

## Exploring Current Practices and Opportunities for Collaborative Teaching between University and Industry

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### Abstract

Exploring current practices of collaborative teaching between university and industry could potentially provide evidence-based opportunities in collaborative teaching. Planning, implementing and evaluating phases of collaborative teaching were designed and developed in support of theory and model of collaborative teaching. The design and development of these phases had led to the formation of a hands-on framework of delivery model for collaborative teaching between university and industry. It demonstrated the need for an effective collaborative teaching approach in higher education. This involved an equivalent expertise between university and industry in order to simultaneously achieve the course learning outcomes.

**Keywords:** Collaborative Teaching, University and Industry, Current Practices, Opportunities

### Introduction

Collaborative teaching has been defined by many scholars as “a teaching practice”, “pedagogical practice”, “one of the alternative pedagogical practice” and “an educational approach to teaching and learning” that involves “groups of lecturers (or teachers) working together to accomplish the teaching goals”, “instructors working in the same classroom to draw from each other’s expertise and share resources” and “groups of students working together to solve a problem, complete a task or create a product” (Sengpoh, 2019; Dellicarpini, 2018; Laal et al., 2014; Hunt and Krakow, 2015; Laal & Ghodsi, 2012; Dugan & Letterman, 2008). It is also known as “team teaching” or “co-teaching” (Metzger, 2015; Dugan & Letterman, 2008).

According to Vintan and Gallagher (2019), collaboration can be done in “a myriad of ways to meet the individual learning needs”. It takes various forms including “the simultaneously taught two-person course (co-teaching), the alternating two-person course (alternate), and the panel of three or more faculty (panel)” as described by (Dugan and Letterman, 2008). The key components to creating effective collaborative teaching and learning environments have been identified by (O’Reilly, 2016). Three themes of “student centeredness, effective pedagogy and collaboration” have been highlighted. Interestingly, Sengpoh (2019) added that the collaborative teaching models depart so significantly from the traditional model with the aim to facilitate students’ understanding of the concepts from a variety of viewpoints.

Theoretically, Panhwar et al (2016) pointed out that Vygotsky’s model of teaching and learning supports collaborative teaching and learning. Erbil (2020) described, according to Vygotsky, “students learn via the social interactions they engage in with their more competent peers or their teachers” and “social interaction is a condition in ZPD” in which Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) is one of Vygotsky’s most important theories. In support of social interactions, Panhwar et al (2016) informed that this is applicable to English language setting due to the nature of language learning which is “student-student interaction and student-teacher interaction is central”. Furthermore, Zou et al (2019) stated collaborative teaching has been observed to involve using guest speakers in both classroom and online teaching settings. It is said that, having guest lectures in class allows them to demonstrate their approach to the content of the course (Kabasenché, 2014). The application of guest speakers between university and industry might be a relatively new field to explore in English language course setting. Guest speakers provide specific knowledge on a topic and students have a chance to learn about the topic. Inviting guest speakers in collaborative teaching is considered to be a more approachable way of teaching that allows students to actively engage in classroom.

Hence, in support of theory and model of collaborative teaching, this study intends to present the current practices of collaborative teaching by having guest lectures from university and industry.

### **Problem Statement**

Greater and active participations from university lecturers to practice collaborative teaching have been encouraged immensely. In an attempt to examine how collaborative teaching can be integrated in the teaching and learning, a study was conducted for one selected course in a public university in Malaysia to meet the model of delivery for collaborative teaching. The model required having invited guest lectures from university and industry. The following three research questions guided this study:

1. What are the current practices of collaborative teaching between university and industry?
2. What are the opportunities gained in collaborative teaching based on the current practices of collaborative teaching between university and industry?
3. What is the proposed hands-on framework of delivery model for collaborative teaching between university and industry?

### **Research Objectives**

The research objectives of this study are as follows:

1. To describe the current practices of collaborative teaching between university and industry.
2. To discuss the opportunities gained in collaborative teaching based on the current practices of collaborative teaching between university and industry.
3. To provide a proposed hands-on framework of delivery model for collaborative teaching between university and industry.

### **Methodology**

This study presents a collaborative teaching for a course on English for Report Writing taken by two groups of undergraduates from the same faculty of different campuses in a public university in Malaysia. It was conducted by two class lecturers who collaborated with four guest speakers from the same university, other universities and an industry.

### **Course Description**

English for Report Writing is a course for students to develop a range of essential written communication skills using common report writing conventions. At the end of the course, students will collaboratively produce the report which has great quality, clarity and impact. The duration of the course is one semester which is equivalent to 14 weeks.

### **Collaborative Teaching for the Course**

In this study, collaborative teaching for the course, English for Report Writing involved experts from university and industry for its delivery model. In order to establish collaborative teaching team, two class lecturers from different campuses of a public university in Malaysia had collaborated to plan and implement teaching for 54 students from the same faculty but in different campuses. Guest speakers from university and industry were invited to teach the course.

This collaborative teaching involved the planning, implementing and evaluating phases. The design and development of phases were examined to meet the research objectives of the study.

### **Results and Discussion**

The results are presented based on the research objectives. There were three phases involved in collaborative teaching for the course, English for Report Writing. Phase 1 (Planning) and Phase 2 (Implementing) revealed results for current practices. Phase 3 (Evaluating) showed results for evidence-based opportunities.

### **Current Practices**

Phase 1: Planning

This phase involved two class lecturers collaborated to plan for collaborative teaching. The two class lecturers teaching the course included an Associate Professor and a Senior Lecturer. Both lecturers had the experience of teaching the course for more than five years. Each lecturer represented a different campus and brought diverse experiences teaching the course. To establish collaborative teaching for the course, due to geographically separated campus and the Covid-19 situation, both lecturers met online for meetings and discussions.

Planning for collaborative teaching began in the beginning of the semester. Both lecturers agreed to choose Delivery Model for Collaborative Teaching. This model involved inviting guest speakers from university and industry during the course. Both lecturers decided on the topics according to the scheme of work of the course. The topics were for guest speakers to deliver during lecture hours. The schedules for guest speakers' lectures were according to the academic calendar of that particular course. A list of potential guest speakers was prepared to enable the two class lecturers to contact and invite them for collaborative teaching. A brief explanation was conducted to inform potential guest speakers about the course objective, the approach and platform used to teach the course, the topics and schedules of the course and other matters related to the administration of the course.

### Phase 2: Implementing

This stage involved series of lectures presented by guest speakers for collaborative teaching. Four guest speakers had accepted the invitation for collaborative teaching between university and industry. Guest speaker 1 was from the same public university as the class lecturers, Guest speakers 2 and 4 were from different local public universities and Guest speaker 3 was from the local industry. Each of them was assigned to prepare different topics to be delivered to students online on separate weeks according to the course scheme of work. It was conducted four times between April 2022 and June 2022. Table 1 offers a closer look at each guest speaker's profile:

Table 1

#### *Guest Speakers' Profile*

	Guest Speaker 1	Guest Speaker 2	Guest Speaker 3	Guest Speaker 4
Gender	Female	Female	Male	Male
Position	Senior Lecturer (local university)	Assistant Professor (local university)	Special Officer (Strategic) (industry)	Associate Professor (local university)
Working Experience	More than 10 years	More than 10 years	Less than 5 years	More than 10 years
Qualification	Ph. D	Ph. D	Bachelor Degree	Ph. D
Expertise	English Language	English Language	Administrative Science and Policy Studies	English Language
Topic of the Course	Writing Effective Proposal	Designing Questionnaire	Data Presentation	Writing Findings and Conclusion
Week	5	8	9	10
Date	27 April 2022	25 May 2022	8 June 2022	15 June 2022
Duration	2 pm to 4pm (max. 2 hours)	2 pm to 4pm (max. 2 hours)	2 pm to 4pm (max. 2 hours)	2 pm to 4pm (max. 2 hours)

### ***Evidence-based Opportunities***

Phase 3: Evaluating

This phase involved collaborative discussions regarding the implemented and enacted collaborative teaching. Evaluation phase was based on the class lecturers' recollection of individual thinking as well as their reflective discussion for the planning phase and implementing phase. This was done upon completion of the series of lectures. Evaluating phase was divided into three factors: strengths, weaknesses and improvements. Several strengths, weaknesses and improvements have been identified for the current practices of collaborative teaching between university and industry.

The strengths of planning phase included the shared roles between the two class lecturers. For record, they did not know each other. They made contacts after both were introduced by another lecturer of the same university. They supported each other's division of tasks through online meetings and discussions pertaining collaborative teaching and the course. This included decisions on the topics and schedules for guest speakers as well as preparations for contacts with guest speakers particularly on briefings, invitations, lecture announcements and platform links.

However, the main weakness of the planning phase was the difficulty for the class lecturers to get the guest speaker from the industry. Even though the list of potential guest speakers based on the available contacts of the class lecturers as well as the contacts received from other university colleagues was made, other obstacles seemed to appear. Topics and schedules became one of the obstacles from the industry due to their working hours that could not fit into the collaborative daily lecture hours schedules. Besides, they were uncertain of the lecture topics to be presented for the students even though they were aware that the topics could be related to their field of work.

Hence, lessons learned were in order to ensure the guest speakers from the industry had the equivalent level of expertise in the course content, there was a need for improvements in the planning phase. Taking into considerations several factors particularly, the topics and schedules as well as the availability of the guest speakers, it was essential to identify speakers who were able to engage and connect university and industry experiences for collaborative teaching. For the current collaborative teaching between university and industry for the course, English for Report Writing, the guest speaker from the industry was the alumni of the university and had adequate experiences in the related topics within the industry as well as having the experience of attending the same English course while in the university.

Next, the strengths of the implementing phase have been identified in terms of the success of the collaborative teaching to document the guest speakers' sessions with two groups of students from two separate campuses. The guest speakers provided their biodatas for collaborative teaching. All the sessions were conducted based on the topics and schedules assigned according to the scheme of work and the academic calendar. The sessions were recorded as evidences of collaborative teaching.

The weaknesses of the implementation phase were found to be lack of immediate responses from students during the Question and Answer session. In almost all sessions, students who gave questions and asked clarifications to further understand the topics came from the same few students. Even though the guest speakers announced for any questions from students virtually in oral or written forms, the students seemed to be contented with the delivery of

lectures which were shown in their oral responses or written messages in the chat box and the “raised hand” method in the online platform.

Thus, a method of improvements to enhance students’ engagement during the session with the guest speakers was the need to supplement the sessions with interactive activity. The class lecturers proposed to have students got themselves ready with a list of questions regarding the topics of their own report writing that needed clarifications. Additionally, the class lecturers could provide online quizzes to check students’ understanding of the topics delivered by the guest speakers.

At the end of the evaluating phase, class lecturers documented the results of the discussion. These results were presented in a form of framework (Figure 1) that could be incorporated in another collaborative teaching of the same model in the following semester.

***A proposed hands-on framework of delivery model for collaborative teaching between university and industry***

Delivery Model: Collaborative Teaching between University and Industry		
Phase 1	Phase 2	Phase 3
Planning	Implementing	Evaluating
Class Lecturers: Team formation Conduct meetings Discuss and divide tasks	Class Lecturers: Make announcements Document evidences  Students: Attend lectures Engage in Question and Answer session  Guest Speakers: Deliver lectures according to topics and schedules	Class Lecturers: Discuss strengths Discuss weaknesses Discuss improvements Evidence discussion

Figure 1. A Proposed Hands-on Framework of Delivery Model for Collaborative Teaching between University and Industry

**Conclusion**

Collaborative teaching takes time and energy for lecturers to work together in planning, implementing and evaluating. One of the significant factors in influencing the collaborative teaching method is the supportive team members. This is in line with Sengpoh (2019) that described professional relationships are bonded through active interactions among academics. This will encourage the academic to share ideas and give suggestions to improve job performance. Furthermore, it is also believed that “...the strong social relationship could strengthen, develop and sustain the collaborative teaching methods”.

Besides collaborative reflection as evident in Phase 3 could enhance teaching and learning. It acted to improve knowledge, awareness and classroom practice (Baird et al., 1991). This is essential when collaborative teaching was conducted online in open and distance learning. According to Abas and Kaur (2007), “In open and distance learning environments, online collaboration is seen as crucial to help learners reach their target goals...It is a way of making

learners belong to a community of practitioners... Further, online collaborative learning helps in identifying learner presence and support belongingness”.

The proposed hands-on framework of delivery model for collaborative teaching between university and industry could be incorporated for the future intended collaborative teaching for delivery model. As lecturers gain confidence in collaborative teaching, they will find the proposed hands-on framework useful and appropriate. The framework was designed based on the current practices of collaborative teaching between university and industry. Similarly, in other studies on design and development (DeWitt & Siraj, 2010), this study recommends for further studies to be proceeded to determine if the proposed framework could be used for other courses that attempt to fit into delivery model of collaborative teaching.

To conclude, the design of the planning, implementing and evaluating phases of collaborative teaching which focusses on the delivery model highlights the unique contribution of this study. Having guest lectures from university and industry for a course, English for Report Writing, provide opportunities to increase wider perspectives on the course among class lecturers, students as well as guest speakers. Hence, this approachable way of teaching could certainly motivate higher institutions to create collaborative teaching environment for other courses. With an emphasis on Vygotsky’s theory and model of collaborative teaching, this further enhances support towards achieving the learning outcomes in educational settings.

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