

## TEAM – TEACHING – A GOOD EXAMPLE FOR INSTITUTIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND COLLEGIAL LEARNING

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**Abstract.** The article focuses on the practice of team teaching (TT) in secondary schools and at universities. The advantages of this method were first observed in schools due to the positive effects it had on students with special needs. The application has now spread to all levels of education and the focus stayed the same: The learning of students and their needs are in the foreground. This is why it is important to adhere to important principles which are relevant for all phases of teaching and learning. How to work with a co-teacher in class and how to prepare and evaluate the lessons are important questions and principles which are tackled in the article. A best practice example of collaborative teaching at Plovdiv Agricultural University proves the arguments for this method and shows the possibility for wide application.

**Keywords:** Teamteaching, collegial cooperation, collaborative teaching, students' needs, equality, collective learning, interpersonal skills, professional learning communities

*„Collaboration is vital to sustain what we call profound or really deep change, because without it, organizations are just overwhelmed by the forces of the status quo. “*

**Peter M. Senge**

Austrian schools have practised teamteaching (TT) for decades and it used to be linked with the so called *Integrationsmodell* of the Austrian primary and secondary school system. This comprised the inclusion of handicapped students in a class of „main-stream“ learners. Two teachers were responsible for teaching at the same time in the same classroom. Mixed ability teaching, i.e. integrative and individualised teaching and learning were in the foreground. In the past five years TT has spread to a greater number of Austrian schools due to political decisions to implement the „new secondary school“ where two teachers facilitate learning in the subjects maths, English and German.

### **Theoretical background**

TT was practised first in the American and British school systems and there is a vast number of academic literature on the empirical outcomes of the school system but

hardly any findings can be traced concerning *university* lecturing and its benefits.

However, the outcomes of a CLIL<sup>1)</sup>-study at the University College for Agricultural and Environmental Pedagogy (HAUP), a teacher training college on the tertiary level in Vienna, prove certain principles that have been established in international research results at school level in the last three decades.

For the time being it seems that there are many similarities concerning one topic, namely cooperation.

Research shows that the quality of teamwork is highly conducive to sustainable cooperation among all participants, i.e. the teachers and the learners.

### **The quality of collaborative teaching**

Cooperation is something that needs to be learnt by the team members. Working together means reflecting alone and with the co-teacher about the process and the strengths and weaknesses of teaching (Sandermann 2010: 6). It can be further explained by reflecting in action and reflecting on action (Rolff 2006: 180, 172-73)

#### **Learning together**

The collaboration process concerns the planning, teaching and evaluation phases and there are success factors which help to start TT. Professional learning communities promote the education of people and systems and move away from teachers who act as „lone fighters“ (Schratz; Westfall-Greiter 2010: 122). Communities of practice focus on collective learning and the application of learning (Rolff 2006: 170) The needs of the students are in the foreground (Bonsen 2011: 104).

Tajino/Tajino are two Japanese authors who were analysing two English teachers (native speaker teaching assistant and main teacher in a tandem arrangement) suggest that „team-teaching should be re-interpreted as team learning“ (Tajino; Tajino 2000: 6, 10). This will take place when particular classroom roles are clarified consciously and when they showcase the respective skills of partners“ (Carless 2006: 345).

### **Equality**

The freedom to plan according to each teacher's expertise and to take turns as the lesson develops is an example of the principle of equality, which „is seen as the highest value of cooperation which allows team partners to set a course, make suggestions and favour innovation“ (Schratz; Westfall-Greiter: 124).

This notion is also supported in the aforementioned CLIL-study carried out at the tertiary institution in Vienna in 2012. The native speaker teaching assistant expressed in an interview her views on ideal conditions that „she would rather feel confident with content whose choice she could influence and getting some direction from the non-NEST<sup>2)</sup>“ (Kralicek; Langer 2013: 40).

### **Organisation of the process**

Working in teams means changing processes and Tuckman's model can serve as

an orientaton tool. Forming, storming, norming and performing is an example for the group dynamics. It can help the team teachers to analyse the phase of the teaching/lecturing process and calm the potential weariness of partners.

### Team Teaching of ENTER-network members as an example

In March 2013 the first cooperation of two ENTER partners (from STOAS, Wageningen and HAUP, Vienna) in the form of TT took place. Jan-Willem Noom and Beate Kralicek offered an in-service training for teachers of Bulgarian agricultural vocational schools at the Agricultural University in

Plovdiv for two days. The topic was „Active Learning and Participation“, which is a content that both lecturers were experts in. Both trainers applied various teaching styles that fitted their personalities and strengths and the needs of twenty students<sup>3,4)</sup>.

The overall results were beneficial to all participants, both teachers shared the joys of cooperation and as Hibler said „the collaboration between teaming teachers also serves as a model for teamwork, which is linked to the heightened interpersonal skills of the students who model the cooperative nature of team teachers“ (Hibler, 2010: 25). Besides being models it is a very important aspect that can reduce the pressures of having to be a (lonely) expert with the whole responsibility. Both ENTER- trainers showed their expertise of the content and teamteaching with ease. The lectures were characterised by supportive and shared leadership, shared values and vision and shared practice - important criteria of professional learning communities.



2 figure: translated from Philipp 1996: 3

### NOTES

1. CLIL means using a foreign language as the medium of instruction; TT was done by two teachers-one main teacher and a co-teacher, who was a native speaker of English
2. main teacher
3. The content was published in Noom, J.W. Active learning and participation, In: Vocational education , volume 15, number 4, 2013, page 305-314, Azbuki, Sofia, 2013
4. There is a video with parts of this videographed seminar to be seen during the ENTER Study Days in Wageningen in April 2014. Prof. Tonya Georgieva from the Agricultural University will know the details for registration.

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## **ГРУПОВОТО ОБУЧЕНИЕ – ДОБРА ПРАКТИКА ЗА ИНСТИТУЦИОНАЛНОТО РАЗВИТИЕ И ОПЦИЯ ЗА ОБМЕН НА ОПИТ МЕЖДУ КОЛЕГИТЕ**

**Резюме.** Статията разглежда темата за екипното обучение в средните училища и университетите. Предимствата на този метод първоначално са изследвани в училищата заради положителния ефект, който груповото обучение е имало върху децата със специални нужди. Сега този метод на преподаване е разпространен във всички образователни равнища, но основата си остава същата: обучението, съобразено с нуждите на учащите се, е от първостепенно значение. Затова е важно да се спазват основните правила, присъщи на всички фази на преподаването и ученето. Как да работим с учител в екип по време на часа и как да подготвим материала, който ще преподаваме – това са важните въпроси, които статията разглежда. Добър пример за подобно сътрудничество в преподаването е дейността на Аграрния университет в Пловдив, която дава възможност за бъдещи изследвания и задълбочени проучвания.

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