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Enhancing Teachers' Collaborative Learning as a Form of Professional Development

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Introduction

In our world, collaborative learning is a key component of the learning process for both students and teachers. Teachers generally need to have a stronger sense of collaborative professionalism before they can engage effectively with students in a collaborative way (Hargreaves & O' Connor, 2018). It acknowledges students' awareness of their knowledge gaps, empowering them to learn from and support one another in achieving a comprehensive understanding together. Teacher educators and teachers play a vital role in enhancing students' collaborative learning. The professional development of teacher educators and teachers must be improved at every stage of their teaching careers to prepare them as lifelong learners.

Teacher learning is a complex structure. While individual learning for teachers is shaped by personal beliefs, experiences, and practices, the collective beliefs and practices within the learning system can influence individuals' beliefs and motivation to learn at the school level, thereby creating an interconnected system (Opfer & Pedder, 2011). Teachers' professional learning is more effective when they adopt a collaborative approach and share their insights and knowledge with colleagues. Leadership plays a crucial role in the effectiveness of professional learning, particularly when professional autonomy is respected and support is provided (Menter & Mclaughlin, 2015). Moreover, teacher training and other professional development programs play a pivotal role in equipping educators with the qualifications necessary for classroom instruction (Ulla, 2018). So, a collaborative learning culture should be practiced and fostered throughout a teaching career to provide students with learner-centred approaches.

Bray et al., (2014) described in their book:

“The nature of any particular comparative study of education depends on the purposes for which it was undertaken and on the identity of the person(s) conducting the enquiry” (pg.19). There are different categories of people who undertake comparative studies of education: policy makers, international agencies and academics, practitioners and parents. Our study is a comparative study of education that mainly focuses on the collaborative professional development and learning culture in two countries, Myanmar and Hungary.

Myanmar is situated in Southeast Asia and is culturally one of the diverse countries in the world and predominantly Buddhist, while there are Christians, Muslims, Hindus and Spiritualists. Many of political and social problems had been started by the actions of 19th-century British colonialists and they have remained unsolved for decades since independence (Aye & McLellan, 2014) and education systems have been impacted significantly (Gutierrez, 2015).

The education system in Myanmar has an extremely authoritarian nature (Maber et al., 2019). But from 2015 to 2020, Myanmar began a domestically led transition from military dictatorship to a more participatory system, resulting in an NLD Government. Education became a catalyst for the emergence of new civil society organizations that pushed for change (Lall, 2016; Lall, 2020a). The country moved forward in response to the positive transformations brought about by education reforms across various sectors in formal and informal ways (Lall, 2020a). But after the coup on February 21, 2021, all people in Myanmar have experienced to their past situation (Saito, 2021), and all the situations are dating back to the authoritarian centralization.

Hungary is situated in Central Europe. The Hungarian education system is adapted to the traditions of German-speaking and Eastern European countries. In the last three decades, major changes in processes in the Hungarian education system occurred before and after the change of regimes, between 2005 and 2010 and when a new education system was introduced in 2010. The abolition of autonomy of teachers and schools, and the forceful centralization of the education system, increased role of school in inequality, inhibition of inclusive pedagogy, major withdrawal of financial resources from education and the failure of vocational education to equip the learners for job markets and lifelong adaptation become issues for the efficiency of education became questionable for the direction of changes of educational policy and governance after the change of government in 2010 (Nahalka, 2018)¹. Rado (2021) also revealed three issues that are considered in attention: (1) the impact of technological changes, especially in connection with demand for skills on the labour market (2) the impact of autocratic regimes on the governance of education and (3) problems to social and ethnic inequalities.

Each country has its own unique challenges and issues in education, and these should be taken into consideration. In this comparative study, we highlight one of the important areas in education: collaborative professional development and learning culture, and the key factors and challenges faced by practitioners in enhancing it in their countries.

Problem Statement

Collaborative learning among teachers and a collaborative culture can enhance change, adaptation and revitalizing education, fostering and building on qualities of openness, trust,

¹ <https://library.fes.de/pdf-files/bueros/budapest/14211.pdf>

and support among teachers. Promoting collaborative practices in schools can facilitate professional development, creating a reciprocal effect (Forte & Flores, 2014). But, collaboration does not automatically and naturally happen in the workplace, and we need to learn it.

Teacher collaboration is significantly influenced by various personal and socio-cultural factors over time, relying on both teachers themselves and the efforts and support of stakeholders (Yuan & Zhang, 2016). School leaders and stakeholders are responsible for teacher learning by enhancing collaborative professional learning, helping teachers become more active, engaged, and reflective.

As it is explained in the introduction, both Myanmar and Hungary have individual challenges and issues within their education system. Myanmar has started transitioning to educational reforms, but the teachers and students face many challenges. The content-heavy curriculum, teacher-centred and authoritarian pedagogies that focused on rote learning rather than learner-centred or participatory approaches (Lall, 2011, Soe et al., 2017), become challenging for creativity. The students cannot engage in dialogue or shared decision-making with their teachers, and it has become significantly challenging to implement more learner-centred practices in the classroom (Maber et al., 2019).

Large class sizes of over 100 students, an insufficient teacher-to-student ratio, a lack of space and time to cover lessons, and the absence of teaching aids created barriers to applying the child-centred approach (CCA). A significant challenge was the perception that this approach undermines the traditional hierarchical structures of respect for teachers and elders, potentially fostering a culture clash at home and in the classroom (Lall, 2011).

The teacher education institutions mainly emphasize theoretical knowledge about teaching rather than focusing on learner-centered approaches in a collaborative learning culture. The teachers encounter challenges such as language barriers, multigrade teaching, diversity among learners, and varying student abilities. The pedagogical approaches taught at education colleges cannot effectively address these challenges. While various education colleges utilize diverse teaching strategies, the discussions surrounding these practices focus on passive methods that significantly influence classrooms in Myanmar (Lall, 2020b). Moreover, collaborative networks for continuous professional development occurred among teachers themselves but implementation across institutions are needed to develop (Khine & Meehan, 2025). So, initiating and enhancing collaborative learning practices in the Myanmar education system should be enhanced.

In Hungary, as centralization influences education policy, weakening professional autonomy is found at both the levels of individual teachers and the level of institutions (schools and universities) and process (curriculum regulation, financing and evaluation). As a result, autonomous, collaborative professional decision-making becomes weakened (Kopp & Kálmán, 2023).

Hungary has made notable progress in aligning teacher education and professional development policies with European frameworks. However, teacher education and the teaching profession face challenges such as the low status of the teaching profession, and the need for professional development programs to meet the diverse professional contexts of teachers (Chrappán et al., 2020; Stéger, 2014; Symeonidis, 2017) and teacher shortages, poverty and high student dropout rates especially in schools in economically underprivileged areas (Kopp & Kálmán, 2023).

Moreover, another issue is becoming stronger in perfectionism in Hungarian higher education, which might be initiated in the secondary schools. Even though perfectionism also depends on personality traits of individuals (Juhász et al., 2025), it can hinder to cultivate collaborative learning culture in education.

It is seen that collaborative professional development and learning in both countries are less developed and still in the initial phase due to the aforementioned challenges. The supportive system for collaborative professional development and learning lacks a systematic and detailed approach, resulting in a controversial perception. To comprehend these challenges, misunderstandings and reluctance towards collaborative professional development can be examined through qualitative research focusing on the participants' voices.

Research Aim

This research aims to understand the collaborative nature of teachers' professional development in Myanmar and Hungary. To encompass the entire collaborative professional learning process in both countries, the research emphasizes:

- to understand collaborative professional learning from diverse perspectives among various stakeholders, including teachers, teacher educators, student teachers, and special education teachers
- to explore the perceived challenges, the supportive and hindering factors influencing collaboration, and
- to investigate the role of initial teacher education in promoting professional collaboration and the development activities of teacher educators and teachers.

This research can contribute understanding of collaborative professional development and learning practices in the contexts of Myanmar and Hungary, where collaborative professional learning cultures are not very rich, and the support system is insufficient. This research will enhance understanding of the diverse interpretations and ways of collaborative professional development and learning that can guide effective ways to enhance collaborative culture in these less mature contexts. Moreover, it can highlight the importance of having a collaborative professional community within the schools and institutions, raise awareness of the complexity, help in reflection and adapt new ways of collaborative professional development and learning in these countries.

Theoretical Background

This research's theoretical framework is grounded in social learning theory, situated learning theories, social constructivism and transformative learning theory as adult learning theory. These theories are especially significant for understanding how teachers grow professionally through collaborative learning environments and how learning takes place through social interaction with peers.

The workplace is an important environment for learning. Many theories and research, including social and situated theories of learning (Bandura, 1977; Lave & Wenger, 1991), question why, what, and how people learn at work and how this learning occurs in formal educational contexts or other non-specialist educational settings. Understanding learning as a social process is powerful, as it helps us grasp how learning takes place in various environments and how groups of individuals learn collectively. This social aspect is crucial in workplace learning, where the quality and extent of learning depend on social relations and the organization of the workplace (Fuller & Unwin, 2011).

Situated learning is a social, activity-based process where individuals build knowledge and identities by engaging in real-world community practices. It goes beyond merely learning in a specific place or context, and is not just 'learning in situ' or 'learning by doing'. Situated learning emphasizes that learning is mainly about being a member of a community of practice, increasing participation in activities that emphasize meaning construction through activity rather than solely cognitive processes (Lave & Wenger, 1991).

Social learning theory, proposed by Albert Bandura, highlights that individuals learn by observing, imitating, and modelling the behaviors, attitudes, and emotional reactions of others. It emphasizes the interactions among cognitive, behavioral, and environmental factors that influence people's behavior. Reciprocal social interaction, a fundamental component of this

theory, fosters a rich environment for learning and development (Bandura, 1977).

Constructivist learning theories further underscore the importance of active engagement in the learning process. Learning is a dynamic force that leads to growth and advancement. It requires learners to engage their minds actively, think outside the box, and take responsibility for their development (Fosnot & Perry, 2005). Constructivists view learning as a process where individuals actively build meaning in their minds and share it with others through experiences validated by interaction (Steyn, 2017). Social constructivism aligns with the perspective that teachers construct knowledge collectively through interactions within a learning community. This collaborative nature of learning can be guided by a facilitator or through collaboration with others (Bryant & Bates, 2015; Akpan et al., 2020).

Furthermore, knowledge is transformed in adults through critical thinking and discussions with others who can justify (Mezirow, 1991). Mezirow (1991) described transformative learning theory as an adult learning theory, and adults' perceptions and expectations can only be altered through critical thought and discussion with others who can justify them. Mezirow (1997) asserts that changes can be brought about by (1) elaborating on current frames of reference; (2) learning new frames of reference; (3) transforming points of view; and (4) transforming habits of mind. Mezirow (2000) argued that the variety of perspectives within the learning community is beneficial, as transformation in learning occurred when they acknowledged and respected different voices of the members. Conversations with colleagues enable teachers to explore new perspectives, leading to transformative learning in a professional learning community built on trust and respect.

In conclusion, the workplace is a rich environment for learning through social interaction and active engagement. Social and situated learning theories, alongside constructivist perspectives, emphasize the importance of communities of practice, collaboration, and shared experiences in knowledge acquisition and professional development. Bandura's social learning theory, Vygotsky's Zone of Proximal Development, Lave & Wenger's situated learning, and Mezirow's transformative learning highlight the significance of social relationships, observation, active participation, and critical reflection in fostering learning. By leveraging these principles, organizations can create environments that promote individual growth and enhance collective knowledge, improving overall performance. Insights from these theories provide a framework for designing effective collaborative professional development that acknowledges the dynamic nature of learning in the workplace, ultimately leading to a professional learning environment.

Research Design

This research, rooted in a qualitative social research approach, adopts the constructivist paradigm, specifically social constructivism, as its theoretical framework. Constructivism highlights how individuals build social and psychological realities through their cognitive processes (Young & Collin, 2004). Social constructivism posits that groups collaboratively construct knowledge, leading to a shared culture of meaning. It emphasizes that learning occurs through interactions with others (Crotty, 2003) (cited in O'Reilly & Kiyimba, 2015).

From an ontological point of view, this research follows a relativist approach. Qualitative research explores the complexities of human experience, using words and sometimes images as its primary data. It also examines the complex interplay of personal and societal realities—both internal (subjective experiences) and external (the objective social and physical environment) (Braun & Clarke, 2013). This aligns with the aim of this research, which emphasizes encompassing the entire collaborative professional learning process in both countries from diverse perspectives of various stakeholders.

Participants consisted of different sub-groups as teachers, teacher educators, student teachers and other professionals who are collaborating and working with the schools from two different contexts, Myanmar and Hungary. But it is important to note that this kind of special education teacher is not working in the public schools in Myanmar, and they work in the special schools, which are not managed by the Ministry of Education. Consequently, only special education teachers working within and collaborating with public schools in Hungary are included as participants within the “other professionals” category. Two of the most common types of nonprobability sampling, convenience sampling and snowballing or friendship pyramiding, are used as sampling strategies in this research.

To understand the above research aim, the research questions are constructed as follows.

Table : Research Questions and Research Methods

1. What are the perceptions of collaborative development and learning?	Vignette, Semi-structured Interviews
2. What are collaborative learning practices in schools and teacher education institutions?	Vignette, Semi-structured Interviews
3. How is the interprofessional collaboration in schools and teacher education institutions?	Vignette, Semi-structured Interviews
4. Which supportive factors are needed to improve collaboration in schools and in teacher education institutions?	Semi-structured Interviews

5. What are the perceived challenges to enhancing collaboration in schools and teacher education institutions?	Vignette, Semi-structured Interviews
6. How does teacher education develop collaborative development and learning?	
i. How does preservice teacher education help student teachers to develop collaborative learning?	Semi-structured Interviews
ii. How does teacher educators and teachers get support for their professional development?	Semi-structured Interviews

Data Collection and Analysis Method

In the Myanmar case, **18** participants, including **5** teacher educators, **9** teachers, and **4** student teachers, are involved. In the Hungary case, **17** participants, including **5** teacher educators, **4** teachers, **6** student teachers, and **2** special education teachers, are involved. Therefore, **35** participants across both contexts are involved in the interviews. Semi-structured interviews and vignettes are used as data collection methods in the research. Thematic analysis (TA) is used to analyze the data in this research. Among the different approaches to thematic analysis, reflexive thematic analysis was used. Reflexive thematic analysis (RTA) is an accessible and adaptable qualitative method for identifying and analyzing patterns (themes) in data (Braun & Clarke, 2012) and data are analyzed inductively. ATLAS.ti (Version 24.11) analysis software is used in this research because it helps qualitative researchers analyze systematically and identify patterns and relationships across the dataset.

Comparative Framework

As this research is a comparative study of education that mainly focuses on the collaborative professional development and learning culture in two countries, Myanmar and Hungary, the structure of comparison followed Bray & Thomas's three-dimensional approach for comparative and multilevel analyses (Bray & Thomas, 1995). which is a three-dimensional approach to categorize various focal points of comparative studies: geographical/locational, nonlocational demographic groupings, and aspects of education and society (Bray & Thomas, 1995) for multilevel analyses in comparative studies to achieve multifaceted and holistic examinations of educational phenomena. These three dimensions represent the questions in comparative analyses: 'where', 'who' and 'what' (Bray et al., 2014). This research focuses on the questions of 'where' and 'what' regarding the unit of analysis for comparison. In alignment with Bray & Thomas's framework (Bray & Thomas, 1995), the question 'where' is answered by level 2: Countries and level 7: Individuals.

My research, which studies two countries, Myanmar and Hungary, primarily focuses on the individual level, involving various groups such as teachers, teacher educators, student

teachers, and special education teachers. At the same time, the question ‘what’ emphasizes ‘Collaborative professional learning and the factors influencing it’ as aspects of Education and Society, described in the Bray & Thomas framework.

Myanmar and Hungary are two countries on different continents: Asia and Europe. Both countries have various aspects, such as culture, socioeconomic status, education systems, and teacher training programs. However, within these two contexts, commonalities and differences in collaborative professional learning among key stakeholders are explored in this research. With this perspective, the research method is constructed based on a similar strategy (interview guide, sampling methods, data analysis methods) in both contexts. However, there are two exceptions in data collection: (i) the total number of participants in each group differs depending on their availability, and (ii) other professionals, such as special education teachers, are not included in the Myanmar context because the Ministry of Education does not manage special education. Therefore, only special education teachers are included in the Hungarian context.

Myanmar Findings

- The participants perceived **benefits of collaboration** as improving teaching and instruction, enhancing shared goals and responsibilities, enhancing negotiation and flexibility, and improving a collective mindset. But some participants shared different perceptives, such as reluctance to collaborate and to accept others’ ideas, being introverted and social inhibition, unfairness and unequal workload due to collaboration.
- The **collaborative learning practices in schools and teacher education institutions** are formal meetings and conflicts in meeting schedules in schools, peer learning and support, small talk in closed groups, mentorship from seniors, help from active and supportive colleagues, delegating tasks and sharing responsibilities, lack of learning habits regarding instructional strategies, and generational differences in collaborative learning.
- The participants recognized **the benefits and importance of interprofessional collaboration and other external collaboration in schools**. The help of these professionals and community members can significantly improve classroom-based performance and collaborative development between professionals. Participants described the value of working with other professionals, such as psychologists and

health workers, to support students facing a broad range of diverse difficulties. Teachers in schools have to work on all the tasks and take a lot of responsibility. But there are some tasks and duties beyond their capacities and boundaries. So, professionals are necessary to support teachers in addressing complex student needs and problems in schools. The role of parents and families is essential for students' holistic development. However, current practices on interprofessional collaboration and other external collaboration in Myanmar schools are only discussions and health check-ups in schools and discipline committees and involvement of parents. There are challenges and barriers in schools to develop interprofessional collaboration and other external collaboration such as accessibility of professionals, financial and resource constraints, requirement of specific needs from community engagement, having unequal opportunities for schools based on geographical areas.

- Participants described the positive and negative influence of **leadership** on collaboration. Leadership is a key to creating collaborative and high-quality teaching across the learning sectors, with a variety of skills and qualifications necessary to facilitate the most positive outcomes. Several characteristics of effective leaders were identified as crucial for fostering a collaborative environment. Motivation and positive reinforcement, professional development opportunities and resource provision, monitoring teacher collaboration, open communication and fairness in delegating tasks, proficiency in administration and academics, listening and addressing difficulties, role of leadership in collaboration with parents and the community, supportive role of teacher leadership are positive influence of leadership. Lack of accountability and responsibility, authoritarian leadership style and centralized decision making, conflicts and lack of unity are negative influence of collaboration. There is **lack of resources** in schools and teacher education institutions such as insufficient personnel and infrastructure, insufficient funding and learning materials.
- The challenges related to the beginning teaching profession, challenges arising during the COVID-19 pandemic, communication challenges, management-related issues and student-related difficulties. Miscommunication with senior colleagues and lack of skills, power imbalances, and lack of active engagement are challenges at the **beginning of teaching profession**. Heavy workload and administrative tasks, curriculum time constraints, large class size, lack of specialized teachers are

management-related challenges, high proportion of low-achieving students, behavioural problems are **student-related challenges**. Moreover, technological barriers, economic inequality and training gaps are **challenges during the COVID 19 pandemic**.

- **Initial teacher education** enhances collaborative learning of student teachers with group work and active learning in pedagogical subjects, key role of well-planned activities related to real-world connections, freedom in group activities, extracurricular activities in the education colleges and universities, and collaborative activities in the new curriculum reform of teacher education colleges. Student teachers expressed their **experience in practicum**, such as support of experienced teachers from schools during practicum, isolation from teachers in schools and difficulties in managing students.
- **Professional development activities for teacher educators and teachers** in Myanmar are training programs facilitated by external organizations for teacher educators, government-led initiatives targeting for teachers in underperforming schools and the ineffectiveness of short courses for teachers. The teachers and teacher educators described for continuous professional development courses (CPD). These needs reflect a desire for CPD that should be practical, relevant and address specific skill gaps. They are professional training for information and communication technology (ICT) and refresher courses in pedagogical knowledge and practice.
- Moreover, **autonomy and freedom in teacher education institutions** is described as autonomy over lesson design in teacher education. Some of the teacher educators described that they have autonomy to design their lessons because of the supportive working environment. But some of them are restricted from for creating collaborative teaching and learning in assessment styles. So, this kind of feeling that there is restriction in academic freedom can negatively impact their capacity to action new teaching methodologies and can reduce the contributions of the best practice ideas to their colleagues.

Hungarian Findings

- The participants perceived **benefits of collaboration** as enhancing shared expertise and development, increasing confidence and skill development, enhancing teaching practices, enhancing shared goals and responsibility, and cultural influences on collaboration. But some participants shared different perceptive, such as reluctance to collaborate.
- The **collaborative learning practices in schools and teacher education institutions** are formal meetings, subject group meetings in schools, cross-subject collaboration in schools, research groups and international collaboration at the universities, collaboration with doctoral students, peer support and networks for problem-solving, social events and interactions, from university-friendship to professional collaboration. generational differences in collaboration, lack of open communication in group work and individualism.
- The participants recognized the **benefits and importance of interprofessional collaboration and other external collaboration in schools**. In Hungary, there is a system of collaborating with different professionals, such as doctors, nurses, social workers, psychologists, and special education teachers in schools. The participants strongly agree with the importance and benefits of interprofessional collaboration and other external collaboration for the well-being of students and educational development. In Hungary, schools have other professionals who can help students address the problems and challenges of the students. Professionals are necessary to support teachers in addressing complex student needs and problems in schools. Parental involvement is essential in schools because collaboration between teachers and parents could support students' holistic development, such as physical, mental, emotional, intellectual and social. However, Financial constraints to hire different professionals in schools and having unequal opportunities for schools based on the geographic areas and a shortage of professionals and a large population of students in schools are challenges in collaboration with different professionals. Moreover, the special education teachers have challenges in collaboration with other experts in schools and as a travelling teacher to collaborate with teachers in schools.

- Participants described the positive and negative influences of **leadership** on collaboration. Being supportive leaders for collaboration, role of facilitators in the research groups and same subject meetings for collaboration, communication for professional development opportunities, and teacher input in decision making. are positive influence of leadership. Limited monitoring and feedback, insufficient support for professional development participation and a top-down decision-making process are negative influences of collaboration. There is a **lack of resources** in schools and teacher education institutions such as financial and time constraints, insufficient infrastructure, personnel and learning materials.

- The challenges related to the beginning teaching profession, challenges arising during the COVID-19 pandemic, communication challenges, management-related issues and student-related difficulties. Communication challenges and lack of experience, student interactions and classroom management are **challenges at the beginning of teaching profession**. Administrative challenges of teachers and workload are **management-related challenges**, diverse students and their characteristics are **student-related challenges**. Moreover, disruption to professional development and isolation and difficulty in adaptation to online learning are **challenges during the COVID-19 pandemic**. Role conflict of teacher educators and role conflict of teachers are **internal conflict in the profession**.

- **Initial teacher education** enhances collaborative learning of student teachers with fostering a collaborative learning environment, addressing challenges and motivating participation, activities for sharing and learning from different perspectives, activities for skill development for the profession, interdisciplinary academic subjects in teacher education programs, and the disconnection between theory and practice. The teachers and student teachers explained the system of mentoring in Hungarian schools. The teachers and student teachers explained the **formal mentoring system** in Hungary, intensive support and guidance of mentors, emotional support and encouragement. While a formal mentoring system exists in Hungary, the mentoring system is not always functional, and there is a gap in the mentoring system. Some teachers argued that mentoring does not always work effectively in practice. This can include the unproductive practice of the mentor system, the absence of formal mentors due to school management issues, inexperienced mentors, and unfavorable mentoring styles. Teacher

educators, teachers and student teachers discussed their suggestions to improve the Hungarian teacher education with earlier school exposure and more practical content and shorter duration in the teacher education program. But in the new reform of the teacher education program, it is found that these suggestions are developed.

- **Professional development activities for teacher educators and teachers** in Hungary include different programs for collaborative professional development and learning. gap in the formal training of teacher educators. Follow-up programs for novice teachers and concerns about PD purpose are suggestions and recommendations for the professional development of teacher educators and teachers.
- Teachers explained **autonomy and freedom in schools** with different perspectives, as significant freedom in lesson planning under a supportive and encouraging management structure. But there are concerns about teachers' freedom. Sometimes teachers dare not express their ideas openly in schools because they are scared to lose their position and would like to maintain it in a good secondary school. The national curriculum is very exam-oriented and has strict control over autonomy and freedom.

Comparison of Commonalities and Differences in Myanmar and Hungary

Both participants from Myanmar and Hungary expressed that collaboration enhances teaching and instruction, and shared responsibilities and shared goals. Both Myanmar and Hungarian participants described different perspectives on collaboration similarly. Sometimes, collaboration is difficult for people who are reluctant to collaborate with other people and to accept others' ideas. Participants from Myanmar highlighted that collaboration enhances negotiation and flexibility. Negotiation is essential for working together with various group members who have a diverse range of ideas and skills to meet common goals. Participants from Hungary emphasized that the collaboration enhances professional learning and growth through the shared expertise and development, as well as an increase in confidence and skill development. Myanmar participants explained that some colleagues who have personality traits as being introverted are unwilling to initiate collaboration. This can limit their capacity and interest in collaborative work and limit the social setting. But one of the Hungarian teacher educators specially highlighted the influence of horizontal Western culture in European contexts on open communication and collaboration. The culture of open inquiry is conducive to professional development and effective learning, especially for new and novice teachers the

senior colleagues. Myanmar participants highlighted that collaboration could lead to dissatisfaction related to task allocation when there is an unfair distribution of work among team members.

Commonality is only found in generational differences in both contexts. There are generational differences in collaborative learning. The generational differences between older and younger colleagues are particularly significant regarding enthusiasm for collaboration, innovation, and the initiation of new instructional strategies, especially among Myanmar teachers, teacher educators, and Hungarian teachers. But these differences in collaboration is not observed among Hungarian teacher educators. In Myanmar schools, many formal meetings in schools primarily focus on administrative purposes rather than professional growth. It is the opposite of what the teachers need that is beneficial for them. Moreover, the schedule of the meetings has conflicts and holding the meetings during instructional time becomes a practical obstacle for teachers and hinders the willingness of teachers to collaborate in the meetings. In Hungarian schools, the formal meetings are scheduled mostly at the beginning and mid-point of the academic year. Individualism is a unique factor found in the Hungarian context. One teacher educator described the nature of individualism and competition in higher education, and she mentioned that it is frequently found more in higher education than in school education. The individual achievement is prioritized for career development, and it leads to a competitive working environment, which can impede the potential of collaboration. The publication-based evaluation system fosters individual publication as a key performance indicator and encourages more individual achievement. But in Myanmar, research-based performance appraisal is not formally formulated in Myanmar. Still, it is only considered for the promotion criteria.

Myanmar participants described the value of working with various professionals, such as psychologists and health workers, to address students' diverse and complex needs and to support teachers in tackling these challenges in schools. The role of parents and families is crucial to the development of students. Both contexts have their individual challenges in interprofessional collaboration and other external collaborations. The challenges and barriers to interprofessional collaboration in Myanmar include the accessibility of professionals, financial and resource constraints, specific community engagement needs, and unequal school opportunities based on geographical areas. The major difference is that a formal system of collaboration exists in Hungary and various professionals, such as doctors, nurses, social workers, psychologists, and special education teachers are collaborating in schools but there is no formal system in Myanmar.

The participants in Myanmar and Hungarian contexts described the role of leaders in teacher collaboration as a positive influence of leadership. They prefer these kinds of supportive leaders over authoritarian ones. The empathetic leadership that emphasizes both human well-being and the professional development of teachers creates a safe working environment. Some Hungarian participants described the top-down decision-making process as a negative influence of leadership, especially in the higher education level. Leaders are primarily involved in higher-level decision-making at universities, institutes, and faculties. According to the organizational structures and regulations of the institute, decision-making typically follows a top-down approach in Hungary. Myanmar participants highlighted authoritarian leadership style and centralized decision-making in the schools and teacher education institutions as a negative influence on leadership. There is a lack of resources in schools and teacher education institutions, such as financial and time constraints, insufficient infrastructure, personnel and learning materials in both contexts.

The interesting challenge is internal conflicts in the profession, and only Hungarian teachers and teacher educators described role conflict in their profession. Teacher educators have to balance their roles as teacher educators and researchers, and it becomes an internal conflict between fulfilling the responsibilities of teacher educators and improving the performance of research. The teachers, especially part-time teachers and doctoral students in the university, have internal conflicts because they are not very close to the school's inner circle and have less social integration in the school community.

Initial teacher education enhances collaborative learning of student teachers in both contexts and highlights the importance of the new curriculum in teacher education to develop collaborative learning. In Hungary, mentoring is a collaborative practice between schools and universities. But Myanmar has no formal mentoring system. The teachers in respective schools are responsible for the student teachers during their practicum for a short-term duration and support them.

In Hungary, the system of professional development credits is mandatory, and teachers must earn credits for professional development every seven years. But in Myanmar, professional development programs for teacher educators and teachers are mainly organized by external organizations and the government.

Myanmar teacher educators stated that they have this autonomy in preparing their lessons. However, it is often linked to a lack of experienced guidance, particularly regarding the new curriculum in education colleges. The curriculum reform has resulted in the absence of experienced guidance, permitting complete freedom in teaching approaches without

oversight. Only the collaborative exchange of knowledge and best practices among teacher educators is the most effective professional support in implementing the new curriculum in colleges. In Hungary, higher education institutions have thematic plans, course descriptions, and literature that align with the accreditation process. Teacher educators have considerable autonomy and freedom to plan their lessons in accordance with these thematic plans. They determine the structure of the course, including requirements, assessments, and types of assignments, during formal meetings. Institutions allow the freedom to express ideas and opinions, accompanied by a shared responsibility for each other's views. The Hungarian teachers agreed that autonomy and freedom are also present at the school level. Autonomy and freedom are important factors for teachers; they will strive to obtain them if they do not have them. However, some teachers are afraid to express their ideas openly in schools, fearing the loss of their positions in high-prestige schools. Moreover, the teachers have varying views on their freedom due to the national curriculum. The national curriculum is highly exam-oriented and restricts teachers' freedom in their lessons.

Conclusion

Professional learning fosters skills and creative thinking to address challenges. Collaboration also boosts confidence for novice teachers by providing emotional support and enhancing their skills through guidance from experienced teachers. From the perspective of theoretical background of the research, the findings follow the constructivist perspective that suggests that learning is a process where individuals actively build meaning in their minds and share it with others through experiences validated by interaction (Steyn, 2017). Moreover, it follows Lave and Wenger's situated learning theory and communities of practice (Lave & Wenger, 1991 ; Wenger, 1998; Wenger & Snyder, 2000) that demonstrate how collaboration fosters a sense of belonging and shared purpose, transforming the workplace into a learning environment. Teachers and teacher educators collectively contribute to community goals, with 'legitimate peripheral participation' allowing learning to be intertwined with communal practice and task division (Wenger & Snyder, 2000). Shared responsibilities in collaborative projects prevent individual overwork.

Collaborative practices in schools and teacher education institutions can improve professional development and learning. The effectiveness of formal meetings in collaborative professional development and learning depends on the scheduling, purpose, and communication during meetings. Subject group meetings should be well-planned to help teachers tackle challenges in their classrooms and respective subjects. Informal collaborative

practices, such as peer learning and support through informal groups, task delegation, and sharing responsibilities, as well as social interactions, play a vital role in professional development and learning. Social learning theory suggests that teachers learn best by observing and interacting with experienced colleagues, sharing best practices, and receiving feedback in a supportive learning environment (Bandura, 1977). The lack of discussion about instructional strategies in informal groups in the Myanmar context is evident in the lack of Vygotsky's zone of proximal development (ZPD), which highlights the importance of learning from more knowledgeable others ((Vygotsky, 1978). Vygotsky also believed that peer interaction was a powerful tool for developing and expanding learning (Morgan & Skaggs, 2016).

Vygotsky (1978) argues that mentorship or collaboration with experienced peers is vital for success in the zone of proximal development (ZPD). In collaborative environments, teachers at different experience levels can facilitate each other's growth within their ZPD (Morgan & Skaggs, 2016). Effective mentoring systems must assist novice teachers with initial career challenges, counteracting feelings of isolation stemming from communication issues and imbalances in power dynamics. Furthermore, mentoring should address the challenges faced by student teachers, while quality initial teacher education can attract new and qualified student teachers.

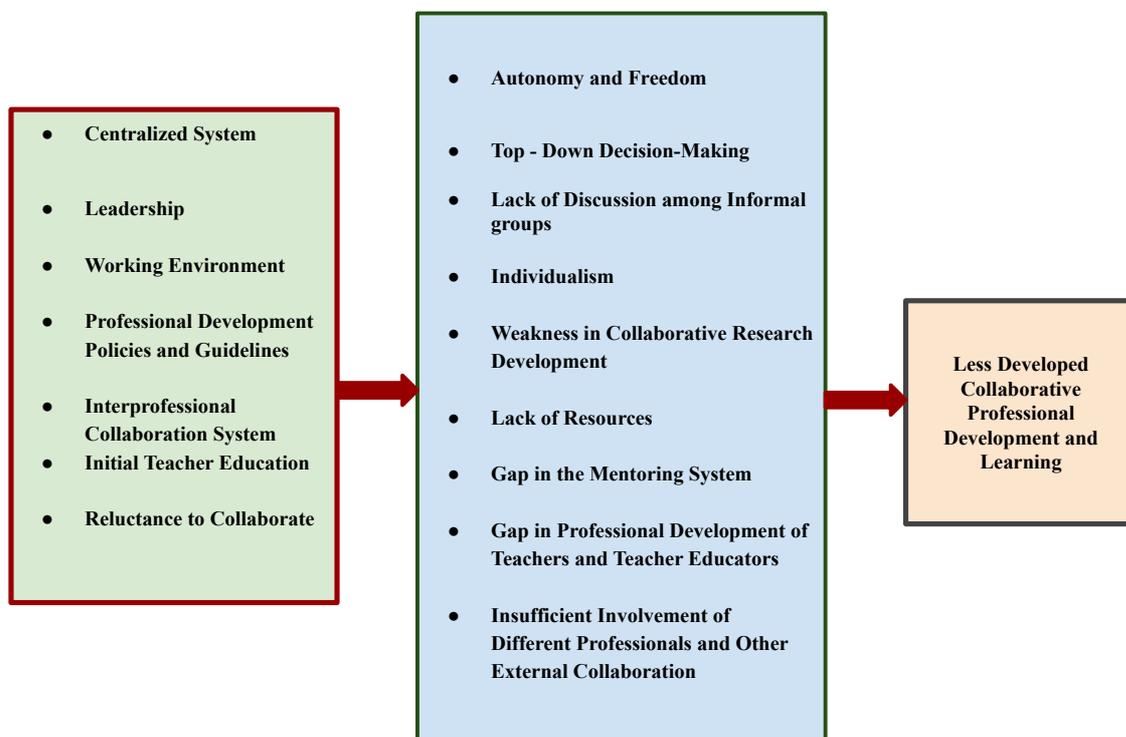
Professional development courses must reflect Mezirow' s transformative learning theory (Mezirow, 1991; Mezirow, 2000) and meet teachers' specific needs rather than just credit requirements. Engaging teachers in professional development fosters critical reflection, collaboration, and practical insights, leading to shifts in perceptions and practices. Sharing challenges and insights, providing ongoing feedback, and introducing new viewpoints are critical for professional growth.

Leadership significantly enhances collaborative professional development and learning in both contexts, motivating and reinforcing teacher collaboration and engagement with other professionals. Leaders influence decision-making in schools and teacher education, encouraging teacher involvement to enhance motivation and community belonging. Additionally, leaders should assist teachers in addressing management and student challenges such as heavy workloads, administrative burdens, unequal ratios, and classroom management issues. Resource allocation, such as covering funding, infrastructure, and human resources, is vital for supporting teaching quality and fostering collaborative professional communities.

Both Myanmar and Hungary struggle with less developed collaborative professional development and learning, yet well-designed collaborative environments can greatly improve professional learning and student outcomes. This research explores how collaborative

professional development and learning are perceived, implemented, and the challenges and facilitating factors in Myanmar and Hungary. It is found that centralized education system in both countries, leadership, working environment, professional development policies and guidelines, initial teacher education and interprofessional collaboration system in both countries and individual perceptions of being reluctant to collaborate can influence in autonomy and freedom and lead to top-down decision making, lack of discussion among teacher groups, individualism, weakness in collaborative research development, lack of resources, gap in mentoring system and professional development of teachers and teacher educators and insufficient involvement of different professionals and other external collaboration. These actions lead to less developed collaborative professional development and learning in Myanmar and Hungary. Therefore, it is strongly suggested that these factors are needed to be enhanced in Myanmar and Hungary to have more developed collaborative professional development and learning in the systematically organized collaborative teacher teams. The following figure describes the collaborative professional development and learning situation in Myanmar and Hungary, and the factors that are leading to both countries into less developed in collaborative professional development and learning.

Figure: Collaborative Professional Development and Learning in Myanmar and Hungary and factors influencing it found in this Research



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