

Chapter 99

The University Partnerships for Critical Reflection by Teacher Trainers

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ABSTRACT

This chapter explores educational training-based partnerships between universities in relation to in-service teacher education practices to enhance the quality of the professional development activities currently in practice. With this in mind, the nature and content of the collaboration between different universities located in Turkey are depicted through the analysis of triangulated data sets from written reports, focus group discussions, and the Likert scale questionnaire in order to elaborate on the impact of exchange of information and visitations on the trainers' professional development. The chapter accomplishes the self-reported impact of university-university collaboration on the participating trainers as well as one-day T-PLUS (Trainers' Professional Learning and Unlimited Sharing) meeting during which the trainers exchange ideas about teacher training and professional development tools and procedures in focus group discussions. The results indicate positive stance towards such a collaboration model that emerged as a result of the written reports and the Likert scale questionnaire.

INTRODUCTION

This chapter examines the university-university partnerships from the social constructivist perspective which “emphasizes the importance of knowledge being constructed within and with the help of the group, in our case, with *trainers* and *trainers (not present in the original)* sharing

and contrasting ideas, agreeing and disagreeing, etc.” (James, 2001: 153). Its two major themes – “school-university partnership and sociocultural and social theories of learning” – have both been treated extensively in the literature (Tsui et al., 2009). It is the bringing together of university-university partnerships and social constructivism themes that makes this chapter unique.

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Twenty three teacher trainers working at different Turkish universities participated in this research. The following table shows the demographic characteristics of participants.

The research questions addressed in the chapter are:

1. What are the major motives behind the partnerships between teacher training units?
2. What are the advantages of partnerships?
3. What is the impact of the partnerships/collaboration on the trainers and their institutions?

In this examination of an evolving model of university-university partnerships, the T-PLUS Project in Turkey, the authors analyze the learning that takes place as the participants (novice trainers and experienced trainers) mutually engage in the enterprise of improving teaching and learning in university settings, developing shared practices, and creating new communities of practice. The major aims of the partnerships include different foci due to the varying needs of each institution. These aims and needs are as follows:

To Monitor Teacher Development Units (TDU)

A university aiming to set up a TDU visits another university to monitor the procedures from a lived experience. Yaşar University visits the University of Economics to learn from them about how they can set up a TDU. In this case, Yaşar University recognizes the University of Economics as the one that can facilitate their setting up process as a role model.

To Get Acquainted with Different Professional Development Activities

A university needs to learn more about a specific professional development activity conducted at

another university. For example, Katip Çelebi University visits Gediz University to learn more about how peer observation and teacher research are conducted there. The experiences reported and observed are seriously taken into consideration when decisions on the types of the professional development activities are made. These exchanges and mutual influences are going to be depicted with unique characteristics.

To Establish a Joint Teacher Development Unit (TDU)

Two universities collaborate to set up a TDU and learn from each other. For example, the TED university (Turkish Education Association) and the TOBB university (The Union of Chambers and Stock Markets of Turkey), which have recently been founded in Ankara, the capital of Turkey, collaborate during the setting up process in order to bring together the human capital to facilitate the process.

To Reflect on Professional Development Practices

Two universities visit each other to contribute to each other reflecting on the professional development practices. Partners more specifically aim to enhance the quality of training they provide by making adjustments in the professional development activities. For instance, two trainers whose universities are located in the same region, Gediz University and Katip Çelebi University visit each other not only to contribute but also to learn from them.

Although the chapter describes one specific context, it is not just about this locale. Rather, the T-PLUS Project is used as a context for theorizing more generally a social theory of learning for university-university partnerships that is relevant to any other similar context. Therefore, this chapter will interest teacher educators, researchers in

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