Promising practices

Collaboration between and within universities, Boards of Education and schools in Japan
This case study describes a “Promising practice” drawn from an OECD review of Initial Teacher Preparation in Japan from 5-9 September 2016.

The OECD Review Team – Hannah von Ahlefeld (OECD), Francesca Caena (University of Venice), Kjetil Helgeland (OECD) and Danielle Toon (Learning First) – identified a number of “Promising practices” in each country. These practices may not be widespread or representative, but seen in the context of other challenges, they represent a strength or opportunity to improve the country’s initial teacher preparation system – and for other countries to learn from them.

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Promising practice 4.
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Context

Stakeholder involvement and open dialogue lay at the heart of effective governance and reform. But in order to be effective, a strategic vision and set of processes to harness their ideas and input is required (Burns and Köster, 2016[1]). Teacher education institutions, national and subnational authorities and schools are the major players in initial teacher preparation systems – and following the rules of good governance, stakeholders could work across and between institutions to build bridges between theory, policy and practice. Although a growing body of literature advocates the importance of effective school-university and university-local governments partnerships “to create coherence between training and practice as well as pipelines for recruitment, preparation, hiring, and induction” (Darling-Hammond et al., 2012[2]) and to give “new teachers the best possible chances to develop and mature into expert and research-informed practitioners” (Greany and Brown, 2015[3]), the evidence base on the impact of these partnerships, and on the barriers and enablers to achieving them, is somewhat limited.

Toon and Jensen (2017) provide a useful framework for describing different types of collaboration, which varies in terms of the depth of collaboration, roles and accountability of the various partners and systems involved in or implicated by the collaboration, and the capacities and financial incentives required to nurture and develop collaborations:

- Basic partnerships, which involve regular discussions about operational issues;
- Collaborative partnerships, in which partners hold structured meetings that involve sharing data and what they are working on;
- Continuously improving partnerships, in which partners use an improvement cycle and collaborate on joint projects; and
- Partners who jointly design, deliver, evaluate and improve preparation and early career development.

Many of these partnerships can be found in Japan, between universities (JANU, Tokyo Gakugei University project for university collaboration), within universities (e.g. Tamagawa University Center for Teacher Education Research), between universities and Boards of Education (e.g. Joint Councils), and between universities and schools (e.g. affiliated schools).
What are some examples of collaboration between universities?

**Japan Association of Universities of Education**

The Japan Association of Universities of Education (JANU) has 56 member institutions (i.e., education universities and faculties of education in national universities), all with affiliated schools, and 12,000 faculty members as part of these universities. Its main role is to provide policy recommendations to the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT) Council for Education on issues such as teachers’ curriculum and programme accreditation; to award grants for research on all teacher education, especially in its affiliated schools, collaboration between community and universities, and contemporary issues in education; and disseminate the findings of this research through journals and conferences.

*For more information: [www.janu.jp/eng/](http://www.janu.jp/eng/)*

**Tokyo Gakugei University project for university collaboration**

The Center to Support Partnership in the Advancement of Teacher Education will serve as the activity hub for the HATO Project, which aims to strengthen and enhance teacher training functions by exploiting the respective strengths of Hokkaido University of Education (H), Aichi University of Education (A), Tokyo Gakugei University (T) and Osaka Kyoiku University (O). The Center will promote partnership and cooperation between teacher training universities and undergraduate faculties nationwide, proactively addressing the various challenges faced by teacher training in Japan.

*For more information: [http://www.u-gakugei.ac.jp/english/about/institutes.html](http://www.u-gakugei.ac.jp/english/about/institutes.html)*

What are some examples of collaboration between universities and Boards of Education?

MEXT gives strong advice to universities to work closely with Boards of Education. MEXT is creating a legal framework to enable each university and Board of Education to have teacher competency standards.

**Joint Councils in Japan**

Mandated by MEXT, each BOE is required to set up a Joint Council, which is responsible for maintaining close, positive and collaborative relationships between BOEs and universities with regard to initial teacher education (ITE) programmes.

Joint Councils are typically responsible for setting the Capability Index for the Enhancement of the Quality of School Principals and Teachers (Teachers’ and Principals’ Capability Index) in collaboration with universities. In so doing, Joint Councils aim to maximise the utility of resources of both universities and BOEs to create a seamless link between ITE and teachers’ lifelong professional development.

What are some examples of collaboration within universities?

**Tamagawa University Center for Teacher Education Research**

Many universities have multiple ITE programs that are independently organised and operated, across both the open system and education faculties. However, it is not
uncommon to find that education faculties do not interact with other faculties who provide subject specialist training. This is inefficient, especially for organising practicums.

MEXT are thinking about initiatives that can better combine theoretical and practical courses so they are not so separate. Some universities are creating joint teacher training centres, such as the Tamagawa University Center for Teacher Education Research, which was established to manage ITE programmes across all departments of the university, coordinating both open system and education faculty programmes.

There are 6 faculties that are certified to provide teacher training courses in Tamagawa University: Faculty of Letters, Faculty of Agriculture, Faculty of Engineering, Faculty of Education, Faculty of Arts and Faculty of Liberal Studies.

For more information: http://www.tamagawa.jp/en/highereducation/support.html

What are some examples of collaboration between universities and schools?

Affiliated schools in Japan

Affiliated schools are schools that have formal partnership arrangements with universities in Japan. In 2015, there were 258 affiliated schools in 58 national universities in Japan, including 72 in primary and 73 in junior high schools. In some cases, the school is located on the university campus. Affiliated schools have three purposes:

- Provide innovative education
- Conduct educational research in cooperation with university faculty
- Help candidates practice teaching


Why is it an opportunity?

The OECD Review Team in its review of Japan from 5-8 September 2016 concluded that:

- These forms of collaboration provide good examples of the way powerful partnerships look like. The partnerships observed are able to spread good practices more widely, deepen the exchange of ideas and information, and use more effective research models.

How could it be improved?

The OECD Review Team also noted that:

- There is little collaboration between education faculties and subject specialist faculties (i.e. Open System and faculties of education). Many universities have multiple ITE programs that are independently organised and operated. Most education faculties do not interact with other faculties who provide subject specialist training. This is inefficient, especially for organising practicums.
- Universities are starting to engage in meaningful collaboration on joint research projects. To improve quality across universities there could be structures that
enable universities to provide collegial review feedback to each other to share ideas and jointly solve issues.

- There are no formal structures to enable schools to provide regular feedback to universities to help improve their programmes (e.g. current issues facing the school that should be covered in training). The Ministry is working to improve collaboration between universities and BoEs through Joint Councils.

References


