Teacher Perceptions of the Effectiveness of Co-Teaching Practices in Two Suburban School Districts in the Southeast (Research Session)

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Abstract

This applied dissertation was designed to give teachers an opportunity to think reflectively on their respective co-teaching practices, to engage administrators with knowledge of effective co-teaching practices, and to provide a foundation on which to build effective and sustainable co-teaching practices in elementary and middle schools in the Southeast.
Co-teaching practices in schools today are not living up to their intended purpose, which is to provide students with disabilities the opportunity to receive high quality instruction in the least restrictive environment, using a variety of co-teaching delivery models, accommodations, and specialized instruction to ensure access to rigorous curriculum. Consequently, student achievement is not maximized.
Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this convergent parallel mixed methods study was threefold: to determine (a) teachers’ experiences of the effectiveness of co-teaching practices, (b) teachers’ level of knowledge regarding processing deficits and use of specialized instruction to meet student needs in order to create an action plan for improving co-teaching practices, and (c) how the quantitative and qualitative data converge to gain a better understanding of how the provision of common planning, implementation of varying co-teaching delivery models, and continuous and ongoing professional development affects teacher perceptions of the effectiveness of co-teaching practices in two suburban school districts in the Southeast. The qualitative strand of data was the teachers’ experiences of their co-teaching practices, which was collected via open-ended questions. The other two areas informed the quantitative data and were collected via Likert-style questions. This convergent parallel mixed methods design merges both quantitative and qualitative data into one meaning. The data had equal emphasis on both the quantitative and qualitative strands. As such, the data was gathered concurrently.
Research Questions

- This study will seek to answer the following research questions regarding teachers’ perceptions and experiences of co-teaching practices in elementary and middle school classrooms in two suburban school districts in the Southeast.

  - Quantitative Question 1. What are teacher perceptions regarding the importance of professional development in co-teaching?
  - Quantitative Question 2. What are teacher perceptions regarding the importance of establishing clearly defined roles and responsibilities in the co-teaching classroom?
  - Quantitative Question 3. What are teacher perceptions regarding the importance of common planning for co-teachers?
  - Quantitative Question 4. What are teachers’ perceptions regarding their level of knowledge of processing deficits and use of specialized instruction to meet unique student needs?
  - Qualitative Question 1. What are teachers’ experiences regarding their specific co-teaching assignment?
  - Qualitative Question 2. What are teachers’ experiences regarding school and administrator support for co-teaching?
  - Mixed method question. How does the qualitative data explain the quantitative data regarding teacher perception of effective co-teaching practices?
Chapter 3: Methodology
- Overview
- District Demographic Information
- Participants
- Sample Strategy
- Instrument
- Formative and Summative Committees
- Instrument Reliability
- Design
- Procedures
- Data Analyses
- Limitations of the Research
- Chapter Summary
The aim of this study was to

1. Understand the different variables that contributed to the effectiveness or ineffectiveness of co-teaching practices.

2. Provide administrators and teachers in local school systems in the Southeast the opportunity to reflect upon current co-teaching practices.

3. Create an action plan on which systems and schools can build effective and sustainable co-teaching structures.
The participants in this study consisted of co-teaching teams from two suburban school districts in the Southeast. In District 1, participants were from two elementary schools and one middle school. There are 18 general education teachers and four special education teachers, for 22 teachers in Grades K through 5 in the two elementary schools. Of these 22 teachers, two are male and 20 are female; all teachers are White. In the middle school, there are 14 general education teachers and five special education teachers who participate in co-teaching, in Grades 6, 7, and 8. Of these 19 teachers, fifteen are female and four are male.
## Participant Demographic Data and Co-Teacher Level of Education Achieved

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Answer options</th>
<th>Response percent</th>
<th>Response count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>General education teacher</td>
<td>60.5</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Special education teacher</td>
<td>39.4</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elementary school</td>
<td>39.4</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle school</td>
<td>60.5</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>15.7</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>84.2</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
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</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Answer Options</th>
<th>Response percent</th>
<th>Response count</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bachelors</td>
<td>26.3</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Masters</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Specialist</td>
<td>15.8</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Doctorate</td>
<td>7.9</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Years Teaching and Years Co-Teaching

![Graph of Years Teaching Experience](image1)

- 0-5 years: 8 participants
- 6-10 years: 10 participants
- 11-15 years: 6 participants
- 16-20 years: 4 participants
- 21+ years: 6 participants

![Graph of Years Co-Teaching Experience](image2)

- 0-5 years: 25 participants
- 6-10 years: 5 participants
- 11-15 years: 1 participant
- 16-20 years: 1 participant
- 21+ years: 1 participant
Sample Strategy

Participants for this study were selected using a non-probability sampling of convenience because the researcher had identified the sample group of co-teachers and conveniently had access to gather data regarding the phenomena of co-teaching. Non-probability is to have access to a certain population logistically. Lanier and Briggs (2014) commented that non-probability sampling is when the “researcher’s goal is to study a specific sample or when a complete list of the total population is not available” (p. 220). Under the non-probability umbrella there are two strands: quantitative and qualitative. The quantitative strand is related to the convenience sampling as it is based on access to the participants (i.e., who the researcher can obtain), while the qualitative strand is related to purposeful sampling to select certain individuals in a group who can give the researcher the most insight in gathering data (i.e., who the researcher wants to interview). A purposeful sample is based on “when the researcher has already decided the characteristics of interest for the study and intentionally seeks out those types of research subjects” (Lanier & Briggs, 2014, p. 223).
The instrument that was used for this study was modeled after Austin's 2001 Perceptions of Co-teaching Survey. Austin's original survey consisted of four sections, the first of which consisted of eight general information questions, asking participants such information as grade level and content area(s) taught, area of certification, highest level of education received, total years of teaching experience, and gender. Section 2 consisted of Likert scale questions asking teachers to rank their perception of the importance and implementation of varying co-teaching practices. Sections 3 and 4 of the survey asked participants to rank their perception of the importance of teacher preparation for co-teaching and school-based supports for co-teaching.
Formative and Summative Committees

Since the design of this survey was intended to measure co-teaching practices, both of the formative and summative committees were formed based on their expertise and experiences in the field of co-teaching. Litwin (2003) stated that content validity is having “reviewers who have some knowledge of the subject matter” (p. 33).

The formative committee consisted of the director of a special education service agency, who oversees several state-mandated initiatives and projects as well as one of the largest budgets of all special education service agencies in the state, and two special education coordinators who serve in one of the largest school systems in the southeast.

The summative committee consisted of one assistant principal who previously served as a high school special education department chairperson and co-teacher, one current special education director who has observed and evaluated co-teaching for many years, and one former special education director who served in one of the largest school systems in the southeast.
Using a convergent parallel mixed methods design, this study was designed to determine teacher perceptions of the effectiveness of their co-teaching practices in two suburban school districts in the Southeast in order to identify an appropriate plan of action to improve co-teaching practices, thereby improving student achievement.

The quantitative survey data and the qualitative survey data serves as convergent parallel mixed methods design as both types of data are collected and analyzed at the same time (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011).
Procedures

- Quantitative data collection
  - Quantitative data was collected via Survey Monkey and was based on Austin's Perceptions of Co-Teaching Survey (2001)

- Qualitative data collection
  - Teachers were asked seven qualitative, open-ended questions in order to determine teacher experiences of their respective co-teaching assignments, level of school and administrator support, and their knowledge of processing deficits and specialized instruction
Data Analysis

- Quantitative data analysis
  - Descriptive analysis was included to measure the mean and mode of responses
- Qualitative data analysis
  - Open-ended responses were analyzed based on common trends and themes
- Quantitative data and qualitative data were collected concurrently and analyzed independently
Limitations of the Research

- Limitations can be based on the statistical research, which suggests that questionnaires are based on certain assumptions: (a) the respondent reads and understands the questions or items, and (b) the respondent processes the information to answer the questions or items honestly (Keppel & Wickens, 2004; Locke, Silverman, & Spirduso, 1998; Mertler & Charles, 2005).

- There are limitations to non-probability of convenience sampling based on selection bias (e.g., the researcher is selecting participants who want to be part of the study), and the sample not representative by limiting the ability of generalization (e.g., the participants are not representing the entire group).

- A final limitation considered in the methodology is from the methodological purists' perspective. Some researchers do not feel the mixed methods approach is ideal for research and that quantitative and qualitative paradigms should not be combined or merged (Howe, 1988; Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004).
Co-Teacher Perceptions of the Usefulness of Professional Development Opportunities (Quantitative Research Question 1)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Answer options</th>
<th>Very useful</th>
<th>Somewhat useful</th>
<th>Of limited use</th>
<th>Not useful</th>
<th>I don’t know</th>
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<tr>
<td>Workshops/mini courses on facilitating co-teaching</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Pre-service courses in co-teaching</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
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<tr>
<td>In-service courses in co-teaching</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Pre-service special education courses for general education teachers</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pre-service general education courses for special education teachers</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Co-Teacher Perceptions of the Importance of Establishing Clearly Defined Roles (Quantitative Research Question 2)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Answer options</th>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neither agree nor disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Co-teachers should share classroom management</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Co-teachers should share classroom instruction</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Co-teachers should establish and maintain specific areas of responsibility</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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### Co-Teacher Perceptions of the Importance of Planning for Co-Teaching (Quantitative Research Question 3)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Answer options</th>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neither agree or disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Co-teachers should meet daily to plan lessons</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
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</tbody>
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## Participant Perception of Level of Knowledge of Processing Deficits & Specialized Instruction (Quantitative Research Question 4)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Answer options</th>
<th>Response percent</th>
<th>Response count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Very knowledgeable</td>
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<tr>
<td>Knowledgeable</td>
<td>53.3</td>
<td>16</td>
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<tr>
<td>Limited knowledge</td>
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<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No knowledge</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>0</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Answer options</th>
<th>Response percent</th>
<th>Response count</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Very knowledgeable</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knowledgeable</td>
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<tr>
<td>Limited knowledge</td>
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<tr>
<td>No knowledge</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>0</td>
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</table>
Qualitative Question 1

- Most satisfying aspects
  - the relationship and/or collaboration with their co-teacher
  - the positive effect on the students

- Recommended changes or improvements
  - common planning between general and special education teachers
  - scheduling
  - administrators should keep co-teaching teams together from year to year
  - smaller class sizes and shared responsibility
Qualitative Question 2

- provision of planning time
- teacher participation in professional learning
- administrator participation in planning meetings
- verbal understanding and encouragement
- provision of common planning
- ongoing training in co-teaching
- consistent co-teaching teams
- observing and receiving mentoring from experienced co-teaching teams
Analysis of qualitative data provides an overwhelming perception that common planning is an integral part of successful co-teaching practices and that providing common planning to co-teachers is a change or improvement they would recommend, which corresponds with teacher response to quantitative questions asking if teachers should meet daily to plan lessons, if schools should provide daily scheduled common planning time, and if schools should provide summer planning time.

Secondary to common planning is access to professional development in effective co-teaching practices, which corresponds with teacher response to quantitative questions regarding the usefulness of workshops or mini courses on facilitating co-teaching, pre-service courses in co-teaching, and in-service courses in co-teaching.
Thanks for listening and watching
Any questions?