

# CO-TEACHING STRATEGIES AND THEIR APPLICATION IN REGIONAL EDUCATION AND ADULT EDUCATION

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## Abstract:

Co-teaching, i.e. the joint action of multiple educators in a classroom team or adult education, has many models. These strategies define the involvement of individual educators in teaching and point to the possibilities for guiding teaching. In practice, co-teaching can be encountered at all levels of the educational system. Co-teaching is applied in the Czech Republic in regional education, in tertiary education and its potential is also in continuing adult education. The text of the study first introduces the basic strategies of co-teaching and then discusses examples of the application of co-teaching in regional education in the Czech Republic and the possibilities of its use in initial (here tertiary) and continuing adult education, focusing on the group of (future) teachers as key elements of the educational system. The text deals exclusively with the application of the traditional form of co-teaching in face-to-face teaching.

## **Introduction**

The text of the study is devoted to the traditional form of co-teaching and its use in the practice of regional education, tertiary and continuing adult education. Traditional or also classical co-teaching usually takes place in the full-time form of teaching in regional education, or it is part of full-time and/or face-to-face teaching (within the combined form of study) at universities and in continuing adult education (Veteška, Kursch, Svobodová, Tureckiová and Paulovčáková, 2020). The aim of this study was to define co-teaching and identify its basic models/strategies as described in the literature, especially for application in initial formal education with possible overlaps to other phases of lifelong learning (Chapter 1). The authors have also selected and briefly described examples of the application of co-teaching in the practice of different types of schools within the regional education system in the Czech Republic (Chapter 2) and in tertiary and continuing adult education (Chapter 3). In the latter chapter, attention was paid in particular to the application of co-teaching in the professional education of future teachers, and the possibilities of continuing development of educators in this innovative teaching method were presented, again mainly – but not exclusively – in the Czech Republic. For the sake of completeness, we would like to add that the Department of Andragogy and Educational Management (Faculty of Education, Charles University) is currently investigating the effectiveness of the application of virtual co-teaching (see for example Kursch, 2021) and gradually developing a methodology for its application in the practice of regional education. However, these were not included in this study and are the subject of further investigation.

The basic method used in this text was the study of electronic and printed documents that deal with the issue of traditional co-teaching. The databases used were google.cz (for examples from the Czech environment) and scholar.google.com. The international term co-teaching was first used as keywords for Czech documents. However, this did not bring the desired results and was eventually replaced by the more common team, tandem and pair teaching in Czech. Subsequently, illustrative examples were manually selected for each type of school, and for preservice teacher education and continuing education of teaching staff in co-teaching so that the selected examples were up-to-date (for the previous 5 years, i.e. since 2017). For the resources in English, the keyword co-teaching has been retained and supplemented with team teaching in the following combinations: co-teaching in tertiary/higher education, co-teaching in doctoral education, co-teaching in future teacher education, team teaching in teacher education. Relevant sources in English were selected for the study that describe models/strategies of co-teaching in its traditional face-to-face form and justify the importance of using and adopting co-teaching in tertiary preservice teacher education and in continuing teacher education.

## **1. Co-teaching – definition of the term and models/strategies**

The term co-teaching, sometimes referred to in the Czech environment as pair, tandem or team teaching, refers to a method of education in which a larger number of teachers participate in the educational process and school teaching. Benninghof (2012, p. 16) defines co-teaching as *"coordinated instructional practice in which two or more educators simultaneously work with a heterogeneous group of students in a general education classroom"*.

Dove and Honigsfeld (2018) define co-teaching similarly, but also add that co-teaching involves the overall process of preparing and delivering the lesson – through the planning, the allocation of individual teacher roles, the actual teaching with students in the classroom, its subsequent evaluation, feedback and assessment in the next planning of the teaching day.

In addition to the application of co-teaching in regional education, it can also be used in tertiary education and continuing adult education. The definition of co-teaching by the active participation of multiple educators who simultaneously act in different roles in education is given by Turkich, Greive and Cozens (2014, p. 2) for the role of the lecturer and the mentor and in relation to the goal of such a co-teaching activity as *"the lecturer and the co-teaching mentor formed a co-teaching partnership to deliver the unit, with joint responsibility for the learning outcomes and the teaching evaluations"*. Similarly, it would certainly be possible to combine other roles of educators (e.g. lecturer and tutor, theorist/academic with practitioner, less experienced and more experienced educator – see also the models or strategies of co-teaching below). The possibilities of co-teaching in tertiary and continuing adult education are also explored in more detail in Chapter 3 of this study.

Co-teaching in educational practice is therefore understood as the presence and participation of a larger number of teachers in a school classroom, or a pair or team of educators in tertiary and continuing adult education. Co-teaching can be implemented in several strategies/models. These differ in the involvement of the teachers/lecturers present in the teaching, but also in the overall distribution of teaching within the classroom/group of learning individuals. Cook and Friend (1995, In: Lusk, Sayman, Zolkoski, Carrero and Lewis-Chui, 2016) bring these strategies to life in an application to early/initial formal education. In addition, for each type, they also present the advantages of the strategy, but also point out challenges or problems that may arise.

### **1. One teach, one observe**

One teacher leads the lessons, the other observes the progress of the lessons and collects data. In the preparation phase, they decide together what information will be useful for them and collect it, they also set up a system for collecting this data and analyse it together.

This strategy allows the teacher to collect the necessary data – this is always the focus of the observing teacher, who also reflects on which pupils are performing the tasks set. However, this model of co-teaching can create a feeling in the observing teacher that he/she is not a full-fledged teacher, but a mere observer. Even the pupils may not perceive the other (observing) teacher as a real teacher and thus may not perceive him/her as an authority.

### **2. One teach, one assist**

In the classroom, teachers divide responsibilities – one always has the main responsibility, while the other observes students or provides assistance to students as needed.

The advantage of this strategy is that it is relatively simple to implement. Teachers take turns in their main role and divide lesson planning accordingly. Thanks to the work of the second (assistant) teacher, all students receive support. Even in this case, the students may question the teacher's work, so it is important to ensure that the main and secondary roles are rotated between teachers so that there is an equal rotation of leadership.

### **3. Station teaching**

Teachers divide the curriculum into two or three stations and present their part of the lesson at these separate stations. If the students are older and more able to work alone, they can use the third station for their independent work or partner work with their classmates.

As students rotate between stations and thus work in smaller groups, they can benefit from a more personal and individual approach from the teacher. Similarly, disadvantaged students can be better included in this approach (they mostly benefit from smaller class sizes and possible individualisation).

Because pupils are being educated in different parts of the classroom at the same time, communication noise may be present, which may cause a poorer understanding of the material being discussed. In addition, teachers may have different levels of pacing in their explanations within each unit, which can cause problems with the timing of alternating between units – one group has to wait while the other has to finish explaining the material.

### **4. Parallel teaching**

Teachers divide the pupils of a class and teach them the same information at the same time, this type of co-teaching also allows for a lower number of pupils per teacher.

Parallel teaching allows pupils to participate more in the practical aspects of the lesson, they can consult the material discussed together. However, as with the previous type of strategy, more communication noise tends to be present in the classroom, problematic for sustaining attention.

## 5. Alternative Teaching

One teacher works with a small group (e.g. 3-8 pupils), while the other teacher is in charge of the rest of the class. Small group teaching may consist of revision or preparation for the lesson.

Pupils with disabilities benefit greatly from alternative teaching, as they are also given individual attention. In a small group, pupils can communicate with each other and with the teacher. This alternative type of co-teaching strategy can stigmatise pupils with disabilities as they need more repetition and re-explanation of the material.

## 6. Teaming

Both teachers provide the same interpretation of the material to the students, and within this approach, teachers can alternate – one leading the lesson and the other taking notes for further lesson planning.

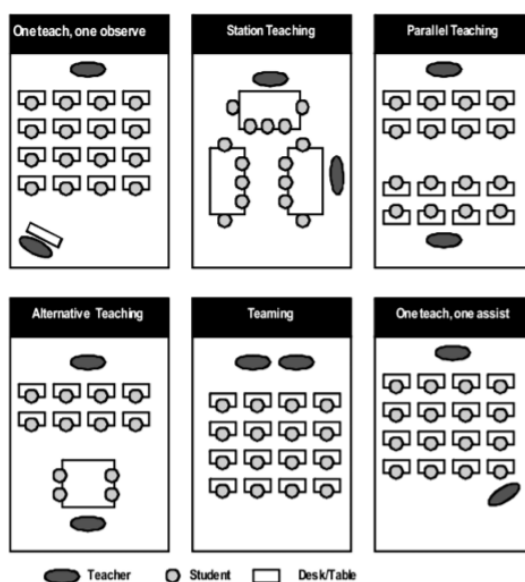
Teaming requires a high level of commitment from teachers and a high level of mutual trust between teachers.

The different approaches suit individual teachers and classroom teams. If a school decides to introduce co-teaching, it must select suitable co-teachers who will benefit from working together and will support each other in planning and delivering the lessons.

Staněk, Karvánková, Popjaková, Kuřimská and Vančura (2017) provide further insight into the practice of team teaching used in regional education. In addition to the presence of a larger number of teachers, it can be a thematic linking of several subjects, which are connected by a single topic discussed during the teaching.

**Figure 1: Co-teaching strategies**

*M. Friend et al.*



Source: Friend & Bursuck, (2009, p. 92, In: Friend, Cook, Hurley-Chamberlain and Shamberger, 2010, p. 12)

## 2. Co-teaching – examples from the practice of regional education in the Czech Republic

Co-teaching is applied in many educational institutions across the Czech Republic. This chapter will summarise some examples from the practice of schools that use co-teaching in their educational activities.

The Royal Kindergarten and Primary School profiles itself as bilingual – Czech and English teachers teach together, so both are native speakers. Not only does their working together transfer language skills from the native speaker, the presence of two teachers helps pupils who need more support. (Zajímavosti a přednosti školy, 2022)

The Vitae Primary School (Jižní Město, Prague) uses co-teaching to an above-standard extent – each class has a tandem of two class teachers, thanks to which the children have a really big space for individualization of teaching and addressing the current needs of the pupils. (Inovativní vzdělávání, 2020)

Dobronín Primary School incorporates a variety of trends into its educational process and participates in many projects; there is a well-run school parliament, formative assessment and paired learning. The school applies this in the subject of English language – teachers reflect that pair teaching is of great importance for them not only for the implementation itself, but also for the evaluation of students' performance and further planning of teaching (Dobrá praxe v Dobroníně: Párová výuka, školní parlament i projekty, 2020)

Another good example from practice is the Kunratice Primary School, where pair teaching has been applied in practice for over 10 years. Here, paired teaching is used with pupils from first to third grade. The use of paired teaching is most suitable for general subjects – these have clearly defined objectives to be achieved by each pupil. (Beran, 2021)

Staněk, Karvánková, Popjaková, Kuřimská and Vančura (2017) describe the application of team teaching in the Bohumil Hrabal Primary School. Here, they incorporate team teaching into the geography curriculum and link it to music education – for example, Smetana's Vltava can be a central theme. In addition to learning about the personality of this important composer, pupils can also learn about the Vltava River as part of a second subject.

In addition to their own staff, secondary schools also use the presence of practitioners in their teaching. The Gymnasium in Žďár nad Sázavou uses the presence of a lawyer in teaching the basics of social sciences. The Secondary School of Arts and Crafts Jihlava-Helenín uses the presence of a fashion designer for the implementation of a project within the subject Design of Clothing and Fashion Accessories in practical teaching. (Spolupráce s odborníkem z praxe – (nejen) tandemová výuka, 2022)

The presence of practitioners is widely used both in secondary vocational schools and in higher vocational schools – IT specialists, lawyers, gardeners or hairdressers can be involved in practice. All of them provide insight into practice from their profession, and often work with students in the context of their workplace, where students can try out their own experience.

### 3. Possibilities of using co-teaching in tertiary and continuing adult education – examples of preservice and continuing teacher education

In addition to the above examples of how co-teaching can be used in regional education practice, it can also be applied in various forms of adult education. Given the diversity of possible learning activities, in this text we will focus primarily on the application of classical co-teaching to a group of future and current teachers. The rationale for this selection was the assumption that it is mainly teachers who use co-teaching in their practice. If they are to use it effectively and of high quality, it is appropriate that it should be part of their professional preparation (e.g. in the form of teaching practice) and continuing education. The application of co-teaching in adult education is certainly more complex and not limited to the area of practice described here.

If we proceed chronologically in giving examples of the application of co-teaching within the levels of the education system, we will focus our attention first on tertiary education. There are certainly opportunities for co-teaching in this context, for example, arising from the requirement to link theoretical knowledge gained through study at university with its practical application, and also, for example, from the mentor-mentee relationship (when an experienced and a less experienced teacher/academic work together in the same or similar subjects at university and when there is a mentor-mentee relationship between them), or when different subjects taught within a university department or institute are linked, etc. (Turkic, Greive and Cozens, 2014; Veteška, Kursch, Svobodová, Tureckiová and Paulovčáková, 2020)

Various types of teaching practice are also an important part of the professional preparation of future teachers. Their successful provision (planning), their own course and evaluation require a continuous cooperation of universities with faculty or clinical schools. Although the method of co-teaching is not directly mentioned in the methodical materials of universities on pedagogical practices, the requirement of cooperation between academic and pedagogical staff and the ability to reflect on the preservice teacher is evident from them (see for example the material of the Faculty of Education of Charles University – *Koncepce a pojetí pedagogických praxí v kontextu vzdělávání učitelů*, online).

A foreign example of the use of co-teaching in professional education and continuing skills development for teachers is given in an article by Diana (2014). The author states that *"although co-teaching can have a positive impact on all stages of the continuum /of teacher development/, integrating co-teaching during preservice teacher education programs will have a long-term effect"* (Diana, 2014, p. 77). Graziano (2012) makes a similar point about the need to develop co-teaching skills in preservice teacher education when he writes that *"preparing preservice teachers to be effective co-teachers needs to be a significant component of teacher education curricula in higher education"* (Graziano, 2012, pp. 109-110).

The possibility of using co-teaching in university practice is certainly not limited to undergraduate education. Co-teaching is also used in doctoral studies. Chanmugam and Gerlach (2013) give the example of two doctoral students who co-developed and co-taught an undergraduate course. A common variant is of course the involvement of a doctoral student in the teaching of a more experienced academic.

Examples of the use of co-teaching by teachers of different types of schools in the Czech Republic have already been described in this text. Teachers also have the opportunity to acquire competences in co-teaching within the framework of continuing education for teaching staff.

Courses accredited by the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports are provided for them, for example, by the Libchavy Academy (Tandemová výuka – párové učení /učitelská dílna/, online) or DVA (two) education (Tandemové učení, online).

## **Conclusion**

Co-teaching is used in practice in all levels and types of formal education as well as in other forms of lifelong learning. It is a suitable method for individualizing teaching, for working with smaller numbers of students. This is very useful, for example, in a team that includes a pupil with special educational needs. However, co-teaching can also be used in mainstream schools in the context of regional education.

In general education and initial vocational education, the importance and effectiveness of co-teaching as a coordinated collaboration between at least two teachers and a group of pupils is gradually increasing. Other practitioners are also entering the educational process, working together with teachers to guide pupils and students in acquiring the necessary practical skills.

Responsibility for planning, implementing and evaluating co-teaching is shared between a larger number of teachers and/or other educational professionals. In addition, co-teachers bring their own competencies, often with different teaching styles, to the classroom to suit a larger number of pupils and students. Co-teaching also brings the possibility of linking multiple school subjects, for example geography and music education, history and geography, etc. Co-teaching in the presence of multiple teachers can also be included when a new or novice teacher joins the school. Mutual cooperation between new teachers and their more experienced colleagues is enriching for both parties.

Models (strategies) and concrete examples of the application of co-teaching in the practice of regional education in the Czech Republic can be used in tertiary and continuing adult education. For this study, we have also used several examples from the practice of applying and adopting co-teaching in the professional preparation and continuing education of teachers.

Currently, the possibilities of using co-teaching also in hybrid or virtual forms of education are being developed. However, these were not the focus of this study, although 'classical' or traditional co-teaching may be part of a blended learning format or inspire a virtual form of co-teaching. It is essential that the application of a particular co-teaching model is beneficial for all parties involved – whether co-teachers, academics, practitioners involved in teaching, adult education lecturers, or (indeed) especially their pupils, students and adult participants in initial and continuing adult education.

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