

International Journal of Learning, Teaching and Educational Research
Vol. 21, No. 7, pp. 145-157, July 2022
<https://doi.org/10.26803/ijlter.21.7.8>
Received May 9, 2022; Revised Jul 8, 2022; Accepted Jul 19, 2022

Awareness of Co-Teaching Administration among Teachers of Resource Room Program

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Abstract. Collaborative teaching (co-teaching) is a method of providing educational services to students with learning disabilities (LDs) in general education classes, and it also reduces educational dispersion as a result of these students joining remedial instruction in special education programs. This descriptive research aimed to identify the level of awareness of co-teaching among teachers of resource room program (RRP). A total of 162 Omani teachers of RRP responded on a co-teaching scale. This scale consisted of 28 items distributed into five domains related to the concept of co-teaching, as well as co-teaching models, in addition to the elements, benefits and requirements of co-teaching. The results indicated that, according to the means and standard deviations of the scale domains, the teachers' awareness of co-teaching was as follows: a low level of awareness of the elements, requirements and models of co-teaching, a moderate one of the benefits of co-teaching, and a high one of the concept of co-teaching. The outcomes of the t-test also showed that there were no statistically significant differences in the teachers' awareness attributed to their specialization and teaching experience. This research recommended reconsidering the pre-service and in-service teacher training programs in Oman to align with the philosophy of co-teaching and raising awareness of it among Omani teachers and educational leaders.

Keywords: awareness; co-teaching; Oman; teachers; students with learning disabilities; resource room program

1. Introduction

Students with LDs spend the majority of the school day with their peers in general education classes, and the rest of it in RRP. The RRP provides remedial instruction

services to improve the academic and social skills of students with LDs. The teacher of RRP teaches students with LDs academic skills in reading, writing and mathematics in which they have learning deficits. Therefore, RRP may reduce the opportunities for students with LDs to benefit from the school program and the general curriculum, as well as social interaction with their peers without LDs. Teachers of RRP are not trained to teach all school subjects to students with LDs, and general education teachers are not trained to deal with students with LDs in general education classes. Hence, there was a need to find a new educational strategy that meets the academic and social requirements of students with LDs and create a spirit of collaboration between general and special education teachers (GSETs). From this standpoint, co-teaching emerged to establish a collaboration base between GSETs in teaching students with LDs in inclusive education settings.

Co-teaching developed in the middle of the last century to improve the teaching of students with special needs and to respond to laws and regulations demanding the education of these students in the least restrictive environments (Walther-Thomas et al., 1996). Therefore, co-teaching came to establish a positive collaborative relationship between GSETs to provide high-quality teaching for students with LDs in inclusive education settings. Co-teaching is one of the educational strategies that seek to achieve inclusive education for students with LDs. It is based on collaboration between GSETs in teaching students with LDs in general education classes (Alsheaha, 2022). In other words, co-teaching is based on the collaboration between GSETs in planning, teaching, assessment and classroom management to provide appropriate education for all students in general education classes (Cook & McDuffie-Landrum, 2020). Therefore, co-teaching provides opportunities to integrate students with special needs with their peers, receive individual support, and enhance their social skills in the general classroom (Al-Rumaih & Aba Hussein, 2019; Perez & Wong, 2012).

The purpose of co-teaching is to provide an opportunity for students with LDs to access general education curricula and benefit from instruction strategies that enhance their learning in general education classes (Friend, 2008). The GSETs participate together in teaching the general curriculum to students with and without special needs (Brown, 2013). Co-teaching is a type of collaboration between two or more teachers who share their intellectual and professional experience to create an educational environment that contributes to the academic achievement of students with special needs in general education classes (Diana, 2014; Hentz, 2017). Therefore, co-teaching achieves integration between teachers' experiences and makes students' participation in the educational process more effective. Individual remedial instruction by special education teachers may not be a guarantee of adequate teaching for students with disabilities (Weiss et al., 2020).

Co-teaching is commonly used in general education schools in the United States of America because it meets the educational, social and psychological needs of students with special needs in inclusive education classes (Randolph, 2017). It also contributes to the formation of the teacher's balanced personality through

knowledge of the strengths and weaknesses that appear to him/her during the implementation of co-teaching (Murawski & Spencer, 2011). Co-teaching also promotes positive interaction between GSETs by sharing responsibility in classroom management (DelliCarpini, 2009).

Co-teaching may be more effective than the conventional teaching methods used in teaching students with LDs in the Omani RRP. It improves academic achievement, thinking skills, motivation and active learning among students with LDs (Le et al., 2018). Co-teaching includes group activities based on the mutual positive interaction between students, as well as providing them with a spirit of collaboration to reach answers to teachers' questions (Wang & Hwang, 2012).

Constructivist learning theory advocated the integration of educational practices between teachers (Shah, 2019). Based on this theory, co-teaching facilitates the cross-fertilization of ideas and develops teaching strategies for teachers that benefit students with LDs. Accordingly, social interaction between teachers and their participation together in preparing the classroom environment gives students opportunities for oral and written communication and contributes to their cognitive development (Hurst et al., 2013). On the other hand, conversation theory emphasized the dialogue method to construct human knowledge among students (Pangaro, 2017). Co-teaching may become a pillar in teaching Omani students with LDs in inclusive education environments because it is linked to the elements of the learning-teaching process. Therefore, GSETs are required to use contemporary teaching methods such as co-teaching to improve the academic skills of students with LDs (Bani Abdel Rahman & Al-Zoubi, 2017). Teachers also encourage the teaching of students with LDs in inclusive education settings by using co-teaching rather than in an RRP (Strogilos et al., 2016). Pre- and in-service teacher training programs play a role in facilitating the implementation of co-teaching in inclusive education settings (Pancsofar & Petroff, 2013, 2016). In this regard, pre-service special education teachers have noted a lack of co-teaching content, while general education teachers need more training on its implementation (Shin et al., 2016).

The effectiveness of co-teaching depends on the role of teachers of students with LDs in raising awareness among the administrative and educational staff in inclusive education environments. Thus, the teacher contributes to enhancing the learning of students with special needs in inclusive education environments (Nwosu et al., 2020). Contemporary trends demand that the special education teacher be a consultant for general education teachers (Abdallah et al., 2021). Thus, the most effective teachers are those who demonstrate collaborative relationships with the school administration and other teachers, as well as parents of students with LDs.

There are positive advantages to co-teaching, but, on the other hand, there are problems that reduce its use, such as teachers' resistance to the idea of co-teaching and their refusal to work with another teacher in the classroom, the academic performance gap between students with and without LDs, and the weakness of technical and administrative support provided by school principals (Abidin et al.,

2012), In addition, teachers have insufficient information about co-teaching, few opportunities for professional development, and a lack of co-planning time (Alnasser, 2020; Mulholland & O'Connor, 2016). At the Arab level, there are obstacles that reduce the implementation of shared teaching in public education schools. Almajed and Albash (2015) have pointed to the negative perception among parents, teachers and students that reduces the chances of using co-teaching, the low number of professional development programs for GSETs, and school administrations' lack of awareness in regard to co-teaching.

Co-teaching includes three elements related to co-planning, co-instruction and co-assessing (Brendle et al., 2017). In co-planning, the GSETs plan teaching methods, materials and assessment methods. In co-instruction, they implement one of the co-teaching models, and in co-assessing, they evaluate the performance of students with and without LDs, and the co-teaching model used with these students (Sileo, 2011). On the other hand, co-teaching includes six models that can be used with students with and without LDs in inclusive education environments. These six models are as follows (Hentz, 2017; Murawski & Lochner, 2017; Stein, 2016):

1. One teaches, one observes: One teacher teaches, while the other observes the teacher's performance and the students' social, behavioral and academic aspects.
2. One teaches, one assists: One teacher teaches the course content, while the other teacher roams among the students to provide support or answer their questions.
3. Team teaching: GSETs are in the classroom at the same time and take turns teaching and giving instructions to all students.
4. Alternative teaching: One teacher teaches a large group of students, while the other teacher teaches a small group of students in the same class. The teacher of the small group provides remedial instruction for students with LDs or enrichment activities for gifted students.
5. Station teaching: The teachers divide the students into three groups or teaching stations and the students move between these stations. The two teachers at each station teach students the same lesson in different ways.
6. Parallel teaching: The class is divided into two equal groups of students, and the two teachers teach the same lesson to both groups.

The issue discussed in this research has emerged following the international laws and trends that require inclusive education for students with LDs. The No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) emphasized that students with special needs should have access to high-quality instruction by providing teaching strategies that meet their educational needs in inclusive environments (Guerra, 2015). on the other hand, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) recommends teaching students with special needs in the least restrictive environments (Friend et al., 2010). This investigation was also developed in response to the results and recommendations of previous studies. Pancsofar and Petroff (2013) suggested that teachers who receive training services on co-teaching were more confident and positive in their co-teaching practices than those who did not receive this training. Brown (2013) described the need to train teachers in the area of content and

planning for co-teaching. Aba Hussein and Al-Hussein (2016) and Simon (2017) indicated the lack of in-service training programs for special education teachers on co-teaching, whereas Baqabed (2018) stressed the need for training workshops to improve the knowledge of teachers of students with LDs about co-teaching. In this regard, Al-Khatri et al. (2020) confirmed the effectiveness of training programs for improving the attitudes of teachers of students with LDs toward co-teaching. Shaffer and Brown (2015) found that GSETs have positive views on co-teaching. Alsheaha (2022) emphasized the use of teachers of students with LDs for co-teaching and the conduct of empirical research based on it.

This research arose from the need of the educational system in the Sultanate of Oman for research that keeps pace with global trends. These contemporary trends demand the inclusion of students with special needs in general education schools and classes. Therefore, inclusive education requires collaboration between GSETs. This investigation may contribute to improving the awareness of co-teaching among these teachers. The results of this analysis may also be useful in organizing workshops and training programs based on co-teaching in the Sultanate of Oman. The aim of this evaluation is to identify the awareness of co-teaching among teachers of students with LDs by answering the following questions:

1. What level of awareness do teachers have of co-teaching?
2. Does the teachers' level of awareness of co-teaching differ according to their specialization?
3. Does the teachers' level of awareness of co-teaching differ according to their amount of teaching experience?

2. Methods

2.1 Research Design

A descriptive survey research design was used to determine the teachers' level of awareness of co-teaching. An electronic scale was distributed to all Omani basic education teachers who teach students with LDs in the RRP.

2.2 Participants

The research population consisted of 649 teachers from various Omani governorates. These teachers teach students with LDs in the RRP attached in the Omani basic education schools. A scale was distributed to all these teachers. Through the convenience sampling method, 162 female teachers responded to the scale. Therefore, the percentage of participants reached 25% of the research population. Table 1 includes the demographic data of the participants.

Table 1: Demographic data

Variable	Category	N	%
Specialization	Arabic language	93	57
	Mathematics	69	43
Teaching experience	10 years or less	74	46
	11 years and over	88	54

Table 1 shows the demographic data of the participants who teach students with LDs enrolled in the RRP, of whom 93 teachers teach the Arabic language, and 69

mathematics. The table also illustrates the level of teaching experience, with 88 teachers having 11 years or more compared to 74 with 10 or less.

2.3 Instrument

After reviewing the theoretical literature, the first draft of the co-teaching scale, which consisted of 34 items, was developed. To check the psychometric characteristics, the scale was reviewed by five faculty members at the Department of Psychology, Sultan Qaboos University. Thus, the final draft of the scale consisted of 28 items. These items were distributed into five domains related to the concept of co-teaching (six items), elements of co-teaching (five items), co-teaching models (six items), the benefits of co-teaching (five items), and co-teaching requirements (six items). Furthermore, each item of the scale was answered on a 5-point Likert scale from strongly agree (5) to strongly disagree (1). The final draft of the scale was performed on a pilot study of 30 teachers. The reliability coefficient according to Cronbach's alpha for each domain was as follows: the concept of co-teaching (0.83), elements of co-teaching (0.81), co-teaching models (0.86), the benefit of co-teaching (0.83), and co-teaching requirements (0.85). In order to analyze the results, the mean (M) was classified into three levels: low (1:00 to 2.33), moderate (2.34 to 3.67), and high (3.68 to 5:00).

2.4 Ethical Considerations

Approvals were obtained from the College of Education at Sultan Qaboos University and the Omani Ministry of Education. The link to the co-teaching scale was distributed by WhatsApp to all teachers of students with LDs in the various governorates of the Sultanate of Oman. These teachers were also informed of the instructions for responding to the terms of the scale.

3. Results

3.1 In terms of the teachers' level of awareness in regard to co-teaching, Table 2 indicates that teachers have a high level of awareness of the concept of co-teaching (M = 2.35; standard deviation (SD) = .594), a moderate one of co-teaching benefits (M = 2.22; SD = .308), and a low one of co-teaching models (M = 1.63; SD = .319), elements (M = 1.61; SD = .239), and requirements (M = 1.45; SD = .275).

Table 2: Means and standard deviations according to the scale domains

Domain	Mean	SD	Level
Concept of co-teaching	2.35	.594	High
Co-teaching benefits	2.22	.308	Moderate
Co-teaching models	1.63	.319	Low
Co-teaching elements	1.61	.239	Low
Co-teaching requirements	1.45	.275	Low

3.2 The teachers' level of awareness in regard to co-teaching does not differ according to specialization. Table 3 shows that there were no statistically significant differences in the teachers' awareness of co-teaching attributed to their specialization ($p > 0.05$).

Table 3: T-test results according to specialization

Domains	Qualification	M	SD	t	p
Concept of co-teaching	Arabic language	2.38	.607	1.02	.306
	Mathematics	2.28	.567		
Co-teaching benefits	Arabic language	2.22	.331	.027	.978
	Mathematics	2.22	.257		
Co-teaching models	Arabic language	1.63	.229	1.41	.158
	Mathematics	1.57	.255		
Co-teaching elements	Arabic language	1.42	.249	1.91	.058
	Mathematics	1.50	.317		
Co-teaching requirements	Arabic language	1.64	.344	.775	.440
	Mathematics	1.60	.261		

3.3 The teachers' level of awareness in regard to co-teaching does not differ according to teaching experience. Table 4 shows that there were no statistically significant differences in the teachers' awareness of co-teaching attributed to their amount of teaching experience ($p > 0.05$).

Table 4: T-test results according to teaching experience

Domains	Teaching experience	M	SD	t	p
Concept of co-teaching	10 years or less	2.39	.592	.785	.434
	11 years and over	2.31	.597		
Co-teaching benefits	10 years or less	2.21	.316	.591	.555
	11 years and over	2.24	.303		
Co-teaching models	10 years or less	1.61	.247	.294	.769
	11 years and over	1.62	.233		
Co-teaching elements	10 years or less	1.48	.292	1.52	.129
	11 years and over	1.42	.258		
Co-teaching requirements	10 years or less	1.63	.325	.044	.965
	11 years and over	1.63	.316		

4. Discussion

The responses to the first question showed that teachers of students with LDs have a low awareness level of the elements, models and requirements of co-teaching, a moderate one of its benefits, and a high one of its concept. The teachers' low awareness of the elements, models and requirements of co-teaching can be justified by the fact that it is not implemented in Omani general education schools. Mainstreaming (RRP) is the current educational system in Omani basic education schools. Therefore, the implementation of co-teaching in inclusive education environments requires the issuance of legislation and laws that encourage the teaching of students with LDs with their peers in the general classroom environment and throughout the school day. In this regard, the NCLB stressed that students with special needs receive a high-quality education in the least restrictive environments through the use of strategies that meet their educational needs (Scott, 2016). In contrast, the IDEA emphasized teaching students with special needs the general curriculum in general education classes (Compton et al., 2015; Simonvski, 2015). Thus, the positive attitudes of GSETs enhance their awareness of the elements, models and requirements of co-teaching. In other

words, teachers' knowledge of co-teaching improves their attitudes toward implementing it in general education classrooms. On the international level, Almajed and Albash (2018) indicated that teachers' attitudes towards implementing co-teaching still varied between supporters and opponents. Almajed and Albash (2018) reviewed 41 articles published in English. This review addressed the attitudes, requirements, models and benefits of co-teaching. Their results concluded that GSETs need training on the models, elements and requirements of co-teaching.

Since mainstreaming is the educational alternative applicable in Omani schools, it is obvious that the awareness level of teachers is low in relation to the elements, models and requirements of co-teaching. The implementation of co-teaching requires knowledge of co-planning so that the teacher of Arabic or mathematics collaborated with the teacher of students with LDs in lesson planning. It also requires co-instruction between GSETs through the implementation of a co-teaching model, in addition to the active participation of GSETs in classroom management and co-assessing students' performance. In this regard, Indelicato (2014) asserted that GSETs do not know the concept and models of co-teaching. On the level of Arab Gulf states, Baqabed (2018) confirmed that the knowledge of teachers of students with LDs about co-teaching models is still average. Aba Hussein and Al-Hussein (2016) showed that teachers of students with LDs face problems in implementing co-teaching in general education classes. Aldabas and Alhossein (2019) stressed that the readiness of GSETs for using co-teaching in co-teaching in inclusive schools is still average.

Therefore, it is necessary to reconsider the pre-service and in-service preparation programs for Omani GSETs. Training programs in the Sultanate of Oman must highlight the models and elements of co-teaching. The Omani special education teacher needs to have an in-depth knowledge of general education curricula, while the Omani general education teacher needs to have knowledge of the categories and characteristics of students with special needs. Thus, training programs may contribute to providing Omani GSETs with theoretical and practical knowledge about the requirements of co-teaching and promoting collaboration among others. In this regard, Almajed and Albash (2018) suggested reconsidering the pre-service and in-service teacher education programs to comply with the requirements of co-teaching in inclusive education environments. Al-Zoubi and Bani Abdel Rahman (2016) indicated that the weakness of teachers in implementing teaching strategies is one of the challenges of inclusive education for students with LDs. Chitiyo and Brinda (2018) stressed that the lack of training and workshops reduced teachers' preparedness for using co-teaching.

The results showed that the teachers of students with LDs have a moderate awareness of the benefits of co-teaching. This outcome can be justified by the fact that these teachers have only theoretical knowledge and no practical experience of the benefits of implementing co-teaching in inclusive education environments. Consequently, these teachers need to have applied knowledge regarding implementing co-teaching in general education classrooms, as well as the positive social, psychological and behavioral benefits of applying it to students with LDs.

The presence of students with LDs with their peers in the general class throughout the school day contributes to reducing the social stigma of students with LDs. In this regard, Packard et al. (2011) emphasized the benefits of co-teaching in reducing social stigma and improving the mental health of students with LDs as a result of their studying the general curriculum. In addition, Dasilva (2011) demonstrated the positive impact of co-teaching on social and academic skills on students with and without LDs because it encouraged them to participate in dialogue and collaboration. On the other hand, co-teaching contributed to advancing the reading and writing skills of students with special needs and gave them access to general education curricula (Wilson & Michaels, 2007). In this regard, Alsheaha (2022) confirmed the effectiveness of co-teaching in boosting the reading skills of students with and without LDs. On the other hand, Lehane and Senior (2019) stressed the need to conduct empirical research to identify the effect of co-teaching on the academic skills of students with LDs.

Co-teaching also helped improve positive interactions and classroom activities among students with disabilities in classrooms that applied co-teaching (Strogilos & Avramidis, 2016). In contrast, it provides teachers with new methods for collaboration and professional development. Through co-teaching, teachers exchange ideas for teaching students with LDs in inclusive education settings. Thus, co-teaching results in diverse social and academic benefits for teachers and students. The awareness of the benefits of co-teaching must be raised among teachers of students with LDs. Thus, professional development programs and collaborative relationships between GSETs have facilitated the implementation of co-teaching (Aljabr et al., 2019). In this regard, constructivist theory has received attention from psychologists because it focuses on aspects of social and cultural interactions in the education of students with LDs. Therefore, the students learn more as a group than they do individually. The implementation of co-teaching by GSETs in inclusive education for students with LDs achieves the implications of this theory.

This research observed that the teachers of students with LDs have a high awareness of the concept of co-teaching. This outcome can be justified by the efforts of the Omani Ministry of Education to achieve inclusive education and keep pace with contemporary international trends in teaching students with LDs in general education classes throughout the school day. The Omani legislation that developed in response to international laws also contributed to raising teachers' awareness of the concept of co-teaching. In addition, the desire of Omani teachers to learn the contemporary teaching methods used in teaching students with LDs around the world cannot be ignored. In other words, the internet and social media have contributed to improving teachers' awareness of co-teaching and have formed a conceptual framework regarding it.

The results of the second and third questions showed that there were no statistically significant differences in the teachers' awareness level of co-teaching attributed to their specialization and teaching experience. Accordingly, awareness of co-teaching was not affected by the specialization and teaching experience of teachers of students with LDs. This result can be justified by the fact that the idea of co-teaching is not presently implemented and that mainstreaming education is

the current practice in Omani general education schools. Therefore, it is normal that awareness of co-teaching is not altered by specialization and teaching experience.

5. Conclusion

The results of this analysis showed that there was a difference in the awareness level of the concept, models, benefits and requirements of co-teaching among teachers of students with LDs. The outcomes also indicated that there were no statistically significant differences in the teachers' awareness attributed to their specialization and teaching experience. These conclusions encourage educational leaders in the Sultanate of Oman to rethink the in-service training programs for special education teachers. In-service training programs may contribute to improving the knowledge, awareness and implementation of co-teaching by teachers of students with LDs. Despite the findings of this research, the educational field in Sultanate of Oman and the Arab Gulf states needs more empirical research on the effectiveness of implementing co-teaching in inclusive education environments. These investigations may contribute toward modifying teachers' attitudes towards co-teaching and to improving their awareness of co-teaching models, requirements and elements. Subsequently, it is recommended that an evaluation of the attitudes of Omani general education teachers towards co-teaching be conducted. Finally, it should be noted that the selection of participants through convenience sampling may reduce the generalization of the results to all teachers of students with LDs in the governorates of the Sultanate of Oman.

Conflict of Interest

The authors report no conflicts of interest.

Funding

This research did not receive funding from any source.

Acknowledgments

The authors thank the RRP teachers for their collaboration and responses to the research scale.

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