
**Categories:** Professional Development, Co-Teaching, Co-Research, SoTL

**Summary**

This article examines the concept of using co-teaching projects between college teacher education faculty and K-12 teachers as a means of measuring pre-service teachers “sense of efficacy in classroom management and student engagement.” According to the authors, while interest in this sort of collaboration has existed for several decades, there has been little effort to bring such collaborations to fruition. This failure stems from several causes: little pressure within the academy or academic literature for such studies; teacher resistance to participation; limited understanding/experience with advanced statistical concepts on the part of K-12 teachers; cultural differences between college faculty and K-12 teachers and their respective institutions, particularly in regards to the incentives for such research. Despite these obstacles, it is broadly recognized that in order to improve the quality of both K-12 teachers and teacher education programs collaborative research must be done.

To this end, the authors, one of whom teaches in a special education program at the university level and the other who teaches special education at a local high school, gained permission to conduct a study on the potential impact of co-teaching at the college level on teacher education programs. The study undertaken by the authors involved eight students in a college course required for certification and graduation from a Special Education program. The study employed a pretest/posttest design, using the “Teacher Sense of Efficacy Scale,” and adopted a Collaborative Consultation model, which posits the consultant and consultee as “equal partners with diverse experiences.” Within this design, the authors served as “both consultant and consultee/mediator” and regularly exchanged these roles. Further, because of the general sense amongst pre-service teachers that school observations were of limited value (due to lack of input, involvement in school activities, and direction from the cooperating teachers), the authors placed most of the student participants in the study at the same school, with access to the same mentor teacher (who was the co-author of the study). Finally, the course which the student participants were drawn from was in a “Professional Development School (PDS).” This program focuses on the development of partnerships between an institute of higher learning and K-12 systems, so as to improve student performance and preparation at both the university and K-12 levels.

According to the study, the program design described above had beneficial effects upon the participants. The data collected from the pre/post-tests suggested that the students had acquired a greater sense of efficacy in classroom management skills. Similarly, these test results also indicated a significant statistical improvement in the participants’ sense of efficacy in student engagement.

**Conclusions**

This study, according to authors, illustrates the potential of co-teaching collaboration to improve the preparation of pre-service teachers by improving their sense of efficacy in classroom management and student engagement. This improvement may stem from the utilization of the co-teaching format, the presence of one of the co-teachers at the school in which the student s were placed, the students’ opportunities to have both responsibilities at and experience in a public school, and the improvements
made to the school observation process. While study highlights this model’s potential benefits, it also had several limitations that suggest the need for further research: limited number of study participants, limited ability to identify the impact of specific components of the redesign given the newness of the model, and the lack of a control group for comparison.

Applications

Despite the somewhat confusing organization of this article and its lack of clarity in details, it offers some useful ideas. First, this presents another example of how to engage in SoTL at U.D.C. Second, it should be of obvious interest to faculty in our Education programs. Finally, the type of research conducted in this study has important potential implications for improving teaching and learning not only in education programs within the U.D.C. system, but also offers an opportunity to expand the impact of reforms within the University to the broader Washington, D.C. community.

Citations of Interest


