



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

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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.

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