Reaching the Bar: Cooperating Teachers' Expectations for Student Teachers

by

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Abstract

The education and preparation of pre-service teachers for K-12 classrooms remains a widely discussed area of education literature. Expectations are high for new teachers to be capable to manage contemporary classrooms as they replenish the profession. The practicum is widely acknowledged to be key to teacher preparation as each graduate must complete at least one practicum round of classroom-based student teaching. Previous research has reported a large divide between universities and schools, role ambiguity among practicum partners, and inconsistent approaches across university programs as longstanding issues in teacher education. Cooperating teachers, classroom mentors of student teachers, are crucial partners in the practicum. A review of education literature suggests that cooperating teachers' voices are often not heard in research and their expectations for student teachers are understudied.

This qualitative interview study examined ways in which classroom teachers view their roles as mentors for student teachers. The following research question guided this study: What do cooperating teachers expect from student teachers? Three sub-questions that further guided the study are (1) How do cooperating teachers describe their expectations for student teachers? (2) What do cooperating teachers communicate to student teachers about expectations for the teaching practicum? (3) In what ways are cooperating teachers' expectations for student teachers shaped and formed?

Data was collected through 10 semi-structured interviews in select K-12 urban schools in Alberta, Canada. This interpretive study was guided by a pragmatic approach and the researcher's practitioner positionality. This study identified emergent themes from participants' descriptions of their experiences with mentoring student teachers. The themes were discussed

within larger categories: Insider and Outsider Positionality, Cooperating Teachers' Professional Commitment and Mentoring, and Recognizing Idiosyncratic Nature of Cooperating Teachers. This study suggests that while cooperating teachers often approach mentoring with enthusiasm and can experience benefits, longstanding challenges inhibiting the potential of a practicum can remain: a theory/practice divide with universities, the practical demands of content and pacing, and cooperating teachers' experiences of classroom isolation and limited professional collaboration.

This practitioner research has implications for the partners in student teaching such as universities, school divisions, and cooperating teachers. It may help to build awareness in university programs of cooperating teachers' expectations of pre-service teachers. This study may help school divisions and cooperating teachers emerge from silos to explore conversations about how closely their attitudes, perspectives, and choices surrounding student teachers align.

Preface

This thesis is an original work by Jonathan Sharek. The research project, of which this thesis is a part, received ethics approval from the University of Alberta Research Ethics Board, Project Name "Reaching The Bar: Cooperating Teachers' Expectations", No. Pro00104442. Pilot study approved December 12, 2020. The main study was approved March 20, 2021.

Dedication

This degree and dissertation are dedicated to my grandfather, Walter P. Sharek, a distinguished educator and administrator. Walter was one of the finest persons I have ever known, one whose presence to my life and this study remains close to this work and my teaching career. As I write these words, I am mere blocks from his long-time home in Jasper Place where he lived and taught high school for many years. His journey from normal school and tiny country schools into retiring as principal of Queen Elizabeth High School in Edmonton is reflected in these pages – his life and work are fondly remembered.

Acknowledgements

First and foremost I would like to thank my wife Toscha Turner and son McKinley Sharek. Without your patience and understanding this entire journey would not have been possible. This project could not have been completed without the invaluable assistance of my advisor, Dr. Noella Steinhauer. Being able to rescue an inexperienced doctoral student and patiently guiding him towards confidence and completion is no small feat. Thank you for your guiding presence and utterly dependable ways in which you helped pushed back the panic and promote growth. The way forward would not have been possible without you.

Thank you to my parents, Paul and Virginia Sharek, for their unwavering support and counsel over this long journey. As well, thank you to Dr. Lorene Everett-Turner for you support and advice. Other early collaborators that I leaned on heavily include Karen Pashby and Norene Erickson, who remained ever patient as they dealt with my endless questions.

Table of Contents

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

Background

In a recent Government of Alberta stakeholder survey of educational stakeholders (Alberta Education, 2015), 36% of principals expressed that current education graduates are not sufficiently prepared for the classroom, up from 21% just four years earlier. New teachers, expected to renew and revitalize the profession, face an array of challenges transitioning from student teacher to beginning teacher. In initial teaching assignments, beginning teachers are often expected to perform duties with the same level of expertise, efficiency, and efficacy as experienced teachers (Wildman et al., 1989). Expectations for newly graduated teachers are high, and strong teacher education graduates are needed to meet the challenges of contemporary schools. Societal expectations placed on schools are driving calls to improve teacher education programs (Ballou & Podgursky, 2000; Darling-Hammond, 2010; Labaree, 2008).

Within the robust body of literature on initial teacher education (ITE) programs, the practicum is consistently cited as having paramount importance in the teaching preparation process (Caires & Almeida, 2005; Smith & Lev-Ari, 2005). Research in this field has explored areas such as the length of the practicum (Cannon, 1997, Ellis et al., 2019), the strength of relationships between universities and schools (Zeichner, 2010), deficiencies in the practicum stage (Ralph et al., 2009), the disconnect between theory and practice (Zeichner, 2002), and the dynamics between practicum partners (Haigh & Ward, 2004). The

The three main partners in the school-based practicum are the student teacher, an experienced mentor teacher assigned to oversee and guide them, and the university supervisor. The school-based mentor teacher can be referred to as a cooperating or associate teacher (Clarke

et al. 2014), or a pre-service teacher mentor (Ellis et al., 2019). In Alberta the mentor teacher is

most frequently referred to as the cooperating teacher. The dynamic among these three partners

has spurred a number of studies examining the dyadic nature of the relationship between the

cooperating teacher and student teacher (Anderson, 2007; Auster, 1984) as well as the triadic

relationship that would include the university supervisor (Bullough & Draper, 2004). However,

of the three practicum partners, cooperating teachers and their expectations appear to be

understudied. In their review of research on the teaching practicum, Lawson et al. (2015) note

that the majority of studies reviewed are centered on student teachers, and as such are limited to

the "beliefs, views, perceptions, applications, problems…" (p. 379) of student teachers. Robbins

(2012) concurs that the voices of student teachers often dominate in these studies, and claims that

"…there is one voice that remains silenced in this research; cooperating teachers within the

school system" (p. 315). This is not to say there is a lack of research on cooperating teachers, but

the above did motivate me to conduct an investigation that would invite more cooperating

teacher voice to the research.

Of the studies that do focus on cooperating teachers, many note the hierarchy that can

develop in the triadic relationship, often leaving the mentor at the bottom (Veal & Rickard, 1998;

Tsui & Law, 2007). This hierarchy can contribute to tension among the partners, and can leave

cooperating teachers in a passive role. Zeichner (2010) argues that cooperating teachers can be

very disconnected from what student teachers learn in ITE programs due to their having little

idea of the skills and methods taught in teacher preparation. Such a disconnect, he reasons, can

position cooperating teachers' perspectives as unheard voices in teacher education research.

Clarke (2006) observes that "substantive analyses of the way in which cooperating teachers

frame and reframe their advisory practices have not been forthcoming" (p. 910). In light of this

gulf, I investigated the stories and experiences of cooperating teachers and their expectations for student teachers.

I am a practitioner researcher, and have remained in an active teaching role throughout my graduate study. I work among teaching peers who mentor student teachers. The pragmatic approach chosen for this study not only compliments this teacher practitioner role but is a methodology I found that helped reduce the distance between research and the field. Motivated by my mentoring and teaching experiences in secondary schools and ITE programs, the purpose of this study is to explore cooperating teachers' expectations for student teachers in practice. Having encountered deep disconnect between universities and schools, I wanted to ask cooperating teachers about their expectations within the context of established expectations. Now that this study is complete, I feel fortunate to have discovered rich insights and new curiosities in the area of teacher education, and I am keen to discuss the findings and discussions with fellow practitioners.

Bringing Myself to the Research

My approach to this investigation is centered in a deep respect for the teaching profession. A multitude of diverse experiences in teaching initial teacher education (ITE) programs – as a student teacher, mentor, and university instructor - have afforded me the opportunity to view many aspects of what it means to learn to become a teacher. What I have found through these experiences is that a vast array of challenges and opportunities exist in the teacher preparation process. That has instilled a sense of importance to investigate challenges and opportunities in order to explore how the teaching profession renews itself, and how cooperating teachers experience the process of mentoring student teachers.

The path I took into teaching was not linear, nor was it filled with confidence. I attended the major institution in my hometown, the University of Alberta (U of A). I started my post-secondary studies in computing science, a program that I found was neither inviting nor forgiving. Fortunately, after nearly being required to withdraw, I transferred into the university's Bachelor of Music program and was immersed in a field of study that was far more suited to my interests. Soon into my second year I was made aware there was an option to pursue a combined Bachelor of Music/Bachelor of Education program. Unlike those who may have long felt that they were called to be teachers, I considered the teaching profession in mostly practical terms. The prospect of having a teaching certificate seemed wise as opposed to relying on solely on musical performance as a livelihood. One might say that ultimately I "backed" into teaching as a career.

Along with countless others, I had experienced Lortie's *Apprenticeship of observation* (1975) in my own public school experience. Lortie suggests that as we all experience schooling first-hand and witness thousands of hours of teaching, it is common to enter teacher education filled with preconceptions about how to teach. However, once I started the education courses in the combined program, I was inspired by an awareness that I was entering a discipline that was very new to me, and I was impressed by the breadth and depth of educational topics and disciplines available for study. While I found the foundational and theoretical aspects intriguing, I certainly remember looking ahead to the practicum as the ultimate proving ground for my prospects of becoming a capable teacher.

My practicum rounds were generally positive as I had supportive mentors, and I emerged with very good evaluations. In retrospect, my entire undergraduate degree at the U of A was a series of vivid impressions: finding my way in a large faculty that graduated hundreds of teacher

candidates a year; taking in theatre lectures and small group activities; crossing the threshold

from student into the world pre-professional as a student teacher. Despite the vast scale of this

enterprise, I was struck by a multitude of intense and acute experiences. The reality of teaching

was immediate, intimate, and personal.

After graduating and entering the teaching field, I often found myself circling back to

reflect on my experience as an ITE student. Certain concepts and theories made more sense once

I had worked in classrooms of my own for several years. Many times I thought about the way I

had been prepared, and generally about the way student teachers of the day were prepared. I

began to think about how politics, government, and power shape education. While continuing to

teach, I returned to the university as a Master's degree student to explore these and related

questions.

In the field, I began to work as a mentor with a large number of practicum students who

were completing the ITE program at the same university I attended. I became curious about what

pre-service teachers knew, how prepared they were, and how much the ITE program had

changed since I was a student. What would student teachers' expectations be of me as a mentor

teacher? What exactly would I expect of them? As I contemplated my role, I realized that I

would not only be their primary evaluator, but also their guide, confidante, and perhaps friend.

In reality, however, when I entered into practicum rounds as a cooperating teacher, it

seemed that the university was the ultimate arbiter of how each practicum unfolded. I felt that of

the three partners, I had the least amount of knowledge of the process, and that my role was the

smallest and least certain. This felt like being at the lowest end of the triadic hierarchy (Veal &

Rickard, 1998; Tsui & Law, 2007).

Concurrently, the community of professional peers with whom I worked would frequently voice dissatisfaction around the quality of the student teachers they were mentoring, and of ITE programs as a whole. Opinions in the field highlighted the disconnect between pedagogical theory and practice, and very often lamented a lack of rigour in ITE programs. I would often find that my peers seemed far more certain of what they expected of their student teachers than I did, and this was, at times, a source of significant confusion and discomfort for me.

In my experience, teachers are generally keen to share aspects of their teaching lives with one another. Colleagues of mine who were having particularly negative experiences mentoring student teachers would often relate (sometimes more than once) detailed and vivid stories about their stresses and disappointments, similar to findings Hastings (2006). These were highly personal accounts of the ways in which their student teachers were failing to live up to their expectations, and as a listener I got the distinct sense that these mentors felt very strongly about giving voice to their perspectives.

After several more years of teaching, both in Alberta and in the United States, I again returned to the U of A's Faculty of Education, this time as a field experience associate. This position provided me with the opportunity to oversee various stages of the ITE program, including instructing undergraduate courses. As a field experience associate, I also served as a faculty liaison to partner districts and schools that hosted pre-service teachers, and responded directly to issues arising in practicum placements. Despite being cognizant of the tensions surrounding pre-service teacher preparedness from my own experience and from listening to my peers, I was still surprised by the amount of negativity that I encountered. I frequently encountered criticism of our practicum schedule that involved negative comparisons to other

education programs – for example, because we did not get student teachers into classrooms right at the start of the school year, or did not offer a fifteen-week final practicum round, as other universities did. I often heard cooperating teachers assert that a longer practicum would produce teaching graduates who were better prepared for the classroom.

Liaising with school partners allowed me to partake in many conversations that centered on the negative experiences of schools and cooperating teachers hosting pre-service teachers. Recurring complaints from these stakeholders included: the bureaucratic complexity of the practicum process; confusion in the field about roles and expectations of practicum partners; and their overall sense of dissatisfaction with teacher education. At times there were specific criticisms of the Faculty of Education: that it failed to prepare pre-service teachers for professional teaching, or to enforce the necessary standards to weed out ineffective teacher candidates. At times I noticed cooperating teachers advise student teachers to disregard their university educations and instead focus on mentor advice and practical classroom experience. In some instances the expectations of cooperating teachers seemed to disregard university guidelines entirely; particularly opinionated mentors felt that the university lacked rigour, and required that their student teachers meet a completely different set of criteria from the university's, one created by the mentor. Out of these many observations and experiences, I developed a substantial curiosity about how cooperating teachers develop expectations for their student teachers.

I have reflected on why mentoring student teachers is important to me. As an individual who "backed into" teaching, I have considered whether my own lukewarm entry into the undergraduate teaching program perhaps steered me towards mentorship and guidance for pre-service students. Working as part of a collective that participates in the renewal of the profession

as a mentor teacher and field experience associate has given me the opportunity to reflect on teacher education both in the field and in the university setting. I have formed the view that the development of teacher education students is seldom straightforward, and can be fraught with significant challenges. With this in mind, I returned to graduate school in part to examine more closely the origins and foundations of teacher education.

The teaching profession has long struggled with negativity, which can often be found in newspaper columns questioning the quality of teachers and teaching (Clarke & Phelan, 2017). My work in multiple roles in teaching and ITE programs suggests to me that the negativity is in part related to the education of teachers, and their transition from pre-service teachers to professionals. Despite this, I am optimistic that by investigating cooperating teachers' expectations of student teachers, this study can contribute positively to informing and enhancing ITE programs.

This study is intended to contribute to discussions of practice in teacher education, with a particular focus on the experiences of my mentor peers. However, it is important to note that my view of the student teaching practicum may have been influenced by my close association with the University of Alberta (U of A). Although I have had some teaching and mentoring experience outside of the U of A, the greatest proportion of my knowledge about being a student, graduate student and field experience associate has been acquired at this institution, and relates the U of A's practicum context. In addition, much of the inspiration for research questions and literature review has come out of conversations with teacher peers, student teachers, school administrators, university faculty, practicum supervisors, and fellow graduate students in the U of A teacher-education network.

The Practitioner Researcher

In their review of teacher education literature, Cochran-Smith et al. (2015) identify distinct research spaces within the teacher education research landscape – one occupied by active practitioners, the other by external investigators:

> We found that two relatively segregated research spaces have developed within
>
> the landscape of the research in this field, which are the result of profound
>
> differences in researchers' purposes and disciplines, the ways they position
>
> themselves as insiders or outsiders to the professional teacher education
>
> community, the larger agendas to which they align their work, and the extent of
>
> available resources and infrastructure that support their research. (p. 117)

Menter et al. (2016) state that "practitioner research in education is systematic enquiry in an educational setting carried out by someone working in that setting, the outcomes of which are shared with other practitioners" (p. 4). On the basis of these two statements, I identified my role in this investigation as an "inside researcher" because, for the duration of this study, I continued teaching high school on a full-time basis and mentored several student teachers.

Once data collection for this study was complete, I felt compelled to reflect on my chosen practitioner research stance. Cochran-Smith et al.'s (2015) notion of two research spaces would go on to influence the data analysis of this study. Of particular inspiration was their notion of "insider" and "outsider" positionality that related to my simultaneous work as a practitioner and a researcher.

Research Questions

The overarching question for this study is as follows: What do cooperating teachers expect from their student teachers in selected K-12 urban schools? Further sub-questions guided this research:

- How do cooperating teachers describe their expectations for student teachers?

- What do cooperating teachers communicate to student teachers about expectations for the teaching practicum?

- In what ways are cooperating teachers' expectations for student teachers shaped and formed?

Definitions

For the purpose of this study the following definitions were used:

ITE Programs – Initial Teacher Education Programs: Accredited university-based teacher education programs in which a teaching degree is granted upon completion, making the graduate eligible for a teaching license or certificate.

Student Teacher – A pre-service teacher usually in the third or fourth year of an ITE program in "an extended field experience under the guidance of an experienced teacher" (Clarke et al., 2014)

Cooperating Teacher – An active and experienced K-12 teacher who is the primary mentor and supervisor of the student teacher for the duration of the practicum round.

Practitioner Research – Menter et al., (2016) offer the following definition (as cited above): "Practitioner research in education is systematic enquiry in an educational setting carried out by someone working in that setting, the outcomes of which are shared with other practitioners" (p. 4).

Practicum – In teacher education, a practicum may be defined as "regular structured and supervised opportunities for student teachers to apply and test knowledge, skills and attitudes, developed largely in campus-based studies, to the real world of the school and the school community" (Price, 1987, p. 109).

Summary

This chapter has introduced cooperating teachers as important partners of the crucial practicum experience, and problems stemming from the understudied nature of their expectations for student teachers. Examining cooperating teachers' expectations of student teachers will help to provide insight into the undergraduate practicum experience, and thereby help to create a more cohesive teacher education program. The next chapter will provide a review of the literature examining ITE programs, cooperating teachers, and role expectations of student teachers and cooperating teachers.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter reviews literature related to teacher education, mentoring, cooperating teachers and their expectations for student teachers. For the purpose of undertaking this study and creating boundaries for its scope, I have narrowed the focus of the literature review to four main areas: Initial Teacher Education, How Student Teachers Learn, Cooperating Teachers, and Role Expectations. Within these areas, the literature has been organized into several more specific topics:

(1) Initial teacher education: higher education origins;

(2) Initial teacher education: criticisms and orientations;

(3) Initial teacher education: practicum stage;

(4) Adult learning theory;

(5) Mentoring and apprenticeship;

(6) Becoming a cooperating teacher;

(7) The experience and work of cooperating teachers;

(8) Expectations of cooperating teachers;

(9) Expectations of student teachers

Teacher Education

Initial Teacher Education: Higher Education Origins

In a brief look at the historical context of teacher education, this section will focus on the common school period (Cooper, 2007). It will also look at some of the historical developments of teacher education in Canada and the province of Alberta in particular. Cooper (2007) writes that prior to the era of common schools in England, resident servants often took on the role of educator. These servant educators were often trained by senior servant staff, in an early example

of the apprenticeship model in teacher education. At this point education was reserved for a privileged few. In the emerging common school era of the 19th century, political leaders such as Horace Mann of the United States advocated for public schools that would provide universal education for children (Baines, 2006). The advent of mass schooling for the children of working classes created a surge in demand for trained teachers. To facilitate this, the development of normal schools provided training institutions for prospective educators (Dombkowski, 2002; Aldrich, 2004).

Normal schools in North America and Europe were typically a one-year program of teacher preparation. Students would be admitted straight out of high school, with a shorter route for elementary teachers than secondary (Aldrich, 2004). Bohan and Null (2007) explore how the profession of teaching has been shaped by gender roles. Normal schools, which dominated elementary teacher education well into the twentieth century, enrolled an overwhelming majority of women as teaching was one of the only professions available to educated women in the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century. Traditional gender roles were reinforced through the direction of women, assumed to be caring and nurturing, into primary teaching roles. It was assumed that the rigour and knowledge needed for secondary teaching was suitable for men only. Secondary school teaching candidates were expected to have a bachelor's degree followed by a one-year course leading to certification (Bohan & Null, 2007).

O'Neill (1986) notes that "teacher training" is a more appropriate description of teacher preparation than "teacher education" in the normal school era. He maintains that the two terms tend to be used interchangeably, but that this fails to acknowledge the important distinction between normal schools and contemporary university-based teacher education programs. In delineating the terminology, O'Neill argues that university-based teacher preparation is a more

comprehensive experience that should be described as teacher education. The teacher training of

normal schools "involves activities that relate to the mechanical, technical and vocational aspects

of the teaching process; activities which might be aptly labelled rote, ritualistic, or repetitive" (p.

260). In O'Neill's view, university-based teacher education programs have an emphasis on

theoretical, research-based, and practical components. By being situated on university campuses,

teacher education students benefit from a wider range of opportunities for knowledge and

specialization in contrast to the narrow practical focus of normal schools.

Writing specifically about Alberta, Wimmer and Kasamali (2017) note the developments

in the province's teacher education evolution that are unique in Canada. The University of

Alberta in Edmonton opened the first faculty of education in the nation, in 1942. Since the year

1905, the year Alberta was granted provincehood, teacher preparation had previously been the

responsibility of three normal schools in the province. Wimmer and Kasamali (2017) credit the

forward-looking vision of the University of Alberta's first dean of education, M.E. LaZerte, for

guiding teacher preparation into the university setting. Just three years after it was established,

the U of A's Faculty of Education became responsible for all teacher preparation in the province

as the government transferred responsibility from normal schools to the university. LaZerte

imagined that the university setting would enable teacher education students a greater

opportunity to engage deeply in their subject area (Wimmer & Kasamali, 2017).

The eventual assimilation of normal schools into universities has been well documented

(Labaree, 2008; Robinson, 2006). Sheehan and Wilson (1994) write on this topic in the Canadian

context, noting that by the early 1970s all elementary teacher training had been transferred from

normal schools to universities. Elementary requirements were strengthened by this point, with

elementary student teachers requiring two years of education with the eventual goal of making a BA or BEd the standard to earn professional certification.

Sheehan and Wilson (1994) examine the post-War baby boom in Canada, observing that "the demand for teachers across Canada severely outstripped the supply" (p. 27). They point out that provincial authorities, needing a teaching workforce in the classroom, were able to delay calls to lengthen the period of teacher preparation. In some instances, emergency short courses were authorized to prepare teachers for the classroom even more rapidly. Provincial departments of education managed to direct and exert control over both the education and certification of teachers in publicly funded school systems. Sheehan and Wilson (1994) describe this as contrasting "sharply with other professions in Canada, such as law, medicine and dentistry, where both education and self-regulation were supervised by their respective professional bodies" (p. 27).

In a discussion of the absorption of normal schools into universities, Labaree (2008) identifies a number of problematic elements between teacher education and universities in the American context. He argues that teacher education "has long suffered from low status" (p. 297), consistently bearing criticism from many sides and stakeholders. Contributing to this low status is a combination of market pressures to meet a teacher labour shortage, the notion that teaching is not an exclusive profession but a mass occupation, and the unflattering impression of much of what a teacher's work entails.

 Labaree (2008) goes on to suggest that teacher education has "ceded control over its professional programs, cooperated in undermining the professional quality of these programs, and allowed these programs to become marginalized within a university setting that grants them little respect" (p. 304). The flipside of the bargain, Labaree contends, is that teacher education

benefits from the prestige of the university setting in exchange. He elaborates on the effects on

professional education:

> These have varied according to the university's location in the academic
>
> hierarchy. At the low end, the modest status benefits of affiliation with regional
>
> state universities have permitted education schools to maintain a relatively strong
>
> professional identity, although often at the expense of both academic and
>
> professional quality. The resulting accommodation has shown remarkable
>
> stability over time. But the same cannot be said about the situation of teacher
>
> education at the high end. Leading research universities have exerted strong
>
> pressures on education schools to pursue academic credibility at the expense of
>
> professional mission, while at the same time requiring them to maintain sufficient
>
> professional identity to differentiate themselves from the disciplines. (p. 304).

Labaree's view might lean heavily towards the cynical. However, the tensions

surrounding the place of teacher education in the academy have been written about

extensively (Clark, 2013; Diener, 2008; Gillard, 2009). Aldrich (2004) examines the

development of ITE in early 20th century England, and describes much inconsistency in

the training of teachers. He notes that English universities were hesitant to view

education as a subject of study. Aldrich also notes that societal needs of schools evolved

into an "emphasis on character formation rather than cognitive development, and the

social disciplinary nature of elementary schools" (p. 629), further scattering the focus of

ITE programs.

Reddy et al. (2008) contend that generally, there are far more commonalities than

differences among ITE programs, going as far as to suggest that they are "much the same

throughout the world" (p. 145). Tom (1995) laments the static structure of ITE programs, describing a mixture of foundational and methods courses culminating in at least one round of student teaching. He laments that ITE programs have not changed in nearly a century.

Initial Teacher Education: Criticisms and Orientations

My aim in this study is to investigate cooperating teachers' expectations for student teachers. Exploring these expectations will very likely intersect with cooperating teachers' experiences in, and opinions of, ITE programs. As a practitioner I have encountered persistent criticism of ITE programs from the field, and as such searched to see if this criticism is reported in teacher education literature. This process commenced with searching for general criticism of ITE programs and their orientations, and was narrowed to three subcategories in order to manage the scope of findings. The subcategories are: disconnect between ITE programs and the K-12 classroom, lack of classroom management preparation for pre-service teachers, and questions of who instructs student teachers in ITE programs.

Literature on the effectiveness of teacher education programs contends that despite reform efforts, chronic issues persist (Goodlad, 2007; Hess, 2001; Walsh, 2001). A disconnect between ITE programs and the school classroom has long been identified as problematic by prominent researchers (Knowles et al., 1994; Lortie, 1975; Zeichner, 2010). Examination of research literature reveals competing views about the content and nature of what should be included within teacher education curriculum. Crocker and Dibbon (2008) report that school principals and education faculty tend to have very different understandings about what content areas should be prioritized in ITE programs. For example, education faculty rated the importance of historical and philosophical foundations of education quite high, while school principals rated

these topics as very low. Ball and Forzani (2009) advance the claim that the curriculum for

teacher preparation is often centered "not on the tasks and activities of teaching but on beliefs

and knowledge, on orientations and commitments" (p. 497), implying that practical skills are

underserved.

Some of the literature on ITE programs explores the tension between subject knowledge

and pedagogical skill in teacher education curricula, leaving graduates with insufficient grasp of

content. Sanders and Morris (2000) write specifically about math content expertise in student

teachers, suggesting that there are concerns about the acquisition of subject mastery in ITE

program, further contributing to the impression of education as having low rigour. Shulman

(1986) echoes this unease, comparing historical teacher education exams to current standards and

finding them lacking: "Where did the subject matter go? Where is the content?" (p. 5).

Zeichner (2002) writes specifically about the disconnect implicit in the notion that

university is where student teachers learn theory, after which they proceed to practicum where

they attempt to apply this theory to practice. Such a belief, he argues, means that "cooperating

teachers and university instructors are often mutually ignorant of each other's work and the

principles that underlie it" (p. 61). Focusing on the educational background of teachers, Ravitch

(1998) levies criticism at faculties of education for what she sees are deficiencies in

requirements. She points out that most social studies teachers finish their undergraduate degrees

without either majors or minors in history. In Ravitch's opinion, a bachelor's degree in education

does not, in and of itself, provide a sufficient basis for one to go on to teach history.

Smith and Avetisian (2011) note that student teachers frequently experience incongruence

between the constructivist pedagogy learned in teacher education courses and the direct

transmission instruction often encountered in their K-12 practicum setting. This difference in

orientation can make it a challenge for both principal partners - student teachers and cooperating teachers - to negotiate teaching practices and expectations for the practicum rounds. Zeichner and Tabachnick (1981) found that student teachers' progressive pedagogical approaches have the tendency to be "washed out" by the practical demands of the classroom. Newer teaching techniques student teachers bring to the classroom can be conventionalized by the conservative approaches held in many schools. Feiman-Nemser (2001) charges that "too often teacher educators do not practice what they preach. Classes are either too abstract to challenge deeply held beliefs or too superficial to foster deep understanding" (p. 1020). This suggests a significant disconnect in how teacher educators teach at university versus how they expect that student teachers teach in the classroom.

A recurring theme in teacher education literature is the effectiveness of classroom management preparation for pre-service teachers. Emmer and Stough (2001) broadly define classroom management as "both establishing and maintaining order, designing effective instruction, dealing with students as a group, responding to the needs of individual students, and effectively handling the discipline and adjustment of individual students" (p. 104). Merrett and Wheldall (1993) report that despite widespread agreement of the importance of classroom management, 72% of teachers were unsatisfied with how classroom management was addressed in their ITE programs. Student teachers can develop fear of managing classrooms when the discussion of classroom management in teacher preparation programs is inadequate (Seibert, 2005). Oliver and Reschly (2007) contend that many programs claim to provide classroom management skills, but generally do not in fact offer adequate preparation for the creation of positive and organized classroom environments.

In their review of Canadian ITE programs, Gambhir, Broad, Evans and Gaskell (2008) note that "most faculties of education incorporate a differentiated staffing model" (p. 18). This model attempts to "bridge research and practical expertise by involving tenure track professors, contract instructors…and seconded instructors such as experienced classroom teachers who are released from the board for this purpose" (p. 18). This suggests a complex answer as to who exactly is providing instruction in teacher preparation in any given year, and highlights that pre-service teachers might not be able to have a consistent experience in ITE programs. Darling-Hammond (2006) argues that "…creating coherence has been difficult in teacher education because of departmental divides, individualistic norms, and the hiring of part-time adjunct instructors…" (p. 306). Faculties of education are subject to the wider forces of government and university budget and policy environments, meaning that ITE programs can often be subject to major change or realignment.

The contemporary education context presents significant challenges to faculties of education. As the complexities of schools and classrooms deepen, there is more pressure for faculties to respond. Gambhir et al. (2008) note a number of ways in which ITE programs are pushed to change and diversify: offering more alternative programs such as inner city or arts-based education; calls for stronger literacy and numeracy fundamentals; attention to issues such as equity, inclusion and social justice. They go on to caution that "many competing agendas" (p. 16) make ITE core subject matter a contested space, with the potential to have a fragmented course of study limited by a four-year time span. Tom (1995) criticizes what he calls the "bias in teacher education for breadth without depth" (p.124) for having too many discrete course topics and instructors working in isolation.

It should be noted that the broad term "teacher educators" has varying descriptions in education literature. Teacher educators are generally known as the faculty or instructors who prepare undergraduate education students. They are the teachers of teachers. Lunenberg (2010) notes that many teacher educators have prior experience in the K-12 classroom, though some might hold advanced degrees and may not necessarily have classroom experience. Not only are they responsible for teaching course content, but are often heavily involved with various functions of ITE programs such as building school partnerships, liaising with teachers in the field, committee work to develop policy, or even developing curriculum for ITE courses. Murray and Male (2005) offer the conceptualization that teachers educators can be considered as being second-order practitioners upon entering higher education. "Where they once worked in the *first-order setting* of the school, they now work in the *second-order setting* of HE" (p. 2). This could describe those post-secondary instructors who teach ITE courses, but are not academics.

Initial Teacher Education: Practicum Stage

Generally, the literature suggests that the practicum stages of teacher education programs are an invaluable way for pre-service teachers to obtain experience and learn about the professional role of the teacher (Beck & Kosnik, 2000; Caires & Almeida, 2005; Smith & Lev-Ari, 2005). Daresh (1990) identifies more specific value in the practicum, noting that student teachers have the opportunity to test their commitment to a prospective career as an educator. The practicum stage has been identified as a key component of teacher education since the advent of mass schooling in the 19th century (Ellis et al, 2019). Vick (2006) notes that despite variations in details, "the general form of teacher training was remarkably uniform: a combination of on-campus study and school-based practice which was jointly supervised by

school and training institution staff" (p. 183). The same author also states that the framework of

the practicum has long been the joint responsibility of the teacher education institutions and

schools. Vick (2006) chronicles a number of examples of committees "formed to discuss the

organisation, conduct and assessment of teaching practice" (p. 186). These examples

demonstrate university and school partnerships in the UK and Australia as far back as the 1920s.

In the modern context, the partnership may include the university, school jurisdictions, and

teacher associations. For example, the Faculty of Education, local school districts, and the

Alberta Teachers' Association all have input in the practicum stage at the University of Alberta.

Ryan et al. (1996) found two general views of the purpose of the practicum stage in a

curriculum, the first being "an opportunity to apply theoretical knowledge previously gained in

campus-based activities" (p. 356). The other purpose is "the opportunity to reflect on or examine

experience in light of the individual's current knowledge and understandings" (p. 357),

prompting more critical reflection in the ITE curriculum to complement the practicum

experience. Similar dichotomies of practica purposes are found elsewhere in the literature.

Dewey (1904) maintained there are two major approaches to the practicum: the apprenticeship

approach, in which the student teacher models practical skills and learns from demonstration;

and the laboratory model, in which the student teacher enacts new practices and learns through

experimentation.

All ITE programs in Canada provide an in-school practicum component (Crocker &

Dibbon, 2008; Gambhir et al., 2008). ITE programs depend on strong and continuous

partnerships with school jurisdictions to provide practicum opportunities (Rolheiser, 1999). In

terms of structure, the practicum length can vary widely among different types of program.

Crocker and Dibbon (2008) found the variance in Canadian programs to be from fewer than 50

days to more than 120, with most programs falling somewhere in between. ITE programs in Canada have guidelines and regulations set by their respective provincial governments, often setting a minimum length of supervised practicum in order for a teacher candidate to qualify for certification (Nickel et al., 2015).

Because the provincial regulations tend to be general, much of the responsibility for determining the length and format of the practicum can lie with universities themselves. This can lead to differences in practicum length and formats within the same province. For example, the faculties of Education at the University of Alberta and a smaller university within the same city both specify a period of nine weeks for the final round of the practicum. One key difference is that is that U of A student teachers start five weeks into the school year, while student teachers from the smaller university are in the classroom at the start of September.

In some cases, authors have argued that ITE programs should change the practicum format to a year-long internship similar to what is done in other fields (Berry et al., 2008). In their literature review of practica in higher education, Ryan et al. (1996) identify three practicum formats: an extended single placement model, a multiple shorter block placement model, and a part time placement or concurrent model. Citing a lack of supporting evidence, the authors state that "the rationale for choice of structure is often unstated or unclear" (p. 370).

Ralph et al. (2009) investigated student teacher perspectives regarding their ITE practicum experiences. They solicited responses from over 200 student teachers who had recently finished the education practicum. It is of particular note in the findings that two of the data categories indicated negative experiences with the university and practicum structures themselves. Under one data category, "sixty-seven percent of the respondents perceived that the most frustrating aspect of the extended practicum was the existence of unacceptable or deficient

university policies relative to its operation" (p. 80). Some felt as though the coursework preceding and following the practicum was largely irrelevant, while a small number of respondents indicated that the extended practicum was too short.

Another data category consisted of "concerns related to the faculty office in charge of field experiences" (Ralph et al.,p. 81, 2009). One telling response was that students felt the organization and delivery of seminars, where student teachers are recalled to meet with university instructors, was often unhelpful and interrupting to the practicum. Not only did the study's findings indicate a large number of negative issues with the practicum, but the authors note that similar deficiencies had been identified decades earlier and yet remain pervasive problems. These findings align with other literature identifying shortcomings and deficiencies surrounding the teaching practicum (Goodlad, 1990; Vick, 2006).

"Many universities today treat teacher education as a self-evident activity both for school and university-based teacher educators who mentor prospective teachers in clinical experiences and for the instructors and faculty who teach the courses in a teacher education program" (Zeichner, 2005, 118). Zeichner's appraisal of ITE programs implies that many of the assumptions that guide principal stakeholders remain unexamined, creating much inertia that can interfere with attempts to improve the practicum.

How Student Teachers Learn

Apprenticeship and Mentoring

The concepts of apprenticeship and mentoring have been used to describe the pairing of a cooperating teacher and a student teacher in the education practicum setting. Tickle (2000) describes the apprenticeship model as a generally conservative approach that features a clear hierarchy between master and learner. Generally, the apprenticeship model fosters deference to

the status quo while limiting new approaches the learner (in this case, the student teacher) may

bring. Dewey's (1904) view of student teaching practice cited earlier in this chapter sees the

apprenticeship model as a closed system with little flexibility. Ryan et al. (1996) describe an

apprenticeship model of practicum as one in which the experienced professional models

practices for the student to replicate. The primary goal is "student mastery of relevant practices

and student induction into the occupational group" (p. 360). Little, if any, reference is made to

the importance of relationship between cooperating and student teacher in the apprentice model.

Some authors (Britzman, 1986; Gordon 1985) have criticized the apprenticeship model as

unchanged vocational training held over from nineteenth-century teacher preparation. "Inherent

in this apprenticeship model is a behavioristic view of learning: learning is achieved through

imitation of working teachers and repeated practice" (Britzman, 1986, p. 443).

Student teachers have been required to undertake supervised teaching practice for

decades in what could described generally as an apprenticeship approach (Britzman, 1986;

Gordon 1985). This has evolved into more recent conceptions of practicum supervision termed

as mentorship. Hobson et al. (2009) describe mentorship as the personal support of a less

experienced practitioner by a more experienced practitioner with the goal of improving their

skills and "to facilitate their induction into the culture of the profession" (p. 207). Mentoring

gained traction in career development and business (Phillips-Jones, 1982; Zey, 1984), suggesting

that influential mentors guide and assist protégés in achieving life goals. In education, teacher

mentoring is largely seen as a way to explore efforts to support and retain newly hired beginning

teachers, who can face substantial difficulty as they enter classrooms of their own (Calderhead &

Shorrock, 1997) and face high attrition rates in the first years of teaching (Smith & Ingersoll,

2004). Mentoring in the specific context of pre-service teacher is a smaller subset of mentoring in education literature.

Salinitri (2005) maintains that mentoring is based on a reciprocal relationship, and that it "is distinguishable from other retention activities because of the emphasis on learning in general and mutual learning in particular" (p. 858). The mentoring model can involve much time and energy from both mentor and novice partners. Mentoring involves careful thought and reflection "in order that progression can be effective" (Oti, 2012, p. 357). With an emphasis on a less hierarchical partnership in which both members can critically reflect on their teaching practice, the mentorship model is predicated on a collegial and equitable relationship.

In literature on cooperating teachers and the practicum, it is common to find descriptions of binary approaches by cooperating teachers that are similar to the apprenticeship and mentoring models. Franke and Dahlgren (1996) describe them as binary as traditional vs. reflective approaches. "In the traditional approach, the mentor teachers' professional knowledge and competence are taken for granted and have to be reproduced by the student teachers" (Zanting et al., 1998, p. 14). The reflective approach shifts the focus to the learning and development of the student teacher without simply relying on episodic evaluation of their practice lesson performance. There is more emphasis on reflective conversations to help develop competency and professional knowledge (Le Cornu, 2010). This duality in practica between whether student teaching performance or critical reflection and conversation are emphasized is also recognized by Feiman-Nemser and Parker (1993). They conclude from their study that cooperating teachers tend to focus on student teaching performance, suggesting that these individuals favour a conservative and traditional approach (similar to apprenticeship). Clarke et al. (2014) find a similar emphasis of the traditional approach entrenched in teacher education:

"Despite critique of the apprenticeship model in preparing beginning teachers, this model remains dominant in many learning to teach contexts as evidenced by an emphasis on the technical dimensions of teaching…" (p. 45).

Hargreaves (1988) cautions that in the context of teacher preparation and new teachers, programs that claim to promote a mentorship approach may inadvertently be using the apprenticeship approach. This can mean that in some instances, student teachers assume a passive role wherein they are expected to conform to the expertise and practice of their mentors. This may also occur unintentionally. Calderhead (1988) found that when student teachers feel concern about how their teaching will be judged by the cooperating teacher, they may simply default to imitation of the cooperating teacher's norms and teaching practices.

Zanting et al. (1998) note the difficulty that can arise in trying to classify approaches to mentoring student teachers, as cooperating teachers "interpret their own roles individually and therefore the nature of mentoring is idiosyncratic…mentoring is highly contextualised and influenced by the expectations of schools, teachers education institutes, and student teachers" (p.13). It was noted in a prior section that the university context of teacher education means that a great variety of faculty members and instructors are involved in designing and teaching the ITE program and within this framework, inconsistency between the practicum models of mentorship and apprenticeship is perhaps inevitable. The University of Alberta Faculty of Education uses the term "mentor teacher" to describe cooperating teachers, and offers the following description: "Mentor teachers support and mentor student teachers. They use their professional judgment and knowledge to evaluate student teachers." (University of Alberta, n.d.). The most detailed part of the cooperating teacher description is under "coaching and guiding the student teacher", which includes organizational and teaching tasks, assisting in developing reflective practice, and

advising on effective strategies and skills. The University of Toronto's Ontario Institute for

Studies in Education (OISE) has a lengthy practicum handbook specifying that the "Associate

Teacher and Teacher Candidate work together to plan and implement the educational program"

(Dr. Eric Jackman Institute of Child Study, 2018, p. 9) Upon initial reading, this suggests a

collaborative relationship is congruent with the mentorship approach. While universities do

strive to make expectations apparent, it is less clear how well these expectations are followed by

cooperating teachers.

Adult Learning Theory

Skills, strategies, and methods used in the art of instruction are often known by the term

pedagogy. Mortimore (1999) defines pedagogy as "any conscious action by one person designed

to enhance learning in another" (p. 3). In an ITE curriculum, pedagogy refers to the skills

prospective teachers will need to apply to their future K-12 classrooms. The term has broader

applications to learning, at times being used to describe a university instructor's approach to

teaching post-secondary students.

Caruso (1998) notes that by the 1980s some teacher educators began to turn to "theories

of adult development to gain insight about teacher development and ways to support teacher

growth" (p. 120). Teacher education has been described as "a continuum of professional

development for teachers as they seek to improve their practice" (Clarke et al., 2014, p. 163).

This long-term continuum offers a more holistic notion than does viewing teacher learning and

development in discrete stages. As this continuum primarily begins with an ITE program at a

university, the program entrant is entering the world of adult learning. The learning and

development of student teachers during the practicum phase can be considered by using theories

of adult learning.

The term *andragogy* has become widely used to describe forms of adult learning. Merriam (2001) characterizes the advent of andragogy as an effort "by adult educators to define adult education as a unique field of practice, one that could be differentiated from learning in general and childhood education in particular" (p. 11). Knowles (1980) is widely acknowledged for his foundational writing on andragogy. He writes extensively on assumptions of andragogy, specifically in how they differ from assumptions of pedagogy. His four assumptions of adult learners are that they: a) move from dependency to self-directed learning; b) use a lifetime of experience as a resource for learning and retention; c) become ready to learn with attention to social roles; d) have a perspective of deferred application of knowledge changed to one of immediate application. Hussain (2013) suggests that educators should be familiar with andragogy in order to effectively create educational experiences for the adult learner.

Aside from providing assumptions about mature learners, adult learning theory also poses questions about the responsibilities of ITE partners in creating the circumstances in which adult learners are successful. "Accordingly, the primary techniques in education are experiential techniques-laboratory experiments, discussion, problem-solving cases, simulations exercises, field experience, and the like" (Knowles, 1980, p. 44). It is worth considering the place of learning theory in the ITE program overall and the practicum itself. Collins et al. (1991), suggest that learning theory can positively inform the process of constructing practicum experiences. Seeing as how the practicum phase has input from multiple sources (school districts, faculties of education, teacher professional associations) that may themselves feature competing agendas and interests, it is not clear how learning theories are integrated into the design of practica.

Knowles also comments on the need for adults to learn experientially (1980). Undoubtedly, the school-based milieu will greatly affect the way in which a student teacher's

experience shapes their practicum learning. Vygotsky (1978) has written extensively on the effect of a situation or environment on learning and retention. One of his central concepts of learning is the zone of proximal development: "the distance between the actual developmental level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance, or in collaboration with more capable peers" (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 86). The "proximal" refers to skills that the learner is acquiring, but will still require guided practice before being able to demonstrate independently. For Vygotsky, social interaction is necessary for learning, retention, and cognitive development (Nyikos & Hashimoto, 1997).

As noted in a prior section, the diversity among cooperating teachers can make a practicum pairing a highly unique experience. Cooperating teachers may have their own highly individual approaches and expectations towards supervision, in some cases providing little structure or support for the student teacher (Hastings, 2004). While in some cases these cooperating teachers may be personally inclined to take a "tough approach" with student teachers, others may simply be unaware of the content and principles taught by university instructors (Zeichner, 2002). Zeichner (1990) also identifies a frequent loose structure or even a complete absence of structure in student teacher learning in a practicum space. Applying Knowles's assumptions of adult education techniques to the practicum appears to assign substantial expectations for the cooperating teacher in facilitating the adult learning of the student teacher. If cooperating teachers are going to be consistently capable of meeting these expectations, it is less clear what supports, if any, are in place for them. A recurring theme in the literature is the need for greater preparation and/or support for cooperating teachers (Russell & Russell, 2011; Sayeski & Paulsen, 2012).

Another body of literature related to how student teachers learn is that of experiential learning. Experiential learning is often associated with adult education and "practices based on reflection on concrete experience" (Fenwick, 2001), and is described by Kolb (1984) as having "a fundamentally different view of the learning process from that of the behavior theories of learned based on an empirical epistemology" (p. 20). It is reasonable to consider that as each ITE program requires at least one practicum round (Ellis et al., 2019) there is broad acceptance of the notion that learning to teach requires learning through experience.

These aspects of adult education theory provide the study with context in helping to examine the assumptions of university instructors, cooperating teachers, and student teachers. The assumptions are likely to influence the way in which cooperating teachers form expectations for the practicum.

Cooperating Teachers

Cooperating teachers are both the primary object of this study and are crucial partners in ITE programs. There are pools of literature on cooperating teachers' involvement in practica (Caires & Almeida, 2005; Ellis et al., 2019) "however, there is little understanding of the experiences of cooperating teachers who have the responsibility for student teachers" (Goodfellow, 2000, p. 25). As this investigation intends to deeply examine the expectations that cooperating teachers hold for student teachers, this section of the literature review will focus on becoming a cooperating teacher, and the work of cooperating teachers.

Becoming a Cooperating Teacher

Elfert and Clarke (2015) claim that there are not formal qualifications for those intending to become cooperating teachers, though most universities and school districts have criteria for being considered for the role. These criteria can vary greatly across jurisdictions. A generation

ago, Haberman and Harris (1982) found that nearly half of American states had "no legal requirements for serving as a cooperating teachers" (p. 45). Their study found that the highest end of requirements required a masters degree, five years of teaching experience, and additional coursework specifically on supervision. A more recent sampling of university guidelines in the Canadian context suggests that potential cooperating teachers should have a minimum of three years of teaching experience. The University of Alberta specifies "three years of successful teaching practice" (Mentor teachers, n.d.) as one of the criteria for becoming a cooperating teacher. In an online search of various practicum department websites, the requirements to be considered a cooperating teacher were not frequently apparent, often requiring follow up requests to get the specific information. Simon Fraser University's education faculty asks for five years of experience (C. Clerc, personal communication, January 21, 2020).

Ideally, cooperating teachers should demonstrate excellent teaching and communication skills (Farbstein, 1965; Hamilton & Riley, 1999, Ellis et al., 2019) They utilize effective teaching practices that a student teacher can observe, consider, and model themselves (Koerner et al., 2002). "Typically, university teacher education programs select veteran or more experienced teachers to serve as cooperating teachers and mentors based on factors that may include prior collaboration, credentials, and teacher availability or willingness to work with an intern" (Russell & Russell, 2011). The sheer quantity of needed practicum placements often means that universities have limited say in selecting cooperating teachers. Clarke, Triggs, and Nielsen (2014) claim that the reliance on willing teachers to mentor student teachers "has grown over the years" (p. 45). The notion that teachers nominate themselves to participate is helpful to creating enough classroom for student teachers to practice in. However, it is less clear if cooperating teachers feel prepared to mentor or what assumptions they may hold about mentoring.

Stout (1982) surveyed cooperating teachers specifically for the reasons that they volunteered to take on novices. Most indicated they wished to create a positive impact on the teaching profession. Half of the respondents felt a student teacher could help revitalize their own practice, and that being in touch with the latest teaching techniques would cause them to "examine and re-evaluate their own styles and methods" (p. 22). Just over one quarter of the respondents indicated that they benefit from having another capable adult in the room, even if for a short time.

Sinclair et al. (2006) note a lack of literature looking into what sorts of teachers enter into cooperating teacher roles, or what incentives might convince them to volunteer to participate. With this gap in mind, the authors created three categories from their findings: boosters, guzzlers, and enticers. Boosters voluntarily agreed to take on student teachers, hoping to share their experience with student teachers and help bring them into the profession. They also saw this as beneficial due to extra payment and as professional development. Conversely, guzzlers would avoid accepting student teachers as they claimed they were too busy, or that they felt student teachers were unprepared for the demands of the practicum. Lastly, enticers sought concessions for their mentor role: greater payment for mentoring, more release time, or additional contact and support from the university.

Literature on cooperating teachers reveals a call to provide more guidance and training for prospective cooperating teachers, suggesting that in many instances cooperating teachers assume the role with little or no formal preparation (Ganser, 2002; Hargreaves & Fullan, 2000, Richardson et al., 2020). Knowles and Cole (1996) note that this deficiency is compounded when cooperating teachers tend to model the scenario of their own student teaching. Rather than have the capacity to take on a more thoughtful and proactive role, cooperating teachers may

simply rely primarily on how they themselves were guided as a model for their advisory

practices.

The Experience and Work of Cooperating Teachers

Goodfellow (2000) describes the practicum as a "collection of planned and unplanned

experiences" (p. 25), acknowledging the unpredictable and dynamic nature of life in schools. In

addition to the cooperating teacher's regular classroom teaching assignment, mentoring duties

can significantly increase the mentor's workload. He (2009) notes that mentors are expected to

simultaneously fulfill multiple roles, including providing steady support to a student teacher's

pivotal practicum experience. Hastings (2006) undertook a study to describe the emotional toll

that can accompany the responsibility of mentoring a student teacher. The author noted that

"feelings of guilt, responsibility, disappointment, relief, frustration, sympathy, anxiety and

satisfaction" (p. 138) can be present for cooperating teachers in the practicum role, particularly

when they invest heavily in the success of a struggling student teacher.

There have been numerous studies on the work done by cooperating teachers, some of

which reveal beneficial aspects to mentoring student teachers. Clarke (2006) reported that in his

examination of cooperating teachers' reflections, the "frequently cited claim that working with a

student teacher prompts one to think more deeply about one's own teaching practice was

evident" (p. 918). Such an experience may lead a cooperating teacher to reevaluate their

approach to teaching, or might even reinvigorate their enthusiasm in renewing their practice.

Depending on the amount of time that has elapsed since a cooperating teacher was in university,

this may help to reconnect veteran teachers with their own professional education from decades

before.

Cooperating teachers spend much of the practicum helping student teachers understand the practicalities of the school and classroom (Wang & Odell, 2002). This may include practical aspects of teaching such as routines, policies, using various technologies, and attendance. While these are all important aspects of a teacher's professional setting, this may dominate the practicum at the expense of more substantial developments such as teaching philosophy and reflective practice.

Role Expectations

This section explores literature relevant to the issue of role expectations for student teachers and cooperating teachers. The regulations, practices, and norms of the practicum stage are largely determined by the policy context of the university. Faculties of education maintain guidelines that specify most aspects of the practicum, such as: its duration, teaching responsibility schedules for the student teacher, feedback procedures, conflict protocol, final evaluation procedures, and various general expectations for all partners.

Literature on the practicum often focuses on student teachers and cooperating teachers (Richardson . For the purposes of this study, literature that deals with student teaching triads (student teacher, cooperating teacher, and university advisor) was not included.

Expectations of Cooperating Teachers

In years after teacher education's shift from normal schools to universities, expectations for cooperating teacher became established (Castillo, 1971; Copas, 1984; Farbstein, 1965; Yee, 1969). Grimmett and Ratzlaff (1986) identify some expectations of cooperating teachers they found to be consistent across the literature at the time of their writing:

1. Provide the student teacher with basic orientation to the school

2. Ensure the student teacher has all needed source material such as textbooks

3. Involve the student teacher with planning and evaluation

4. Hold regular conferences with the student teacher

5. Evaluate the progress of the student teacher with observation and feedback

The above items appear to be a baseline set of expectations that meets basic criteria for the

functional roles of cooperating teachers. Little (1990) summarizes a conventional approach to

cooperating teaching as providing student teachers with situational orientation, technical advice

and emotional support. Darling-Hammond and Bransford (2007) describe support for student

teachers involving modeling, co-planning, regular feedback, and opportunities for frequent

practice and reflection.

In a review of 60 years of literature on cooperating teachers, Clarke, Triggs, and Nielsen

(2014) note the emergence of three "common conceptions of teacher participation in teacher

education" (p. 8) based on the level of engagement and participation of the cooperating teacher.

The authors describe these conceptions as widely accepted within teacher education circles. A

minimal role for the cooperating teacher is the *classroom placeholder*, in which the newly

arrived student teacher replaces the cooperating teacher immediately. This relies on "the

assumption that the student teacher, upon entering the practicum, should be immersed in the

daily practice of teaching and be expected to quickly assume the mantle of teacher" (p. 8).

Noting the long absences from the classroom of the cooperating teacher that is typical of this

approach, the authors characterize this minimal level of participation as "something akin to being

an absentee landlord" (p. 8). Clarke et al. identify a participation model with more involvement

as a *supervisor of practica*, one in which the cooperating teacher's role is to "observe, record,

and report on the success or otherwise" (p. 8) of the student teacher's application of theory and

knowledge. The highest level of involvement is identified as a *teacher educator*, a term that

describes a cooperating teacher who is knowledgeable about the practicum process and teacher education literature, and can recognize the unique and complex nature of working with each student teacher.

Rajuan et al. (2007) examined the gap between expectations that cooperating teachers had for themselves and what student teachers expected from their cooperating teachers. The authors note that "conflicting expectations between student teacher and their cooperating teachers concerning the role of the cooperating teacher served as a major obstacle to the formation of productive mentoring relationships" (p. 244). Using the conceptual framework of teacher education of Calderhead and Shorrock (1997), Rajuan et al. classified the underlying beliefs and values of teaching into: academic, practical, technical, personal, and critical orientations. Their findings indicate that cooperating teachers tend to see themselves as having predominantly practical (apprenticeship model), and technical (the behavioural skills required to teach) orientations. When the student teachers were asked to identify the orientations most desirable for a cooperating teacher, they responded that a personal (relationships, individual growth) orientation would be the most helpful in their development: in other words, "student teachers differ from their cooperating teachers in their expectation for a more supportive, personal relationship" (p. 236). While cooperating teachers are eager to impart the basics of operating a classroom, student teachers "seek support in an accepting relationship before they can absorb practical and technical knowledge" (p. 237).

As mentioned in a previous section, mentoring approaches can be difficult to examine in light of the highly individual nature of teachers and teaching. "Cooperating teachers' perceptions of teaching are closely tied to their professional self-image and perspective of what it means to them to be a teacher" (Rajuan et al., 2007). With this complexity in mind, it is no surprise that

there is disconnection between on-campus teacher education and classroom-based practicum settings. Beck and Kosnik (2000) argue that there is a "lack of clarity and agreement regarding associate teachers" (p. 209) leading to ambiguity and disconnection between academics and practitioners.

Expectations of Student Teachers

In the same study, Beck and Kosnik (2000) found that cooperating teachers often have inflexible expectations of their student teachers; examples of this include: strictly following long-range plans and closely following the curriculum. "The students for their part often told us they felt under pressure in the practicum to teach precisely the content laid out by their associate teacher and with much of the same pedagogical approach" (p. 217). Similarly, Smith and Avetisian (2011) conducted a case study of a student teacher paired with two cooperating teachers. Among their findings was a sharply contrasting view between the two cooperating teachers. One was clearly in favour of a lockstep traditional model, while the other chose to allow for more experimentation on the part of the student teacher.

University guidelines set out most of the expectations for student teachers: what to do before arrival at the school, introducing oneself to cooperating teachers, weekly teaching load requirements, and so forth. Woods and Weasmer (2003) studied expectations for student teachers that go beyond these basic parameters, ones that may be loosely implied or that a student teacher may encounter in the culture of the school. Firstly, they argue that the cooperating teachers themselves implicitly set the tone with their vocabulary, temperament, choice of attire, and general interactions with staff and students. As well, they note that mentor teachers' schedules and extra-curricular commitments may require substantial time commitments for student teachers that are not addressed in university guidelines. The authors report that such issues can be a

source of significant tension, with cooperating teachers citing ambiguity in university guidelines that does not prepare student teachers for the reality of the profession.

Grannot (1993) notes that wide variations can occur in expectations created for student teachers, and that this is often connected to the degree of collaboration that is present. He describes a continuum where at one end, student and cooperating teachers might work together closely on mutually designed goals. At the other end of the continuum, Grannot describes a distant relationship in which each partner works in relative isolation. Fives et al. (2007) studied student teacher burnout in education practica, investigating how it may be related to the high or low levels of support provided by the cooperating teacher and university. It appears as though stress for student teachers can be affected by the expectations held by their cooperating teachers, which may or may not be explicit.

Summary

This literature review reveals a landscape in which teacher education has historically struggled for legitimacy in the academy, and still does. Various dilemmas emerge: content and orientations of ITE programs that seem incompatible with the work done in schools; inconsistencies in program content and who teaches that content; pervasive deficiencies in the practicum stage of ITE programs; inconsistent notions of mentorship for cooperating and student teachers; a wide gulf between teacher educators and practicing teachers. Despite reform efforts, the above problems tend to persist at institutional levels.

While there is a body of research that explores teacher education as it relates to cooperating teachers, there is a shortage of literature in the field that focusses on the expectations that cooperating teachers hold for student teachers. Such expectations tend to be touched on in existing literature in peripheral ways: Russell and Russell (2011) examine cooperating teachers'

perspectives on mentoring scenarios; Goodfellow (2000) provides a narrative account of cooperating teachers' own experience of tension within the practicum; Bigham et al. (2014) do examine cooperating teachers' expectations for students, but in a context of qualities principals look for in hiring new graduates. By offering a rich and detailed exploration of the experiences of cooperating teachers, the current study is intended to offer specific insights into the expectations these individuals form and hold for their student teachers.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

The roots of my search for an appropriate methodology for this study weave through the entire journey of my life in education. Arriving at a resolution required a long gaze back into the story of how I experienced (and continue to experience) the world of education. This involved reflecting deeply on the circumstances that shaped who I am and how I think. This also meant finding an academic pathway to connect my curiosity and inquiry to an established methodology and research study framework.

Ontology and Epistemology

My program of post-graduate studies required me to develop a deeper understanding of the research landscape in education. It required me to explore the philosophical and theoretical traditions in the many disciplines from which education research has evolved. This involved reviewing concepts such as objectivity and subjectivity, and examining how they have played a role in social science research.

As a classroom teacher, I have listened carefully to peer impressions of what constitutes research. I find that many people I talk to, including other education practitioners, have a general impression that university research means utilizing an objective "scientific" approach. They expect that investigating educational problems means designing controlled experiments that have a large sample size, phenomena that can be precisely measured, and results that can definitively state what is effective and what is not. I have heard colleagues ask for "research-based" techniques from academics to provide proven solutions for schools and classrooms. The broad assumptions of my peers have inspired me to examine my own assumptions as I considered an overall approach and methodology for this study. I found guidance from Hiller's (2016) advice for researchers to carefully reflect on "ontological and epistemological beliefs, assumptions, and

commitments" (p. 104).

I have been in schools for as long as I can remember: as a child in school, a young adult in undergraduate school, practicing educator, and a graduate student in education. At each stage, I have been constantly challenged to assess what I accept as knowledge as I strive to understand and make sense of reality. There are distinct memories of my experience as a small child, learning about the empirical nature in which scientific phenomena were framed, understood, and presented. Though I did not understand the formal terms yet, the impression I had was that the world seemed to be organized into concrete and observable facts that could be translated into general laws. The rudimentary understanding of research I held at a young age was that of science and experimentation. In my view, the modern scientific age would be well equipped to prove or disprove claims in the natural or human world. Despite this sense of certainty, I also became aware there were things that science and experimentation could not explain. When I became mature enough to study introductory psychology and social science, I began to become aware of the different approaches to research. In reconsidering this experience, I wonder if the evolution of my perspective might reflect some of the differences between modernist approaches and post-modernist approaches.

Not having travelled down an academically-oriented path, I was pleased to discover that authors like Crotty (1998) provide robust yet accessible descriptions of modernism and post-modernism. He describes modernity as the process of change in society ushered in by the Industrial Revolution, "where instrumental reason holds full sway" (p. 184). Crotty's writing on modernity helps me to understand the ways in which my younger self understood the world. "Science and the scientific method are paraded as the paramount way in which this self-professedly universal and valid hold on reality is achieved" (p. 185). It has occurred to me that

elements of modernity are deeply embedded in our daily lives and can be affect our thinking in ways that we may take for granted. Assertions about scientific certainty and universal truths may also help explain the assumptions of my teacher peers about the nature and purpose of educational research.

Crotty (1998) goes on to describe postmodernism as a rejection of the major beliefs of modernism:

> Where modernism purports to base itself on generalised, indubitable truths about the way things really are, postmodernism abandons the entire epistemological basis for any such claims to truth. Instead of espousing clarity, certitude, wholeness and continuity, postmodernism commits itself to ambiguity, relativity, fragmentation, particularity and discontinuity (p. 185).

I realize that modernism and postmodernism cannot be distilled down to a simple and neatly compartmentalized dichotomy. However, getting a sense of the landscape of each has helped me to understand the major delineations between the two philosophies.

Tierney (2002) states that in the social sciences, there has been a great shift from a modernist singular truth to a postmodern stance that reality is pluralistic and socially constructed. He goes on to suggest that this shift has profound implications for the role of the researcher: "The epistemological shifts that have taken place in light of our understandings of reality have helpfully brought about a questioning of the researcher and author's roles" (p. 394). I felt it was important that the choice of research approach can address my role in regards to the participants of this study. As a teacher researching other teachers, I was not distant, objective, and unmoved by the research process. I was part of the research process.

This study's literature review has demonstrated a gap in the literature on cooperating

teachers and the expectations they hold for student teachers. As the literature only touches on these expectations in peripheral ways, I chose an approach capable of exploring the central phenomenon in a detailed manner. The review of literature also suggests that the voices of cooperating teachers are not as well represented as other key actors in studies of the teacher education practicum. In order to address these concerns, I selected the interpretive paradigm as a basis for this investigation. As Schwandt (2000) explains, interpretivism strives for "understanding the complex world of lived experience from the point of view of those who live it" (p. 221).

The journey to this research topic led me to find unacknowledged complexity to be explored and unheard voices to be brought out. In discussing this complexity, Pascale (2010) makes a sharp delineation between interpretivist and positivist approaches: "Social behavior is not governed by fixed natural laws; there are no social equivalents of scientific laws such as gravity" (p. 22). While interpretivism has evolved into a number of contemporary paradigms and specific research approaches, this study drew on broad aspects of interpretivism for ontological and epistemological footing.

The interpretive paradigm assumes that known reality is socially constructed (Willis, 2007). Because there is not a window to a singular, objective reality, a researcher can only strive to access a subjective and socially constructed reality.

Interpretivism arose out of a critique of the positivist approach of human study, with a turn towards "understanding and interpreting the meanings humans attribute to actions" (O'Reilly, 2008, p. 119). German sociologist Max Weber is widely credited to have been a central influence on interpretivism (Chowdhury, 2014). Weber's stance on human inquiry

focused on "individuals as actors in the social world rather than focusing on the way they are acted upon by social structures and external factors" (O'Reilly, 2008, p. 119).

The German word *Verstehen*, or understanding, is associated with Weber's notion of the inseparability of understanding and interpretation in social research. Levin (2008) comments on the idea of *Verstehen* and the motivations of the researcher: "At some level, then, all social research is interpretive because all such research is guided by the researcher's desire to understand (and therefore interpret) social reality" (p. 464).

The current study investigated cooperating teachers' attitudes and perceptions, how these are shaped by their specific contexts, and how they inform cooperating teachers' actions. This is congruent with my curiosity and desire to gain insights into and deeper knowledge about the attitudes of cooperating teachers and the expectations that they hold for their student teachers. It was my goal to help reveal the detailed, unique and contextualized nature of their perspectives. Schwandt (2000) states that interpretive research means to study how "…particular actors, in particular places, at particular times, fashion meaning out of events and phenomena through prolonged, complex processes of social interaction involving history, language, and action" (p. 221-222). In interpretive epistemology, knowledge created is "intersubjective – produced through interactions of the researchers and study participants" (Hiller, 2016, p. 103). This investigation used relational dialogue as researchers and participants "coconstruct understandings that are reported as interpretations" (Hatch, 2002, p. 23) through semi-structured individual interviews.

While interpretivism is the study's paradigm, I selected a more specific interpretive framework to underpin the study. Continuing with Hiller's (2016) guidance, I turned attention to the assumptions and commitments of this study. Looking back at the earliest stages of this

study's proposal, I recalled that a key aspiration was that its results would be of value to ongoing

discussions around university teacher education programs. The outcomes, I thought, would need

to have real-world applications in the teacher-practitioner community. I made the choice of a

pragmatic framework to help address this.

     "Individuals holding an interpretive framework based on pragmatism focus on the

outcomes of the research – the actions, situation, and consequences of inquiry" (Creswell, 2013,

p. 28). Considering a pragmatic approach requires the researcher to evaluate their research

question and ask: "…why we should even consider an issue if its potential understanding won't

make a difference in the real world" (O'Leary, 2007, p. 207). The literature review of this study

highlights many of the ongoing concerns about initial teacher education programs, including the

disconnect that often exists between classroom teachers and faculties of education. Once the

study was carried out and data analyzed, it became apparent that a pragmatic framework

provided a suitable lens for this study's focus. My ongoing immersion in the classroom among

practitioners, the 'real world', suggested that highly theoretical analysis and discussion would

not be able to reach a practitioner audience.

     My experience among my classroom teacher peers suggests to me that academic

literature on education has limited impact on their daily experience and practice. Practicing

teachers can encounter barriers to access, limited time for professional reading, and often search

for applicable tools instead of ideas. The highly formal rhetoric of academic literature can make

it difficult to understand for the casual reader. As well, academic literature framed by highly

abstract theoretical debates can also limit its potential audience with teacher practitioners.

Creswell and Clark (2011) note that a pragmatic framework can use informal rhetoric, which is

useful for communicating to a wider audience. A pragmatic approach means that decision

making in research design is guided by "whether the potential consequences would match or differ from the research goals" (Kaushik & Walsh, 2019, p. 5). I believe that pragmatism has assisted me, a novice researcher, in remaining committed to honouring my stance as a practitioner researcher – meaning that the study was carried out among teacher practitioners in the field, and that entailed an onus to share the results with fellow practitioners.

Pragmatism has its philosophical origins in late 19th century United States with such thinkers as Charles Sanders Peirce and William James, and is frequently associated with philosopher and education writer John Dewey. Early forms of philosophical pragmatism "began as a consequence of the fundamental agreement of these scholars over the rejection of traditional assumptions about the nature of reality, knowledge, and inquiry" (Kaushik & Walsh, 2019, p.2). These rejections suggested that ideas should be not be evaluated by encumbering debates about reality or metaphysics, but instead should be appraised for their practical consequences. A central theme to emerge from pragmatic philosophy is that pragmatism is "benefit-directed, seeking to motivate the acquisition of a belief just because of the benefits generated by holding that belief" (Jordan, 1996, p. 409). This emphasis on utility has made its way into pragmatism as a research approach, in that the researcher seeks "the methods, techniques, and procedures of research that best meet their needs and purposes" (Creswell, 2013, p. 28).

Methodology

While interpretivism provided key assumptions for this study's ontology and epistemology, the pragmatic framework was key for guiding its methodology. This study did not use mixed-methods, even though pragmatism has been frequently linked with mixed-methods research (Creswell, 2013) as well as methodological pluralism and eclecticism (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004). Morgan (2014) notes the difference

between using pragmatism as a paradigm and using pragmatism as an approach to

methodology. He articulates what he calls the "pragmatic approach", in consideration of

research design. This pragmatic approach is consistent with Creswell's (2013)

description of pragmatism as selecting the best research procedures to meet the purposes

of the study. While a pragmatic approach gives a researcher flexibility in choosing

methods for a research design, Morgan (2014) cautions against making arbitrary

selections. In his view, a pragmatic approach requires that "…an appropriate research

design means finding a match between the purposes that motivate your research and the

procedures you use to meet those goals" (p. 5). The goals of this study were to

investigate cooperating teachers' expectations of student teachers, with the outcomes

positively contributing to informing and enhancing ITE programs. Following Morgan's

guidance, I considered the accessibility of the study results to be paramount to meeting

these goals. Having now completed the study, I believe that later chapters present

findings and discussions in ways that are accessible to practitioners. I also plan to adapt

findings into presentations and articles for fellow teacher practitioners.

   Clarke and Visser (2019) noted that major qualitative methodologies such as

ethnography, case study, and grounded theory were not suitable to meet the aims of

their qualitative study, and that a pragmatic approach to methodology became their

chosen alternative. They credit a pragmatic approach for allowing them to address

practical issues, such as a feasible time frame for data collection, while maintaining

consistency with their ontological and epistemological commitments as researchers. As

a full-time practitioner I faced similar constraints. For example, while ethnography was

an early consideration for this study's methodology, the requirement to be in a research

site for an extended period was simply not possible for me as a working classroom

teacher. Having considered Morgan's (2014) recommendations to evaluate the

alignment of my motivations and purposes with the procedures used to meet this study's

goals, I was ready to choose an appropriate research design.

Research Methods

Morgan (2014) contends that while the pragmatic approach to methodology offers a vast

array of choices, researchers should approach combinations of methods with great care. As he

relates from his own experience, choosing multiple research methods can create significant

challenges in integrating separate sets of results. While Morgan's writing is generally focused on

mixed-methods possibilities, his pragmatic approach encourages researchers to align their

research design with purposes and goals. He states that "in some cases, your best choice will be

to rely on a single research method" (p. 5). With this in mind along with Morgan's earlier

caution of complexity with multiple methods, I chose individual interviews as the method of data

collection. This choice was guided by the pragmatic framework, one that takes into consideration

the constraints of the study I faced as a practitioner researcher. This choice reflected a

congruency with the research goals of having accessible results that can be shared with other

teachers as well as to help inform ITE programs and practice. The selection of individual

interviews as method is compatible with the overall approach of interpretivism, in which the

lived experience and voices of participants are sought in their real-world contexts of practice.

Participant Selection and Recruitment

Qualitative approaches do not seek wide random sampling in search of generalizability to

apply to a larger population (Creswell, 2013). A purposive sampling method was chosen to

select information-rich cases for study, "those from which one can learn a great deal about issues

of central importance to the purpose of the inquiry" (Patton, 2002, p. 230). Purposive sampling

means that participants are deliberately selected by the researcher in order to prioritize in-depth

understanding of the phenomenon in question. Purposive sampling, and more specifically

criterion sampling, guided participant selection for this study. As Creswell (1998) notes,

criterion sampling ensures that participants have experienced the phenomenon under

investigation.

Participants had to meet the following criteria for this study: 1) they needed to be current K-12

teachers, and 2) have mentored at least 2 student teachers. Patton (2002) notes that the "logic of

criterion sampling is to review and study all cases that meet some predetermined criterion of

importance, a strategy common in quality assurance efforts" (p. 238). The above criteria meet

the study's objective of seeking information-rich cases of individuals who have mentored

student teachers in a K-12 setting. Without guiding criteria, there may have been volunteers for

the study who did not have significant experience as mentor teachers.

    In order to access permission to solicit participants, a number of Alberta school districts

were approached. The process began by a search of district websites for research policies,

criteria, and any related information about submitted requests to conduct research. The research

log shows that requests were made to eleven school districts across the province. Many declined,

citing the extra demands that the pandemic had placed on their teachers as the main reason not to

permit study invitations. In the end, there was only one school district that granted permission

for study. Whereas there had originally been a design to create a pool of 25 candidates for the

study, the low approval rate of school districts necessitated a smaller pool. Ultimately ten

candidates were able to participate in the study.

I had intended to send out a solicitation email via the liaison to the participating school district. Once the study gained approval, the district liaison informed the researcher that the best strategy for contacting potential participants would be individually rather than through a widely shared invitational email. As a result, potential participants were approached directly by the researcher. In some cases, once participants had completed their interviews they were asked if they knew colleagues who fit the study criteria and might be willing to also participate.

Pilot Study

A significant development since this research study was approved for candidacy was the request by the committee that the researcher undertake a pilot study. While unexpected, the request for a pilot study allowed the researcher to undertake of ethics review approval as well as test interviews. This proved to be a valuable lesson in the research process as it illustrated challenges that can face research studies. Once approval was obtained, the researcher carried out two interviews for pilot study.

Outside of being a participant in a handful of research studies, this was my first time designing and leading data collection procedures. The addition of a pilot study stage proved to be valuable to the entire research study process as the experience of practicing interview techniques prompted refining that assisted the main study. In the first pilot study interview, it became evident that my novice techniques would need improvement. Research reflections shortly after this time show that the initial interviews were "too question and answer", which felt too rote and mechanical. At this point I returned to Seidman (1998) as well as my academic supervisor for guidance. Ultimately, the pilot study interviews were not included in the analysis for the overall study.

Data Collection

Qualitative research can employ a number of methods to collect data. As qualitative data is non-numerical in nature, observations, individual interviews, and focus groups are some of the most frequently used qualitative methods. The method selected for this study was individual interviews. Patton (2002) notes that "we cannot observe feelings, thoughts, and intentions…we cannot observe how people have organized the world and the meanings they attach to what goes on in the world. We have to ask people questions about those things" (p. 341).

Interviewing is "a powerful way to gain insight into educational issues through understanding the experience of the individuals whose lives constitute education…it affirms the importance of the individual without denigrating the possibility of community and collaboration" (Seidman, 1998, pp. 7-8). I prepared to invite cooperating teacher participants to "an interpersonal situation, a conversation between two partners about a theme of mutual interest" (Kvale, 1996, p. 125) and set about reviewing possibilities for interview approaches and techniques. Rabionet (2011) suggests that a critical goal in designing interview protocol is "to establish rapport, to create an adequate environment, and to elicit reflection and truthful comments from the interviewee" (p. 564). Seidman (1998) advises qualitative interview researchers to be mindful of efforts needed to establish rapport as "building the interviewing relationship begins the moment the potential participant hears of the study" (p. 39).

As this study was designed as practitioner research using an interpretivist framework, every effort was made to interview participants at the schools where they teach. This is an important consideration as it is desirable to speak with participants in the setting where the phenomenon takes place (Creswell, 2013). What had initially been planned to be in-person interviews evolved, in most cases, into a secondary plan due to the fact that the COVID-19

pandemic developed in such a way that school facilities were frequently under policies that

limited social contact. In most cases the individual interviews had to be conducted via video

conference. The specific conditions varied on the basis of circumstances (for example, one of the

interviews was able to be conducted outdoors, thereby minimizing indoor social contact), but all

interviews did allow for the researcher and subject to see and hear one another clearly.

Despite the delays and uncertainty involved in the pandemic period, a goal of creating

rapport with participants was paramount in this study. When possible, I did try engage in

informal discussion with participants prior to commencing the interviews. As some of the

participants were known to me while others were not, it was important to create a sense of

familiarity and trust with all. It was explained to all that consent was voluntary and that

participant could opt out up to the point of data analysis. All participants were provided with a

formal invitation that explained the nature of the study, their rights in regards to privacy,

confidentiality, consent, and withdrawal, and the time commitment required by them as a

participant.

In using interviews, qualitative researchers direct effort "toward the goal of minimizing the

effect the interviewer and interviewing situation have on how the participants reconstruct their

experience" (Seidman, 1998, p. 16). Seidman goes on to claim that in any approach for

conducting interviews "the hardest thing for most interviewers to do is to keep quiet and listen

actively" (p. 63). As a novice researcher I strove to utilize this active listening, and was able to

elicit further information from participants. I asked follow up questions, asked for clarification

when needed, and requested to hear more information about certain topics that arose during the

conversation.

This study used semi-structured interviews. Kvale (1996) describes semi-structured interviews as having "a sequence of themes to be covered, as well as suggested questions. Yet at the same time there is an openness to changes of sequence and forms of questions in order to follow up the answers given and the stories told by the subjects" (p. 124). Using a flexible interview protocol helped me to create rapport and conduct responsive interviews. A more specific strategy for constructing the interview protocol for semi-structured interviews is suggested by DeJonckheere and Vaughn (2019). They advocate initiating the interview with a "general question related to the content of the overall research question" (p. 5) which is then followed by "Five to ten questions that directly related to the information the researchers wants to know" (p. 5).

This study investigated the expectations cooperating teachers have for their student teachers. The interview questions were guided mainly by the study's sub-questions:

- How do cooperating teachers describe their expectations for student teachers?

- What do cooperating teachers communicate to student teachers about expectations for the teaching practicum?

- In what ways are cooperating teachers' expectations for student teachers shaped and formed?

According to Kvale (1996), research questions and sub-questions need to undergo transformation "into an easy-going, colloquial form to generate spontaneous and rich descriptions" (p. 130). Hearing interview questions in accessible and direct language can increase chances for participants to provide spontaneous responses and lead to detailed descriptions. Kvale advises that research questions can become several interview questions, "thus obtaining rich and varied information by approaching a topic from several angles" (p.

130). This approach was used to generate simple and direct interview questions using the research question and sub-questions as a basis. A list of these interview questions can be found in Appendix A.

Seidman (1998) notes that interviewers may encounter a participant's "outer voice," a guarded presentation that "always presents an awareness of the audience" (p. 63). An interviewer must be prepared to detect an outer voice, and "search for ways to get to the inner voice" (p. 64). This study followed Seidman's recommendations to address this issue, including by recording interviews in their entirety and active note-taking by the researcher, which helped to maintain the flow of conversation by reducing interruptions by the interviewer. Significant statements were recorded in notes, which gave the interviewer a chance to follow up at natural breaks in conversation. The researcher also followed recommendations of Hatch (2002), who maintains that the role of the interviewer requires a deep level of focus on managing the interview session itself. This includes monitoring the overall time of the interview, gauging progress on how well the interview questions are being addressed, and being attuned to the responsiveness of the participant. In order to help bring a sense of closure to interview sessions, each participant was asked if they would like to add to anything that was not addressed by the interview questions.

Hatch (2002) outlines important considerations for interview studies beyond conducting and recording interviews. He recommends that a research log be kept, that "include[s] records of where, when, and whom, and for how long interviews will be held" (p. 114). Throughout the study I kept a research journal to chronicle both my research steps and to reflect on my research experience. The journal contains the research log, notes from each interview, as well as regular reflections on the data. This provided an important foundation for the data analysis stage, as the

"whole idea of making a record of impressions during the process of gathering and processing data is to capture potentially fruitful explanations that can be systematically examined later" (Hatch, 2002, p. 182).

While in the data collection phase, I had the opportunity to confer with my academic supervisor at regular intervals. We were able to discuss some of the obstacles of carrying out research during pandemic times. As well, at one point it was suggested that interview questions evolve to include "the magic wand" question, and therefore in subsequent and follow-up interviews I asked participants to explore the topic of teacher education in universities, and asked them to tell me if they could ["wave a magic wand" and] change anything about a student teacher's practicum process, what it would be. This allowed for more open-ended discussion about the drawbacks participants see in the practicum and their ideas about how it could be improved.

Ten interviews were conducted, lasting between 45 and 90 minutes. All participants were asked if they wished to continue the conversation. Most declined, however this request lead to follow-up interviews with three participants of approximately 30 minutes. No participants withdrew from the study and all expressed appreciation for having been able to take part.

Data Analysis

"The challenge of qualitative analysis lies in making sense of massive amounts of data" (Patton, 2002, p. 432). The interviews with the ten participants comprised the data collection for this study. As the interviews were conducted, the research log was updated and the electronic recordings were organized into the correct sequence as some participants had more than one session. Once this was sorted, the transcription process was undertaken. The audio recordings

were digitally converted to text transcripts, but since there were some errors in voice-to-text results, it became apparent that each interview recording would have to be reviewed against the transcripts. This process to ensure that what appeared on the transcripts was accurate took several weeks.

In reviewing major approaches to qualitative data analysis, Creswell (2013) notes the consensus that it is of value to read through the data in its entirety at the outset. As a novice researcher, I appreciated this direction at the outset of the data analysis phase and in fact, I read the transcripts several times to immerse myself in the data. Creswell (2013) defines memos as "short phrases, ideas, or key concepts that occur to the reader" (p. 183). Following Creswell's descriptions, memos were used to record initial impressions of the data in the margins of the transcripts. These were basic one or two word phrases that stood out over the initial readings that were written into page margins.

At times when reviewing the transcripts, I listened to the recordings as well. There were instances when the inflection of the participants' voices, their cadence, or their responses after thoughtful pauses prompted me to listen and read the passage again. This iterative process of reading, listening, and writing margin memos helped me to create a great familiarity with the whole of the study data.

The reading and memo work was indispensable to coding, which is defined by Creswell as "reducing the data into meaningful segments and assigning names for the segments" (2013, p.180).

Coding qualitative data presents researchers with a number of choices, the most pressing being of which is the nature of the coding categories to be used. For this step I returned to the overarching research question of this study: "What do cooperating teachers expect from their

student teachers?" Because this is an open-ended question, using a predetermined set of codes would not have served the analysis well. Predetermined sets of codes may ultimately limit the views of participants through the analysis process (Creswell, 2013). As a researcher I was seeking to understand the world of lived experience from the point of view of cooperating teachers. Therefore, I chose to use open coding, which would allow me to discover codes that emerged from the data.

Gibbs (2007) writes extensively about levels of coding work done in data analysis. Initial coding is described as being "descriptive", which helps condense and focus text data. The next level is categorical, in which the researcher deliberately moves beyond mere description to seek commonalities with data across interviews. Finally, Gibbs describes a deeper stage of coding he refers to as "analytic". Here the researcher looks for deeper meaning in the text data, making reasoned judgements about different possible interpretations. Creswell (2013) states that this deeper level of analysis, interpretation, "involves abstracting out beyond the codes and themes to the larger meaning of the data" (p.187).

In the study proposal, I had indicated I wished to follow Hatch's (2002) steps in interpretive analysis. As a novice researcher, I looked to established procedures to provide a basis for this study's data analysis stage and, as the study progressed further, additional readings helped to prepare me for the unique challenges presented to qualitative researchers. The data presentation and analysis phases of this study proved to be the most difficult. While I can now state that I was able to accomplish most of what was described in Hatch's steps to interpretive research, the journey through data analysis took me along some different paths.

Bloomberg and Volpe (2012) note the "somewhat mysterious" (p. 172) nature of data analysis, noting a lack of agreed upon rules and conventions in qualitative research. They

propose that researchers need sound judgment and creativity: "because each study is unique, approach is unique as well" (p. 172). This confirmed my decision to use open coding and I ultimately undertook the challenge of finding and interpreting meaning across this study's data, embracing the unknown way in which this meaning would emerge.

As suggested in Hatch (2002), Gibbs (2007), and Creswell (2013), once I had read the transcripts numerous times and created memos in margins, I proceeded to tentatively identify themes. Preserved in the research log are some of my early attempts to see what sort of categories might coalesce out of the data. I used temporary categories, such as "personal feelings on practicum guidelines or expectations," or "subject comments on expectations of other mentor peers." It was apparent even in these early versions that these categories would need to evolve; I noted that two of the categories were "adjacent" and one was merely labelled "yet to be classified." Though I did not necessarily feel great confidence at this stage, I had valuable discussions with my supervisor who encouraged further refinement..

After more attempts to solidify classifications and further reading of the transcripts, I added coloured stickers to transcripts to identify potential codes. Ultimately I created a large poster which plotted the standout memos from the transcripts in a wide grid. Using the same coloured stickers, each standout memo phrase was assessed to see if it aligned within a draft category. By this point some draft category ideas were not supported widely across the data, and were evaluated to see if they could be combined with others. If not, they were discarded, although they would be preserved in the research log. The categories that did last demonstrated commonalities across interviews, suggesting that meaningful findings were emerging from the data.

As there was much concentration on the data and the meaning within, it was no surprise

to see some categories emerge that flowed directly from interview guide questions. For example, each participant was asked about their own experience as a student teacher and naturally there was a cluster of responses on mentors' own formative experiences. I began to distinguish between the clusters that flowed from prompting questions and those that did not. The latter clusters were intriguing as they may have evolved organically from interview discussions and were not necessarily linked to direct questions. With guidance from my study supervisor I was able to follow this process to the data presentation as set out in Chapter Four, and the data analysis and interpretation as set out in Chapter Five.

Trustworthiness

As stated earlier, assumptions about research can include the expectation that research in the field of Education generally uses quantitative methods to reveal objective truth. Qualitative inquiry does not strive for the positivist goals of reliability, validity or generalizability. As such, qualitative researchers need to select strategies to address quality and rigour in their work. This is generally referred to as the "trustworthiness" of a qualitative study (Creswell, 2012; Shenton, 2004). Lincoln and Guba (1985) argue that credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability are concepts that assist researchers in achieving trustworthiness.

As this study employed individual interviews, one of the strategies used to achieve credibility was "member checking." All participants were contacted and offered the chance to review their transcripts to ensure accuracy of data. Perhaps unsurprisingly, many of the practitioner participants declined to review the transcripts in the midst of their busy classroom lives. Two participants did review their transcripts and provided approval. One additional participant chose to review their transcript and returned it to the researcher with clarifying notes in the margins, which prompted an updated version of that interview transcript.

"Transferability" tries to address the notion of a study's application to other situations. In positivism this is known as external validity, "the extent to which a researcher can generalize the results from the study sample to a population and to other settings" (Plano Clark & Creswell, 2014). Shenton (2004) notes the difficulty in applying this concept to qualitative study, as the findings are "specific to a small number of particular environments and individuals" (p. 69). To address this, Shenton recommends that qualitative studies focus on providing "background data to establish context of study and detailed description of phenomenon in question to allow comparisons to be made" (p. 73). Comparing investigations to one another can lead to broader discussions about variations, rather than simply focusing on trying to identify similar findings.

Attending to dependability and confirmability can further address a qualitative study's rigour. This study has included a detailed methodological description, with the idea that the study could be replicated to produce similar results. Having such a detailed description also allows for "integrity of research results to be scrutinised" (Shenton, 2004, p. 73). An audit trail was maintained containing the field notes and researcher reflections at various points in the study.

Delimitations

Because it focused on a small number of individual teachers and their personal understandings, this study chose criterion sampling of active teachers who had mentored at least two student teachers. As such the sample was delimited to active K-12 teachers. Since this is practitioner research, this study required interviewing current teachers. There is a host of stakeholders (school administrators, university facilitators, university faculty) who may shape and guide the practicum experience (Rajuan et al., 2007), but this study focused on examining the perceptions and experiences of cooperating teachers in particular. This was consistent with

the study's goal of investigating the understudied nature of cooperating teachers' expectations for student teachers.

A further delimitation was that study participants must have mentored at least two student teachers. Having multiple experiences as a cooperating teacher meant that participants would not be relying on a single experience.

Limitations

The interviews took place in an urban area in Western Canada, which meant there was a high likelihood that participants and their student teachers had studied at and graduated from the same faculty of education. This may have limited the extent to which the findings are generalizable. As mentioned in prior sections, the COVID-19 pandemic limited the number of school districts that were willing to grant permission for their teachers to participate in this research study. While this meant that participation was concentrated into a smaller sample than was originally hoped for, an effort was made by the researcher to vary participation evenly between elementary and secondary practitioners.

The researcher acknowledges that some of the participants were known to the researcher prior to the study. Bloomberg and Volpe (2012) advise that with such familiarity, researchers need to be aware of tendencies such as participants possibly trying "overly hard to cooperate with the researchers by offering them the responses they perceived the researchers were seeking or might be helpful to them" (p. 127). Throughout the study, the researcher continued to reflect on the interview process to consider how participant reactivity might be influencing participant responses. This included reflections on how to avoid subtle cues such as nodding or verbally agreeing with responses that might encourage participant reactivity. Every effort was made to create an interview environment that was conducive to open dialogue.

As well, participants may have refrained from responding to questions about their social experiences, perceptions and background knowledge about cooperating teaching and student teachers candidly if they felt as though their comments may have cast their school district in a negative light. In order to help address the above, the researcher assured them of confidentiality prior to recording conversations.

A significant limitation on this study was the full-time teaching obligation held by the practitioner researcher. The policy environment of school districts in Alberta is quite varied. Some districts may grant teacher sabbaticals for study, though in others professional study leave is not an item included in the collective agreement. In such a case, as was for this study, it had to be carried out and completed outside of school teaching time.

It is acknowledged my skills as a novice researcher are limited. The work of interviewing, analyzing data, and interpretation are all first time efforts that may fall short of how experienced researchers carry out similar studies.

Research Ethics

This study followed the ethical regulations for the use of human participants in research as laid out by the *Tri-Council Policy Statement: Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans* (2014) and the University of Alberta. The solicitation to participate in the study (see Appendix B) explained the overview of the study, and participants' rights in regards to confidentiality, privacy, and withdrawal from participation. It was made clear that consent would be voluntary and the participant could opt out up to the point of data analysis.. Only participants who provided informed consent were eligible to participate in this study.

The informed consent letter was reviewed together by the participant and researcher before interviews commenced. Each interview was audio recorded and transcribed after the

interviews. The University of Alberta's Research Records Stewardship Guidance Procedure sets out specific responsibilities for researchers in terms of data management. As the primary researcher, it will be my responsibility to retain my records for at least five years from the completion of the doctorate degree. At that point, if the study has not been submitted for a journal publication, the data will be destroyed. Should the paper be successfully submitted for publication, the data will be destroyed five years beyond the date of publication. In conformance with guidelines, participants' real names and any other identifying information, such as place of work, were removed from the transcripts. These files are currently kept on the researcher's password-protected computer and in a locked cabinet.

One ethical challenge that developed in the study emerged through the peer-to-peer aspect of practitioner research. In some instances, participants described interpersonal frustrations they felt when recalling aspects of their mentoring experiences. As a practitioner researcher and teacher, I am also bound by the Code of Conduct of the Alberta Teachers' Association. At times this could create a layer of complexity that might not be found in research led by an academic.

This underscored the researcher's obligation to explain participants' rights, including those of anonymity and the ability to withdraw from the study. Over the course of data collection and beyond, the researcher adhered to the use of participant pseudonyms as well as strict discretion when discussing the study with others.

CHAPTER FOUR: DATA PRESENTATION

The purpose of this study was to explore the expectations held by cooperating teachers for their student teachers. Previous chapters have acknowledged cooperating teachers as important partners in the crucial practicum experience, and various problems stemming from the understudied nature of their expectations for student teachers. For the duration of the study I remained a teacher colleague of interviewed participants. As previously mentioned, while many school districts were solicited for research participants, most declined, citing concerns around COVID-19-related pressures on their teachers. Ultimately, my own school district did allow its teachers to be potential participants. Some of the participants were known to me, and some were recommended to me by the district's coordinator of research.

My determination of participants aligned with the practitioner-research approach. Menter et al. (2016) say that "practitioner research in education is systematic enquiry in an educational setting carried out by someone working in that setting, the outcomes of which are shared with other practitioners" (p. 4). At the conclusion of each interview, each participant was told they would receive a copy of the final study. As well, avenues to share the study outcomes with a wider practitioner audience are planned. This could include professional development sessions, publication in a journal, or informal sharing of the study with teacher colleagues.

This qualitative interview study was based on the following central question: What do cooperating teachers expect from their student teachers in selected K-12 urban schools? Further sub-questions guided the research:

- How do cooperating teachers describe their expectations for student teachers?
- What do cooperating teachers communicate to student teachers about expectations for the teaching practicum?

- In what ways are cooperating teachers' expectations for student teachers shaped and
  formed?

Ten participants who had experience as cooperating teachers were interviewed between April
and July of 2021. While data was being reduced and analyzed, there were follow-ups with
interviews with some participants.

This chapter will present the findings from interviews with experienced mentor teachers
in selected K-12 urban schools. A context of the research as well as a brief profile of each of the
ten participants is provided, using pseudonyms.

Context of Research

The ten participants are active classroom teachers who have mentored at least two student
teachers. The interviews with participants did not involve deep explorations of their particular
school and classroom scenarios. Nor were there specific questions about what years that
participants mentored student teachers. This section will provide a general description of
education in Canada and Alberta, highlighting some of the trends in schools seen in the last
twenty years. Some key challenges will also be explored, which is meant to assist the reader in
understanding broad context in which this study's participants mentor student teachers.

Gambhir et al.'s (2008) overview of education in Canada notes that each individual
province has responsibility for K-12 and post-secondary education, including the development
and supervision of curriculum. There is not a federal ministry of education. At the time of this
study all participants were teaching in K-12 urban schools in Alberta, Canada. Alberta had a
2021 population of 4.2 million (Statistics Canada, 2021), with approximately 650 000 students in
public, separate, francophone, and charter schools. The province is one of three in Canada to

operate separate schools, which provide Roman Catholic instruction through publicly funded schools.

Harvey and Houle (2006) studied demographic trends in Canada and their impact on public education. They found that schools have experienced rapid increases in immigrant families and Aboriginal populations, driving school systems to adapt to meet linguistic, cultural, and racial diversity. Research has found trends indicating less diversity among Canadian teachers than can be found within their student populations, especially in urban school settings. For example, Ryan et al. (2009) state:

>…the data indicate that the proportion of the general population of colour in Canada is much greater than the proportion of racialized elementary and secondary educators and educator counsellors. In other words, there are proportionally many more students of colour than there are educators of colour. More than this, the gap between the groups appears to be widening. (p. 599).

Wotherspoon (2007) acknowledged a need to address this gap for educators and Aboriginal communities. He maintains that teacher preparation in Canada must include a robust understanding of social and cultural learning for Aboriginal students. Alberta updated its teaching certification requirements in 2019 in part to reflect this need. The Teaching Quality Standard now includes in its professional competencies "Applying Foundational Knowledge about First Nations, Métis and Inuit" (Alberta Education, 2022). Preservice teachers in Alberta ITE programs must demonstrate these professional competencies during practicum rounds to be considered for certification.

Another area of diversity which has evolved for students and staff has been that of sexual and gender minorities (SGM). Taylor and Peter (2011) found that SGM

students faced significant levels of harassment, and experienced elevated levels of academic and personal risk in schools. Despite some opposition in a relatively socially conservative province such as Alberta, peer support groups such as gay-straight alliances (GSAs) have been granted legal protection to be formed in schools (Wells, 2018). These changes have affected notions of inclusion in Alberta schools and in preparation of Alberta's preservice teachers.

Organizations such as the Alberta Teachers' Association have advocated for improved education funding models for Alberta schools criticizing large class sizes that do not meet the Alberta Government's class size targets (Alberta Teachers Association, 2019). In the same document the ATA claims that compared to classrooms elsewhere in the world, Alberta classrooms are "twice as likely to include a significant number of students with special needs….and twice as likely to include students learning in a language that is not their mother tongue" (p. 3). In noting that Alberta's education system is world renowned, the ATA argues that member surveys demonstrate that class size, composition, and under-supported special needs place a significant toll on classroom teachers. More recently, the COVID-19 pandemic has presented significant disruption to Alberta schools. While this is not unusual among global jurisdictions, the ATA surveyed member teachers on the impacts of COVID-19 on teaching and learning. The ATA reported that a significant number of teachers surveyed feel that the pandemic has left many students in classes with "significant gaps in their understanding of the curriculum" (Alberta Teachers' Association, 2022).

The preceding section is meant to give the reader a general sense of the context in which participants mentored student teachers. Of the ten participants, five are

primary teachers and five are secondary teachers. The participants are representative of where classroom teachers are typically employed in publicly-funded schools in urban settings in Alberta, Canada.

Cooperating Teacher Participants

The ten study participants were active classroom teachers who had mentored at least two student teachers. At the time of the study they had all been working in K-12 urban schools in Alberta, Canada.

Martha

Martha has taught in secondary schools for over ten years. Her previous teaching experience as well as university training were both out of province. Martha's relocation meant reestablishing her teaching practice in Alberta, and not getting to mentor until later in her career. She has since mentored several student teachers, and enjoys encouraging them to jump in, saying: "…in some ways, I think that the more experience teaching, the better."

Amanda

Amanda has taught in elementary schools for nearly ten years. Both of her parents are retired educators, and she has mentored three student teachers. Amanda values and maintains ongoing relationships with her former student teachers as they are colleagues in her district. As a mentor, she advises her student teacher: "…you are learning just like the kids are learning. And especially in elementary, they are learning through experience."

Henry

Henry has taught junior high for several years and has nearly completed a master's degree. He cites a job in sales from his younger days as inspiration for preparing diligently for daily teaching and enjoys imparting this approach to his student teachers. Henry has served in a

department head role and welcomes student teachers to his physical education classes, hoping to "help them as they join the profession with their competencies and to build resiliency".

Joanna

Joanna is another participant who completed her own student teaching practicum in another province before moving to Alberta. Her teaching experience is primarily in junior high English Language Arts, which she notes comes with expectations for Alberta's grade nine achievement tests. Joanna remarks that "…student teachers are here to learn. Just as I am continuously learning and improving as a teacher, my expectation is that they're doing the same."

Sidney

Sidney is relatively new to Alberta and has been teaching elementary school in her current district for just over five years. She completed university training in Ontario and gained early teaching experience on a reserve in that province. Sidney has mentored fewer than five student teachers, recently having one that withdrew halfway through the practicum. She notes that as a member of the practitioner community "we don't always get to job share or we don't get to work together collaboratively, with student teachers it's always good to get different perspectives on how other people teach."

Charlie

In addition to teaching in both elementary-school divisions, over his career Charlie has pursued a number of other opportunities, such as instructing post-secondary courses and working in development for a tech company. He has worked with five student teachers. Charlie comments on the importance of connecting to his student teachers in saying "…to make them feel

confident, you've got to give them that relationship."

Erica

Erica teaches upper elementary grades and has had experience with specialized emotional and behaviour support programs. She has mentored more than a dozen student teachers. At one point she had taken on the role of school lead on student teachers, which meant she was a liaison to the partner universities. During one of her own student teaching practicum rounds, she felt very unclear about expectations and withdrew before the halfway point. Erica remarks how this affects her current mentor practice, saying "I like talking to them more about how they think they are doing or my impressions of how they are doing, because I don't feel like I got that."

Rebecca

Rebecca has travelled a longer road than most into her elementary teaching career. After working as a lab tech and starting a family she began to volunteer at her children's school. This involvement led to her working as a classroom educational assistant. After this phase she returned to university as a mature student to earn a Bachelor of Education. She has taught for ten years across four schools and has mentored fewer than five student teachers. Rebecca describes her mentoring approach as flexible, saying "…I'm not very strict in what I expect them to do."

Courtney

Courtney also came to Education as a mature student. She entered an after-degree program in Education having already completed a master's degree in English. Courtney has taught in more than ten schools across K-12, and has taught high school English language arts for the last several years. She characterizes her mentoring approach as generous, saying: "I'm going to give them every tool and resource to be successful."

Peyton

Peyton is very familiar with his current high school, as it's the same site where he attended as a student and later completed one of his practicum rounds. He has taught for nearly ten years primarily in the physical sciences. Peyton has mentored fewer than five student teachers; in two instances they shared a practicum assignment with another mentor teacher. He has stepped in as a mentor more often on an emergency basis than by choice, and notes that he has "never actually requested a student teacher".

Findings

The following findings are the results of semi-structured interviews with the ten participants in the study. The interview questions that guided the conversations can be found in Appendix A. While the interview questions provided the basis of interviews, conversations evolved in different directions depending on how participants responded. Once interview recordings were sorted and transcribed, an iterative process was begun that involved comparing transcripts to recordings and checking for accuracy. Participants were provided with the transcripts to review, and in some cases provided clarification of passages. This continual refining of the data allowed me to read through the transcripts several times in their entirety. Following the suggestion of Creswell (2013), I sought to reflect on "larger thoughts presented in the data" (p. 184) and to generate initial categories. This step was also iterative in that I created memos in transcript margins, and created poster maps as to help identify potential themes. The following are themes that emerged from my reflection on the data.

Purpose of practicum

Many participants expressed beliefs about the practicum stage, including how they might view student teacher mentorship conceptually. Some saw the practicum as part of the broader

picture of a teacher's professional development over the course of their career. Amanda, for example, said that she tells her student teachers: "I am still learning, and so just because […] you are done with your practicum or done your education degree does not mean that you are going to be done…this is just a peep hole into it."

Peyton acknowledged that the science courses he teaches are rigorous and demanding, and that this often means teachers feel pressure around pacing, content, and results. Still, he understands that student teachers need opportunities in order to help replenish the profession. He states "…there's going to be future teachers who are going to be teaching these courses, and they need to be able to get some practice." Despite the pressures of his teaching setting, he also sees the practicum as a place student teachers can practice in a safe environment. He recalls a student teacher who followed a great lesson by a flop, and how "….we had to laugh about that. How you can go from so good one day to getting yourself a little turned around the next."

Charlie reflected on his own experience as a student teacher. He shared his impression of the two practicum rounds: "I thought the first practicum was basically to show me what I don't know. And then you go back and you value everything that you learn, and then you try to use it in your final practicum, right?"

Rebecca saw the practicum as an important place of determination for prospective teachers. She said:

> I want student teachers to figure out if teaching is really what they want to do before they
> get to the classroom and think, okay, now I've got my own classroom and all these kids,
> and I really don't want to be here.

Many of the participants were consistent in viewing the practicum as an important and safe place for student teachers to practice teaching and to learn from their mistakes. The more

specific expectations held for student teachers are presented later in this chapter, but this theme

helps to demonstrate factors that brought the participants into the cooperating teacher role.

Motivated to mentor

Cooperating teacher participants all shared thoughts about their reasons to volunteer as

mentors. The decision to host a student teacher is a commitment to open one's classroom to an

unfamiliar pre-service teacher, which requires time, energy, and risk on the part of the

cooperating teacher. Despite these additional obligations on an already demanding profession,

many of the respondents looked forward to the opportunity to mentor student teachers.

Describing herself as a "late starter" Martha said that after having studied and taught in

another province, once settled in her current district she was "really excited" to host a student

teacher.

Amanda expressed appreciation for the energy that student teachers bring to her

classroom. She stated, "…I love student teachers because they are eager, they want to be here."

She went on to comment that the presence of a student teacher is helpful in meeting the needs of

students:

> The amount of support we have been having has just been dwindling year to year since
>
> I've started. If the student teacher is able to be up at the front teaching the whole group,
>
> then I'm able to pull those two to three kids that are really struggling and be actually able
>
> to help them learn the content faster.

Courtney recalls a time she was adjusting to a new teaching assignment after having

moved schools. This was not an ideal time to take on an extra responsibility, but she was

approached by an administrator with a specific request: "The principal came up to my classroom

and personally invited me to take on a student teacher because he was a former English teacher, and he really wanted an English student teacher in the school."

Similarly, Peyton said "I think I'm always happy to take one based on needs." However, he does feel that there are limits relating to the courses that he usually teaches:

> But with Physics 30 and Physics 20 and AP courses, it's difficult to sometimes let the student teachers take those over as you never know what sort of quality you're going to get or how comfortable they are going to be.

In summary, the participants had a variety of positive and negative experiences mentoring student teachers. They shared various motivations for hosting student teachers, with many actively choosing to mentor while in some instances they agree to take one when asked.

Past experience informing present mentoring practice

Each cooperating teacher participant was asked about their own experience as an undergraduate student teacher, which gave them the opportunity to share a great deal about how they themselves had been mentored. Every participant had experienced at least two separate practicum rounds, and in many cases had extremely positive things to say about a particular practicum or mentor. For example, Henry recalled a great sense of encouragement from his cooperating teacher. He said, "…the fact that he knew and believed in me really went a long way in terms of helping to build my foundation as a teacher and helping to build my confidence. He was fantastic."

Similarly, Charlie had high praise for his second cooperating teacher. After a difficult first practicum round where mentor feedback was completely lacking, he commented on the improvement in the second round due to the cooperating teacher's generosity and willingness to collaborate. As Charlie recalled,

He is a lovely, lovely, guy. And he gave me tons of feedback, written down…he gave me

not just management tips, but, you know, you should use this to assess the kids, and go

down the hall to talk to so-and-so because they've got these resources that would be great

for what you are doing.

Most of the participants discussed how aspects of their own experience in student

teaching can inform their own mentor activity and expectations. It was found in the data that

both positive and negative experiences could contribute to how participants describe their current

practice as cooperating teachers.

In describing her own practicum, Sidney recalled feeling daunted by a high-needs student

in her class. She felt out of her depth in trying to manage the student. She recounted, "It was just

scary, I didn't know how to deal with her" and added:

I was just not prepared for it. So that was one of the big reasons I wanted to become a

mentor teacher is to help other people learn that is a possibility, because I don't think our

schooling teaches that, like teachers' college didn't really teach us that.

Charlie spoke about the significant challenges of his first practicum where he did not feel

supported by his cooperating teacher, using the term "atrocious" more than once during the

interview. He drew a direct link between this difficult experience and an evolving inspiration for

how he eventually would want "a practicum to look like when someone came into my

classroom." Charlie summed up his vision for supporting student teachers of his own when he

said:

When I had enough years of experience, I talked about how I wanted to get a student

teacher in here. I want to give them the best experience. I want to have everything nice

and organized for them and get them energized about stuff and help them grow.

Several of the participants discussed how a vivid pre-service teaching experience directly linked to their mentorship techniques. For example, Henry felt marginalized by one of his own mentors. This included not only feelings of abandonment, but social exclusion. Henry said about one cooperating teacher:

He was given some classes to teach, he was not invested in those classes. All the classes didn't like, he basically dumped on me… he never really took the time to get to know me on a personal level. He had his two or three friends in the school that he would go out with at lunch, and I was never invited to be a part of that.

In describing that he learns from negative experiences as well as positive ones, Henry emphasized how this helps inform how he treats student teachers and teacher colleagues. "Building that personal relationship is so, so important," he says. "And you have got to get to know the people you work with on a personal level."

Many of the participants related that as student teacher themselves, they were granted significant room to try new things in the classroom. Erica noted that one of her mentors "was very traditional in her approach, but she was very open and willing to let me try, because obviously I had a different approach. I was a little more inquiry-based even back then." This has impacted Erica's practice in mentoring student teachers. As she reflected further: "…I thought her approach was a really positive approach in that she gave me the freedom to explore my own style of teaching, which is something that I then try to give to my student teachers."

Rebecca recalled a similar sense of freedom afforded to her in her two practicum rounds. She stated: "…I found very positive experiences in both cases and a lot of freedom to explore what I needed to learn as a teacher." This connects to part of her approach as a mentor today. In describing her approach to meeting her student teachers for the first time, she stated that her

greeting partly consists of "I'm here for you, whatever you need. But I am just going to let you explore as well."

Mentor interpretation of guidelines

Like all volunteer mentor teachers, the cooperating teacher participants facilitate field experience practica with a partner university. While there are often layers between the cooperating teacher and the university such as a school liaison, the cooperating teacher has the primary responsibility of overseeing the practicum course for the student teacher.

Participants related ways in which they access and rely on an institution's guidelines to reference for their role as cooperating teachers. University education departments provide guidelines for the role of university liaison, school liaison, cooperating teacher, and student teacher. These detail week-to-week commitments for the various partners in the practicum experience. For example, this often includes required observations, conferences, and teaching load for the student teacher.

Joanna described how she accessed university guidelines prior to hosting a student teacher, noting the information was sent directly to her: "I definitely consulted with the guidelines before. It's kind of like whatever the package that was sent out to me, I read it."

All of the participants commented on the university's guidelines for student teacher's teaching loads, including opinions on how closely the participants follow them in practice. Erica reflected on this when she stated:

 I do look at the weekly guidelines that they give. I don't always adhere to them,

 because if you have a student teacher that is ready to go, then I'm not going to hold them

 back and say, well, you're only supposed to do this during this week.

Henry explained his more individualistic approach to expectations for student teachers. He said that, for him, mentoring is "not a one-size-fits-all type of environment where you can continue to be the same mentor teacher, regardless of the student teacher you get. You do need to adapt and modify." He stated that week-by-week guidelines specifying times do not provide enough flexibility. "That doesn't work," he said.

Along similar lines, Amanda considers a set of weekly guidelines to be somewhat flexible. She stated: "I don't feel bound by it because every learning experience is going to be different, and every student teacher that comes in is going to have different background knowledge."

Courtney described her approach to guidelines by saying, "I've always been fair [when it comes to] the teaching load." She saw the guidelines as a safeguard for the student teacher:

I like to take on student teachers when I have a prep so that there's only ever 75% and you never give them all of the load. I think student teachers have to advocate for what's fair for them and teachers have to be very clear.

There were also participant comments on the importance of university guidelines for making expectations clear to student teachers. Rebecca recalled an instance where she had to address multiple concerns with a student teacher not meeting expectations. As a result, she says her updated routine is to advise incoming student teachers of university guidelines during the initial meeting. For example, she informs them - "You're expected to dress professionally, you're expected to have your lesson plan given to me in the morning."

Charlie spoke at length about relying on the guidelines to help manage expectations for his student teachers. He recounted a time when a student teacher disputed that they had a

responsibility for assessing students. Referring to the guidelines as the "document," Charlie explained how he clarified expectations:

Well I can't just let them teach a hundred percent for two weeks and not have any assessments done out of it. And so let's go back to the document. So this is where it says "Yes, that's part of your student teaching practice, because it's part of normal teaching practice."

Charlie elaborated on the importance of university guidelines when responding to other instances of student teachers questioning their responsibilities:

I will remind them that I didn't write the document, that they can talk with the university facilitator. I'm not getting in between that. And I think it's usually been around the minutes that they need to teach or the percentage that they have to teach. That might be stressful for them, but I'm not getting in the way of following the letter of the law.

Unique and personal expectations for student teachers

As was seen in previous themes, participants brought into the discussions their motivations, beliefs, and experiences of mentoring. The presence of unique and personal expectations held by cooperating teachers was a significant theme to emerge from the data. The participants described duties and commitments that they have communicated to their student teachers that at times overlapped with university guidelines, but in many cases did not.

Part of Henry's advice to his student teachers is about interpersonal goals with school staffs:

I say mingle with staff. If you are friends with the people that you work with and you know them well and you can build relationships with staff, going to work a lot of times doesn't feel like going to work. It feels like you're hanging out with your friends.

Martha described a shortcoming she has seen with student teachers, noting that they can lack self-awareness of what's needed for effective presence in the classroom:

The things that seem so basic, but I've seen so many student teachers that don't have these basic skills of looking up when you're speaking, projecting your voice making eye contact, making sure that you're not speaking to the board, turning around and walking around the room.

In reflecting on how to impart the importance of having "presence" but to provide a chance to practice the necessary skills, Martha hoped there could be an opportunity "like a Toastmasters" available for student teachers.

Several participants commented that they advise their student teachers develop a personal style through practice teaching. Henry shared:

My first couple of student teachers, they would almost try to emulate me because they thought that that's what I was looking for. And I never want to hear my voice in a student teacher because it just doesn't work as a teacher. You might have role model teachers that you try to act like, and it just doesn't work.

Along similar lines, Rebecca expressed this wish for her student teachers: "I want them to develop their own personal style." Rebecca also reminds student teachers that what works for the veteran classroom teacher may not necessarily work for them.

The unique nature of each practicum-partner participant was apparent in their responses. In discussing the university guideline requiring student teachers to provide their cooperating teachers with written lesson plans, Courtney said: "I have never really pushed this as an expectation to have full plans written and shared with me every day."

Sidney related a story about having a particularly shy and withdrawn student teacher. She

shared that the student teacher came from a small town and "you could tell that she didn't have a lot of life experiences." Sidney noticed that this made it difficult for the student teacher to relate to classroom kids, and took a sympathetic approach to her expectations. She said, "And I felt like my heart hurt for her. So my expectations for her weren't as high as the ones I had for another student teacher a year before."

Theory versus practice

As a practitioner interviewing fellow cooperating teachers, I was aware that each participant would be familiar not only with the practicum, but also with initial teacher education programs in university. While interviews did intersect with participants' own experiences in universities, the bulk of conversation was about participants' student teachers, cooperating teachers' impressions of what student teachers learn in university, how relevant that is for the classroom, and how well university teachers are prepared for a practicum in the classroom.

Erica commented on the way that university programs prepare student teachers for creating lesson plans, and had a complimentary view of them, describing lesson plans she had received as: "very in-depth". She noted that while student teachers provide more detailed daily lesson plans than she herself does, she found satisfaction in assisting them with medium and long term planning.

In Henry's view, his impression is that university teacher education misses the mark in the area of educational technology. "By the time a student graduates from university, everything you've learned in those instructional technology classes is obsolete." He acknowledged the rapid pace in which educational tools and products are replaced in schools, and that it is also a challenge for classroom teachers to keep current.

Charlie's teaching work is based in educational technology and online learning, and he had similar comments as to how well prepared pre-service teachers are with technology:

As a tech, I don't find that student teachers being younger and maybe more tech savvy have a better use of tech in education. They might have their iPhone and they might have brought in their personal computer, but that doesn't mean they're good at educational technology. And they're certainly not good at putting away the educational technology when it's not any good.

Participants often described their student teachers as unprepared for the reality of schools. For example, Courtney assessed the general level of preparation student teachers have from university programs as being "disproportionate to what is required in the classroom". She indicated that she had seen deficiencies in student teachers' understanding of grading and curriculum, and she even quantified student teachers as being "about twenty percent prepared" for the classroom.

Joanna summarized her view of university preparation when she said:

There is a feeling that universities provide maybe, like the theoretical and the background, which is great. And that's important. But you're not really living it, you're not testing it until you're in the classroom. And so some student teachers come unprepared because how to do you learn to manage thirty-six twelve-year-olds, right? Unless you do it.

Providing a basis for student teachers

Participants were keen to discuss the resources they provide for their student teachers at the outset of the practicum. This can include a variety of instructional materials that cooperating teachers see as practical applications and strategies in the classroom. Courtney referred to this several times in the interview, choosing to use the term "platform". This includes the school schedule, policies, concepts, and literature for the English course. She went on to describe her "platform" as a flexible start plan for the student teacher, telling them: "These are the books for class. And there will be at least a week that I will let you observe, and you will start writing your lesson plans for one class." She added that "I give them everything I do, and then let them invent." Interestingly, when recounting her own student teaching experience, Courtney also described resources and materials from her cooperating teacher as a "platform."

Henry provides an extensive set of advice and tips to his student teachers. In the interview he shared a comprehensive document that he uses as orientation, and proceeded to explain it in detail. The recommendations he makes to his student teachers include the interpersonal ("Smile and be outgoing, even if that's not your style," "Learning students names…goes a long way in terms of building a relationship, and it's way more effective in terms of classroom management"), ones that relate to work and preparation ("Work now and reap the benefits later," "You should be arriving at least half an hour before the bell,"), and management suggestions ("Keep them busy. Active kids have way less opportunities to be disruptive," "be doing activities with your kids, walking around the classroom…as opposed to just being the sage on the stage that stands in front of them and tries to teach them").

Along similar lines, Charlie spoke of a set of resources for the outset of the practicum that are set aside in a binder: "This is how I set up for my student teachers, so there's that beginning

binder." While other participants spoke of their own unique resources to help orient their student

teachers, only Charlie talked about sharing his with other cooperating teacher peers.

Expectations of teacher peers on fellow mentors

Many of the participants recounted conversations that they had with fellow cooperating

teachers about student teachers. Peer communities can be a prevalent influence in the

expectations for student teachers. For example, Martha said, "Our department is fairly tight knit

so we also give each other advice, wanted or unwanted, about our student teachers." She went on

to say that these teacher colleagues felt she was present in the classroom too frequently with the

student teacher, and that "I need to leave king of thing."

Sidney talked about a student teacher who was "having difficulties with classroom

management." After many suggestions and tips, she remained frustrated with the student

teacher's progress, stating: "I had to step in a few times to try to quiet the class because they

were talking over her. So my expectation of classroom management wasn't being met." Feeling

stymied, Sidney approached her cooperating teacher peers for assistance: "They suggested

different things that I don't do in my classroom."

In Charlie's case, he recounted how yearly requests to host student teachers would

prompt interesting discussions among his teacher colleagues:

Of course, you have that discussion at recess or in the staff room…you always start with

"What was your worst student teachers experience, right? You have to share that, and

also what your best one was. And then talk a little bit about: what are you looking for?

What's the first thing you're going to instill in them when they arrive in your classroom?"

Peyton noted that discussions with cooperating teacher peers can reveal a generational

divide. He noted:

Talking to other mentor teachers in terms of what they've done in the past, frankly,

sometimes can be troublesome because you may be talking to mentor teachers who've

been doing it for twenty, twenty-five years and what they're doing works for them.

In his experience, this may lead to inconsistencies in how closely mentors follow

university guidelines. Peyton noted that for cooperating teachers relying on long-held mentoring

styles may, in practice that may be "not be congruent with what it's supposed to be."

Establishing relationships

Some participants emphasized the importance of forming strong relationships with their

student teachers. Charlie talked about the importance of "building that relationship" and

described how he demonstrates this through generous collaboration:

I often approach these practicums as we are going to peer teach. We are going to do a lot

of things together, and I plan with them together. If you need to add me into the lesson

plans because you want me to do something, I'm not going to sit at my desk the whole

time. I'll be up and around.

Charlie rounded out this explanation and explained that it's important to work well

together, and that this helps to move beyond baseline expectations: "…the relationship is huge in

that you could get away from that kind of scripted minimum of what universities are expecting

and make them and make them feel to comfortable to fail because it's not their classroom."

Amanda frequently alluded to this theme as well, when she stated "…I have built really

strong relationships with two out of my three student teachers." The opportunity to bond with the

third student teacher, she explained, was curtailed when the COVID-19 pandemic ended the

practicum round just three days in. The relationship with her first teacher remains important as

the two are now teacher colleagues in the district. Amanda mentioned how when the pandemic

forced classes into isolation periods: "…I am the first person she called, and I love that. She knows she can call me, she knows she can still use me as a mentor even though she's a practicing teacher."

Henry recalled a profound moment with a student teacher helped him through a personally difficult time. He discussed that his grandfather was not doing well, and had advised the student teacher that he may have to leave the school to be with his family. When he was notified during school hours that his grandfather had passed away, Henry returned to the gym to find that his student teacher was more than capable of assisting in the moment:

> I couldn't believe how he had picked up on being so in tune to other people's emotions and thoughts. I didn't leave him a sub plan. I didn't leave him anything. He just completely took over my class for the next hour without any plans or anything. He just knew that's what I needed at the moment. I couldn't believe it, he really proved to be a student teacher mature beyond his years, and I was so proud of him that day.

Summary

The preceding section presented findings that emerged from semi-structured interviews with ten participants. The overall research question is quite broad, and nearly all findings related to it in some way. The following table presents a brief summary of this study's findings in relation to the sub-questions.

Table 1

Emergent Themes and Research Questions

Research Question	Themes that address question
Overall question: What do cooperating teachers expect from student teachers?	
SQ1: How do cooperating teachers describe their expectations for student teachers?	Past experiences informing present mentoring practice; Mentor interpretations of guidelines, Theory vs. practice; Unique and personal expectations for student teachers
SQ2: What do cooperating teachers communicate to student teachers about expectations for the teaching practicum?	Mentor interpretations of the guidelines; Providing a basis for student teachers; Establishing relationships; Purpose of practicum
SQ3: In what ways are cooperating teachers' expectations for student teachers shaped and formed?	Past experiences informing mentoring practice; Expectations of teacher peers on fellow mentors; Motivated to mentor

Whether at the elementary or secondary teaching level, these cooperating teacher

participants were enthusiastic in discussing sharing their classrooms with student teachers. The

interviews evolved into wide ranges of topics that included insights into how they viewed

classrooms, schools, and universities. The following chapter proceeds from this point by

considering researcher and participant positionalities through a revisiting of the study's

assumptions. This is followed by analysis that connects findings to related teacher education

literature.

CHAPTER FIVE: ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

This qualitative research study into the expectations of cooperating teachers consisted of interviews with ten classroom teacher participants, all of whom had mentored at least two student teachers in select K-12 urban schools. Each participant took part in a semi-structured interview that was approximately one hour in length. The main findings emerging from the data have been presented in the previous chapter.

This qualitative interview study was based on the following central question: What do cooperating teachers expect from their student teachers in selected K-12 urban schools? Further subquestions guided the research:

- How do cooperating teachers describe their expectations for student teachers?

- What do cooperating teachers communicate to student teachers about expectations for the teaching practicum?

- In what ways are cooperating teachers' expectations for student teachers shaped and formed?

This chapter provides analysis and interpretation of the study's findings as well as connections to themes found in related literature on cooperating teachers and their expectations for their student teachers. It is a secondary level of analysis to the study's findings presented in the previous chapter.

Analysis and Interpretation Approach

According to Bloomberg and Volpe (2012), qualitative researchers should invest significant time in reflecting on a study's findings and not rush the interpretation and analysis phase. They encourage patience in order to "peel back all the possible reasons regarding how else a finding can be explained, thereby fleshing out the meanings that underlie each finding" (p.

173). In order to undertake a deeper level of analysis, they suggest researchers ask: "What is happening, and why is it happening? How else can this be explained? What assumptions am I making…what alternative interpretations or explanations might exist for what I see in the data?" (p. 174).

Bloomberg and Volpe (2012) note the "somewhat mysterious" (p. 172) nature of data analysis, noting a lack of agreed-upon rules and conventions in qualitative research. They suggest that researchers need sound judgment and creativity since, "because each study is unique, approach is unique as well" (p. 172). My analysis was also be guided by the advice of Patton (2002) to "fairly represent the data and communicate what the data reveal given the purpose of the study" (p. 432).

The overarching research question in this study is open-ended and exploratory. The findings presented in the last chapter were themes that were found to have emerged from the data. While there was some concentration of responses across individuals, the researcher continued with an inductive approach to search for patterns not merely emerging from the data but from the entirety of the study project itself.

Revisiting Assumptions of Study

Prior to delving into further analysis of the findings, it felt vital to revisit the assumptions and motivations that preceded the data collection phase. As I reviewed the section of the opening chapter that summarized the journey to the research, I found new insights into the study that evolved into the reflections that are presented in this section.

The chosen positionality of practitioner research gave shape to the research topic, purpose, research questions and interview guide. I had not realized the extent to which a practitioner research stance would inform and shape the overall study. As quoted in Chapter

Four, Cochran-Smith et al. (2015) identify distinct research spaces within the teacher education research landscape:

> We found that two relatively segregated research spaces have developed within the landscape of the research in this field, which are the result of profound differences in researchers' purposes and disciplines, the ways they position themselves as insiders or outsiders to the professional teacher education community, the larger agendas to which they align their work, and the extent of available resources and infrastructure that support their research. (p. 117)

Over the early analysis phase, it became clear how much some of these notions had, perhaps subconsciously, become embedded in the development of this research study. Throughout my time in doctoral studies I have struggled at times with the notion of "insider" and "outsider." Remaining a K-12 practitioner has often made me feel as though I am an outsider in academia. Fellow doctoral students were likely to be full time on campus, immersed in their discipline, and driven by aspirations of academic positions. This could easily cause me to feel uncomfortable due to feelings of being inadequate by comparison. I often felt like the outsider on campus, the reciprocal of feeling more of an insider among K-12 practitioners. By remaining a classroom teacher, my experience over this study was far closer to practitioner peers than it was to fellow graduate students.

Completing the data collection and initial analysis phases prompted further reflection and exploration of the notions that I as researcher was located as an insider in the professional teacher community, and that this study took place within an "insider research space." In conducting research as a fellow practitioner and experienced mentor, I was able to enter into ten semi-structured interviews with people who were my colleagues. The interviews were prefaced

with informed consent and supported by the question guide, but much of what followed felt like a frequent occurrence among practitioners: informal conversations concerning teaching and mentoring student teachers. I believe that this helped to create rapport and situate researcher and participants together within the "insider" research space of K-12 practitioners alluded to by Cochran et al. (2015).

In an earlier chapter, I stated: "I have reflected on why mentoring student teachers is important to me. I am part of a collective of mentor peers that participates in the renewal of the profession." It is as a part of this insider collective that I developed and carried out this research study in a practitioner research space. While I had acknowledged this stance earlier, I underestimated the positional frame of the professional teaching community with respect to the study's central question of what cooperating teachers expect from their student teachers. The finding of Cochran-Smith et al. (2015) of "two relatively segregated research spaces" existing in their review of teacher education literature could be describing practitioner and academic research. Using their terminology, the concepts of "insider" and "outsider" provided an important consideration for analysis and interpretation of the data.

The ten participants of this study were experienced cooperating teachers who engaged in semi-structured interviews with the researcher. Hiller (2016) refers to such researcher-participant interactions as "intersubjective," and describes them as the basis for creating knowledge in interpretive epistemology. To help interpret and make sense of this knowledge, I returned to interpretive framework of this study for guidance. Using a pragmatic framework provides a "focus on the outcomes of research – the actions, situation, and consequences of inquiry" (Creswell, 2013, p. 28). The "situation" of this inquiry is a practitioner research space. As previously stated, Menter et al. (2016) define practitioner research as "enquiry in an educational

setting carried out by someone working in that setting, the outcomes of which are shared with other practitioners" (p. 4). The situation and the consequences, therefore, must prioritize choices that best enable this study's outcomes to reach practitioners. It is reasonable to assume that many K-12 practitioners do not engage with academic literature on education, as the divide between schools and universities is well documented in teacher education literature (Ball & Forzani, 2009; Smith & Avetisian, 2011). The implications for this study are that analysis and recommendations should attempt to steer clear of abstract and dense rhetoric that can be found in some academic literature, and instead move towards accessible and applicable findings.

Analytic Category 1: Insider and Outsider Positionality

Themes discussed: Theory versus practice; Providing a basis for student teachers; Expectations of teacher peers on fellow mentors.

The findings suggest that cooperating teachers see themselves as "insiders" of the teaching profession and see the university as comprised of "outsiders," and that this has an impact on their expectations for student teachers. One of the themes of the previous chapter was "Theory versus practice," and in that context I mentioned that several participants had expressed skepticism about the effectiveness of university education's theoretical approaches in ITE programs. These findings are consistent with literature on a general disconnect between K-12 classrooms and universities (Knowles, Cole, & Pressword, 1994; Zeichner, 2010).

In considering the possibility that cooperating teachers contrast their "insider" position in the teacher profession to that of universities as "outsiders," I re-examined the data to see if this interpretation was supported. Going beyond the findings of the previous chapter, it was noticed that participants had subtly described their position in relation to the universities that are responsible for ITE programs. For example, Courtney elaborated on the many challenges facing

student teachers when she said: "…they could remove that negativity and they could involve us more." Referring to the university as "they" suggests a gulf, with Courtney and me on one side, and university on the other. There is an implication by Courtney that by not being involved, K-12 practitioners are excluded in the practicum process as outsiders with little to no say. Courtney's reference to the divide has been identified in teacher education literature calls for more consistent alignment (Darling-Hammond & Oakes, 2021).

Similarly, Peyton commented on the sort of lesson planning he encountered in his own university education and how he did not believe it was realistic in the practice setting:

> I recall this when I had my pre-practicum courses, was that there's really not a lot of pragmatic unit and lesson plan practice. There's a lot of idealistic unit plan, lesson plan practice, but not a lot that really works in terms of day-to-day use. I don't know the last time I've seen teachers' lesson plans that include every single knowledge, skills, and attitude outcome for science and technology.

Though Peyton was criticizing the practicality of lesson planning that he was taught, a significant divide between K-12 practitioners and universities may be inferred from his comments. The disconnection that participants in this study placed between classroom and universities finds support in literature on teacher education. Notably, schools and universities have been described as far apart as being "two worlds" (Feiman-Nemser & Buchmann, 1985). In their review of teacher education literature, Cochran-Smith et al. (2015) identify a set of studies that focused on "dissonance between universities and schools regarding educational goals" (p.111). Participants in this study who have experienced the two-world divide used words like "idealistic," "obsolete," and "irrelevant" to describe the theory-versus-practice disconnect they experience with universities. These responses indicate participant impressions of university

teacher education programs, as they were not asked specific questions about contemporary university program approaches. Participants would also have drawn as their own experience as university students in forming these impressions.

The participants described the ways in which they provided practical and material support for student teachers. A theme from the previous chapter was "Providing a basis for student teachers," a suite of encounters that took place anywhere from the cooperating teacher's first contact with the student teacher to the end of the practicum and even beyond. Most discussion centered on the initial days of the practicum, in which participants described providing their student teachers with calendars, timetables, books, and many sorts of digital resources. For example, one participant said they provided two weeks of lesson and unit plans for incoming student teachers as a transition to their creating their own materials. This collegial sense of support was cited by participants as a way in which cooperating teachers can help initiate student teachers into the work of classroom teachers. This is consistent with the finding of Wang and Odell (2002) that cooperating teachers spend much of the practicum helping student teachers understand the practicalities of the school and classroom. It appears to the researcher that cooperating teachers see themselves as insiders to the profession, and that providing practical supports is an important part of this positionality.

An explanation for cooperating teachers having an orientation towards the practical is that classroom teachers feel pressure to meet demands of pacing, content, and school and district policies. A number of the participants in this study were secondary teachers and described how some of this pressure affected expectations for their student teachers. Martha talked about encountering what she perceived to be a very idealistic approach by her student teacher in a high school class:

Another thing he told me was because he was doing science he learned that every class should be a lab. And I'm like, well, I suppose that's great in theory, but that is so unrealistic. Like, we have way too much content. The program of studies is far too content heavy. You could never also, practically, how will you possibly set up a lab every time?

Martha not only viewed the idea of a daily lab activity as an unattainable goal but also pivoted towards the priorities of pacing and content. This tendency for cooperating teachers to emphasize the practical aspects of classroom teaching has been written about extensively in teacher education literature (Beck & Kosnik, 2000; Rajuan et al. , 2007). Cooperating teacher participants in Moore's (2003) study described beliefs that student teachers must learn to handle management, lesson planning, and pacing as basic skills necessary for the classroom. The emphasis on the practical may support the idea that cooperating teachers see themselves as insiders of the teaching profession. Lemma (1993) and Coulter et al. (2007) conclude that an exclusive focus on the practical aspects of teaching may contrast with reflective approaches found in university programs. If cooperating teachers view themselves as insiders of the profession, their emphasis on the practical may set them in opposition to the outsider influence of universities.

Many of this study's participants recalled conversations they had been a part of with other cooperating teachers. These discussions included exchanging advice, troubleshooting, or opinions on the preparation level of student teachers under their charge. This theme from the findings was titled "Expectation of teacher peers on fellow mentors," and suggests that within collectives of classroom teachers there are communities of cooperating teachers who can influence expectations for student teachers. Martha recalls that cooperating teacher peers are an

important sounding board: "We certainly do chat about student teachers. We sometimes need to vent about them, you know, if they're particularly difficult or non-functioning or whatever, sometimes we do that."

After a trying semester hosing her first student teacher, Erica described how seeing "the student teachers that other mentor teachers had and the positive experience they had" helped in overcoming serious doubts about hosting more student teachers in the future. She had not been sure that she would be up for it again, but discussions among her peers were informative and encouraging. This study's findings show groups of cooperating teachers can function as a beneficial collective for one another, echoing findings in teacher education literature (Darling-Hammond & Oakes, 2021). In the realm of teacher education, this collective can be considered insiders within the profession as compared to the outsiders from the university. Clark et al. (2014) lend support to the notion that in teacher education, cooperating teachers are in a distinct position from universities:

> Furthermore, cooperating teacher participation has been – and continues to be – positioned in relationship to the university, an issue that surfaced in the above analysis. The cornerstone of that relationship is that universities are the final authority with respect to the degree that as awarded to successful student teachers on completion of the program. Underscoring this point, and also noted earlier, classroom teachers who supervise student teachers on practicum are regarded as *cooperating* with the university. (p. 187)

Not all of this study's participants indicated that they participated in discussions with their cooperating teacher peers about student teachers. When faced with difficulties or conflicts

with their student teachers, some participants described scenarios involving the student teaching "triad."

The student teacher, cooperating teacher, and university supervisor are frequently referred to as a "triad" in teacher education literature (Bullough & Draper, 2004). The dynamics of the triad can also influence a cooperating teacher's expectations for their student teacher. For example, Erica's challenging semester of hosting her initial student teacher was a difficult struggle as the student teacher was falling short of expectations. Erica was able to assist the student in finishing the semester, with considerable help and collaboration from the university supervisor. Barahona (2019) notes that the university supervisor roles include facilitation and mediation. On the challenging student teacher, Erica stated: "We had to work really hard to get her through it, and she got through, but it was a lot of work." The student teaching triad can help mitigate issues and provide support for cooperating teachers and student teachers. However, Veal and Rickard (1998) and Tsui and Law (2007) found that a hierarchy can develop in the triadic relationship, often leaving the cooperating teacher in a more passive role.

In summary, the "insider" positionality of participants appears to be an important factor in how cooperating teachers describe their expectations for student teachers. In this study's analysis, the classroom-based work of teacher practitioners informed their expectations of student teachers. Participants did see positive aspects of student teachers' university education, but often regarded it as the outsider position to the profession. The university component of a student teacher's preparation was often perceived by cooperating teachers as being overly theoretical and idealistic, and as such tended to direct their expectations of student teachers towards the practical. This preference of a practical sense of classroom teaching suggests that cooperating teachers experience a need to steer student teachers towards the insider space of

classroom professionals. Participants also spoke of the insider collective of cooperating teachers that can influence the expectations cooperating teachers have for their student teachers.

Analytic Category 2: Cooperating Teachers' Professional Commitment and Mentoring

Themes discussed: Purpose of practicum; Motivated to mentor; Past experience informing present mentoring practice.

This study's findings suggest that cooperating teachers' expectations for student teachers are significantly influenced by their sense of professional commitment. Participants saw themselves as hard working teachers committed to their students and schools. Clark et al. (2014) agree with this, stating: "cooperating teachers are first and foremost teachers of children" (p.185) and observing: "too often this commitment is unacknowledged and represents a significant oversight in conversations with cooperating teachers" (p. 186). All participants had taken on student teachers by choice, and generally described themselves as being enthusiastic about mentoring student teachers. Though there may be circumstances where classroom teachers are assigned student teachers, cooperating teachers generally must voluntarily agree to host student teachers from partnering universities and are crucial partners in ITE programs (Clark et al., 2014).

The semi-structured interviews of this study allowed for participants to discuss their views on the purpose and importance of the practicum stage. Nearly all participants commented on the importance of a student teaching practicum for incoming members of the profession to apply their knowledge and skills. This aligns with literature on ITE, where the practicum is consistently cited as having paramount importance in university teacher education and learning to teach (Caires & Almedia, 2005; Smith & Lev-Ari, 2005). Joanna emphasized her belief in the importance of the practicum when she stated: "…the actual learning how to teach happens when

you're doing your student teaching, right when you're living the experience." Some participants indicated that they view the practicum as part of the career-long span of teacher growth and development, rather than simply a discrete stage. This is consistent with the characterization by Clarke et al. (2014) of teacher education as a "continuum of professional development for teachers as they seek to improve their practice" (p. 163).

Participants also turned inwards when discussing the practicum, seeing it as valuable experience for themselves and their own teaching practice. Reflecting on his own veteran teaching, Peyton spoke of the benefit seeing some of the "different approaches" brought to the classroom by student teachers. He mused, "I feel I've slowly slipped into slightly a more teacher-centered approach." The study findings of Tjeerdsma (1998) similarly point to cooperating teachers seeing the practicum "as a positive experience that caused them to increase reflection on and revitalize their teaching" (p. 214).

Throughout the interviews, participants explored complex feelings on choosing to mentor, as presented in the previous findings section "Motivated to mentor." While participants discussed their choices to mentor in mostly positive terms, there were instances where they expressed hesitancy in working with student teachers in light of their classroom obligations. Outside of hosting a student teacher, a cooperating teacher's classroom is often dominated by their responsibilities to schedules, assessments, course content and pacing, school expectations, and policy environment. Participants demonstrated caution in choosing to host a student teacher with statements like "You never know what sort of quality you're going to get," and "They either don't come in knowing enough of the curriculum or they do know the curriculum." This is echoed by the description by Clark et al. (2014) of the dilemma to mentor: "Their desire to foster the next generation of teachers is in tension with their commitment to their pupils" (p. 186).

When a cooperating teacher opens their classroom space to a student teacher, tension and even displacement may be felt by the cooperating teacher. Bullough and Draper (2004) found that cooperating teachers felt difficulty in navigating self-as-teacher and the student-as-teacher over the practicum. Some participants in this study described feeling conflicted negotiating this space. For example, Sidney described a situation where she articulated clear directions to a student teacher struggling with classroom management. When the student teacher did not incorporate the directions, Sidney found herself questioning her subsequent decision to intervene with her class: "Unfortunately, I had to step in a few times to try to quiet the class because they were just talking over her." Seeing how Sidney characterized this intervention as "unfortunate," it is reasonable to infer that she would have preferred not to step in. She went on to describe further efforts to prompt the student teacher into trying different class attention strategies but was stymied, stating: "She wouldn't take the time to research it herself or get to understand it herself. And I don't understand why." While Sidney was trying her best to mentor, it was evident that she felt a strong professional commitment to her own classroom. Implicit in this scenario is that the classroom is an opportunity for a student teacher to practice, but the latitude to practice can be limited by the cooperating teacher's commitment to their classroom. This hierarchy may be explained by the pressures felt by classroom teachers, who work in environments "where policies emphasize student test scores, scripted teaching, and prescribed course content and instructional pacing and where teachers are given little support for collaboration and inquiry" (Cochran-Smith et al., 2014, p. 113).

Even subtly, a cooperating teacher's expectations for student teachers can bend towards a more conservative school culture as the cooperating teacher feels pressure. For example, Martha's student teacher approached chemistry with a short section of direct instruction followed

by extended periods of student work and collaboration. She described how the initial skill would be taught "in maybe twenty minutes. And then he would give them an hour to practice this skill… An hour was way too much time, and then he would end up getting upset. They weren't working." Martha would go on to coach the student teacher towards a faster pace of content. A generation ago, Zeichner and Tabachnick (1981) wrote about schools having a similar effect in conventionalizing approaches that student teachers may be bringing from campus. They found that progressive approaches would often not be sustainable as student teacher attitudes tended to "show a regression…towards more traditional viewpoints either during student teaching or during the first year of teaching" (p. 7). Even if not consciously aware, cooperating teacher expectations for student teachers are likely affected by the traditional school milieus where school-based practica are held. Voss and Kunter (2020) reported similar findings, reporting beginning teachers can lose enthusiasm for new teaching approaches in the emotional exhaustion of early years of teaching.

Despite the tensions and balancing act with their own school and classroom commitments, this study's participants expressed great enthusiasm about choosing to mentor. For example, Charlie expressed a desire for close collaboration with his student teachers when he stated: "I approach these practicums as though we're going to peer teach. We're going to do a lot of things together." The invitational model of collaboration could be what Sudzina et al. (1997) described as "mentoring as a shared enterprise between the cooperating teacher and the student teacher" (p. 25). Study participants saw mentoring not only as beneficial and collaborative, but important to the profession itself. Participants used terms such as "important", "opportunity", "future teachers", and even "duty" to describe motivations for requesting student teachers. In

speaking about her sense of responsibility to mentor student teachers, Martha stated: "I feel like it's sort of your duty as a teacher to do that, like someone did it for me."

Closely related to "motivations to mentor" was a section in the findings entitled: "Past experience informing present mentoring practice." This study's participants all said that their own student teaching experience connected with their approach to hosting a student teacher. Past experience was often intertwined with a participant's motivation to mentor in that they either wished to redress a negative experience or were inspired by a positive experience.

Over the study interviews it was not uncommon to hear a participant recount very negative experiences that they themselves had had as a student teacher. This could range from disappointment in the lack of engagement with the cooperating teacher to a feeling of abandonment and ostracization. Courtney recalled very limited interaction with her cooperating teacher. She stated: "I might have observed for two days. And I then I was thrown in English 20 and ESL. I think it was English 10 and it was a full load. I was on my own." Clark et al. (2014) describe a similar conception of mentoring that is characterized as "a minimal level of participation by the cooperating teacher" (p. 166). This assumes a student teacher is ready to take over a classroom and "immediately exchanges places with the cooperating teacher who then exits to the staffroom for the remainder of the practicum" (p. 167). With this formative experience in her past, Courtney spoke of how others in the school stepped in to help her with useful tips, and how she now on passes similar tips to the student teachers she mentors. As discussed in the previous chapters, participants also drew on very positive experiences they'd had as student teachers and hoped that as mentors they could pay the experience forward.

Another significant area of past experience was the participants' past experiences as cooperating teachers. Once again, an array of both positive and negative experiences was

apparent across participant responses. Henry regularly requests student teachers, and commented on the successful experiences, stating: "…I've won the student teacher lottery. I've been very, very fortunate." Henry's description of fulfilment he gets from being a cooperating teacher is consistent with Koskela and Ganser's (1998) findings that student teachers enhance the classroom.

In contrast, the first student teacher paired with Erica provided a significant challenge. She described the double burden of her own classroom responsibilities compounded with helping a struggling student teacher to complete the practicum round. This left her exhausted and quite unsure if she would be willing to request student teachers in the future. The findings of Sinclair et al. (2006) concur that negative experiences in mentoring can dissuade cooperating teachers from taking on student teachers again. Erica described a progression over the practicum round with this first student teacher. In the early stages the student teacher was showing up moments before opening bell, not leaving enough time to complete preparations for the day. While this grew to be a problem, the response was slow and required repeated interventions that included the university supervisor's involvement. Erica ultimately showed a degree of leniency and understanding in her expectations with this student teacher. She explained her motivation for modifying expectations: "I certainly didn't want to fail my first ever student teacher."

This study's findings suggest that cooperating teachers' expectations for student teachers are influenced by their sense of commitment to their profession, schools and classrooms. Participants were generally enthusiastic to volunteer as cooperating teachers, and were in agreement with literature citing the practicum as a critical component of teacher education and development (Orland-Barak & Wang, 2021). Their motivations to mentor were complex, acknowledging potential pitfalls but also rewards in choosing to request a student teacher.

Participants described allowing autonomy for their student teachers to practice and grow, which can lead to a dilemma of intervention if classroom needs are not being met. Within the classroom this could mean maintaining order and flow of instruction, consistent lesson preparation, and carrying out assessment of student learning. The dilemma of intervention articulated by some participants may be explained by the overarching pressure classroom teachers face in traditional school environments and by extension may influence cooperating teachers' expectations for student teachers to be more conservative. By way of their own experiences as student teachers, this study's participants were inspired to carry forward good experiences they had had, or to redress negative ones. As a result, most participants expressed the notion that flexible expectations were important in their current mentoring practices.

Analytic Category 3: Recognizing the Idiosyncratic Nature of Cooperating Teachers

Themes discussed: Mentor interpretation of guidelines; Unique and personal expectations for student teachers; Establishing relationships.

This study was guided by exploration of the overarching question: "What do cooperating teachers expect from their student teachers?" The interview process, analysis of data, and reflection on findings suggested to the researcher that cooperating teachers are often individual actors with idiosyncratic expectations for their student teachers. One section of findings that illustrated these individualist tendencies was titled "Mentor interpretation of guidelines". Guidelines for a student teaching practicum are generally provided by universities, and set out standards in a number of areas for the student teacher: teaching and supervision load, lesson planning, student assessments. The guidelines may also specify areas such as professional dress, written reflections, and extra-curricular obligations.

Participants in this study generally responded in one of two ways when asked about university guidelines. One smaller cluster stated that they follow the guidelines closely, and can rely on them to ensure that student teachers are meeting basic standards. However, most participants indicated how they regard guidelines with at least some degree of flexibility. Participants in this study who used phrases such as: "don't always adhere", "don't feel bound", and "not a one-size-fits-all" to describe how they may adapt and modify university guidelines for the practicum. One explanation for this may be the context of the classroom for newly arrived student teachers. Clark et al. (2014) characterize the practicum as "multifaceted and often overwhelming for most student teachers" (p. 179). They add that as a result of this potentially difficult context, cooperating teachers may use professional judgement to modify the practicum:

> Cooperating teachers have an important role in managing that context and introducing student teachers to the readily apparent as well as the often hidden dimensions of teaching as appropriate to and in light of a student teacher's stage of readiness. (p. 179)

In managing this context, cooperating teachers have considerable say in the amount of teaching that a student teacher will take on over the practicum. When asked about instances in which student teachers ran into difficulty, participants cited lack of preparation, tardiness, and ineffective classroom practices as worrying indicators. In order to help student teachers get back on track, participants noted that at times they have modified and adapted guidelines. Sidney spoke of "differentiation" for a student teacher she mentored who was having a hard time in the practicum. She indicated that she can show leniency based on the circumstances of individuals, and that expectations "vary for each student teacher."

A possible explanation for the variance of expectations between mentor teachers is the presence of teacher isolation in schools. Lortie (1975) noted that teachers have very limited

opportunities to interact and observe each other teaching, most of the day is spent working in a classroom with their students. Teachers have autonomy in their classroom, and by extension have a great deal of decision-making power over the student teacher's practicum. While cooperating teachers would see the same practicum guidelines from the university, there is no guarantee that each individual teacher would read and interpret them in the same way. Though a large number of this study's participants expressed flexibility, there were instances where guidelines were strictly adhered to. Zeichner (1990) notes that one obstacle to student teachers' learning is that a dominant view of the practicum as an unstructured and unmediated apprenticeship, lending support to a notion that standard guidelines will be interpreted and applied unequally by different cooperating teachers.

Loughran (1996) notes that the work of cooperating teachers is complex and unique, and it follows that this will be reflected in mentors expectations for student teachers. Going beyond the guidelines set out by universities, another section of this study's findings was titled: "Unique and personal expectations for student teachers." These findings represent what participants shared when asked what expectations they may communicate that go beyond the parameters of university guidelines. Given that participants teach alone in mostly isolated settings and have limited collaboration, it was not unexpected for individuals to hold some unique and personal expectations for their student teachers.

Among the findings was participant emphasis on interpersonal skills with teaching colleagues, making eye contact and using clear speech, and the encouragement for student teachers to develop their own teaching styles. The hope of respondents that student teachers can develop specific interpersonal skills may be explained in part by Zeichner's (1990) conceptions of practicum tensions and issues, noting the absence of an explicit curriculum for the practicum.

This suggests that aside from university guidelines and the classroom and school context, there is considerable space for the cooperating teacher to share unique expectations, attitudes, and beliefs with the student teacher. By expressing how "soft skills" such as eye contact and clear speech as being important, cooperating teachers demonstrate what they personally feel is important for successful classroom practice. This can manifest into expectations for student teachers, by way of guidance and coaching.

From the findings section, Martha's comments about student teachers lacking self-awareness and needing soft skills seemed to indicate these issues would be part of her guidance and coaching focus during the practicum. However, a deeper examination of the data indicated this concern was in context of how she envisioned ways to improve the practicum for all student teachers, rather than just those she was mentoring: she felt that a "Toastmasters" type of soft skills training program was something "student teachers need to be taught" to become engaging practitioners. It is reasonable to infer that she saw these skills as ones that should be learned prior to the student teacher beginning the practicum, meaning it would need to be the responsibility of the university or individual student teacher. The uncertainty of where this training would fit into expectations for a student teacher recalls Zeichner description of causes of practicum tensions (1990): lack of explicit curriculum, view of practicum as unmediated and unstructured, and discrepancies about the role cooperating teachers play. It is difficult to imagine a cooperating teacher discussing a student teacher's need for improvement in soft skills or attributes with that individual, particularly as these would not be plainly evident in university guidelines. This dilemma recalls Zeichner's (1990) observation that tough conversations between cooperating teachers and student teachers can prove to be elusive. Haggarty (1995) notes that as the space of a practicum tension is so difficult to navigate that these difficult conversations can be masked by

excessive politeness and cooperating teacher engagement with their student teachers becomes

increasingly reserved. It appears while that cooperating teachers may hold complex and personal

expectations for their student teachers, many of these expectations may be unstated or remain

unaddressed, and can contribute to tensions.

If cooperating teachers hold expectations that student teachers will arrive prepared to

perform above the baseline of university guidelines and school polices, it is possible that this is

based on more implicit expectations that are not always stated outright. Woods and Weasmer

(2003) found that when entering a school a student teacher will encounter school culture, attire,

vocabulary, temperaments, and student and staff interactions that may serve as subtle

expectations for the practicum. While much of these can be implied or not mentioned, some of

the participants discussed how they clarify some of these expectations. For example, Rebecca

described needing to overtly address attire with a student teacher in athletic wear that was

inappropriate for the classroom. This affected Rebecca's mentoring practice going forward; she

remarked that the dress code incident created the need to be far more explicit with expectations

from the outset of meeting a student teacher. "And is that sort of the first and only time I've ever

had that experience. But going forth now, I set everything up on the first date."

Some participants described what they deemed to be important requisites for their student

teachers. Joanna stated: "Because I am a language arts teacher I expect them to be a

reader….with a novel, I expect them to have it read before they come. That's something I make

clear when they send me their first email." In all likelihood, this would have been one of the first

expectations that the student teacher encountered beyond the university guidelines. While the

advance reading is a fairly straightforward task, expecting them "to be a reader" suggests a

desired trait or attribute in student teachers. When participants were asked about what sorts of

attributes are best for potential success of student teachers, they used phrases such as: "showing initiative," "managing time," "being organized," and "being interactive with students." These suggest habits, abilities, or even ways of being that may not easily be categorized in expectations or guidelines. Such desired attributes will be of different importance to each cooperating teacher, who in turn will each have their own ways of communicating with student teachers. Depending on a cooperating teacher's beliefs, they may not have confidence that these attributes can be communicated or even learned. For example, Rebecca stated: "…a lot of times it comes down to the personality of the student teacher, whether they're just made to be a teacher or whether they are sort of in education because it was an easy degree, I don't know." Cooperating teachers may expect student teachers to meet a level of commitment equal to that of a full time classroom practitioner. Some participants referred to needing more from student teachers in terms of time spent and engagement. For example, Sidney spoke of student teachers "needing to not just do the bare minimum and to try…to push yourself to take that initiative." The tensions between cooperating teachers and their student teachers over expectations, whether explicit or implicit, create the potential to provide sizable challenges to their relationships.

One of the study's findings that lends itself to recognizing the idiosyncratic nature of cooperating teachers is nature of the relationships participants' establish with their student teachers. The unique relationship dynamics formed over a practicum have an impact on what cooperating teachers expect from the student teachers. This study's interview question guide did not specifically ask respondents about their relationships with student teachers, but some conversations with respondents evolved to include descriptions of their relationships with student teachers.

The participants of this study are committed classroom teachers and articulated that they wished success for their student teachers. Schools are dynamic environments in which conflict and disagreement among teachers, administrators, other school staff and even parents is not uncommon (Achinstein, 2002). Incorporating student teachers into this milieu can certainly add to this interpersonal complexity. Much of this chapter as well as the previous one has explored tensions and disagreements that participants shared concerning their student teachers. White and Forgasz (2016) note the challenging terrain that can face practicum partners, observing that student teachers can "struggle to develop productive learning relationships with their cooperating teachers" (p. 240). Rajuan et al. (2007) concur with the importance of a functional cooperating teacher and student teacher relationship, noting that conflicting expectations can contribute to this discord.

Interviews with participants did not directly address strained relationships with student teachers. However, it is reasonable to consider that discussions involving conflict over expectations did indirectly explore the times when relationships with student teachers became difficult. Rebecca had a set of particularly challenging moments with a student teacher. She described a significant amount of resistance starting on one of the first days of the practicum: "I asked her if she wanted to read a story to the kids, and her response was 'No, I'm busy!' I was taken aback because I didn't think anybody would say no." Rebecca had expected this to be a rhetorical question, as she had assumed the student teacher would be up for involvement in the classroom. "And so from then on, it was a let's see how we're going to approach the situation. I think it was the next day that she told me that I was doing everything wrong in the classroom…" Rebecca's predicament calls to mind similar findings from Hastings (2006), who reported problem behaviours that can occur with student teachers, including: ignoring directions,

arrogance, immaturity, stubbornness, rejection of support, and lack of cooperation with the

mentor. It is reasonable to assume that this type of behaviour can strain the relationship with the

cooperating teacher, who it has been established is primarily concerned with ensuring their own

classroom responsibilities are met. Hastings (2006) also describes that in addition to the

immediate stress of a fractured relationship with a student teacher, cooperating teachers tend to

experience a student teacher's struggles as their own, significantly adding to an emotional toll.

Despite the risks of interpersonal difficulties, the conversations with participants revealed

that they seek to build positive relationships with student teachers. Amanda frequently stated that

forming strong relationships with her student teachers was a priority. For other participants, the

term "relationship" was not used as frequently. However, their descriptions of seeking to create a

safe and trusting environment for the student teacher to practice teach can be considered an

important part of establishing a positive relationship. Indicating that the practicum is a place to

learn through failures was one of these ways for Peyton, who described a tough moment for his

student teacher: "…the next day of his own admission his lesson flopped and we had to laugh

about that." Sidney had a similar scenario with one of her student teachers. She described:

"When she came in one of her lesson plans flopped. She owned it. We had a conversation after,

and she said, 'It didn't work out, and it was hard!' But I figured we could go off of that and make

it a win for her."

The participants were not asked about their familiarity with teacher education literature.

However, much of what they spoke of in terms of striving to create a positive relationship with

their student teachers can be connected to what literature states is important for student teacher

success. The creation of a space where student teachers have the latitude to try a lesson or

technique that might fail is seen as significant by Graham (2006), who cites "a strong

relationship and a sense of empathy" (p. 1124) between cooperating teacher and student teacher as key to a student teacher's professional growth. Ferrier-Kerr (2009) found that the most important factors in developing positive relationships with student teachers are personal connectedness, willingness to collaborate and reflect, styles of supervision, and role interpretations. As it is unlikely that many cooperating teachers are familiar with teacher education literature on mentoring, it must be considered that cooperating teachers approach mentoring in unique ways that may vary greatly. In other words, the idiosyncrasies of individual cooperating teachers suggests that in any given practicum round the expectations for a student teachers can vary significantly depending on with whom they are partnered.

This study's findings suggest that cooperating teachers are individual actors with idiosyncratic expectations for student teachers. Participants expressed varying degrees of adherence to university guidelines in their mentoring practice, with some preferring to differentiate expectations based on particular student teachers. Cooperating teachers work in largely relatively isolated circumstances with little chance to collaborate with peers and may develop unique and personal expectations for student teachers that go beyond basic guidelines. Tensions can arise when cooperating teachers expect student teachers to have soft skills or attributes that are more difficult to articulate. This can impede communication and strain the relationship between cooperating and student teacher. While relationship is a key component of a cooperating teacher's work with a student teacher, the practice, beliefs, and expectations of each mentor can vary greatly.

Discussion on Research Questions

This chapter has presented interpretations of this study's findings as well as connections to themes found in related literature on cooperating teachers and their expectations for student

teachers. The analysis was guided by a pragmatic approach as well as the researcher's

practitioner positionality. The main research question that framed the study was "What do

cooperating teachers expect from their student teachers?" Three sub-questions that further guided

the study are (1) How do cooperating teachers describe their expectations for student teachers?

(2) What do cooperating teachers communicate to student teachers about expectations for the

teaching practicum? (3) In what ways are cooperating teachers' expectations for student teachers

shaped and formed?

How do cooperating teachers describe their expectations for student teachers?

The findings suggest that the perceived divide between theory and practice is a

significant factor in participant descriptions of their expectations for student teachers.

Participants described the university as a place of theory and schools as places to apply this

theory and acquire skills. It occurred to me that practitioners may want to seek connection with

practice and not theory, viewing the latter as an antiquity of their undergraduate education. Upon

further reflection, I wondered how I as practitioner researcher may have affected this. Peer-to-

peer communication may have felt more natural, less structured, and less formal in this study's

interviews than if they were speaking with campus-based academic researchers. The notion that

classroom teachers see themselves as "insiders" speaking with a fellow insider could certainly

have influenced the opinions participants were comfortable sharing in this study.

I felt a sense of satisfaction in being able to connect with peers, and I believe that they

were pleased to be asked about aspects of their professional teaching lives – which undoubtedly

is a rare occurrence. The participants spoke of unique and personal expectations they hold for

student teachers, as well as some of the subjective ways in which they interpret practicum

guidelines. Through busy days and in isolated classroom spaces, it is understandable that

teachers develop individualistic conceptions and expectations for student teachers. These participants must rapidly adapt to dynamic situations, tailor instruction and assessments for diverse learners, and make reasoned judgements to solve problems as they arise. These habits may influence cooperating teachers to view mentoring in a similar way – another facet of classroom instruction that depends on quick, decisive, and self-generated ideas and actions. Perhaps hosting a student teacher can be seen as another duty to manage with limited time and resources, considering classroom teachers' daily routines are rooted in self-reliant decisions and actions. This may be consistent with Zeichner's (1990) warning that school partners can often be left to their own devices when hosting student teachers. As a result, cooperating teachers can rely on past experience for guidance, and develop unique and flexible expectations for student teachers.

What do cooperating teachers communicate to student teachers about expectations for the teaching practicum?

The findings suggest that study participants, immersed in the demands and structures of schools, have a "here and now" approach. Participants in this study acknowledge that meeting curricular outcomes in a timely manner remains a top priority, and as result their coaching of student teachers tends to reflect this goal. As noted earlier in this chapter, this can be explained by mentor teachers' sense of professional commitment and responsibility. This was frequently mentioned by secondary grade level participants, who mentioned the pressure in their schools and departments to not fall behind in their pacing. The notion that cooperating teachers focus on a student teacher's performance and lean towards conservative and traditional approaches was previously noted by Feiman-Nemser and Parker (1993).

Perhaps unsurprisingly, the sort of practical and material support offered to student

teachers by participants resembles the generational-old basic expectations of cooperating

teachers as previously mentioned by Grimmett and Ratzlaff (1985):

     1. Provide the student teacher with basic orientation to the school

     2. Ensure the student teacher has all needed source material such as textbooks

     3. Involve the student teacher with planning and evaluation

     4. Hold regular conferences with the student teacher

     5. Evaluate the progress of the student teacher with observation and feedback

With respect to the first three items, participants in this study described how these were regular

features of their orientation routines with student teachers. This suggests that cooperating

teachers' understanding of their own roles has not changed significantly in over a generation. An

explanation for this may come from broad view of this study: it is possible that practitioner

research into cooperating teachers' expectations for student teachers mirrors the wider divide

between ITE programs and schools. This study's discussions did not develop into exploring how

university teachers education programs may have since evolved.

This study's interviews with participants did not strongly intersect with issues of equity

among teachers or students in school. While one participant did speak about the importance of

inclusive programing, it had to do specific with the learner profile of her elementary classroom.

The Context of Research as presented in Chapter Four identified contemporary issues in schools

such as a gap in Aboriginal representation among staff, the need for Alberta teachers to develop

social and cultural learning for Aboriginal students, and supporting sexual and gender minorities

in schools. It is difficult to say why these issues of equity did not come up with participants, but

their absence is noteworthy. University based ITE programs have made great efforts to prepare

teacher candidates in these areas, but this study suggests that the issues may not be front of mind

for cooperating teachers. While university graduates may enter schools better equipped in these areas, Alberta does not require classroom teachers to be re-certified once a permanent teaching certificate has been granted.

In what ways are cooperating teachers' expectations for student teachers shaped and formed?

The findings suggest that expectations cooperating teachers and students hold for student teachers are influenced by cooperating teacher peers within the school. While participants acknowledged that they access university guidelines for guidance, they were also drawn to peers for advice on how to approach mentoring. Participants also referred to the influence of administrators, who can encourage teachers to take on the responsibility of mentoring. It has been established that teachers and schools are relatively disconnected with universities, and that schools are predominantly concerned with a practical emphasis on classroom matters. The idea that the school influence is more powerful than that of universities is supported by the previously noted claim by Zeichner and Tabachnick (1981) that schools are conservative sites that tend to resist change. The findings in this study support the notion that schools are largely a closed feedback loop, in which cooperating teachers learn conventional expectations for student teachers in part from other cooperating teachers within the school. This can make them relatively immune to attempts by universities to inform mentoring practices.

The participants' own experiences as practicum students played a more significant role in shaping and forming the expectations they hold as cooperating teachers. As noted earlier in this chapter, cooperating teacher peers may influence a participant's expectations. However, participants at times did not rely on peers or instead were influenced by the university supervisor. A participant's own practicum experience is a factor that influences each teacher and by extension every cooperating teacher. Each and every practitioner must complete the practicum

phase on the way to earning professional certification. As this phase is universal, it is reasonable to assume that a cooperating teacher's own practicum influences the way they go on to mentor student teachers of their own. Though they were asked a general question about their own practicum rounds, each participant connected these past experiences to the way that they mentor student teachers in the present.

Summary

This analysis was organized into three major sections: Insider and Outsider Positionality, Cooperating Teachers' Professional Commitment and Mentoring, and Recognizing the Idiosyncratic Nature of Cooperating Teachers. These all developed from reflection on the study's findings and represent larger themes that were shown to be consistent with teacher education literature. This was followed by a review of the research sub-questions in relation to the findings and analysis.

As a novice researcher, I endeavoured to explore my positionality and make it clear to the reader how it informed my intuition and analysis. Similar to identifying findings in the data analysis stage, this was an iterative process that took a great deal reading and reflection. It is hoped this analysis provides a holistic synthesis for readers.

The researcher acknowledges that as is common in qualitative research, there is potential bias involved in the researcher's central role. Additionally, it is acknowledged that some of the study participants were known to the researcher prior to the study. As previously stated in Chapter Three, efforts were made to continually reflect on the role of researcher-as-instrument and to try and limit the effects of participant reactivity.

The final chapter will introduce the conclusions of this qualitative research study. Implications of the conclusions for partners in the practicum will be presented and

recommendations for various stakeholders will suggest ways in which cooperating teachers

voices can be better heard and supported than is currently the case.

CHAPTER SIX: CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The purpose of this study was to explore the expectations held by cooperating teachers for their student teachers. This qualitative research study consisted of interviews with ten classroom teacher participants, all of whom had mentored at least two student teachers in select K-12 urban schools. Each participant took part in a semi-structured interview that was approximately one hour in length. The analysis and discussion of the findings was presented in the previous chapter.

As has been noted, the overarching research question was open-ended and exploratory. Careful reflection on the findings and analysis were necessary to arrive at conclusions that are trustworthy and consistent. The conclusions of this research study are presented in four main areas: idiosyncratic expectations in schools; relational effect on expectations; the school emphasis on the practical; and, cooperating teachers' own experiences and cycle of approaches.

Conclusions

Idiosyncratic Expectations in Schools

A major finding of this research study is that cooperating teachers' expectations for student teachers are unique and personal and accompany subjective interpretations and applications of university guidelines. A conclusion to be drawn from this finding is that university guidelines alone are not sufficient to prepare student teachers for the expectations they will encounter in school-based practicum rounds. Participants described their own expectations in ways that suggest that successful student teachers need to go above and beyond what universities set out in their guidelines. While some participants indicated that they inform student teachers of university guidelines at the outset of the of the practicum, this was not always the case.

Although there have been efforts to strengthen ties between schools and universities (Darling-Hammond & Oakes, 2021), the expectations of cooperating teachers for student teachers can vary widely. It follows that the expectations that student teachers may face during a practicum experience may be difficult to predict and to prepare for. Education faculties at universities rely on partnerships with school divisions, schools, and volunteer cooperating teachers to be reliable partners in hosting student teachers. With very large numbers of student teachers headed to the field from universities, it is important to acknowledge that the expectations of cooperating teachers will vary as widely as do the school and classroom contexts. As noted by Zeichner (1990), teacher education can often be treated as a self-evident activity for partners involved, and this can leave student teachers facing uncertainty as they grapple with cooperating teachers' expectations in practicum rounds.

Relational Effects on Expectations

A second major finding was that participants indicated that the relationship between the cooperating and the student teacher was a key factor in understanding cooperating teachers' expectations. Most cooperating teachers in this study spoke about the importance of establishing and maintaining a positive relationship with student teachers. However, the intricacies of interpersonal relationships can mean that a thorny relationship can have significant effects on the expectations cooperating teacher hold for student teachers. A conclusion to be drawn from this finding is that addressing the important relational dimension is a gap in current practicum preparation.

As discussed in prior sections of the study, the preparation of student teacher candidates tends to be inconsistent across universities (Cochran-Smith & Villegas, 2015), but in any case an emphasis on the relational dimension between student teacher and cooperating teacher is unlikely

to feature into a student teacher's preparation for practicum rounds. Traditional models of classroom teaching imply one-way interaction, while more contemporary models can see teaching and learning as more cooperative, described by Brownlee (2014) as "a relational approach" (p. 4). That term generally refers to the classroom relationship between teacher and student, not necessarily between student teacher and cooperating teacher.

The practicum itself may possibly include prompts to consider the relational dimension, but that may depend entirely upon suggestions by cooperating teachers, university supervisors, or other staff within the school setting. There is also the possibility that the relational dimension is not addressed by anyone, potentially leaving practicum partners to negotiate tensions with uncertainty and frustration.

In considering the notion that universities do address the relational dimension as they prepare student teachers for a practicum, this is difficult to know and would be an interesting potential area for future research . University-based teacher educators may or may not have K-12 classroom experience themselves, and as has been established in the literature review there can be great variability across universities in their overall program approaches, much less how they prepare student teachers for their practicum.

The School Emphasis on The Practical

The study's third major finding is that cooperating teachers' expectations for student teachers are affected by the practical orientation of schools and may be disconnected with university theories, goals and expectations. A conclusion from this finding is that since cooperating teachers are immersed in the reality of schools, their expectations of student teachers are likely to emphasize practical goals and tasks. Study participants often discussed this in terms of idealism vs. realism, framing the practical orientation as vital in order to meet the sustained

challenges of classroom teaching. Through practicum rounds, cooperating teachers are able to

help initiate student teacher candidates into what is understood as the practical professional life

in schools.

In light of this, it can also be concluded that cooperating teachers perceive ITE programs

as insufficient in preparing student teachers for the practicalities they see as so important in

schools (Crocker & Dibbon, 2008). Although cooperating teachers themselves went through ITE

programs, their responses give little indication that they retain a meaningful connection between

university education and their classroom practice. Study participants generally saw universities

as the home of theoretical study, with schools being a place to apply knowledge in practice.

Considering the notion that teachers may see themselves as insiders to the profession while

seeing university instructors as outside, it is conceivable that cooperating teachers see a student

teacher's entry to schools as an opportunity to disregard outsider influence and to initiate them

into the insider practitioner space.

Cooperating Teachers' Own Experiences and Cycle of Approaches

The study's fourth finding was that a cooperating teachers' own experience as a student

teacher greatly affect their approach to mentoring. Study participants discussed their own

practicum experiences in vivid detail, and generally hoped that their current mentoring practices

would pass on positive experiences or redress negative ones. A conclusion to be drawn is that a

cooperating teacher's own experience as a student teacher is key in understanding how they as

mentors may later approach their own student teachers, and what expectations they may have of

them. As Lortie famously wrote in 1975, student teachers will approach the classroom with

abundant preconceptions about teaching after years of observing it. Similarly, cooperating

teachers likely arrive at mentorship with preconceptions about what it means to be a cooperating

teacher. In light of the lack of preparation they may feel as mentors, teachers may rely on their

own experiences as a student teacher to inform their conceptions of cooperating teaching. For the

researcher, the discussions with participants about their formative experiences as student teachers

were the most significant in developing understanding of the expectations they have gone on to

hold as cooperating teachers.

Recommendations

As this practitioner research study has been guided by a pragmatic approach, it is of

paramount importance that it offer actionable recommendations. With respect for school-based

cooperating teachers and university-based teacher educators, the researcher offers the following

recommendations for: university undergraduate education programs, school divisions,

cooperating teachers, and future research.

Recommendations for University Undergraduate Education Programs

University undergraduate education programs are commonly found in an unenviable

position, faced with budgetary pressures and political limitations that affect productivity and

accountability (Sleeter, 2009). As was established in the literature review, education faculties can

also struggle for status on university campuses. These challenges compound the work of

undergraduate departments that must recruit students, prepare student-teaching candidates, liaise

with school partners, and facilitate school placements. This student-teacher-focused endeavour is

situated within a wider faculty that also must attract academic staff, promote academic research

and publishing, and provide graduate education programming.

With the above in mind, it is recommended that university faculties of education consider

the field of practitioner research as a distinct and important resource to inform undergraduate

education and field studies departments. In their review of teacher education studies, Cochran et

al. (2014) note that "most were carried out by teacher educators in search of solutions to fieldwork probes they were grappling with at their own institution" (p. 112). This suggests that the "two worlds" divide of universities and schools may not be overcome if academic research on field studies challenges has an inward gaze. This recommendation is not made with the intention to set academic and practitioner research in opposition with one another, but rather to help connect the work of practitioners to the policy makers of undergraduate education programs.

In regards to the expectations that universities set out for student teachers as well as guidelines for all partners, it is appreciated that these must set boundaries yet not be too prescriptive. While it is hoped that new student teachers and their cooperating teachers will engage in a conversation about expectations for the practicum at the outset, it would be reasonable for university instructors to suggest to student teachers that they inquire about the cooperating teacher's own practicum experience. This may help to bring elements of the cooperating teacher's formative experiences to the forefront which may otherwise go unstated and unacknowledged.

Recommendations for School Divisions

School divisions are the setting for teacher education field work. Generally, they are dependable partners with local universities in facilitating the placement of vast numbers of student teachers. In most cases, the majority of these placements are successful. School divisions benefit from hosting student teachers in a number of ways, including potentially identifying and recruiting capable student teachers for hire towards the end of their practicum rounds.

School divisions prioritize and pursue their own organizational goals. These may reflect the aims and parameters of provincial or state level governments, but outside of that framework,

divisions have autonomy in charting and funding professional development for teachers and instructional leaders. While a division's central leadership may connect with universities for guidance and cooperation, this step in the process is not assured. There are a host of options that may facilitate this kind of connection, including book authors and conference speakers, which may or may not be academic in nature. Such inconsistent planning and delivery can mean division professional development can reinforce the distance between universities and classroom teachers. As Zeichner (2002) found, "cooperating teachers and university instructors are often mutually ignorant of each other's work and the principles that underlie it" (p. 61).

It is recommended that school divisions endeavour to align their professional learning more closely with universities in order to reduce the two-world divide seen in teacher education literature as well as this study's findings. As stated earlier, school divisions have a vested interest in identifying and retaining strong teaching graduates to replenish their teaching staff. It follows then that building capacity for successful and ongoing mentorship in their schools is in divisions' self-interest. In addition, consistent with findings in other teacher education literature (Zeichner, 2010; Clarke et al., 2014), participants of this study wondered hopefully about the possibility of obtaining support or training for mentoring student teachers. To address this, perhaps divisions could consider devoting some professional development towards supporting cooperating teaching. While there are calls to improve the relevance of professional development (DeMonte, 2013; Patton et al., 2015), it is less clear whether school divisions have focused on developing cooperating teachers. In a Canadian context, Law (2013) argues:

>By supporting and encouraging experienced teachers to serve as cooperating
>
>teachers, schools are promoting teacher leadership by giving teachers specific
>
>leadership responsibilities and providing opportunities for this development. In

this way, schools can make teacher leadership a component in planning for

continued success. Schools can further develop teachers as instructional leaders

by providing access to mentorship training (p. 181).

A school division's structure is likely to feature central office consultants, who tend to be

specialized by school subject area, or in fields such as literacy, assessment, and inclusion. These

central staff may be seconded from the teaching ranks, and as such can represent a significant

investment for divisions striving to meet their educational goals. It is reasonable to consider

creating a position that could specialize in supporting the district's mentor teachers, one that

could also liaise with partner universities. This could more firmly connect faculties of education

with partnering divisions, and help to alleviate some of the two-world divide between theory and

practice. As well, a connection to a district liaison could benefit universities. They could be in a

better position to receive timely and regular feedback from the field. If the school liaison is able

to have input into their division's professional development, universities could have a more

direct conduit into the field to provide proactive information or preparation for experienced or

novice cooperating teachers.

School divisions also have considerable say over the professional learning opportunities

of their teachers. The prospect of teachers' planning, conducting, and completing practitioner

research would be beneficial, and could be helped immensely by a school division's willingness

to allocate resources for study sabbaticals, release time, or even tuition support for study. As was

recommended to universities, it is important that divisions consider practitioner-led

investigations to be a distinct body of research that can assist in improving teaching practice.

School divisions have the opportunity to demonstrate leadership, create a supportive culture, and

distinguish themselves among other divisions by stepping up to support their teachers in practitioner research.

Recommendations for Cooperating Teachers

The researcher acknowledges that classrooms place increasing demands on K-12 practitioners, and previous chapters have established that mentors' feelings of professional commitment may deter them from requesting student teachers over a challenging assignment or semester. It was heartening to see in this study that despite challenges, enthusiasm and generosity is largely present for cooperating teachers to take on student teachers.

In noting that participants articulated a hope that there could be more preparation available for cooperating teaching, it is recommended that cooperating teachers elevate their view of this important mentoring activity. A profession that struggles with negativity and diminished status can feature many opportunities for confidence and pride. A heightened profile for cooperating teaching could help create demand for more professional development on mentorship, creating a positive feedback loop that could assist in spurring more opportunities for support.

Finally, it is recommended that cooperating teachers engage in reflection about their own ITE experience. If classroom teachers hold a general disregard for their own university education, this memory can become a self-defeating contradiction that undermines the struggle for professional recognition in society in general and student teaching in particular. ITE can be inconsistent across eras and institutions. The dismissal of one's own professional education is a commonplace that can be avoided.

Recommendations for Further Research

The limitations of this study suggest that while it has provided insight, there can be more specific studies that focus on cooperating teachers in the teacher training experience. This study was based on an open-ended research question lending itself to a qualitative study. Studies of cooperating teachers' expectations could be conducted using larger sample sizes, mixed methods, or quantitative study designs on more specific aspect of expectations, yielding further insights.

A significant area for future exploration indicated by the current study is a deeper investigation of cooperating teachers' own experiences as student teachers. A similar study that involves in-depth conversations with cooperating teacher participants could create a comprehensive picture of how their experiences as student teachers affects their practice as cooperating teachers.

After significant reflection on the experience of conducting this study, it is thought that research could be undertaken on cooperating teachers and their relationship to their own ITE programs. An undercurrent from the earliest conception of this study is the apparent uneasiness cooperating teachers have with their own undergraduate university education. The fact that it may be considered overly theoretical, impractical, and of little use for classroom application could indicate that a study exploring cooperating teachers' view of their own ITE could help reveal some aspects of their expectations for student teachers.

Researcher Reflections

It is the sincere wish of the researcher that this study resonates with fellow K-12 practitioners. This research was undertaken on the basis of a deep reflection on my entire journey

through experience as an education student, classroom teacher, cooperating teacher, field experience associate, and graduate student. The process has been rewarding, mysterious, frustrating, inspiring, and ultimately very satisfying.

Part of this satisfaction has been an even deeper reflection on my journey through education and this research study. Earning a graduate degree is hardly unique in contemporary education. While statistics were not readily available for Canada, the number of public school teachers who held a master's, doctorate, or education specialist degree rose from 47 to 58 percent between 2000 and 2018 in the United States (National Center for Education Statistics, n.d.). It is reasonable to assume that doctorate degrees are a smaller proportion, and that it may be more rare yet for those pursuing doctorates to do so without interrupting their practitioner role. This circumstance, continuing to teach while embarking on my first research study, was by far the most challenging factor I faced. It did add an extra dimension of exhaustion to an already demanding practitioner role. But it is with great pride that I navigated a path through this challenge and I feel very fortunate to do so at the university of my professional origin. I cannot imagine that many other education practitioners get the chance to complete the circle in this way.

No step along the way felt at all simple towards the ultimate goal of a finished study and dissertation. Early in the course section of the doctorate degree, I found myself in the qualitative research methods course required by all doctoral students. Expectations were very high, and it was soon apparent that our research topics and research questions were presumed to have been discussed with our supervisors and ready to be developed into study proposals over that first semester. Not only did I feel like an outsider on campus, but like an imposter clearly out of their academic depth. This was extremely difficult as I was nowhere near finalizing a research question, but I was able to create a proposal that brought me closer to the topic of cooperating

teachers in schools. The curiosity of what cooperating teachers expected from their student

teachers was a theme that persisted going forward.

Despite the struggles experienced in the early stages of the doctoral program, I was able

to gradually take what I had learned and figure out what would not work for this study. By way

of elimination, I knew that approaches such as ethnography would require far too much time to

be feasible for practitioner research. The journey encountered more setbacks when I worked over

a year on a narrative inquiry approach, and was then turned towards a more general qualitative

approach.

Part of the joy of this experience has been serving as a cooperating teacher to twelve

student teachers over this degree. This has afforded me an opportunity to share with various pre-

service teachers the different stages of this study. More recently, I have had the amusing

experience of informing student teachers that since I am studying the expectations cooperating

teachers hold for student teachers, that we are inhabiting the very scenario that I had been

studying for years. In having occupied so many roles in teacher education and classrooms, I

appreciate the panoramic view of K-12 and university education that I have been granted.

Since the earliest inception of this study, I have been driven by a need to explore a

phenomenon that occurs when student teachers arrive in schools to embark on their practicum

journeys. The uncertain journeys of prospective teachers, who must pass this practicum phase to

earn a teaching certificate, will always remain a source of fascination for me. Likewise the

expectations of cooperating teachers will be something I will be discussing for the remainder of

my education career. I hope that my work can prompt K-12 practitioners to consider their own

journeys through initial teacher education to where they are now, and to reflect on the

assumptions, habits, beliefs, and practices that influence not only their work as classroom

teachers, but as the mentors who are so vital in renewing the teaching profession.

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Appendix A: Interview Questions

Basic background information questions for participants:

1. How long have you been teaching?

2. What is your teaching assignment and how long have you been in this role?

3. How many student teachers have you mentored?

4. Are there any other roles you have been involved in (such as school-university liaison or school administrator)?

5. What made you want to mentor a student teacher?

This set of questions is designed to explore how participants describe their expectations for student teachers.

1. What abilities of a student teacher do you see as being the most important?

2. What attributes do student teachers need to be successful in a practicum?

3. Can you tell me about a time when you felt a student teacher met or exceeded your expectations?

4. Can you tell me about a time when you felt as though a student teacher fell short of your expectations?

5. Can you tell me about any unique and personal expectations you might have held for student teachers? (If prompted – i.e., expectations that are not found in university guidelines or school policies, ones that you had personally)

This set of questions is designed to explore how participants communicate expectations for the practicum to their student teachers.

1. Can you describe a time when you had the first meeting or two with a student teacher? What expectations did you communicate with them at that initial point?

2. How have you approached speaking with your student teachers about expectations?

3. Can you describe a time when you had difficulty communicating your expectations to your student teacher?

4. Can you describe a situation where you have had to talk to someone else about the student teacher understanding your expectations?

5. Have you experienced conflict between your expectations and your student teacher's expectations for the practicum?

6. Can you tell me about a time you felt compelled to speak with your student teacher about meeting your expectations?

This set of questions is designed to explore how participants' expectations for student teachers are shaped and formed.

1. Can you describe your own practicum experience?

2. How would you describe the expectations for you during your own practicum?

3. What was expected of you and how was it communicated to you?

4. Did your experience as a student teacher shape what you have expected from student teachers as a mentor?

5. Where have you found information about what to expect from your student teacher?

6. Who have you spoken to about what to expect from your student teacher?

7. Can you describe a conversation with a peer about expectations for student teachers?

8. How do you feel about the level of preparation student teachers get from universities?

9. Can you describe a conversation with a peer about the level of preparation student teachers get from universities?

Appendix B: Invitation Letter to Join the Study

My name is Jonathan Sharek and I am a doctoral student at the University of Alberta. I am conducting research into the expectations held by mentor teachers in a study entitled: "Reaching the Bar: Cooperating Teachers' Expectations for Student Teachers." I would like to interview you about your experience as a cooperating teacher. The purpose of this study is to examine the expectations cooperating teachers hold for their student teachers. This study asks the following question: What do cooperating teachers expect from their student teachers in selected K-12 urban schools? This study aims to explore how these expectations are formed, described, and communicated. Further understanding of cooperation teachers' perceptions and experiences are important to strengthen the future direction of the teaching profession.

I am the principal investigator of this study as a student in the Department of Educational Policy Studies at the University of Alberta. This study is a principal requirement for my doctoral degree program, and is under the supervision of Dr. Noella Steinhauer.

Procedures and Confidentiality

If you agree to participate, you will be asked questions about your experiences and opinions about your work as a cooperating teacher. You will be interviewed at least once for one to two hours. Interviews will take place either face-to-face or over video conference and will be recorded (voice only).

All your responses will be kept strictly confidential. Any identifying information, such as your name and the organization for which you work, will be removed from the transcript resulting from our interview and will not be included in any publication that might come from this study. Please be aware that although direct quotations may be used in the writing of the report, your anonymity will be ensured by the use of a random name chosen specifically for this study and

attached to any documents resulting from our interview. Interview recordings and transcripts will

be kept on a password-protected computer accessible only by the researcher.

Risks and Benefits

The risks of participating in this study are no more than the risks of everyday life. You do not

need to talk about anything that makes you feel uncomfortable. You might not experience direct

benefits from participating in this project; however, as the aim of this research is to provide

insight into cooperating teachers' perspectives, your participation in this study will help address

a gap in teacher education literature. There is no reimbursement of expenses incurred during

participation in this study.

Freedom to Withdraw

Participation in this study is voluntary and you may withdraw from the study up to one week

following our interview without penalty or explanation. During the interviews themselves you

may refuse to answer a question, request that the interview be stopped at any time, and ask that

the recording device be stopped. If you choose to withdraw, any data collected will be destroyed

and your participation in the study will remain confidential.

If you have any questions, would like further details, or would like to schedule a time to speak,

please contact me at jsharek@ualberta.ca or (780) 982-6815. My supervisor, Dr. Noella

Steinhauer (noella@ualberta.ca) is also available should you have further questions regarding the

study.

Sincerely,

Jonathan Sharek

The plan for this study has been reviewed for its adherence to ethical guidelines and approved by Research Ethics Board 1 (REB1) at the University of Alberta. For questions regarding participant rights and ethical conduct of research, contact the REB1 Research Ethics Board at (780) 492-2615. This office has no affiliation with the study investigators.

Appendix C: Informed Consent Form

Reaching the Bar: Cooperating Teachers' Expectations for Student Teachers

Principal Investigator: Jonathan Sharek

The purpose of this study is to examine the expectations held by cooperating teachers for their student teachers. Gaining insights into these expectations has a number of important benefits. This study will contribute research about cooperating teachers' expectations for student teachers, which may inform professional development for cooperating teachers. Research outcomes may also guide teacher education programs with respect to how cooperating teachers' expectations are understood. As a practitioner researcher, I hope this study's findings will be shared with teachers and prompt conversations about the practice and nature of mentoring student teachers. This study is a principal requirement for my doctoral degree program, and is under the supervision of Dr. Noella Steinhauer.

Procedures and Confidentiality

If you agree to participate, you will be asked questions about your experiences and opinions about your work as a cooperating teacher. You will be interviewed at least once for one to two hours. Interviews will take place either face-to-face or over video conference and will be recorded (voice only).

All your responses will be kept strictly confidential. Any identifying information, such as your name and the organization for which you work, will be removed from the transcript resulting from our interview and will not be included in any publication that might come from this study. Please be aware that although direct quotations may be used in the writing of the report, your

anonymity will be ensured by the use of a random name chosen specifically for this study and attached to any documents resulting from our interview. Interview recordings and transcripts will be kept on a password-protected computer accessible only by the researcher.

Risks and Benefits

The risks of participating in this study are no more than the risks of everyday life. You do not need to talk about anything that makes you feel uncomfortable. You might not experience direct benefits from participating in this project; however, as the aim of this research is to provide insight into cooperating teachers' perspectives, your participation in this study will help address a gap in teacher education literature. There is no reimbursement of expenses incurred during participation in this study.

Freedom to Withdraw

Participation in this study is voluntary and you may withdraw from the study up to one week following our interview without penalty or explanation. During the interviews themselves you may refuse to answer a question, request that the interview be stopped at any time, and ask that the recording device be stopped. If you choose to withdraw, any data collected will be destroyed and your participation in the study will remain confidential.

If you have any questions, would like further details, or would like to schedule a time to speak, please contact me at jsharek@ualberta.ca or (780) 982-6815. My supervisor, Dr. Noella Steinhauer (noella@ualberta.ca) is also available should you have further questions regarding the study.

Please note that you may keep a copy of this letter as part of your records.

Thank you for your time and participation in this study.

Sincerely,

Jonathan Sharek

Department of Educational Policy Studies

University of Alberta

Email: jsharek@ualberta.ca

Phone: (780) 982-6815

The plan for this study has been reviewed for its adherence to ethical guidelines and approved by Research Ethics Board 1 (REB1) at the University of Alberta. For questions regarding participant rights and ethical conduct of research, contact the Research Ethics Board at (780)-492-2615. This office has no affiliation with the study investigators.

Participant Consent Form

Consent Form for Reaching the Bar: Cooperating Teachers' Expectations for Student Teachers

Before you make a decision; the researcher will go over this form with you. You are encouraged to ask questions if you feel anything needs to be made clearer. You will be given a copy of this form for your records.

I, _____ (print name), have read and understood the information letter and agree to participate in the study being conducted by Jonathan Sharek.

I understand that participation in this study will include the following activities:

- participation in interview(s)
- audio/screencast recording of the interview
- Follow-up emails or telephone calls for clarification
-

I also understand that:

- I may decide not to participate at all, or may withdraw from the research up until 30 days after the interview is completed
- if I choose to withdraw from the study, any data already collected from me will be destroyed
- my name will not be associated with the data and anything that does identify me will be destroyed after five years
- I will not be identifiable in any documents resulting from this research and a pseudonym will be used to protect my identity
- all data collected through this research will be kept in a secure location for a minimum of five years at the end of the project, at which time the data will be destroyed
- the results of this research may be presented in papers and other articles, conference presentations, web postings, or used in teaching.
- any interviews that occur online (e.g. Skype) or in person will be recorded for the purposes of transcription
- I will be able to access the final research results at the completion of the study by contacting the researcher

_____

Signature of participant

_____

Email address of participant

Date Signed: _____

If you have any questions about this study, or would like to withdraw, please contact Jonathan

Sharek (jsharek@ualberta.ca) or 780-982-6815.

I will conduct this research and handle all data in compliance with the Standards for Ethical

Research.   The plan for this study has been reviewed for its adherence to ethical guidelines and

approved by Research Ethics Board 1 at the University of Alberta. For questions regarding

participant rights and ethical conduct of research, contact the Research Ethics Office at (780)

492-2615. This office has no affiliation with the study investigators.

*Please sign this consent form and scan and return one copy by email to Jonathan Sharek

(jsharek@ualberta.ca).