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An innovative perspective of initial teacher training in myanmar: current school-university partnership practices

Introduction

The importance of school-university collaboration in teacher education started during the 1980s, where the criticism of initial teacher education emerged as a significant concern (Tsui et al., 2009). In the United Kingdom, David Hargreaves was the leading researcher. He initiated the idea of a school-university partnership by highlighting the lack of connection between knowledge production and application procedures.

There were reasons why the school-university partnership emerged in the 1980s. Among them, the most significant problem was the massive criticism on the quality of teacher preparation.

Theoretical Framework

Developing a school-university partnership is a difficult task to perform, and there is no perfect method to play for the successful one (Tushnet et al., 1993). According to the author, some principles have been established for the implementation of school-university partnerships for different purposes, even though there is no perfect method for it. Among them, the school and university collaboration for teacher training in Australia has demonstrated some fundamental principles to follow in the professional development of prospective teachers.

The interpretative framework, which is developed from an actual collaboration between schools and universities, provides a focus for establishing and thinking of successful partnerships for promoting teacher quality through considering the different strengths and weaknesses of schools and universities (Jones et al., 2016). According to this framework, there are four components that are essential for obtaining successful school-university partnerships. The four pillars include growing school-university partnerships (GUSP), enabling Innovative Practices, Representing partnership practices (RPP), and enabling growth. These components are core parts of a holistic partnership model in which these components help to support to run partnerships, to investigate how the connection has embedded in the practice, to consider the methods that result from the fruitful collaboration and finally the growth in professional teacher education because of the successful partnership (Jones et al., 2016).

In the four components of the framework, the “growth” component is concerned with the professional development of partners when they are collaborating with their partners. This “growth” component of the framework showed that identity, confidence, praxis, and relationship of partners (student teachers, mentor teachers, and university teachers) could be improved and promoted through effective collaboration between schools and universities (School-based partnerships in teacher education, 2018).

School-university partnership not only enables the professional development of its partners but also serves many other purposes. Nowadays, scholars see “school-university partnership” as an innovative solution to bridge the connection between the knowledge produced and its application sector. This kind of consideration can be taken from the “knowledge triangle” concept.

According to Sjoer (2011), the idea of the knowledge triangle means the conceptual tool in which research, education, and innovation are linked together with their respective processes on its three sides and “orchestration tools” in the heart which balances these three (research, education, and

innovation)components. According to him, the knowledge triangle renovates the flow of information among actors. In the traditional "one way" method, the data only goes from research to education and from educators to students. In contrast to this conventional way, the knowledge triangle considers the "mutual flow of information" between three partners; research, education, and innovation.

In the context of a school-university partnership, the examination has been taken in higher education institutions (universities). "Innovation" sector of knowledge triangle can be seen as schools where the innovation is embedded in the daily practices of teachers in a school (Halasz, 2016). From this concept, school-university collaboration is one of the suitable ways to innovate education and to close the gap between research and its application.

Methodology

Participants

Qualitative method is applied in the study. Five student teachers have participated in the study. All of them are from the University of Education. Two final year male student teachers and three female fourth-year student teachers were interviewed by the researcher.

Interview

Five student teachers were interviewed by the researchers through focus groups and individual interviews. Three female student teachers were interviewed through focus group interviews, and two male student teachers were interviewed individually. All of them are from the University of Education. Interview questions are developed by the researcher focusing on the student teachers' experiences in their practical teaching, aiming to investigate the professional development through school-university partnership.

Observation

To have more information about the school-university partnership practices, the researcher did the observation. The demonstration, which is done by the college teachers from the Methodology Department, has been observed by the researcher. The presentation took place in the college of education, where teacher educators taught "a sample teaching to elementary children" in a simulated classroom setting. The aim of the demonstration is to show "student teachers" about the real classroom situation and to show them the different teaching methods.

Data Analysis

Data have been analyzed through the forming of sub-categories, categories, and themes through the interviews. The observation was analyzed according to formed categories.

Findings

Both the results of interviews and observation will be presented in this section.

Interview results

According to student teachers' interview results, they became more confident after their practical teaching. Because of the real experiences of the classroom, the student teachers got an enormous amount of teaching experiences, classroom management, and planning lessons. However, the professional development that they improved came from their practices and interaction with pupils in their classroom. They agreed that they rarely got information and rarely learned from school mentor teachers or university teachers since there was less communication between them.

"I got so many experiences from my practical teaching. I have to manage classrooms, organize lessons, and everything relies on me. And this is great. I learned a lot from teaching experiences. Now, at least, I know how to manage the classroom and how to communicate with students." (Student teacher 1)

"Normally we organize our lessons by ourselves. We communicate rarely with mentor teachers. We never discuss with mentor teachers for planning lessons and teaching methods". (Student teacher 2)

According to the interviews with student teachers, the university teachers and mentors teachers are not usually keep in touch. According to their opinion, the university teachers and the school teachers are in a separate world.

"When university teachers came to visit us when we are practicing teaching, I only see that she talked to the school principal. I never see the school mentors and the university teachers talk to each other". (Student teacher 3)

"Once, the university teachers came to visit us. She gave us a suggestion about how to teach our subjects. It is very helpful. But I don't see her talking to school mentors". (student-teacher 4)

Concerned with the practical teaching period, the student teachers are not fully satisfied with the short period. They think that two-week practical teaching is so short for them. "Two weeks is not enough for us. That is one of the reasons that we have less communication with mentor teachers because we are so rush in teaching and learning in classrooms, no time to communicate with school teachers". (Student teacher 5)

Observation

Observation of teacher educators' demonstration aimed at investigating how the schools and universities collaborate to promote student teachers' learning. Demonstration in this article means that the teacher educators teach the elementary school children in a simulated classroom where the student teachers can observe.

In demonstration lessons, taught by teacher educators, school teachers, and the college teacher, educators had no communication between them. And teacher educators rarely observed what lessons are teaching at the schools in the current time. School teachers showed no interest in what kind of experiences will be taught by teacher educators. Therefore, teacher educators only chose the lesson to teach elementary children based on their academic expertise and preferences. It is observed that school teachers were talking to phone when teacher educators were teaching the children. Observation results showed that schools and universities should be more collaborated to promote student teachers' learning.

Conclusion

Schools and universities individually have been a small place to learn and find out new things at this age for providing professional development training (Stoll & Louis, 2008). Living and learning in a separate world are not enough at this age, especially for the learning society today. One of the best ways to promote teacher education and to provide professional development of prospective teachers can be gained through schools-universities collaboration. School-university partnerships can provide opportunities for teachers to engage in the professional learning communities and to interact with their colleges to innovate education (Sandholtz, 2002).

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