



**Title:**

**Activity theory as a lens to explore participant perspectives of the administrative and academic activity systems in a university–school partnership in initial teacher education in Saudi Arabia**

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**By**

**Dhaifallah Awwadh Alzaydi**

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## **Abstract**

This study used Activity Theory (AT) as a lens to explore how administrative and academic activity systems worked in a university, in schools and in the university-school partnership to support Initial Teacher Education (ITE) in Saudi Arabia. It examined the perspectives of partnership coordinators, university tutors, head teachers, cooperating teachers and student teachers involved in the ITE partnership programme at Umm Alqura University. The study was conducted under the umbrella of the interpretive paradigm. Case study was used as the methodology of the study. The study employed multiple methods of data collection: questionnaire, interviews and documentary evidence. Maximum variation sampling was used to select the participants to take part in the current study. The total number of the whole sample with all sub-groups was 187. Ten in-depth interviews were conducted with volunteer interviewees.

The study yielded various findings. Participants' expectations were influenced by their history and background. In addition, student teachers were supported in learning about teaching in the university, school and through the partnership between school and university. However, different kinds of challenges were identified. These included: extreme centralisation in running the partnership activity system, lack of awareness of the importance of the partnership and of the need to address contradictory points of view about teaching and learning to teach in a constructive way. These challenges were symptoms of unresolved contradictions inherent in the partnership activity system. Despite these contradictions, many opportunities for professional development were highlighted by all partners.

Using AT as an analytical tool, several implications for all partners were identified. The study concluded with the idea that for effective teacher education, not only is it important to understand the interaction between university and school but also how, within each, administrative and academic activity sub-systems operate and interact. This is because clear understanding of all aspects of the academic and administrative elements of the partnership, and of their relationship, is essential for a successful teacher education.

# Table of contents

<b>Content</b>	<b>Page</b>
<b>Abstract</b> .....	2
<b>Dedication</b> .....	3
<b>Acknowledgment</b> .....	4
<b>Table of contents</b> .....	5
<b>List of tables</b> .....	12
<b>List of figures</b> .....	14
<b>List of appendices</b> .....	14
<b>Abbreviations and terms</b> .....	15

## **Chapter one: Introduction, context and exploring the gap**

<b>1.1 Introduction</b> .....	16
<b>1.2 Context of the research</b> .....	17
1.2.1 Philosophy of education.....	18
1.2.2 The structure of provision (educational stages).....	18
1.2.2.1 Pre-school.....	18
1.2.2.2 General education.....	18
1.2.2.3 Higher education.....	19
1.2.3 Administration of the educational system.....	20
1.2.3.1 The Higher Educational Policy Committee.....	20
1.2.3.2 Ministry of Education.....	20
1.2.3.3 Ministry of Higher Education.....	20
1.2.4 Teacher education.....	20
1.2.4.1 System of teacher education.....	20
1.2.4.2 The Faculty of Education at Umm Alqura University.....	21
1.2.4.3 Teacher training.....	23
1.2.4.3.1 Courses offered to pre-service teachers.....	24
1.2.4.3.2 Courses offered to in-service teachers.....	28
<b>1.3 Exploring the gap</b> .....	30
<b>1.4 Aims of the research</b> .....	30
<b>1.5 Significance of the research</b> .....	31
<b>1.6 Why carry out this research? My personal interest and previous</b>	

research .....	33
<b>1.7 Overview of the thesis</b> .....	37
<b>1.8 Summary of the chapter</b> .....	38

## **Chapter two: Theoretical framework**

<b>2.1 Introduction</b> .....	40
<b>2.2 An overview of AT</b> .....	40
<b>2.2.1 History, background and generations</b> .....	41
<b>2.2.2 The basic principles of AT</b> .....	46
<b>2.2.3 Activity levels</b> .....	48
<b>2.2.4 How does AT shape my work?</b> .....	49
<b>2.2.5 Pros and cons of AT</b> .....	55
<b>2.2.6 Comments</b> .....	56

## **Chapter three: Literature review**

<b>3.1 Introduction</b> .....	58
<b>3.2 Definitions</b> .....	59
3.2.1 Administrative issues.....	59
3.2.2 Teacher education.....	59
3.2.3 Partnership between school and university.....	60
<b>3.3 Some administrative and academic issues in teacher education in KSA</b> .....	60
<b>3.3.1 Some administrative issues in teacher education in KSA</b> .....	60
3.3.1.1 Centralization.....	60
3.3.1.2 Funding.....	62
<b>3.3.2 Some academic issues in teacher education in KSA</b> .....	63
3.3.2.1 Content of the pre-service teacher education programmes.....	63
3.3.2.2 Conceptualising the link between theory and practice.....	64
3.3.2.3 Teacher education research.....	68
3.3.3 Interaction between administrative and academic issues.....	69
<b>3.4 University and school partnership in teacher education</b> .....	70
<b>3.5 Oxford internship scheme</b> .....	76
3.5.1 The development of the internship scheme.....	76
3.5.2 Ideas and principles guiding the scheme.....	77

3.5.2.1 Goals to be achieved in the teacher education programme.....	78
3.5.2.2 Problems to be solved in teacher education programmes.....	79
3.5.2.3 Principles of the scheme.....	82
3.5.3 The internship model in practice.....	83
3.5.3.1 The general programme.....	85
3.5.3.2 The curriculum programme.....	86
3.5.4 Problems, comments and opportunities offered by the scheme.....	86
3.5.5 Lessons to be learned from the Oxford internship scheme and implemented in the Saudi context.....	93
3.5.6 Concluding thoughts on the scheme.....	94
<b>3.6 Recent developments in teacher education and the partnership between school and university .....</b>	<b>96</b>
<b>3.7 Overview of the reviewed literature and stating the research questions.....</b>	<b>101</b>

## **Chapter four: Research design**

<b>4.1 Introduction.....</b>	<b>103</b>
<b>4.2 Research paradigm.....</b>	<b>103</b>
<b>4.3 Ontological assumptions.....</b>	<b>104</b>
<b>4.4 Epistemological assumptions.....</b>	<b>104</b>
<b>4.5 Methodology.....</b>	<b>105</b>
4.5.1 Population and sampling.....	107
4.5.2 Generalization from case study.....	109
<b>4.6 Methods of data collection.....</b>	<b>109</b>
4.6.1 Questionnaire.....	110
4.6.2 Interviews.....	112
4.6.3 Documentary evidence.....	113
4.6.4 The relationships between the data collection methods.....	114
<b>4.7 Translation of the questionnaires and interviews.....</b>	<b>116</b>
<b>4.8 Procedures of data collection.....</b>	<b>116</b>
<b>4.9 Data analysis.....</b>	<b>121</b>
4.9.1 Questionnaires data analysis.....	122
4.9.2 Interviews data analysis.....	123
4.9.3 Documentary evidence data analysis.....	125

<b>4.10 Validity</b> .....	126
<b>4.11 Ethical issues</b> .....	127
<b>4.12 Summary of the chapter</b> .....	128

## **Chapter five: Quantitative findings and making sense of the data**

<b>5.1 Introduction</b> .....	129
<b>5.2 An example of the process of analysis</b> .....	129
5.2.1 Expectations about a good teacher.....	129
5.2.1.1 Differences among different groups according to role, gender and year of experience.....	130
<b>5.3 Subject</b> .....	135
5.3.1 Differences among different groups.....	136
<b>5.4 Object</b> .....	138
5.4.1 Differences among different groups.....	139
<b>5.5 Tools</b> .....	142
<b>5.6 Community</b> .....	143
5.6.1 Differences among different groups.....	148
<b>5.7 Rules</b> .....	152
5.7.1 Differences among different groups.....	154
<b>5.8 Division of labour</b> .....	156
5.8.1 Differences among different groups.....	158
<b>5.9 Conclusion</b> .....	162

## **Chapter six: Qualitative findings and making sense of the data**

<b>6.1 Introduction and preview of the findings</b> .....	163
<b>6.2 Perspectives on a good teacher</b> .....	167
6.2.1 Purpose.....	167
6.2.2 Disposition.....	168
6.2.3 Knowledge.....	169
6.2.4 Action.....	171
6.2.5 A good teacher tools for personal learning.....	173
6.2.6 Teaching outcome.....	174
6.2.7 Explanation for pupils' learning.....	175
<b>6.3 Expectations about learning to teach</b> .....	175

6.3.1 Tools for personal learning about teaching.....	175
<b>6.4 Expectations about teaching</b> .....	179
<b>6.5 History and background</b> .....	180
6.5.1 Personal experience.....	180
6.5.2 Family.....	183
6.5.3 Own teacher influence.....	184
6.5.4 Others influence.....	185
6.5.5 Values.....	186
6.5.6 Influence of history and background.....	187
<b>6.6 Objects</b> .....	190
6.6.1 Student teachers' objects.....	190
6.6.2 Student teachers' hardest objects to be achieved.....	192
6.6.3 University objects.....	193
6.6.4 School objects.....	194
<b>6.7 Learning at the university</b> .....	197
6.7.1 Feeling about learning in the university.....	197
6.7.2 Action-own learning.....	198
6.7.3 Support at the university.....	198
6.7.4 Hindrance at the university.....	200
6.7.5 Bringing the university-related findings together and making sense of the data .....	203
6.7.6 Recommendations for the university.....	205
<b>6.8 Learning at the school</b> .....	206
6.8.1 Feeling about learning in the school.....	206
6.8.2 Support at the school.....	207
6.8.3 Hindrance at the school.....	210
6.8.4 Bringing the school-based findings together and making sense of the data .....	218
6.8.5 Recommendations for the school.....	221
<b>6.9 Learning through the partnership between school and university</b> .....	223
6.9.1 Support through the partnership.....	223
6.9.2 Feeling about learning through the partnership .....	225
6.9.3 Hindrances through the partnership between school and university.....	225
6.9.4 Different points of views.....	232

6.9.5 Dealing with different points of views.....	234
6.9.6 Bringing the partnership-related findings together and making sense of the data .....	236
6.9.7 Recommendations for the partnership between school and university...	239
<b>6.10 Professional development through the partnership between school and university .....</b>	<b>242</b>
<b>6.11 Assessment.....</b>	<b>245</b>
6.11.1 Attitude towards assessment.....	245
6.11.2 Recommendations for assessment.....	247
6.12 Conclusion .....	248

## **Chapter seven: Further discussion using AT as an analytical tool**

<b>7.1 Introduction.....</b>	<b>250</b>
<b>7.2 Answering the research questions .....</b>	<b>250</b>
7.2.1 The university context.....	251
7.2.2 School context.....	251
7.2.3 The partnership between school and university in teacher education....	252
<b>7.3 The analysis of the partnership activity system.....</b>	<b>254</b>
<b>7.4 Conclusion.....</b>	<b>263</b>

## **Chapter eight: Implications, recommendations, suggestions and conclusion**

<b>8.1 Introduction.....</b>	<b>266</b>
<b>8.2 Difficulties in conducting the study .....</b>	<b>266</b>
<b>8.3 Implications.....</b>	<b>267</b>
8.3.1 Implications for policy makers and administrators .....	268
8.3.2 Implications for university tutors and cooperating teachers .....	268
8.3.3 Implications for parents .....	269
8.3.4 Implications in terms of AT .....	270
<b>8.4 Recommendations.....</b>	<b>270</b>
<b>8.5 Suggestions.....</b>	<b>273</b>
<b>8.6 The way ahead.....</b>	<b>274</b>
<b>References .....</b>	<b>277</b>



## List of tables

<b>Table 1.1:</b> Components of the teacher education programme.....	23
<b>Table 2.1:</b> Engeström’s (1987) Four Levels of Inner Contradictions in Activity Theory Systems.....	52
<b>Table3.1:</b> The key features of each type of the three models of the partnership between school and university in teacher education.....	99
<b>Table 4.1:</b> Distribution of the sample according to gender, job and years of experience for the whole sample except student teachers.....	108
<b>Table 4.2:</b> Distribution of the sample according to subject of specialisation of student teachers.....	108
<b>Table 4.3:</b> The meta-data of the interviews.....	120
<b>Table 4.4:</b> Types of data collected.....	122
<b>Table 5.1:</b> The descriptive statistics for the responses to the sub-topic of expectation about a good teacher.....	130
<b>Table 5.2:</b> The results of the normality test.....	130
<b>Table 5.3:</b> The differences among groups according to role regarding knowledge about subject matter.....	132
<b>Table 5.4:</b> The differences among groups according to role regarding linking theory to classroom practice.....	133
<b>Table 5.5:</b> The differences among groups according to years of experience regarding awareness of pupils’ characteristics.....	134
<b>Table 5.6:</b> The descriptive statistics for the responses to the items related to the AT topic of subject.....	135
<b>Table 5.7:</b> The differences among groups for the responses to the items related to the AT topic of subject.....	137
<b>Table 5.8:</b> The descriptive statistics for the responses to the items related to AT topic of object.....	139
<b>Table 5.9:</b> The differences among groups for the responses to the items related to AT topic of object.....	140
<b>Table 5.10:</b> The descriptive statistics for the responses to the items of the AT topic of tools.....	142
<b>Table 5.11:</b> The descriptive statistics for the responses to the items of the AT topic of community: learning in the school.....	144
<b>Table 5.12:</b> The descriptive statistics for the responses to the items of the	

AT topic of community: learning in the university and through the partnership between school and university.....	146
<b>Table 5.13:</b> The descriptive statistics for the responses to whether or not the different views between school and university about teaching and learning to teach were a problem.....	147
<b>Table 5.14:</b> The differences among groups for the responses to the items of the AT topic of community: learning in the school.....	149
<b>Table 5.15:</b> The differences among groups for the responses to the sub-topics of learning in the university and through the partnership between school and university.....	151
<b>Table 5.16:</b> The descriptive statistics for the responses for the participants to ‘yes’ or ‘no’ questions in terms of routine and assessment.....	152
<b>Table 5.17:</b> The descriptive statistics for the responses for the participants to the frequency of meetings held in terms of routine.....	153
<b>Table 5.18:</b> The descriptive statistics for the responses showing the agreement or disagreement of the participants in terms of routine and learning to teach.....	153
<b>Table 5.19:</b> The differences among groups for the responses to the items of the AT topic of rules.....	155
<b>Table 5.20:</b> The descriptive statistics for the responses to the items of the AT topic of division of labour.....	157
<b>Table 5.21:</b> The differences among groups for the responses to the items of the AT topic of division of labour.....	159
<b>Table 6.1:</b> The topics, categories and sub-categories of the qualitative data analysis.....	164

## List of figures

<b>Figure 2.1:</b> Basic AT representation.....	41
<b>Figure 2.2:</b> The structure of a human activity system.....	44
<b>Figure 2.3:</b> Two interacting activity systems as minimal model for the third generation of activity theory.....	45
<b>Figure 2.4:</b> Basic "Structure" and terms used with regard to Human Activity	48
<b>Figure 2.5:</b> University-school partnership activity systems within teacher education programme.....	50
<b>Figure 2.6:</b> An activity system analysis from AT perspective.....	54
<b>Figure3.1:</b> Continuum of expansive-restrictive learning environments for teachers.....	101
<b>Figure 4.1:</b> The relationships among methods of data collection.....	115
<b>Figure 4.2:</b> An example of the qualitative data inserted to the Excel file.....	124
<b>Figure 4.3:</b> Triangulation of methods of data collection.....	126
<b>Figure 7.1:</b> Student teachers professional development activity system.....	255
<b>Figure 7.2:</b> School-university partnership activity system.....	257
<b>Figure 7.3:</b> Contradictions inherent in student teachers' professional development activity .....	262
<b>Figure 7.4:</b> The interaction between administrative and academic activity sub-systems within university-school partnership activity system.....	265

## List of appendices

<b>Appendix 1:</b> Student teachers' questionnaire.....	294
<b>Appendix 2:</b> Partnership coordinators and university tutors' questionnaire...	305
<b>Appendix 3:</b> Head teachers and cooperating teachers' questionnaire.....	316
<b>Appendix 4:</b> Student teachers' interview schedule.....	326
<b>Appendix 5:</b> Partnership coordinator and university tutors' interview schedule.....	328
<b>Appendix 6:</b> Head teacher and cooperating teachers' interview schedule.....	330
<b>Appendix 7:</b> A student teacher's interview transcript.....	332
<b>Appendix 8:</b> Certificate of ethical research approval .....	343