School-university partnership: Perceptions and experiences of school teachers and student teachers on current collaboration in teacher education in Myanmar

KHIN KHIN THANT SIN*

Doctoral School of Education, Faculty of Education and Psychology, Eötvös Loránd University (ELTE), Budapest, Kazinczy u. 23-27, 1075, Hungary

Received: July 9, 2021 ● Accepted: October 17, 2021
Published online: December 21, 2021

ABSTRACT

As networking and collaboration become the essential source for knowledge sharing and creation, one has to cross boundaries for new experiences and to learn from them. In teacher education, boundary crossing and collaboration can be enhanced by school-university partnerships which may provide rich learning opportunities that none of the partners can provide alone (Cochran-Smith, 1991). This paper aims to examine and understand the current school-university collaboration practices in teacher education in Myanmar and their impact on teachers' learning. Mixed method research was applied in this study. Survey data were collected from 56 participants (school teachers and student teachers) and four participants were interviewed. The findings revealed that participants consider such collaboration essential and beneficial for their learning and knowledge creation. On the other hand, different perspectives and opinions between the two entities is a common obstacle for successful and trustful collaboration. Both partners declared the impact of collaboration positive as it enhanced their reflection on their teaching/learning and gave them new ideas. Interestingly, collaboration between schools and university focusing on new curriculum development appears to be the most advantageous form of learning and knowledge-creation for school teachers.

KEYWORDS

school-university partnership, collaboration, teacher education, boundary crossing, knowledge sharing, networks

INTRODUCTION

People have different ideas and thoughts which are distant from one another. We learn new things and new experiences mostly by interacting with others from different communities by boundary crossing. In teacher education, teachers, university educators and student teachers' learning and knowledge creation usually occurs when stakeholders collaborate together by crossing boundaries and observing others' entities for their professional development. The reason is that collaboration between different entities can provide richer learning opportunities for its members than each entity can provide alone (Cochran-Smith, 1991; Darling-Hammond, 2006).

School-university partnership is essential in teacher education in order to improve all three areas of education; initial teacher education, induction, continuous professional development and even to research development in teacher education. Many research studies have proved the benefits of establishing school-university partnership in teacher education and they showed significant improvement in professional knowledge, research development, and knowledge creation (Baumfield & Butterworth, 2007; Betlem, Clary, & Jones, 2019; Callahan & Martin, 2007; Halasz, 2020; McLauglin, 2006; Reischl, Khasnabis, & Karr, 2017;
Tsui & Law, 2007; Zeichner, 2010). Therefore, to boost knowledge creation and dissemination in teacher learning, one recommendation is to emphasize partnerships between schools and universities in order to improve the education system of the country (Hargreaves, 1999).

Despite the formal partnership between schools and universities, no research studies have been done in Myanmar in this area of teacher education. As a matter of fact, partnership between schools and universities for teachers’ learning is one of the untouched areas of the education system in the country. Therefore, this study is initiated as a very first research study focusing on collaboration between one university of education and one school in teacher education in Myanmar.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The emergence of school-university partnership

Paying attention to the need of school and university collaboration began in the mid-1990s, especially in United States, with the reports called Carnegie Forum and Holmes Group in order to improve teaching and learning (Burstein, Kretschmer, Smith, & Gudoski, 1999). During the 1980s–1990s, the quality of training and learning of teachers posed major problems in teacher education (Cochran-Smith, Feiman-Nemser, McIntyre, & Association of Teacher Educators, 2008) and the criticism of teacher education for not being able to produce highly qualified teachers was raised constantly. The decline in producing highly qualified teachers and providing high quality professional development for school teachers led to organizing the Holmes Group (a group of academic officers across the US) in 1987, which recommended the establishment of professional development schools (PDSs) in which universities and schools would work together in order to improve preparation of novice and experienced teachers (Burstein et al., 1999; Tsui, Edwards, Lopez-Real, & Kwan, 2009). At the same time, the Carnegie report in 1986 recommended that the best way of preparing teachers and supporting their professional development is to create connection and collaboration between schools and universities in order to improve both teaching and learning (Carnegie Forum on Education and the Economy, 1986).

Academic officers from the Holmes Group set five goals for reforming teacher education in the United States. They were mainly focusing on improving the qualification of teachers in the teaching profession. One of the five goals which showed the birth of school and university collaboration was to connect their own institutions to schools (Holmes Group, 1986). And this goal clearly illustrated that schools must be places where university educators and school teachers can meet and do things together in order to improve practice (Holmes Group, 1986). From these perspectives, professional development schools where schools and universities worked together were born to improve initial teacher education as well as professional development and research development in teacher education. As a consequence, partnership between schools and universities has become one of the major areas in teacher education until today.

Broader concepts of partnership

Knowledge triangle. In the early 2000s, the Lisbon Agenda of the European Union introduced the “Knowledge Triangle” term in order to improve the poor relation between education, research and innovation in European universities (Sjoer, Nørgaard, & Goossens, 2012). According to Groumpos (2013), the knowledge triangle has been increasingly seen as an essential tool for enhancing innovation processes by linking three key factors, namely, education, research and innovation in knowledge-based societies.

This concept has been applied as the conceptual framework in many different areas for the purpose of improving innovative processes. In education, this concept has been applied in several fields, especially in teacher education. Halasz (2016) applied this knowledge triangle concept in teacher education where schools and school practice are placed at the innovation pole of the original knowledge triangle concept (See Fig. 1).

According to Halasz (2016), universities are assumed as research centers and centers for educating teachers while schools are the birth place of innovation (Halasz, 2016). As he stresses, knowledge in teacher education will be created and shared effectively only when schools and universities collaborate together.

Boundary crossing and third space. According to Tsui and Law (2007), boundaries are mostly seen as sources of difficulties in communication; on the other hand, they can be the sources of innovation and renewal. Boundaries become the major source of innovation and renewal when participants from one community try to take a fresh look at their longstanding practices and assumptions by crossing them and observing the other communities (Tsui & Law, 2007). Boundary zones, where elements or innovative ideas of both

![Fig. 1. Knowledge triangle in teacher education](Image)
communities are present, play a critical role in initiating boundary crossing for opportunities. This term “boundary zone” is sometimes referred to as “a third space” where learning occurs when different ideas from different cultures meet and form a new place or new meaning.

With the growing attention to school-university partnership in teacher education, the concept ‘third space’ was born in order to encourage boundary crossing and collaboration in education. According to Beck (2018), third space is a revitalized and creative space where all the voices, narratives and histories can be fulfilled and appreciated. Third space in teacher education means a democratic and collaborative space where teacher educators, school teachers and all stakeholders work together and potentially stand to benefit (Beck, 2018). Zeichner (2010) used this concept in order to discuss different boundary crossings between universities and campus. In pre-service teacher education programs, a third space is seen as a hybrid space where university teacher educators, practitioners and academic knowledge encounter in order to enhance learning of pre-service teachers (Zeichner, 2010).

Networks of schools and universities. Network learning communities are formed since teachers are gradually stretching out from their own community (school) and learn that collaborative learning is more effective and efficient than learning on their own (McLaughlin, Black-Hawkins, & McIntyre, 2006). The practice and experiences of teachers involved in collaborative communities shows that purposeful collaboration is more fruitful to learning than competition (Jackson & Temperley, 2006). Networks of schools and universities are increasing in order to support teachers’ learning and professional development (McLaughlin, 2006, 2008; Stoll & Louis, 2008).

School-university partnership in teacher education

Based on the literature on school-university partnerships, there are five functions of partnership: (i) school improvement, (ii) research and innovation, (iii) teacher education as skill development, and (iv) university improvement and (v) curriculum development (EDiTE, 2020). School-university partnership, especially in teacher education, is essential as teachers are the main agents of classrooms and classrooms are the ideal laboratories for educational research (Hargreaves, 1999; Stenhouse, 1981; Zeichner, 1990). School-university partnership is established mainly in three areas; initial teacher education, continuous professional development and research and development for teacher education (Baumfield & Butterworth, 2007).

Many scholars claimed that the training of pre-service teachers will be more effective and efficient if schools and universities collaborate throughout the training processes (Cochran-Smith, 1991). In induction, universities and schools play a major role in supporting teachers in their early years of teaching experiences. One example of this can be found in Estonia where partnership is used to support teachers in the induction phase. In Estonia, the schools provide mentors and stand as the environment for professional development and the universities offer seminars for professional development and mentor training in the induction program (Šnöck et al., 2010). Several scholars have claimed that school-university collaboration is essential for professional development not only for school teachers but also for university educators (Hargreaves, 1999, 2010, 2011; McLaughlin, 2008; McLaughlin et al., 2006; Stenhouse, 1981; Tsui & Law, 2007).

Teacher learning in knowledge communities of school-university partnership: creating, sharing, dissemination

Knowledge and innovations of teachers, teacher communities and schools created from their daily practice has a major impact on improving the quality and effectiveness of education systems (Halasz, 2020). Innovation and knowledge creation in teacher education cannot be neglected today because teachers’ knowledge creation, sharing and dissemination were far left behind compared to other professions (Hargreaves & Freidson 2000; Revai & Guerrero, 2017). In teacher education, several research studies have shown that knowledge creation, sharing and dissemination is maximum when individuals from different entities work together in collaborative activities (Cornelissen et al., 2015; Halasz, 2020; Hargreaves, 1999; McLaughlin, 2006; Tsui et al., 2009).

Hargreaves and Freidson (2000) compared the use of professional knowledge between the medical profession and teaching professions. He found that the creation and use of professional knowledge in the teaching profession was far left behind compared to other professions. This result reminds us to reconsider the functions of schools and universities in education. It seems that schools are places where practices are applied and as the birth places of innovation, they are disconnected from universities, the birth places of research and theories in teacher education.

All innovative models of knowledge processes (Bereiter, 2002; Engeström, 2001; Hargreaves, 1999; Nonaka, 1998), have emphasized the importance of interactive communication among partners assuming knowledge development as social processes. In school-university partnership, individuals are interactively communicating and each individual’s role is taken into account in knowledge creating, sharing and dissemination. For teacher learning, the reconnection between schools and universities should be considered in order to boost knowledge creation and sharing professional knowledge in teacher education.

CONTEXT OF THE STUDY

Myanmar, which is strategically located between the economic hubs of China, India and ASEAN countries is also the largest country in mainland Southeast Asia. At the end of the colonial period in 1948, Myanmar’s education system was recognized and became superior to many other neighboring states, with a 60% adult literacy rate. However, the
The education system of the country went into long-term decline for many decades to the bottom of the league table of ASEAN after the military coup in 1962 (Borg, Clifford, & Htut, 2018).

The situation changed after the political power transfer in 2015 and the country has been redirecting from decades of its international isolation and ethnic conflict (Hardman, Stoff, Aung, & Elliott, 2016). Currently, Myanmar is integrating in the global economy and is introducing reforms to expand trade and investment. With the rapid changes in every sectors of the country in order to achieve sustainable economic development, Myanmar is facing two major challenges: (i) a shortage of skilled workers, in spite of increased job opportunities and (ii) limited governance and public sector management capacity. The country has recognized that the education sector is playing an essential role in facing these challenges in the coming years.

As the country is at the beginning stage of an ongoing process of building democratic education, new criticism and judgments are continuously emerging concerning the education sector (Borg et al., 2018). Myanmar has been reforming its teacher education since the country started improving the whole system two decades ago (Borg et al., 2018). The Ministry of Education has prioritized teacher education, recognizing that the quality of teacher education is important for quality education and better student learning outcomes (Walailak University & Ulla, 2018).

Even though there are several pathways to become teachers, there is one expectation that every teacher must be degree-qualified, having completed a minimum of a four-year degree course. There are two different kinds of teacher training institutions: universities of education and education colleges; both of which provide degree-level teacher education courses. There are three universities of education and 25 teacher education colleges (UNESCO, 2017).

School-university partnership in Myanmar is a weak area in teacher education. A recent development is that references to ‘an enhanced partnership model’ have appeared in the communication between the Ministry of Education, education colleges (which offers Bachelor of Education degrees, BEd) and schools in Myanmar (Hardman, 2013) (See Fig. 2).

The “Enhanced Partnership Model” suggested that there should be closer collaboration between education colleges and schools in order to fill the gap between theory and practice in pre-service education and training of teachers (PRESET). This model has also defined the roles and responsibilities in partnerships. Besides PRESET, in-service teacher education and training (INSET) should also be improved through collaboration between the Ministry of education, school networks and the education colleges (Hardman, 2013).

**RESEARCH METHOD**

To attain a deeper understanding of partnership practices and their impact on teacher learning, this study applied a mixed-methods sequential-explanatory design where quantitative data collection and analysis were carried out first, followed by the collection and analysis of qualitative data (See Fig. 3). The aim of using this design is to answer questions generated by the quantitative phase of empirical analysis (Creswell, 2012). For phase I, questionnaires were developed by the researcher based on a previous school-university partnership project questionnaire (EDiTE, 2020) in which necessary corrections, additions and development were made under expert guidance. In the qualitative stage, phase II; interviews were conducted with mentor teachers and student teachers. Interview questions were generated on the basis of the results of the quantitative phase, and additional questions were also added when relevant interesting themes emerged during the interview processes.

**Phase I: Quantitative**

**Phase II: Qualitative**

*Fig. 2. Enhanced partnership model*

*Fig. 3. Study design*
Quantitative analysis

Based on the literature and the objective of the study, the following research questions were formulated.

Research Question 1: What are the current school-university partnership practices in initial teacher training in Myanmar?
Research Question 2: What are the current school-university partnership practices in continuous professional development of teachers in Myanmar?
Research Question 3: What are the challenges or obstacles in collaboration between schools and universities in Myanmar?
Research Question 4: What is the impact of school-university partnership on teachers’ learning in Myanmar?

Based on the literature on the school-university partnership, the researcher hypothesized that the challenges of partnership would be lack of time, power and authority relationship, trust issue and workload (Ebbutt, Robson, & Worrall, 2000; Martin, Snow, & Franklin Torrez, 2011; Taylor, Klein, & Abrams, 2014). As regards research question 4, the hypothesis would be a positive impact on learning in school-university partnership (Bernay, Stringer, Milne, & Jhagroo, 2020; Betlem et al., 2019; Burns, Yendol-Hoppey, & Jacobs, 2015; Tsui & Law, 2007).

Participants. Because of the focus on initial teacher education and continuous professional development in school-university partnerships, the sample was restricted to those teachers who have had experiences in collaboration with universities, and student teachers who have done their practical teaching at least once. Teachers who have experienced collaboration with universities, but have never been mentor teachers were also accepted. The reason was that different perspectives and perceptions were expected from the two groups of teachers. There were 56 participants altogether: 28 student teachers and 28 mentor teachers. Mentor teachers were from basic education high schools and student teachers were from a university of education.

Instruments. Two questionnaires were developed to obtain data describing partnership practices and their impact on learning; one for mentor teachers (MTs) and another for student teachers (STs). The questionnaires included questions regarding background information, the current partnership practices, challenges of partnership, and the respondents’ learning and development. For mentor teachers, there were 26 questions in total while there were 25 questions for student teachers in the questionnaires.

Each questionnaire included five parts. For part I, there were nine questions asking about the respondents’ teaching services, the quantity of mentor-mentee experiences, their current position and other aspects of their professional career. Part II contained six questions related to current partnership practices. Part III had two questions where the participants had to rank some challenges of partnership in teacher education. Part IV asked about teachers’ learning, with 28 items where answers could be given on a 3-point Likert-type scale. For the final part, part V, three questions were included related to school-university collaboration.

Procedures and data analysis. The questionnaire were created in an online survey software program (Qualtrics) and sent to the participants out via messenger on 22nd November, 2020. The participants had one week to complete the questionnaire. The collected data of this study were systematically analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) software version 22.

Qualitative analysis

Based on the results of the quantitative part of the investigation, the following research question was formulated for the follow-up interviews:

Research question: How do participants explain collaboration between school and universities in teacher education and its impact on their learning?

Participants. Of the 56 participants who completed the online survey and agreed to participate in the follow-up interviews, four participants were selected using purposive sampling. The researcher chose two different types of mentor teachers (MTs). One of them had been a mentor teacher for more than two years and the other one had no experience in mentoring but had had a lot of experience in collaborating with universities in professional development areas. The purpose of selecting two different types of participants was to have a richer understanding of school-university partnership not only in initial teacher training, but also in continuous professional development, especially in the knowledge creation and sharing component. As regards the student teachers, a fourth-year and a fifth-year student were selected for the interviews. The reason was to gain a deeper understanding of differences between the two different types of practicum experiences and practices in school-university partnership in initial teacher training. Student teacher (ST1) is a fourth year student who did his practical teaching in his third year semester break at his home town (in third year, student teachers can choose any school to do their practical teaching. Student teacher (ST2) is a fifth year student who had practical teaching experiences in the city where his university is located. He did his practical teaching in his fourth year where university directly allocated a group of maximum 10 student teachers to one school according to their subject major.

Procedures and data analysis. The interviews were held by phone on the first week of December, 2020 and lasted between 30 and 60 min. The interview data were transcribed from the audiotapes. The transcripts were coded manually. Before starting the coding process, a first version of the codebook was developed by the researcher. After careful analysis of the transcripts of the interviews, the researcher revised the codebook. Based on the second version of the codebook, the coding was repeated. The codebook was left open throughout the coding process, making it possible to include new emerging themes. In order to increase
trustworthiness in data analysis, documents were coded at least two times by the researcher at different times.

RESULTS

Quantitative findings

Current partnership practices in teacher education. This part of quantitative findings will answer first two research questions about initial teacher training and continuous professional development within the context of school-university partnership.

Mentor teachers were asked about the kinds of activities or collaboration they had experienced with universities in teacher education. Eight areas were defined as shown in Fig. 4. According to the teachers, the kind of collaboration where teachers and university educators work together were in professional development programs, courses and workshops held by universities. There were few cases of collaboration between schools and universities for research purposes, mentoring activities and initial teacher training. Over 5% of mentor teachers have collaborated with university teachers in curriculum development and doing project together with university teachers. More than 15% of teachers reported that they have never experienced any of the above collaboration with universities.

When we looked at school collaboration with universities, the data showed that 35% of schools have no collaboration with universities. Teachers reported that their school had a regular collaboration with universities in research development where master students came to their school for collecting data for their thesis and in initial teacher training. More than 5% of school teachers have a regular collaboration with universities (See Fig. 5).

To explore the perceptions of both groups about the areas or purposes of school and university collaboration, both groups of participants were asked to rank the areas or
purposes of school and university collaboration (see Fig. 6). Both mentor teachers and student teachers believed that schools and university partnerships should be for professional development as the first priority. Besides this, both groups of participants responded that school-university partnership for university benefits is the least favorable area for collaboration.

In relation to actors who have an impact on the collaboration between schools and universities, six actors were defined who might play major roles in partnerships (see Fig. 7). We asked both mentor teachers and student teachers to rank these six actors according to their roles in determining the effectiveness of school-university partnership. According to the mentor teachers, policy makers play the biggest role and student teachers are the least important in determining the effectiveness of partnership. As regards the student teachers, the principal (head of the school) plays the largest while mentor teachers have the smallest role in building effective school-university partnerships.

**Obstacles or barriers in school-university partnership.** To determine the obstacles of school-university partnership, seven categories were created based on school-university partnership literature, and the participants were asked to rank these categories in order to determine the most and least influential barriers (see Fig. 8). Figure 8 shows the perceptions of mentor teachers and student teachers on obstacles of collaboration. For student teachers, limited time availability is the most powerful barrier. On the other side, the mentor teachers perceived administrative/organizational demand as the highest barrier for collaboration. Interestingly, the student teachers regarded the demand as the least powerful obstacle for school-university collaboration.

**Impact of school-university partnership on teachers’ learning.** To find out which areas of teachers’ learning are improved and affected by collaborating with university or university teachers, we compared the mean values between those teachers who had been mentors and those who had not in several teacher learning areas (See Table 1).

One such area is knowledge about learners’ behaviors and characteristics. Teachers with mentoring experience scored significantly higher here ($M = 2.00$, $SD = 0.00$) than their counterparts without mentoring experience ($M = 1.71$, $SD = 0.46$), ($t = -2.82$, $P = 0.01$). The result suggests that mentoring does have an effect on teachers’ learning; teachers who had been mentors had learned more about learners’ behaviors and characteristics than teachers who had never...
been mentor teachers. Similarly, there was also a significant difference between the two subgroups in the area of feeling as a core person in education. Here again, mentor teachers’ score significantly higher (M = 2.00, SD = 0.00) than teachers with no mentoring experience (M = 1.71, SD = 0.46) (t = −2.828, P = 0.01). The result suggests that mentoring does have an effect on teachers’ building identity and confidence in education. There were also significant differences (P < 0.05) in the areas: knowledge about teaching aids and materials, knowledge about education news and issues and enjoying teaching more than before. These results reveal that mentor teachers learnt more in these areas than teachers who have never been mentor teachers (See Table 1).

Comparisons between two groups of teachers who have participated in collaboration with UTs in curriculum development are shown in Table 2. There were significant differences between two groups of teachers (P < 0.05) in the several areas. In the area of ‘knowledge about educational goals’, teachers who had collaborated together with UTs in new curriculum development scored significantly higher here (M = 2.00, SD = 0.00) than their counterparts without any collaboration with UTs (M = 1.8696, SD = 0.34). Similarly, there was also a significant difference between two groups in the area of knowledge about teaching aids and materials. Teachers who had participated in curriculum development with UTs scored significantly higher (M = 2.0000, SD = 0.00) than teachers who hadn’t collaborate (M = 1.8400, SD = 0.37) in the area of knowledge about up-to-date educational news and issues. These results revealed that collaboration with

Table 1. Impact of school-university partnership on teachers’ learning according to mentor role

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Learning area</th>
<th>Teachers with mentoring experience (N = 4)</th>
<th>Teachers without mentoring experience (N = 24)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>M</td>
<td>SD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge of learners’ behavior and characteristics</td>
<td>2.0000</td>
<td>0.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teaching aids and materials</td>
<td>2.0000</td>
<td>0.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Educational news and issues</td>
<td>2.0000</td>
<td>0.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New teaching strategies and methods</td>
<td>2.0000</td>
<td>0.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enjoy teaching more than before</td>
<td>2.0000</td>
<td>0.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feel as a core person in education</td>
<td>2.0000</td>
<td>0.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Started collaborating with other teachers</td>
<td>2.0000</td>
<td>0.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2. Impact of School-university Partnership on Teachers’ Learning according to Collaboration with UTs in Curriculum Development

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Learning area</th>
<th>Curriculum development collaboration with UTs</th>
<th>No curriculum development collaboration with UTs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>M</td>
<td>SD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge about teaching aids and materials</td>
<td>2.0000</td>
<td>0.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge about up-to-date educational news and issues</td>
<td>2.0000</td>
<td>0.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge about educational goals</td>
<td>2.0000</td>
<td>0.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
UTs in curriculum development have an effect on teachers’ learning. Specifically, teachers developed their knowledge in educational goals, teaching aids and materials and up-to-date educational news and issues by collaborating with UTs in curriculum development (See Table 2).

To find out whether teachers’ learning areas are improved, two groups of teachers who collaborated and worked together with UTs in a project were compared (See Table 3). According to data analysis, there was significant difference for teachers who collaborated with UTs in a project ($M = 2.00$, $SD = 0.00$) and teachers who didn’t collaborate with UTs ($M = 1.73$, $SD = 0.44$), ($t = -2.787$, $P = 0.01$) in the areas of knowledge about learners’ behaviors and characteristics. The result suggests that collaboration and working together with UTs in a project does have an effect on teachers’ learning; teachers who worked and collaborated together with UTs in a project learned and understood more about learners’ behaviors and characteristics than teachers who didn’t have these experiences. Other areas show significant differences ($P < 0.05$) in teachers’ learning about knowledge of educational goal and education news and issues (See Table 3).

### Qualitative findings

**Partnership practices.** Data from interviews revealed the conditions that characterize school-university partnerships in initial teacher training and continuous professional development. According to he student teachers, the current collaboration between schools and universities for initial teacher training is not intensive. There was no regular or close communication between schools and universities in the case of student teachers’ practical teaching and learning. The communication between mentor teachers and university teachers was totally missing.

When we have a semester break for two months, we have two weeks practical teaching in our home town. The only thing university gave to us is ‘the letter of permission’. We have to show this letter to headmaster of the school where we did practical teaching. That is all connection between schools and university has. (ST1)

A group of us directly went to school which is allocated by university. During our two weeks practical teaching, I saw one university teachers come to visit us. She asked whether we have difficulties in teaching or communicating with teachers. She encouraged us and tried to do the best. (ST2)

When mentor-mentee relationship was explored by the researcher, the weak collaboration between partners was observed based on interview results. As student teachers were confident in their pedagogical knowledge, they found that there was nothing they could learn from the mentor teachers concerning teaching methods and techniques. They reported that the way their mentor taught to the class was a traditional method which was not interesting for students.

Concerning teaching methods, I don’t think I can learn anything from mentor teachers. Mentor teachers are using lecture method which is not interesting for pupils. At university, we studied a lot about learner-centered classroom methods and designing the lesson more attractive and interested using activities. But it is totally opposite what mentor teachers are teaching at schools. They lectured pupils all the time. So, I think students like our teaching more than mentor teachers because we teach in different ways. (ST1)

I never discuss lesson planning and designing lesson with mentor teacher. They are doing their things and I am doing my own teaching. We never actually shared our practices together with mentor teachers. (ST2)

However, student teachers reported that classroom management and subject matter knowledge were the best things they learnt from mentor teachers. One student teacher reported that mentor teachers’ classroom management skills were wonderful and he learnt a lot from his mentor teachers. Another student teacher reported that whenever he asked the mentor teacher about the subject matter, he found that she was an expert in the subject she taught.

On the other hand, mentor teachers reported that there was no regular collaboration between university teachers and them. The interview results show that the most frequent collaboration was attending professional workshops, courses and training held by universities. Very few of them had experienced working together with university teachers in a research project or other kind of collaboration as colleagues. According to the interview results, the current partnership between schools and universities was a university-led one way partnership where university teachers lectured to school teachers in the case of professional development programs.

**Obstacles.** Regarding the obstacles and barriers in school-university partnership, both student teachers complained about the short duration of the practical teaching period. Two weeks period of practice teaching is not enough for them to acquire necessary practices and too short to learn...
learners’ characteristics and classroom management. Both student teachers reported that one or two months’ practice teaching period should be given to them in order to get the necessary experiences and practices in teaching and learning. One student teacher explained that he was allowed to do practice teaching for two months as he knew the headmaster and the school teachers. He reported that he had benefits because of doing practice teaching longer than his friends during his semester break.

Unlike my friends, I got two months practice teaching when I did practice teaching at my home town. I know the principal and some school teachers as they are my childhood teachers. I felt more confident after that one month practice teaching. My friends, they only got two weeks and they said that this was not enough for them. I agree with them. Now, I have more experiences than my friends and now at university, when we do peer group teaching (PGE), I was a leader always coz they believed that I have more experiences. (ST1)

On the other side, another student teacher reported the financial difficulties in doing practice teaching at schools where the university allocated them.

When I was third year, I did practice teaching at my home town. There was no problem. But in fourth year, we did practice teaching at city where university is allocated us. We had to take taxi sometimes when school time is so early at 6.30 am in the morning coz of traffic issue. We are students and we are self-supported students. We had serious financial problems at that time. And when we arrive from schools, the dorm lunch time is already closed, so we had to buy food, again, we were in trouble. When I was in Education College, they provided us 45 practice teaching days plus some money. Money was not so much but it saved us a lot. But, here, at university, there was nothing. (ST2)

Another thing student teachers reported was theory-practice gap between schools and universities. Student teachers reported that the way they studied at the university to manage a classroom was totally different from daily practices at schools. They were trained and managed lessons with a classroom of 25–40 students as maximum. However, the practical experiences showed them the actual classroom was over 60 students and they were frustrated at that time in managing the classroom.

I was in trouble in thinking how to manage the classroom activities with my lesson. I want to create a lively classroom and I tried once to teach a lesson with classroom activities. But I failed. Because there are so many students, I can’t control the classroom and I was frustrated. (ST1)

For mentor teachers, administrative and organizational demands are obstacles in the case of initial teacher training and continuous professional development. The period of the year when student teachers came to them for practice teaching is always the same and it was difficult for mentor teachers to manage the time. For continuous professional development, workload and demands are so much that they could not balance between the workload upon them.

Student teachers came at the same month, each year. So, different student teachers came and taught the same lesson each year. For us, we are getting the same materials from them. We asked them to make teaching aids and every year they make the same teaching aids for the same lesson. So, I want to change the period each year. (MT1)

Sometimes, we have to attend the workshop and courses hold by universities, we have classes to teach while a supply of teachers was not enough at our school. It is not easy. We are exhausted. (MT2)

Teachers’ learning and professional development. In case of school-university partnership and its impact on teachers’ learning and professional development, mentor teachers reported that they got a lot of experiences and knowledge in collaborating with universities. One mentor teacher has participated as a teacher trainer in teaching and lecturing back to her colleagues for the subject of new curriculum. First, she was trained by university teachers for four days in connection with teaching the new curriculum. After that training, she became the teacher trainer in her township to share and discuss with other public school teachers (her colleagues) and private school teachers. She was the broker between the university world and school world in order to discuss how to teach the new curriculum. She reported that these experiences were “wonderful” and she had learned a lot from both universities and her colleagues.

I learnt a lot from both university and my colleagues. I learnt different things from different perspectives. From university teachers, I learnt mostly how to teach (content pedagogical knowledge) in that specific subject. Of course, we don’t discuss with university teacher like colleagues, they lectured us, but still it was very effective for my pedagogical knowledge. But, when I taught back to my colleagues, actually I was not teaching them, we were discussing, I learnt subject matter knowledge. All of my colleagues are experienced and very expert in subject, so we discussed each other and we argued. We did ‘demonstration teaching’ and we learnt a lot from each other. This is very wonderful. Among other partnership activities, I learnt the most from this. (MT2)

Besides school-university partnerships, network of schools collaboration is also an opportunity for professional development learning.

Last year, experienced teachers from famous public schools gave us training about my subject. I enjoyed these training a lot. These school teachers are very experienced and have expertise in the subject they teach. I learnt a lot especially my subject matter. (MT2)

In the case of initial teacher education, one of the mentor teachers reported that she learnt ‘how to create teaching aids’ from student teachers.

We asked them to create teaching aids for the lesson they taught. And they created good stuffs. I like them. I posted them in my classroom. (MT1)

On the other hand, the student teachers reported that they had developed their confidence level after practice teaching at schools. They reported that they felt they played major roles in determining the success and achievement of
the pupils at school. They developed their identities as teachers. Furthermore, they learnt how to manage classroom according to mentor teachers. One student teacher reported that he could connect theory and practice between schools and universities. Nevertheless, he reported that most of the things he had studied at university were mainly theory. Therefore, he could not really apply them at schools. As a consequence, he wanted to suggest that universities should prepare and teach them by connecting daily practices and needs of schools.

"After this practical teaching, I became more confident in teaching. I accepted that I am a teacher. Before that, I felt like I am a university student. But now, I felt like I am more than a university student. I am a teacher-to-be and has a lot of responsibilities." (ST1)

"I can connect more on theory and practice. I have seen university’s teachings are not so useable in practical life. I have learnt how to control classroom and how to manage thins. But real practice is different. You learnt and studied a lot and in real life, you have no time to think back, you have to solve it immediately and quickly. So, I would like to suggest university to give us more training which close to real practices at school." (ST2)

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

School-university partnership for the promotion of development in teacher education seems promising in the literature. Many projects and abundant research have been done all over the world and the results have shown that collaboration between schools and universities is worth establishing for knowledge creation and sharing in teacher education (Hendriana, Nugraha, Hendayana, & Supriatna, 2016; Hobbs & Campbell, 2018; McLaughlin, 2006; Tsui et al., 2009). This study has analyzed the problem of school-university partnership in teacher education and its impact on teachers’ learning in Myanmar where the potential of collaboration between schools and universities is not yet fully recognized. The qualitative and quantitative data on the current practices and challenges of partnership showed that communication between universities and schools is still rather weak. Despite this, it was found that mentor teachers and student teachers could learn from each other and they could develop their professional knowledge and identities even within the current forms of school-university collaboration in Myanmar.

For first and second research questions about partnership practices in teacher education, the majority of mentor teachers reported that the most of the majority of collaboration between schools and university for professional development was ‘university-led’. The quantitative results of this study show that the two worlds of schools and universities are detached from each other. Data reported by individual teachers revealed that attending professional development activities and workshops supported by universities were the main form of collaboration between schools and universities. Interviews with both student teachers and mentor teachers confirmed the relative weakness of collaboration in teacher education: interactive communication is rarely seen in the case of initial teacher education and professional development.

Mentor teachers and student teachers have similar opinion when identifying and ranking the areas or purposes of collaboration between schools and universities (see Fig. 6). Partners believed that school-university partnership should be established in order to support the professional development of teachers. As the least favorable factor for establishing partnership, both groups of participants chose ‘university benefit’ for the purpose of collaboration. In comparing the respondents’ opinions on actors who have an impact on collaboration between schools and universities, the mentor teachers reported policy makers played the biggest role whereas the student teachers reported the principal as the most influential person (see Fig. 7). This suggests that student teachers might think that their effectiveness of practical teaching depends on the leadership of principals. The interview results also suggest that the principals’ way of delegating tasks also had an impact on their practical teaching.

Concerning the third research question about barriers of partnership in teacher education, quantitative data showed the administrative and organizational demand were the major barrier for mentor teachers (see Fig. 8). The complementing interview data revealed that this barrier was embodied by the unmanageable workload and pressure at work that mentor teachers face to manage to balance. Furthermore, the period where student teachers came to their schools was one of the busiest periods of the year when all school ceremonies were celebrated.

For the student teachers, the lack of time and availability were the main obstacles (Fig. 8). The interview results showed that student teachers felt the ‘two-week practice teaching’ was not enough for them to acquire sufficient practice and teaching experiences and in that short period of time they were not able to gain sufficient knowledge about pupils’ behavior. In addition, the student teachers found that financial issues posed major problems in practice teaching. In education college in Myanmar, practice teaching is 45 days and student teachers are given financial support to cover these 45 days. However, in education universities, practice teaching is two weeks as maximum, and no financial aids is given to student teachers. Student teachers compared these two situations, and reported financial problems as one of major barriers in initial teacher practice teaching.

Regarding the impact of school-university partnership on teachers’ learning (fourth research question), the majority of school teachers revealed that their knowledge about educational news and issues, their confidence and knowledge about learners’ behaviors and characteristics were the most developed areas. Furthermore, qualitative findings revealed that school-university partnership for new curriculum development was one of the most beneficial areas for mentor teachers’ learning and for their continuous professional development. The qualitative data seem to confirm
this that school teachers improved in their knowledge about teaching aids and materials, learners’ behaviors and characteristics. In addition, student teachers’ interview findings revealed that they want more practical teaching and studies from university which can be more applicable in daily classroom situations at schools.

It is definitely a limitation of the study that data were collected from only one of the universities of education (there are three such institutions in the country). Mentor teachers were randomly selected from different areas of the country from different regions but mainly from Yangon Region. Besides this, school-university partnership in teacher education is the untouched area of education and no research has been done to find out its nature. And the number of teachers who were mentors was very low, only four out of 28 teachers. Due to its condition, the data collection was limited and researcher can only reported the initial and limited findings of partnership practices as this is the very first research study in the country.

In the 21st century, teacher knowledge and teacher learning matters as we expect teachers not only to teach students challenging things but also to succeed with different and diverse students, to reflect on and analyze their own practice and to improve their own learning. This study investigated teacher learning from the perspective and within the area of school-university partnership in teacher education.

Effective learning and knowledge creation cannot be achieved without the collaboration of schools and universities in teacher education (Halasz, 2016). Myanmar, as a developing country, is in initial stage of reforming its education and teacher education system. Despite still weak collaboration between schools and universities the potential of partnerships for improving teacher learning and knowledge creation in Myanmar seems promising in the future.

**Funding:** This research was supported by the Stipendium Hungaricum Scholarship Programme by the Hungarian Government.

**ACKNOWLEDGMENT**

I would like to thank Professor Dr. Gabor Halasz, for his efforts and support in helping to revise this article for publication. I would also like to thank the participants from Myanmar who involved in this study for their cooperation.

**ABOUT THE AUTHOR**

Khin Khin Thant Sin is a PhD candidate from the Doctoral School of Education, Faculty of Education and Psychology, Eötvös Loránd University. She is also a teacher educator from Yangon University of Education in Myanmar. Her areas of research interest are school-university collaboration, teacher education, knowledge creation and management and higher education studies. She participated in the EDITE SUP project in 2019, which was funded by the European Union’s Horizon 2020 research and innovation program. She contributed her works in the EDITE SUP project and its publication about school-university partnership for international doctorate program on teacher education in 2020.

**REFERENCES**


research on teacher education: Enduring questions in changing contexts (3rd ed.). Routledge; Co-published by the Association of Teacher Educators.
Halasz, G. (2020). Measuring innovation in education with a special focus on the impact of organisational characteristics (Manuscript submitted for publication). Faculty of Education and Psychology, Eotvos Lorand University.
Hardman, F. C. (2013). Development of a teacher education strategy framework linked to pre- and in-service teacher training in Myanmar. UNICEF.
Sjoer, E., Nørgaard, B., & Goossens, M. (2012). Opportunities and challenges in the implementation of the knowledge triangle. 12.
Sjoer, E., Nørgaard, B., & Goossens, M. (2012). Opportunities and challenges in the implementation of the knowledge triangle. 12.


Open Access. This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License (https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/), which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original author and source are credited, a link to the CC License is provided, and changes – if any – are indicated. (SID_1)