Best Practices for Very Large Team Teaching

Sandy Campbell
Thane Chambers
Liza Chan
Trish Chatterley (Coordinator) *
Dagmara Chojecki*
Liz Dennett
Marlene Dorgan
Linda Seale
Linda Slater
Dale Storie
Lisa Tjosvold

* Presenters today
LIS 520 - An Introduction to Health Sciences Librarianship
LIS 520 Course Description

...An examination of major reference sources in health sciences, collections issues, literature searching specific to health sciences, evidence-based practice, teaching/bibliographic instruction, professional practice issues, consumer health, and an overview of the many health sciences environments in which librarians work and types of services they provide....
What does the literature say?

• Not much!

• No articles addressing large team teaching in health sciences librarianship education

• Literature on teaching in teams of two or three

• Mostly related to instruction in schools rather than post-secondary education
“Team teaching involves a group of instructors working purposefully, regularly, and cooperatively to help a group of students learn. As a team, the teachers work together in setting goals for a course, designing a syllabus, preparing individual lesson plans, actually teaching students together, and evaluating the results. They share insights, arguing with one another and perhaps even challenging students to decide which approach is correct.”

Benefits to Team Teaching – for teachers

- Fosters teachers’ professional development
- Helps overcome feelings of isolation sometimes encountered in one person teaching
- Can improve morale among staff and deepen friendships
- Avoid lecturer burnout
- Frees up time for other academic activities
Benefits to Team Teaching – for students

• Instruction from subject experts
• Exposure to alternate perspectives on issues
• Opportunity to observe collaborative teamwork
• Exposure to a variety of teaching styles
• Avoid lecturer burnout
Potential Drawbacks of Team Teaching

• Exposure to a variety of teaching styles can cause confusion
• Increased chance of conflict arising among instructors
• Lots of planning required, and group decisions can be slow to make
• Can lead to lack of cohesion in the flow of instruction
How is a Large Teaching Team different from a course with many Guest Lecturers?

• Instructors participate in course planning, evaluation and improvement

• Instructors are responsible for a variety of facets of the course

• Instructors have multiple points of contact with each other

• Instructors have multiple points of contact with the students
How did we organize it?

• One instructor coordinated administration and communication: present at all classes

• Instructors taught in their own specialties and interests, often in pairs

• Marking was done by two librarians to maintain objectivity: different librarians for each assignment

• Central file of presentations, assignments, etc
Course Objectives and Methods

• Objectives: introduction to the field for students with no prior subject knowledge

• Methods: lectures, hands-on, class discussion, readings, demonstrations, expert panel, game

• Assignments:
  – in-class exercises
  – case scenarios
  – student presentations
  – systematic review search / protocol
How did we evaluate it?

After ethics approval:

- Mid-point survey of students
- Final survey of students
  - Separate from standard University evaluation
- Wrap-up discussion and evaluation by instructors
## Student Feedback

Universal Student Ratings of Instruction (N=7)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>In class time was used effectively</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am motivated to learn more about these subject areas</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I increased my knowledge of the subject area in this course</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall, the quality of the course content was excellent</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
# Team Teaching vs. Conventional

*N=7*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Better</th>
<th>About the same</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mastery of Material Presented</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maintaining Student Interest in Class</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Range of Learning Activity Types</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communication with Students</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Student Commentary: Positive

• ‘learn from a broad knowledge base’

• ‘variety of voices/input’

• ‘teaching of topics by subject experts’

• ‘best class I have taken’

• Also liked:
  Practical hands-on exercises (some in class) and assignments which helped students learn
  Small class size (7)
Student Commentary: Drawbacks

- “a danger of sections being disconnected”
- “not when it is well-taught like this class was”
- “if properly coordinated, no”
- “differences in the amount of material presented”
- “instructors in one session assumed familiarity (with material that had not previously been taught)”
Instructor Feedback: Positive

• “not something that I would have done on my own”
• “more creative instruction because of different teaching styles and knowledge”
• “liked working with a partner”
• “liked teaching within my own profession”
• “liked having a coordinator to maintain quality and consistency”
Instructor Feedback: Downsides and Surprises

• “don’t get to know the students like you would if you were the only instructor”

• “surprised by the amount of time and labour required for marking”
Future Changes?

- Re-order some classes, split others
- Bigger class
- Instructor from a hospital or other (non-academic) health library
- Add a section on professional trends
- Journal club session
- Reduce number of instructors
Keys to Success

- All instructors had worked together and had teaching experience
- Coordination and communication
- Instructor involvement at all stages
  - Course planning
  - Mid-term meeting
  - Working in pairs
  - Available to students
- Variety of learning assignments
Best Practices

1. Establish a main coordinator (or coordinators)
2. Establish a primary communication point
3. Ensure all team members have a part in developing curriculum
4. Ensure familiarity among team members
5. Utilize multiple methods of communication
6. Establish grading procedures in advance
Best Practices cont...

7. Come to consensus on who will teach what

8. Allow instructors to use own teaching methods and styles

9. Involve instructors to the level that they can be/want to be

10. Build in multiple points of interaction among students and instructors

11. Establish an easily accessible teaching repository

12. Incorporate instructor’s de-briefing session

13. Have fun!!
Thank you!

Questions?

Trish.chatterley@ualberta.ca

Dagmara.chojecki@ualberta.ca