

Chapter 3: School–University Partnerships and the Collaboration Continuum Model in Teacher Education: A Developmental Framework for Systemic Impact

Alice Omariba

<http://orcid.org/0000-0002-9313-8476>

DOI: 10.4018/979-8-3373-7252-5.ch00342

Murang'a University of Technology, Kenya

ABSTRACT

This chapter, per the authors, advances a developmental understanding of partnership formation and sustainability in teacher preparation systems. It introduces the Collaboration Continuum Model (CCM) as an integrative framework conceptualising progression from consultation and coordination to cooperation, co-creation, and co-leadership. Drawing on contemporary studies and qualitative meta-synthesis, the chapter synthesises theory and empirical evidence to examine how shared practice, distributed authority, and transformative learning enable sustainable institutional alignment. Illustrative cases from Kenya situate the model within competency-based reform contexts in the Global South. The chapter contributes a diagnostic and policy-relevant tool for strengthening institutional governance, professional learning, and system coherence aligned with SDG 4.

INTRODUCTION

School-university partnerships (SUPs) have increasingly gained prominence as strategic mechanisms for strengthening teacher education, enhancing professional learning, and improving student outcomes across diverse education systems. Globally, higher education institutions are being called upon to move beyond traditional, institution-centric models of teacher preparation toward more collaborative, practice-embedded, and impact-oriented partnerships with schools (Darling-Hammond et al., 2020; OECD, 2020). These partnerships are viewed as critical spaces for bridging theory and practice, fostering continuous professional development, and supporting system-wide educational reforms. In the context of the Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG 4) agenda, SUPs are increasingly framed as vehicles for advancing equitable, inclusive, and quality education through shared responsibility and collective action (UNESCO, 2021; UNESCO, 2023). Within teacher education, collaborative SUPs have evolved to encompass a range of joint practices, including co-teaching, school-based mentoring, collaborative curriculum design, participatory action research, and professional learning communities. Results from recent studies emphasizes that effective collaboration is not merely structural but relational, requiring trust, shared leadership, and a common vision among partners (Hargreaves & O'Connor, 2018; Fullan, Quinn, & McEachen, 2020). Studies conducted in both Global North and Global South contexts demonstrate that when collaboration is intentionally cultivated, SUPs contribute to enhanced teacher agency, stronger professional identities, and improved instructional practices (Darling-Hammond & Oakes, 2019; Burns & Köster, 2016). However, the nature and depth of collaboration vary significantly depending on institutional cultures, governance arrangements, and policy environments. In the Global South, and particularly in sub-Saharan Africa, SUPs have gained renewed attention due to ongoing education reforms, teacher shortages, and the transition toward competency-based curricula. Universities are increasingly expected to work closely with schools to support teacher preparedness, curriculum implementation, and pedagogical innovation (Akala, 2021; Schweisfurth, 2020). While collaborative initiatives exist, many partnerships remain project-based, donor-driven, or personality-dependent, limiting their sustainability and systemic impact. Emerging evidence suggests that without coherent collaborative frameworks, SUPs struggle to move beyond episodic engagement toward institutionalized, mutually beneficial, and scalable models of collaboration (Burns & Lawrie, 2021; OECD, 2023). Despite growing global recognition of the value of school–university partnerships, significant gaps remain in the conceptualisation and operationalization of collaborative approaches that support their long-term sustainability and impact particularly within teacher education systems in the Global South. Much of the existing literature