USING SPECIAL TEAMS FOR TEACHING

AND NOT TEAM TEACHING

by

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Introduction

Undoubtedly, teaching at the college level requires professors to orchestrate and play a
diverse set of roles which require the performance of different tasks and which depend on a
variety of talents and temperaments. Historically, it has been almost universally accepted that all
the diverse roles to which a college teacher must play, should be assumed by one teacher.
James L. Bess and his associates (2000) challenge this long held assumption and suggest that
special teams for teaching should be established, whereby the various teaching roles are
unbundled and differentiated with separate faculty fulfilling the individual roles. Rather than team
teaching in which different faculty teach a particular portion of the course content, Bess argues
that different faculty should be used to perform the diverse roles of a teacher in each specific
course. Bess suggest seven specialist's roles that faculty should perform: (1) pedagogue;
(2) researcher; (3) lecturer; (4) discussion leader; (5) mentor; (6) integrator; and (7) assessor. An
explanation of each teaching role follows.

Pedagogue

This role refers to the primary, traditional role of a teacher to understand the subject
content and become the creator of learning for the students in the classroom. To be effective, the
pedagogue must possess, not only curricular knowledge but also, knowledge of the learners in
the classroom.

A few of the specific tasks of the expert pedagogue in higher education, as postulated by
J. G. Donald (1992), include the following:

1. Explaining the educational goals, purposes and values and their epistemological
grounds.

2. Clarifying the institutional and faculty educational objectives, governance, and
financing with respect to the institutional context.

3. Providing an overview of the discipline as to how the subject matter is organized and
the methods used to validate this knowledge.
4. Instilling within the students a sense of the importance of scholarly learning and providing personal collaborative contact.

5. Explaining to the students that their learning depends primarily on the quality of effort they put forth in their work.

6. Interpreting critically the baseline knowledge level of students before they enroll in a particular class, designing topics and concepts to be learned, and measuring the results within the context of learning outcomes.

7. Using alternative ways in which to represent concepts and skills to impart the knowledge of the discipline.

8. Responding to student questions and needs and adapting the teaching strategy to achieve learning outcomes.

9. Aligning the instruction in manner that enables the instructor to interact with and receive feedback from the students.

10. Monitoring and evaluating the students' competence and understanding of the material during and at the conclusion of the class to assess overall students' performance.

Researcher

The researcher role does not suggest advancing the common body of knowledge of a particular discipline, particularly at two-year college institutions. Rather, this role refers to making content decisions about a particular course. The faculty member assuming this role would survey the same courses taught at other similar college institutions by reviewing the printed material and finding relevant content knowledge to include in the course, given the learning objectives and outcomes of the course.

The profile of the researcher, according to Barzum and Graff (1985), is the trait that facilitates creativity. Researchers tend to be focused on an objective world rather than a social world. They possess high levels of cognitive ability and the skill to manage a highly objective
world. Their primary concern is to identify topics related to the focal course and to provide recommendations for course content and organization.

Lecturer

Lecturing as suggested by Bess does not merely mean presenting material and transferring information. This role requires excellent communication skills in which the ability to motivate, inspire, and expand the understanding of the students is clearly demonstrated. A high-powered faculty member would be illustrative of someone fulfilling this role. Thus, of all the factors that have an impact on the manner in which a lecture is delivered, a dynamic, motivated personality is the single most important trait according to Bess. Research by Murray, Rushton, and Paunonen (1990) reveals that extroversion and liberalism are also two dominant personality traits associated with successful lecturers. Qualities such as being friendly, lighthearted, colorful, and charismatic are considered to be manifestations of extroversion, while aesthetic sensitivity, flexibility, and non-authoritarianism are expressions of liberalism. Research has borne out the fact that lecturers who performed well in classes scored high on both the extroversion and liberalism factors.

Discussion Leader

Students can and should learn from and with each other. Accordingly, a faculty member, who is skilled in group learning environments, can significantly contribute to the learning process of students. This role of creating, executing, and assessing learning in a group context constitutes a significant set of skills and knowledge beyond merely the course content.

The task requirements of an effective discussion class leader, as suggested by Richard Tiberius (1990), are as follows. First, the discussion leader must encourage and maintain class discussion. This presupposes chosen topics that provide an interest in and a stimulus for discussion. The discussion leader must create an informal climate of acceptance to promote freedom of expression. Second, the discussion leader must keep the discussion on the topic. This is accomplished by clarifying the goals of the topic and summarizing when appropriate. Third, the discussion leader must promote sharing among the learners in the classroom. Ground
rules have to be set to encourage members to listen to one another, hear the viewpoints of others without judgment, and ensure balanced interaction among the students. Fourth, the discussion leader must encourage the awareness of the group process of learning. Pointing out the process issues to the class members is sometimes more important than the actual course content. Fifth, the discussion leader must deal promptly and appropriately with disruptive students. Students tend to be more accustomed to the lecture style of teaching, and therefore, they must be trained in the discussion style of teaching in order to reduce destructive conflict by and competition among the class members.

Mentor

Perhaps this could be considered a new role for a faculty member to play since it means far more than merely setting an hour aside daily for student consultation. Similar to mentors in the workplace, faculty mentors would enrich their role of faculty advising and become involved with their students personal growth and development. Research has borne out the positive impact of role modeling and mentoring on work associates and students.

Golian and Galbraith (1996) suggest the following six mentoring functions:

1. Building and establishing relationships.
2. Providing information and support.
3. Facilitating change.
4. Challenging and confronting ideas.
5. Modeling appropriate behavior.
6. Developing a vision for the students.

Moreover, an in-depth analysis and research of mentoring by Golian and Galbraith revealed that there are similar themes imbedded in the process of mentoring. These common themes of mentoring include the notion that mentoring is a process within a controlled contextual setting. Mentoring involves a relationship between a more knowledgeable and experienced individual and a less experienced and educated individual, and thereby provides professional networking, counseling, guiding, instructing, modeling, and sponsoring. Moreover, mentoring
establishes and develops a personal, professional, and psychological support mechanism and builds a social and reciprocal relationship. Finally, mentoring provides an identity transformation for both the mentor and the protégé or mentee.

Integrator

Learning is a holistic experience, and therefore, college educators should focus on educating the whole person in an age of specialization and high technology. Integrating the material learned in the classroom with what occurs outside the classroom is indeed a formidable challenge, but worth pursuing. According to Bess, this role builds a collegiate learning environment, and places the faculty member in the position of a manager, overseeing learning in a much larger context. Also, the integrator role involves merging the traditional separation or bifurcation between academic affairs and student affairs.

The primary function of the integrator is to link curricular and co-curricular experience. Learning does not occur entirely within a singular isolated domain such as a classroom. Rather, learning according to Rhoads and Black (1995) is an integrated and evolving process in which academic and non-academic experiences are inherently interconnected. Student life outside the classroom is an important venue, whereby the opportunity to synthesize and integrate the material introduced in the formal academic environment is nurtured. The intent is to enable the students to understand and interpret knowledge gained in the classroom, and apply this knowledge to subsequent non-classroom experiences. Thus, students are empowered to interpret what is learned in the class from their own cognitive structure and to make their own decisions about the meaning, value, and validity of the material.

Assessor

Traditionally, a college teacher has always had the responsibility of evaluating students' performance and assigning grades at the end of the course. However, this role goes well beyond generating grades at the end of each semester. This role consists of integrating both the formal and informal learning experiences into a comprehensive outcome assessment with respect to how well the students have learned upon graduation from the institution.
The Assessor as envisioned by Speck (1998) has a six fold task:

1. Analyzing, with the other team members, what should be evaluated.
2. Designing and establishing an evaluation process of the students.
3. Managing and controlling the evaluation process effectively and efficiently.
4. Evaluating the data derived from the previous tasks in the assessment process.
5. Interpreting and reporting those data to the other team members.
6. Using the data to create a common body of knowledge about effective teaching and learning based upon valid empirical research.

Some may argue that the approach of using special teams for teaching as an organizational structure in higher education as presented herein would be inefficient and costly. If seven faculty members were required to teach a single course formerly taught by one, then indeed colleges would price themselves out of business by having to raise tuition to pay for the additional faculty members. However, for specialized team players to work collaboratively as a single team, the new methodology of faculty specialists would have to involve teaching more than one course at a time. Thus, a matrix organization structure would be most appropriate. The seven faculty specialists would be arrayed with various courses as shown below.

Table 1

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<th>Specialist</th>
<th>Course #1</th>
<th>Course #2</th>
<th>Course #3</th>
<th>Course #4</th>
<th>Course #5</th>
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<td>Pedagogue</td>
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<td>Researcher</td>
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<td>Lecturer</td>
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<td>Discussion Leader</td>
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<td>Mentor</td>
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<td>Integrator</td>
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Conceivably the faculty specialists would have some familiarity with the discipline, and therefore, would provide their expertise in the preparation and delivery of each course. Thus, a pedagogue, for example, would still be teaching five different courses, of which some of them would be the same but a different section. Moreover, it is likely that the specialization in research would be rotated so that all faculty members would have the opportunity to enlarge and sharpen their core knowledge of the discipline. Accordingly, there would be numerous faculty members who specialize in specific areas and who would teach according to their specialization to various sections of the same courses during a particular semester. Thus, the teams formed would be composed of different combination of specialists, who are not only knowledgeable of the subject material, but also who have the interpersonal compatibility and skill to maximize the fruitfulness of the joint teaching venture.

The critical issue with matrix organization structures in the academic environment is the management of communication with the team members and their challenges to their task authority. The pattern of professional authority is unquestioned in the traditional classroom settings. Because of the interdependent complexity of the teaching with team specialists, the psychological dynamics of team behavior must be well understood. According to Bess, team members must be learners within the learning community in which double-loop learning is engaged. This implies correcting ineffective practices by questioning fundamental organizational beliefs and challenging long-standing perspectives, rather than relying on the past routines and habits. Teams do not become effective and self-managing instantly after they are created. Thus, there is a necessity for phasing in the process. Initially, as envisioned by Bess, faculty development consultants would be needed to work with the teams collectively and with faculty members individually. The consultants would function as interim leaders, gradually relinquishing their consultive roles for delegated ones, as the team specialists learn how to manage themselves.
Conclusion

In summary, Bess argues that the foregoing faculty roles require such a mix of tasks, talents, and temperaments that the faculty "sub-roles" must be performed by more than one faculty member. To quote Bess: "In all work organizations, for successful outcomes to emerge, in addition to proficient workers performing the required tasks, there must be a compatibility among the three elements--the tasks to be performed, the talents needed for the tasks, and the temperaments that are likely to result in satisfaction and motivation" (Bess, 2000, p. 8).

Accordingly, faculty should consider assembling teaching teams, whereby individual faculty members would be assigned different roles, and they would collaborate to create more effective teaching and learning outcomes.

The notion of faculty members assuming different specialized teaching roles within a collaborative team environment is truly unique. If the approach were implemented, it would significantly transform higher education in the twenty-first century. Successful implementation of such an approach turns on two basic questions: First, can the faculty roles be unbundled within the present traditional college teaching environment? Second, can faculty members make the cultural shift from "my work" to "our work" and begin teaching together rather than teaching alone? The future of the faculty role within higher education is predicated on the answers to those two questions.
References


