

Co-teaching in practice: A qualitative exploration of teachers' experiences in communication, planning, instruction, and assessment

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Abstract

Aim: This study examined teachers' experiences in co-teaching practices, focusing on communication, collaborative planning, instruction, and assessment, and their implications for inclusive teaching and learning.

Methodology: A qualitative phenomenological research design was employed to explore the lived experiences of 20 teacher-participants engaged in co-teaching. Data were systematically collected using a semi-structured interview and analyzed using thematic analysis following Braun and Clarke's approach.

Results: The findings revealed three major themes: collaborative teaching culture, structured and responsive co-teaching, and data-informed teaching. Results highlight the importance of open communication, shared planning, and the use of assessment data in enhancing instructional practices. However, challenges related to coordination, role clarity, and consistency in implementation were also identified.

Conclusion: Effective co-teaching requires intentional collaboration, systematic planning, and data-driven instruction. Strengthening these practices can improve teaching effectiveness and support inclusive education. The study underscores the need for institutional support and targeted professional development to enhance co-teaching implementation.

Keywords: *co-teaching, collaborative teaching, qualitative research, teacher experiences, inclusive education*

INTRODUCTION

Inclusive education has become a central priority in global educational systems, driven by international frameworks such as the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) (Deocareza & Soriano, 2025) and the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, particularly Goal 4 (Rad et al., 2022), which emphasizes equitable and quality education for all learners. In response, schools worldwide have increasingly adopted collaborative teaching approaches, with co-teaching emerging as a widely recognized strategy to address diverse student needs in inclusive classrooms. Co-teaching, defined as the shared responsibility of two or more educators in planning, delivering, and assessing instruction, has been associated with improved student outcomes, enhanced instructional practices, and stronger professional collaboration among teachers.

Scholars have emphasized that when implemented effectively, co-teaching promotes differentiated instruction and fosters inclusive learning environments (Barron & Friend, 2024; McTigue et al., 2023). However, despite its theoretical advantages, empirical evidence suggests that many teachers continue to experience challenges in implementing co-teaching practices. These challenges often stem from insufficient training, unclear role delineation, limited planning time, and inconsistent communication among co-teachers. As a result, the effectiveness of co-teaching varies significantly across educational contexts. In the United States, co-teaching has been widely implemented as part of inclusive education reforms, particularly in response to policies such as the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA, 2004), which mandates that students with disabilities be provided access to the general education curriculum in the least restrictive environment. This law ensures that eligible children receive a free appropriate public education and necessary support services within inclusive settings. Within this framework, co-teaching is commonly practiced between general education teachers and special education teachers to ensure that students receive differentiated

instruction and appropriate academic and behavioral support (Strogilos et al., 2022). However, recent research indicates that while co-teaching is structurally present in many schools, its quality and consistency remain uneven. Teachers often report difficulties in aligning instructional strategies, managing shared responsibilities, and conducting joint assessments effectively. In local contexts such as Odessa, these challenges are further compounded by contextual factors such as resource constraints, varying levels of teacher preparedness, and diverse student populations. Schools in Odessa, Texas, reflect broader national trends where co-teaching is implemented as a strategy for inclusion but is not always supported by sufficient professional development or institutional structures. Teachers in such settings may struggle to establish effective communication channels, engage in meaningful collaborative planning, and implement cohesive instructional and assessment practices. These issues highlight the need for a deeper understanding of teachers' lived experiences in co-teaching environments within specific local contexts.

While existing literature has extensively examined the effectiveness of co-teaching in terms of student achievement and general instructional outcomes, there remains a notable gap in qualitative research that explores teachers' actual experiences in the day-to-day implementation of co-teaching practices (Rönn-Liljenfeldt et al., 2023). Many studies rely on quantitative measures or focus on student outcomes, thereby overlooking the nuanced perspectives of teachers who are directly involved in collaborative teaching (Gourvenec et al., 2022; Kokko et al., 2021; McTigue et al., 2023). Furthermore, limited research has simultaneously examined the interconnected dimensions of communication, planning, instruction, and assessment within a single qualitative framework. This study addresses these gaps by providing a qualitative exploration of teachers' experiences in co-teaching practices, focusing on key dimensions that are critical to effective collaboration. Careful examination of teachers' profiles alongside their lived experiences, the study offers a more comprehensive understanding of how individual characteristics may relate to co-teaching practices. Unlike previous studies that often isolate specific aspects of co-teaching or rely heavily on quantitative data, this research adopts a holistic and context-sensitive approach that captures the complexity of collaborative teaching. This study contributes to the growing body of knowledge on inclusive education by generating contextually grounded insights that can inform policy, professional development, and instructional practices.

Review of Related Literature and Studies

Co-Teaching as a Collaborative Practice in Inclusive Education

Co-teaching has gained significant attention in recent years as an effective pedagogical approach for promoting inclusive education and improving instructional delivery. Defined as a collaborative process in which two or more teachers share responsibility in planning, instruction, and assessment, co-teaching is widely implemented across educational systems to address the diverse needs of learners. (Barron & Friend, 2024). Recent studies emphasize that co-teaching supports differentiated instruction by enabling teachers to adapt content, teaching strategies, and assessment methods according to students' varying abilities and learning styles (Mabasa-Manganyi, 2023). Co-teaching positively influences both teacher development and student learning, highlighting its potential as a dynamic instructional framework (Gardesten, 2023). The study further noted that co-teachers benefit from mutual professional learning and the exchange of effective teaching strategies, which enhances instructional quality in inclusive classrooms. Similarly, recent research indicates that co-teaching fosters stronger teacher collaboration and promotes shared accountability in addressing student needs, particularly in heterogeneous classroom settings (Gourvenec et al., 2022). Despite these benefits, contemporary literature also underscores persistent challenges in the implementation of co-teaching. Teacher learning within co-teaching contexts remains underexplored, with significant variation in how co-teaching is conceptualized and practiced across educational settings (Kokko et al., 2021). This inconsistency often results in ineffective implementation, where co-teaching is reduced to limited models such as "one teach, one assist," rather than fully collaborative instructional partnerships. This often leads to a hierarchical rather than an equitable distribution of responsibilities, thereby diminishing the potential for shared pedagogical growth and student differentiation inherent in true co-teaching models (Figuroa-Céspedes et al., 2020).

Teachers' Experiences in Communication, Planning, Instruction, and Assessment

Effective co-teaching relies heavily on the quality of interaction between teachers, particularly in communication, collaborative planning, instruction, and assessment. These components are consistently identified in recent studies as the core dimensions of successful co-teaching practices. Research indicates that strong communication between co-teachers fosters trust, clarity of roles, and shared decision-making, all of which are essential for maintaining an effective teaching partnership (Pizana, 2022). Recent qualitative investigations emphasize that collaborative planning is one of the most critical yet challenging aspects of co-teaching (Strogilos et al., 2022). Teachers

often report limited time for joint lesson planning, which affects the coherence of instructional delivery and the alignment of learning objectives. According to recent findings, insufficient planning time can lead to fragmented instruction and reduced effectiveness of co-teaching strategies (Lane et al., 2023). In terms of instruction, co-teaching enables the use of diverse teaching models such as team teaching, station teaching, and parallel teaching, allowing teachers to address different learning needs simultaneously. However, studies reveal that many teachers default to less collaborative models due to time constraints, lack of training, or unclear expectations regarding their roles. This limits the full potential of co-teaching as an interactive and dynamic instructional approach. Assessment practices within co-teaching contexts also present significant challenges (Zach & Avugos, 2024). While co-teaching ideally involves shared responsibility in evaluating student learning, research shows that assessment is often handled individually rather than collaboratively. This lack of coordination can result in inconsistencies in grading, feedback, and monitoring of student progress. Furthermore, recent studies highlight that teachers may have differing assessment philosophies, which can complicate the implementation of unified evaluation strategies. Teacher culture and interpersonal dynamics significantly influence co-teaching practices, particularly in communication and collaboration (Kervinen et al., 2022). The study found that trust, mutual respect, and shared beliefs about teaching are essential in sustaining effective co-teaching relationships. Similarly, other recent research highlights that co-teaching is not merely a structural arrangement but a relational practice that requires continuous negotiation and adaptation between teachers.

The reviewed literature establishes that co-teaching is a widely recognized approach in inclusive education, contributing to improved instructional practices and enhanced student learning outcomes. Recent studies consistently highlight communication, collaborative planning, instruction, and assessment as essential and interrelated components of effective co-teaching. However, despite its growing implementation, the literature reveals several important gaps. Most existing studies focus on quantitative outcomes, with limited attention to teachers' lived experiences in actual co-teaching contexts. Additionally, the key dimensions of co-teaching are often examined separately, resulting in a fragmented understanding of the practice. There is also a lack of localized qualitative research that captures how contextual factors influence co-teaching implementation in specific settings. Furthermore, limited studies explore how teachers' profiles relate to their experiences in co-teaching.

Given these gaps, the present study provides a holistic and context-specific qualitative exploration of teachers' experiences in co-teaching, offering deeper insights into its practical implementation across communication, planning, instruction, and assessment.

Theoretical Framework

This study is anchored on the Sociocultural Learning Theory of Vygotsky (1978), which is highly suitable for qualitative research as it emphasizes the importance of social interaction, shared meaning-making, and the co-construction of knowledge within a cultural and collaborative context.

Sociocultural Learning Theory posits that learning and professional development occur through interaction with others, where individuals construct understanding through dialogue, collaboration, and participation in shared activities. In the context of co-teaching, this theory provides a strong lens for examining how teachers engage in joint practices such as communication, collaborative planning, instruction, and assessment. These dimensions reflect socially mediated processes where teachers negotiate roles, exchange ideas, and co-develop instructional strategies. The relevance of this theory to the present study lies in its focus on lived experiences and social processes, which are central to qualitative inquiry. Co-teaching is not merely a structural arrangement, but a relational practice shaped by interactions, shared meanings, and contextual factors. Through this lens, teachers' experiences are understood as products of ongoing collaboration, influenced by their professional relationships and the environment in which they operate.

Conceptual Framework

In qualitative research, the framework does not aim to establish causal relationships but instead provides a structure for understanding how various elements of the phenomenon are interconnected. The teacher profile, which includes age, sex, educational attainment, and length of service, serves as a contextual variable that helps describe and situate the participants' experiences. These characteristics are considered important in shaping how teachers perceive, interpret, and engage in co-teaching practices. The core of the framework focuses on teachers' experiences in co-teaching, particularly in the areas of communication, collaborative planning, instruction, and assessment. These dimensions represent the essential processes through which co-teaching is enacted and experienced in actual classroom settings. Communication facilitates the exchange of ideas and coordination between co-teachers, while collaborative planning ensures the alignment of goals, strategies, and learning activities. Instruction reflects the shared delivery of

lessons and the implementation of teaching strategies, whereas assessment involves the joint evaluation of student learning and progress. These components are viewed as interrelated and dynamic, collectively shaping the overall experience of co-teaching.

The framework assumes that teachers' experiences are socially constructed through interaction and collaboration, and that their profiles provide meaningful context for understanding variations in these experiences. A comprehensive understanding of co-teaching as a lived and collaborative professional practice emerges through examining these elements together.

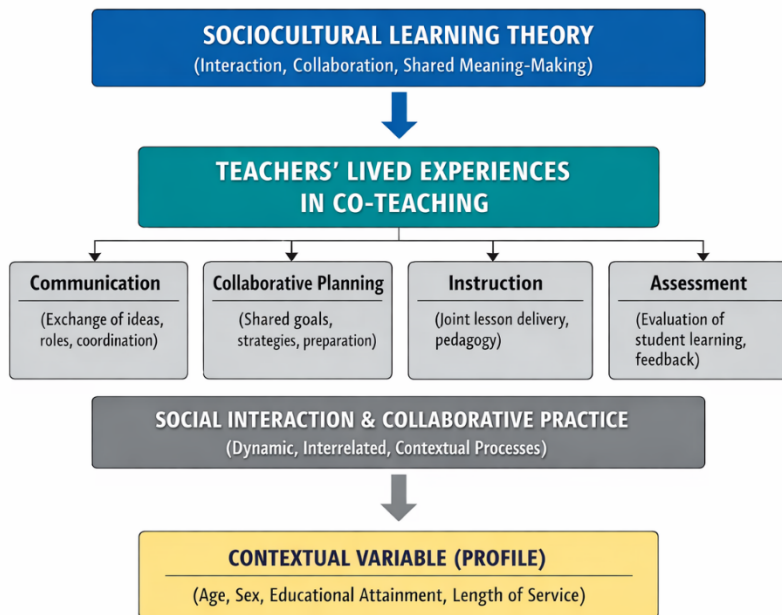


Figure 1. Research Paradigm

Statement of the Problem

Co-teaching is widely recognized as an effective approach in promoting inclusive education and strengthening collaborative teaching practices in diverse classroom settings. It enhances instructional delivery and addresses the varied needs of learners through shared responsibility among teachers. However, despite its increasing adoption, many teachers encounter challenges in effectively implementing co-teaching, particularly in the areas of communication, collaborative planning, instruction, and assessment. These challenges often result in inconsistent practices and limit the full potential of co-teaching in improving teaching and learning outcomes.

Existing studies have largely focused on student achievement and instructional effectiveness, with limited attention to teachers' lived experiences in co-teaching contexts. Furthermore, many studies examine specific components of co-teaching in isolation, resulting in a fragmented understanding of how these key dimensions function as interconnected processes in actual classroom practice. There is also a lack of context-specific qualitative research that captures how teachers experience and navigate co-teaching in real educational settings, particularly in relation to their professional profiles.

Given these gaps, there is a need to explore teachers' experiences in co-teaching to gain deeper insights into its practical implementation. Understanding these experiences, including the challenges encountered and strategies employed, is essential in informing improvements in collaborative teaching practices and strengthening the implementation of co-teaching in inclusive education.

Research Objectives

General Objective

To examine the profile of teacher-participants and explore their lived experiences in co-teaching practices.

Specific Objectives

1. To determine the profile of the teacher-participants in terms of age, sex, educational attainment, and length of service.
2. To explore the experiences of teacher-participants in co-teaching practices in terms of communication, collaborative planning, instruction, and assessment.
3. To identify the challenges encountered by teachers in implementing co-teaching practices.
4. To analyze how teachers respond to and manage these challenges in their co-teaching experiences.

Research Questions

1. What is the profile of the teacher-participants in terms of age, sex, educational attainment, and length of service?
2. How do teacher-participants describe their experiences in co-teaching practices in terms of communication, collaborative planning, instruction, and assessment?
3. What challenges do teachers encounter in the implementation of co-teaching practices?
4. How do teachers manage or respond to these challenges in their co-teaching experiences?

METHODS

Research Design

This study employed a qualitative phenomenological research design, as it is well-suited for examining teachers' lived experiences in co-teaching practices. Phenomenology emphasizes the exploration of how individuals perceive, interpret, and construct meaning from their experiences within a specific phenomenon. Given that the study focuses on teachers' experiences in communication, collaborative planning, instruction, and assessment, a design capable of capturing depth, meaning, and subjective interpretation is necessary. Co-teaching, as a collaborative and interaction-driven practice, involves complex interpersonal dynamics that cannot be fully understood through quantitative measures alone. Thus, a phenomenological approach enables a comprehensive examination of teachers' experiences in authentic classroom contexts, including the challenges encountered and the meanings associated with their collaborative practices.

Population and Sampling

The participants of this study comprised 20 teachers currently engaged in co-teaching practices in Odessa, Texas. These individuals were drawn from schools implementing inclusive education, where collaborative teaching is actively practiced. Focusing on teachers is appropriate, as they are directly involved in the phenomenon under investigation and are therefore positioned to provide rich, first-hand accounts of their experiences in communication, collaborative planning, instruction, and assessment.

A purposive sampling technique was employed to select the participants. This approach enabled the deliberate inclusion of individuals with relevant knowledge and direct experience in co-teaching. The inclusion criteria specified that participants must: (1) be currently practicing co-teaching, (2) have at least one year of experience in a co-teaching setting, and (3) be willing to participate and share their experiences. These criteria ensured the selection of participants capable of providing meaningful and in-depth insights aligned with the study's objectives.

Instrument

A researcher-made semi-structured interview guide was used as the primary data collection instrument. It was designed to capture teachers' experiences in co-teaching, particularly in communication, collaborative planning, instruction, and assessment. The semi-structured format allowed flexibility while ensuring that key areas were addressed. The instrument underwent content validation by three experts: a qualitative research professor, a school administrator, and an experienced co-teaching teacher. They evaluated the guide based on clarity, relevance, and

alignment with the study objectives. Their feedback led to revisions in wording, organization, and content, ensuring that the instrument was appropriate and effective for gathering meaningful data.

Data Collection

A semi-structured interview was utilized as the primary method of data collection. Guided by a validated interview protocol, the process facilitated the systematic exploration of teacher-participants' experiences in co-teaching while allowing sufficient flexibility for the emergence of detailed and nuanced responses. Prior to participation, informed consent was secured, and all interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed to ensure accuracy in data analysis.

The data collection process lasted within a two-week timeframe, which allowed for the efficient scheduling and completion of all interview sessions. This duration supported the acquisition of comprehensive and contextually grounded data reflective of participants' lived experiences.

Interview sessions were carried out in selected school settings where co-teaching practices are implemented. To maintain confidentiality and minimize potential disruptions, interviews were conducted in controlled environments such as faculty rooms or designated offices. When in-person interaction was not possible, online platforms were utilized as an alternative mode of data collection. Each interview session had an approximate duration of 30 to 60 minutes.

Treatment of Data

The study employed thematic analysis following the approach of Braun and Clarke (2006) to systematically analyze the qualitative data. This method was selected for its flexibility and suitability in identifying patterns and themes within participants' narratives. The analysis began with a familiarization phase, during which the transcribed interview data were repeatedly reviewed to achieve a comprehensive understanding of the participants' responses. This was followed by generating initial codes, where meaningful segments of the data related to co-teaching experiences were identified and labeled. Subsequently, the analysis proceeded to the theme development stage, wherein related codes were systematically organized into broader categories that represent significant aspects of the participants' experiences. The themes were defined and named, focusing on capturing the essence of teachers' experiences in communication, collaborative planning, instruction, and assessment. To ensure the trustworthiness of the data, credibility was established through prolonged engagement and careful transcription of interviews, while dependability and confirmability were supported through systematic coding and peer review of emerging themes.

Ethical Considerations

Ethical standards were strictly observed throughout the conduct of this study. An informed consent was given for all participants. Each teacher-participant was provided with a clear explanation of the study's purpose, procedures, and their role in the research. They were informed that participation was voluntary and that they could withdraw at any time without any consequences. Consent was obtained in writing before the conduct of the interviews. In addition, formal permission was secured from the concerned school authorities prior to conducting the study. Approval to access participants and conduct interviews within the school setting was obtained to ensure institutional compliance. Participants were also assured of confidentiality and anonymity, and data were used solely for academic purposes.

RESULTS and DISCUSSION

This section provides the analysis and interpretation of the data obtained from the informants. The results are presented through emerging themes, each systematically examined and accompanied by corresponding implications. The discussion is organized according to the sequence of the statement of the problem to maintain consistency with the research objectives. Such an arrangement facilitates a coherent integration of participants' narratives with related literature, thereby strengthening the depth and clarity of the analysis.

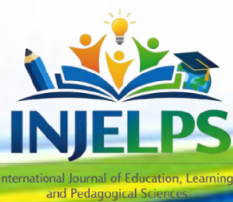


Table 1
Profile of Teacher-Participants

PROFILE	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
Age		
21-29	7	35
30-39	4	20
40-49	6	30
50-59	3	15
Total	20	100
Sex		
Male	4	20
Female	16	80
Total	20	100
Highest Educational Attainment		
Bachelor's degree	15	75
With master's units	5	25
Total	20	100
Length of Service		
<10 years	13	65
11-20 years	4	20
21-30 years	3	15
Total	20	100

The profile of the teacher-respondents shows a diverse distribution in terms of age, with representation across early, middle, and later stages of professional life. A notable portion of the participants falls within the younger age group, suggesting the presence of relatively early-career teachers, while a substantial number also belong to more experienced age brackets. This indicates that the study captures perspectives from teachers with varying levels of maturity and professional exposure, which may influence how co-teaching is experienced and practiced.

In terms of sex, the group is predominantly female, reflecting the common demographic trend in the teaching profession where female educators comprise the majority. This distribution may have implications for collaborative dynamics, communication styles, and shared teaching practices within co-teaching environments.

Regarding educational attainment, most participants hold a bachelor's degree, while a smaller proportion has pursued graduate studies. This suggests that while the majority meet the standard qualifications for teaching, there is a growing engagement in professional advancement through further education. Such differences may shape teachers' approaches to instructional strategies, collaboration, and reflective practices in co-teaching.

As to length of service, the majority of respondents have less than ten years of teaching experience, indicating that many are relatively new to the profession. At the same time, a smaller group of more experienced teachers is also represented. This combination allows for a comparison of insights between novice and seasoned educators, particularly in how they navigate co-teaching practices. Less experienced teachers may rely more on collaboration for support, while more experienced teachers may contribute established practices and classroom management strategies.

These profile characteristics are not merely descriptive but provide meaningful context for interpreting teachers' lived experiences in co-teaching. Variations in age, sex, educational attainment, and length of service shape how teachers engage in key co-teaching processes such as communication, collaborative planning, instruction, and assessment. For instance, less experienced teachers may depend more heavily on communication and collaborative planning for guidance, while those with advanced educational qualifications may demonstrate greater confidence in instructional decision-making and assessment practices. Similarly, differences in professional experience may influence how roles are negotiated and how instructional responsibilities are shared.

1. Lived experiences in co-teaching along communication

Theme

Collaborative teaching culture

This theme describes the presence of a supportive and cooperative environment among co-teachers, characterized by open communication, shared responsibilities, and mutual engagement in instructional practices. Participants emphasized the importance of consistent interaction and resource-sharing as essential elements in fostering effective co-teaching. Sample responses illustrate this dynamic:

R1: "We consistently communicate openly about our teaching strategies and students' needs."

R2: "We effectively share resources and materials to enhance our instructional practices"

These responses indicate that collaborative teaching culture is built on continuous dialogue and active sharing of instructional responsibilities. Teachers who engage in open communication are better able to align their teaching approaches and respond to students' diverse learning needs. Resource sharing further strengthens collaboration, as it allows co-teachers to maximize available materials and strategies to improve instruction.

This finding is supported by recent studies which highlight that effective communication and collaboration are fundamental to successful co-teaching (Strogilos et al., 2022; Jortveit & Kovač, 2022). Research suggests that when teachers maintain open lines of communication and share instructional resources, they are more likely to create cohesive and inclusive learning environments. Such practices contribute to improved instructional planning and more responsive teaching strategies.

The presence of a collaborative teaching culture enhances the overall effectiveness of co-teaching. It promotes shared accountability, reduces instructional gaps, and supports more coordinated delivery of lessons. Schools that foster this type of culture are more likely to sustain successful co-teaching practices, ultimately benefiting both teachers and learners. These findings suggest that teachers may benefit from structured communication protocols in co-teaching environments. School leaders and curriculum planners may consider integrating collaborative communication strategies into instructional frameworks and professional development programs to strengthen inclusive classroom practices.

2. Lived experiences in co-teaching along collaborative planning

Theme

Structured and Responsive Co-Teaching

This theme presents how teachers engage in organized and flexible co-teaching practices through intentional planning and the use of collaborative tools. It reflects the ability of co-teachers to structure their instructional processes while remaining responsive to the needs of students and the demands of the classroom.

Sample responses illustrate this practice:

R6: "We co-develop lesson plans, ensuring that both teachers contribute to the content and structure."

R9: "We utilize collaborative planning tools like shared documents, to streamline our planning process."

These responses suggest that effective co-teaching involves deliberate and shared planning processes where

both teachers actively participate in designing instruction. The use of collaborative tools further supports efficiency and organization, enabling teachers to coordinate their roles and responsibilities more effectively. Such practices indicate a structured approach to co-teaching that enhances clarity, consistency, and preparedness in lesson delivery.

This finding aligns with recent educational literature which emphasizes that collaborative planning is a critical component of successful co-teaching. Studies indicate that structured planning allows teachers to align instructional goals, select appropriate strategies, and anticipate student needs (King-Sears et al., 2021; Wong, 2023). At the same time, responsiveness is demonstrated through the ability of teachers to adjust plans based on real-time classroom situations, ensuring that instruction remains relevant and effective.

Structured and responsive co-teaching supports more coherent and adaptive instruction. It enables teachers to work systematically while remaining flexible in addressing diverse learners. This approach strengthens instructional quality and ensures that co-teaching is not only well-organized but also responsive to the evolving needs of students. These results imply that curriculum developers and school administrators may play a critical role in institutionalizing collaborative planning by allocating time and providing structured planning tools. Embedding co-planning mechanisms within curriculum design may enhance instructional coherence and responsiveness.

3. Lived experiences in co-teaching along instruction and assessment

Theme

Data-Informed and Responsive Teaching

This theme describes how teachers utilize assessment data and classroom evidence to guide their instructional decisions and adjust teaching strategies to meet students' learning needs. It highlights the role of continuous monitoring, feedback, and reflection in ensuring that instruction remains responsive and effective within a co-teaching environment. Sample responses are shown below:

R4: "We employ a variety of instructional strategies to engage all students meaningfully."

R8: "We analyze student performance data together to inform our instructional practices."

These responses indicate that co-teachers actively engage in analyzing student data to inform their instructional practices. The use of assessment results allows teachers to identify learning gaps, monitor progress, and implement targeted interventions. This reflects a responsive approach to teaching where instruction is continuously adjusted based on evidence rather than fixed plans.

This finding is supported by recent educational research which emphasizes the importance of data-driven instruction in improving student outcomes (Leibur & Saks, 2025). Studies highlight that when teachers collaboratively analyze assessment data, they are better able to design appropriate interventions and provide differentiated instruction (Adlit & Adlit, 2023). In co-teaching settings, shared responsibility in assessment further strengthens consistency in evaluating student performance and enhances instructional alignment.

Data-informed and responsive teaching promotes more effective and learner-centered instruction. It enables teachers to make informed decisions, address diverse learning needs, and ensure that instructional strategies are aligned with students' progress. This approach reinforces the role of assessment as a tool for improving teaching and learning rather than merely measuring performance. These findings highlight the importance of integrating data-driven instruction into teacher education and professional development programs. Policymakers and school leaders may support this by promoting assessment literacy and collaborative evaluation practices within inclusive education systems.

Conclusions

The study revealed that co-teaching is a collaborative and dynamic instructional practice shaped by communication, planning, instruction, and assessment. A strong collaborative teaching culture enhances instructional alignment and supports inclusive learning environments. Structured and responsive planning contributes to more coherent and adaptable teaching practices, while data-informed instruction strengthens decision-making and learner support.

These findings contribute to the improvement of teaching and learning processes by emphasizing the importance of collaboration and reflective practice in inclusive classrooms. The study also informs curriculum development by highlighting the need to embed co-teaching structures and collaborative planning mechanisms within

instructional design. In terms of educational leadership, the results underscore the role of school leaders in fostering a supportive environment for co-teaching through professional development and institutional support.

Furthermore, the study contributes to pedagogical innovation by promoting data-driven and collaborative instructional approaches. It also supports teacher professional development by identifying key competencies required for effective co-teaching, including communication, shared planning, and assessment literacy.

Recommendations

Teachers may establish regular and structured communication routines, such as scheduled planning sessions, to ensure alignment in instructional goals and strategies. The use of collaborative tools (e.g., shared digital platforms) may enhance coordination and efficiency in lesson planning.

School leaders may allocate dedicated time within teachers' schedules for collaborative planning and reflection. They may also implement targeted professional development programs focusing on co-teaching strategies, communication skills, and data-driven instruction.

Curriculum developers may integrate co-teaching frameworks into curriculum design by embedding collaborative planning structures, differentiated instruction strategies, and shared assessment practices.

Educational institutions may develop clear guidelines and support systems for co-teaching implementation, including defined roles, mentoring programs, and coaching mechanisms for teachers.

Policymakers may strengthen inclusive education policies by providing resources, training programs, and monitoring systems that support effective and consistent co-teaching practices across schools.

Teacher education programs may incorporate co-teaching models, collaborative skills training, and assessment literacy into pre-service and in-service teacher development curricula.

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