

Teacher Educators' Perceptions of Their Professional Roles in Myanmar

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ABSTRACT

Although scholarly interest in TEs' professional roles and development has increased, limited research has explored how TEs in Asian countries perceive their roles. This study investigates the professional roles of TEs in Myanmar by examining their perceptions and how they vary by demographic characteristics and school-related factors. A quantitative design was employed to survey 408 TEs from Myanmar using a questionnaire that assessed their perceptions of their professional roles. The findings revealed that TEs identified five key functions: teacher of teachers, researcher, coach, curriculum developer, and broker. Among these, the role of teacher of teachers was most strongly emphasized, whereas the role of researcher was least recognized. Significant differences in perceptions were found based on gender, prior teaching experience, and area of expertise. The study concludes with recommendations for supporting TEs' professional development, highlighting the need to strengthen the research dimension of their professional practice.

Keywords: Myanmar, perceptions, professional roles, teacher education, TEs.

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Introduction

The development of qualified teachers depends heavily on the quality of teacher education. The Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) has emphasized its impact on teachers' behaviors, skills, and student outcomes (Musset, 2010). Teachers' effectiveness is shaped by their preparation in teacher-education institutions (TEIs), making the quality of the teaching workforce closely tied to teacher educators' (hereafter referred to as TEs) perspectives and competencies. Since TEs are primary implementers of teacher education, understanding who they are, what they do, and how they perceive their roles should be extensively researched.

TEs are professionals who support the learning process of both prospective (pre-service) and experienced (in-service) teachers. The European Commission (2013) defined them as those who formally facilitate teacher growth either at the beginning of teachers' careers or throughout their professional development. They may include school-based mentors as well as TEI faculty responsible for initial preparation. The OECD (2019) described them as "a distinct professional group within teachers in higher education (HE) and school, with a deep mastery of teaching strategies tailored for the needs of teacher candidates" (p. 86). Research interest in their quality, roles, policies, and practices has grown considerably (Koster et al., 2005), underscoring their importance in advancing education.

Studies worldwide have examined these roles from varied perspectives. Professional roles are defined as "a personal interpretation of a position based on expectations from the environment and a systematically organized

and transferable knowledge base" (Lunenberg et al., 2014, p. 6). Research has identified them as curriculum developers (Bouckaert & Kools, 2018; Tep, 2024), role models, counselors, storytellers, and listeners (Hoydalsvik, 2017), and relationship builders linking universities, schools, and student teachers (Ellis et al., 2013). Swennen et al. (2010) added sub-identities including schoolteacher, higher education teacher, teacher of teachers, and researcher. Murray and Male (2005) highlighted challenges in developing teaching practices in HE and becoming research active. Smith (2011) noted broad expectations in Norway, including roles as pedagogues, role models, researchers, and administrators. Smith and Flores (2019) described their work as "Janus-faced," reflecting competing demands of teaching and research. Collectively, these studies demonstrate the diversity of TEs' professional roles.

The roles of TEs have been examined in numerous studies; however, the majority have used small samples and a qualitative approach. Additionally, Lunenberg et al. (2014) recommended employing quantitative research to support the previous qualitative findings. Moreover, few studies have examined how perceptions vary according to sociodemographic characteristics, and quantitative studies involving large samples are especially rare. The final point highlights the rare studies in the Asian TEs context. Therefore, this study addresses these gaps by investigating the professional roles of Myanmar's TEs.

Literature Review

Researchers have identified a variety of roles fulfilled by TEs. They have been described as “second-order practitioners” (Murray and Male, 2005), or teachers of teachers, responsible for preparing both prospective and experienced teachers at undergraduate and graduate levels. Other scholars have also provided typologies of TEs’ roles. Klecka et al. (2008) defined five roles: teacher, scholar in teaching, collaborator, learner, and leader. Lunenberg (2010) and Barahona et al. (2024) recognised “modelling” as a role model for professional and pedagogical responsibilities. Lunenberg et al. (2014) identified six professional roles, emphasising the demands and expectations of TEs’ jobs: teachers of teachers of teachers, researchers, coaches, curriculum developers, gatekeepers, and brokers. By combining positioning theory and an interpretive framework, Vanassche and Kelchtermans (2014) also revealed three TE positions: pedagogues, reflective teachers, and subject teachers. Moreover, four positions of TEs emerged through the recent qualitative studies of Jonker et al. (2018): facilitators, transmitters, personal coaches, and communicators. In addition, Richter et al. (2021) identified two labels: facilitators who support teacher development and reflect on their own teaching, and transmitters who transmit professional knowledge.

Comparing these studies, the present study used the findings of Lunenberg et al. (2014) as a framework, since their qualitative study analyzed 405 references related to TEs’ professional roles over the past twenty years. As a result, this framework represents more comprehensive research findings among the related studies, including the most recent studies. Additionally, it is more acceptable to examine the multifaceted

nature of TEs by considering the various roles, since the recent studies accounted for two dimensions (Richter et al., 2021). The following are six roles identified by Lunenberg et al. (2014).

1. **Teacher of teachers.** Loughran and Berry (2005) mentioned that TEs must be proficient in addressing adult learners in higher education contexts and enable a meta-learning process for student teachers through explicit modeling.
2. **Researcher.** Fiskum et al. (2025) noted that fostering teachers as lifelong learners is a broader aim of TEs, achieved in part through the integration of research-based learning in teacher education.
3. **Coach.** Lunenberg et al. (2014) differentiated between workplace facilitators and institution-based coaches. Workplace facilitators support new teachers in addressing practical issues and adapting to school environments, while institution-based coaches provide structured support within teacher education institutions.
4. **Curriculum developer.** TEs are expected to lead and actively participate in these discussions by integrating guiding principles, approaches, and practices to create an appropriate teacher education curriculum.
5. **Gatekeeper.** TEs take the responsibility of gatekeepers to the teaching profession by deciding

whether student teachers meet the institutional and professional standards. This evaluative role positions them as key decision-makers in shaping the quality of the teaching workforce.

6. **Broker.** TEs also assume the role of brokers by guiding cooperation between educational institutions. This role facilitates the learning process of pre-service teachers by strengthening connections between theory and practice.

Significance of the Study

The study advances the field by addressing the gaps in the literature. Using a quantitative approach, it provides evidence supporting the previous qualitative findings and offers knowledge on TEs in the Asian context. Exploring the perceptions of TEs' professional roles and the factors influencing them contributes to improving teacher education in Myanmar.

Research Questions

This study aims to elucidate Myanmar TEs' perceptions of their professional roles. The research questions are as follows:

1. What do TEs in Teacher Education Institutions perceive their professional roles to be?
2. Do TEs' perceptions of their professional roles in Teacher Education Institutions differ significantly by demographic characteristics (e.g., gender and age)?
3. Do TEs' perceptions of their professional roles differ significantly by school-related personal factors such as total years of teaching experience, years of experience as a teacher educator, professional level, educational qualification, prior teaching experience before entering a TEI, and area of expertise?

Research Context

In Myanmar, teacher education is delivered through two types of teacher education institutions (TEIs): Universities of Education (UOE) and Education Degree Colleges (EDCs). Teachers for teaching Elementary and Lower Secondary are trained at EDCs, and the UOE are for Upper Secondary Teachers. Both are under the Ministry of Education. TEs are individuals working as teaching staff at TEIs and supporting pre- and in-service teachers.

Participants

The population of this study comprised approximately 1,700 TEs of two UOE and 25 EDCs located across 15 regions of Myanmar. These TEIs share similar characteristics, as they are public institutions governed by the same ministry and linked through a transfer system for TEs and administrators. A simple cluster sampling method was applied, as it is effective for large and widely dispersed populations. Five EDCs and one UOE were selected randomly, and all TEs from these institutions were included. A total of 408 TEs participated, and their characteristics are described in Table 1.

Table 1*Participants' Characteristics*

Characteristics		<i>n</i>	%	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Gender	Male	61	15		
	Female	347	85		
Professional level	Tutor	150	37		
	Assistant lecturer	68	17		
	Lecturer	85	21		
	Associate professor	48	12		
	Professor	31	8		
Educational qualification	Bachelor	68	17		
	Master	304	75		
	PhD	34	8		
Prior teaching experience as a schoolteacher	Yes	253	62		
	No	147	36		
Subject expertise	Educational pedagogy	180	44		
	Academic	228	54		
Workplace	EDC	269	66		
	UOE	139	34		
Age				37.13	10.38
Total years of teaching experience				11.74	10.66
Years of experience as a teacher educator				3.98	6.30

Methodology**Research design**

This research aims to use large-scale data gathered from a wide population and analyze data statistically to generalize perceptions of Myanmar's TEs. Using a survey-based quantitative research design, the study examined TEs' perceptions of their professional roles and determined how these perceptions vary by demographic and school-related factors. Data were collected using a questionnaire.

Instrument

The author developed a questionnaire to investigate TEs' professional roles based on the six roles discussed by Lunenberg et al. (2014): teacher, researcher, coach, curriculum developer, gatekeeper, and broker. Tsukawaki et al. (2023) previously conducted a 32-item questionnaire survey in Thailand, Cambodia, and Vietnam using the same framework. The author added 15 items to this questionnaire based on Lunenberg et al. (2014), resulting in a 47-item questionnaire. Therefore, the items were suitable for Myanmar TEs. The questionnaire consisted of sociodemographic questions and items assessing perceptions of professional roles. The second section included 47 items, with 6–10

items assigned to each role. These were rated on a four-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (“strongly disagree”) to 4 (“strongly agree”). Higher scores indicated stronger agreement with the relevance of the role.

The items were originally in English and translated into Myanmar by the author. Then, they were back-translated by a bilingual lecturer from the University of Education (UOE) to verify the translation and ensure accuracy. Content validity was confirmed by a UOE professor with expertise in education, and construct validity was established through exploratory factor analysis (EFA).

The EFA results are as follows. An analysis of the skewness (−0.246 to 1.132) and kurtosis (−0.861 to 1.694) confirmed that the data were in the normal distribution range. The Kaiser–Meyer–Olkin (KMO) measure of sampling adequacy value (0.934) and the significant value of Bartlett’s test of sphericity ($\chi^2 = 6164.758$, $p < 0.001$) supported the factor analysis. The EFA was conducted with 47 items ($n = 408$) using the principal component extraction and equamax with Kaiser normalization. The analysis provided five factors with eigenvalues > 1 ; these factors accounted for 60.306% of the total variance. Item communalities were more than 0.5, and factor loadings varied from 0.359 to 0.708. The final model retained 24 items across five roles: teacher of teachers, researcher, coach, curriculum developer, and broker. Gatekeeper role was insignificant since their factor loadings of less than .25 were below the acceptable values. However, for the purpose of coherence with the research framework, this factor is also described in the analysis.

Cronbach’s alpha of 0.926 indicated very high reliability, confirming the questionnaire’s strong internal consistency.

Data collection and data analysis

The author acquired research ethics approval from Hiroshima University’s Institutional Review Board. Questionnaires were distributed directly to TEs with permission from selected institutions. The author ensured that participants were fully aware of the research objectives and their right to voluntary participation and to withdraw at any time. Confidentiality was assured, and informed consent was obtained. Participants took approximately 40 minutes to complete the questionnaire. Data were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics using IBM SPSS Statistics (Version 29).

Findings

TEs’ perceptions of their professional roles

The analysis of Research Question 1 examined the roles of Myanmar’s TEs. The means and standard deviations for perceptions of the roles were $M = 3.23$, $SD = 0.35$ (teacher of teachers); $M = 2.99$, $SD = 0.26$ (researcher); $M = 3.15$, $SD = 0.38$ (coach); $M = 3.19$, $SD = 0.38$ (curriculum developer); $M = 3.19$, $SD = 0.33$ (gatekeeper); and $M = 3.14$, $SD = 0.36$ (broker), respectively. These results indicate that participants generally perceived their professional roles as being aligned with the above categories. The most prominent role was the “teacher of teachers”, and the least prominent was “researcher”. To ensure the validity of the results, a one-way repeated-measures ANOVA test was performed. The analysis with a Greenhouse–Geisser correction revealed significant differences among the aforementioned mean scores for the five roles: $F(4.419, 11798.437) = 56.459$ ($p < 0.001$). Post-hoc pairwise comparison with Bonferroni correction indicated that the mean score for the teacher of teachers was significantly higher than

those of the other roles, except for the curriculum developer. Conversely, the researcher role received the lowest ratings (See Table 2).

Table 2

Comparisons of TEs' Perceptions of Their Professional Roles

Professional roles		Mean difference
Teacher of Teachers	Researcher	.244*
	Coach	.083*
	Curriculum developer	.041
	Gatekeeper	.048*
	Broker	.093*
Researcher	Coach	-.161*
	Curriculum developer	-.204*
	Gatekeeper	-.197*
	Broker	-.152*
Coach	Curriculum developer	-.042
	Gatekeeper	.007
	Broker	.010
Curriculum developer	Gatekeeper	-.035
	Broker	.052*
Gatekeeper	Broker	-.045*

Note: * $p < .05$.

Differences in perceptions by gender and age

TEs' perceptions were first examined by gender. Male participants rated the roles of researcher and broker significantly higher than female participants: researcher ($t(405) = 4.130, p < 0.05$) and broker ($t(405) = 2.511, p < 0.05$).

Age-based differences were then analyzed using correlation analysis. The correlation coefficients of the six roles as teacher of teachers, researcher, coach, curriculum developer,

gatekeeper and broker were 0.008, -0.087, -0.032, 0.013, -.006 and 0.042, respectively. No statistically significant coefficients ($p > 0.05$) indicated no meaningful relationship between TEs' age and their perceptions of professional roles.

Relationships and differences in perceptions by school-related personal factors

The relationships between the perceptions of the TEs in their professional roles and their total years of teaching experience and years of experience as a teacher educator were verified via the evident correlations. The results revealed that the duration of total experience and teacher educator experience did not influence TEs' perceptions (See Table 3).

Table 3

Correlation Analysis of TEs' Perceptions of Their Professional Roles by Total Years of Teaching Experience and Years as a Teacher Educator

Professional Roles	Correlation Coefficients (r)	
	Total Experience	Teacher Educator Experience
Teacher of teachers	.056	.022
Researcher	-.045	-.045
Coach	.025	.039
Curriculum developer	.082	.041
Gatekeeper	.058	.042
Broker	.010	.024

Differences in perceptions by professional level were investigated using a one-way ANOVA. No significant differences were indicated: teacher of teachers ($F(4,377) = 1.323, p > 0.05$),

researcher ($F(4,377) = 1.443, p > 0.05$), coach ($F(4,377) = 0.542, p > 0.05$), curriculum developer ($F(4,377) = 1.463, p > 0.05$), gatekeeper ($F(4,377) = .620, p > 0.05$), and broker ($F(4,377) = 0.902, p > 0.05$). Moreover, a one-way ANOVA was used to examine variations by educational qualification. Results again did not demonstrate statistically significant differences: teacher of teachers ($F(2,403) = 1.025, p > 0.05$); researcher ($F(2,403) = 1.025, p > 0.05$); coach ($F(2,403) = 0.587, p > 0.05$); curriculum developer ($F(2,403) = 1.480, p > 0.05$); gatekeeper ($F(2,403) = .853, p > 0.05$), and broker ($F(2,403) = 1.074, p > 0.05$).

A *t*-test was conducted to assess the effect of teaching experience prior to becoming TEs. Significant differences emerged for the roles of teacher of teachers ($t(367.8) = -2.662, p < 0.01$) and curriculum developer ($t(359.7) = -2.515, p < 0.01$). Participants with prior teaching experience identified more strongly with these roles than those without.

Finally, perceptions were analyzed by subject expertise using a *t*-test. Subject expertise was categorized into two groups: educational pedagogy (educational studies and methodology) and academic subjects (e.g., language, social studies, science, and ICT). TEs specializing in educational pedagogy scored higher across all professional roles than those in academic subjects; researcher ($t(343.9) = 3.294, p < 0.01$), researcher ($t(406) = 3.145, p < 0.01$), coach ($t(356.5) = 3.325, p < 0.01$), curriculum developer ($t(334.7) = 4.437, p < 0.01$), gatekeeper ($t(313.5) = 3.949, p < 0.01$), and broker ($t(405) = 2.511, p < 0.01$). This suggests that pedagogy-focused TEs have more clearly defined perceptions of their professional roles.

Discussion

This study examined Myanmar TEs' perceptions of their professional roles. Addressing the first research question provides a novel perspective by analyzing TEs' roles. Although TEs consumed different professional roles, the teacher of teachers role was perceived as most closely aligned with participants' professional identity, as shown by one-way repeated ANOVA results. This indicates that TEs placed more emphasis on their explicit teaching than on other roles. The finding is consistent with that of Bouckaert and Kools (2018), who reported that TEs generally considered themselves, at least to some extent, teachers of teachers role within Lunenberg et al.'s (2014) six-role framework. Similarly, Tsukawaki et al. (2023) found that TEs in East Asian countries recognized all six roles. The results of emphasizing the teacher of teachers role showed that TEIs are still teaching-focused institutions.

In the present study, only a few TEs identified the researcher role. These findings align with Smith (2005), Bouckaert and Kools (2018), and Grobged et al. (2016), all of whom reported weak perceptions of the researcher role among TEs. Smith (2005) found that only half of novice and experienced TEs regarded research and publishing as key activities. Bouckaert and Kools (2018) similarly reported that only 46.7% recognized the researcher as a professional role, while Grobged et al. (2016) noted that only 9% included "researcher" in their professional identity. The current findings are consistent with UNESCO's (2016) observation that research remains an underdeveloped skill among TEs in Myanmar.

Cochran-Smith (2005) emphasized the gradual increase in research on teacher education and highlighted that TEs should be

intelligent consumers of research by applying it in teaching-learning situations, considering new studies from multiple perspectives, and improving proficiency in performing their own research. Similarly, Valle et al. (2025) explored TEs' perceptions of research in their professional practice, including their use of high-quality research literature, the relevance of current research in their instruction, and their research activity engagement for the student teachers' professional development. Currently, research exchange sessions are rarely found among TEIs in Myanmar. As previously mentioned by researchers, research has become a trend in higher education institutions worldwide, a weak opportunity for TEs to broaden their perspectives on research interrupts the development of teacher education in Myanmar.

This study examined the influence of gender and age on Myanmar TEs' role perceptions. Significant gender differences were found for the researcher and broker roles, with males showing stronger alignment across all roles than females. In Myanmar, males, who will be the head of a family, are less interested in teaching because of the poor economic position of the profession. As a result, it can be concluded that men who decide to become teachers may have favorable and positive attitudes toward the profession and likely engage in their work more actively. In Myanmar, it is therefore normal and acceptable for male teacher educators to have stronger perceptions. From the international perspective, these findings mirror those of prior studies. Prozesky (2012) attributed this disparity to women's dual responsibilities in family building and academic tenure. Similarly, Ducharme and Ducharme (1996) reported that female educators spent less time on scholarly and research activities that advance promotions, salaries, and tenure.

No significant relationship was found between age and perceptions of professional roles. This aligns with the findings of Tsukawaki et al. (2023), who observed no correlation between age and TEs' professional identities. These were likely influenced by other personal factors, such as their beliefs and attitudes, rather than their age (Rosdi et al., 2020).

The study further explored school-related personal factors. Total years of teaching experience, years spent as a teacher educator, professional level, and educational qualifications were not significantly associated with perceptions of professional roles, contradicting the findings of Tsukawaki et al. (2023), strengthening aspects of professional identity at a higher level. However, prior school teaching experience influenced perceptions of the teacher of teachers and curriculum developer roles. Educators with prior teaching experience showed stronger alignment with all roles, suggesting that such experience fosters positive role perceptions. As Murray and Male (2005) emphasized, these educators must transfer and adapt school teaching skills to meet the demands of second-order teaching contexts.

Differences between pedagogy-specialized TEs and those from academic subject backgrounds are another important finding. Pedagogy specialists were typically graduates of TEIs and demonstrated stronger identification with professional roles, likely due to their training in professional theories and classroom teaching experience as schoolteachers. By contrast, subject specialists—who often transition directly from academic disciplines without exposure to teaching theory—showed weak perception of their professional roles. As discussed by Meeus et al. (2017), TEs are second-order teachers who should have been educated as teachers. Basic competencies and knowledge of educational core goals achieved through a teacher education

curriculum support pedagogy-specialized TEs to assume their professional roles more strongly. This highlights the professional requirement of teaching credentials for subject-specialists. To intentionally tailor learning opportunities for this type of TEs, den Hertog et al. (2025) identified three criteria for beneficial previous professional expertise: task similarity, complementarity between learning opportunities and prior professional practice, and level of support and recognition within the organization.

A critical issue emerging from this study is the lack of recognition of the researcher role. Because of the poor perception of this role, TEs are less likely to engage in research- and inquiry-based teaching, which limits both their practice and fulfillment of other roles, and thus raises the question: Why do teacher educators not recognize their researcher role?

One key factor is autonomy within TEIs. In Myanmar, curricula of teacher education for education degree colleges are centrally determined at the national level, with specific subjects, time allocations, and examinations. Teacher education institutions are required to follow these guidelines, leaving TEs with limited flexibility beyond designing classroom activities. Consequently, research is not required, limiting opportunities for innovation of diverse curricula and improvement in professional practices. Thus, both institutional and individual autonomy greatly shape how TEs perceive and enact their roles. As argued by Chung (2023), Finland's decentralized system increases teachers' decision-making in the classroom, school, and professional levels. The positive results can be found in teachers' enjoyment of the profession (Paulsrud & Wermke, 2020) and worldwide recognized performance on PISA (Chung, 2023). This

evidence underscores the critical role of expanding autonomy for TEs' professional practices and the development of TEIs.

Limitations and Future Studies

This study has several limitations. The sample was gender-unbalanced and had high variability in total years of teaching experience and years spent as TEs, though this reflects the national context; future studies should use more balanced samples to improve generalizability. Furthermore, this study employed a quantitative design grounded in six roles defined by Lunenberg et al. (2014), developed in Western contexts. Additional roles may exist in Eastern settings; therefore, qualitative research is recommended to identify culturally specific roles. Beyond perceptions, classroom observations and in-depth studies of daily practices are necessary to fully understand TEs' professional roles.

Implications

The following are recommended based on the findings of this study. The first recommendation is training in adult pedagogy (andragogy) and second-order teaching practices for both novice and experienced educators, as the findings highlighted the weak perceptions of subject-specialized TEs. Second, institutions must foster research-oriented culture because TEs in both EDCs and UOE are least acknowledged in their roles as researchers. To address this, research seminars, workshops, forums, and conferences should be organized, involving TEs and both undergraduate and graduate students. Research opportunities should also be expanded through support for budgeting, technology, and

methodology, and research-based practices should be embedded in curricula from the start of TEs' careers by embedding such activities as institutional requirements.

Conclusion

The findings of this study contribute new perspectives to the literature by providing insights into TEs' perceptions in a non-Western context. The results also highlight the limited emphasis on research within Myanmar's teacher education system, despite the increasing importance of research-based teaching and scholarly engagement globally. As research-intensive universities become an international standard, a key question for policymakers emerges: how can a robust research culture be developed among TEs in Myanmar? This study offers actionable recommendations and establishes a foundation for future research on teacher education in the country.

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Bionote

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