qualitative data, gathered from one-on-one interviews with faculty who were undertaking significant revisions to an existing MBA program, were used to investigate the negative associations faculty had with team-teaching. These informal discussions uncovered some deep seated concerns and reservations about team course development and team-teaching, and these concerns suggest that faculty perceive team-teaching as having significant costs to both faculty members and to the administration.

Those faculty members who were most adamantly opposed to implementing a program which included team-teaching considered team-teaching to be too radical a departure from the time honored tradition of having one teacher and one class interacting over a defined academic term. Studies conducted by (Davis 1995; Chelte 2001, and Lasher and Manners 2005) reported similar reservations. Other faculty members responded by characterizing team-teaching activities as too "soft" or too "touchy-feely" for a business school program. Still other faculty members responded that they had, in fact, "teamed" with invited guest speakers who offered an informed perspective on specific topical areas of the course. More

often than not, however, the discussion revealed that the invited speaker's perspective did not differ radically from that of the instructor and so reinforced the viewpoint that the faculty member wished to get across to the class. Discussions with faculty members who had expressed positive views regarding team course development and team-teaching, but had been unwilling to become involved in these activities, posed what appeared to be an inconsistency. Upon further discussion, however, this inconsistency between their stated opinions and supporting actions stemmed from a practical and a very understandable rationale. Their reticence to express both operational and active support for the concept of team-teaching as a path to curricular integration was a reaction to the perceived possibility that departmental or college administrators might focus on the acceptance of some of the benefits of team-teaching and, giving less weight to faculty members' reservations, impose a team-teaching approach.

Quantitative Data

The previous sections document both positive and negative aspects of team-teaching. However, the extent to which faculty members have awareness of, and belief in, these aspects remains unknown. Thus, a quantitative study was conducted to ascertain the benefits and costs faculty at large associate with team-teaching.

Methodology and Data Collection

Data were collected by administering a survey to business school faculty members from a large, private, and urban University in the Midwest. A total of 111 completed surveys were collected (69 from full-time instructors and 42 from adjunct instructors). Respondents were solicited via email and directed to a web-based questionnaire that collected their responses. The survey presented respondents with a number of items that each contributed to one five scales discussed in the following section.

Measurement Scales

A five-item scale was used to measure "Student Benefits". The items asked respondents for their opinion regarding the degree to which team-teaching positively impacted students' ability to make decisions, think critically, integrate concepts, apply concepts, and generally learn. The scale, which proved to be reliable for the data set as a whole (α = .957) as well as for full-time professors (α = .957) and adjunct instructors separately (α = .958), was calculated as the mean of the five individual items.

A four-item scale was used to measure "Faculty Benefits". The items asked respondents for their opinion regarding the degree to which team-teaching was rewarding, helped them stay current, helped them become better instructors, and should be part of their normal responsibilities. The scale, which proved to be reliable for the data set as a whole (α = .878) as well as for full-time professors (α = .849) and adjunct instructors separately (α = .925), was calculated as the mean of the five individual items.

A three-item scale was used to measure "Faculty Costs". The items asked respondents for their opinion regarding the degree to which team-teaching detracted from their ability to focus on research, required too much time, and required too much preparation. The scale, which proved to be reliable for the data set as a whole (α = .911) as well as for full-time professors (α = .899) and adjunct instructors separately (α = .930), was calculated as the mean of the three individual items.

A five-item scale was used to measure "Administrative Costs". The items asked respondents for their opinion regarding the degree to which team-teaching activities were difficult to administer in terms of the required coordination across faculty members, the faculty evaluation and compensation, and resource allocation. The scale, which proved to be reliable for the data set as a whole (α = .679) as well as for full-time professors (α = .735) and adjunct instructors separately (α = .581), was calculated as the mean of the five individual items.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Faculty Perceptions of Team-Teaching

To investigate faculty perceptions of team-teaching, means for each scale were calculated and t-tests were used to see if the means were significantly different across faculty groups (i.e., means

for full-time faculty were compared to means for adjunct faculty). The results reveal that there are differences between types of faculty in terms of perceptions of the faculty costs and faculty benefits of team-teaching, but not in terms of the student benefits and the administrative costs (see Table 1).

Table 1
Scale Means for Full-Time and Adjunct Faculty

Scale	Full-time Faculty Mean (SD)	Adjunct Faculty Mean (SD)
Student Benefits	4.1 (1.2)	4.3 (1.4)
Faculty Benefits	**3.9 (1.3)**	**4.6 (1.5)**
Faculty Costs	**3.2 (1.5)**	**2.5 (1.3)**
Administration Costs	4.3 (1.2)	3.9 (1.Ø)

Bold type indicates significant differences in means across groups (95% confidence level).

Confidence intervals were calculated for the mean of the Student Benefits scale and for the Administrative Costs scale using the data set as a whole. The confidence interval for the Student Benefit scale suggests faculty have a neutral opinion of the degree to which team-teaching benefits students. That is to say, faculty members as a whole perceive team-teaching has having no significant impact on student learning. Similar to the data regarding Student Benefits, the confidence interval for the Administrative Costs scale suggests faculty have a neutral opinion of degree to which team-teaching is burdensome to administer. That is to say, faculty as a whole seem to perceive team-teaching as having no significant administrative costs.

The perception of relationship between team-teaching and the benefits and costs to individual faculty members was different across the two types of faculty. With regard to faculty benefits, scale means indicate adjunct faculty perceived team-teaching to be more personally beneficial than did full-time faculty (scale means of 4.5 and 3.9 respectively). Additionally, full-time faculty perceived team-teaching as more costly than did adjunct faculty (mean of 3.2 and 2.5 respectively). Both groups indicated that team-teaching offered more benefits than costs.

Relationship Between Team-Teaching Experience and Faculty Perceptions

Further analyses were conducted to see if faculty who differed in terms of either team-teaching behavior or team-teaching intentions also differed in terms of their perceptions of the benefits and costs of team-teaching. The results revealed that there were significant differences in the perceptions of team-teaching when faculty were grouped based on team-teaching intentions (see Table 2). More specifically, faculty who have considered team-teaching (as compared to those faculty who have not considered team-teaching) think team-teaching leads to greater student outcomes, lesser faculty benefits, and lesser faculty costs. It should also still be noted that the faculty benefits of team-teaching seem are perceived to outweigh the faculty costs for those faculty who would consider team-teaching.

However, among faculty who have considered team-teaching (n = 69) there are no differences in perceptions of team-teaching regardless of whether or not those faculty had actually team-taught a course (see Table 3). These results imply that there is a significant hurdle to overcome to get faculty to *consider* team-teaching, but the

Table 2
Differences in Perceptions of Faculty Grouped Based Upon Team-Teaching Intentions

	Scale Means			
Response (sample size)	Student Benefits	Faculty Costs	Faculty Benefits	Admin. Costs
Have not considered team-teaching a course.(n = 3Ø)	3.6	3.5	3.4	4.4
Have considered team-teaching a course. (n = 69)	4.4	2.8	4.4	4.1

Italics indicate significant differences in means across groups (95% confidence level).

Table 3
Differences in Perceptions of Faculty Grouped Based Upon Team-Teaching Experience

Response (sample size)	Scale Means			
	Student Benefits	Faculty Benefits	Faculty Costs	Admin. Costs
Have not team-taught a course. (n = 21)	4.1	4.1	3.0	4.3
Have team-taught a course. (n = 49)	4.4	4.6	2.7	4.0
Significance of Difference (p-value)	.407	.424	.195	.270
*Among those faculty who have considered team-teaching.				

expectations faculty have once they cross that hurdle are consistent with the experience of team-teaching. In other words, the perceptions of benefits and costs that faculty have once they consider team-teaching do not change after they actually team-teach.

Overall, the qualitative and quantitative data suggest that there are significant obstacles to overcome in getting faculty to consider team-teaching. However, once faculty consider team-teaching as a viable option, they perceive many benefits to engaging in team-teaching activities and these benefits do not change once faculty actually do engage in these activities. These findings have policy implications (discussed in the following sections) for schools and colleges that seek to encourage more team-teaching among faculty.

POLICY IMPLICATIONS

While team-teaching is dependent upon faculty actions, administrative policies can be used to promote these actions. Incorporating knowledge regarding faculty members' perceptions of team-teaching into the policy development process can help ensure that policies foster desired faculty activities without creating barriers to those same activities. The data collected for the present study suggest that administrative policies designed to promote team-teaching should be designed to achieve two goals: (1) persuade faculty to consider team-teaching, and (2) ensure that the team-teaching experience delivers the benefits and costs that faculty expect. The following discussion focuses on policy considerations that can be used to accomplish these two goals.

Incentives to Persuade Faculty to Consider Team-Teaching

Evidence for the critical importance of using incentives to stimulate desired initiatives has, in recent years, been made very clear (Levitt and Dubner 2005 & 2009). From the point of view presented in this article incentives and administrative policies are considered to be related. Incentives can stimulate the activities considered necessary to attain stated objectives and clear and relevant administrative policies can aid in sustaining these activities. Incentives can take many forms in order to correspond to a wide variety of motivating factors:

- Financial incentives (e.g., $2000 for developing a new team-taught course)
- Faculty development opportunities (e.g., support faculty attendance at conferences/seminars that allow faculty to expand their knowledge bases)
- Course releases (e.g., reduce teaching loads to allow faculty time to develop team-taught courses)
- Evaluation exclusion (e.g., allow faculty to exclude evaluations from team-taught courses from their performance evaluations when the course is initially taught by the faculty member)

Ensuring a Quality Team-Teaching Experience through Faculty Leadership

Team-teaching initiatives should be led by faculty who volunteer to champion the concept of team-teaching and/or lead team-teaching efforts for specific courses. These faculty volunteers are likely to be viewed as credible advocates and thus

their advocacy efforts are likely to be more fruitful. Implementing a program of team-teaching requires the attention and efforts of a "concept champion" and eventually individual "course leaders". Successful team-teaching initiatives rely heavily on the service of volunteers who will develop the requisite course schedule, specify the educational materials and assignments to be incorporated within the course and state both the teaching and learning objectives of the course (Davis 1995). The team must also arrange a time period(s) for the course; pilot test offering(s) and methods for evaluating the course and assessing its learning objectives (Cowan, Ewell and McDonnell 1995, Cohen, DeMichiell and Manning 2003). All of these activities are components of a faculty member's workload and all are related to his or her teaching performance and teaching evaluations.

Policy Statement

A formal written policy regarding team-teaching could provide a mechanism for engaging faculty in conversations regarding team-teaching that could lead to an increase in the number of faculty who would consider team-teaching (please see Appendix for a sample policy). A statement of policy regarding team-teaching must address the issues and answer the questions that are raised by faculty members (Robinson & Shaible 1995, Goetz 2000, Yellowley & Farmer 2005). Given the negative issues that could arise from team-teaching, the policy should address the following elements:

- Teaching load issues: The policy should state the impact that team-teaching will have on the faculty member's teaching load. It is recommended that team-taught courses count the same as sole-instructor courses when calculating the teaching load for individual faculty members.
- Impact on Tenure and Promotion: The policy should include language that assures faculty that their team-teaching efforts will be recognized as legitimate teaching and/or service activities when presented within the documentation used to evaluate faculty for contract renewal, salary adjustments, and tenure and promotion.

CONCLUSION

Team-teaching and cooperative curricular revision and innovation are group activities that stimulate faculty members to work together. They must, however, also realize that these important activities are not likely come about spontaneously. And so administrators at all levels should be prepared to offer directions and incentives to stimulate those activities which are in the service of both long and short term objectives. On the other side of the interaction, faculty may also recognize the necessity and importance of cooperation in achieving both long and short term objectives. They will respond to incentives if and only if the administration adheres to a stated policy which governs how these cooperative activities are defined and especially how they are recognized, evaluated and, beyond the limited period of initial incentives, how these activities will be rewarded.

The right combination of incentives and policy matters means that both the faculty members and the administrators can get what both parties are likely to want. Both groups can benefit from positive program recognition; increasing enrollments in programs; increased revenues from tuition; enhanced levels of scholarship; the continuity of cooperation and , not to be understated, security.

In conclusion clear statements of policies covering expectations, incentives and rewards must be communicated to and understood by faculty members. The policy could be as simple as stating that "development activities are considered as an integral part of the faculty members' workload." Or it could state that "released time for course and program development is a matter to be decided at the discretion of the chair(s) contingent on the needs of the college." The final language of the policy must be discussed, agreed upon, announced, applied and reinforced. The important point is to assure faculty members who engage in course development and innovative course delivery efforts that these efforts will be recognized.

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APPENDIX
A Sample Policy for Participating in Team-teaching

Some of the proposals for curriculum revision and program development currently being considered require the coordination and integration of course content. Meeting the objectives addressed by these proposals, or at least, that are implied within them will require course development and course presentation by teams composed of faculty members within individual departments and between different departments within the College. Other proposals will require team development and teaching by faculty from Commerce and other colleges within the university.

Team course and program development and team-teaching is a departure from the standard operating procedure within the college. Because these activities must be factored into the faculty work load and departmental operations, we needed a set of agreed upon policy statements The policy statements should have to be simply stated, clear to both faculty and administrators, and as fair as possible to the individual faculty members and to the departments, and colleges involved. In sponsoring and implementing team-teaching.

There are three major categories of activities which require policy statements. These are as follows:

1. **Team Development: Individual Teaching**

   This activity involves a team of faculty members within the same department or from two or more departments who work together to develop a new course; a sequential program of courses, or to revise a single or sequence of courses. Once developed, the new or revised course or courses in the program would be taught by individual faculty members.

   For example, within the Department of Economics, two faculty members have worked together to develop a new course called "Business Conditions Analysis." This course was designed to be a requirement for the MBA program(s) and to be taught in several sections by individual faculty. Another course, "The Global Economy" was revised by faculty from several departments and is scheduled to be taught in several sections by individual faculty members. Another course, "Communication 499" was developed by three faculty members from different departments and will be taught by the three as a team.

   Faculty teaching loads, credit hour generation and reporting are matters already covered by departmental and college policies. For the team course development and team-teaching initiatives mentioned above the college administrative committee and, most especially the departmental chairs, require a unified policy regarding the inclusion and recognition of development efforts as important components of a faculty members' workload.

   Reporting of activities related to course development was included in the teaching portfolio distributed to each faculty and these activities were to be considered in rating a faculty member's overall performance evaluation. The uniform policy, therefore, must distinguish between development efforts which are considered part of the normal work load and those activities for which a faculty member should expect p be rewarded with released time either as an incentive to engage in course development activities or as a reward for having engaged in course development activities.

   Because course development and course delivery activities may occur between two or, in some cases, among several academic departments, the policy statement must be uniform for all departments.

2. **Team Development: Team-teaching.**

   This activity involves either an interdisciplinary or an intra-disciplinary team of faculty members who are working to develop a new or extensively revise an existing course or courses and teach the

emergent courses as a team to one or several sections of students.

The purpose of the following policy statement is to encourage interdisciplinary team-teaching in order to enhance our overall course and program offerings.

A. Each of the two or more faculty members who team teach a course offered by the the College shall receive course credit equivalent to one full course. In other words the computation of the course load of a faculty member who teaches a course with the assistance of another faculty member shall not be affected by that assistance. Each faculty member will receive full course credit for teaching the course.

B. Where more than one faculty member teaches a course in the College, the respective departments of those faculty members shall divide equally the credit hours and any costs generated by the course, without regard to the actual division of labor between the faculty members teaching the course.

C. Where more than one faculty member teaches a course in the College, the respective faculty members will be separately evaluated using the current student teaching evaluation form.

D. The policy statement is comprehensive and clear. The credit hours generated could be expected to fall below those of an average class during the pilot testing (first offering) of the course. From that point on, assuming multiple sections and larger enrollments per section, the credit hour apportionment issue should resolve itself.