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# **A Survey of Team Teaching Effectiveness in Executive Graduate Business Programs**

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## **Abstract**

This paper contributes to the academic literature by using a survey instrument of executive students to assess the effectiveness of team teaching in a multidisciplinary Executive MBA management program and an Executive Master's program in Finance. The cohort structure of the program and the virtual similarities between the two programs allows for a unique way of addressing this issue. The results of the survey show that the multidisciplinary EMBA program was more effective in fostering an integrated team teaching approach. The results also suggest that there is a transition process in incorporating the team teaching approach in new programs as evidenced by the results in the Executive Master's Program in Finance.

## **Introduction**

This paper investigates the effectiveness of team teaching using a survey approach in an Executive MBA (EMBA) program and an Executive Masters in Finance for Professionals Program (MFP) at an AACSB accredited business school. The remainder of the paper will simply refer to the programs as EMBA and the MFP for brevity. A major motivation of our research was that program administrators noticed how differently faculty from the various disciplines interacted in the team teaching approach. Both the EMBA and MFP programs are housed under the Director of Executive Programs with Academic Directors for each program.

The programs consist of a cohort group of students that complete the program with a combination of weekend residencies and web-assisted learning when away from campus using the product Blackboard as their virtual classroom. Each cohort is assigned a cycle number, and the students proceed through the programs taking all of their classes together as a cohort. The

programs also use the term modules, which refers to the 6 credits that the students receive in each of the separate courses that are required. The MFP program is structured with 6 modules (36 credits) and the EMBA is structured with 9 modules (54 credits). In the EMBA program, 3 to 4 faculty members from different business disciplines teach full time in the program. Two additional faculty members from marketing and the organizational behavior field are brought into the program to teach specific modules. In the MFP program, the majority of the faculty members are from the Finance Department, augmented by two faculty members from the Accounting Department. There are anywhere from 2 to 4 faculty members teaching in the MFP program during each module. The faculty members in both programs lecture over the residency weekends and communicate with the students using Blackboard and video conferencing when they are away from campus. The programs have subtle differences: i.e. the period between residencies for the EMBA program is 10 – 12 weeks, while the MFP program is 8 - 9 weeks. The results of the survey demonstrate that team teaching was more effective in the multidisciplinary EMBA program as opposed to the single-discipline geared program of the MFP. The results also show that there is a very fast learning curve when implementing team teaching in a new program.

### **Review of the Literature:**

Much has been written in the academic literature about team teaching and multidisciplinary approaches in college education. Harper, Lamb, and Buffington (2008) discuss the various types of team teaching. The authors note that Brabston, Henley, and White (1999) proposed three different models for collaborative teaching, including: the interactive mode, where two or more teachers were in front of the class; the rotational mode, where faculty only taught their part of the course; and the participant mode, where faculty rotated positions as observers and teachers. Harper, Lamb, and Buffington go on to discuss a fourth model for collaborative teaching, as initially presented by Buffington and Harper (2002) called a *semiformal collaborative teaching mode* that can be used with case studies. The executive programs discussed in this paper would most closely be categorized as semiformal collaborative teaching. The faculty spent time with students over the entire length of residency weekends. Usually, one faculty member would lecture while others are free to sit in the room or move throughout the complex. In the case of presenting a project developed in conjunction with other faculty members, they are together in the front of the room. The faculty members are given a good deal of flexibility on how they want to distribute the workload in the module.

Teece (2011) argues that there are numerous difficulties with team teaching. He notes that there are financial considerations prior to implementing the team teaching approach, and the approach is not necessarily suited for all faculty members. Massey and Van Hise (2009) also state that there are financial constraints associated with team teaching which restricted them to using it only in the initial stages of the program. The executive programs discussed in this paper were able to minimize the financial constraints by using stipends for some faculty as opposed to load for faculty members. In addition, the fact that each module counts for 6 credits as opposed to the conventional 3 credit courses in most graduate programs, also removes some of the financial constraints.

Sisaye (2011) states that the benefits of team teaching in a multidisciplinary approach across functional areas of business can enhance the learning process for students. Team teaching can also help minimize the shortcomings of faculty in certain areas. Some courses have been

team taught that are not in the same field of discipline, which has become particularly prevalent in accounting programs that began to incorporate ethics into the accounting curriculum.

Williams and Elson (2010) argue that a team teaching approach utilizing an accounting and philosophy approach can be beneficial to teaching ethics in an accounting program. They also note that monetary incentives should be included to entice faculty members to engage in a team teaching approach. Massey and Van Hise (2009) discuss incorporating ethics into the accounting curriculum. Initially team teaching was used by combining an accounting professor with an ethics professor. This was done to familiarize the accounting professor with a background in teaching ethics. Wade and Stone (2010) discuss the methodology they used and the problems they encountered in teaching a cross-functional course in economics and sociology. Litzenberg (2010) discusses the advantages of team teaching, particularly when it takes advantage of the complementary skills of each of the professors. Litzenberg also states that the infusion of junior and senior faculty members can help them better relate to students particularly in the area of technology.

## **Survey and Methodology**

Surveys were administered to 96 students in the executive programs at the completion of their academic studies to assess the effectiveness of team teaching. The surveys were conducted during the last residency weekends for the executive students. This study was conducted over a 3 year-time period to obtain the 96 observations. It needs to be noted that the EMBA program is a 21- month program and the MFP is approximately 14 months. The average age of the EMBA students was approximately 32 years old and the MFP students' average was approximately 28 years old. Although the EMBA program has been around for 13 cycles and the MFP program for 3 cycles, approximately 43% of the faculty from the MFP program had also been involved in the EMBA programs for years. The students were given paper copies of the survey and were asked to complete them anonymously.

Prior to completing the survey, the authors explained to the students what was meant by a fully integrated teaching approach as opposed to a sequential teaching approach. The survey consisted of 10 questions overall with a rating scale of 1 – 5. The first six questions dealt with the effectiveness of team teaching directly. The higher the scale, the more effective that team teaching was perceived by the students. Questions 7 and 8 asked the students whether the team teaching approach was presented more in a sequential format or a fully integrated format. The objective of both programs was always to have more of an integrated program. Question 9 asked the students whether they would want to have more of a team teaching approach in their college experience. Question 10 asked the students about their overall level of satisfaction with the program. A copy of the survey given to the students is provided in Appendix A.

## **Empirical Results of Survey**

Table 1 illustrates the results comparing student response from the EMBA program and the MFP program. There were 96 observations from the study. For the first six questions, the overall ratings for the EMBA program were higher than the MFP Program, but the mean differences were not statistically significant. The mean difference for Question 7 was statistically significant at the 5% level. This question dealt with the effectiveness of integrating the teaching team approach. The students in the EMBA felt that it was more successful, even

though the materials covered in the modules were multidisciplinary. This was observed generally by the administrators of the two programs. The Finance and Accounting faculty in the MFP tended to divide up material and simply assign work to various faculty members in that particular module. This was perceived by the students as being a sequential approach. The EMBA faculty members were more successful in integrating their materials. This concept of team teaching as being fully integrated was reinforced in Question 8, as the mean difference was significant at the 10% level. The students described the teaching in the EMBA as being more fully integrated. Question 9 asked the students if they would like to see more team teaching at the graduate level. Not surprisingly, the students in the EMBA program felt that more team teaching should be used, and the mean difference was significant at the 10% level.

All of this resulted in the EMBA students having a higher level of satisfaction with their program. The mean differences of the overall level of satisfaction were significant at the 1% level for the EMBA program. These results suggest that it is easier and more successful to incorporate team teaching in a multidisciplinary approach as presented in the EMBA program. A few points of qualification are necessary. This EMBA format has been in existence for 13 years, compared to only 3 years of the MFP's existence, though only one member of the original EMBA program still teaches in the program. In the MFP program, as noted earlier, 43% of the faculty in the MFP had taught in the EMBA program. Additionally, the turnover of the EMBA faculty is actually higher compared to the MFP faculty over the time periods used in the survey. These factors allow the authors to be comfortable with their conclusion that incorporating team teaching in a multidisciplinary program is more effective and successful. These results would be consistent with the finding of Sisaye (2011).

In Table 2, the authors compared the survey responses of students from Cycle 2 compared to students from Cycle 1 in the MFP program. There were 39 observations used from the survey. The results were very encouraging as far as the ability of faculty to adapt to team teaching in a short period of time. These results do not contradict the results in Table 1, since that analysis was on the entire sample of survey responses. Questions 3 and 4 illustrate that the faculty in MFP Cycle 2 were more successful in the students' view in conveying teaching responsibilities and the concept of team teaching. The mean difference between these two questions was significant at the 5% level. The students in Cycle 2 felt that they would like to see more team teaching in the future as noted by Question 6. The mean difference of this question was significant at the 5% level. In Question 7, the students of MFP Cycle 2 felt that the integrated approach was more effective with a mean difference significant at the 5% level. Finally, the students in Cycle 2 felt that the team teaching was perceived as fully integrated and the mean difference was significant at the 1% level. These results suggest that faculty can improve their team teaching approach in a very short period of time.

## **Conclusions**

The results of this paper have two important implications for team teaching in graduate business programs. The structure of the EMBA and MFP Programs are relatively similar in that both use a cohort approach. This insures that all 96 students that were surveyed were exposed to very similar experiences related to team teaching. The first significant finding is that it appears that team teaching can be more effective when implemented in a multidisciplinary program as opposed to a more narrowly defined curriculum. The authors contend that at least part of this explanation can be attributed to the "master of your own domain" mentality. In a

multidisciplinary program, each one of the faculty is viewed as an expert in his/her field and is more willing to engage in a team teaching approach. Part of the reason appears to be that the faculty members in the multidisciplinary program were much more willing to allow colleagues opportunities to enhance the material that is being taught. In a more narrowly defined curriculum, the faculty is viewed as sharing overlapping expertise and less likely to interact with each other. This was strongly evidenced in the participation of faculty when colleagues were lecturing. More times than not, the faculty in the EMBA program would remain in the classroom and try to inject information from their field that could be relevant to the lecture. In the more narrowly structured MFP program, faculty rarely would sit in on other faculty member's lectures. These conclusions were based on the results of the student surveys and observations by administrators on the interaction of faculty in the two different programs.

The second significant finding in this paper is that faculty can adjust quickly to be able to incorporate a team teaching approach. Although many of the faculty had taught in a team teaching environment previously, there was a learning curve in being able to do so with a new group of colleagues. Although not reported in the paper, there was not a statistically significant difference in team teaching between Cycle 2 and Cycle 3 in the MFP program. This can be attributed to a few factors. Faculty members in the MFP program rotate teaching responsibilities and probably gravitate more towards faculty they are comfortable with in this team teaching environment. Additionally, over time the level of comfort with the entire team teaching process becomes easier for various faculty members. Future areas of research would be using a similar survey instrument on a team teaching approach in a business and non-business program. This would allow for even greater diversity of knowledge and perspective than what presently occurs in the EMBA program. In addition, although the satisfaction level of the students in the program appears to be relatively high, it would be interesting to explore overall satisfaction with another program that doesn't use a team teaching approach.

## Appendix

Pace University  
Lubin School of Business  
Executive Degree Program Survey

This survey is related to a research project we are conducting on team teaching (sometimes called collaborative teaching) in the EMBA. It is not about your team project assignments and how your student teams functioned. Also, please note that this survey is not an evaluation of individual faculty teaching effectiveness.

1. In the program, there was continual discussion of using team teaching approach. Do you think this approach was used?

Not At All    1   2   3   4   5    Very Often

2. In terms of your overall educational experience, the concept of team teaching was

Ineffective    1   2   3   4   5    Very Effective

3. In conveying to you individual teaching responsibilities, the faculty were

Ineffective    1   2   3   4   5    Very Effective

4. The individual faculty in the program conveyed the concept of team teaching equally

Ineffective    1   2   3   4   5    Very Effective

5. Your overall evaluation of team or collaborative teaching throughout the program was

Ineffective    1   2   3   4   5    Very Effective

6. In the future with regard to team teaching, I would like to see the program have

Less        1   2   3   4   5    More

7. Some faculty followed a sequential team teaching approach, and some followed a fully integrated approach. Which do you feel was most effective?

Sequential Most effective    1   2   3   4   5    Fully Integrated Most Effective

8. Overall, I would describe the team teaching in this program as

Sequential    1   2   3   4   5    Fully Integrated

9. Overall in college level studies using team teaching, I would like to see

Less        1   2   3   4   5    More

10. How would you describe your overall level of satisfaction in the EMBA program

Not satisfied    1   2   3   4   5    Very satisfied

THANK YOU!

Table 1  
Executive MBA (EMBA) students survey responses versus Masters in Finance for Professionals (MFP) student survey responses

| Questions         | Mean EMBA | Mean MFP | Mean Differences |
|-------------------|-----------|----------|------------------|
| 1                 | 3.90      | 4.08     | -.18             |
| 2                 | 4.10      | 3.86     | .24              |
| 3                 | 4.23      | 4.09     | .14              |
| 4                 | 3.70      | 3.70     | 0                |
| 5                 | 3.93      | 3.67     | .26              |
| 6                 | 4.07      | 3.89     | .18              |
| 7                 | 3.97      | 3.42     | .55**            |
| 8                 | 3.73      | 3.39     | .34*             |
| 9                 | 4.23      | 3.92     | .31*             |
| 10                | 4.47      | 4.05     | .42***           |
| Observations = 96 |           |          |                  |

\*\*\*Significant at the .01 level, \*\*significant at the .05 level, \* significant at the .10 level.

Table 2  
Masters in Finance for Professionals (MFP) Cycle 2 student survey responses versus Masters in Finance for Professional (MFP) Cycle 1 survey responses

| Questions         | Mean MFP Cycle 2 | Mean MFP Cycle 1 | Mean Differences |
|-------------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|
| 1                 | 4.09             | 4.18             | -.09             |
| 2                 | 4.09             | 3.77             | .32              |
| 3                 | 4.23             | 3.77             | .46**            |
| 4                 | 3.95             | 3.29             | .66**            |
| 5                 | 3.89             | 3.65             | .24              |
| 6                 | 4.32             | 3.41             | .91**            |
| 7                 | 4.05             | 3.29             | .76**            |
| 8                 | 3.91             | 2.77             | 1.14***          |
| 9                 | 4.05             | 4.00             | .05              |
| 10                | 4.18             | 4.27             | -.09             |
| Observations = 39 |                  |                  |                  |

\*\*\*Significant at the .01 level, \*\*significant at the .05 level, \* significant at the .10 level.



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