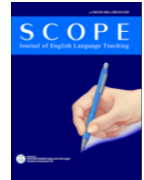




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Research Article

Elementary Teachers' Difficulties in Team Teaching: An Exploration between Novice and Experienced Indonesian English Teachers

Ade Tika¹, Rita Seroja Ginting², Utami Dewi³

^{1,2,3} Universitas Islam Negeri Sumatera Utara, Indonesia

KEYWORDS

Elementary teachers;
 Experienced teachers;
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 Team teaching;
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CORRESPONDING AUTHOR(S):

E-mail:

¹ ade.tika@uinsu.ac.id*;

² ritaserojabr.ginting@uinsu.ac.id;

³ utamidewi@uinsu.ac.id

A B S T R A C T

This research aims at exploring the difficulties faced by elementary school teachers in team teaching between novice and experienced teachers. This research was conducted in some private schools in Medan. Participants consisted of 16 teachers of which 8 teachers were chosen in participating the questionnaire and interview of 4 novice teachers and 4 experienced teachers. This research used qualitative methods and took a thematic approach to its data collection. A questionnaire with open-ended questions as well as semi-structured in-depth interviews served as the research instruments. The findings of this research reveal four common themes that emerged from the responses to the questionnaire regarding the difficulties that teachers experience during the process of team teaching and the factors that contribute to those difficulties. It is necessary to conduct additional research in order to determine whether the perspectives of team teachers working in various areas are unique or equivalent.

INTRODUCTION

Along with the development of the era, the curriculum is also growing. Teachers are required to do things that are more creative in carrying out learning in the classroom. The various demands of teachers are becoming increasingly complex such as teachers must be sensitive to individual differences in students, teachers must be creative in planning learning strategies so that students can learn actively and have fun, and teachers must also be able to evaluate the process and the results of student's learning as a whole. Various things that must be done by a teacher are difficult things. Thus, it is necessary to have a companion so that all of these things can be carried out optimally. One way is to implement learning using a team

teaching strategy. Team teaching is considered as an alternative to overcome the ineffectiveness of learning, especially in elementary school classes.

Team teaching is one kind of teacher's collaboration that has been utilized for a long time at all levels of education. It is sometimes used interchangeably with co-teaching or collaborative teaching, which are both forms of teaching in which teachers work together to improve the quality of their instruction and the performance of their students. Teachers have access to a wide range of team-teaching approaches, including (Cook & Friend, 1995) one teaching/one assisting paradigm, which is only one example. In this model, one of the teachers is in primary charge of the class and is the one who gives instructions, while the other teacher rounds the room and provides assistance to students as required.

In an effort to improve the teaching and learning process, several private schools in Indonesia apply team teaching as an alternative teaching. Team teaching is a way of learning that involves two or more teachers in the student's learning process. This method is expected to be able to help and to overcome problems that occur in elementary school classes where elementary school children have various characteristics so that teachers are required to be more active from students so that they are able to handle students during the learning process. Team teaching cultivates a supportive environment for instructors by assisting them in overcoming isolation. This, in turn, leads to the development of novel teaching approaches, provides solutions for students who present challenges, and paves the way for intellectual advancement. Team teaching is thought to be beneficial for students because it involves the presence of two teachers who each bring different models of how classroom language should be used and different approaches to instructing students. Team teaching also gives students more opportunities for personalized engagement with the teacher (Luo, 2014).

Some countries have analyzed studies related to team teaching, for instance, in Hongkong, Japan, and Taiwan, team teaching is a method of teaching students a foreign language that involves two or more teachers, one of whom is a native speaker of the language being taught and the other who is not. This method is also used by two student teachers who are both native speakers of the language. Teachers in a team setting may come from the same or entirely different professions, and their roles may shift depending on the circumstances.

In the context of Indonesia, team teaching has been an area of research interest over these years.

The use of team teaching, which includes native and non-native speaking teachers, is frequently unsuccessful due to personality conflicts, a misunderstanding of the various tasks, or a lack of knowledge of the culture and beliefs of their coworkers (Nuraini, 2022). As a consequence of this, two coworkers who are both local English teachers have an increased likelihood of successfully collaborating with one another in the classroom. For instance, Rosmaladewi and Abduh (2017) find that team-teaching activity in the English classroom is successfully implemented at one Indonesian polytechnic after adopting the transition between false collegiality and collaborative teaching cultures. Moreover, it is discovered by Usadiati and Norahmi (2019) that team teaching is the most effective method of instruction when two collaborative local English teachers come to teaching English for specific purposes. This is due to the fact that students have more space and opportunities to participate in classroom activities when there are two teachers who can provide support for both

language and subject content when there are two teachers in the classroom.

However, despite the growing number of studies regarding team teaching in English Language Teaching (ELT) classrooms in Indonesia, least number of researches discover the difficulties found in the classroom based on the teachers' perspective. The bulk of them are seeking to determine the potential uses of team teaching (Usadiati & Norahmi, 2019), the adoption of collaborative cultures in team teaching (Rosmaladewi & Abduh, 2017), and teachers' perceptions about their responsibilities in team teaching (Nuraini, 2022). Furthermore, the researches cited above solely address the application of teaching in a higher education context. It is also critical to learn about the team-teaching method at a younger age, such as elementary school.

Team teaching is believed to give various benefits and chances for teaching and learning, but it is not without its share of drawbacks as well. Horwich (1999) claims that a lack of preparation in team teaching could lead to conflicts between teachers and poor performance in the classroom. This is in reference to the challenges associated with team teaching. In addition, there is a potential for issues to arise if the distribution of teaching responsibilities among team members is not planned in advance. According to the research of York-Barr, Ghore, and Sommersness (2007), some educators might be apprehensive about losing autonomy in the classroom, both in terms of instruction and decision-making. This is because collaborative teaching tends to make classrooms less flexible and creative. In addition, they may experience confusion regarding shared tasks and responsibilities, fear of making their instruction public, and/or concern regarding having varying teaching philosophies. All of these issues may lead to confusion.

Even Buckley (2000) proposes that a poor form of team teaching involves two teachers teaching a class on separate schedules with no interaction between them. On the other hand, a robust form of team teaching involves a group of teachers teaching each other's classes with consistent interaction between them. Buckley (2000) also highlights the fact that all proposed ways of team teaching may vary based on the requirements and resources, making it difficult to advocate for a single strategy. According to Rabb (2009), the norms and obligations need to be clearly articulated, and all of the participants need to understand how the effects of their contributions would ripple across the entire process. If education is not carefully prepared, there is a risk that power struggles between teaching partners will arise, which is detrimental to the students.

In cases that occurred in several elementary schools in Indonesia, it shows that there are regulations from the school that combine novice and experienced teachers into

one class. In other words, in one class filled with two teachers who have different experiences in teaching. The phenomenon of teaching using the team teaching strategy is growing rapidly in several schools which claim this strategy as one of the leading programs owned by private schools. Several private schools in Medan use this strategy in terms of teaching, class management and others. Team teaching is carried out to make it easier for teachers to control students during the teaching and learning process.

Thus, the purpose of this research is to determine the difficulties that both novice and experienced English teachers face after incorporating team-teaching activities into their individual classrooms. It is believed that team teachers' views of the viability of team teaching in EFL contexts are crucial in assessing whether or not this innovative mode of instruction will be effective in the long run. Despite the fact that we focus our research on team teaching in an Indonesian context, we discover that the findings are transferable to different EFL settings. As the guidelines of the research, the followings are the research questions: 1) What difficulties do novice and experienced English teachers in Indonesian elementary schools have while teaching English in teams?, 2) What kind of factors could limit good collaboration between members of team teaching?

METHOD

This research adopted qualitative research method. The purpose was to explore the teacher's difficulties in team teaching.

Participants and Setting

The participants were 16 teachers with required a minimum of one year of team teaching experience at the primary level as novice teachers and three or more years as experienced teachers from some private schools in Medan, Indonesia. For ethical considerations, the researchers first asked about the participants' willingness and information before getting involved in this research and then the teachers' names have been changed into pseudonyms.

Table 1. Participants' background

Subject	Gender	Age	Team teaching experience
MU	F	25	1
DN	M	23	1
BS	M	25	2
FA	F	23	2
HH	F	25	3
FA	F	26	5
NP	F	30	3
AS	F	25	3

The participants were chosen based on three criteria: 1) teaching English in an Indonesian Elementary school; 2)

having less than 1 year of experience as a novice teacher and or more than 5 years of experience as an experienced teacher; and 3) graduating from English education department. The researchers used Patton's (1990) rules in choosing maximum sampling of variation based on the participants' age, sex, and team teaching experience. Table 1 is the list of the chosen 8 participants as the representation from 16 participants, 4 are novice teachers, and the remaining 4 teachers have more than 3 years of team teaching experience with ages ranging from 23 to 30.

Instruments

This research used two instruments as data collection, an open-ended questionnaire and semi-structured in-depth interviews in order to know the teachers' difficulties in team teaching. The purpose of the open-ended questionnaire was to obtain fundamental data on the problems that the teachers thought to be involved in team teaching. At the outset of the survey, the participants were requested to provide some background information about themselves, such as their gender, age, and number of years of team teaching experience.

The open-ended questions in this instrument focused on five distinct issue areas regarding the problems team teachers encountered in elementary school teaching. These questions were intended to offer participants a setting in which to focus and to allow for continuous thinking on the many issues they might face when team teaching. Data analysis would be aided if participants were as specific as they could be in their answers, therefore this was a request made of them. These questions were adopted from Rao and Chen (2020) as follows:

1. When you work as a team, do you ever have problems with your co-teachers? If so, what are they?
2. What are the most significant challenges that prohibit you from successfully collaborating with your co-teachers in your classroom?
3. Is there any backlash from students over the use of team teaching? If so, what are they?
4. What elements might influence your team's classroom teaching?
5. What do you believe elementary teachers should improve on in team teaching?

In interviewing the participants, the researchers compiled data from previously completed questionnaires to learn more about survey respondents' histories. Only a few volunteering EFL teachers were invited to the interview session.

Data Collection

In collecting the data, the researchers administrated the questionnaires to explore their experiences and perceptions. In addition to develop a more in-depth understanding of novice and experienced teachers'

perceptions, only a few volunteered EFL teachers were sought to participate in the interview session. The survey in the form of a questionnaire did provide researchers with some preliminary data for this investigation; however, researchers' primarily relied on in-depth interviews as primary method for collecting data. While conducting these interviews, the researchers' primary focus was on gaining a better understanding of the difficulties that the participants faced when working in teams. During the course of the interviews, the researchers relied heavily on direct quotations from the participants in order to ensure the validity of their findings. The interview was then verbatim transcribed. All interviewees were given the transcripts of their interviews to verify for accuracy.

Data Analysis

The acquired data were thematically analyzed using content analysis. According to the recommendations made by Braun and Clarke (2006), the replies to the open-ended questions on the survey as well as the interview transcripts were analyzed using thematic content analysis. The acquired data were thematically examined using content analysis. The interview was transcribed by the researchers in order to be analyzed. Researchers guaranteed the credibility of their findings by relying on direct quotations from participants during interviews. The participants' trust in the transcribed data had been preserved through its dissemination and clarification. The coding process began as soon as the data were transcribed. Following that, the transcribed data were categorized using the categories created in response to the research questions. The participants' responses were organized into themes, and then an interpretation was generated. Finally, the problems that had developed were analyzed in light of the pertinent ideas and previous research.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results of this research are derived based on the research questions that are posed at the beginning of the research. These results provide insight into two sections.

1. The difficulties faced by novice and experienced English teachers in doing team-teaching.

After conducting data from the questionnaire and interview, the researchers find that the problem with co-teachers is being the difficulties while applying team teaching method. There are four themes found by the researchers as follows and the data display immediately differentiates between novice and experienced teacher's perspective.

Table 2. Unclear role distribution in team teaching

Themes	Novice Teacher	Experienced Teacher
Unclear role distribution	"I was confused about my duties and role when I was asked to do team teaching"	"I feel there is no difference in teaching roles, although sometimes it makes us awkward in class"
	"I feel uneasy when I have to pair up with teachers who are more experienced than me"	"The role of the classroom teacher is more prominent than the assistance teacher, and sometimes it's also confusing us"
	"What kind of responsibility should I take in team teaching is so confusing"	"With different experiences, it is sometimes difficult to divide tasks between us as partners"

In this research, the teachers note that confusing role distribution in team teaching has hampered their ability to collaborate smoothly. Especially the novice teachers seem confused about their role and they feel difficult to discuss each other. They emphasize that because team teaching involves two teachers with varying levels of expertise, it is critical for them to understand their distinct roles in the classroom. For this case, giving and involving both teachers in demonstrating the role in team teaching is highly needed to avoid misunderstanding. Furthermore, teachers who are involved in the design process from the start—participating in joint conversations, co-planning, and building a common vision—are the most satisfied with the results.

Table 3. Limited resources and experience in organizing teaching teams

Themes	Novice Teacher	Experienced Teacher
Limited resources and experiences	"As a teacher who has no experience, I need more guidance"	"Training on team teaching needs to be done regularly"
	"Schools provide less training to new teachers on team teaching"	"I still find it difficult to share tasks with my partners"
	"There is no clear division of material"	"I feel unfair because I am paired with a teacher who lacks experience in team teaching"

Team teaching is important for teachers to develop their professionalism in teaching. Based on the data above, the novice teachers feel that they do not get some training before becoming one of the difficulties in applying team teaching method. Accordingly, a lack of time and expertise

are the primary barriers they face when planning for team teaching.

Table 4. Miscommunication

Themes	Novice Teacher	Experienced Teacher
Miscommunication	“Sometimes I’m afraid to ask the class teacher”	As a more experienced teacher, sometimes I am reluctant to reveal something related to teaching”
	“I feel that my relationship with my partner is not harmonious, so misunderstandings often arise”	“I want my partner to ask a lot of questions so that she can balance what things she wants to achieve together in teaching”
	“The material to be delivered is not in accordance with the teaching plan due to lack of communication”	“It is difficult to unify the understanding of the companion”

Team teaching is becoming more theoretically tied to the socio-constructivist perspective of learning, in which teachers actively collaborate to construct knowledge and social interaction, achieving more than they would have independently. Miscommunication has become one of the reasons of the difficulties of team teaching. Both teachers feel shy, afraid and rarely want to immediately rebuke if their partner makes a mistake which is why their team teaching activities do not run well. However, In addition, for a team teaching experience to be successful, the team members must have mutual trust, respect, and support (Copping, 2012)

Table 5. Lack of teachers’ motivation in doing team teaching

Themes	Novice Teacher	Experienced Teacher
Lack of motivation	“Sometimes I feel discouraged when there is too much workload” “When I teach, my partner often interrupts and comments on the material I teach, which makes my confidence and motivation decrease” “I feel embarrassed when my partner often helps me in teaching the material”	“I am often not in the mood when I lose motivation in teaching” “I feel tired when students pay less attention in learning because their focus is divided between the class teacher and the co-teacher” “A class filled with too many students makes me feel claustrophobic and less enthusiastic due to being too tired”

Lack of motivation becomes one of the difficulties found in this research. If motivation is maintained, the teacher's performance in carrying out their obligations will be at its highest level (Brandmiller, Cornelius, Dumont, Hanna, & Becker, 2020). Both teachers should reflect to build a good cooperation during team teaching in order to boost motivation in teaching, because work motivation has a positive and significant impact on the performance of teachers (Rofifah, Sirojuddin, Ma`arif, & Mitra Zuana, 2021).

2. Factors impede a successful collaboration

The researchers excavate information to several teachers due to get some factors impede team teaching. The researchers find several general perspectives about the obstacles according to both novice and experienced teacher.

Lack of understanding

Both novice and experienced teacher consider that lack of understanding restricted their use in team teaching. They say that they rarely do such meetings out of the classroom consequently. They find it hard to adapt themselves to the team teaching method.

“Apart from being in class, I rarely meet with my teaching partners so it is difficult to unify an understanding of team teaching”.

This statement also strengthens by the experienced teacher:

“Lack of time to discuss sometimes makes it difficult for us to understand the material to be taught”.

In line with the study by (Jeon, 2010), who said that the participants' lack of understanding of the roles that team teachers play in the classroom led them to be skeptical of the benefits of collaboration, which in turn discouraged them from taking an active role in implementing this method of instruction. Thus professionalism of teachers is often attributed to three factors that are quite important, namely the competence of teachers, teacher certification, and teacher professional allowance (Zulfitri, 2020).

Lack of team teaching training

One of the most significant obstacles to team teaching, according to all participants, is a lack of training.

For novice teachers, they inform that they are less competent in teaching English and as well as the lack of experience in team teaching.

“I was a fresh graduate student, then the school asked me to join in team teaching, but I was never taught how to apply that in actual classroom”.

Similarly, experienced teachers also do not get any training of team teaching before they are asked to join this program. This experience described by one of them;

“I did not receive any training of team teaching back then such on how should I do while come into an actual classroom teaching”.

Due to the lack of training resulted in an unclear and fragmented understanding of team teaching, and made it difficult for them to give up their familiar solo teaching approach.

Lack of planning

Other obstacle that arose between novice and experienced teacher is they don't have much time to plan the teaching activity. For novice teacher, albeit she finds it difficult, her co-teacher (experienced teacher) helps her when she is lost during the teaching process.

“I was helped a lot by my partner when I was stuck”.

Lack of planning in classroom teaching conveyed from the teachers' different competency in classroom teaching, as teachers who participated in Luo's (2014) study of team teaching reports that it is challenging to monitor their students' progress because the students are not accustomed to the approach. The acquisition of teacher competence following an acceptable allowance may demonstrate competent teachers. Accordingly, experience teacher that known as more competent teacher often leads the class:

“The novice teacher always pays attention to how I teach, so I try my best to teach according to the lesson plan”.

And other reasons of this obstacle appeared is teachers' planning is out of the expectation, accordingly they both need to always discuss the progress based on the application of the teaching process they did.

“Our lesson plans sometimes don't go smoothly due to a lack of communication”.

From her statement, it reveals that the team teachers lack the necessary time and expertise to do a communication whereas developing a good plan for what to teach and how to teach is critical for successful team teaching (Carless & E, 2006). This problem will always arise if both the teachers do not take their time to set their teaching planning. Therefore, both teachers need to build their communication because this is related to the role of each teacher while doing a team-teaching that communication is key in establishing role clarity (Aaron, 2017).

Workload

The last factor or obstacle of team teaching discovered by the researchers in this research is workload. As can be seen from novice teacher's view in the following:

“As a co-teacher, I feel more burdened because I have to control the students while studying”.

This as another novice teacher replies:

“Basically the workload received is the same, it's just that as beginners we are required to imitate more experienced class teachers”.

“I feel that my workload as a class teacher is more than my partner as a co-teacher and it does not match the salary I get”.

This statement clearly shows that experience teacher's distribution can affect the successful collaboration. Teachers' feeling shows their results of teaching. Hence, the school manager should encourage this problem due to team teaching program can be run well as it is supported by (Baeten & Simons, 2014) that collaboration promotes emotional and professional support, conversation about learning and teaching, and professional and personal development.

CONCLUSION

The findings of this research are significant because they provide light on some of the difficulties that arise during collaborative EFL instruction. All of the participants in this research, however, are from several private schools in Medan. Additional research is required to establish whether or if the perspectives of team teachers working in various areas are unique or equivalent. More research into this area would help us better grasp the potential limitations that team teaching may have on a variety of educational settings. It is intended that team teaching will be able to establish teaching approaches that are suitable for their students, colleagues, and cultures if they have a greater grasp of these issues and are better prepared for them.

In light with implication for of this research, some of what the team teachers report about their challenges in establishing collaborative teaching is shared by many EFL countries throughout the world. Although these hurdles are unavoidable for all instructors in their partnership, we can take steps to minimize or prevent them. To help teachers overcome these difficulties, we should provide teacher training, build a harmonious relationship both novice and experienced teacher, and creating a clear and detail team teaching planning.

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