

“TEAM TEACHING” IN HIGHER EDUCATION:

The relationship between team norms and effectiveness

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ABSTRACT

The demand for successful teaching depends on collective knowledge and richness of diverse perspectives which requires the need for collaboration and teamwork in all parts of organization. Hence, there has been a conscious movement towards building effective teams as a strategic vehicle for accomplishing work. This study explores the team norms in team teaching that contribute to optimum lecturers' and students' performance. In addition, it investigates the norm content in team teaching with regards to lecturers' collaboration in the planning, sharing, imparting knowledge, implementing activities, personality styles and assessing students' work. It is aimed to observe and identify the roles of team teaching participants (team norms and norm content), and ultimately to formulate a model for team teaching in higher education. This paper discusses effective team norms in team teaching that enhances the scholarship of teaching and learning in the university. In short, the paper outlines issues encountered and further work that needs to be done in undertaking team teaching.

Key words: team norms, team-teaching

Objectives:

1. To observe and identify the roles of team teaching among learners [team norms: planning, sharing, imparting knowledge, implementing activities and assessing students' work (norm content)].
2. To formulate a suggested model for team teaching in higher education.

The requirements for effective teaching depend on collective knowledge and richness of diverse perspectives, hence calls for the need to collaborate and teamwork from lecturers. Currently, there has been a conscious movement towards teams as a strategic vehicle for accomplishing work. In particular, teams provide meaning, union and importance to the

people who are involved with them. Ultimately, they have become the vehicle that moves organizations into the future delivering quality products and services.

At present, the common mode of accountability for any courses at higher education in Malaysia is on an individual lecturer. This creates problems, for lecturers often work in seclusion in self-contained or departmentalized lecture-rooms. Hence, issues with regard to teaching and learning are not highlighted. For instance, among the students' complaints Mariam and Abdul Halim (2006) recorded were: there were no feedback from the lecturers for the assignments submitted; lecturers did not clarify key concepts to students; lecturers were too fast in dispensing notes via the power point, apparently, students could not listen and write at the same time; students were overwhelmed with too much notes that were incomplete, unrelated, and which did not give a holistic picture of the topic; there was no focus on the teaching of concepts; lecturer rushed to complete the syllabus; learning outcomes were not precise; lecturer's lack emotional intelligence, for instance, they 'marked' students and were not fair when assigning grades; new lecturers lacked industrial experiences, hence they were too theoretical. On the other hand, experienced lecturers overwhelmed students with too much information. Overall, students wanted both information and field-experiences.

In short, we see that the lecturers' teaching style had caused problems to students' learning and understanding. Obviously, students were not in the position to question the lecturer's teaching style. In due course, we need to understand the shortcomings of one-lecturer mode of teaching and hence, conduct team teaching to record and rectify the problems that are not within our mindful perspectives, but can be highlighted when we practice team teaching. Consequently, lecturers who practised team-teaching are in the position to observe and evaluate each others' lecturing styles, and subsequently correct their short comings.

Background

Team teaching was introduced in America, as early as 1963, by William M, Alexander, who is known as the "father of the American middle school." Now, team teaching is used at all grade levels and across disciplines. The notion of team teaching requires a faculty at a university to provide an opportunity for a team of three to five lecturers to work together and share a group of students (Alexander, 1993). Using common content areas, they develop curriculum and instruction. Generally, during 'team teaching', lecturers are assessed critically by colleagues from different subject matter experts, on different styles of teaching approaches, methods of lecture presentation and beliefs. As for the students, they encounter varied views and teaching styles by more than one lecturer. Ultimately, they develop a more matured understanding of knowledge. In particular, team teaching promotes professional and interpersonal dynamics of personalities that assist closer academic staff integration.

Excellent teams are based on interdependency and mutual interactions, as well as on reciprocal trust and support. Amabile *et al.* (1996) demonstrates that individuals working in

teams appreciate personality, motivation and involvement, as well as the complementarity of knowledge and capabilities with the rest of the members in the unit (Gibson et al., 2007). Nevertheless, teams cannot be seen as separate entities within the organization. If the organization wants to base its strategy in this kind of groups, a harmonized system is required. Links between teams must be established. Lateral communication is particularly relevant in this process, to coordinate the collective capabilities developed in each of the teams (Lynch & Werner, 1994). It is noted that regular planning time among team teachers assist to improve teachers' rates of coordination of student assignments, assessments, and feedback. In addition, positive attitude towards the teaching profession is also recorded among teachers who actively participated in frequent collaborative planning (Erb & Stevenson, 1999).

By and large, team teaching is noted to be beneficial in the following aspects: positive effects on a person's health (Southers, Carew & Carew, 2002; Blanchard, Bowles, Carew & Carew, 2001); joint scholarly resources (Martin-Alcazar, Romero-Sanchez-Gardey & Sanchez-Perez, 2009); prompt collaboration (Duimering & Robinson, 2009); students favour teaching style (Yanamandram & Noble, 2005) and promotes interdisciplinary contact between academicians (Stewart, 2005; Yuan, 2009).

Furthermore, Wallace (2007) contends that the formation of interdisciplinary teams can assist to reduce student alienation and indirectly increase students' sense of membership, for the 'teams' provide students with a greater sense of identity, belonging and support. In fact, students' evaluations denote that team teaching works, whereby two qualified instructors together make presentations to an audience (Quinn & Kanter, 1984).

On a similar note, studies conducted by the manufacturing sectors revealed that team development skills and leadership had positive impact on the staff morale. One example of this was a study conducted at a General Electrical appliances manufacturing plant, whereby one of the assembly line representative mentioned that after attending the team development workshop, he felt appreciated. This showed that worker's health and well being were directly affected by the amount of involvement they had at the workplace (Southers, Carew & Carew, 2002). Similarly, another study on 12,000 male Swedish workers over a 14-year period revealed that workers who felt isolated and had little influence over their jobs were 162 per cent more likely to have a fatal heart attack, than were those who had a lot of influence in decisions at work and who worked in teams (Blanchard, Bowles, Carew & Carew, 2001). Likewise, team-based effort brings about competitive advantages materialised from informal networks, accumulated implied knowledge and ease of internal relationships (Martin-Alcazar, Romero-Sanchez-Gardey & Sanchez-Perez, 2009). These processes created a particular social mix within organisations, hence, showed that team working can help the organization to materialise the significance of joint scholarly resources.

On the same note, Duimering & Robinson (2009) conducted an inductive case study of an effective self-directed team working in a manufacturing setting, over a six-month period. Semi-structured interviews and participant observations were used to investigate the

behavioural characteristics of the team and the properties of the team's task situation that may have influenced its behaviour. Findings indicated that collaboration among members was the team's most significant behavioral norm. For example, various contextual factors that were consistent with the development of team norm were present in the situation including task flexibility, low task interdependence and others.

Likewise, Yanamandram and Noble (2005) from the university of Wollongong, Australia, on a positive note reported that the majority of students liked the concept of team teaching for they experienced variation in the teaching styles of different team members. However, their study showed that from the students' perspectives the most critical factor in determining the success or failure of a team teaching effort was the actual composition of the team, specifically the skills needed to be a successful team teaching member. Of utmost importance, the model of team teaching adopted in this study was the weakest form.

Further, Stewart (2005) investigated how interdisciplinary contact between language and content specialists might be viewed as a possible model for teacher development. Here, teacher development referred to a teacher's ability to make adjustments to one's teaching practices according to the demands of a curriculum, learner needs and the institution where a teacher worked. As many non-native-speakers of English entered schools in English-speaking countries, the language proficiency of these students could be frustrating to content-area teachers. The content professors were experts in their academic disciplines, but were not well versed about the linguistic needs of the ESL students enrolled in their course. Hence, there should be increased integration between language educators and content teachers to close this knowledge and sensitivity gap. In the study, fourteen practicing team teachers were interviewed over a two-year period at an English-medium liberal arts college in Japan. The paper concluded by recommending elements of effective partnership in team teaching that institutions and individual teachers can do to encourage effective partnership in team teaching. Among the recommendations were:

1. Decision-makers must provide ongoing support for effective team-teaching. For instance, by recruiting faculty members who are familiar with reflective teaching, conduct workshops aimed at developing openness and trust in partnership, conduct forums for open discussion of teaching issues, conduct series of workshops to aid new team teachers understand the dynamics of team teaching culture at faculty level.
2. Team teachers should be willing to develop their own practice and engage strong commitment to the partnership. For example, by engaging in collaborative action research projects and practice reflective teaching. Also, each member must think 'team' and about learners first. Each teacher needs both to share what s/he has to offer and to accept what others offer.

On the same note, studies conducted in the academic world showed beneficial aspects of team teaching. A good example of team teaching is by Yuan (2009), who investigated a

partnership, between a native English teacher (assistant language teachers) with a Japanese teacher, conducting EFL classes in high schools and junior high schools. They proposed the five steps in creating an effective team teaching relationship.

1. Exchange Emails to create a co-participant stance which will foster cooperative class management.
2. Talk for 5-minutes before class on the following aspects to create shared understanding on the class.: students' expected achievements, types of activities, materials used, and team teaching members' specific roles.
3. Display your trust in action through active participation in the class and by framing your directions as request or invitations.
4. Make small talk to establish closer rapport with your teaching partner. For instance, reflecting on the class, partner's culture, hobbies, etc.
5. Write after class reflections. Speak from a team stance and be open to any suggestions.

The five steps proposed by Yuan (2009) are practical tips in establishing an effective teaching team.

In short, based on the few studies discussed it is shown that teams can be far more productive than individuals functioning alone, which provides a compelling argument for creating high involvement workplaces and using teams as the central vehicle for getting work done.

However, only few studies have examined the content of group norms- that is the specific kinds of behaviours reflecting what team members do when they interact with one another or with external groups during the course of their work, and no studies have examined the influence of norm content on team effectiveness (Duimering & Robinson, 2009).

Suggestions and recommendation from previous studies

Many researchers and educators provide varied perspectives to team teaching. The majority of instructors in team teaching model the process of integration by interweaving teaching partners' perspectives into each presentation. Minnis and John-Steiner (2005) provide an example of team-teaching, a collaboration between a professor who lectures philosophy and another who lectures French and Italian. They lecture several courses together and refer to each other in lectures and presentations (Melissa, 2006). By showing respect for each others' ideas, even when they may disagree, they are able to maintain students' interest and motivate them on the course material. Also, the instructor who is not leading the class meeting often plays the role of a 'kibitzer', sitting in the middle of the class and offering commentary on the other's presentation or lecture. Wentworth and Davies (2002,p27) suggests different roles that the non-participating teacher can play, such as 'model learner' where s/he asks questions and contributes to discussions; 'observer' where s/he takes notes and gauges student response to the presentation; 'discussion leader' where s/he

facilitates or leads break-out groups by raising challenging questions to stimulate class creativity.

With regard to cognitive ability, Anderson and Speck (1998, p.681) contends that team teaching allows students to observe high-level intellectual debate among colleagues. They describe this respectful debate as ‘professional disagreement’ that is both ‘expert and collegial.’ Hence, students learn to disagree without hostility and to encounter new materials through a variety of perspectives. Buckley (2000) observes that team teaching renders students to more than one opinion or perspective of the subject matter which can encourage critical thinking skills in students. On the same note, Goetz (2000) believes that it links to more than one opinion which enables students to gain a more mature level of knowledge understanding as well as it encourages students to reflect on the legitimacy of various views.

In face of all the positive comments on team teaching, Wadkins, Miller and Wozniak (2006) postulates that although team teaching offers students with an increased amount of feedback from the instructors, however, conflicts can emerge with regard to standards in evaluating students’ work. For instance, papers that met their agreed-upon standards were evaluated by just one teacher, but those papers that do not meet the criteria were read by both teachers.

To sum up, we must always bear in mind that ‘good teaching’ involves a combination of a number of elements, such as the acknowledgment that content is more important than method, the degree of engagement students have in the process of learning and the level of responsiveness shown by a teacher to students’ needs (Ramsden,1992, p.176). The choice of one teaching method over another should be based on the degree to which it engages students in the learning process and responds or fits in with their learning needs. In short, student experiences and perceptions are important factor in assessing the value of a teaching method. Nevertheless, Ward and Jenkins (1992) remarked that there is an upward trend in highlighting students as clients in higher education which had consequently led to several teachers changing their hub of their lectures from content to provision of amusement.

For the purpose of this study, the essential definitions of terms used are described below:

- i. A team is where two or more persons join forces for a common purpose and are mutually accountable for results.
- ii. Team teaching brings a group of teachers to work together, plan, conduct and evaluate the same group of students’ learning activities.
- iii. Team comprises staff members who are representatives of different subject expert areas.
- iv. Group – a collection of individuals working on the same task.
- v. Team norms- describe as stable patterns of behaviour and related expectations that influence the ongoing behaviour of group members.

Blanchard (2010) acknowledged that building highly effective teams is like building a great organization, for it begins with a picture of what is your target and proceeds accordingly: Purpose and Values; Empowerment; Relationships and Communication; Flexibility; Optimal

productivity; Recognition and Appreciation; and Morale. The seven elements of high performing teams are represented by the acronym PERFORM (Blanchard, 2010,p 170).

Benefits of team teaching

During lecture-style instruction, students play a passive role. On the other hand team teaching involves students in physical and mental stimulation created by viewing two individuals (lecturers) at work. Lecturers become the role models, discussing and disagreeing on issues, while at the same exposing students to the course content. The process of dialogue between the lecturers creates a clash of the minds, which has the potential for revitalizing the students' instructional capabilities. Concurrently, this will stimulate students to pick up the lecturers' enthusiasm that can assist to challenge, expand and enrich their understanding. In short, when working in teams effectively, a team can make better decisions, solve more complex problems, and do more to enhance creativity and build skills than individuals working alone. The team is the only unit that has the flexibility and resources to respond quickly to changes and new needs that have become commonplace in today's world (Blanchard, 2007).

Weaknesses of Team Teaching

Majority of the research demonstrated that teams failed for a number of reasons from lack of a clear purpose to lack of training. Among others noted were: lack of a sufficient charter that defines the team's purpose and how it will work together to achieve that purpose; inability to decide what constitutes the work for which they are interdependent and mutually accountable; lack of mutual accountability; lack of resources to do the job which includes time; lack of norms that foster creativity and excellence; lack of planning; lack of management support; inability to deal with conflict and lastly, lack of training at all levels on group skills (Southers, Carew & Carew, 2002) .

Methodology

In this study, team teaching involved two lecturers collaborating to deliver two courses (TOEFL and SAT). They did not develop the content and or/ design the curriculum. The study was conducted in two semesters, by two lecturers on one preparatory class of 25 students for Teaching English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) and Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) examination. The team teaching model was adapted from Goetz (2000), whereby two lecturers worked together in planning, conducting and evaluating the learning activities for the same group of learners (TOEFL and SAT). Both were experienced English lecturers with more than ten years of teaching English at local universities in Malaysia. Each lecturer held individual classes according to his or her area of expertise. Lecturer A specialized in writing and speaking skills (TOEFL), while lecturer B on grammar (SAT). Team members applied different approaches, styles and methods in delivering the course. Lecturer A was more towards student-oriented approach using cooperative learning and problem-based learning techniques, since she had to cover the speaking and writing skills. On the contrary, lecturer B

was more of teacher-oriented approach, since he had to focus on grammar. In terms of teaching style, lecturer B’s teaching style was more structured and serious in nature, whilst lecturer A engaged more relaxed and playful learning style.

The stages of conducting team teaching adopted in this study are discussed below:

Lecturer A: Walked around visiting small groups checking for understanding of the rules. Also, using proximity control to ensure students are on task. In cases where students were doubtful, the lecturer would re-teach and asked clarifying questions to induce students to think.

Lecturer B: Conducted lecture on grammar rules, for instance to explain a new grammatical concept.

Despite the difference in teaching styles, both lecturers actually needed to follow the stages in Table 1

Table 1: The Process of Conducting the Classes

Stages	Lecturer A and B	
Before Lecturing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Identify co-partner for the lesson. ➤ Read books and prepare notes. ➤ Plan lessons and materials. ➤ Make copies of notes to be distributed to the class. 	
While Lecturing	Lecturer A	Lecturer B
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Lecturing to clarify concepts on grammar rules. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Observing how students’ respond to the lecturer’s teaching. ➤ Observing whether the lecturer’s teaching style/approach/voice projection is effective and comprehensible when he/she sat at the back of the class with the students.

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- Observe the level of responsiveness shown by the teacher to the students' needs, whether they are adequate or whether there is room for improvement.

Post-lecturing

- Meet to reflect on each others' teaching method.
- Provide strengths and weaknesses of co-partner's teaching.
- Interview students on their perspectives of team teaching.
- Suggest remediation procedures.

Participants

Students from the TOEFL and SAT class completed a survey involving questionnaire which examined selected aspects of the course ranging from their learning experience of the team teaching model adopted in the course. The questionnaire included five-point Likert scale questions and open-ended questions designed to assess their perceptions of the impact of team teaching on their interest in the course and their overall satisfaction with the teaching and learning process.

Participants were twenty-five students, aged between nineteen and twenty-one who were undergoing a preparatory class to pursue their degrees at overseas universities. For the eight hours TOEFL class, classes were conducted during weekdays, Monday (1100 to 1300 hours and 1400 to 1700 hours) and Tuesday (1400 to 1700 hours). The four hours SAT class was conducted on Thursday ((1100 to 1300 hours and 1400 to 1600 hours).

Data Analysis

In this study, the concept of 'conceptual ordering' (Strauss & Corbin, 1998) was engaged in which it refers to the organization of data into distinct categories or themes according to their properties and scope and then using description to explain those terms. Data from the open ended questions on the survey forms was coded and analyzed using the constant comparative method. This involved the inductive coding of data and synchronized comparison of comments, events and /or forms of phenomenon recognized from within the data that showed similarities, differences and universal patterns. Basically, inductive coding involved classifying the data into coded units, then gradually and methodically grouping data units that

showed similarities and associations. Based on this method of data analysis a range of themes were found to be universally right through the student responses. The team norms adopted of the two lecturers were rather similar as they used modules, newspaper, Newsweek, Reader's Digest articles, supplementary worksheets and log book to record activities or reports. They encouraged students to do brainstorming, sharing of ideas, collaborative problem-solving approach, editing and proofreading. Students were observed and assessed based on public speaking, writing, reading, and grammar skills.

Results and Discussion

The findings showed that there was a split decision with regard to the students' perspectives on the two modes of teaching style: team teaching and one-lecturer style.

Majority of the respondents, 60% (15) of the students mentioned that they preferred to study using the team-teaching style, 28% (7) disagree and 12% (3) did not provide any response. This finding was in accordance to the findings by Yanamandram and Noble (2005) on a positive note reported that majority of students liked the concept of team teaching for they experienced variation in the teaching styles of different team members.

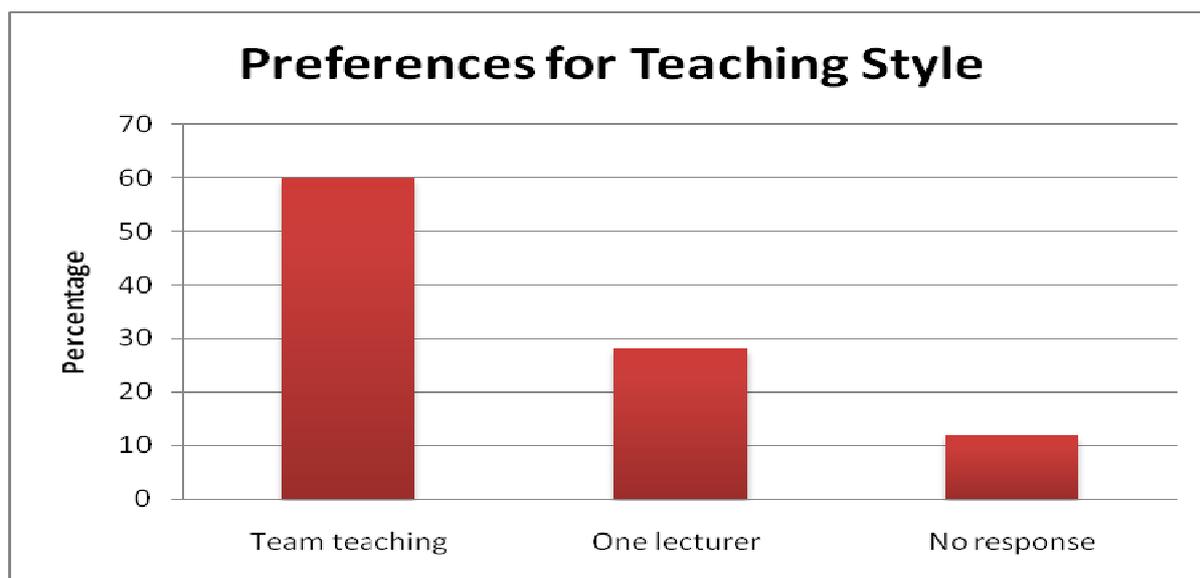


Figure 1: Feedback on Team Teaching by the Students

Most noticeable, the students accredited that team teaching promoted critical thinking skills when students were involved in activities that prompted them to utilize various types of questions and answers with different perspectives of a same topic. To illustrate, having two lecturers teaching the same subject could give them a wider point of view when solving things such as essay writing. That was, they had the chance to learn specifically about the topic from experts, as a result they became more excited to learn that particular topic. Beyond

that, it promoted teamwork whereby the lecturers could gain more ideas by sharing information among them. They could tackle the students' mistakes more efficiently.

Majority 60% (15) claimed that they enjoyed seeing a different lecturer each week, and yet 40% (10) disagreed. Above all 88% (22) students agreed that during team-teaching, they had the opportunity to learn from experts on the topic, still 12% (3) commented otherwise.

In line with the idea of learning from the experts, more importantly, 92% (23) acknowledged and substantiated that team-teaching promotes critical thinking skills, when the lecturers exposed them to more than one perspective on a topic. For instance, they pointed that the two lecturers sometimes had different ideas/opinions. Each lecturer gave a different explanation about a particular topic and had different ways to solve problems. For example, there are too many opinions from very different perspectives which sometimes opposed each other, consequently provoked them to think and analyzed the differing point of view. In other words, this coincides with Anderson and Speck (1998, p.681) findings that contented that team teaching allows students to view high-level intellectual discussion among lecturers which they had described as 'professional disagreement.' Subsequently, repeated exposures to this scenario would make students learn to disagree without aggression and to view new materials through a variety of perspectives.

Likewise, 72% (18) of the students disclosed that the team-teaching style matches their learning style, for incidentally they also prefer to work in group. Only 28% (7) lamented that different lecturer posed different teaching styles and have different ideas and concept which sometimes confused them. All in all, from the observation, team teaching is well accepted with open arms in the researchers' institution as it benefits learners in many ways and it is perceived as new innovative ways mode of delivery.

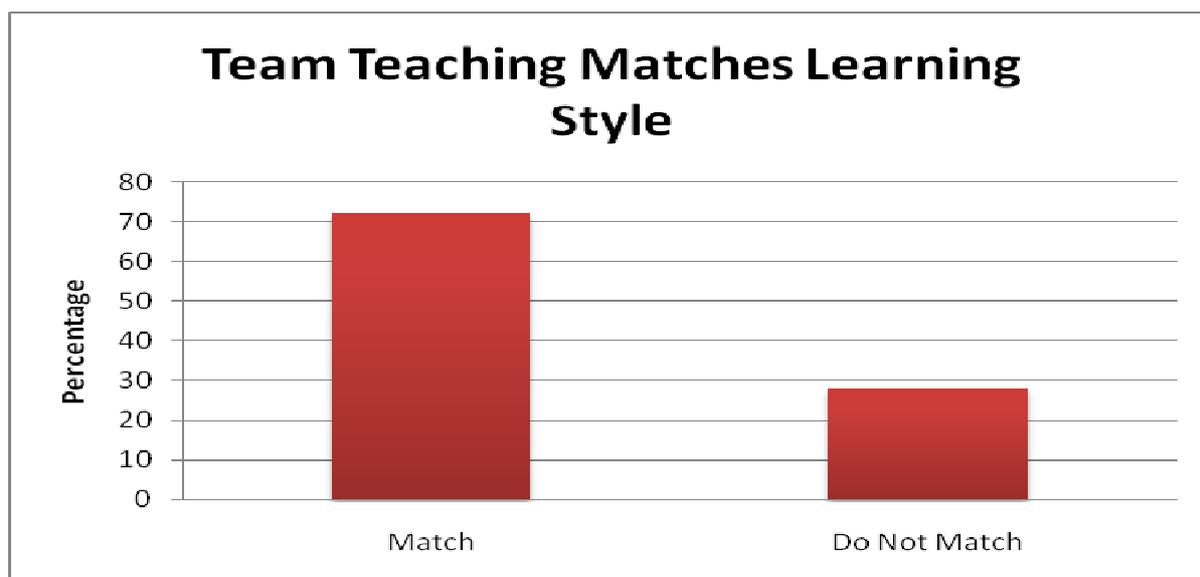


Figure 2: Students' Preference on Learning Styles

As a result of the team teaching carried out and observed, to commensurate with the study conducted, we have formulated and suggest a simple 11-step model for effective team teaching in higher institution.

Steps:

1. Both lecturers meet regularly to plan the lesson. They prepare notes and work-sheets, make copies of handouts to students.
2. During class, teacher A/B alternatively, introduces a concept either grammar or writing or speaking, depending on their area of specialization. He/she explains the rules and format for the concept for twenty to thirty minutes. .
3. Alternatively, Teacher A/B observes the teaching and learning activity, and noted comments on the strengths and weaknesses of the lesson. Also, provides suggestions for improvement where appropriate.
4. Group work activity. Students create a context to apply or use the concept using newspaper articles/pictures.
5. Students present the activity.
6. Both teachers alternatively provide oral and written feedback to the oral presentation and the written work submitted.
7. Students do corrections and resubmit work.
8. Both teachers meet to discuss and reflect on the teaching, as well as to evaluate students' progress, as case-by-case basis.
9. The teacher who is the expert in the area in which the students had shown weaknesses will re-teach the concept.
10. Students do corrections and resubmit work.
11. The cycle repeats with the introduction of new concepts.

The development of an effective team is a process that takes time. In fact, team members should not be clones of each other, because differences in subject expertise, styles, perspectives, interest, educational backgrounds, gender, and upbringing can contribute to the collective strength and beauty of a team. Also, the 'mix' of personalities and characteristics add to the experience the students get from interacting with the team (lecturers).

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