The Lived Experiences of Instructors Co-teaching in Higher Education

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Abstract

The strength of co-teaching informs educators' understanding of their own teaching practice and fosters a rediscovery of their passion for teaching. Instructors bring their skills and competencies to the co-teaching relationship in ways that create an instructional dynamic greater than can be achieved individually. From a qualitative research design, instructors' focus group interview data were examined with regard to identifying elements that influence successful co-teaching experiences, factors that impact the development and sustainability of the co-teaching relationship, and challenges that need to be addressed to avoid a breakdown in the co-teaching relationship. Drawing on the literature and the data, four recommendations for co-teaching practice are shared. Further, implications for educational development and administrative support are discussed in relation to co-teaching practice in higher education.

Keywords: Co-teaching, higher education, teaching, learning

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In higher education, faculty members are often collaborators in research, but not necessarily collaborators in teaching. Co-teaching that involves simultaneous instruction in one classroom over a semester is not common, as compared to this practice in K-12 educational settings. From the literature (Kerridge, Kyle, & Marks-Maran, 2009; Minardi & Riley, 1991; Shepherd & Ashley, 1979), it is evident that there are advantages to co-teaching that contribute to the richness of the student learning experience. However, studies examining the practice of co-teaching in higher education are in the early stages and often report on reflective accounts by faculty members (Seymour & Seymour, 2013).

The purpose of this article is to identify and examine factors that influence the dynamic nature of the co-teaching relationship from the experience of three instructors within a professional program in higher education. The article begins with a critical review of the literature to examine the nature of co-teaching in higher education and its advantages, challenges, and strategies. A description of the research design and findings are shared with regard to three instructors' experiences and insights into co-teaching with each other through three iterations of an undergraduate nursing course. In conclusion, by drawing on the findings and the literature, four recommendations for practice are offered to foster the pedagogical relationship among instructors who are assigned to co-teach. The article concludes with a discussion of two implications for educational development and administration.

Defining Co-teaching

There are various ways to define co-teaching. Sometimes it is referred to as team teaching or teaming. Co-teaching according to Wenzlaff et al. (2002) is described as "two or more individuals who come together in a collaborative relationship for the purpose of shared work…for the outcome of achieving what none could have done alone" (p. 14). Within teacher education, Heck, Bacharach, and Dahlberg (2008) defined co-teaching as the cooperating teacher and student teacher in which the two "collaboratively plan and deliver instruction" (p. 1). In this relationship, at the beginning the cooperating teacher makes explicit the instructional decisions, and over time this instructional pair "seamlessly alternate between assisting and/or leading the planning, teaching and evaluation" (p. 1). This co-teaching relationship involves a transition of power and a change in roles that occurs over time rather than being mutual between the two people.

The following are six types or approaches of co-teaching practice that is both responsive to student learning needs and fosters purposeful instruction:

1. *One teach, one observe* - Instructors determine what information is to be gathered through observation, one observes and the other teaches, and together they analyze this information.
2. *Station teaching* - Each teacher has specific content to be taught to one group and then repeats teaching the content to the second group. The third station is where students work on their own.
3. *Parallel teaching* - Two teachers divide the class and provide simultaneous instruction of the same content. The goal is to increase student participation and allows for differentiation of instruction.

4. *Alternative teaching* - One instructor is responsible for teaching a large group and the other works with a small group of students for such purpose as enrichment or additional support.
5. *Teaming* - Both instructors are involved in delivering the same content to a group of students through lecturing and providing opposing perspectives in debate or two processes for problem solving.
6. *One teach, one assist* - One instructor has the responsibility to teach the large group while the other provides individual assistance in the classroom. (Friend, Cook, Hurley-Chamberlain, & Thrasher Shamberger, 2010)

For the purpose of this article, co-teaching is defined as two instructors who team teach by providing simultaneous instruction to a large group of students in a course over a period of time (e.g., a semester). Both instructors mutually engage in a collaborative relationship involved in simultaneous planning, instruction, and assessment throughout the instructional time. A key component is the intentionality and purposefulness in the creation of the co-teaching relationship.

Co-teaching relationships are not simple and "[i]t cannot be assumed that co-teaching or team teaching relationships occur naturally or evolve in a healthy manner" (Clancy, Rosenau, Ferreira, Lock, & Rainsbury, 2015, p. 73). According to Yanamandram and Noble (2005), successful co-teaching collaboration requires an investment of time and effort. Co-teaching, according to Rytivaara and Kershner (2012) is "a genuinely peer-learning relationship in which communication shifts between different contexts within and beyond the classroom" (p. 1001). Adding to this, Laughlin, Nelson, and Donaldson (2011) argued that co-teaching is more than pairing two instructors together. Rather, they believed successful co-teaching requires "careful preparation" (p. 12). At the heart of this definition, co-teaching is about developing a relationship in which two instructors react and respond to each other and to the class. In effective co-taught lessons, there is

an invisible flow of instruction with no prescribed division of authority. Both teachers are actively involved in the lesson. From the students' perspective, there is no clearly defined leader – both share the instruction, are free to interject information, and available to assist students and answer questions. (Bacharach, Heck, & Dahlberg, 2008, p. 11)

Rationale for Co-teaching in Higher Education

Co-teaching, by its very nature, exposes students to alternate perspectives and a variety of teaching methods within a course. Different perspectives and teaching methods are opportunities that have been linked to greater student interest, an increase in their critical thinking, and greater class attendance (Gaytan, 2010; Yanamandram & Noble, 2005). For example, co-teachers of a writing class for K-12 teachers found that students viewed instructor differences as assets and that they contributed to greater student interest, motivation, and learning (Anderson & Speck, 1998).

From an instructor's perspective, there are numerous advantages for having a co-teaching experience. For example, Laughlin et al. (2011) noted such advantages as diversity of teaching and learning philosophies shared by instructors, the opportunity to mentor new instructors, creating an environment for the sharing of planning, organizing and presenting styles, opportunities for co-instructors to learn *with* and *from* each other to inform their teaching practice, and a forum to share

successes and challenges based on their shared experiences. Another advantage within an interdisciplinary instructional context, co-teachers are able to "learn about lesser-known fields and thereby grow intellectually" (p. 15). This provides an opportunity to learn discipline knowledge while sharing the teaching experience.

Co-teaching also provides an opportunity for instructors to model best practices of this approach to teaching to each other and to their students. Harris and Harvey (2000) recommended that co-teaching in higher education create opportunities for modeling different approaches to teaching, as well as how to respond to tensions and conflict that may arise in the classroom. From their research of pre-service teachers, Stang and Lyons (2008) found that all students in their study acknowledged the value to learning through observing co-teaching. Further, Plank (2011) argued that students observing "their teachers learn from each other and even disagree with each other models for students how scholars and informed citizens within a community of learning can navigate a complex and uncertain world" (p. 5). This modeling helps students to develop an appreciation for collaboration and the nature of negotiation in collaborative relationships that form part of their professional workplace context.

Co-teaching provides a professional learning opportunity for the instructors. From their study, Bacharach et al. (2008) reported co-teaching experience supported the utilization of different teaching strategies, enhanced their teaching practice, allowed co-instructors to be more reflective with regard to their teaching given the required negotiation of decisions with each other, and the "co-teaching experience provided an energizing opportunity for faculty to renew their passion for their profession" (p. 15). It also provides a forum for their own educational development. According to Ferguson and Wilson (2011) co-teaching provides instructors with opportunities for professional growth and development, and at the same time offers students various instructional strategies, along with different alignments of teaching philosophies in practice "

If higher education embraces more co-teaching, then careful consideration needs to be given to preparing instructors for this experience. It cannot be assumed that co-teaching is the same as teaching on one's own. Co-teaching, as noted by Plank (2011), involves "messiness" that "moves beyond the familiar and predictable and creates an environment of uncertainty, dialogue, and discovery" (p. 3). In part, this messiness arises from instructors' underlying cultural differences as well as their different approaches to work ethic, organizational skills and problem-solving perspectives (Ploessl, Rock, Schoenfeld, & Blanks, 2010). Expectations and assumptions need to be checked and managed by the instructors. There is a mindfulness both in going into the relationship and developing a healthy rapport, as well as in the maintenance of a co-teaching relationship that positively impacts student learning.

Co-teaching requires careful attention in the development and in the fostering of the collaborative relationship, as well as a commitment on the part of the co-teachers to design and facilitate robust learning experiences for students. From the literature, it is evident that there are various advantages, strategies, and guidelines to support co-teaching in higher education. What is not common practice is for co-teachers to intentionally carry out a joint reflective process and then report on those reflections.

Context and Design of the Study

Funded through a university scholarship of teaching and learning (SoTL) grant, a two-year mixed methods study (Creswell, 2012) was conducted to investigate co-teaching in a *Nurse as Educator* course within a Bachelor of Nursing program. A major component of the research was to investigate the benefits and challenges of co-teaching in higher education. Both students and instructors in the course were invited to participate in the study. The study involved the following data collection: pre- and post-student surveys, end-of-semester and four month later individual interviews with students, artifacts of student learning (philosophy statement and reflection on peer teaching) and focus group interviews with instructors. Given the focus of this article is on instructors' experiences and insights into co-teaching, only the qualitative findings from the study's focus group interviews with the three instructors are shared and discussed. Other data from the larger mixed methods study are reported elsewhere.

The *Nurse as Educator* was a *s*enior-level course designed to engage nursing students in exploring principles of teaching and learning in relation to the development of their nursing practice. The course was taught in the final year of the four-year program. A critical element of the course was for nursing students to observe the co-teaching role modeling provided by their instructors. It was hoped that such demonstration of practice would provide an example for students to follow in their co-teaching assignment and in their future professional practice. The co-teaching assignment involved students working in pairs to plan a three-hour nursing lab and then to co-teach the lesson to their junior peers.

From 2014 to 2015, this course was co-taught three times and involved three instructors (n=3) with various experience teaching this course. One instructor taught all three sections and had taught it previously with a fourth instructor. The second instructor taught with the first instructor twice and had co-taught the course once before. The third instructor taught the course once with the first instructor and during the study this was the second time she had co-taught the course.

The rationale for using a focus group interview was to provide an opportunity for the instructors to engage in a guided conversation regarding their co-teaching practice. As each responded to questions, there was additional reciprocal elaboration. Often one instructor's response would initiate further discussion on the topic.   The two focus group interviews, which were 25 to 30 minutes in length, were conducted by a lead faculty member of the research team, who was not an instructor nor a member of the Faculty in which the course was taught.

Two instructors participated in each focus group interview. The focus groups occurred at the end of the first two times the course was taught. This provided an opportunity for the second and third instructors to be interviewed once and the first instructor participated in both focus group interviews. During the interviews, the instructors were asked to define co-teaching and its attributes, to describe the process of how the co-teaching unfolded in the course identify strengths in modelling a co-teaching approach, and also to share the challenges of co-teaching.

Saldaña's (2013) two cycles of coding were used. In the first cycle, it provided a way to "initially summarize segments of data" (Miles, Huberman, & Saldaña, 2013, p. 86). Initially the data were hand-coded by the same member of the research team who had conducted the interviews.

In the second cycle, it provided "a way of grouping those summaries into a smaller number categories, themes, or constructs" (p. 86). Through this analysis process, the pattern codes included 1) "[c]ategories or themes"; 2) "[c]auses/explanations"; and 3) "[r]elationships among people" (p. 87). Following the second cycle, member checking occurred when the instructors reviewed the coded data. The analysis were reviewed by all members of the research team, which also included three instructors and an independent research associate.

Discussion of the Findings

Five themes emerge from the focus group interview data from the instructors. First, the instructors identify key elements of co-teaching. Second, we explore how previous professional relationships impact on the development of the co-teaching relationship. Third, we examine attributes of what is required to nurture a collaborative pedagogical relationship. Fourth, the instructors share insights into what they learned with and from each other through the co-teaching experience. Fifth, challenges to co-teaching are identified and discussed in terms of how to address these issues.

Elements of co-teaching. From the two focus-group interviews, the instructors (n=3) were asked to provide three words or phrases that capture what is at the heart of their co-teaching. They shared such elements as trust, respect, self-respect, mutuality, and collaboration. In terms of trust, they reported how they trusted the knowledge they brought to the lesson, as well as how they brought it to life in relationship with the students and their learning. It was not a matter of rehearsing or second guessing each other's responses or movements. Rather, the dynamic is fluid (Barcharah et al., 2008; Rytivaara & Kershner, 2012). This notion of fluidity is supported by having both instructors in the room simultaneously. In cultivating the sense of relationship in the classroom, there is no substitute for time. When students are new to the instructors, they need to learn to trust the co-teaching approach, to trust the experience, and then become active members of the learning community.

One instructor spoke of the need to trust oneself but also to trust the other person. As technical as an instructor is in the planning, the experience of how it is lived out cannot be anticipated. The co-instructors have to appreciate and embrace the uniqueness of each co-teaching moment. There is no re-creation, given the nature of co-teaching. There are elements that make it unique. It is the matter of being in the moment and responding well to the given experience. As noted by another instructor, "you have to authentically know who you are. You have to value that … you have to be willing to enter into that relationship and share all of those pieces of yourself with somebody else and allow them to be authentic and trust you."

Another element they acknowledged was "openness to vulnerability." In co-teaching, their planning, instruction and assessment are in a public space where they are negotiating decisions, observations and interactions with each other and providing feedback. They needed to trust in each other. Here is how one instructor described her insight into vulnerability:

> …..recognition of what the other person has to risk or feel vulnerable about is really significant because there were times when I really felt vulnerable. But, I had to really say

that I'm trusting that she's not going to hang me out to dry in front of these students... You have to be very open to vulnerability ... to do this together has some different kinds of discomfort…in the long run we can share if we feel safe to. And I often said to her I'm not understanding this, please help me understand this piece. I think what I learned about vulnerability was humbling… it was good because it reminds me that to feel too comfortable is not a good place to be either.

The three instructors described how they co-taught the course. What emerged from this data was three-fold. First, they appreciated that they had similar approaches and values with regard to student learning (e.g., student-centred). Yet, they were comfortable in using different teaching approaches and creative ways to support student learning within the co-taught lessons. This approach was noted by an instructor who spoke of "developing the course to meet the curricular needs and honour the work of the second instructor." Second, they acknowledged that "co-teaching is a process" where the relationship evolves over time.   What they found was that each time they co-taught with the other instructor the relationship evolved. A good example was reflected by the instructor who taught with another instructor twice. In the first teaching, she said she wanted to create an environment and space for the novice instructor to find her way. As a result the senior instructor reported holding back and noted that "didn't really make things flow." However on the second occasion of co-teaching with the novice instructor, the senior instructor noted the need to honour who she was and trust that the novice instructor would "come alongside that we're going to make this work." Third, time needs to be given to the relationship development. The newest instructor to co-teaching described the "process is creating time to come together, not just the first day of class but even before that. In order to engage in a co-teaching relationship, you have to get to know who you're working with and identify strengths. I think talk about explicitly what each person's understanding is of co-teaching." Further, the instructors also shared how they took time to debrief the lessons and talk about the teaching.

Previous relationship impact on co-teaching. As nursing educators, the three instructors had co-taught at least once in the undergraduate nursing program over the past five years. These instructors had a professional relationship prior to entering into the co-teaching of the *Nurse as Educator* course. They acknowledged their teaching styles were different, yet their philosophical perspectives are grounded in the similar values and beliefs about teaching and learning (e.g., student-centered, value student past learning experiences, experiential learning and the co-creation of knowledge). As recommended by Cook and Friend (1995), co-teachers need to discuss their beliefs about teaching and classroom practices and routines for this leads to the ability to negotiate compromises and to be proactive in addressing difficult situations.

One of the instructors spoke to the importance of "recognizing the evolution of the relationships because our co-teaching dynamic is different this time and the relationship is different this time around than the first time." From the instructors, they acknowledged that each time they taught the course, it was a new experience which influenced the nature of the relationship. As such, care needed to be given to dynamics of the co-teaching partnership. Further, the newest instructor in the co-teaching experience, shared the following description of the change that occurred over time

that impacted how she engaged in the relationship:

> There is rhythm now…which we didn't have a year ago…I certainly waited for you to call the shots. I was the newbie and I was there to learn from you and learn with you. And this time, I'm feeling a little bit more confident around my competence in relation to the content of the course…I'm not afraid to go up and have a voice and speak my mind.

Ongoing, open communication is a necessity both in terms of the development of the relationship and in terms of the day-to-day teaching practice. There is a need to develop trust so as to allow for rich dialogue, as well as to accommodate discussions about what is working, but also to address what is not working and why.

Nurturing a collaborative pedagogical relationship. Each of the instructors has co-taught with other colleagues in the faculty. In forging new co-teaching partnerships, they had to negotiate and establish a new understanding of the relationship and how the practice would unfold from the relationship. In the formation of the new relationships, they have had to recognize and develop a new co-teaching identity. The co-teaching relationship is different given their new partners and new negotiated co-teaching values and beliefs that guide the teaching practice. For example, the newest instructor shared how she relied on the experienced co-instructor to lead given her uncertainty of the vision with regard to co-teaching of the course content. She remarked, "I had that year to grow and to really understand what the vision was for the course. Every opportunity I have had this past year has helped me to understand the value of co-teaching."

Between the creation of the course and the planning for the first class, a shift occurred from an individual perspective to that of a partnership. The co-instructors had a vested interest in the course, and worked to create a mutual understanding of the intent of the learning and the delivery of the course.   As noted by one instructor, "We showed up together and we left together". It was reported that at first in a new co-teaching relationship the teaching of the lesson was somewhat structured, ensuring that each instructor presented her own parts, and quietly waited until the other had completed their section of the lesson. As the course continued however, the rapport and interaction between and amongst the co-instructors became more fluid and dynamic. They continued to plan who was going to deliver what aspect of the content, yet they began to trust one another. They found they were able to engage in a conversational approach, supporting yet challenging one another and the students during class discussion. Through this seemingly natural transition in their approach, they came to appreciate co-teaching on a deeper level.

One of the key strengths identified by the instructors was being open to each other's views, perspectives and experiences. The diversity of knowledge and experience that each instructor brings to the class adds to the richness of the learning experience for the students. As noted by an instructor, "one of the strengths is being able to draw on the diversity of our own backgrounds, and draw from that our students." Adding to this, one instructor remarked that if her colleague was in a discussion with a student, "I could watch and think what little thing are they struggling with here. And what can I do here to offer as additional insight and to complement what she just said." They reported that drawing on their diverse experiences helps to make the abstract more concrete for their students.

Learning from the co-teaching experience. As part of fostering the collaborative relationship, the instructors acknowledged the need for self-reflection. As co-instructors, they needed to be reflective of their practice and the student experience as part of nurturing the collaborative pedagogical relationship. Similar to what Crow and Smith (2005) concluded from their research in that "[t]he trusting and empathetic relationship we had developed meant that we could share our intra-reflections and through the process of reflective conversation move from understanding to attempting change in practice" (p. 500).

The focus group interviews with the instructors revealed it was through reflective practice that co-instructors began to deconstruct what was required to be successful collaborators when working in a co-teaching relationship in nursing education. With purposeful after class debriefing sessions, they identified for themselves what factors were influencing their co-teaching and how these items were intentionally or unintentionally embodied in their everyday co-teaching practice. They talked about the work and their practice as part of a professional collegial discourse designed to enhance their practice. Out of the reflections and discussion of the lessons, they were learning with and from each other what influenced their next steps in their teaching (e.g., their next lesson).

According to van Manen (1990) it is the lived experience of an individual that gives meaning to a phenomenon. Phenomenology, therefore, is an attempt to reveal and describe the internal meaning structures of a lived experience evolving from everyday practical concerns. Phenomenology is characterized as attentive thoughtfulness, a caring attunement, and mindful wondering of what it means to live a life (van Manen, 1990). Through the sharing of and reflection on their lived experiences of co-teaching, the instructors sought to cultivate a thoughtfulness and attune to their practice in a manner that revealed the phenomenon of co-teaching.

Identifying and addressing challenges of co-teaching. Identifying and addressing challenges were a critical component of what makes for a successful co-teaching relationship. From the study, the instructors identified three key challenges they encountered. First was the challenge of providing a space for new partnerships in the co-teaching relationship. A senior co-teaching instructor noted how comfortable she was co-teaching with another instructor. Yet, when she co-taught the course with a third instructor, she "didn't have that and it was very constraining...It was difficult." The third instructor was new to the course and to the co-teaching relationship. As a novice it can be a difficult to enter into the co-teaching relationship when the other instructor has experience and expectations from previous collaborative co-teaching. The third instructor, the novice of co-teaching, talked about the change over the year. Nurturing the relationship of novice into being an equal partner in the relationship takes time and support. It requires a conscious effort on the part of the other instructor to create opportunities for sharing and allowing the novice to lead. It is through such practices that the two instructors will establish a strong pedagogical relationship and engage in a balanced co-teaching approach.

Second, is the difficulty of "monitoring the air". One of the instructors reported that she was exceptionally passionate and shared the following example of how she kept herself from dominating the lesson: "I would just let go and talk. I would sometimes just need to catch myself...I would stop in mid-thought and there would be silence and I'd say [*instructor's name*] is there

anything you'd like to add?"   Along with this is the notion of "turn taking". One example the instructors shared was how a person might take the lead on an activity and then next time the other would take the lead. This taking turns provided a mechanism to navigate through the work of the course.

Third, immediate decision-making may be a challenge given it takes time to consult. One instructor spoke of it as "a waiting game." She went on to say, "You always have to consult with each other…If you're going into this as a pair or as a team, all decisions have to be made as a team." This is especially important in terms of what was communicated to the students. As the senior instructor commented, "it wouldn't matter whether it was me or [instructor name] meeting with the student, we would probably be on the same page." Effective co-teaching relies on trust and establishing a strong rapport (Crow & Smith, 2005; Laughlin et al., 2011; Lester & Evans, 2009). Through respecting each other's perspective and teaching approach, the instructors were able to create an open communication that enabled them to build a common understanding of the course, and gain a certain level of comfort moving into the classroom as co-instructors. Further as co-teachers, they worked collaboratively and responsively with each other and their students.

Recommendations for Co-Teaching Practice

Drawing on the literature and from the data of the three instructors' insights into the evolution of co-teaching, we have identified the following four guidelines for practice. The guidelines are designed to help instructors develop a co-teaching relationship that supports a positive teaching and learning experience for both teachers and learners. Through the development of the co-teaching experiences, there is reciprocity in terms of learning *with* and *from* each other as teachers, as well as from the learners.

First is the need to select a partner who engages in a mutual commitment to co-teaching. With the establishment of such a partnership, there is the need for a shared accountability to each other, to the students and to the program. This relationship requires both teachers to share their ideas, experiences and expertise in achieving mutual outcomes in terms of teaching and student learning. It is the notion that the work is not about *me*, but about *we*. Co-instructors of a writing class for K-12 teachers posit that compatible team teachers can have different teaching styles and opinions as long as they share a similar philosophy and vision for the class (Anderson & Speck, 1998).

Second, co-instructors need to honor in an inclusive way the diversity required to engage both instructors and the students in the learning experience. Co-teaching enhances the fostering of multiple perspectives, encouraging various ways of knowing, as well as nurturing different approaches to teaching. Indeed, Ploessl et al. (2010) stated that the goal is not to eliminate all potential conflict between instructors, but to use differences of opinion to strengthen and improve the relationship. They stress the importance of respecting cultural differences, discussing small issues before they escalate and not responding impulsively during disagreements.

Third, the co-teaching relationship is dependent upon ongoing, open communication and constructive feedback. It requires both instructors to be open minded for the betterment of oneself and each other. It is imperative to take time to debrief each experience to determine what worked

well and what needs to be enhanced or addressed. From these purposeful conversations, decisions need to be made in terms of next steps for enactment and re-evaluation. This is a continuous informed cycle designed to improve the teaching experience (Anderson & Speck, 1998; Crow & Smith 2005).

Crow and Smith (2005) view co-teaching and reflective conversation between instructors as a means of continuing professional development. Their own experience of co-teaching a module on "ideology and collaboration in health and social care" and their consistent reflective conversations enabled them to continually revisit issues that arose in class and aided in the planning and evaluation of their practice. They pointed to the empathetic and trusting relationship they developed with each other and how it aided them in first understanding and then changing, when necessary, their teaching practice. As noted in our study, co-instructors need to be in tune to the day-to-day in class experiences and contributions of the students. This awareness helps to facilitate how the instructors respond in an informed manner to the diversity of student voice, learning needs and learning styles.

Fourth, co-instructors need to be proactive in recognizing differences and tensions and developing a plan of resolution earlier rather than later. This requires having trust in open and sometimes difficult conversations to address the tensions. Entering into the pedagogical, collaborative relationship does require knowing that challenges may arise and to have a plan or strategy for dealing with them proactively. As noted by Crow and Smith (2005), "…co-teaching provides possibly the most rich and often neglected vehicle for facilitating….reflective conversations…" (p. 502). Reflection with another person (co-instructor) brings questions and issues to the forefront and makes them explicit which more often leads to debate and change.

Implications

The journeys shared by the three instructors in the study were positive. However, they were very aware of the potential challenges and tensions that can emerge and negatively influence the co-teaching relationship and the student learning experience. Therefore, as higher education institutions embrace greater opportunities for co-teaching, consideration needs to be given to the nature of the educational development, along with the administrative aspect of support and resources.

First, care needs to be given to the nature of the educational development required to prepare instructors for co-teaching. To have impact, educational development opportunities need to go beyond looking at what is the nature of co-teaching and the advantages of it. Rather, the educational development needs to be ongoing and responsive to the needs of the co-instructors. In some way, it needs to be differentiated to support the unique learning needs of the instructors (e.g., novice to more experienced co-instructor) who are engaging in this collaborative instructional work. One such approach is fostering a community of practice model (Wenger, McDermott, & Snyder, 2002) that may provide a forum for learning with and from others.

Second, from an administrative perspective supports and resources need to be made available to instructors who take up the opportunity to co-teach. When assigning instructors to co-teach, are there structures in place to help foster the development of the collaborative pedagogical

relationship? Further, who gets involved to moderate situations when conflict arises and the relationship is having a negative impact on the teaching and learning?   While pro-active discussions may reduce the potential for conflict between instructors, Brown, Howerter, and Morgan (2013) recommended they develop a mutually agreed upon process for resolution. This process can be put into writing to ensure fairness and equity when identifying issues and developing solutions. These types of questions and such processes need to be established to help support co-teaching initiatives in higher education.

Conclusion

Co-teaching as described in this article involves two instructors who provide simultaneous instruction to a group of students over a period of time (e.g., a semester). Both instructors mutually engage in planning, teaching, and assessing throughout the instructional time. This notion of co-teaching is very different than team teaching where various aspects are assigned to be taught by specific individuals. Further, it is not a matter of divide and conquer. Rather, it is about mutual commitment to teaching and learning, as well as to each other as educators.

The strength of the co-teaching collaborative relationship is framed on the development of harmony that leads to both discovery and appreciation of the diversity that influences the richness of the teaching and learning experience. Cultivating mutual trust and respect enables instructors to be authentic and to navigate fluidly through the complex uncertainty of working in the moment with each other, with the students, with the curriculum, and with the knowledge that is co-created. Conflict and disagreement can exist in the relationship. The ability and confidence to openly discuss and negotiate these tensions result in a stronger and healthy partnership. These can be seen as opportunities for enhancing the relationship.

Through the three instructors' journey of co-teaching, they have developed a greater understanding of the complexity of teaching in higher education and have further developed their pedagogical practice. Learning from their experience and being responsive to their experiences benefits the co-instructors and their students. A critical component of this work is the ability of the instructors to mutually navigate the intricacies of co-teaching that results in rich teaching and learning experiences.

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