

The Co-Teaching Professorship

Power And Expertise In The Co-Taught Higher Education Classroom

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Abstract

Collaboration allows for synergy in the classroom and increases the likelihood of meeting each student's individual needs. Co-teaching has been used as a method of collaboration for inclusion and multi-disciplinary classrooms in grades K–12. In this study two professors co-taught an undergraduate reading methods course to model such practices for their students, and to have firsthand experience of the endeavor. During the 15-week semester, the professors kept journals and had students fill out surveys to document the experience. Data analysis of both data sources showed the changes in the professors' understanding of co-teaching in the areas of power and expertise. Such findings suggest that these issues may be universal in a collaborative setting and should be address.

Coming together is a beginning. Keeping together is progress. Working together is success.

—Henry Ford

Co-teaching is defined by Wenzlaff et al. (2002) as two or more individuals coming together in a collaborative relationship to share work in order to achieve what could not have been done as well alone. Roth and Tobin (2004) described co-teaching as teaching at one another's elbow and sharing responsibility for instruction. Regardless of the words used to explain the idea, co-teaching

is seen as an effective instructional technique capitalizing on the knowledge and expertise of two or more teachers in the same classroom in order to increase student learning (Darling-Hammond & McLaughlin, 1995; Lieberman, 1995; Roth & Tobin, 2004; Roth, Tobin, Zimmermann, Bryant, & Davis, 2002). At the university level, co-teaching is often discussed and recommended in teacher preparation programs as a way to utilize the professional understandings of two teachers, meet the needs of diverse students in a classroom, and utilize practices for special education inclusion (Kloo & Zigmond, 2008). Yet, college professors do not often model this teaching approach for their students, nor have many of them had experience engaging in the technique (Greene & Isaacs, 1999). Such a lack of experience with co-teaching causes a misalignment between professors' beliefs about its positive impact and their personal instructional practices which result in beginning teachers entering a classroom with only a conceptual understanding of what it means to co-teach. As such, pre-service teachers often miss the deeper implications co-teaching holds for student learning.

Past studies have primarily focused on co-teaching within inclusion classrooms (Bauwens & Hourcade, 1991; Scruggs, Mastropieri, & McDuffie, 2007) or *team-teaching* across the disciplines (Shibley, 2006; Crow & Smith, 2003), with little being done to analyze co-teaching's place in the higher education classroom. While it might be said that higher education faculty members are known to collaborate on research, they most often teach their courses singularly. Therefore, the purpose of this study was to implement a co-teaching model in a content area reading course for pre-service teachers such that the professors could: (1) model the instructional practice for the pre-service student body; and (2) experience its benefits and pitfalls first hand.

Theoretical Framework

Collaboration has long been established as a cornerstone for professional growth and educational reform (Darling-Hammond & McLaughlin, 1995; Lieberman, 1995; Roth et al., 2002). The act of co-teaching, its history, and progression, dates back to the 1960s era when "progressive education" was de rigeur (Thousand, Villa, & Nevin, 2005). During the 1970s, legislated school reforms were a catalyst in advancing the need to co-teach as teachers found themselves modifying their instruction in order to teach a "more diverse student population" (Thousand et al., 2005; Walther-Thomas, 1997). As described by Cook and Friend (1995, 1996), co-teaching is defined as having two educators delivering meaningful instruction to diverse groups of students in a common setting. Such a definition was used as a framework for this study.

Activity Theory

Activity theory has been applied to the co-teaching model by Roth and Tobin (2002, 2004). They asserted that human activity is focused on objects, guided by

tools, and provides tangible outcomes. According to activity theory, co-teaching's goal depends on the social context and asks questions such as: Is the class an inclusion classroom needing to focus on scaffolding for special needs students (Kloo & Zigmond, 2008)? Is the purpose to integrate two subject areas for better understanding of the content (Crow & Smith, 2003)? And, are the teachers combining their efforts to offer a level of instruction that could not be accomplished independently (Roth & Tobin, 2004)? The purpose for co-teaching will dictate the model and execution, and become the object of the experience.

As teachers use co-teaching tools to obtain their tangible outcomes, such as increased student engagement and learning, teachers also consistently reproduce and reinvent themselves through collaboration (Roth & Tobin, 2004). Activity theory posits that it is the contradictions between experiences and each other that evoke change. For co-teachers, it's their negotiation of expectations, processes, and methods that induce professional growth and change. By working together, teachers increase their opportunities to observe, practice, and learn from the experiences in the classroom and each other. Co-teaching expands the teachers' identity which inadvertently moves their zone of proximal development into increasingly difficulty levels (Roth & Tobin, 2004). Therefore, the ultimate goal of co-teaching is to establish a 'collective responsibility' for what occurs in the classroom such that two experts share and commit to knowledge, and grow professionally during the process.

Benefits of Co-Teaching

Teachers are expected to engage in collaborative instructional techniques as part of their professional duties. Exceptional teachers continue to refine their craft with the aid of another professional's feedback and encouragement (Crow & Smith, 2003; Darling-Hammond & McLaughlin, 1995; Roth & Tobin, 2004). Such aid can both scaffold understanding of classroom practice and reflection, as well as aid the discovery of new and innovative ways to think about problems and teaching in the particular context. This type of teaching allows educators to build their own knowledge base through collaboration, while also increasing the students' measure of success (Crow & Smith, 2003; Jang, 2006; Wenzlaff et al., 2002). Roth and Tobin (2004) found that when the teachers made efforts to change and improve their practice, not only did the teacher's knowledge base increase, but the students noticed and displayed higher engagement and achievement in the science lessons as well.

Similar results were found by Birrell and Bullough (2005). These researchers monitored 10 student teachers who completed their student teaching in collaborative pairs. The students were concerned that the experience would not prepare them for the 'real' world of a self-contained classroom because of its notorious individualistic nature. In the end however, they experienced increased feedback and felt their co-teacher's creativity heightened their own through the process. Thus, it was concluded that by participating in a co-teaching format, the student

teachers became better teachers. When teachers were able to build trust with one another, their personal level of confidence increased causing a greater level of synergy and satisfaction from teaching (Birrell & Bullough, 2005). Such co-teaching practice seemed to allow the teachers to grow professionally rather than feel the more common isolation from their peers and insecurity of teaching alone.

The act of teaching has been described as lonely (Boreen & Niday, 2000), singular (Lindenfeld, 1992), and competitive (Jamal & Baba, 2001). However, because of the collaborative relationship involved in co-teaching, windows are open for reflection and teamwork both in regards to identical contextual experiences and meeting student needs. The collaborative experiences described in the above mentioned studies allowed the student teachers' view of their role as educators to deepen beyond the norm of a single adult alone in a room with children. They not only valued the fact that educators must reach out to other educators to meet the needs of their students but acted on such notions. When Crow and Smith (2003) experienced co-teaching, both professors grew to trust the other's opinion and valued their knowledge base. The collaborative practice of co-teaching modeled a valuable collaborative practice for their students. This newfound understanding of teaching was said by Birrell and Bullough (2005) to decrease their stress and allow the student teachers to feel they could safely take risks with their instruction; there was a peer safety net. In addition, it was documented by the principals who employed these student teachers that the collaborative experience of co-teaching seemed to decrease the amount of time they spent in solitary 'survival' mode their first year of teaching.

The children in Birrell and Bullough (2005) also benefited from the co-teaching model. They found that when two teachers are in the room, students received increased attention and their questions were addressed in a timelier manner. It could be assumed this was because there were two sources of expertise in the room. In their study, student teachers that worked in pairs were able to plan increased small group instruction, have additional time to work individually with students, and experience a decrease in classroom management issues (Birrell & Bullough, 2005). Co-teaching provided an avenue by which the teachers could increase their interaction with the students to both benefit their learning and build meaningful relationships. For student teachers, it specifically meant that they were not constantly focused only on the students identified as *struggling* children and instead on all children as individuals. Overall, every stakeholder benefited from the co-teaching model of instruction.

Roth and Tobin (2002a, 2002b, 2004) conducted studies in attempts to establish and define the benefits and struggles associated with co-teaching. In 2002, they sought to reevaluate the teacher education program in an urban setting and introduced the co-teaching model as an alternative to traditional teacher training. During the longitudinal study, the researchers shifted from being simply observers to participant observers. The high school teachers with whom they co-taught stated that they felt a reprieve from their solitary jobs during the process and

learned a great deal from the experience. Teachers explained how they had read about cooperative teaching, but couldn't truly appreciate its value until they had participated in the process.

Roth and Tobin (2004) then documented the process of a veteran science teacher of 12 years and a curriculum developer who taught four years joining forces to co-teach a fourth–fifth grade science class. Both teachers were hesitant about teaching the science unit on their own and therefore decided to co-teach the unit. Roth and Tobin's (2004) findings concluded that both teachers began to emulate each other after 2 months of teaching; it became a reciprocal teaching relationship. The ability and support to build a risk-free environment allowed them to grow professionally. For example, these teachers claimed it allowed and promoted the attempt of tasks they would not have approached on their own. The process was also said to have offered continuous professional development. Just as Vygotsky (1978) proclaimed social interaction was paramount for learning experiences, co-teaching acted as the social context for greater interaction, increased feedback, and more resources for the teachers. The social interaction of both teachers and the class determined what the two teachers taught as well as molded how they taught the material. The act of co-teaching was discussed as continually evolving and shaping those involved based on the social and cultural expectations of the setting (Roth & Tobin, 2004). Co-teaching as explained had the power to change the way one teaches.

A Model for Pre-Service Teachers

Co-teaching can be enacted in different formats in the elementary classroom. Five formats are most commonly used in inclusion classrooms, specifically in regards to the use of both a regular and special education teacher (Kloo & Zigmond, 2008). The first format, *one teaches—one assists*, occurs when one teacher is responsible for the classroom instruction while the second teacher acts as an assistant. She might help with classroom management or engage in small group instruction. The second method is often called *station teaching*. With this method teachers divide the content and activities of instruction as well as the actual physical space. Students then rotate through the stations. Each teacher is responsible for teaching one component to all students through small groups. *Parallel teaching* involves both teachers planning a lesson collaboratively, from which the teaching is carried out at the same time to different groups of students, thus in parallel. An *alternative* co-teaching model provides for a small group or individual to be pulled from the class for instruction while the other teacher continues to teach. Finally, *team-teaching* is when both teachers are responsible for the planning and implementation of the lesson. This method is often described as '*tag-teaming*.' Because co-teaching is so infrequently done, there is currently little research on which method of co-teaching offers the most benefit to students and instructors under various circumstances (Bacharach, Heck, & Dahlberg, 2008; Dugan & Letterman, 2008; Kloo & Zigmond, 2008).

Smith, Frey, and Tollefson (2003) sought to model the collaboration found in team-teaching for their pre-service teachers. Their focus was on working together within an inclusion classroom. Not only did these instructors plan together, they provided explicit instruction concerning collaboration in a co-teaching environment to their students. The researchers had 130 pre-service teachers assigned to a regular campus-based program for instruction in teaching, and 30 students assigned to a collaborative cohort for instruction. Four professors taught the collaborative cohort while the regular campus-based courses were taught individually. The findings indicated that the students within the cohort appreciated the collaborative teaching modeled. According to the 30 students in the co-teaching model, the experience allowed them to observe the components and benefits of professional collaboration in an active, participatory manner.

Pre-service teachers stated that the modeling conducted by the collaborative faculty made significant difference in their attitude toward and understanding of what collaboration was and what it took to be successful. Smith, Frey, and Tollefson (2003) stated, "More importantly, respondents expressed an understanding of how this team building would lead to meeting the needs of a variety of students in a specific classroom" (p. 61).

Co-Teaching in Higher Education

Crow and Smith (2003) combined their knowledge to teach a college course titled "Ideology and Collaboration in Health and Social Care" that integrated the researchers' specialty in health and social care. The purpose of the course was to model collaboration across fields creating an interdisciplinary team, a skill these researchers thought necessary for their students' success in the workforce. They believed that through experiencing collaboration between groups and teachers, the students would find co-teaching valuable. This was posited to be a better experiential model than simply talking about collaboration. In the beginning, there was a concern that the professors would feel a sense of lost autonomy. However, by the end of the course, it was determined that collaboration had positive impacts on both the instructors and the students. Crow and Smith (2003) explicitly state, "an often forgotten aspect of adult education and collaboration is that it should be fun" (p. 51).

The students in Crow and Smith's (2003) study reported enjoyment of the collaborative approach experienced in the co-taught college level course and identified the method as a model for interprofessional collaboration. One student wrote, "Co-teaching . . . is almost certainly helpful [because] . . . two tutors from differing professional backgrounds showed that it is possible to collaborate effectively with each other and the whole group in general" (Crow & Smith, 2003, p. 52). Another student explained, "You were an example of what we were learning about" (Crow & Smith, 2003, p. 52). Through the process of co-teaching, Crow and Smith (2003) found that their self-awareness and reflectivity grew during the experience. This showcased the powerful nature of collaborative learning. Overall, co-teaching was rewarding for these professors and allowed them to build a

relationship of trust that encouraged constructive feedback between each other. They felt such dialogue led to a more enriched classroom environment for their students and themselves, and their students concurred.

A recent study that explained the benefits of co-teaching methods within higher education was conducted by Dugan and Letterman (2008). Like previous studies have posited (Benjamin, 2000; Roth & Tobin, 2004), students would again report increased learning, effort, and engagement in the co-taught courses. However in contrast, Dugan and Letterman (2008) found that college students' ratings on a 5-point scale were consistent among all courses, whether taught by one instructor or co-taught. Among the co-teaching formats, the students' ratings were also similar. Only the one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) used to compare the groups showed a significant difference between the groups of team-teaching ($M = 58.40$, $SD = 4.758$) and collaborative teaching ($M=34.5$, $SD = 6.50$) with a 99% confidence level, and although there was also a preference for the team-teaching model over the alternative format, the findings were not significant. The survey results revealed that the students expressed negative feedback to the co-teaching models provided by the students on the survey; although minor, this expressed confusion in communication and organization. The students stated they did not know which professor to communicate with or who would be teaching that day. Overall, they felt the confusion in communication and organization of the course made it difficult for them to attain a high grade. Therefore, it can be assumed that the students preferred the predictability of having only one professor for their course.

Therefore, co-teaching in higher education has great potential for building a strong learning community, both within the pre-service teacher community and the university professor body. Pre-service teachers benefit from firsthand experience with co-teaching, both personally in the growth of their content knowledge, as well as professionally as a model for instruction that focuses on student learning and utilization of dual sets of knowledge and experiences (Greene & Isaacs, 1999). Despite these positive attributions to co-teaching at the university level, co-teaching has been less prevalent and only rarely studied (Cook & Friend, 1996; 1995). This study seeks to add to the co-teaching literature by exploring the ways professors' perceptions of knowledge about co-teaching change during the experience of a co-taught class.

Method

Participants and Context

The setting of this study was a public university located in an urban area of south Texas serving a primarily Hispanic (66%) student body. The course was a senior-level content area reading course designed for pre-service teachers. The students' certification levels included: EC-4, 4-8 English Language Arts/Reading, and all level Special Education. The class met two times per week over a 15-week Spring

semester and had 34 students enrolled. The two professors participating in the study, Jenny and Jackie, have doctoral degrees related to reading, are within their first 2 years of a tenure-track faculty position, and have multiple years of teaching experience at the elementary level.

During the semester, four types of co-teaching were used. The first type was *one teacher–one assistant*. For these sessions, the professor assigned to teach was responsible for the planning, yet both the teacher and assistant were involved in the classroom teaching. The second type might be considered *traditional teaching*, in which only one professor was present and thus solely responsible for the class. *Team-teaching* was the third type and involved both professors maintaining responsibility for particular sections of the class period and working in tandem. The final type, *alternative teaching*, involved the use of small groups or independent work wherein both professors rotated, instructed, and conferenced in both settings. Planning for these sessions was done collaboratively.

As action-researchers, we wanted to experience each format of co-teaching to document our preferences and any specific benefits or limitation to individual formats. Student surveys were also reviewed for any mention of format preferences. The findings of this study, in relation to the various formats of co-teaching, will guide future co-teaching research experiences. The various formats were dispersed throughout the semester. The rationale for determining the format for the day depended on the content to be presented, the professor's schedules, and the professor's content expertise. Team-teaching and one teacher–one assistant formats were used during 10 of the 30 class periods because these two formats seem to be the most popular. Parallel teaching was conducted during four class sessions to provide individualized attention to students' needs. Finally, the alternative approach, where one professor was present, occurred 6 out of 30 class sessions due to the need for one professor to be absent.

Data Sources and Collection

The qualitative data sources included professors' journals and student surveys. The professor journals allowed for reflection and first-hand documentation of the co-teaching experience including the positive and negative aspects. These journals included instructional notes, plans and ideas from their collaborative meetings, and experiences and feelings about teaching the class.

The student surveys provided insight into how the co-teaching model was being received, and if the perceived benefits and limitations of co-teaching were similar between students and professors. The initial survey was given at the beginning of the course to serve as a baseline for students' perceptions of the course, professors, and the co-teaching model. It was given to the class during the first month of the semester after the set-up of the "two teacher" classroom was explained and the syllabus given. The survey consisted of open-ended questions such as: What does co-teaching mean? Or, what are you excited about in this class? These questions attempted to elicit what the students' ideas and

experiences were both in regards to college classes and to co-teaching. The students were provided class time to complete the initial survey and 32 of the 34 students responded, with the other two opting out of the survey.

At the mid-term of the semester, the following six open-ended questions were given during class, and 33 of the 34 students responded. The questions included: What does co-teaching look like; How would you describe your experiences with co-teaching in this class?; and, Why do you think this class is being taught with a co-teaching style? These questions aimed to explain the students' experiences in the co-taught classroom, a classroom where the "two teacher" experience was relatively new (i.e., based on the first of semester surveys) to all involved. At the end of the semester a final survey was conducted and asked similar questions in attempts to show change over time as well as garner thoughts about the experience holistically. The final survey asked students questions such as: What would you say has been the hardest part of the co-teaching semester?; and, How would you describe Dr. Wilson's teaching style or Dr. Ferguson's? Such questions probed students to identify the similarities and differences, good and bad, and to reflect about the classroom co-teaching. The goal of all surveys was to be open enough to allow students to say what they were thinking and experiencing.

Data Analysis

The qualitative data sources were analyzed using a qualitative grounded theory approach and a constant comparative method (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). As a result, data analysis began after the first survey data was collected and continued until far after the last. Early coding of initial description, categories, and themes from the first surveys were done by both participants through their combing through the data, identifying prominent ideas and trends, and returning with such ideas. Preliminary categories and themes were then changed and agreed upon by both researchers to reflect both ideas. A Constant Comparative Method allowed the reading and rereading of data in attempt to categorize the items into theme, idea, or content area. Identification, delimitation, and justification of categorical inclusions or exclusions were based on rules and definitions that were developed directly from the data and crosschecked with both researchers. As themes were formed, negative cases (i.e., those that do not seem to fit within the categories) were sought out and analyzed to revise and potentially re-identify or redefine categories. By allowing preliminary hypotheses to be brought back into data collection, they were refined and deepened through further data collection, thereby bringing analytic rigor to a qualitative methodological approach. From such a constant comparing of themes and ideas, a theory, grounded in data, can (and did) arise. Strauss and Corbin (1998) describe grounded theory as, "theory that was derived from data, systematically gathered and analyzed throughout the research process" (p. 12). For example, initially one researcher identified what she deemed a recurring idea concerning internal aggrandizement. Upon discussion with the other researcher, it was noted that such personal feelings of being

better than another might be considered power, and the category of personal aggrandizement was revised to reflect itself as an example rather than a theme.

Professor journals were reviewed and evaluated for emerging themes and negative cases, to gain a thorough understanding of how both understood and experienced co-teaching. As the categories took shape, justifications and further examples were found and central categories became increasingly apparent.

Results and Discussion

One overarching theme and two categories emerged during analysis that indicated how co-teaching was experienced by the professors. From a large theme involving the evolution of the professors' co-teaching understanding during the experience of co-teaching, two categories emerged: (1) issues of power were experienced by both professors; and (2) the availability of professorial expertise was both positive and negative.

Co-Teaching Understanding Evolution

Throughout the semester, both professors reported a change in the way they viewed the co-teaching experience. As the experience began, both professors wrote about their concerns in regards to co-teaching with another professor. Before the first class, and after much pre-semester planning, Jenny wrote in her reflection journal, "I'm nervous to have someone watch me. I know I'm a good teacher, but what if I'm not as good?" Such a statement reflected her worry that having another expert in the classroom meant that someone was watching her, and perhaps in a judgmental way. She thought perhaps comparison and ability questioning would happen on both participants' parts, providing a possible venue to categorize herself (and possibly that of her colleague) as "good" or "better." Such professorial egocentrism did not include any statements in regards to the students and/or their experience within the class. Both professors illuminated such a personal and ability-centered focus. Jackie wrote, "She will be watching me, and I'm sure she won't mean to, but might be judging. I hope she gives me a chance—Heck, I'll give her one!"

However, this egocentric stance toward co-teaching did not remain. Toward the end of the semester, Jenny noted,

We work well together. She is a type A (which I worried about initially), but we balance and collaborate so well. It is fun to get a fresh set of eyes on your teaching when you trust the person. I trust her now, cause I know her. It's feedback in the truest sense!

Jenny seemed to have grown in her ability to be reflective about the co-teaching experience, to step out of her ability-based assumptions and to move past her initial fears of comparison. Instead, she became a reflective practitioner.

For Jackie, the experience of co-teaching also moved beyond an initial self-consciousness and eased her comparison mentality. In the beginning she wrote, "I need to remember it is not a competition and I have to stay focused and on top of things!" Here, Jackie wrestled with the need to be seen as successful in the eyes of both her colleague and the students, so she could feel, as she writes, "the best teacher of two!" Jackie's need to be the one noted as "the best" or as also written, "the one they like," enhanced her notions of co-teaching as competitive. Yet, later in the semester she would change the ways she spoke of co-teaching, "I'm realizing we both teach college and elementary students in the same ways. I have learned to back off and let it flow." Here, Jackie notes that not only has she learned about her colleague, but also through that new understanding, she was able to justify her own teaching methodology. Jackie felt that she had moved away from her need for control in the classroom as well as her need to be the one seen as on top, and into a more sinuous and dynamic learning model of teaching. "This is the best class," she concludes in her journal.

For both professors, co-teaching had become less about having someone "win" over the other, and instead about what the other had learned. In the beginning, both professors illustrated that the initial feeling of, "I want to be better, to win over the students" or "I should model for *her* good strategies" changed to: "I learned so much. I thought I would do the modeling, and I did, but so did she! That's not just good co-teaching, it's teaching!" Understandings of co-teaching transformed from egocentric ideas about its nature and what it means to teach with another expert, to more inclusive and dynamic models of transformative, collaborative, collegial instruction. Essentially, Jackie had learned from Jenny, and Jenny had learned from Jackie. The focus was no longer on feeling vulnerable and/or on display, but on using the experience to grow professionally and provide exceptional instruction to all of the students.

Jenny and Jackie's experiences mentioned above are similar to those expressed by Crow and Smith (2003) in which the two professors originally believed that co-teaching would limit their autonomy and constrain their teaching styles. Both Jenny and Jackie initially wondered about how they would balance each other's personality and teaching knowledge, but in the end, like Crow and Smith (2003), they learned to have fun with their teaching. The benefits from the experience overwhelmingly outweighed their fears of sharing control of their course or being compared to another, and resulted in them continuing to co-teach other courses.

Issues of Power

For both professors, beginning the co-teaching experience was fraught with internal questions of power. They struggled with identifying who had power within and responsibility for the course, as well as how, and if, that power would be shared. At the onset of the experience, Jackie explained, "I'm actually teacher on record, so I guess when push comes to shove, it's my decision," and Jenny

expressed, "It's not actually my class, so when should I be responsible for the planning? Or is it partly mine?" Initially, both professors questioned how to balance power effectively in a class that was not either's own. In addition, both professors referred to "the power," as if it was a singular entity, seemingly something one professor might have while the other did not, something to be gotten or received as a medal. On the other hand, both professors also had a sincere desire to put forth their best effort to enable students' success and would find that co-teaching allowed them that opportunity. "I do enjoy having someone to plan with. It is more creative and better for the students. They get the best of both and I like learning too," stated Jenny. Jackie wrote, "Planning is so full of ideas, especially hers, so I feel we need to get her name on the books too." Through the co-teaching experience, both Jenny and Jackie had discovered pleasure in the planning and execution of the class and felt it important that the class have two names delineated as "in charge." Both professors also referred to co-teaching's "learning potential for both students and [us]." Specifically, Jackie wrote, "When we plan together, the lesson is more creative and effective. We need to make time to share the expectations of power and authority. It just works better when we talk and work it all out." Power was a major part of the discussions within the journals of these professors. They both admitted to not saying anything aloud about it to each other, but feeling a struggle with power was a major part of their co-teaching experience.

The students' comments also indicated problems with power between the professors. One student explained that the hardest part about co-teaching was "different teachers, different ideas about things. I wonder how much they really are communicating." Another expressed, "The hardest part was just getting past the whole 2 teacher idea. Who's in charge?" They disliked "having to deal with two sets of grading[s]" for example. "Both teachers grade things but they grade differently. It's hard to know," wrote several students. The students struggled with determining 'who' was in charge at various points in the semester. The idea that both professors could equally share power was foreign to them and as such, expressed in their surveys. It was noted most often as the professor on record.

However, the co-teaching experience the students noted an appreciation for having both professors available. Twenty-two students wrote that the best part about co-teaching was "more experiences to draw from" and "getting two teachers that have different perspectives on an issue." Students, while noting the confusion in regards to power, also noted the promising aspects to having multiple, powerful people from which to learn.

Although Jackie and Jenny needed to work through issues of authority and power themselves, both professors also saw the positive intent and increased likelihood of growth inherent in having two people "in charge." Quotes from the professors' journals, which involved words such as "sharing," "fun," and "best," were plentiful and indicated a switch in the professors' thinking from power as something to be worried about, to power as a multi-dimensional

platform from which a better place to work is instantiated, for both the professors and the students.

Expertise

Both professors reported feeling the positive and negative impact of having two experts in the classroom. Because both were experienced teachers, the professors felt as if they had a good grasp of the content. However, it was possible to feel intimidated by the other's expertise. "I was overwhelmed today when Jackie was discussing R-A-F-T (a writing strategy) with the class. I had no idea what it was. Then a student asked me about it. I had to reiterate what she said! I felt inept!" Jenny continued to speak about the times she did not know something that Jackie was teaching. But over time, the language used to describe such scenarios involved more positive associations such as, "It felt good to learn something new I could use in my other classes" and, "I re-founded my understanding of guided reading with young kids. I haven't done it with them in so long, I thought I had forgotten." This example shows Jenny's expertise was not threatened by the other professor's use of a strategy she didn't know and instead was thought of as an act that was good and had high utility in her own classes. In addition, Jenny's knowledge was confirmed and refreshed through Jackie's teaching.

Such learning and expertise confirmation was not common to only Jenny. More positively, Jackie wrote, "I let Jenny grade the books. She is better at that sort of thing and she needs to be in charge of some of the grading too!" Jackie felt confident in the skills that her colleague possessed, even describing those skills as, "better" than her own. Also interesting was a time when Jackie did not know the answer to a question posed by one of the students. "Today Bette (pseudonym) asked me how to set up CORI in her classroom. I forgot what Jenny said in her lesson about it. It felt weird not to know. So, I just said to ask, but I should know! I will have to get it when she teaches it next time!" Jackie also felt confident about her knowledge, yet when it was illustrated that there was possibly things she didn't know, it was somewhat threatening. She would later say, "At first I didn't like it when I didn't know exactly what something was or when she [Jenny] said it differently than I would have. I noticed though that her way works too. I can learn from her. Her expertise in reading is awesome and sometimes she thinks of it or has experienced it differently than me." When Jenny led class discussions, Jackie would reflect on the nuances between herself and Jenny and then admitted to practicing the integration of Jenny's "ways" into her lectures for other courses. She even added one of Jenny's open-ended projects to a syllabus of a course she taught independently the next semester. The fear of being discovered inadequate evaporated as both professors saw the value of continued growth both personally and professionally. Jackie had a revolution in her understanding of reading, not just in regards to her own expertise, but also Jenny's.

The students viewed the expertise of two professors as a way for teachers to meet the needs of all the varying students in the classroom. Comments indicating

such a standpoint were plentiful and included, “Co-teaching is two teachers working together as a team to provide different viewpoints on topics as needed,” “Two teachers working together in one classroom for the benefit of the students,” and, “Teachers covering areas and covering each other explaining things differently so more will understand.” Seemingly the opportunity of having two professors in one classroom encouraged students to experience varied instruction that addressed the diverse learning styles and needs within the classroom. Students also wrote they received “more feedback and different perspectives about your work” and that “someone was always available” as benefits to being co-taught. Greene and Isaacs (1999) observed the same findings when their student teachers co-taught. Their students were able to meet more frequently in small groups, experience a wider range of learning activities, and received quicker and more frequent feedback from the teachers since the student–teacher ratio was decreased by co-teaching. When asked to explain the best part of co-teaching, one student wrote, “two people to depend on.” Having a second professor seemed to profit the students and their learning.

During the co-teaching process both Jenny and Jackie gained content and pedagogical knowledge through the experience as seen in other studies (Birrell & Bullough, 2005; Roth et al., 2002). There is a level of empathy that occurs from experiencing the same situations side by side over time. The student teachers observed by Birrell and Bullough (2005) stated they experienced a greater understanding of teaching, increased confidence, openness to new ideas, and sensitivity to children, a finding in agreement with Jackie and Jenny’s journal responses. Similarly, the value of immediate feedback increased as teachers saw the need to negotiate and renegotiate their roles and processes. The student teachers learned from one another and it was reported by their principals that as first-year teachers they were already ahead of the learning curve. Therefore, co-teaching at the pre-service level has immense potential to develop strong teachers if those involved are open to the idea of collaboration and interdependence. Jackie and Jenny were able to model the experience for their students and open the door to the possibility of experiencing its benefits for themselves.

Conclusion

The data evaluated in this study suggest that the issues of power and expertise arise during collaborative endeavors and should be addressed openly. The purpose of this study was to experience co-teaching, reflect on our understanding of co-teaching, and model the practice for pre-service teachers. If the teaching profession wishes to experience true educational reform that increases student learning and engagement, then educators, both classroom teachers and professors, must change the way they think of themselves. They must be willing to open their doors and provide insight into the strategies they use, the knowledge they have, and the goals they wish to impart to their students. The way teachers

are trained and their expectations of teacher behavior must align to utilize the strength and power that co-teaching has to offer.

Pre-service teachers also need a model of how collaboration provides professional support. Teaching is a career that allows for a large amount of autonomy, but at the same time, teachers professionally grow through feedback and require such to refine their craft. Collaboration among teachers also boosts morale and reminds teachers that teaching is, and should be, fun (Crow & Smith, 2003). Therefore, co-teaching has the ability to serve as continual professional development (Roth & Tobin, 2004) and to increase teacher morale. Combined, these components increase teacher retention as well as student learning (Kloo & Zigmond, 2008; Roth & Tobin, 2004).

This study allowed two professors to directly experience co-teaching's benefits and struggles, an area of research currently underdeveloped in higher education. Their authentic instruction of co-teaching was a model to pre-service teachers while providing both professors with quality professional development in their area of expertise and pedagogy. As Jackie and Jenny's understanding of co-teaching evolved, they gained new knowledge to guide and strengthen their future co-teaching endeavors. Continued research on co-teaching in higher education will: (1) improve higher education instructional practices; (2) empower pre-service teachers to engage in co-teaching for the benefit of their students; (3) model collaboration; and (4) provide authentic professional development for university professors.

Co-teaching has the potential to change praxis at all levels of education (Roth & Tobin, 2004). Exceptional teaching and learning must be modeled and implemented in every setting, including higher education. Using a co-teaching format at the university level allows future teachers to experience the strengths and weaknesses of working collaboratively. Co-teaching allows professors to continue to grow, reflect, and change, while also providing students with a variety of effective instructional methods and alignment of beliefs, values, and teaching.

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