

APPLICATION OF TEAM TEACHING WITHIN SCHOOLS OF BUSINESS

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With their numerous disciplines--all interrelated, some overlapping--schools of business would appear to be ideal environments for application of the team teaching concept. Yet a review of business and education journals indicated that such courses were very much underrepresented in business schools' curricula.

Team teaching occurs when two or more teachers work together regularly to enhance instruction. Patterns of cooperation can include planning and designing materials or instructional processes, sharing groups of students and/or sharing instruction, or any combination of those activities. Within schools of business, team teaching can be applied both intradepartmentally--e.g., two marketing instructors offering a section of the principles course--and interdepartmentally--e.g., presenting the MBA capstone course as a cooperative effort of the Finance, Marketing, Management, and Quantitative Systems departments.

Historically, team teaching is an education idea developed within secondary schools in the late 1950's. The extent of its success appears uncertain; however, the conditions most likely to lead to such success were not nearly as difficult to ascertain. A review of relevant literature revealed the majority of these conditions had to do with planning, i.e., attempting a team-taught course involved newness in respect to not only the instructional format, but also interpersonal relationships with colleagues, and most likely subject matter. Each of these required significant effort and preparation. At the university level, however, an additional factor must be included.

An underlying assumption of the team teaching concept is that having two teachers present material to twice as many students is more effective than the traditional classroom format. However, doubling what is essentially the teacher/student ratio does not assure a two-fold increase in classroom learning: First, undoubtedly some "overlap" exists in what the instructors have to offer; second, and more significantly, there is no reason why two teachers will necessarily be able to present the quantity and quality of material from two disciplines better than one teacher alone.

The problem is essentially one of background: If students are to understand marketing--or finance or accounting--they must first comprehend the elements of the discipline's thought; and it is unreasonable to expect students to engage in significant marketing thought before such basic understanding is acquired. Yet, because most team-taught courses, especially interdisciplinary ones, are not introductory in nature, this is precisely what they do expect. Since the nature of the team teaching format makes it difficult for instructors to provide this background in the course, the typical result is one of two possibilities. In one case, the instructors essentially

lecture concerning legitimate interdisciplinary topics and problems; however, the students are unable to respond except on a superficial level because of their lack of background. In the other, the course is presented on a level equal to the students' background; again superficiality results, and the true potential of an interdisciplinary course is lost.

A three-factor modification in the team-teaching format can overcome this superficiality aspect: preparation, prerequisites, participation.

Preparation refers not only to putting together a new course, but also to learning about the other instructor(s). While it is not necessary the instructors have identical teaching styles, it is probably necessary that they possess similar teaching philosophies; and while it is not required that they like each other, it is necessary that they be able to compromise.

Prerequisites refers to the background students must have to handle the rigor of most team-taught subject areas. For each area combined to form the course, students must have a foundation at least equal to that provided by an introductory or principles course in that area.

Participation refers not so much with students' interaction with the class-- although that would be a normal expectation of a team teaching environment-- but with their ability by the end of the course to integrate the material from the various subject areas. If students are to significantly benefit from team-taught topics, they must be able to do more than simply become knowledgeable in the involved subject areas. They must be able to integrate the separate knowledges into the more sophisticated subject area which is the topic of the course; and they must be forced to do so by the structure of the class.

The previous suggestions were based on experience gained over a six-year period from a particular team-taught course at California State University, Long Beach. The course, "The Consumer: A Socio-Legal Approach," is a joint offering of the Marketing and Finance Departments, with an intent of teaching students to deal with and make decisions about current consumerism and consumer law issues. From a slow start, the course has evolved to a sophisticated, rigorous, and apparently successful course that truly reflects the suggested team teaching approach: All students are required to have taken Introduction to Marketing and at least one business law class before enrolling. The course chronology is such that dominance switches back and forth between consumerism and consumer law each three-week period. While the appropriate instructor leads his/her segment, both instructors are present for most classes. An Adversary Proceedings segment, occupying the final three weeks, forces the students to integrate the marketing and law information with which they have been dealing.

Marketing seems particularly well-suited to interdisciplinary-type courses-- e.g., Public Relations and Advertising/Promotion Management, Real Estate Marketing, Development and Application of Marketing Models, Non-Profit Marketing. Undoubtedly, the success of such joint ventures will be directly related to the effort the individual instructors are willing to invest.