

## **TEAM TEACHING: A CLARIFICATION...**

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Team teaching has attracted considerable attention in areas of the academic community. Teaching in teams of two or more educators can offer substantial advantages by allowing us, educators, to serve a more diverse set of student needs, and by offering more teacher resources to classes that are containing increasing numbers of students. The literature is replete with positive examples of how team teaching can help students and enrich the experience of educators in their work (Winn and Messenbeimer-Young, 1995; Young and Freeman, 2008).

One theme within this literature is the need for the team to present a unified perspective to students. That is, team members need to largely be in agreement with each other in the presence of students so that a consistent perspective can be presented. This consistency ensures that students don't become confused. This need for unity is well established and there is substantial evidence supporting it (Buckley, 1999 p5). However there is one problem in this literature, team teaching research doesn't differentiate between teams of teachers operating within the same classroom and those teams that are outside of the classroom. For example, the classic within classroom team is two lecturers who co-teach or rotate lecturing duties during a semester. An outside of the classroom team can be a lecturer who gives the lectures, a tutor who takes seminar sessions, and an online moderator running the course website. We argue that the need for a unified perspective is only necessary for outside the classroom teams, and that dis-unity can actually be a positive for within the classroom team teaching.

Team teaching outside of the classroom needs to present a unified perspective on the course content. There are many different voices, one for each educator, with each of them potentially communicating at different times through different mediums, so they are not perceived by the students as a single source. Thus, when those sources are communicating conflicting perspectives (disunity) the students get confused trying to resolve which one is 'correct'.

In team teaching within the classroom the need for unity is diminished. This is because within the classroom the educators can present conflict, but that conflict is now perceived as coming from a single source, the single 'team' in front of the students. As long as the educators demonstrate "honesty, trust and respect" (Winn and Messerbeimer, 1995) towards each other they can act as a single source of information (a single team), rather than be two separate sources that can confuse students. With students only perceiving a 'single' source, they can be exposed to contradicting perspectives (disunity) and not be confused regarding which one is 'correct'. It is this ability to hear contradictory perspective that makes team teaching so powerful, and is often overlooked in the literature. Conflicting perspectives on content can be a catalyst for development in students and teachers alike.

Underlying much of the literature is an inherent belief that the in-class educators must share an epistemology, we disagree. It is this potential to deliver both complementary and contradictory perspectives that makes team teaching so powerful, and is one that is often overlooked in the literature.

One of the challenges for us as marketing educators is to enable our students to deal with conflicting ideas in constructive and thoughtful ways. The temptation for educators is to emphasize material that supports their view of the world, it reduces the potential for confusion amongst students and is easier to present. We know that the world of marketing isn't like this: it is confusing, messy and not like the textbooks. In the classroom, effective teaching teams can

encourage deep thinking in students, developing an ability to process multiple perspectives. The underlying issue is what does it take to be a successful team in the classroom, can it be prescribed or is it alchemy?

References Available upon Request