

Lecturer's and assistant's views on collaborative teaching at the university

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Summary

In higher education teamwork is the key element that helps to cope with limited resources and increasing competition. Many authors (Austin & Baldwin, 1991; Liebel et al., 2017) have highlighted the positive impact that team-teaching can have on students' learning outcomes. For example, working on the same course with colleagues helps to refresh the syllabus, gives a wide-ranging feedback to students, and shares the workload and responsibility. Based on many previous researches, the authors have described many different types of cooperation. The simplest form would be having a colleague or assistant as an observer in the classroom, the most complex cooperation, however, means a full partnership in planning, executing and evaluating courses (Crawford & Jenkins, 2018; Da Fonte & Barton-Arwood, 2017; Dugan & Letterman, 2008; Vangrieken et al., 2013). Each form of co-teaching has some risks and benefits, but generally, all parties benefit from successful co-teaching (Stewart & Perry, 2005). The development of individual teaching skills and teacher's job satisfaction are often influenced by the cooperation experienced in teaching, but these aspects can hardly be studied by quantitative or combined research methods (Caprara et al., 2006; Krammer et al., 2018).

The ethnographic and auto-ethnographic approach is the best way to study one's own teaching, even if the method has to be carried out very carefully to avoid the most common problems. Auto-ethnographic research is a very personal process that puts authors into vulnerable positions, and its results can hardly be generalised. Despite that, the authors have decided to document their own collaboration on the BA course "Practice of audio-visual production" in the 2018 autumn term. The first author (a second year doctoral student) taught this course before as a qualified teacher, and wanted to refresh her methodology by engaging a master's student as an assistant. The second author (a second year master's student) earlier acted as an assistant, grading students' homework online, on a theoretical course, and now wanted to try out "real"

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teaching. Based on their diaries, the authors conducted a qualitative content analysis and compared the results with the students' experiences (four semi-structured interviews conducted by a third author). The main categories of analysis were: 1) Needs that lead to co-teaching; 2) Sharing the responsibility; 3) Perceived roles in co-teaching; 4) Communication between the teaching team; 5) Communication with students; 6) Feedback and feed-forward; 7) Fragmentation of personal time; 8) Formalities of involving master's students as assistants; 9) Results of cooperation.

The results of the analysis indicated that the most significant factor of a successful team teaching is coincidence: existence of a suitable course for a master's student syllabus, an existence of a motivated teacher and assistant, sufficient interpersonal and social skills (like openness to communication and self-reflection), sufficient time resource, and many other details. As a doctoral student and young teacher, Eleri's only way to motivate the master's student was the ECT's, and fortunately Henry could include these in his syllabus as a pedagogical internship at university. Since both Eleri and Henry are competent in audio-visual production, they had enough time to consider pedagogical choices and methodology. Before the course they worked out a detailed syllabus and shared responsibilities, but did not make any agreement about platforms for mutual communication and reflection, or a timetable for follow-up meetings. When it became obvious that other obligations took more of Henry's time than expected, all problems were addressed and solved on various communication platforms thanks to the trust they had in each other. Diaries indicated that both had failed to ask for help when expressing their mutual expectations. More regular communication would have helped to prevent those situations.

During the course, both authors gave oral and written feedback to students. The difference of style confused the students: Henry's feedback was detailed and complex, whilst Eleri concentrated on the biggest failure or nearest development zone of each student.

For students, team teaching of that manner was rich and fluent, since they perceived Eleri as the one who deals with all the formalities and themes she taught, while Henry was perceived by students as the specialist and practitioner. Since Henry demonstrated more of his own production, students got the expression that he is more experienced in video production than Eleri, but is not competent to teach all themes. In fact, the themes were divided based on Henry's time resource, not by competence.

The most significant role confusion was Eleri's role as a responsible teacher and as a mentor for her assistant. In her diary she recognised the need for a more mutual reflection, but did not know how to make it happen in real time.

On that point, she as a young teacher would have benefitted from the support of a mentor.

In general the assumption that all parties benefit from team teaching was approved (Crawford & Jenkins, 2018; Knights & Sampson, 1995; Sandholtz, 2000; Shibley, 2006; Stewart & Perry, 2005). Students, after getting used to teachers' attitudes, benefitted from the different approaches and feedback from the teachers, as well as from the observations of their professional dialogue in the classroom. For Eleri, the course was refreshed with new ideas during Henry's assistance and forthcoming. Henry valued the possibility of "turning the table" and trying teaching before he decided whether to apply for doctoral studies and plan his career as a science teacher.

However, the most significant result of this cooperation was the research itself. The approved abstract was a great motivator to continue and share the results of the auto-ethnographic research into self-teaching.

Keywords: team teaching, autoethnographic research, higher education pedagogy