Challenges to Implementing Partnerships in a College of Teachers' Education and Secondary Schools in Hosanna Town, Southern Ethiopia

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Abstract: The study investigated the challenges of implementing effective partnerships in a College of Teachers' Education and schools in Hosanna town, Southern Ethiopia, using the study used a descriptive design. The study was conducted in Hosanna town which had two public secondary schools, one private secondary school and one College of Teacher's Education. The total number of educators was 150. The researchers sampled 37 instructors and 41 school teachers to make a total of 78 respondents. While there are benefits of forming partnerships among Colleges of Teachers' Education and schools, bridging the gap between theory and practices of trainees is one of the main established challenges. Other challenges include gaps between theoretical and practical parts of teacher education programs, lack of finance in implementing partnerships between the college and schools and lack of collaboration between college instructors and teachers. The study recommends that the Ministry of Education should allocate a budget for developing effective partnerships. The regional education office should give training to develop trust among partners. Training should be given to change the pattern of the top to down work order and solve the cultural differences between the colleges and schools.

Keywords: Partnerships; challenges of partnerships; Colleges of Teachers' Education; Schools, stakeholders

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Introduction

A partnership is the contract of two or more groups to work jointly towards mutual dreams. The educational partnership is the working together of schools, colleges or other stakeholders with mutual goals of improving the quality of education. There are many advantages of partnerships. According to Huong, Tung, Hong and Hung (2020), the main benefit of forming partnerships among Colleges of Teachers' Education and different stakeholders, particularly schools, is to bridge the gap between the theory and practice of the trainees. Moreover, when students experience real-world problems, it helps them develop their problem-solving skills.

Partnership encourages educators to put their theoretical knowledge into practice. It also fosters the learners' ability to develop their knowledge by making it more practical. Partnerships can also help the Colleges of Teachers' Education to partake in different community services, increase research conducting skills, and develop creativity and innovation skills. The collaborative work between student-teachers, school teachers, college instructors and faculties could help stakeholders develop their morale, reduce teachers' isolation and create opportunities to share knowledge and skills between parties. It also creates job exposure for the student-teachers.

Foerste, Merier and Vargiu (2017) confirmed that partnerships could help the student-teachers develop problem-solving skills, which means the teachers can solve the problems experienced during their school practice. It can also help professional teacher educators to connect their theoretical knowledge with practical skills.

Partnership makes the teaching practice real, the teaching and learning more meaningful, and it increases the habit of developing collaboration between students, teachers, professionals, community, and partners. In addition, it bridges the gaps between schools and teacher training colleges. It also helps to bring professional development and creativity to teachers (Velzen, Lorist, & Bezzina, 2008).

Fekadu and Melese (2012) confirmed that in Ethiopia, partnership between Colleges of Teachers' Education and schools develops in-service training within schools, which means staff members benefit from the association. It also advances the skills of innovation and creativity, practical knowledge, and ability to conduct research. It further helps the student teachers to understand the work situations, increase leadership skills and reduces practice shock.

Generally, developing partnerships have benefits in making education so practical by advancing the skills for innovation, creativity and research. However, there are different challenges to implement partnerships. This study, therefore, addressed challenges to implementing partnerships between the selected College of Teachers' Education and schools.

Challenges to Implementing Partnership

Generally, partnerships between teacher education institutions and educational agencies are not always sufficiently supported because of different challenges (Heimann, 2015). A partnership in teacher education is about forming a learning community that works collaboratively with the common goal of producing skillful workers that contribute to the educational needs and development of a country. To reach the goal, there needs to be collaboration between teacher training institutions and educational agencies. However, the challenge is working together in the current individualistic society. Similarly, the development of an appropriate collaboration between parties is a challenge to successful school-college partnerships (Ngan & Chan, 2012).

According to Halvorsen (2017), the partnership aims to form a learning society between universities and schools. However, there are issues in forming partnerships such as learning to be a partner and working together in collaboration. In addition, the divorce between the theoretical and practical parts of teacher education programs by the newly graduated teachers (novice teachers) brings a real shock as they go to teach in their respective workplaces because of a lack of exposure to the workplaces while they are at school. The world is fast-changing and teachers need to meet the demands of their students. In this case, a well-developed partnership in teacher education provides support for professional development.

Even though UNESCO (as cited by Halvorsen, 2017) recommends partnership as a strategy to promote education for sustainable growth, they mentioned a crucial challenge that is a

reorientation of teacher education toward the issue of managing sustainability as it embraces atmosphere, economy, and cultural multiplicity. Therefore, there is a need of reorienting teacher education by creating a partnership in a fast-changing world to address the gap beginner teachers have concerning professional development and addressing the multicultural educational community.

Since universities and schools have their own cultures, these differences in cultures are considered challenges to forming partnerships among teacher education institutions and educational agencies. Midthassel (2017) confirms the challenges of having cultural differences in the following ways: cultural differences such as college teachers considering themselves as higher in status than school teachers are hindrances to partnerships. The presence of different personal experiences, exposures, differences in teaching philosophies, opposing opinions, and diverse approaches to teaching are considered cultural differences that could affect the working together between schools and colleges in partnerships (Clarke & Winslade, 2019).However, these differences can be a working opportunity for the betterment of schools and colleges of teachers' education since the differences pave the need for learning from one another. Similarly, the hierarchical structure of educational institutions orients detachment and creates obstacles to developing interaction, coordination, and collaboration between colleges of teachers' education and schools. Cultural differences such as personality styles, values, and purposes have affected the working relationship between colleges and schools (Schroeder 1999).

Different understanding of roles is another challenge in partnerships. What are the roles of educational institutions in forming partnerships? The partnership brings parties to an equal level though there are differences in the level of education.

Equality is for achieving a common goal of interlacing theory with practice; in this case, professors are knowledgeable in equipping their students with the necessary knowledge but they may not be aware of the new developments at schools as a result of societal and technological changes. On the other hand, teachers know the practical aspects at school but they lack knowledge on how to solve some of the challenges based on research. When the two parties collaborate, it solves the multifaceted challenges that the two parties are likely to face.

Partnerships are between institutions, but the interactions are with people. Baum (as cited by Midthassel, 2017) pointed out that although a partnership is an agreement between institutions, the real work is between individuals; hence, social interactions are significant. One of the tasks of educational institutions is to offer research-based practical skills to educational agencies. While forming partnerships needs time and commitment, teacher education institutions and educational agencies need to understand that they have a gap in linking theory with practice. Once parties know their strength, they will start working together to achieve common goals

The workload of principals is another challenge for schools to form partnerships with teacher education institutions. Nihlfors and Johansson (as cited in Sahlin, 2019) suggest that school principals are loaded with work and different expectations from students, teachers, parents, communities, and the government, as a whole.

A study by Fekadu and Melese (2017), in Ethiopia, indicated the challenges of creating partnerships among teacher education institutions and secondary schools as a lack of smooth work relationships and coordination between some school teachers and college instructors.

Methodology
This section dealt with research design, population and sampling, instruments, validity and reliability, statistical treatment of data and ethical consideration.

Research Design
This study used a mixed-method design. In this design, both quantitative and qualitative data were gathered simultaneously. This method helps researchers combine aspects of qualitative and quantitative research approaches for scope and profundity of understanding and corroboration.

Population and Sampling
The study was conducted in Hosanna town which had two public secondary schools, one private secondary school and one College of Teacher's Education. All the educational institutions were included using the purposive sampling. The total

number of educators was 150. The researchers sampled 37 instructors and 41 school teachers to make a total of 78 respondents.

Research Instrument
This study used a questionnaire which was constructed by the researchers. The questionnaire used agreement/ disagreement levels of 4- to a great extent, 3-to a moderate extent, 2-to a lesser extent, and 1-not at all.

Validity and Reliability
While validity is about truthfulness and reliability is the stability or consistency of measurement, both increase transparency and decrease researchers' bias (Haradhan, 2017). The researchers used different techniques to affirm the validity and reliability of the instrument. To confirm the face validity, experts looked at the items in the questionnaire and suggested if they were valid to measure the concept. To confirm content validity, the researchers developed the survey instrument from the review of related literature. To ensure acceptable reliability, the researchers tested the items of the questionnaire and the Cronbach's Alpha of .701 was established.

Statistical Treatment of Data
The study used descriptive statistics for data analysis. The criteria for interpreting the mean scores were as follows: 3.50-4.0 to a great extent; 2.50-3.49 to a moderate extent; 1.50-2.49 to a lesser extent and 1.49 and below not at all.

Ethical Consideration
The researchers ensured participants' autonomous right to participate or withdraw at any time. Permit to collect data was obtained from the zone education bureau.

Findings and Discussion
This section presents the findings concerning the challenges faced by the College of Teachers' Education and schools to implement partnerships.

Challenges to Implement Partnerships
The research question stated: What are the challenges to implementing partnerships between the selected College of Teachers' Education and schools?

Table 1 indicates the challenges rated by respondents. The criteria for the interpretation of mean scores are as follows: 3.50-4.0 = to a great extent; 2.50-3.49 = to a moderate extent; 1.50-2.49 = to a lesser extent and 1.49 and below = not at all. Table 1 indicates that the biggest challenge was lack of funds (mean score=3.13) which is at the level of a moderate extent.

Table 1: Challenges to Forming Partnerships Based on the ratings of College and School Teachers

SN	ITEMS	Mean	Std. Dev
1	There are differences in cultures among schools and the College of Teachers' Education.	2.97	1.019
2	The workload of teachers and instructors is a barrier to forming collaborative partnerships.	2.83	1.025
3	College of Teacher Education shows their authority over schools.	2.42	.942
4	The government policy does not encourage partnerships.	2.61	1.028
5	College of Teacher's Education and schools lack the finance to form a partnership	3.13	.923
6	A lack of collaboration between instructors and teachers is a challenge to a partnership.	3.08	.879
7	Lack of knowledge regarding the benefit of partnerships is a challenge.	2.90	.961
8	There is a lack of trust between parties to form partnerships	2.92	.900

The respondents said that the teacher training college and schools' lack of finance affects the formation of collaborative partnerships to a moderate level. Literature reveals that it is a requirement to create and execute a thriving partnership, and without having a regular budget, it is impossible to attain goals (Brandstetter, et al., 2006). Moreover, Zuilkowski and Tsiga (2021) confirmed that lack of finance is considered an issue with some partners to develop a partnership. In his finding, Mekango (2013) stressed that financial constraints are challenges to developing partnerships in Ethiopia. The

findings also conform to Desta and Belay (2018) who indicated that a lack of resources (financial and human) is considered a challenge.

The second biggest challenge was the lack of collaboration between instructors and teachers with a mean score of 3.08, affecting the partnership to a moderate extent. Halvorsen (2017) found that a lack of collaboration such as being unable to learn to be a partner is a challenge to implement partnerships. Fekadu and Melese (2012) found that a lack of collaboration between school teachers and student teachers is

considered a challenge to implementing effective partnerships between colleges and schools.

The third challenge was the differences in cultures among schools, teacher education institutions, and other educational offices which had the mean score of 2.97. This also affected the formation of collaborative partnerships to a moderate extent.

The fourth challenge to forming partnerships was lack of trust between parties which had a mean score of 2.92, at a moderate level. According to Midthassel (2017), cultural differences have been hindrances to partnerships. In their findings, Waitoller and Kozleski (2013) established some challenges of universities/colleges toward school partnerships since schools had their own culture and universities/colleges had their own culture. Therefore, the difference in culture is a challenge in developing collaborative partnerships.

The fifth challenge was the workload of teachers and instructors, with a mean score of 2.83, which is in the zone of moderate extent. Nihlfors and Johansson (as cited by Sahlin, 2019) confirmed that school leaders have heavy workloads because of different expectations from students, teachers, parents, communities, and the government. Gemeda (2015) suggested that teachers' workload restrained their participation in forming a partnership. In Ethiopia, teachers are engaged in different instructional and non-instructional activities. Teaching many students in one class, a teacher-centered curriculum, and a shift in assessment methods are instructional activities. Non-professional activities are participating in political and other meetings that do not have a direct link to the teaching and learning process. Farrell (2021), in her finding, expressed that school teachers have a massive workload, and it has become challenging to create any partnerships for professional development with other stakeholders. Razalli, Kamaruddin, Teck, and Daud (2021) recommended that college teachers need to have time allotted for research, publication, consulting with their students, and forming partnerships. Thus, teachers have considerable obligations which inhibit them from forming partnerships and professional development.

The sixth challenge was the unfavorable government policy, with a mean score of 2.61, to a moderate extent; however, the government policy supports the formation of a partnership with industries and other institutions. Zewdie (2019), the president of Ethiopia, confirmed that institutions should establish collaboration and connections with industries and other institutions to implement their goals.

Lastly, the item which says teacher training institutions show their authority over schools was rated at a lesser extent, with a mean of 2.42. Although it is a lesser extent, it indicates the presence of the challenge dominance of college teachers over school teachers. Greany and Brown (2015) confirmed that successful partnerships do not follow the hierarchy of the education system, in which higher education is considered the higher authority. Thus, to establish an effective partnership the stakeholders should come to the same level.

Conclusions and Recommendations
Conclusions
While there are benefits of forming partnerships among Colleges of Teachers' Education and schools, bridging the gap between the theory and practices of trainees is one of the main established challenges. Other established challenges include gaps between theoretical and practical parts of teacher education programs, lack of finance in implementing partnerships between the college and schools and lack of collaboration between college instructors and teachers. Lack of trust between the college and schools was also identified as a challenge. Finally, the policy not encouraging the implementation of partnerships between the college and schools was considered as a challenge.

Recommendations
Based on the findings, the researchers recommended the following:
1. The Ministry of Education should allocate a budget for developing effective partnerships.

2. The regional education office should give training to develop trust among partners.
3. Training should be given to change the pattern of the top to down work order and solve the cultural differences between the colleges and schools.

4. The workload of instructors and teachers should be reduced by training teachers to schedule their tasks, focus on priority, use social media, emphasize student-centered

teaching and delegate social responsibilities to others.

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