

Report of Faculty Experiences When Team Teaching in Higher Education

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Abstract

This article continues the project of current authors (Malak & Gambescia, 2023) who learned about the personalities, leadership styles, and pedagogical preferences of higher education instructors that have collaborated on lessons, by expanding the analysis to the experiences of team teaching in the areas of best, worse, and overall experiences in the teaching/learning process. Thirty-five faculty who had team taught in the past completed an online survey responding to 16 questions related to their team-teaching experience, using a Likert Scale rating and several open-ending questions. Respondents found that the most benefit from the experience was in collaborating with the other faculty member as opposed to benefits to the student. Furthermore, in this collaboration faculty found satisfaction in the planning and building of components in the teaching/learning process to provide a quality course versus activities related to students such as building better relationships and activities related to assessing students' work. External influences and benefits to self that were not related to the other faculty member or student interaction were not evident. Given these results, we believe that a significant characteristic of any faculty member involved in team teaching is knowing how to lead and knowing how to follow.

Keywords: team teaching, higher education, leadership, faculty, qualitative, pedagogical

1. Introduction

1.1 Introduce the Problem

This article continues the project of current authors (Malak & Gambescia) to learn about the personalities, leadership styles, and pedagogical preferences of professors who have collaborated in a higher education setting. Self-reported survey results from their recent article (April 2023) gave a general profile of faculty who have team taught. Their summary profile showed that "faculty who have team taught in higher education are extroverts with a penchant for judging; who prefer to lead rather than follow; use a coaching/mentoring or servant leadership style; and prefer high level cooperation with a colleague(s) in the full range of teaching/learning activities" (Malak & Gambescia, 2023, p. 63). The specific aims in their initial work were to 1) identify faculty personality types using a Myers-Briggs survey; 2) identify faculty leadership style; 3) identify faculty teaching style; and 4) identify roles and responsibility preferences of faculty when they are team teaching (Malak & Gambescia, 2023, p. 51).

The purpose of this project is to gain more knowledge about faculty who have team taught in higher education, specifically about their prior experiences in team teaching. This would inform academic administrators who are responsible for designating faculty teaching roles and responsibilities. In addition, it would benefit those faculty members who may be interested in team teaching about how to form teams that "work well together" and produce positive experiences for students as well as ensure positive student learner outcomes. While few faculty in higher education have engaged in this underutilized teaching offering, findings from this project will gain importance as there are several movements in higher education to teach interdisciplinarily and interprofessionally, as for example what is taking place in the health professions in the US (NCIPE, 2023).

Team teaching understandably is labor intensive and academic departments do not have the luxury of assigning two or more instructors to a single course. While some types of courses such as study abroad, fieldwork or honors college courses are naturally team taught in the aggregate of course assignments in a given year, faculty and students afforded the opportunity of team-taught courses is slight. An additional benefit to this current project to learn more about those who are team teaching is to discover what is value added, thus providing an incentive for academic administrators and faculty to advocate for more team-taught courses.

Another motive for advancing work in this project of learning more about team teaching is narrowing the scope of how team teaching is defined or “thought about” by faculty (Boston University, 2022.) In other words, in the examples given above that note when team teaching is likely to be used, what is the nature and extent of cooperation between and among the faculty assigned to a course? There is a range of roles and responsibilities in teaching a course, such as a) defining the course objectives; b) planning the scope and sequence of the course content; c) developing learner activities; d) choosing the methods of instruction and who teaches what; e) developing student learner assessments and review rubrics; f) examining students' work and providing them with feedback—graded and ungraded; and g) assigning grades.

As will be seen in the literature review, there are several ways to categorize what is considered team teaching; for example, 1) A teacher watches another while they are teaching; 2) there is parallel instruction; and 3) there is station instruction, as in skill-building courses. 4) Different instructors teach different subjects; 5) One instructor takes the lead while another one assists or learns in a mentoring or practicum arrangement (Malak & Gambescia, 2023, p. 51). The need for an ongoing project is to focus on a type of team teaching in higher education defined as when “two or more faculty who have contributed to almost all parts of the teaching/learning process in the course—from planning to grading students’ work—and the collaborators have had a significant amount of time synchronously engaged with students (on ground face-to-face or electronically mediated)” (Malak & Gambescia, 2023, p. 51). Much of the literature on team teaching relates to elementary and secondary education. In summary, the project is a novel area to study and should provide useful information for academic administrators and faculty who will see an increasing need and use of team teaching in higher education.

1.2 Purpose and Specific Aims of This Study

This article provides a follow up to recent work by current authors to learn more about faculty in higher education who have had team-teaching experience (Malak & Gambescia, 2023). There has been little attention in research to the practice of and faculty development to support team-teaching activities in higher education. The aim of this survey research study is to learn about the experiences of faculty who have team taught in higher education in the past. These self-reported experiences via an online survey are categorized as the best, the worst, and their overall rating of the experience when team teaching. We will analyze the relationship between and among the faculty characteristics learned from a previous study (Malak & Gambescia, 2023), as we suspect that those exhibiting a positive experience in team teaching and feel most engaged and effective are those that know when to lead and know when to follow when team teaching and are comfortable in doing so. The results might help academic administrators assign and match faculty to team teach courses in their program offerings and should be helpful to academics who may be invited to explore team teaching with a colleague(s).

1.3 Review of Research & Practice Activities for Team Teaching in Higher Education

As was stated in the prior research, the authors claim that they are not aware of any extensive literature reviews of publications on team teaching that have been published in journals for higher education—either in general teaching journals or discipline/profession specific journals. In the few articles published, authors ostensibly note that this is an area that has been studied (Cruz & Geist, 2019). However, the current authors’ scan of popular books on teaching in higher education (pedagogy and andragogy) is void of information related to team teaching (Malak and Gambescia, 2023, p. 52 & 53). Furthermore, there is little evidence from a review of faculty development centers on college campuses and a myriad of resources dedicated to faculty development that addressing team teaching is a salient topic. Therefore, it is fair to say that even if one claims some useful studies have been carried out, on this subject, the results have not translated into areas of practice for faculty development offerings. Furthermore, published research in team teaching is more common in elementary and secondary education.

A good starting point in a review of the literature is to recognize as Anderson and Speck did that it is a challenge to discern how faculty consider what qualifies as team teaching (1998). Team teaching could be considered from a number of instructional approaches. The major types of teaching activities when not teaching solo can be summarized by considering who does what, when, and with whom. Combine this with the amount of collaboration or cooperation in the range of responsibilities in the teaching/learning process from course planning to student assessment and student feedback or evaluations, and you have several ways of conceptualizing team teaching, such as the five categories noted above (Malak & Gambescia, 2023, p. 51). Regardless of the categories for team teaching, the aims of such research naturally was to look at attitudes of students involved in a team-taught course and assess the various outcomes for student learning (Anderson & Speck, 1998; Cruz & Geist, 2019; Folker, H., Levi, O., & Zala, V. 2009; Plank, K., 2014; Song, E. & Sanchez, M. J., 2021; and Wenger & Hornyak, 1999). However, these extant studies involved small numbers of faculty surveyed.

The goal of the current project is to increase the number of faculty surveyed and to take the aims in a different direction. Identifying a faculty member's traits, such as personality type, leadership style, and teaching style, is one goal, for instance. Another is to learn about the experiences of a wider group of faculty who have team taught in order to understand how

they connect to teaching preferences in this instructional technique. This should provide academic administrators with helpful information and faculty with understanding of who would be suitable for and happy with a team-teaching assignment. The longer-term aim is to see if the most successful team-teaching experiences are when faculty assigned know when to lead and know when to follow, when team teaching. Along these lines, McKenzie, Harris-Wesson, Bangay & Botwell (2022) concluded that clear role delineation and ongoing and open and trustful communication among faculty team teaching are critical success factors in these teaching/learning practices. This current article contributes to what we know about faculty experiences when team teaching.

2. Method

To map individuals' experiences toward team teaching as well as their preferences of leading versus following, we developed a survey for both qualitative (self-report) and quantitative (survey) approaches. We utilized a Qualtrics survey with 32 questions, which took about 40 minutes to complete. The survey is divided into five sections: 1) Basic descriptive data on the participants' academic standing and teaching experience 2) self-reported questions to assess one's Myers-Briggs personality type; 3) self-reported questions to assess one's overall leadership style; and 4) self-reported questions to assess one's teaching style. Results of the survey addressing these four questions were reported in an earlier article (Malak & Gambescia, 2023).

The fifth group of questions on the survey asking faculty about their experiences and attitudes when team teaching had two open-ended questions that solicited "the best team-teaching experience and what made it work" and "the worst team-teaching experience and what made it work." Eleven questions asked the survey respondents to "reflect back to the time you were team teaching" and use a Likert Scale rating on the following questions:

- How you used each other's strengths in the teaching/learning process.
- Satisfaction with the amount of class time given when team teaching.
- Did you share in the responsibilities to set the overall goals or objectives of the course?
- Satisfaction with listening to ideas in establishing the learner activities for the course.
- Degree of getting to know the students better than when teaching individually.
- Satisfaction in establishing the assessments for the course.
- Satisfaction in involvement in establishing the rubrics for the assessments used in the course.
- Level of shared responsibilities of reviewing and grading the work submitted by the students in the course.
- Degree of involvement in setting classroom management expectations for the course.
- Did you find the faculty member(s) with whom you were team teaching to be flexible in making decisions and presenting your course to students?
- How well you listened to each other's ideas for planning learner activities.

Potential faculty participants were recruited via the following method to give us a subject list in which to invite to take the survey. This focused sample would give us subjects who very likely meet the criteria of being over 21 years of age and had team taught in higher education, thus minimizing taking the time of those who have not had a team-teaching experience. To create our invitation list, we first knew of faculty who had team taught in the past. These naturally became part of our subject prospect list. After that, we sent emails to colleagues at our university who oversaw team-taught courses (such those for the Honors College, intra-collegiate programs, and interprofessional degree programs). Third, we sought recommendations from other academics regarding team teachers they were aware of in higher education.

To identify candidates and to be effective in excluding those who did not match the study's criteria of team teaching, a standard recruiting email that had been authorized by the university's IRB was used for all interactions. We never mass-invited professors to complete the survey or requested their names to gather information about potential teachers. Since we knew certain faculty members had experience team-teaching, we wanted to make sure they were included from the beginning.

These three techniques produced a list of 80 potential faculty members to whom we would issue a survey invitation. The potential list included 63 academic members from the authors' university and 20 from other institutions. There was no attempt made to attract people from a certain institution, department, field, or industry. Given that the writers teach in the health professions, the author was familiar with colleagues who had collaborated on lessons. There was no other main discipline or profession area where a prospective subject was taught after this health professions affiliation area.

Following the creation of the prospect list, an email invitation was sent to the 80 prospects with the following information: a) an invitation to participate in the survey; b) an explanation of the survey's purpose; c) a list of the questions that would

be asked; d) an estimate of how long it would take to complete the survey; e) a statement that the survey was voluntary and anonymous; and f) information about the IRB's approval. There were no rewards offered for completing the survey. After three weeks had passed since the initial invitation, one follow-up email was sent to the subject prospect list. The survey was active for one month.

Sex, age, and race were the three items that made up the survey's three fundamental demographic questions. To learn more about the issues, nine questions were posed: highest degree obtained, number of degrees obtained, types of degrees obtained, present teaching status (e.g., full-time, retired), academic department affiliation, years spent instructing in higher education, the number of courses co-taught, academic rank, and subject matter or area of specialization.

3. Results

3.1 Demographics

A total of 80 faculty members (80) who had some evidence of having team taught in a higher education setting were invited to participate in the survey. The poll had 38 responses, yielding a response rate that was very close to 48%. One professor did not fulfill the criterion for participation because they lacked team teaching experience. Two faculty members started the survey but did not finish it. 35 faculty members were left as "n" for this investigation. The tabulated demographic findings summary in Table 1 below shows that sixty-five percent ($n = 24$) of the sample consisted of females and thirty-five percent ($n = 13$) of the sample consisted of males. 60% ($n = 21$) of the participants were Caucasian, 20% ($n = 7$) were African American or Black, 14% ($n = 5$) were Asian, and 6% ($n = 2$) were other. Six percent ($n = 2$) of participants were adjuncts, whereas 61% ($n = 18$) of participants worked full-time, 29% ($n = 10$) were retired, and 14% ($n = 5$) were part-time. There were 18 participants who were full-time. Of the participants, 40% ($n = 14$) had been team teaching for less than 10 years, and 60% ($n = 21$) had been teachers for more than ten years. Of the participants, 14% ($n = 5$) were between the ages of 31 and 40. 4 people, or 11%, were between the ages of 41 and 50. 26 % ($n = 9$) of the population were between the ages of 51 and 60. Nine participants ($n = 26\%$) were 61 to 70 years old. Additionally, 23% of the remaining participants ($n = 8$) were older than 71. Four participants ($n = 4$) held the academic position of instructor, nine participants ($n = 26$) held the level of assistant professor, twelve participants ($n = 34$), and ten participants ($n = 20$) held the rank of professor. Seventy-one percent ($n = 21$) of the academics respondents held a PhD degree, while four also held professional degrees. Twenty one percent ($n = 10$) have a doctorate and one or more master's degrees. There were 32% ($n = 15$) of those with just one master's degree. Thirteen percent ($n = 6$) have several master's degrees but no PhD. Thirty-seven percent of the participants ($n = 13$), fourteen percent ($n = 5$) worked in education, nine percent ($n = 3$) in engineering, three percent ($n = 1$) in information science, and the remaining twelve percent ($n = 4$) worked in social science and design. Twenty-six percent of the participants ($n = 9$) were nurses.

Table 1. Tabulated Demographic Results

Gender	Frequency	%
Male	13	35
Female	24	65
Ethnicity	Frequency	%
White/Caucasian	21	60
Black/African American	7	20
Asian	5	14
Other	2	6
Employment	Frequency	%
Full-Time	18	51
Part-Time	5	14
Adjunct	2	6
Retired	10	29
# of Teaching Years	Frequency	%
1 - 3	3	8
4 - 9	3	8
10 – 15	10	27
16 – 20	5	14
> than 20	16	43
Age	Frequency	%
31 – 40	5	14
41 – 50	4	11
51 – 60	9	26
61 – 70	9	26
71 and above	8	23
Academic Rank	Frequency	%
Instructor	4	11
Assistant Professor	9	26
Associate Professor	12	34
Professor	10	29
Education	Frequency	%
Master's Degree	10	29
Doctorate Degree	21	60
Professional Degree (MD, JD)	4	11
Teaching Field	Frequency	%
Education	5	14
Health & Public Health	13	37
Nursing	9	26
Engineering	3	9
Information Science	1	3
Social Science & Design	2	6
Design	2	6

3.2 Participant's Best Team-teaching Experiences

Table 2 Shows how faculty describe their “best team-teaching experience.” Five themes emerge from their responses: 1) Collaboration 2) Caring for Students 3) Organized 4) Intellectual Stimulation and 5) Leading/Follower.

Table 2. Tabulated Quotes from Participants Explaining their Best Team-Teaching Experiences

<i>What was your best team-teaching experience? And what made this experience work?</i>	<i>Themes</i>
Faculty collaboration	Collaboration
Teaching with colleagues as part of School-Wide EdD programs. Clear course goals that engaged students	Collaboration
I co-taught much of the Custom-Designed major core curriculum with Dr. Kevin Egan. It worked because Kevin and I have a really good balance . My organization combined with his improvisation meant there was structure with room to play . He was open to the longer timelines I like to develop a class and the amount of frontloaded work I like to do on tying objectives to assignments to assessment. I also learned so much from him about leaving space for the unplanned. In the classroom, we tag teamed really well , but we also planned for how we would do that. It was a lot of meeting in advance and debriefing after about what worked and what could be better next time.	Collaboration
Working with a senior faculty member to learn additional teaching techniques . Experience worked because we each recognized one another's strengths	Collaboration
Learning from other professor.	Collaboration
Collaboration with co instructor and continual improvement of course	Collaboration
I recently taught a course in Digital Health with another teacher. We had 30 engineering students and had complete agreement on how to divide the work. We both actively participated in collaborates and discussion boards. The students were top notch and loved the interaction. Many said it was the best online course they ever took and gave great feedback. Great teaching/learning experience.	Collaboration
Universal Collaboration	Collaboration
I have had too many to pick one -- but I love the work I did on the ITOC.	Collaboration
Teaching combined material in a clinical and social areas. Using clinical cases to get students thinking in collaboration	Collaboration
course: introduction to research & evidence-based medicine; module: conducting a literature review; experience: using a health sciences librarian to review the lecture material with the students and then working together with the students to actively search the literature to seek out a research topic and research goal/hypothesis/objective/question (which is part of their capstone project)	Collaboration
Collaboration and partnership as well as learning from the senior professor	Collaboration
Collaboration and being able to communicate and co-teach without having full course burden	Collaboration
Co-teaching evaluation and research methods courses to PhD students who were not familiar with research protocols but were seasoned practitioners. Partner had deep understood in how to simplify and teach statistics while I had better awareness of student challenges in connecting to the content. We respected each other's expertise and helped support it for the students to learn.	Collaboration
Being able to learn from my colleague and having flexibility and reliability of someone alongside	Collaboration
Team teaching and sharing responsibilities	Collaboration
Teaching together and benefit for students	Collaboration
Learning from the other professor.	Collaboration
Teaching with someone who had similar personality and who knew when to lead or follow . She complimented my teaching style.	Organized
Teaching with someone who could compliment and knew when to follow or lead .	Organized
When we planned the whole course together, assigning certain lectures to each other , but agreeing on the rubric, and assignment structures, guest speakers, etc.	Organized
Aligning, clear communication and proper planning on who teaches what	Organized & Collaboration
Running a Public Health Role Playing Simulation of 100 students that took over the entire floor in New College Building and 6 rooms. Real-time feedback by the students and debriefing with the students at the end of the simulation with team teachers. .	Caring for Students
Influencing the Future. As a teacher, you are giving children the skills they need to go out into the world and succeed. ... Help Build Self-Esteem... You Get to Work in a Fun, Creative Setting. ... Every Day is Different and Exciting. ... You Make Learning Fun.	Caring for Students
Health Admin Dept residency program; great teaching partner, great syllabus and activities, meaningfulness of the outcomes for students/dept.	Intellectual stimulation
Working with a like-minded colleague, joint problem solving.	Intellectual Stimulation
I enjoyed not taking control and leading.	Follower/Collaboration
Easy to follow the other professor.	Follower/Collaboration

3.3 Participant's Worst Team-teaching Experiences

Table 3 shows how faculty describe their worst team-teaching experiences. Five themes emerge: 1) Conflict 2) Lack of Teaching Activities/Student Interaction 3) Grading 4) Fear of Leading and 5) Lack of Teaching Credit & Support.

Table 3. Tabulated Quotes from Participants with their Worst Team-Teaching Experience themes

<i>What was your worse team-teaching experience? And what made this experience work?</i>	<i>Themes</i>
Faculty intimidation	Conflict with other faculty
One faculty member on the team trying to make it a battle between faculty . The experience worked because the one faculty member was outnumbered but the other faculty.	Conflict with other faculty
I team-taught with my boss which made direct, open communication very hard . Additionally, our personalities did not jive . I am direct with feedback (good or bad) and he read any criticism as a personal attack . Additionally, we come from very different standpoints and our pedagogies did not align. He also felt as if there was nothing, he could learn from me . This tension meant that me picking things up or trying to keep to a schedule I like/find supportive to the students would cause him to react poorly. So, I stopped being proactive or just doing things so they would be done (i.e., building out the Blackboard, posting the syllabus, etc.), but then they wouldn't get done. Or they would get done weeks later, past the point of being helpful. So rather than doing the things myself, I started to "nudge" him since he wanted to do them, which he received as nagging. We were fully incompatible . The experience was miserable . I assume the students felt the tension, but I don't know for sure. It got to the point that he wanted all class emails to come from him, not from me. He never reminded them about the course eval and I didn't feel like I could, so we didn't get enough respondents to learn about how students received the class.	Conflict with other faculty
Rigidity in teachers: .. Bad team management: ..Personality conflict: ...Inability to complete curriculum	Conflict with other faculty
differences and interaction but overall, this was good for my personality type to gain insights and learning from other professor who was an E type	Conflict with other faculty
Lead faculty was domineering and overbearing	Conflict with other faculty
Too many conflicts on grading rubrics and activities planning	Conflict with other faculty
Health Admin Dept residency program (a different year than above); the poor quality of some of the teaching partners .	Conflict with other faculty
Different personalities	Conflict with other faculty
Different style and ambiguity that came with other professor	Conflict with other faculty
Any scenario where 1 of the team members is pushed into more of an assistant role (vs true team collaboration)	Lack of Collaboration/Conflict between faculty
Not knowing when to take control and who will do what and when. Lack of organizations and cooperation as well as very different personality.	Lack of organization/ Conflict with faculty member
having to be the program coordinator for a course I thought was outdated in content and yet the adjuncts teaching it did not want to change what they were comfortable with and learned decades ago as the content. What made it work is to let every section be delivered however the teacher wished to do it and make all readings available to all students for them to select what to read	Lack of Communication
Split model where neither one of us knew what we covered and students were complaining and failing	Lack of Communication
Teaching only "lectures," power points without much opportunity for interaction with students .	Lack of Communication
very unorganized professor	Lack of organization
Organizing course with multiple instructors, some of whom were not very responsible	Lack of organization
Not being able to divide and concur sections	Lack of organization

Table 3. Continued

I had co-taught with someone who was similar to my personality and neither one of us enjoyed leading so it was a terrible experience	Leading
I hated pre alignment meetings and leading	Leading
Someone who did not know when to take charge and lead	Leading
leading sections that were not my subject matter expertise	Lack of subject matter expertise
They have all been amazing! My experience has only been compromised due to lack of Teaching credit and support/understanding	Lack of Teaching Credit & Support from department
Death by PowerPoint with no class activities . Waste of time	Lack of teaching activities for students
Team teaching health economics resource session in Problem-Based Learning Format. Students continue to ask for more resource sessions . Going from 1 to 4 sessions. Students did not have baseline knowledge to engage in PBHL and were looking for didactic learning.	Lack of resources for students
Tardiness with grading	Tardiness of Grading
We generally worked the same way with agreement on course objectives and assignments, but we had an outside consultant that created some ambiguity about how students were being graded for that assignment . It worked because we cooperated in how the students received feedback.	Influencer from outside; not the faculty of record.
NA	NA
I never had a bad one.	NA

3.4 Overall Participant's Experiences

Participants' experiences were captured through Likert-scale questionnaires. The first set of questions was associated with their classroom and learner-based objectives as well as activities. Participants found the following elements to be most important: 1) Amount of time/say I am given in planning the course 2) Establishing the learner objectives for the course 3) Establishing the learner activities for the course and 4) Establishing the assessments for the course. The least important factors were as follows: 1) Amount of time I am given to the actual instruction with students and 2) Reviewing and grading the students' assessments. See Figure 1 for a graphical summary.

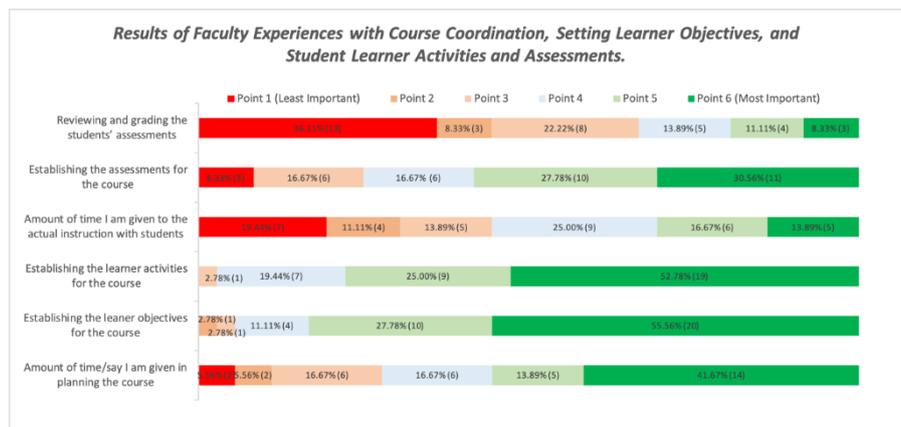


Figure 1. Results of Faculty Experiences with Course Coordination, Setting Learner Objectives, and Student Learner Activities and Assessments

In addition, the second set of questions was associated with their self-development, team building, and engagement with colleagues and students. Participants found the following factors to be most important: 1) The opportunity to learn more about one or more of my colleagues 2) The opportunity to improve my teaching when working with other faculty and 3) The opportunity to learn different ways to engage students when teaching a course. The least important factors were as follows: 1) Amount of credits I am given in my teaching load for team teaching 2) The exposure team teaching gives to my department and 3) The possible benefit to enhance my portfolio for promotion. See Figure 2 for a graphical summary.

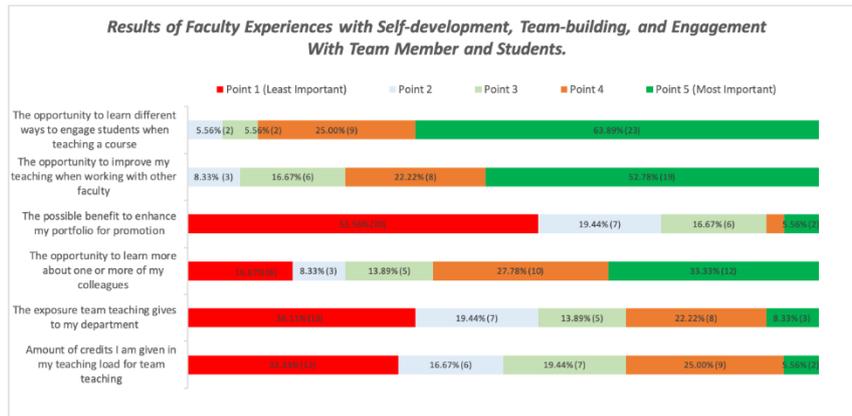


Figure 2. Results of Faculty Experiences with Self-development, Team-building, and Engagement with Team Member and Students

The last set of questions was associated with participants’ experiences and the crucial areas related to team teaching. The majority of the participants strongly agreed with the following variables: 1) We shared in the responsibilities to set the overall goals or objectives of the course? Clearly communicated in our lesson planning 2) We were both involved in establishing the assessments for the course 3) We were both involved in establishing the learner activities for the course 4) I found the faculty member(s) with whom I was team teaching to be flexible in making decisions and presenting our course to students. 5) We listened to each other’s ideas for planning learner activities 6) We know how to utilize each other’s strengths in the teaching/learning process 7) We worked together to set classroom management expectations for the course and put in equal efforts and 8) I am satisfied with the amount of class time I was given in team teaching. Whereas, participants did not agree with following three factors as strongly: 1) In team teaching, we got to know our students better than when teaching individually 2) We shared the responsibilities of reviewing and grading the work submitted by our students in the course and 3) We were both involved in establishing the rubrics for the assessments used in the course. see Figure 3 for a graphical representation.

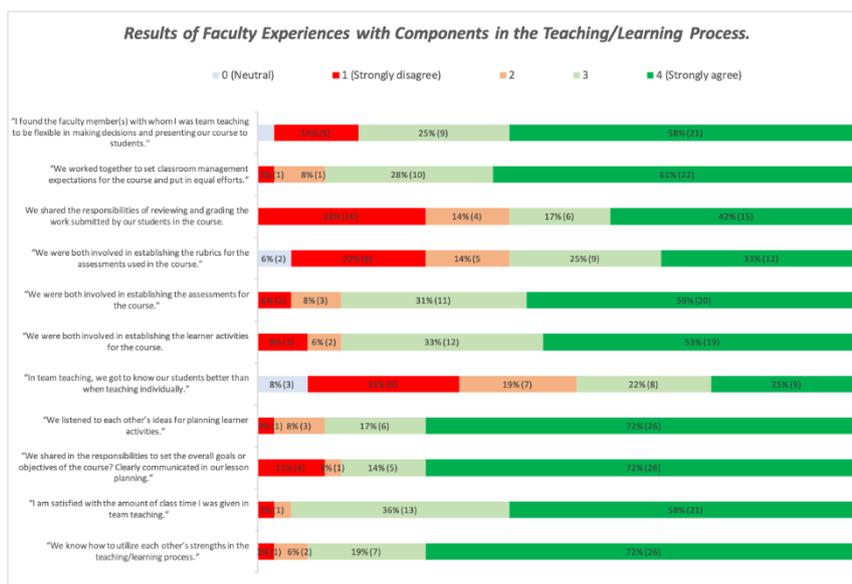


Figure 3. Results of Faculty Experiences with Components in the Teaching/Learning Process

3.5 Participant’s Quantitative Feedback on Their Overall Team-teaching Experiences

The rating of the team-teaching approaches and experiences was predominantly positive. As Table 4 shows, eight items scored a mean of well above the Likert scale mean of 3.0. Furthermore, for these eight items, more than eighty percent of the participants students either agreed or strongly agreed with these items, demonstrating general positive support for team-teaching. The average rating for the overall team-teaching experience was 3.2 out of a maximum rating of 5. In

addition, three particular statements which scored less than an average mean were as follows: 1) “We shared the responsibilities of reviewing and grading the work submitted by our students in the course.” 2) “We were both involved in establishing the rubrics for the assessments used in the course.” and 3) “In team teaching, we got to know our students better than when teaching individually.”

Table 4. Quantitative Team-teaching Feedback from the Participants

#	Question	Mean (Out of 5)	Std Deviation	% saying “agree”/ “strongly agree”
1	“We know how to utilize each other’s strengths in the teaching/learning process.”	3.6	0.7	92%
2	“We shared in the responsibilities to set the overall goals or objectives of the course? Clearly communicated in our lesson planning.”	3.5	1.0	86%
3	“We listened to each other’s ideas for planning learner activities.”	3.6	0.8	89%
4	“We worked together to set classroom management expectations for the course and put in equal efforts.”	3.4	0.9	89%
5	“I am satisfied with the amount of class time I was given in team teaching.”	3.5	0.7	94%
6	“We were both involved in establishing the assessments for the course.”	3.4	0.9	86%
7	“We were both involved in establishing the learner activities for the course.”	3.3	0.9	86%
8	“I found the faculty member(s) with whom I was team teaching to be flexible in making decisions and presenting our course to students.”	3.2	1.2	83%
9	We shared the responsibilities of reviewing and grading the work submitted by our students in the course.	2.7	1.3	58%
10	“We were both involved in establishing the rubrics for the assessments used in the course.”	2.6	1.3	86%
11	“In team teaching, we got to know our students better than when teaching individually.”	2.3	1.3	47%

4. Discussion

In discussing our findings to learn about the value added to assign faculty to team teach a course in higher education or to recruit and select a set of faculty to team teach a course, we focused on three main influencers: 1) Self Interest Benefit (or not) to the Faculty Member; 2) Benefit (or not) to the Students; 3) Benefit to an External Influencer. Below we discuss the findings from our survey of faculty respondents’ team-teaching best, worse, and overall experiences as it relates to the three benefit influencers above.

4.1 Faculties’ Best Team-Teaching Experiences

Naturally, it is reasonable to expect that any pedagogical change or new method would benefit students. In our literature review, a main focus of publications on team teaching is benefit to the students. In looking at the findings from the survey section of the best team-teaching experiences, benefits to the student are low and pale in comparison to the faculty members’ benefits to self. There were 21 qualitative reports in the open-ended questions by faculty explaining that their best teaching experience related to the other faculty member(s) in collaborating in the range of activities in the teaching/learning process. Four comments related to faculty being pleased that the course was well organized, and two comments were pleased that the experience was intellectually stimulating. These three categories relate to faculties’ self-benefit. Surprisingly, only two comments related to students’ benefit when team teaching. One would expect this to be much higher, given the increasing focus on student learner outcomes today at all levels of the academic enterprise and interest from external stakeholders in higher education (accrediting bodies, employers, parents, among others.) (White House, 2013). There were no comments in the best experience category related to an external influencers’ benefit. In summary, of the 29 comments in the open-ended question, only 2 of the 29 related to student outcome benefits (under 7%).

4.2 Faculties’ Worse Team-Teaching Experiences

Similar to the high number of comments by faculty that their best experience was relational with the other faculty member

as explained above, when asked about their worse experience, faculty reported conflict with the other faculty member 12 of the 30 comments characterized. Thus, almost half of the comments related to the other faculty members were lack of benefit to the self. Only five comments involved issues related to students, which is positive, but upon further review the comments related to students were the shortcomings of the faculty teaching the course, such as lack of activities or engaging content and teaching strategies for the students, or timely grading. Communication between faculty was mentioned three times. Course organization was mentioned four times. Problems with outside influencers appeared in only two comments. Four comments were related to the faculty member divulging a shortcoming of themselves with one claiming lack of subject matter expertise in an area assigned. Several felt uncomfortable leading.

Regarding concerns of leading, further research should be conducted to understand the leading phenomenon in team teaching, as this could be a major characteristic in ensuring a good experience for both faculty and students when a course is team taught. While conjecture at this point, when looking at the conflicts with other faculty and issues of communication and organization, we suspect that an important characteristic of any faculty member involved in team teaching is “knowing when to lead and when to follow.” Leading de facto has to be done when one is teaching a course solo. Add another faculty member or more to the mix of teaching, and it appears that conflict is likely. However, screening, so to speak, faculty who have the inclination and ability to know when to lead and when to follow, has to be a positive influence on the success of team teaching in higher education.

4.3 Overall Participant's Experiences - Course Coordination, Setting Learner Objectives, and Student Learner Activities and Assessments

Reports on the faculty participants' overall experience did not relate to student engagement, versus the process of planning and implementing a course. Reviewing and grading the students' assessments was the least favorable of the six activities asked and establishing the student assessments for the course received some low scores. Faculty were most interested in establishing the course objectives, setting the course assessments, and overall planning of the course.

4.4 Overall Participant's Experiences - Self-development, Team building, and Engagement of the Participants with Faculty and Students

In looking at the six questions related to faculty development and relationships with the other faculty member(s) with whom they were teaching and with relationships with students, participants did rank highest “other oriented” benefits rather than benefits to self. Note that the highest ranking of “most important” was the triad of the “opportunity to learn different ways to engage students when teaching a course; the opportunity to improve my teaching when working with other faculty;” and “the opportunity to learn more about one or more of my colleagues.” The faculty respondents were not interested so much in selfish rewards of getting credit for teaching, enriching their portfolio, or gaining exposure for their department. While all six questions relate to benefits to a faculty member and gives us some sense of what satisfaction they get from team teaching, we can see that they are motivated by relationships with colleagues and improving effectiveness with students rather than a selfish benefit of their gain or that of their academic department, i.e., increasing exposure.

4.5 Overall Participant's Experiences - Participant Experiences with the Major Components of the Instructional Process when Team Teaching and Working with Another Faculty Member

Eleven questions addressed the range of components in the instructional process from course planning to establishing learner objectives, learner activities, assessments, rubrics, grading, among others. Similar to what is reported in sections above, faculty who have team taught consider highly important having a cooperative relationship with the faculty team member so they can create a quality course through all its components. Also similar to information presented above, faculty who team teach do not find as a motivating factor “getting to know their students better than when teaching individually;” establishing the rubrics for the assessments used in the course; and grading the submissions by students. Therefore, faculty participating in this survey found relationship building with a colleague more salient than benefits that involve relationship building with students. A final set of questions (11) for their overall experience reinforced the fact that they were not as motivated or as interested in student relations activities such as establishing rubrics, grading students' submissions, and enhancing the student relationship, as they were establishing a colloquial relationship with their team-teaching partner(s).

5. Discussion

This article continues the project of current authors (Malak & Gambescia, 2023) who learned about the personalities, leadership styles, and pedagogical preferences of faculty who have team taught in higher education, by expanding the analysis to the experiences of team teaching in the areas of best, worse, and overall experiences in the teaching/learning process, components of course planning and implementation, and their experience with the working relationship with each other and any student benefit. The faculty who team taught found that the most benefit from the experience was in

collaborating with the other faculty member as opposed to benefits to the student. Furthermore, in this collaboration faculty found satisfaction in the planning and building of components in the teaching/learning process to provide a quality course versus activities related to students such as building better relationships and activities related to assessing students' work. External influences and benefits to self that were not related to the other faculty member or student interaction were not evident. Given these results, we believe that a significant characteristic of any faculty member involved in team teaching is knowing how to lead and knowing how to follow. This should reduce conflict between faculty, thus creating a positive working relationship between faculty to build and implement a better course. We encourage further research in this area to establish a faculty profile that academic administrators can look for when selecting faculty teams to teach courses.

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