**Lecture 6. Communication as a means of teaching cooperation**

In traditional education methodologies, teachers direct the learning process and students assume a receptive role in their education. Armstrong (2012) claimed that "traditional education ignores or suppresses learner responsibility". With the advent of progressive education in the 19th century, and the influence of psychologists, some educators have largely replaced traditional curriculum approaches with "hands-on" activities and "group work", in which a child determines on their own what they want to do in class. Key amongst these changes is the premise that students actively construct their own learning. Theorists like John Dewey, Jean Piaget, and Lev Vygotsky, whose collective work focused on how students learn, is primarily responsible for the move to student-centred learning. Carl Rogers' ideas about the formation of the individual also contributed to student-centred learning. Student-centred learning means inverting the traditional teacher-centred understanding of the learning process and putting students at the centre of the learning process. Maria Montessori was also an influence in centre-based learning, where preschool children learn through independent self-directed interaction with previously presented activities.

The following provides a few examples of why student-centred learning should be integrated into the curriculum:

 Strengthens student motivation

 Promotes peer communication

 Reduces disruptive behaviour

 Builds student-teacher relationships

 Promotes discovery/active learning

 Responsibility for one’s own learning

The student-centred learning environment has been shown to be effective in higher education.

A certain university sought to promote student-centred learning across the entire university by employing the following methods:

 Analysis of good practice by award-winning teachers, in all faculties, to show that, they made use of active forms of student learning.

 Subsequent use the analysis to promote wider use of good practice.

 A compulsory teacher training course for new junior teachers, which encouraged student-centred learning.

 Projects funded through teaching development grants, of which 16 were concerned with the introduction of active learning experiences.

 A programme-level quality enhancement initiative which utilised a student survey to identify strengths and potential areas for improvement.

 Development of a model of a broadly based teaching and learning environment inﬂuencing the development of generic capabilities, to provide evidence of the need for an interactive learning environment.

 The introduction of programme reviews as a quality assurance measure (Kember, 2009).

The success of this initiative was evaluated by surveying the students. After two years the mean ratings indicating the students' perception of the quality of the teaching and learning environment at the university all rose significantly (Kember, 2009).

The success of the initiative at the university in this study indicates that by adapting a more student-oriented approach to education, the students will enjoy a more positive learning experience which will likely help them develop greater passion for learning and lead to more success in their learning endeavours. As well, this approach involves students in their overall education, creating a proactive involvement in learning.



 **Bloom's taxonomy**

Barriers to Effectiveness
Several things can stand in the way of effective teaching in general. However, some issues that are unique or critical to the co-teaching process are described below with some suggestions as to how to address these issues.

1. Time - The amount of time to plan, the time spent developing a school-wide support structure for co-teaching, the time spent to prepare the students, and the time teachers are given to develop a personal as well as a professional relationship can all greatly impact the co-teaching process. This statement does not mean that co-teaching has to take more time, but initially the time must be dedicated to create a school and classroom that support teaching teams as well as including students. Leadership must either lead teachers in using this type of model or must empower teachers to develop their own skills. Also critical to making this type of structure work school-wide is that the schedules of students with disabilities and co-taught teams should be created first, and then other activities must fill in around these important structures. No matter how creative, a limited amount of time or structure for this process can jeopardize the success of this model.
2. Grading - Just as the time and structure must be determined and scheduled prior to the start of a co-teaching relationship, the same should hold true for grading. Co-teaching teams must determine prior to the start of the semester how they will grade students with diverse learning needs in their classrooms. Other ideas for grading are provided below, but the most important variable to remember is to determine how students will be evaluated prior to the start of the semester instead of at the end of the grading period.
3. Student Readiness - Even 10 years ago many students with disabilities were not included into the general education curriculum. They were often pulled out and taught separate skills or curriculum. It is important to remember that simply including students into general education co-taught settings may not ensure their success. One of the struggles that teachers at upper grade levels must acknowledge is that many students with disabilities have received a disjointed education and may have large gaps in their knowledge base. Just as teachers take the time to prepare themselves for a co-teaching relationship, this same type of preparation may be needed to assist students with disabilities who will be included in the class who have either academic or behavioral gaps compared to their peers.
4. Teacher Readiness - Even in the strongest schools with the strongest teachers, resistance to a co-teaching model can occur because teachers often are considered to be autonomous. The best way to address a school-wide co-teaching model is to let teachers know (preferably using a family model) that they will be co-teaching next year. Then allowing teachers collective autonomy to design models or structures that will work for them but using collective accountability that these structures must show teachers should be allowed collective autonomy to design models or structures that will work for them, along with collective accountability which shows how they are using co-teaching to ensure all students are in their least restrictive environment and making strong achievement gains.
5. High Stakes Testing - At the core for everyone at every grade level in every district is the issue of how co-teaching may impact testing. As mentioned earlier, clear evidence does not indicate a conclusive outcome for co-teaching, but with that said, some things are critical to consider in relation to the impact of co-teaching on standardized assessment. First, any initiative that is implemented must be done in a careful and planned manner to ensure the success of all students. For example, if 15 students with the same disability are placed into a classroom so that co-teaching can occur, how will this impact the other 12-15 students in that class? Research clearly indicates that heterogeneous learning communities are the most productive, yet many times when we include students with disabilities, this factor is quickly forgotten. Second, is the co-teaching model being implemented to raise students' test scores, as a cost saving attempt, or in some cases as a dumping model? If students with disabilities are included without sufficient supports, this is not only against the law but will ensure failure of the co-teaching relationship. Third, is ongoing evaluation and data being gathered that reflect the intent of the co-taught setting? Whether co-teaching is occurring at a classroom or school-wide level, data on behavioral, academic, and social skills of all students must be gathered and assessed on an ongoing basis. If this does not occur, then waiting until the local or state assessment indicates that students are failing is too late. Fourth, as data is assessed, school leaders need to look across the data and within the data. Are students in a specific quartile moving up for the first time? Over and over again students who are considered "at-risk" but do not qualify for special services talk about their feeling of success for the "first" time in co-taught settings. Finally, listen to the data and the students. In my work, students who are gifted assure me over and over again that they like co-taught classrooms, yet students with behavioral challenges often say they "get in trouble too much" or "don't like being double teamed." In both of these cases, our state or local assessments will not capture students' perceptions; however, these are critical to consider in all classrooms, but especially important in co-taught settings.