

Team-Teaching : A Powerful Method to Develop New Courses

Team-teaching means a group of two or more teachers teaching a course together in which every teacher attends every lecture, either to deliver the lecture or to listen to the lecture.

It is different from shared teaching or joint teaching of a course in which the teaching is divided among the teachers, usually based on topics, in which each teacher lectures on his/her part but does not usually attend the lectures delivered by the other teachers.

It has two principal modes.

(1) Team-teaching to Develop Research-based Courses :

This is the most common mode of team-teaching. When two or more faculty members doing joint research wish to develop an advanced elective course in their area of research, the best way is to design a new course, and then teach it. It allows them to present their theories as part of a larger perspective from the field.

The teachers develop deeper insight into their theories and work out ways to present them in relation to other known theories. Its benefits on these counts cannot be over emphasized. The student gets to see the thoughts behind the research directly from the authors along with a comparative analysis of other theories the field. Students who attend the course are usually budding researchers, who pick problems from such a course and make solving them a part of their Ph.D. work.

Team-teaching results in close interaction among the teacher, and is also very satisfying.

(2) Team-teaching to Develop Core Courses :

This mode can be used to develop courses which cover basic well-understood material but take a very different approach to teach it. At times, such courses lead to an innovative introduction to the field or sub-field of study. For example, when computer science matured as a discipline, the teaching of the basic courses on programming underwent a transformation. Teaching shifted to top down approach rather than bottom up approach. Instead of starting from machine language, courses were developed with high level languages as the first course. Similar was the shift in teaching of computer organization in which low level digital circuits started getting taught later after computer systems. As a part of this process, new text books get written, which spread the new way of teaching to other institutions.

Institutions value this type of team-teaching enormously, because of its wider impact. So when such courses are being team-taught, it counts as full course load for each of the faculty member involved in team-teaching.

Finally, there is also teaching apprenticeship where a faculty member sits in all the classes of an outstanding teacher colleague so that he/she can teach the course next time. When done with prior approval for Institute Core Courses or Dept. Core Courses, some institutions count this towards half a course load for the faculty member who is sitting in. This is enormously useful for transfer of best practices in teaching.

-Prof. Rajeev Sangal
27 October, 2015
director@iitbhu.ac.in