Exploring Roles in Student Teaching Placements

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If we want to grow in practice, we have two primary places to go: to the inner ground from which good teaching comes and to the community of fellow teachers from whom we can learn more about ourselves and our craft.

—Parker Palmer, 1998, p. 141

Most teachers claim that the most important elements in their professional education were the school experiences found in student teaching (Guyton & McIntyre, 1990). Student teaching is the culminating experience in a teacher education program. For good or ill, this experience has a significant impact on the student teacher who must juggle the responsibilities of teaching (and all that entails) while establishing and developing relationships with one or more cooperating teachers and a university supervisor. Student teachers are surrounded not only by other adults who share in certain power relationships with them but also with children with whom they share a different sort of power relationship (Hargreaves,

2000). Thus, student teaching is a complicated emotional and interpersonal experience that is often critically important to the making of a teacher.

What makes for a good student teaching experience? Do student teachers have different opinions about it than cooperating teachers and university-based supervisors and teacher educators? These are the questions that we pursue in this paper. To find the answers to these questions, we piloted a questionnaire with 21 student teachers and their cooperating teachers and seven university-based supervisors who worked with them. Our aim was to find out if there is tacit agreement among the various participants in student teaching about what a good student teaching experience looks like and about the roles that each participant should play. Further, we wondered if there are common understandings about what each participant should know and be able to do.

Roles and Functions in Student Teaching Placements

While much research about student teaching experiences seems to have been shaped by the interests of teacher educators who want to find out how they can best prepare student teachers (Zeichner & Liston, 1987), there is relatively little that focuses on how the various players construe their roles and how they read their impact on each other (Hauwiller, Abel, Ausel, & Sparapani, 1988). Research on the participants in the student teaching experience includes studies that focus on the influence student teaching has on the student teacher (Zeichner & Tabachnick, 1981; Morin, 1993); studies that focus on what knowledge cooperating teachers need to effectively carry out their role in the process (Hauwiller et al, 1988; Copas, 1994); studies that focus on the mentoring aspects of the cooperating teacher's role (Feiman-Nemser & Parker, 1993); and studies that focus on supervisory aspects of the work of cooperating teachers and college supervisors with student teachers (Guyton,1987; Morin & Lemlach,1987). Ganser (1996) suggests that there is a lack of clarity in defining roles and responsibilities of cooperating teachers and university supervisors. He contends that lack of definition explains the wide variance in the ways in which cooperating teachers, supervisors, and student teachers interact.

The Cooperating Teacher Role

Cooperating teachers are generally understood to be classroom teachers who participate in a teacher education program by agreeing to work with preservice teachers in their classrooms. "Cooperating teachers," write Feiman-Nemser and Buchmann (1987), "set the affective and intellectual tone and also shape what student teachers learn by the way they conceive and carry out their roles as teacher educators" (p.256). Some cooperating teachers serve as mentors to student teachers. Some allow student teachers into their classrooms as participant observers. Still others see student teachers as colleagues in their own professional development.

Enz and Cook (1992) investigated student and cooperating teachers' perceptions of the roles and functions of the cooperating teacher. More salient than being effective models of instruction, Enz and Cook write that

> Cooperating teachers ought to be selected because they demonstrate the qualities of effective mentors. In addition to instructional and management strengths, effective cooperating teachers should be caring, active listeners who are sensitive to the views of others and who are able and willing to articulate the intricacies of their craft and the subtleties of the school culture. (p.13)

Studies by Sudzina and Coolican (1994), Gotliffe (1994), McWilliams (1995), and Graham (1996) expand the notion of cooperating teacher as mentor. Feiman-Nemser and Parker (1993) compared two programs for mentoring beginning teachers. Their work suggests that contextual factors affect the benefits mentees receive from their mentors. Feiman-Nemser and Parker found that formal expectations, working conditions, selection, and preparation were particularly important in determining what roles mentors assume:

> In addition to socializing functions, mentor teachers may serve as educational companions who help student or beginning teachers reflect on their experiences in order to gain insights that will support development of their teaching skills. Mentor teachers who act as agents of change seek to break down barriers that prevent teachers from sharing, inquiring, and collaborating about their teaching. (pp. 716-717)

A number of studies of the relationship between cooperating teachers and student teachers take the student teacher's perspective (Copas, 1984; Rikard & Veal, 1996). Karmos and Jacko (1977) looked at the importance of "Significant Others" in the student teacher experience. Student teachers in their study named twelve categories of others who had an impact on their student teaching. Cooperating teachers were at the top of the list. Student teachers rated cooperating teachers' influence high in the areas of personal support, role development, and professional skills. Copas (1984) study describes student teachers' perceptions of critical requirements for cooperating teachers in an elementary school, based on a "broad definition of the cooperating teacher's role" (p.49) rather than on his or her personal qualities. She found that student teachers wanted cooperating teachers who were models of good pedagogy and classroom management notes and that, "the value of the direct learning experience in schools (for student teachers) seems to depend upon the quality of the teacher with whom the student teacher is placed"(p. 49). Gonzalez and Carter (1996) used the concept of well-remembered events to examine interpretations of classroom events by both cooperating teachers and student teachers. They conclude that "even though student teachers and cooperating teachers often share experiences, they do not necessarily have a shared understanding of what that experience means" (p. 39). Grimmett and Ratzlaff (1986) studied expectations for cooperating teachers from the points of view of student teachers, university supervisors, and cooperating teachers themselves. Like Copas (1984),

they found that student teachers expect cooperating teachers to provide them with the basic information needed to adjust to the student teaching placement, help them acquire materials, involve them in planning and evaluation, hold conferences with them regularly, observe them teach, and provide feedback on their teaching.

These findings emphasize the importance of communication between cooperating teacher and student teacher, and call attention to the importance of conversation as a means of exploring the ways in which student teachers think about teaching. According to Gonzalez and Carter, (1996), cooperating teachers have a unique opportunity to use shared narratives not only to help their student teachers, but also to learn from each other by a common examination of classroom events. Ganser (1996, 1997) believes that being a cooperating teacher could have a significant effect on the cooperating teacher's own work and career. "Improving the effect that serving as a cooperating teacher can have on an experienced teacher's work and career," he writes, "is related to improving teaching itself" (p. 288).

The Supervisor Role

An equally complex role is that played by the university supervisor (Snyder & D'Emidio-Gaston, 2001). In the triad of the student teaching or practicuum experience, the participant who generally receives the least recognition and has been least studied (Griffin, 1985) is the university supervisor. Yet, our research (Koerner & Rust, 2000) suggests that the supervisor can play a critical role in the success of the experience. Case studies by Freidus (2000), Koerner & Rust (2000), Rust and Bullmaster (2000), and Richert, LaBoskey, and Kroll (2000) as well as work by Snyder and D'Emidio-Gaston (2001) suggest that supervisors often serve as translators of the values and beliefs of the teacher education program. LaBoskey, Kroll, & Galguera (2001), found that there was little explicit mention of the teacher education program principles by either student teachers or cooperating teachers, however, university supervisors referred to program principles in both the comments section and the narrative page of the student teaching assessment. Thus, it is ironic that the selection of student teaching supervisors is often done on the basis of availability rather than on the basis of experience and credentials (Snyder & D'Emidio-Gaston, 2001).

Whether a supervisor is prepared specifically for this role appears to be a matter of happenstance. Many are drawn from the ranks of retired teachers and principals, and in many university settings, graduate students with some teaching experience are also part of the pool of supervisors. Some supervisors may come to the job having learned to supervise as craft from a skilled mentor; others may come with formal academic course work; still others may rely completely on their experience as teachers and their memories of student teaching.

But the influence of supervisors transcends their position as a go-between for the University and the School. We know that supervisors tend to hold tacit images of the good student teacher that may only be articulated in situations that challenge

those ideals (Rust, 1989; Snyder & D'Emidio-Gaston, 2001); and we know that supervisors can play a critical role in helping student teachers make sense of their work in ways that will translate into future practice (Orland, 2001 and this volume).

The Student Teacher Role

Considerable research has been done over the past 20 years on student teachers' thinking and emerging understandings of the work of teaching. We know, for example, that many draw on an apprenticeship of observation (Lortie, 1976) to guide their actual practice as student teachers and later as teachers, that often their understandings of the work of teaching are shaped by myth (Britzman, 1988), and that teacher education courses and programs generally function to obscure preservice teachers' beliefs and understandings as they learn to adopt the jargon of the academy (Rust, 1989, 1993; Zeichner & Gore, 1990). However, relatively little work addresses their specific expectations for student teaching.

Student teachers walk a delicate line. On the one hand, they are students learning about a profession, its language, its practice. They take courses during part of the day, and they are at work in classrooms with children and teachers during part of the day. On the other hand, they are novice professionals and are expected to know something of practice, to take initiative, and to demonstrate competence. Lortie (1975) and others tell us that for their decisions about what to do in classrooms and how to act, student teachers and new teachers often draw more on their apprenticeships of observation—those years of being a student in a classroom observing and experiencing teachers at work—than they do the curriculum of teacher education. Britzman (1988) suggests that student teachers draw on educational myths to make sense of some of the critical dilemmas of teaching. Fuller & Bown (1975) describe student teachers' movement from survival to efficacy in terms that suggest the critical importance of both the supervisor and cooperating teacher to provide support, encouragement, and models of practice. However, there is considerable debate among educational researchers about the impact on teacher thinking and teacher practice of teacher education in general and of the student teaching experience in particular.

The Study

It is difficult to discern how perspectives on an issue as sensitive as what makes a good student teaching placement shape and influence the interaction of the various participants in the dance of teacher preparation. There is no doubt that every role in the student teaching experience is important to the emerging practice of a new teacher. Student teachers themselves know this. "The future teacher," writes Cruikshank (1977), "attempts to identify and meet expectations which come from self, cooperating teachers, university supervisors, students and society in general" (p. 51). But are these various perspectives inherent in the interactions between

student teachers, cooperating teachers and supervisors, and are there points of agreement in these various perspectives or is each participant starting from a different point of view?

To ascertain answers to our questions, we drew on qualitative research methods for design and analysis of an open-ended questionnaire. One of the major strengths of qualitative research, write Miles and Huberman (1994), is that it is "fundamentally well suited for locating the meanings people place on the events, process and structures of their lives" (p.10). Individuals' *perspectives* emerge in qualitative research in response to questions that focus on the assumptions people make about their lives and things that they take for granted (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998; Rogers, 1984). In our study, we operate from the implicit assumption that perspectives on student teaching placements are shaped not so much by the physical setting as by the ways in which the various participants in the experience interpret their roles in action (Erickson, 1986; Hatch, 1985).

We developed a questionnaire that we hoped would elicit the perspectives of cooperating teachers, student teachers, and supervisors about "good" student teaching placements. Our instrument draws on the research on student teaching described above. Through our inquiry, we sought to extend our understanding of the dynamics of student teaching in an effort to tease out the characteristics of good student teaching placements. Our approach to this issue involved developing open-ended questions about what makes a "good" student teacher, a "good" cooperating teacher, and a "good" supervisor. We think that such questions offer the opportunity to learn from the participants themselves about their perceptions of good student teaching placements through a focus on these roles.

Our analysis of their responses draws on grounded theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Using a system of constant comparisons to analyze the data, we developed descriptive categories that capture the perspectives of the participants (here student teachers, cooperating teachers, and university-based supervisors). The responses of each group were analyzed separately by listing, examining, and then categorizing them by theme. For validity, three different readers analyzed each set of responses and their results were compared. Where category designations seemed discrepant, there was discussion that generally led to the reshaping of descriptors. We made the decision to present the data in matrices with numbers of responses in order to make it easier to read and understand participants' perspectives.

Participants

Our sample is drawn from master's students in elementary and secondary education programs at Roosevelt University, a private, non-denominational university located on two campuses in Chicago. The teacher programs at Roosevelt serve close to 600 students who are typically first generation college. The majority are racially diverse older adults and career changers. Student teaching is generally the last class that is taken in a 36-hour master's degree. Supervisors are drawn from

the ranks of full-time faculty and experienced, retired school teachers. Because the university has both a downtown and suburban campus, student teachers can be in either city or suburban schools.

Fifty sets of questionnaires were sent out to master's level student teachers and their cooperating teachers in early childhood, elementary, and secondary teacher education programs at Roosevelt University. Seven university supervisors (100 percent), and twenty-one student teachers and their cooperating teachers responded.

The Questionnaire

Each respondent was asked the following questions:

1. Describe a "good" student teacher. (What are the characteristics of a good student teacher? Beliefs? Knowledge? Attitudes? Values? Behaviors? Teaching practices?)

2. Describe a "good" cooperating teacher. (What are the characteristics of a good cooperating teacher? Beliefs? Knowledge? Attitudes? Values? Behaviors? Teaching Practices?)

3. Describe a "good" university supervisor. (What are the characteristics of a good cooperating teacher? Beliefs? Knowledge? Attitudes? Values? Behaviors? Teaching Practices?)

4. Describe a "good" student teaching placement.

Method

We sorted participants' responses in categories. Thus, for example, all of the cooperating teacher responses were coded as a set. Once this coding was complete, we compared across the three groups. Because our sample was so small, we did not analyze the data relative to the grade level of the respondents. With a larger sample, this could be an interesting expansion of this study. We found that participants' responses about roles sorted along four general themes. In order of frequency these are:

- mentoring/supervision activities on the part of cooperating teachers and supervisors;
- personal characteristics such as patience and good humor;
- pedagogical content knowledge as in "knowing the subject and how to teach it";
- professional dispositions such as being collegial, or being organized.

There was general consensus among participants on some of these. For example, student teachers, cooperating teachers, and supervisors all agree that

cooperating teachers should be good mentors and supervisors as is evident in the following responses:

> **Cooperating Teacher:** A good cooperating teacher is a mentor. He should knowledgeable and his advice should be trustworthy. (See Table 5)
>
> **Student Teacher:** A good cooperating teacher will be a mentor and will have good qualities. *OR* A good cooperating teacher is someone who will let a student teacher fly. They let you try different things and give you feedback on your successes as well as any failures. They are there for you to borrow ideas off of and willing to leave you alone to teach your class. (See Table 5)
>
> **Supervisor:** A good cooperating teacher will be available for post conferences, ask questions about what they can do to help students, conference with students and offer constructive suggestions. (See Table 5)

There were also areas in which one group's responses were discrepant with those of the other two: For example, student teachers cited personal characteristics as six times more important for cooperating teachers than did cooperating teachers and university supervisors.

> **Student Teacher:** A good cooperating teacher is honest, energetic, and open-minded. OR A good cooperating teacher is caring, concerned, committed. (See Table 10)

We also found that there were differing perceptions of roles. Student teachers, for example, expected more advocacy on their behalf from supervisors than did cooperating teachers.

> **Student Teacher:** A good university supervisor needs to be a liaison between the student teacher and the teaching community comprised of professional teachers.
>
> **Cooperating Teacher:** A good university supervisor communicates university requirements clearly both to student teachers and cooperating teachers (number of classes to be taught, direction of student teaching, etc.), visits at least 3 to 4 times and does not require a lot of outside work for the student teacher. (See Table 1)

Where category designations seemed discrepant, there was discussion that generally led to the reshaping of descriptors, for example, "Appearance is important. Neatness counts" was interpreted to mean "dresses and acts professionally" (See Table 7) or "Don't be afraid to fail when planning lessons" was interpreted to mean "Able to make mistakes" (See Table 5).

Findings

We have presented our findings in table format below so that comparisons within categories and across roles can be easily seen. We begin with a consideration of the role of student teacher. We move from there to a focus on the role of cooperating teachers and then to a study of supervisors' roles. We end this section with a focus on participants' descriptions of a good student teaching placement.

The Good Student Teacher: The responses to question # 1 suggest the tensions that exist in a role whose very descriptor, student teacher, implies both compliance and assertiveness. Descriptors of the "good" student teacher were evenly divided across the themes of *Professional Attitudes and Dispositions* and *Personal Qualities.* Singly and together, these categories accounted for the majority of descriptors provided by respondents. Among the descriptors that we found most intriguing were those that pointed directly at the student teacher as novice and understudy—"accepting of help & advice" and "able to make mistakes / takes criticism"—and those that focused on the student teacher as budding professional—"innovative/ risk taker" and "flexible/open-minded." Like cooperating teachers and supervisors, they are expected to be "caring" and "reflective," but there is so much more expected of them—by themselves as well as by those who supervise them. (See Tables 1 & 2)

Table 1: Professional Attitudes and Dispositions of Student Teachers

ST (n=21)	CT (n=21)	SUPR (n=7)	Total	
7	1	2	10	Able to make mistakes/Takes criticism/thick skinned
12	9	6	27	Accepting of help & advice/Open to suggestions/ Reflective & develops ways to improve
5	1	2	8	Assertive in taking responsibility/Open & clear with coop. T. regarding expectations & desired outcomes for student teaching/Emulates coop. T & goes beyond
3	0	3	6	Believes all students can learn/Believes kids come first/Student-centered
7	0	1	8	Creative/Resourceful
0	3	0	3	Enjoys kids
5	1	0	6	Good listener
5	5	0	10	Innovative/Risk taker
6	3	1	10	Lifelong learner
4	1	0	5	Observant
11	4	1	16	Responsible/Conscientious/Hardworking
5	2	0	7	Role model for kids
70	30	16	116	Total entries

Table 2: Personal Qualities of Student Teachers

ST (n=21)	CT (n=21)	SUPR (n=7)	Total	
1	0	2	3	Capable/Competent
21	3	0	24	Caring (compassionate, nurturing, concerned with building confidence, empathic, responsive, unselfish)
8	4	0	12	Dedicated/Enthusiastic/Excited/Motivated/Passionate
0	1	0	1	Engaged
1	0	0	1	Fair
8	5	0	13	Flexible (Open-minded)
2	0	0	2	Has stamina
3	0	0	3	Honest
0	0	1	1	Intelligent
1	0	2	3	Mature/Strong in mind and spirit
2	0	0	2	Modest
4	1	0	5	Patient
1	0	0	1	Respectful
1	2	0	3	Sense of humor
4	5	3	12	Self-confident/self-reliant/Takes initiative
57	21	8	86	Total Entries

Observable Professional Qualities: We found in participants' responses to the question of who is a "good" student teacher a set of descriptors that are in some ways analogous to the mentoring/supervisory activities that they ascribed to cooperating teachers and university supervisors (see Table 5). We have designated these as *Observable Professional Qualities* (see Table 3). Most have to do with the role of *student* teacher: They involve emulation of cooperating teacher's activities or compliance with the general order of school. Coming primarily from student teachers, the descriptor, "tries new methods," stands out because it breaks with this pattern (See Table 3).

Table 3: Observable Professional Qualities of Student Teachers

ST (n=21)	CT (n=21)	SUPR (n=7)	Total	
1	0	1	2	Consistent/dependable
3	1	0	4	Dresses and acts professionally
0	3	1	4	Follows coop teacher's lead
0	1	0	1	Follows school district policies
0	1	2	3	Good communication skills/Good people skills
2	0	0	2	Organized
3	3	1	7	Positive attitude/Enthusiastic about teaching
0	2	2	4	Prepared, Keeps up with grading
0	1	2	3	Punctual
3	2	2	7	Respects peers and administrators, good rapport with students and staff
6	1	2	9	Team player/Collaborative/Cooperative
10	0	1	11	Tries new methods, Interested in new methods
1	1	0	2	Uses high level questions
0	4	0	4	Volunteers for extra assignments, Attends extra-curricular activities, parent confs, staff meetings
29	20	14	63	Total Entries

Professional Knowledge Base: We noted with interest the fact that the descriptors of the professional/pedagogical knowledge base for student teachers were much fuller and more robust than those provided for cooperating teachers. While this category is slim especially in comparison to *professional dispositions* and *personal qualities* (See Tables 1 & 2), it nevertheless provides a more robust picture of the essential understandings that undergird teaching than do the descriptors of cooperating teachers and university supervisors (See Table 4).

Table 4: Professional Knowledge Base of Student Teachers

ST (n=21)	CT (n=21)	SUPR (n=7)	Total	
4	4	1	9	Knowledgeable about planning (Clear goals for instruction, Matches content and instruction with students and context, Develops appropriate learning activities)
2	2	0	4	Knowledgeable about classroom management
8	8	3	19	Knowledgeable about content
2	0	0	2	Broad liberal arts background and values education
2	0	2	4	Knowledgeable about standards/assessment
1	0	0	1	Knowledgeable about technology
5	2	3	10	Knowledgeable about child development and the ways in which learning happens
24	16	9	49	Total entries

"Good" Cooperating Teachers: All participants agree that good cooperating teachers and supervisors are good mentors and role models: They take time with student teachers, share their knowledge of good teaching, and offer support and encouragement. It is interesting to note, however, that within the set of descriptors that together describe the activities of mentors, giving autonomy to student teachers is noted by almost half of the student teachers and cooperating teachers who participated in the study but by only one supervisor. Because autonomy so clearly relates to the student teacher's role as a beginning teacher, we were intrigued by this anomaly (See Table 5).

Table 5: Mentoring (Supervision) Activities of Cooperating Teachers

ST (n=21)	CT (n=21)	SPR (n=7)	Total	
2	1	4	7	Allows student teacher to become involved in all aspects and duties of teaching
3	7	3	13	Allows student teacher to try new techniques and activities/Encourages risk-taking
12	11	1	24	Gives autonomy: Makes possible for student teacher to take over
29	37	19	85	Good mentor and role model (see descriptors below)
ST	CT	SPR	Total	
3	2	0	5	Available for questions and concerns
3	0	0	3	Goes the extra mile
3	8	6	17	Good mentor and role model
1	0	1	2	Knowledgeable about teaching teachers
7	3	1	11	Knows when to provide help & support
0	1	0	1	Observes
3	5	0	8	Supportive
0	3	1	4	Spends time with student teacher
4	5	3	12	Shares knowledge of good teaching and resources
5	10	7	22	Gives positive and constructive feedback on successes & failures, lesson plans, instruction
0	4	0	4	Welcoming of student teacher/Prepares students for student teacher's arrival
46	60	27	133	Total Entries

Professional Dispositions & Personal Qualities: *Professional dispositions* comprise the second largest category of responses to our question about good cooperating teachers. While it is interesting to note that none of the characteristics given were mentioned as frequently as were descriptors of mentoring activities for cooperating teachers, it is worth noting that the two descriptors most frequently mentioned: collegiality and openness not only go hand in hand but also are generally acknowledged characteristics of good mentors in any field. Further, though we have separated professional dispositions from personal characteristics because of the ways in which these descriptors were framed in participants' responses, there is actually very little that suggests that they are not simply qualities that one would want to see in any colleague and particularly in a colleague with whom one is also in a mentoring or supervisory relationship (See Tables 6 & 7).

Table 6: Professional dispositions of Cooperating Teachers

ST (n=21)	CT (n=21)	SPR (n=7)	Total	
3	2	0	5	Able to let others make mistakes/Able/willing to let go
3	8	5	16	Collegial/Cooperative/Good communication and interpersonal skills
1	0	0	1	Commitment to kids (kids come first)
1	1	1	3	Enthusiastic about teaching, good teacher
1	1	0	2	Learner
2	0	0	2	High expectations for students
4	4	0	8	Non-defensive/Open to learning from student teacher (younger person)/secure
1	0	0	1	Organized
16	16	6	38	Total Entries

Table 7: Personal Qualities of Cooperating Teachers

ST (n=21)	CT (n=21)	SPR (n=7)	Total	
3	1	3	7	Caring/Careful of student teacher's feelings
1	0	0	1	Energetic
8	2	2	12	Flexible/Open-minded
2	1	0	3	Gracious/Patient
3	0	1	4	Helpful/Supportive
5	0	2	7	Honest/Trustworthy
1	0	0	1	Passionate
0	0	1	1	Perceptive
23	4	9	36	Total Entries

Professional Knowledge: *Knowledge* comprises the fourth major category of responses to the question about a "good" cooperating teacher. To us, the interesting issue related to this category is that so few of the participants' remarks overall related to ways in which cooperating teachers enact their understandings of teaching and learning as they relate both to their students and to student teachers (See Table 8).

Table 8: Professional Knowledge Base of Cooperating Teachers

ST (n=21)	CT (n=21)	SPR (n=7)	Total	
0	1	0	1	Assesses student learning
1	0	0	1	Consistent
0	1	0	1	Demonstrates how to teach
1	0	1	2	Encourages problem-solving
1	0	1	2	Knowledgeable about child development/children
3	1	5	9	Knowledgeable about content
2	3	2	7	Knowledgeable about pedagogy
8	6	9	23	Total Entries

The Good Student Teaching Supervisor

Mentoring (Supervision) Activities: As was the case with cooperating teachers, mentoring activities comprised the largest set of responses concerning a good student teaching supervisor and the largest subset of responses describe supervisors as coaches, mentors, guides, role models. The emphasis that participants placed on this category with relation to supervisors (see Table 9 below) suggests this is a tacit acknowledgement of the cooperating teachers' need to focus first on her students and that the priority of the university supervisor should be the education of the student teacher. This subtle sense of priorities came through here in the descriptions of supervisors' activities and in discussions of supervisors' professional and personal qualities.

There were in participants' responses several descriptors of the supervisor's role that had not figured in the descriptions of cooperating teachers. Chief among these was the perception of the supervisor as a liaison between the university and the school. As such, the supervisor functions as an advocate for the student teacher with regard to the requirements of the teacher education program (See Table 9).

Table 9: Mentoring (Supervision) Activities of Supervisors

ST (n=21)	CT (n=21)	SUPR (n=7)	Total	
0	1	1	2	Address problems quickly
1	1	1	3	Available for regular interaction with student teacher (weekly seminars)
1	0	0	1	Checks with students on student teacher's progress
18	3	5	26	Acts as Coach, Guide, Mentor, Role Model, Provides support/Understanding
4	1	0	5	Combines supervision with instruction
0	1	0	1	Does not require a lot of outside work
15	11	4	30	Gives good advice re teaching/Provides positive feedback and constructive criticism
4	4	0	8	In synch with coop teacher & school/Does not interfere/argue with curriculum that is currently set up in school
7	9	5	21	Acts as Liaison, Gives feedback to cooperating teachers, Mediator between coop teacher & student teacher (when necessary)
0	1	0	1	Makes sure student teacher is ready for student teaching
1	8	0	9	Observes/Makes scheduled & unscheduled visits to observe student teachers (at least 4 times)
4	1	0	5	Provides reference for future work
55	41	16	112	Total entries

Professional Dispositions & Personal Qualities: These themes blend together as they did with the descriptors of cooperating teachers. Like cooperating teachers, university supervisors are expected to be good communicators, but in their role as supervisors, they are expected to be more attuned to the needs of student teachers. Thus, encouragement and caring figure more in the descriptors of supervisors than they do in those of cooperating teachers (See Tables 10 & 11).

Table 10: Professional Dispositions of Supervisors

ST (n=21)	CT (n=21)	SUPR (n=7)	Total	
3	1	0	4	Advocate/Believes in student teachers/Willing to fight for student teachers
0	1	0	1	Collaborative
9	3	3	15	Good communication skills/Good interpersonal skills/Good listener
10	1	0	11	Realistic (about expectations of student teachers)
1	0	0	1	Punctual
23	6	3	32	Total entries

Table 11: Personal Qualities of Supervisors

ST (n=21)	CT (n=21)	SUPR (n=7)	Total	
9	2	2	13	Caring/Compassionate/Empathic/Insightful
8	6	3	17	Encouraging/Motivating/Helpful/Nurturing/ Supportive/Reassuring
1	2	2	5	Ethical/honest
3	0	1	4	Flexible
21	10	8	39	Total entries

Professional Knowledge: We were surprised by the dearth of descriptors that related to supervisors' pedagogical knowledge because the supervisors were the faculty who often taught the methods classes or they were retired school people – both of whom should have had substantial pedagogical knowledge. Besides the expectation that they should have had teaching experience, there was virtually no mention of knowledge about education, supervision, even adult development (See Table 12).

Table 12: Professional Knowledge Base of Supervisors

ST (n=21)	CT (n=21)	SUPR (n=7)	Total	
0	0	1	1	Knowledgeable about content
0	0	1	1	Knowledgeable about research
4	3	3	10	Knowledgeable about teaching and schools/ Experienced teacher (10 years)
4	3	5	12	Total entries

Good Student Teaching Placements

Our data on the question of a good student teaching placement were incomplete. We are missing responses from cooperating teachers. However, there are some interesting trends in the responses that we did receive that round out the data provided above and suggest some intriguing insights about the ways in which our respondents view the student teaching experience. Describing a professional climate was the main focus of their responses and within this broad category, a collegial, open, friendly environment was the most critical aspect (See Table 14). We were interested, too, in the allusions to students that a few student teachers and supervisors thought important to include in their descriptions of good student teaching sites (see Table 13) and, it seems to go without saying, that classrooms should be well-equipped (see Table 15).

Table 13: Students

ST (n=21)	CT (n=21)	SUPR (n=7)	Total	
1		0	1	Angelic Students
2		1	3	Diverse
1		1	2	Small percentage of "at-risk" students/Good "control" throughout setting
1		0	1	Students understand the need for order and discipline
5		2	7	Total Entries

Table 14: Professional Climate

ST (n=21)	CT (n=21)	SUPR (n=7)	Total	
2		2	4	Administrators know and are interested in student teachers
1		0	1	Allows student teacher to teach a preferred grade level
1		1	2	Close to student teacher's home (or supervisor's)
2		1	3	Closely resembles school in which student teacher will eventually work or grew up
8		1	9	Collegial—student teacher part of a team/ Professional interaction around good teaching
6		0	6	Encourages and supports creativity & trial of new ideas
2		0	2	Encourages extra-curricular involvement of student teachers/Involvement in board and faculty meetings
15		1	16	Friendly staff/Welcoming & Supportive of student teachers & outsiders
1		0	1	In synchrony with teacher ed program
1		0	1	Information provided about schedule and other school routines
0		2	2	Master teacher for student teacher
4		1	5	Realistic—gives student teacher a genuine sense of the life of schools & classrooms
3		0	3	Safe environment (physically & emotionally)
12		2	14	Welcoming and supportive of student teachers
58		11	69	Total Entries

Table 15: Physical Setting

ST (n=21)	CT (n=21)	SUPR (n=7)	Total	
1		1	2	Classrooms organized with multiple centers
1		0	1	Open
1		0	1	Small classes
8		0	8	Well-equipped
11		1	12	Total entries

Because the questionnaire was open-ended, we wondered what would happen if we sent out a forced choice questionnaire in which we asked respondents—student teachers, cooperating teachers, and university supervisors—to rank the importance of those attributes that we had determined from the open-ended responses. So, we tried it. We developed a questionnaire on which we placed all of the attributes listed above. Next to each quality, we asked respondents to circle a 1, 2, or 3 with one being the lowest and 3 the highest (most important). As we did with the open-ended questionnaire, we asked respondents to take on one another's roles. For example, a student teacher would respond for herself and then take the role of the cooperating teacher and mark what she thought the cooperating teacher would circle. We hoped there would be perceived differences among the various respondents and that these differences would give us information about how each participant more specifically defined each role. In retrospect, it wasn't too surprising that almost every respondent to this set of questionnaires marked every response with a "3"! Thus, we could not conclude anything from the data except that the qualities and characteristics that we derived from the open-ended questionnaires seem to be seen as essential by all of the participants.

Discussion

Although we recognized that the urban context might make a difference in clinical placements, we neglected to ask for information about placements from our respondents, thus we are left with a critical question about the relationship between the teacher education program and the context of the student teaching experience. That a good student teaching placement is not just a matter of choosing the "right" classroom seemed obvious to us. What we did not know, however, was whether and to what extent the constellation of student teacher, cooperating teacher, university supervisor, and school setting shapes and influences perspectives on a good student teaching placement. Our work with our Mills colleagues (LaBoskey, & Richert, 1999; LaBoskey, V., Richert, A, & Kroll, L.,2000; LaBoskey, Kroll, & Galguera, 2001) as well as that of Freidus (2000, 2001) and Rust and Bullmaster (2000) suggests that the values of a program, its desired outcomes for student teaching placements, and the context of a placement itself have potentially powerful shaping effects on the ways in which student teaching placements are enacted.

We did not anticipate the complex and highly interactive negotiation of experience that the data of these questionnaires revealed. A good student teaching experience, we discovered, is dynamic. It is constantly changing, constantly challenging—not just for the student teacher but for the other participants as well. Our data seem to indicate that general knowledge of best practices are rarely drawn upon by either the university supervisor or the cooperating teacher. There were obvious opportunities for such exchanges in both one-to-one interactions between cooperating teachers and student teachers and between supervisors and student

teachers. Remarkably, such exchanges were not even reported in the weekly student teaching seminars that so closely resemble traditional college classes. It may be that the way in which our questions were posed contributed to the imbalance in this category or it may be that the research-based knowledge of teacher education is absent from the discourse around field-based practice.

We are surprised by the clear demarcation of roles that emerged here: Cooperating teachers are acknowledged first as teachers of children and second as teacher educators. Our participants did not expect cooperating teachers to do more than make the classroom accessible to student teachers and work with them in collegial, supportive ways. That cooperating teachers should be mentors and role models is axiomatic to their status as cooperating teachers, and, now that we have combed through this data, we would contend that the accent in this descriptor should be on *role model*, i.e., cooperating teacher as role model. Mentoring, however, belongs primarily to the university supervisor who, our data suggest, are seen by both student teachers and cooperating teachers as *liaisons* in the student teaching experience. As liaisons, supervisors could influence the development of new teachers and the practice of experienced teachers in powerful ways. Yet, our own experience as teachers and teacher educators and the data of this study suggests that supervisors rarely interpret their role thus.

The concern for autonomy among student teachers and cooperating teachers and its seeming absence from discourse of the university supervisors moved us to wonder if it is a subtle artifact of classroom knowledge that escapes many supervisors because of their separation from daily classroom life. The issue of autonomy sensitized us to an interesting split that exists in student teachers' conceptions of themselves as student teachers: On the one hand, they act as students and many of them take a passive role in the classroom following cooperating teachers' directives and trying to fulfill the requirements of the teacher education program; on the other hand, they are trying to take on professionals' trappings. Thus, they want to "run the class," "try new ideas," "take risks," and be treated as a colleague, engaged in planning, and making decisions about the conduct of lessons. This split conception of the student teaching role extends to descriptors of a good student teaching placement raising the importance of the psychological climate that characterizes the setting. Student teachers need to feel a part of the school and like members of the professional corps.

Implications

Though too small to warrant generalizations, our study could prompt teacher educators to look beyond relationships and day-to-day supervision to a deeper analysis of the linkages between teacher education programs and the field for the purpose of improving student learning. What we have discovered from our work with this small sample of student teachers, cooperating teachers, and university

supervisors is intriguing enough to move us to explore some of the following issues in greater depth.

- What is the research-based knowledge that is discussed among student teachers, cooperating teachers, and supervisors?
- How might supervisors, cooperating teachers, and student teachers get to know about the program, its goals, and its content?
- How might teacher education programs plan for and implement uniformly "good" student teaching placements for their students?

While we acknowledge the importance of craft in teaching, this study makes clear that pushing beyond craft requires a higher level of discourse about practice. Relationships are important for developing trust and establishing confidence and effective communication, but a general re-shaping of teaching practices will require an explicit commitment on the part of teacher educators to raise the level of discourse within their programs through shared professional development with cooperating teachers and university supervisors. These data suggest that we have focused almost entirely on establishing, improving, and buttressing the individual triads of student teaching. But, if teaching is to change, then a focused conversation about general practice much like that described by Lewis and Tsuchida (1997) and Stiegler and Hiebert (1999) regarding lesson study is essential.

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