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Lauren H. Mead
Eastern Michigan University, mead.lh@gmail.com

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Faculty Perspectives of Student-Faculty Collaborative Course Design

Abstract

This qualitative research study explored speech-language pathology (SLP) faculty perspectives of collaborative course design (CCD). For the purposes of this study, the term “faculty” includes all those who teach at the university level. Student-faculty CCD offers benefits to course instructors and students; however, research regarding this topic is lacking in the field of SLP. Interviews with faculty members in SLP programs explored faculty perspectives regarding the incorporation of student input into course design as well as anticipated benefits and challenges involved. The results of this study identified several factors related to faculty reluctance to use CCD, including reluctance to share control, views of students, institutional expectations, planning styles, and uncertainty of how to implement this type of course design. While the participants expressed reluctance to use CCD, they acknowledged potential benefits, such as valuable student input, growth for the professor, increased student engagement, and clinical application. Participants also suggested ideas for how to implement CCD. Lastly, the participants identified information that they would need to implement student-faculty CCD, which has implications for future research.

Keywords

Collaboration/teaching and learning/course design/student-faculty collaboration/Pedagogy

Introduction

When designing courses, course instructors have many different things to take into consideration, from classroom time management to the content that should be taught. Even instructors who have been teaching for many years may try to improve their courses. Course instructors are taught to be specialists in their field, but are not always taught how to teach or to design courses (Ziegenfuss & Lawler, 2008). However, being an expert in a discipline does not mean that this knowledge will automatically transfer into effective teaching and learning (Brackenbury, Folkins, & Ginsberg, 2014). While doctoral students' experiences of being prepared to teach may differ depending on the type of university they attend, organized instruction regarding teaching pedagogy and course design is often not provided (Fink, 2003; Robinson & Hope, 2013). The field of Speech-Language Pathology (SLP) is no exception, and SLP professors are not always given the necessary groundwork in educational methods or planning (Hadley & Fulcomer, 2010). Possible ramifications of insufficient instruction in teaching could present obstacles to effective teaching and learning, including insufficient teaching development, a decline in student performance, and a lack of successful interactions (Bovill, Cook-Sather, & Felten, 2011; Fink, 2003; Robinson & Hope, 2013).

As society changes and evolves, the role of instructors also evolves, as do trends in teaching methods and course design. The role of instructors has shifted from relaying information to students to facilitating student learning, which places the focus on students. This is considered a student-centered approach to teaching and learning, and with this approach the value of designing and structuring learning experiences is emphasized (Brackenbury et al., 2014; Ziegenfuss & Lawler, 2008). This student-centered approach to teaching and learning is based on the theory of student voice. According to the theory of student voice, students possess noteworthy views of teaching and learning and are significant assets that should be enlisted as consultants and contributors to course design (Bovill et al., 2011; Cook-Sather, 2008; Fleming, 2015). In order to provide student-centered learning experiences and refine student learning, a theoretical shift in how instructors view teaching and learning is required (Barr & Tagg, 1995; Ziegenfuss & Lawler, 2008). The exploration of student insights requires power to be shared among instructors and students, and the idea that instructors are also learners in the classroom and can learn from their students is emphasized (Fielding, 1999; Fielding, 2001). Student-faculty collaboration is one way in which instructors can incorporate student insight into the students' education and therefore provide "a constructive, dynamic and socially-just education" (Carlile, 2012, p. 398).

Student-Faculty Collaborative Course Design

Student-faculty collaborative course design (CCD) typically involves one to two instructors, an academic planner, and between two and six students. Together, these individuals refine classroom procedures, course objectives, instructional design, and/or evaluation of learning. Through student-faculty CCD, students transition from the role of a passive learner to an active participant in their learning, while instructor awareness of student requirements and knowledge is increased (Bovill et al., 2011; Mihans, Long, & Felten, 2008). This type of collaboration redefines the dynamic among instructors and students requiring instructors to "become facilitators of change, creating learning situations where power was shared, not held" (Mihans et al., 2008, p. 2).

Student-faculty CCD requires a relationship in which instructors and students are viewed as reciprocal partners in the teaching and learning experience. Therefore, student-faculty CCD calls for a shift in the relationship of authority between faculty and students and challenges the current paradigm of course design. This shift may make instructors hesitant to implement CCD (Bovill et al., 2011; Hutchings, 2005; Mihans et al., 2008).

Benefits of Student-Faculty Collaborative Course Design

Research suggests several benefits of student-faculty CCD. Enlisting students as peers in course design can provide a more extensive knowledge of learning for both students and instructors. The collaborative process also changes the relationship between students and instructors into one involving joint dedication and cooperative endeavors, therefore enhancing student and instructor appreciation of each other (Bovill et al., 2011).

For instructors, the inclusion of students in course design provides access to student views regarding their needs and unique student experience. This entry to the student perspective of learning helps instructors develop a greater understanding of how and what students need to learn, which allows instructors to expand the ways in which they assist in student learning (Kane & Chimwayange, 2014). Thus, as instructors better understand student learning, their expectations of students are refined. Instructor commitment to learning may also be reinvigorated as instructors make connections with students.

For students, CCD could enhance student dedication to learning (Bovill, Cook-Sather, Felten, Millard, & Moore-Cherry, 2015). According to the theory of “student engagement” (Bovill et al., 2011, p. 134), active participation and dedication to learning are critical components of student achievement. In order to develop a collaborative partnership student engagement is necessary, and therefore is increased (Bovill et al., 2015). The transition from a passive role to one of active participation enhances student views and knowledge of what learning looks like, how learning is supported, and how learning is assessed. Students have the potential to become superior scholars when given a voice in their educational experiences, and when students take an active role in their learning their dedication to learning is enhanced (Bovill et al., 2011; Bovill et al., 2015; Cook-Sather, 2015; Hutchings, 2005). It has been suggested that active engagement and increased dedication to learning improve students’ “learning processes and outcomes” (Bovill et al., 2011, p. 134). Another benefit for students is increased commitment, incentive, and interest in learning (Bovill et al., 2011). Allowing students to provide input in their learning reinvigorates commitment to learning by increasing student ownership.

Challenges of Student-Faculty Collaborative Course Design

Although there are benefits to student-faculty collaboration, there are also potential downfalls to consider prior to implementing this type of course design (Bovill et al., 2011; Bovill et al., 2015; Cook-Sather, 2008). Students possess different levels of motivation and have different backgrounds related to learning. Therefore, students’ diverse views regarding learning should be considered in light of the students’ motivation and background. This may make it challenging for instructors to determine which students should be invited to participate. Some instructors may find it difficult to share control with students in order to develop a collaborative partnership, and this

could require instructors to reassess their views of students. Detachment of students from the course design process is another potential downfall if a positive partnership is not developed between instructors and students. Students may become disengaged if they feel that their views are not truly valued. Some students may not feel comfortable in a collaborative role if they are accustomed to and expect teachers to retain control of the course. Instructors may also find challenges associated with the institutions that they work for, and may feel that collaboration with students does not fit in with their institutional obligations. The time commitment needed may seem overwhelming for instructors who have high workloads, as faculty may feel that CCD is unrealistic due to pressures to meet certain requirements of their institution. Some course instructors may be hesitant to alter how they are accustomed to doing things. Several suggestions for maneuvering these potential downfalls and challenges in order to implement CCD are discussed below.

Suggestions for Implementing Student-Faculty Collaborative Course Design

For some faculty members, determining how to implement CCD may seem challenging. Therefore, several suggestions are offered to help guide instructors in the process (Bovill et al., 2011; Bovill, Felten, & Cook-Sather, 2014; Bovill et al., 2015; Cook-Sather, 2008). Employing the help of colleagues may be useful to determine situations in which collaboration at their individual university may be fitting, and faculty can “cultivate support” (Bovill et al., 2014, p. 4) with other faculty interested in collaborative work with students. Instructors that have not collaborated with students before, are unsure that collaboration aligns with their institutional obligations, or feel it may be unrealistic due to other obligations, are encouraged to start off with smaller collaborative projects. Establishing rapport is an important part of student-faculty collaboration, and instructors can begin to build rapport with students early on. Rapport can be built by emphasizing to students that their input is critical to the collaborative process. Instructors are also urged to appreciate the process involved with collaboration, and students should be encouraged to do the same. Additionally, in order to ensure that involvement in the process is significant, neither instructors nor students should feel pressured to be involved. Welcoming students as partners who have valuable contributions to make is crucial to the collaborative process. Therefore, instructors can focus on appreciating what each participant individually brings to the table in order to involve and embrace students as equals in the process. Finally, instructors must keep in mind that collaborative work with students is a dynamic process, and participating in the process once does not forever alter academic design.

Evidence has demonstrated that student-faculty CCD is an effective tool for student and faculty learning. Though students are valuable assets they are “rarely consulted about their educational experiences” (Bovill et al., 2011, p. 133; Bovill et al., 2015), and research regarding student-faculty CCD is lacking in the field of SLP. Thus, the purpose of this study was to explore SLP faculty perspectives of CCD to identify information that is necessary to overcome potential challenges and support the inclusion of students in their education.

Method

Participants. Participants in this study included six faculty members (four women, two men) representing five different SLP programs at universities in the Midwest. A small sample size was used due to the depth of the information sought by the researcher (Bogden & Biklen, 2007).

Potential participants were solicited from SLP department heads at Midwestern universities. No participants who expressed interest in participating were excluded from the study and all completed the university approved consent form prior to the interviews. Though participants engaged in interviews to provide data for this study any identifying information provided, including the participant's name and/or institution, was altered to maintain anonymity. Participants ranged in age from 30 to 59 years, with teaching experience ranging from 1 to 28 years (See Table 1). All participants had completed a doctorate program and were currently teaching SLP courses.

Table 1 Participants, years of teaching experience, and type of institution

Participant	Years of Experience	Institution Type (The Carnegie Classification of Institutions of Higher Education, 2017)
Robert	28	Public doctoral research university
Judy	24	Public higher doctoral research university
Kenneth	14	Public higher doctoral research university
Lindsay	6	Public larger programs master's university
Lucille	3	Public larger programs master's university
Barbara	1	Private not-for-profit larger programs master's university

Robert. Robert teaches at Shea University located in a rural town in the Midwest, with a predominately Caucasian demographic. Robert described his teaching style as “Didactic: I am sort of the talking head.” However, he questions if this is really the best teaching style.

Judy. Judy teaches at Earl University located in a rural city in the Midwest, with a largely Caucasian demographic. Judy feels that being a professor is “humbling,” and that “it is a constant process of figuring out how to do it better.” Judy also values student feedback and generally implements student input in her courses.

Kenneth. Kenneth also teaches at Earl University and welcomes student input. Kenneth has used collaborative course design in the past out of “necessity,” because he had a “really tight deadline” to develop the course design. He described his experience as “positive in the sense that I got to a better product right away.”

Lindsay. Lindsay teaches at Erickson University, located in a suburban setting in the Midwest with a predominately Caucasian demographic. When designing her courses Lindsay tries to think about “what would be feasible for students to do,” and alters her courses “a lot” based on student evaluations.

Lucille. Lucille has limited university teaching experience and is a professor at Erickson University, located in a suburban setting in the Midwest, with a mostly Caucasian demographic. Lucille has never taken any “formal teaching courses,” and stated that it “was difficult for students to shift” to her application-based teaching style.

Barbara. Barbara is a professor at Pauline University, located in a suburban setting in the Midwest, with a mainly Caucasian demographic. Barbara is new to being a professor and feels as though she is still trying to figure it out.

Procedures

The researcher interviewed each participant individually, in person, for approximately one hour. With the participants' permission, all interviews were audio recorded. A semi-structured interview format and open-ended questions were used to allow the participants to respond based on their unique point of view, and to allow the researcher to ask follow-up questions as necessary (Bogden & Biklen, 2007). Interviews included the following questions:

- Have faculty members used CCD?
- Would they consider using CCD if they have not used it previously?
- What potential benefits or barriers do faculty members anticipate?
- How much input do faculty members think students should have in course design, if any?
- What information would professors need in order to consider using CCD?

Data Analysis

Data analysis involved analysis of interview transcripts generated from the recordings of each interview. Transcriptions were read closely for consistency and emerging themes and codes were assigned to emerging themes (Bogden & Biklen, 2007). Once codes were established, all data collected were marked with the corresponding code and themes were developed based on the codes. Themes are "concept or theory that emerges from your data" (Bogden & Biklen, 2007, p. 200). After themes were developed, the data were interpreted to answer two questions: "what were the lessons learned" (Creswell, 2003, p. 194) and "what are the implications of my findings for practice?" (Bogden & Biklen, 2007, p. 197). The researcher solely completed all analysis of the data. Steps were taken to check for accuracy and credibility of findings by the use of peer debriefing and saturation. An SLP faculty mentor who has extensive experience with qualitative research in higher education practices was debriefed on the conclusions drawn from this study. Saturation, or "the point of data collection where the information you get becomes redundant" (Bogden & Biklen, 2007, p. 69) was used to verify that adequate data was collected.

Additionally, data were interpreted by considering the vocabulary of the social context in which these interviews took place in order to infer meaning behind the participant's explanations and provide a more in depth interpretation (Campbell, 1991; Mills, 1940). Mills (1940) theorized that different situations are navigated with a particular "vocabulary" that is considered appropriate for that social context. Consequently, the vocabulary of the social context is an important part of inferring the meaning behind one's motive, and can provide "a more sophisticated understanding of the variety of substantive motive forms that have in practice guided action" (Campbell, 1991, p. 96). Therefore, although some faculty members may use the vocabulary of "responsibility" or "knowledge" as reasons why they may not want to use student-faculty CCD, these reasons are not without reason themselves, and must be explored further.

Results

The participants in this study were generally reluctant to collaborate with students on course design, even though they acknowledged many benefits of student-faculty collaboration. Data analysis indicated three themes, including: reluctance to collaborate with students, acknowledgements of potential benefits, and suggested ideas for how to implement student-faculty CCD.

Reluctance to Collaborate with Students. Several of the participants expressed reluctance to collaborate with students on course design. Data analysis revealed that the participants' reluctance to collaborate with students was influenced by hesitation to share control with students, views of students, institutional expectations, planning style, and questions regarding how this type of course design could be implemented.

Control. Barbara felt that one of the main challenges with CCD is that “it takes some of the control from the professors.” Barbara revealed that collaborating on course design with students would make her “feel extremely vulnerable.” After her first semester teaching, Barbara received negative course evaluations that she described as “the most humiliating feeling” and “such an attack... very harsh,” leading Barbara to conclude that, “the student perspectives on the courses... they hurt sometimes and so I don't have thick enough skin to give a student that much control.” Even though Barbara is a new faculty member, she was not the only one who expressed reluctance to share control with students and the years of teaching experience were not found to have an impact on the reluctance to share control. Lindsay has been a professor for six years and while she was open to the idea of CCD, she expressed that sharing control with students “would be a little bit difficult.” She felt that it would be important to keep “a piece of the control and “retain the final say” to ensure that the final product was one that she was satisfied with. Robert thought that his 26 years of teaching experience might make it more difficult for him to be flexible and share control because even though he has “changed a lot” in the way that he does things, it has not been “in a collaborative kind of way.” Robert also acknowledged the potential vulnerability that comes with receiving student input on course evaluations when he stated, “I don't think students realize just how painful of a process that can be to look at those evaluations.”

Faculty views of students. Professors' perceptions of students contributed to their reluctance to collaborate with students. Some of the participants divulged that power relationships, student knowledge, and maturation level of students were areas impacting their reluctance to collaborate with students. Some participants questioned if students and faculty members could truly alter the traditional power dynamic in which the professor holds the power in the classroom and develop a collaborative partnership where power is shared. Robert was unsure if students and faculty members could overcome this “power relationship” and develop an “equal kind of relationship.” Therefore, he believed “it would take a special faculty person and special student” to develop a collaborative relationship. Lindsay also expressed concern that some students may not like CCD because it is “out of their comfort zone” and students might not be “comfortable or don't feel like they should say anything or speak out.”

The participants questioned whether students possess sufficient knowledge regarding teaching to offer valuable input. Barbara felt that “students are not the expert and they also don't have a very good understanding of teaching pedagogy.” Judy has found that sometimes “student input lacks experiences, so the students aren't always the best arbiters of what the best teaching is.” Judy

questioned, “How much we buy into students who drive things that we really have some expertise about that they wouldn’t have?” Kenneth felt that students’ lack of knowledge would lead to “deferment to me as the instructor” which would make it difficult to get students “meaningfully involved” in course design. The participants were reluctant to receive student input on course content and objectives. Robert stated, “Presumably I have the content because I have the Ph.D.” Lindsay didn’t feel that “students can be the ones to solely develop the objectives.” Mixed views were given regarding collaboration on assessment. Robert felt student input could be helpful on assessment because students might “have a different approach that I haven’t even thought of.” However, Lucille thought that if students were given a say they would not want exams, but would then “complain on the assessment.” The participants expressed openness to receiving student input on delivery and scheduling. Robert felt that any issue “is probably how I am delivering that content to students.” Judy thought that students should be given input on scheduling because “that is not going to change anything for me as much as it is for them.”

The participants also expressed concerns regarding collaborating with undergraduate students, as opposed to graduate or doctoral students. Robert stated that undergraduate and graduate students are “just very different populations of students to deal with.” He explained that graduate students come in with “a pretty good knowledge base already,” whereas undergraduate students haven’t “had much exposure.” Kenneth also felt that he “would have reservations” working with undergraduate students.

Institutional expectations. Institutional expectations also impacted the participants’ reluctance to collaborate with students. These expectations included professor obligation, recognition, and time. The participants wondered if CCD could pose a potential threat to their perceived institutional obligations. Barbara discussed how difficult it is to imagine designing courses with students because of her “obligations” as a professor. She explained that she has “an obligation as a faculty member to have students meet certain objectives so that they can incorporate this knowledge into a clinical experience, then take a comprehensive exam and a national Praxis exam, and be successful in an internship.” Robert also discussed his obligations as a professor when he stated, “there is a responsibility to that group of students, that we are going to attempt to deliver content here that meets ASHA [American Speech-Language Hearing Association] standards and prepares you.” Robert pointed out “even though I am working with this student and we are going to try and do this together, I still have a responsibility here.”

The participants felt that CCD could impact their chances of receiving recognition. Kenneth felt that using CCD would not bring him any recognition, whereas if he were to write a grant or publish a paper he could get new equipment or funding for the department. Kenneth stated that in order to be “promoted or tenured, I am supposed to be developing my own research agenda in my area of expertise.” Lindsay expressed concern with recognition of this work towards achieving tenure, which is one year away. Although she is interested in trying student-faculty CCD, she may wait until after she reaches tenure. At Lindsay’s university, student evaluations play a big part in achieving tenure. Consequently, Lindsay said that she wants “those evaluations to be good, and they have been good. So if it’s not broken, don’t fix it yet.”

In addition to concerns about institutional obligations, the participants felt that CCD may be more time consuming and may not be realistic for professors. Kenneth pointed out that “a lot of course development isn’t well accounted for in my contracted time.” Kenneth explained that professors

“don’t frequently develop tons of new classes” because developing a new class can be taxing. Professors “don’t have a lot of time” for course design “because they have to do their research, or write manuscripts to get them published, or serve on committees for the college.” Lindsay confirmed Kenneth’s statement that professors do not often design new courses when she stated that she has “a template that I work from, and I do make changes every semester, but as far as how the course is designed, I don’t necessarily make broad changes.”

Professor planning style. Faculty reluctance to collaborate with students was also impacted by the professor’s planning style. Two different styles of faculty approaches to teaching were identified: planners and non-planners. Lindsay is a planner: she is “used to kind of knowing when a semester starts what it is going to look like.” Lindsay felt that if she were to use CCD, she would want to use a “timeline to do it... in advance” of the beginning of the semester. Like Lindsay, Barbara also stated that she needs a “plan.” As a result, Barbara felt that in order for CCD to work for her she would need a plan in advance. She stated that she “could see selecting a few students and trying to redesign a course based on feedback,” as long as she had a plan of action before the course started. Kenneth on the other hand, does not spend as much time designing courses up front and is more used to adjusting the course as he goes. Kenneth felt that with CCD “you are talking about having a set meeting, doing this at a specific time. It is just not generally how I do stuff.”

Questions. The participants had many questions regarding how CCD would work, impacting their reluctance to collaborate. When asked if he would ever consider using CCD, Robert stated that he was “not sure how that works.” Many of the other participants expressed reluctance to use student-faculty CCD due to questions regarding how this type of course design “would work.” The participants felt that they would need more information before considering or attempting to use student-faculty CCD. Kenneth felt that if he had “evidence about better outcomes,” he would be more likely to use this type of course design. Lindsay specifically wanted “evidence showing that maybe students are more engaged or have better outcomes” as well as the “student perspectives” of CCD. Barbara wanted more information so that she could develop “the whole picture” regarding CCD. Barbara specifically wanted information that included “some success stories” as well as “some examples of what other professors have done, how it worked for them, who they used and why.” Barbara also felt that information regarding how a CCD model could be “customized” for different professors “particular needs” would be beneficial. Kenneth concluded that a “roadmap” or “guidelines about how I would do this” would be “helpful.”

Anticipated Benefits. The participants anticipated several benefits of CCD, including: valuable student insight, growth on the part of the professor, increased student engagement, and clinical application.

Valuable student insight. The participants recognized that CCD would provide “valuable” insight into the student perspective, which would lead to an enhanced course, and assistance scaffolding student learning. Barbara felt that if she “had that collaborative effort” she would know that “what I am presenting to the students is completely manageable.” Robert also thought that student input would be useful “moving forward” because insight into the student perspective “would be helpful” to determine where issues are in a course and then to determine “what could we do to make that better.” The participants also acknowledged that insight into the student perspective would help professors to scaffold student learning. Kenneth explained that the professor must consider “what

is going to be a good framework” so that students can “be successful as novice clinicians.” Therefore, he felt that student “feedback in just how much they can do on their own is really important in the process rather than at the exam level.”

Professional growth. The participants recognized the importance of growth in pedagogy and felt that CCD could lead to professional growth for professors. Lindsay recognized that student faculty CCD could lead her to “grow as an instructor” because it would help her to “take on different perspectives,” as well as “to have new ideas” and “face new challenges.” She felt this would be “important for growing as a professor.” Judy also recognized that growth as a professor is important. When reflecting on her teaching, Judy felt that “there is always room for improvement,” and that teaching “is a constant process of figuring out how to do it better.” Judy felt that collaborating with students has helped her to grow as a professor because it has made her “more flexible” by “letting go of things that I thought were so important.”

Increase student engagement. The participants felt that CCD could increase student engagement in their learning. The participants shared that they employ various teaching methods in an attempt to increase student engagement. Lindsay thought that CCD would require students to “take some responsibility for their own learning,” as opposed to the instructor being in charge of the students’ learning. Kenneth felt that the more students “feel invested in how they are learning... the more engaged they are going to be.” Judy stated that she thinks “a lot about how to engage the students” when planning her courses. Judy thought that collaborating with students puts them “in the driver’s seat of their learning,” which could result in the students being “more engaged.”

Clinical application. The participants proposed that CCD could also have clinical implications for SLP students. When planning her courses, the most important thing to Lucille is “bringing the clinic into the classroom.” Barbara also felt that clinical application is important, and one of her goals as an instructor is to bridge the “gap between academic learning and clinical application.” Lindsay stated that CCD would “mirror what they have to do in therapy” because they would be “thinking about that collaborative plan for someone else.” Lindsay suggested that CCD would give students hands on experience with collaboration and reflection, two important skills in SLP. She explained that students would get hands on experience with collaboration because they would be “learning how to reach a consensus and design a program together.” Lindsay also thought that student-faculty CCD “would require a lot of reflection on their learning.” Therefore, she concluded that CCD would be “useful” and “beneficial, long-term” for SLP students.

Participant Suggestions for Implementing Collaborative Course Design. While not specifically asked, the participants offered ideas for how to implement student-faculty CCD. The participants shared suggestions for gaining students trust, starting out slowly, and which students to select.

Establish student trust. The majority of participants felt it would be vital to “establish a level of trust from the students” when using CCD. Judy felt that it is important to provide a rationale for different “pedagogic methods” in order to increase the students’ comfort using different kinds of learning methods. Judy stated that professors “really need to be clear with them about why we are using the methods that we use... the benefits, and what they are for.” Lindsay agreed with Judy that it would be “absolutely critical” to share the rationale for CCD with students and suggested

that being transparent with the students would help to gain trust from the students because they would “know why and how this is going to help them later on.”

Starting slowly. Several of the participants felt that they would be more comfortable starting off “slowly” using CCD. Kenneth felt that designing an entire course “from the ground up” with students “seems like a lot.” He stated that he would initially feel more comfortable collaborating with students to “design an aspect of the course.” Barbara felt that starting out with one area would “be a little bit closer to my comfort level.” Lindsay also felt that she would rather implement student input “slowly,” and then “see how that goes before I have them design a whole course.”

Student selection. The participants had conflicting ideas as to which students should be selected to participate in CCD. Barbara thought that student input should be “retrospective.” She felt she could “almost relinquish some control” if she were to collaborate with “previous students about three years post-graduation” that “have been in the field and have taken my class.” Other participants discussed incorporating prospective student feedback as a means to achieve a better course, instead of retroactively addressing potential problems. Kenneth for example, thought that prospective feedback would not waste anyone’s time because professors “could have responded to something that we found out during the course of the semester and we may have been able to start a little further along.” Robert also touched on prospective feedback when he suggested that CCD could be used as a way to help the “less academic oriented group” in order to help professors identify areas “to break it down even more, to simplify it even more, or just do it differently.”

Discussion

The results of this study revealed that the participants were reluctant to collaborate with students on course design, even though they acknowledged that there are potential benefits to this type of course design. The participants also proposed their own ideas for implementing student-faculty CCD. While the results of this study were consistent with previous research regarding student-faculty collaboration, several new themes emerged indicating future directions for similar research.

Reluctance to Collaborate. The participants were generally reluctant to engage in CCD due to placing themselves in a potentially vulnerable situation by sharing control with students. This is consistent with research that acknowledged that the “democratic pedagogical planning process” (Bovill et al., 2011, p. 140) could be difficult for faculty members. Delpit (1988) suggested that incorporating student voices might create a vulnerable situation for teachers because student views could be “unflattering” (p. 297).

The participants’ perceptions of students including power relationships, student knowledge, and maturation level of students, were other factors contributing to their reluctance to collaborate. The participants were reluctant to receive student input on course content, objectives, and assessment. However, the participants were open to receiving input on delivery and scheduling, suggesting that the participants did not feel that as much knowledge may be needed for these areas, making it acceptable to incorporate student input. Previous research suggested that changes to the power dynamic between faculty and students, as well as students’ lack of knowledge regarding teaching, could be difficult for some faculty members (Bovill et al., 2011; Cook-Sather, 2008; Kane & Chimwayange, 2014). However, collaboration often does not involve collaborating with

individuals who have the same knowledge, expertise, or maturation level. While students may not be the experts in regards to pedagogy, they can provide the valuable perspective of “how teaching was being experienced” (Kane & Chimwayange, 2014, p. 58). Therefore, the crucial topic here is not students’ knowledge of pedagogy, but instead students’ impression of teaching and learning (Kane & Chimwayange, 2014). The participants’ vocabulary used in their responses suggests that the justifications for areas where students could not “solely” be in charge might not only be related to students’ lack of knowledge, but may also be related to not wanting to share control and thereby alter the current “power relationship” among faculty members and students.

The participants discussed how their perceived institutional expectations impacted their reluctance to collaborate. The participants concerns are consistent with the challenges to fulfill “professional requirements” suggested by Bovill et al. (2011, p. 141). However, while professors have the responsibility to make sure that students are competent in their profession, they have flexibility to choose the teaching methods that are used (Bovill et al., 2011). The vocabulary of the participants’ perceived institutional obligations could suggest several potential factors impacting the participants’ responses, including: these responses could have been a polite means to convey that they simply are not interested in CCD, the responses could suggest that the participants were uncomfortable collaborating with students on course design, or the responses could reflect the hesitation to use CCD due to limited knowledge and questions regarding this type of course design.

Faculty reluctance to collaborate with students was impacted by the professor’s planning style, and the participants disclosed that CCD could present challenges to their personal preferences for course design. These findings are consistent with the research findings of Ziegenfuss and Lawler (2008) who found that the professor’s planning style could impact their comfort using CCD.

The participants’ questions regarding how CCD would work also impacted their reluctance to collaborate with students. Previous research suggested different ways to implement student-faculty CCD (Bovill et al., 2011; Mihans et al., 2008). However, models of best practice for CCD and suggestions for ways to customize the process have not been suggested. In order to provide an “evidence-based education” (Ginsberg, Friberg, & Visconti, 2012), more research regarding the effectiveness of student-faculty CCD and student perspectives of this type of course design is needed.

Anticipated Benefits. The participants anticipated several benefits of CCD, including valuable student insight, growth on the part of the professor, increased student engagement, and clinical application. Previous literature identified insight into the student perspective and increased student engagement as benefits of CCD (Bovill et al., 2011; Cook-Sather, 2008). Growth on the part of the professor and clinical application were two new themes that emerged. While previous literature has recognized the importance and difficulty of providing clinical application for graduate students in the field of SLP in order to prime them for professional practice, the idea of CCD providing potential clinical application for the field of SLP or other fields has not been explored (Friberg, Ginsberg, Visconti, & Schober-Peterson, 2013).

Participant Suggestions for Implementing Collaborative Course Design. While not specifically asked, the participants offered ideas for how to implement student-faculty CCD. The participants suggested that student trust could be gained by letting students know that faculty wants

to hear “their expertise” and by providing a rationale for different “pedagogic methods.” Previous literature regarding CCD has not addressed the importance of sharing the rationale with students, but has discussed the importance of transparency and building rapport with students by letting them know that their input is important (Bovill et al., 2011; Bovill et al., 2014; Ginsberg, 2007). The participants’ suggestion to start out “slowly” by having students “design an aspect of the course” is consistent with previous recommendations by Bovill et al. (2011) and Bovill et al. (2015), who proposed that faculty members interested in using CCD consider beginning with smaller collaborative projects. The participants had different ideas as to which students to choose to participate in CCD and discussed the benefits of using “retrospective” versus prospective student feedback. Previous research discussed various methods for student selection in collaborative endeavors (Bovill et al., 2011; Cook-Sather, 2008; Mihans et al., 2008); however, the benefits of selecting one set of students over others, or retrospective feedback versus prospective feedback, have not been explored.

Implications

The results of this study indicate that there is a disconnect between the advancement of teaching methods and planning, as well as the views of teaching and learning held by faculty members and the institutions they work for. Change is necessary in order meet the needs of an evolving society and provide effective teaching and learning opportunities. One form of change that is needed is a paradigm shift in faculty members’ views of teaching, learning, and students. Not only is change needed in faculty member’s views, but also larger change, institutional change, is essential to support effective teaching and learning methods for an ever-evolving society.

Transformation of Faculty Member Viewpoints. In order for professors to explore how students experience teaching and learning, they should open themselves up to the student voice (Bovill et al., 2011; Fleming, 2015). As the participants in this study confirmed, this is uncomfortable and requires a shift of faculty members’ current views of teaching, learning, and students. Considering teaching in light of the patient-centered approach employed in SLP is one suggestion for altering professors’ current views. Patient-centered care focuses on patients in order to provide effective therapy, and under this framework the patient is given a voice in their therapy, the SLP shares information with the patient, and the SLP collaborates with the patient. Professors could employ a student-centered approach to teaching that is based on this patient-centered care framework by finding ways to open themselves up to student voice, sharing information about teaching and learning with students, and collaborating with students.

Institutional Change. Institutional changes are necessary to support the active inclusion of student voices in their education. Two areas that could benefit from modifications include the preparation and development of faculty, as well as a reassessment of institutional priorities.

Faculty preparation and development. The participants in this study revealed that a strong foundation in teaching methods is not always a part of doctoral training prior to working as a university professor; rather the predominant focus is placed on becoming a disciplinary specialist. Being a specialist in a certain field does not mean that one is a specialist regarding effective teaching and learning (Brackenbury et al., 2014; Ziegenfuss & Lawler, 2008). The lack of instruction for professors is not without consequences. Possible implications involve a lack of

teaching development, a decrease in student performance, and reduced successful interactions between faculty and students (Robinson & Hope, 2013).

Not only are faculty often not taught how to teach, but they do not always have assistance available when it comes to enhancing their teaching (Ginsberg, 2010). In the field of SLP, there is an emphasis placed on continuing education as part of an evidence-based practice, but teaching does not have the same equivalent. Some universities include centers for teaching and learning that offer resources for professors to prepare and improve their teaching, but this is not standard at every university (Ginsberg, 2010). This means that faculty members looking to enhance their teaching must figure out how to do so on their own, and many faculty members develop their teaching methods according to what they themselves experienced as students (Brackenbury et al., 2014). Just as clinical decision-making in SLP is evidence-based, teaching needs to be also (Brackenbury et al., 2014; Ginsberg, 2010; Ginsberg et al., 2012). The scholarship of teaching and learning (SoTL) provides an evidence base to assist in the development of professors in higher education (Ginsberg, 2010). Yet, with teaching in SLP there are no standards to guide teaching given by ASHA or the Council on Academic Programs in Communication Sciences and Disorders. Therefore, the standard of evidence-based education is dependent on faculty awareness of the need for such practice.

Both the lack of training for faculty members and assistance for professional development indicate that institutional changes are needed to address the current problems in these areas. Attention needs to be paid to the development of professors, and doctoral students should be provided with instruction in teaching methods and planning as part of their educational program. Professors also need to be provided with institutional support for professional development and should be held to the same standards that are required for clinical skills in SLP. This would mean that success should be considered in light of the evidence behind the teaching methods used and the relationship to the values of the profession in which they are educating students (Ginsberg, 2010).

Institutional expectations. Course design is an essential aspect of effective teaching and learning, yet the results of this study reveal that some professors do not spend a great amount of time making adjustments to course design. This suggests that in order to make time for the numerous institutional expectations, important aspects of teaching and learning have been put on the back burner. The results of this study revealed that professors are not always provided with the necessary time to focus on course design, as well as time to research effective teaching and learning methods. This would suggest that in order to promote effective teaching and learning, an emphasis would need to be placed on this aspect at the institutional level. Institutional support is necessary to provide education that is focused on the needs of the student population, and is therefore meaningful and successful.

Conclusion

In order to keep up with current trends in teaching methods and facilitate learning that is student-centered, professors need to incorporate student voices in their education (Bovill et al., 2011; Brackenbury et al., 2014; Carlile, 2012; Fielding, 1999; Fielding, 2001; Fleming, 2015; Ziegenfuss & Lawler, 2008). The results of this study indicate that faculty members are reluctant to place themselves in a potentially vulnerable situation and share control with students who they feel know

very little about teaching and learning. The results of this study also reveal that faculty members are not always provided with proper training and preparation for teaching, nor do they always receive institutional support to advance their teaching methods and develop evidence-based courses. The current views and practices of faculty members and educational institutions are barriers to effective and meaningful educational experiences. Viewing students in the same manner that SLPs view their patients is one suggestion for reducing the current barriers to successful education. Just as clinicians acknowledge the value of giving their patients a voice in therapy, professors also need to acknowledge the importance of giving students a voice in their education. In order to support the inclusion of students in their education, institutional change is also necessary and educational institutions need to rethink their priorities. To keep up with the evolving needs of students and provide meaningful learning experiences, change is necessary.

Limitations/delimitations of the study. This study is limited in that the data are not representative of all university types (i.e., data were gathered from mostly public universities which does not adequately represent private or research universities). Due to the qualitative nature of this study and the small sample size, the results of this study cannot be generalized to faculty across all varieties of institutions. Thus, further research on this subject would be beneficial in order to expand these findings.

There are several delimitations to this study. This study focused on faculty member perspectives and did not take into account student perspectives. Future research on both faculty and student perspectives would provide a more complete analysis of student-faculty CCD. Another delimitation of this study is that it addressed faculty member perspectives in SLP departments. Therefore, the findings of this research are most applicable to the field of SLP. Lastly, data reflect schools in one geographic region of the United States, primarily due to the nature of the study design (i.e., traveling to university sites and conducting face-to-face interviews). Future research in other geographic regions would be necessary to provide a more complete representation of SLP faculty perspectives.

The participants had many questions regarding how CCD would work, and specifically had questions regarding: which students to select, how many students to incorporate, when to begin the process, how to resolve conflict, the amount of input to give students, learning outcomes, and student perspectives. More research is needed regarding the effectiveness of the different methods that have been used for implementation as well as student perspectives of CCD. Another area of research that is needed is the potential clinical application for the field of SLP. The participants suggested that CCD could provide clinical application and hands-on experience with collaboration and reflection. Research focusing on these aspects would not only add to the evidence base regarding CCD, but could also promote the use of CCD as a potential method for the development of clinical skills, which is currently a challenge faced by SLP programs (Friberg et al., 2013).

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