

# Supervising Student Teachers in the World of Performance-Based Assessments: Professional Development Needs of Cooperating Teachers and University Supervisors

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## ABSTRACT

The Policies Commission for Business and Economic Education (PCBEE) Policy Statement 78 states, "Community partners . . . provide input to influence curriculum and opportunities beyond the traditional business classroom" (PCBEE, 2006, p. 3). Community partners are an integral part of any student teaching experience and as a result a triad relationship develops among the cooperating teacher (the community partner), the university supervisor, and the student teacher. The first purpose of this study was to determine what cooperating teachers, university supervisors, and student teachers perceived as their responsibilities were to each of the other stakeholders in this triad relationship. The second purpose was to determine the perceptions of the cooperating teachers, the university supervisors, and student teachers concerning student teacher competencies in the areas of planning and preparation, classroom environment, instruction, and professional responsibilities. A mixed-methods study design was used, based upon survey research and a strategic review of weekly reflections from student teachers, weekly cooperating teacher reports, and periodic university supervisor reports. The participants of the study were all from the business education content area. There were twenty-six public school teachers, four university supervisors who had experience supervising student teachers, and seven student teacher candidates or clinical teacher candidates. Results indicate a need for professional development for business education cooperating teachers and university supervisors who are not full-time, tenured university faculty.

## PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

Based upon feedback from university supervisors, cooperating teachers, and student teachers since the

performance-based assessment, edTPA, was mandated by the state, tenured faculty in the business education program at the university felt that more information was required to ensure all stakeholders involved with the student teaching process were providing support to the student teachers so that they could become successful members of the business education teaching profession. Designed around the theoretical framework of Darling-Hammond, Hyler, and Gardner's (2017) view of professional development, the study examines the perceptions of cooperating teachers, university supervisors, and student teachers concerning their responsibilities to each of the other stakeholders in this triad as well as expectations of student teacher competencies in the areas of planning and preparation, classroom environment, instruction, and professional responsibilities.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

One of the best indicators of whether preservice teachers are likely to pursue a teaching career is the results of the student teaching experience (Conderman, Morin, & Stephens, 2005). Additionally, because it is a capstone experience that aids in the professional development of preservice teachers, the student teaching experience has been extensively studied and reported (Hamman, et al., 2006; Kent, 2001). One facet of this experience is the triad relationship that develops among the student teacher, the cooperating teacher, and the university supervisor during student teaching. To help the student teacher develop and grow professionally, it is important that the university supervisor and cooperating teacher provide guidance, encouragement, and advice (Hunt, Mitchell, Maina, & Griffin, 2015).

This triad relationship facilitates the connection of academic learning and practical experience for student teachers and provides benefits to both the university and the public school partners (Dever, Hager, & Klein, 2003). Open discussions are needed about the role perceptions and expectations of each of the members of the triad. This would alleviate some of the confusion and misunderstanding that plague many student teaching triads (Johnson & Napper-

Owen, 2011). Slick (1997) believes that to better understand the student teaching experience, it is important to research the perceptions, expectations, and obligations of both the cooperating teacher and the university supervisor.

Even though all three members of the triad are important, the relationship that develops between the cooperating teacher and the student teacher is central to the student teacher's success (Edwards & Dendler, 2007). The cooperating teacher has many roles and responsibilities in helping the student teacher progress. These include, but are not limited to, demonstrating best practices, meeting with the student teacher to co-plan lessons, giving continuous feedback, and helping the student teacher develop pedagogical content knowledge while continuing to take on more responsibility in the classroom (Darling-Hammond, Hammerness, Grossman, Rust, & Shulman, 2005; Fletcher, Mountjoy, & Bailey, 2011; Goodnough, Osmond, Dibbon, Glassman, & Stevens, 2009; Nilsson & Van Driel, 2010).

Although cooperating teachers play such a pivotal part in the success and development of student teachers, many cooperating teachers do not receive any formal training for the vital role they play (Dever, Hager, & Klein, 2003). Some researchers believe that formal training should be provided to cooperating teachers. This training would emphasize the importance of skills and activities required during the capstone student teaching experience (Smalley, Retallick, & Paulsen, 2015).

Equally important to the success of the student teacher is the role the university supervisor plays. The university supervisor is one of the essential members of the triad relationship during the student teaching internship (Gimbert & Nolan, 2003). According to Fletcher (2012), "Research examining the duties, roles, and responsibilities of university supervisors is non-existent within the discipline of business education" (p. 2). The results of Fletcher's (2013) study "raise questions regarding how much is known about the supervision of student teachers in terms of the roles and responsibilities of university supervisors" (p. 13). Fletcher (2013) further concludes that it is highly probable that the university supervisors may have differing ideas concerning their roles as university supervisors. Isik-Ercan, Hyun-Young, and Rodgers (2017) found that "in order to fulfill more productive roles in fostering the growth of student teachers, university supervisors should be provided professional growth opportunities that highlight their professional identity" (p. 43). This study begins to fill the gap in the literature, offering current information about the triad role in a system using a performance-based assessment for pre-student teaching candidates, student teachers, and classroom teachers.

## RESEARCH DESIGN

In part, this research study was conducted using Robert Stake's responsive model (2004). The assumption of this model is that the issues raised by the responses of the stakeholders should determine the topics that need to be addressed. Using a mixed-methods study design, based-upon survey research and

a strategic review of weekly reflections from student teachers, weekly cooperating teacher reports, and periodic university supervisor reports, this study sought to answer the following research questions:

1. What are the perceptions of cooperating teachers, university supervisors, and student teachers concerning their responsibilities to the other stakeholders in the triad?
2. What are the expectations of student teacher competencies in the areas of
  - a. Planning and Preparation
  - b. Classroom Environment
  - c. Instruction
  - d. Professional Responsibilities

## Instrument

The researchers designed a survey instrument following the protocols required by the university's institutional review board and based it upon acceptable practices of survey research. The questions were developed as a result of the anecdotal feedback received from the triad stakeholders and a strategic review of the reflections and reports submitted by or for student teachers over the past three years.

**Instrument validation and pilot study.** The university business education program coordinator evaluated the survey instrument and determined that the questions asked addressed the research questions. Two business educators reviewed the survey for clarity. The recommended minor changes to wording were incorporated into the survey questions.

## Data Collection

Three groups were surveyed using demographic-specific survey questions. Twenty-six cooperating teachers who had supervised student teachers during the past five years received invitations to participate in the study. Of those, thirteen cooperating teachers participated. Four university supervisors who had supervised student teachers during the past five years also received invitations to participate in the study; all four supervisors participated. Fourteen student teacher candidates or clinical teacher candidates received invitations to participate in the study. Seven of the students participated in the study. Following Institutional Review Board (IRB) protocols, all participants were given instructions concerning the survey completion before beginning the survey questions. Participants were made aware that they could stop participating in the survey at any time and that all responses would be confidential and reported either at the aggregate level or anonymously.

## Participant Demographic Profile

Ages of the cooperating teachers ranged from 27 – 56. Three of the university supervisors were over 60 years of age, and one was in the 52 – 55 age range. Females were the majority in both groups, with seven cooperating teachers and three university supervisors being female. Nine of the

cooperating teachers hold a master's degree, most in either curriculum and instruction or educational foundations. Two university supervisors hold doctoral level degrees and are employed as tenured faculty. Two university supervisors are non-tenure track or adjunct faculty and hold master's degrees. Nine of the cooperating teachers had been in the classroom for 11 or more years. All four of the university supervisors had over 20 years' experience as classroom teachers. The majority (nine) of the cooperating teachers had supervised three or fewer student teachers, and only three had supervised six or more student teachers. Ten of the cooperating teachers do not have requirements from their school district to be in the classroom with the student teacher, and five of the ten felt that student teachers should be left unsupervised by the cooperating teacher in Weeks 1 or 2 of the student teaching experience. In contrast, none of the university supervisors felt that the student teachers should be left alone in the classroom during the first two weeks of the experience. The other five cooperating teachers stated that the student teacher should be left unsupervised beginning in Weeks 3 or 4. Two university supervisors also felt that Weeks 3 or 4 would be an appropriate time for the student teacher to be left unsupervised, while two indicated that Weeks 5 or 6 were more appropriate.

### Analysis of Data

**Research Question 1:** What are the perceptions of cooperating teachers, university supervisors, and student teachers concerning their responsibilities to the other stakeholders in the triad?

In response to the question: "What do you see as your responsibilities to the student teacher?", the cooperating teachers offered qualitative answers. Six of the cooperating teachers provided responses that included guidance and assistance on creating lesson plans, providing constructive feedback, and organization. Four indicated that helping the student teacher learn classroom management was important. One offered guidance on creating diverse and creative assignments. Two cooperating teachers indicated that they should be a role model who demonstrated best practices. One indicated that the primary role was to help the student teacher become "an effective teacher" and one indicated that guidance was the only responsibility he/she had to the student teacher.

In response to the question: "What do you see as the student teacher's responsibility to you?" The responses varied. Most of the cooperating teachers indicated that they wanted the student teacher to ask questions. Three stressed the need to accept constructive criticism, and three provided responses related to submitting paperwork on time, showing up on time, and being willing to learn. Two cooperating teachers indicated that they wanted the student teacher to follow the classroom procedures in place, and two wanted the student teachers to have the opportunity grow and develop their own teaching styles. One wanted the student teacher to use his/her (the cooperating teacher's) lesson plans and activities, while one indicated that the student teacher should create his/her own lesson plans and activities. One cooperating teacher wrote, "I have been doing this for a lot longer time and am quite

successful, and when I tell you to do something -- do it."

All cooperating teachers responded to the question about responsibilities to the university supervisor by stressing the need for communication to the university supervisor in terms of strengths and weaknesses of the teacher education candidate. In return, the cooperating teachers expect the university supervisor to also communicate with them. Two cooperating teachers asked for guidance on what should and should not be required of the student teacher.

The university supervisors believe their responsibilities to the student teacher should include constructive feedback. In addition, the university supervisors expect to mentor the student teacher and to act as an advocate for the student teacher with the cooperating teacher and/or the university program. From the student teachers, the university supervisors expect the student teacher to be responsive to constructive feedback, submit required paperwork on time, and to communicate with the university supervisor about what is happening in the classroom and about the relationship with the cooperating teachers. In addition, the university supervisor expects the student teacher to be proactive and ask for help before a larger issue arises. One university supervisor expects the student teacher to respond to all communications within a 24-hour window.

Concerning cooperating teachers, the university supervisors see their responsibility as acting as a facilitator between the student teacher and the cooperating teacher. They also indicated that communication with the cooperating teacher is important, especially in terms of student teacher performance. One university supervisor encapsulated the university's expectations of the supervisor role well, stating, "I feel that I should help the cooperating teacher mentor the student teacher. I also think it is important to ensure that the cooperating teacher understands the significance of edTPA as well as the fact that student teaching is a class and as such, the cooperating teacher has a responsibility to make the student teaching experience a learning experience for the student teacher."

In return, the university supervisor expects that the cooperating teacher will demonstrate quality teaching for the student teacher, communicate concerns and insights in a timely manner, ask questions, and share observations about the student teacher's performance.

**Research Question 2.** The second research question utilized the wording from the Danielson Framework for Teaching Smart Card (2014) which is a free resource available from the Danielson Group website (<http://www.danielsongroup.org/framework/>). The Domain levels of performance (Danielson, 2007) are divided into four categories: unsatisfactory, basic, proficient, or distinguished for levels from Danielson. Beginning teachers are expected to perform at the basic to proficient level by most administrators within the state. Distinguished ratings are reserved for exceptional teachers and are rarely given, even to the most experienced classroom teachers (personal communication, E. Palmer, April 12, 2018). The Danielson Framework is the default teacher performance assessment in the researcher's

state for classroom teachers, and as such, the cooperating teachers should be aware of the level of performance expectation for classroom teachers and preservice teachers. For student teachers who first enter the classroom, the university expects performance at the basic level for all four domains.

**Research Question 2a:** What are the expectations of competency in the area of planning and preparation when the student teacher **first** arrives in the classroom? According to the Danielson's Framework (2007), "The teacher's plans reflect **moderate understanding** of the content, the students, and available resources. **Some** instructional outcomes **are suitable** to the students as a group, and the approaches to assessment are **partially aligned** to the goals".

Six of the cooperating teachers expected student teachers to be able to perform at the proficient level; three expected the student teachers to perform at the basic level, and two expected student teachers to perform at a distinguished level. One cooperating teacher wrote: "Yes, they weren't here for the first 10 chapters and have to start teaching Chapter 11, but that is their responsibility to figure it out and be prepared."

Three of the four university supervisors anticipated student teachers would perform at the basic level, while one indicated that the proficient level was expected at the beginning of the student teaching experience.

**Research Question 2b:** What are the expectations of competency in the area of classroom environment when the student teacher first arrives in the classroom? According to Danielson (2007), at the basic level for classroom environment, "The classroom environment functions **somewhat effectively**, with **modest expectations** for student learning and conduct, and classroom routines and use of space that **partially support** student learning. Students and the teacher **rarely treat** one another **with disrespect**."

In terms of classroom environment, the cooperating teachers had even higher expectations of the entering student teacher. Three cooperating teachers expected distinguished levels of classroom management for the beginning student teacher; seven indicated that a student teacher should be proficient at maintaining the classroom environment, and three expected basic classroom environment skills. One cooperating teacher indicated, "I completely expect this to be an area that needs work as they go"; however, this sentiment was in the minority view.

Two university supervisors expected the student teacher to enter the classroom at the basic level, and two expected the student teacher to enter the classroom at the proficient level. One university supervisor provided insight into the expectations for both the cooperating teacher and student teacher saying:

I think this is probably the area that is the most challenging for the student teacher. It is a true hands-on learning experience. I feel that the classroom teacher should allow the student teacher to have control of the class without interfering (unless a major situation arises where a student's disruptive behavior becomes so egregious that it is almost dangerous). The classroom teacher should meet with the student teacher regularly to

discuss the classroom environment and give the student teacher feedback on both his/her positive classroom management actions and negative classroom management actions. Again, this is probably the area where the classroom teacher really needs to be a mentor.

**Research Question 2c:** What are the expectations of competency in the area of instruction when the student teacher first enters the classroom?

In terms of instruction, the basic level is represented by "**Only some** students are **engaged** in learning because of only **partially clear** communication, **uneven use** of discussion strategies, and **only some suitable** instructional activities and materials. The teacher displays **some use** of assessment in instruction and is **moderately flexible in adjusting** the instructional plan **and in response** to students' interest and their success in learning" (Danielson, 2007).

Once again, the cooperating teachers held expectations for student teachers that were at the distinguished (two) and proficient (seven) levels. Only four cooperating teachers felt that a basic level of instruction was to be expected when the student teacher first arrived in the classroom. One cooperating teacher wrote, "This one might be between basic and proficient. I would hope by this point in their training they could create the instructional plan that hit all of the points, but I would expect that it would not always translate as planned in the actual classroom experience."

The university supervisors were once again split, with two expecting basic levels of performance and two expecting proficient levels of performance.

**Research Question 2d:** What are the expectations of competency in the area of professional responsibilities?

Danielson (2007) identified a basic level of professional responsibilities as "The teacher demonstrates **moderate ethical standards** and **levels of professionalism**, with **rudimentary record-keeping systems** and skills in **reflection, modest communication** with families or colleagues, and **compliance with expectations regarding participation** in school and district projects and activities for professional growth."

Only one cooperating teacher believed that the student teachers should enter the classroom at the basic level. Nine indicated that the student teacher should be proficient, while three indicated that a distinguished level was to be expected. One cooperating teacher indicated that he/she understood that the student teacher is young, in college, and may not have the life experiences to hit the distinguished level. Another stated that high ethical standards are expected, but as the cooperating teacher it was his/her role to teach the grading system, communication expectations, and professionalism with peers to the student teacher.

In terms of professionalism, two university supervisors indicated students should perform at the basic level, one at the proficient level, and one at the distinguished level. From the university supervisor expecting a distinguished level of professionalism, "I expect student teachers to exhibit a high level of professionalism. However, if the student teacher is lacking in any aspect of this area, the cooperating teacher and/or the university supervisor should provide mentoring."

## CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

According to the Policies Commission for Business and Economic Education (PCBEE) Policy Statement 78, “business teacher education programs must prepare prospective teachers who can help their business students become confident, skillful, and interested participants in the economic and business environment” (PCBEE, 2006, p.1). To meet the objective of this policy, it is important that all members of the triad—the university supervisors, the cooperating teachers, and the business education student teachers—work in tandem during the student teaching experience.

This study found that many of the concerns expressed by university supervisors and cooperating teachers are in alignment with the perspective of the business education student teachers. Additionally, findings are aligned with the results of Crews and Bodenhamer’s (2009) study that recommended business education student teachers be given more exposure to and practice with classroom management. They also suggest that “an effective mentoring program should be developed” for student teachers (Crews and Bodenhamer, 2009, p. 54). Because cooperating teachers and university supervisors would be instrumental in developing this mentoring program, professional development should be provided to assist them in this process.

While this study lends credence to prior research, it also adds to the business education student teaching knowledge base in terms of the perspectives of student teachers, university supervisors, and cooperating teachers concerning the preparedness of university supervisors and cooperating teachers to supervise student teachers. In addition, this study found disagreement among the cooperating teachers and university supervisors regarding expectations of the student teacher in the classroom environment. Surprisingly, ten cooperating teachers expected student teachers to be at either the distinguished or proficient level in maintaining the classroom environment. One cooperating teacher indicated that this area would need work during the student teaching experience but this opinion was not held by the majority.

Based upon the responses of the cooperating teachers, the university supervisors, and the preservice teachers, the researchers determined that it is important for business teacher education programs to provide opportunities for professional development for both cooperating teachers and university supervisors, particularly if the university supervisor is not a full-time, university tenured faculty member. Survey responses of both cooperating teachers and university supervisors indicate that there is a disconnect between what the university expects of the triad during the student teaching placement and what occurs. In order to bridge this disconnect and provide a value-added student teaching experience, it is imperative that both university supervisors and cooperating teachers participate in professional development before being assigned a student teacher.

## RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

This study was generated from a business teacher education program at a mid-western university in the United States so the results may not be generalizable to other teacher education programs or to business teacher education programs in other regions of the United States or around the world. Future studies should survey a national sample of business education university supervisors and cooperating teachers from business teacher education programs in other parts of the U.S. Additional research should also be conducted on other teacher education programs to determine the perceptions of their cooperating teachers, university supervisors, and student teachers concerning their responsibilities to the other members of the triad. Research concerning the expectations of student teacher competence in the areas of planning and preparation, classroom environment, instruction, and professional responsibilities should be conducted on other teacher education programs as well.

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