COOPERATING TEACHERS' TRAINING, CHALLENGES, AND PERCEIVED
READINESS TO HOST STUDENT TEACHERS

by

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ABSTRACT

ERICA HOBBS MOODY. Cooperating teachers' training, challenges, and perceived readiness to host student teachers. (Under the direction of DR. REBECCA SHORE).

The student teaching experience is one that is typically filled with a wide range of triumphs and challenges, and novice student teachers (STs) tend to rely heavily on their Cooperating Teachers (CTs) to help navigate the experience. CTs have a strong influence on the development of STs; however, far too often CTs are under-prepared to carry out the many duties required of them. Without adequate support and training for CTs, STs may not receive the level of support needed to properly equip them with the skills needed for the challenging first years of teaching. This study investigated the training and support provided to CTs, and examined the challenges CTs faced during the student teaching experience. This study also investigated two levels of training for CTs - those who participated in the standard training provided by the Educator Preparation Program (EPP) and those who completed additional training provided by the EPP through the Teacher Education Institute (TEI), a multi-day summer institute. A total of 361 CTs participated in this quantitative study and completed a survey about the training and support received from the EPP, as well as challenges they encountered while supervising STs. Results showed very few differences between TEI and non-TEI trained CTs; both groups had mostly positive experiences and were mostly satisfied with the training and support provided. CTs in both groups reported similar challenges related to preparation areas such as edTPA, having difficult conversations with STs, and providing feedback/coaching to them, suggesting that these areas may require additional support and training prior to and during the student teaching experience.

DEDICATION

To my loving parents: Thank you for teaching me the value of hard work and perseverance through your living example. Thank you for instilling and modeling a strong work ethic and the significance of morals and values from a young age and reminding me to always lean on my faith in good times and hard times.

To my wonderful husband: Thank you for being there for me throughout this journey and for loving me always! Thank you for the encouragement when I grew frustrated and wanted to give up.

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Last but certainly not least, I want to thank my Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, for without Him, none of this would have been possible.

"Being confident of this, that He who began a good work in you will

carry it on to completion."

Philippians 1:6

"But they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with

wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint."

Isaiah 40:31

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Each year, nearly 200,000 teacher candidates complete student teaching internships through their respective Educator Preparation Programs (EPPs) in a wide range of P-12 settings in the United States of America (National Council on Teacher Quality, 2011). Most student teaching internships across these EPPs consist of a semester-long placement in a P-12 school under the direction of a school-based educator, the Cooperating Teacher (CT), who has the responsibility of overseeing the day-to-day classroom operations, monitoring interactions and instruction between the student teacher (ST) and the students, and evaluating, mentoring, and supporting the overall development of the ST.

For most EPPs, the student teaching internship is the culminating experience before completion of the teacher preparation program. Each state has its own requirements for the structure of the internship and additional licensure requirements. In North Carolina, the student teaching internship must last for a minimum of 16 weeks (NC State Board, 2018), and (as in most other states), the ST is placed with a school-based educator (the CT), and an EPP representative (often termed the University Supervisor - US), who oversees the overall experience. The CT and US work together to evaluate, coach, support, and mentor the ST throughout the student teaching experience.

Once in the student teaching placement, the ST typically assumes instructional and non-instructional duties on a gradual basis, under the guidance of the CT. Per North Carolina state board policy, it is the responsibility of the CT, in cooperation with the principal and EPP representative, to "assign the intern responsibilities and duties that will provide adequate preparation for teaching" (NC State Board, 2018). By the end of the

student teaching experience, if the ST has met all course and program requirements of the EPP, as well as any state requirements, he/she will be eligible for a teaching license.

Teacher preparation is a widely discussed issue across the nation. The quality of the nation's teachers has been the subject of sharp criticism, along with EPPs. Yet, teacher preparation is often treated as an afterthought when discussing how to strengthen the public education system (National Research Council, 2010). Well-prepared teachers consistently produce higher-performing students than teachers who are less well-prepared (Darling-Hammond, Holtzman, Gatlin, & Heilig, 2005; Paulsen, DaFonte, & Barton-Arwood, 2015). It could then be concluded that beginning teachers who start their careers unprepared due to a poor learning experience during their student teaching internship may struggle to produce strong student academic gains compared to their better-prepared peers.

Anecdotal evidence suggests that the first years of teaching are the most challenging. Because of the challenges that exist in these first years, beginning teachers are exiting at alarming rates. Podolsky, Kini, Darling-Hammond, and Bishop (2019) created a list of the reasons beginning teachers exit the profession. Inadequate preparation was cited as one of the reasons beginning teachers leave. Podolsky et al. (2019) specifically explained that beginning teachers with little to no preparation are 2.5 times more likely to leave the classroom after 1 year as compared to their more prepared counterparts. Ingersoll, Merrill, and May (2014) explained that the amount of prior practice teaching that new teachers completed was strongly related to their attrition and that first-year teachers who had at least twelve weeks of practice teaching prior to their employment were over 3 times less likely to leave the profession than those who had no

practice teaching. This is similar to the findings of Podolsky et. al (2016) who found that beginning teachers who had received comprehensive preparation (i.e., observing others teaching; student teaching for a full semester; receiving feedback; taking courses in teaching methods) were 2.5 times less likely to leave teaching after a year in the profession than teachers with little or no training. Ingersoll et al. (2014) suggested that one method to enhance teacher retention is to ensure that new teachers have received adequate preparation.

Beginning teacher preparation and attrition is a key area of focus for many school districts across the nation but research suggests that perhaps the focus should be directed to the clinical field experiences that occur during the student teaching internship (Podolsky et al., 2019) and the support and mentoring received from the CT. To address the issue of teacher retention, researchers suggest that EPPs work collaboratively with school partners to develop and implement effective mentoring support programs for STs and beginning teachers (Russell & Russell, 2011). Considering the amount of time the CT spends supporting and mentoring the ST, a closer examination of the impact of the CT may be beneficial, which this study addresses. Prior to this examination of the CT's impact, it is important to note the historical background of teacher training.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF TEACHER TRAINING

According to the National History Education Clearinghouse (NHEC, 2018), completing coursework and a culminating student teaching internship is a common practice and requirement for most EPPs today; however, this concept of teachers being formally trained at the university level and through an internship was not always customary. In the first decades of American history, teachers received no formal training

at all. Many teachers had no more than a secondary-level education and would typically

return to teach at schools they once attended. This continued until such educational

reformers as Horace Mann began to argue that teachers were unprepared for their work.

Mann argued that teaching was the most difficult of all the arts, and the most profound of

all sciences, therefore, teachers needed to be well-prepared, knowledgeable leaders of

impeccable virtue (Cremin, 1957; Baines, L., 2006). Mann was influential in the

development of teacher training as a path to professionalize teaching as a career, and he

was instrumental in the establishment of the first normal schools in Massachusetts

(Tyack, 1975). By the 1930s, normal schools began to transform into colleges and

universities, and larger numbers of teachers began receiving formal training. With this

formal training came some clinical field experiences on a small scale; however, clinical

field experiences did not expand in practice until the 1950s and 1960s when increasing

numbers of states began to strengthen their licensure requirements. By the 1970s and

1980s, most states created set standards and timeframes for the student teaching

internship, ranging from as little as 4 weeks in length to eighteen weeks (NHEC, 2018).

Clarke, Triggs, and Nielsen (2014) noted that the origins of the term "Cooperating

Teacher" date back to the World War II era. As STs moved from normal schools to

university settings, faculty members who sought academic status began to distance

themselves from normal schools. As a result of this, as well as baby boomers entering

the public school system at record numbers, faculty members suddenly had to rely on

school teachers to help with the burgeoning student population. The university-based

faculty members viewed themselves as superior experts in the field and merely expected

classroom teachers to *cooperate* with them, which led to the widely used term

cooperating teacher. While "Cooperating Teacher" still remains the most frequently used description for classroom teachers hosting a ST, many EPPs have since begun to utilize different terminologies to better acknowledge and respect the work of these teachers. Some of the more contemporary titles are "Clinical Educator" and "Mentor Teacher" (Clarke et al., 2014).

STATEMENT OF PROBLEM

I have been professionally supervising STs in elementary schools since 2015. Prior to this role, I was a classroom teacher and had a number of experiences working with preservice teachers. I was observed by a number of clinical students, who were teacher education majors completing required observations of veteran teachers. I also had the honor of serving as a CT during the 2013-2014 academic year. In both roles, as a US and as a CT, I have experienced a number of challenges that make CT training and preparation personal to me. When I was a CT, I encountered a number of dilemmas related to my role. I worked hard and tried my best to support my ST, but there were areas where I needed support and more clearly articulated expectations. Even though I had attended a 2 hour CT orientation sponsored by the university and reviewed the student teaching handbook provided by the field experience office, I still wrestled with identifying what exactly my primary role was between an evaluator, a mentor, and an instructional model. I struggled to figure out how to turn over responsibilities in a gradual manner, when to give feedback, how to prioritize feedback, how to build a healthy working relationship, how to address dispositional issues, and how to have conversations about challenging topics. Hosting a ST was an incredible opportunity and allowed me to develop my leadership and mentoring skills, which ultimately prepared me

for my current role as a US; however, it was one of the most rewarding, yet challenging experiences I have ever had in my career as a professional educator.

In my current role as a US, I frequently see CTs grappling with the same challenges I did. Because of this, it has been a passion of mine to support CTs through feedback, training, and coaching related to the many dimensions of their role. Even with my efforts to support CTs, I still observe that many of them are ill-prepared to navigate challenges and that brief, isolated training sessions are not enough. Several CTs have expressed their lack of confidence in addressing difficult topics with their ST so they often overlook critical issues to maintain a peaceful working environment. I have witnessed the impact on a ST's development when CTs fail to understand the critical importance of their role or struggle to model best practices, provide performance feedback, and address other issues that frequently arise. Some former STs have even shared with me their perception that they did not feel sufficiently prepared for their beginning years of teaching because of the lack of support and feedback received from their CT.

I have found that while being a CT can be demanding, many CTs are deeply committed to improving and providing the best experience for their ST. Most CTs I work with express a sense of pride and feel honored to give back to the teaching profession in this way; however, it is a challenging role likely due to a lack of knowledge and experience, rather than a lack of commitment. Conversely, I have also worked with some CTs who are not as committed or passionate about their work or appear to merely view a ST as a semester-long teacher's assistant or a way to lessen their individual workload. My experience with both types of CTs leads me to believe that having effective CTs

begins with careful and deliberate selection of those who have the right disposition for this important work of preparing future teachers.

When considering the placement of CTs and STs, there are established CT requirements in most states; however, many EPPs may have additional criteria. In the state of North Carolina, the minimum requirements to serve as a CT include:

(1) Be professionally licensed in the field of licensure sought by the student.

(2) Have a minimum of three years of experience in a teaching role.

(3) Have been rated, through the educator's most recent formal evaluations, at least at the "proficient" level as part of the North Carolina Teacher Evaluation System, or the equivalent on an evaluation system utilized by another state or partner school, as applicable, in the field of licensure sought by the student. The principal shall determine which clinical educator [cooperating teacher] best meets the needs of each intern and shall assign the most appropriate clinical educator to that intern, with priority consideration for those clinical educators rated as "distinguished" and "accomplished." If a principal determines that a teacher rated as "proficient" is the most appropriate clinical educator [cooperating teacher] for an intern, the principal shall maintain records of the reasons for that determination.

(NC General Statutes - Chapter 115C Article 17D)

Like many other states, North Carolina places an emphasis on teacher evaluation ratings and years of experience as a prerequisite in hosting a ST; however, little evidence exists that years of experience or teacher evaluation ratings are key factors in the effectiveness of a CT (Matsko, Ronfeldt, Nolan, Klugman, Reininger, & Brockman,

2020); therefore, serving as an effective classroom teacher of P-12 students does not

necessarily transfer to becoming an effective CT. Matsko et al. (2020) suggested that

being an effective teacher of P-12 students is actually less important to effective ST

mentoring than being able to provide quality feedback and support to a ST.

      CTs play a vital role in teacher preparation (Russell & Russell, 2011). More than

70 years ago, Andrews (1950) suggested that serving as a CT requires particular skills

and knowledge that are not possessed by all teachers and therefore require advanced

training. The training and support CTs receive prior to and during the student teaching

experience varies greatly across EPPs. Despite evidence that training CTs results in

greater ST mentoring and the absence of training is associated with ineffective ST

mentoring, CTs do not typically receive formal training to serve in this role (Garies &

Grant, 2014). Russell and Russell (2011) found that most CTs do not receive

comprehensive or coordinated preparation for their role. There are many reasons for this

phenomenon that are specific to each EPP such as time and resources. Gareis and Grant

(2014) posited that the creation of quality CT training is a complex issue that has not

been adequately investigated and understood as it relates to *how* to train CTs.

      Many existing studies tend to focus on ST and beginning teacher perspectives

related to the support received from the CT or the level of support from the EPP; less

research has been solely focused on CTs and their perspectives of their preparedness and

challenges. As a result of this existing gap in the literature, an exploration into CT

training and support for their role, as well as challenges faced, will be further examined

in this study through the collection and analysis of survey data from classroom teachers

hosting a ST. Prior to this examination, a portion of this data will be gathered in the context of the Teacher Education Institute.

<center>TEACHER EDUCATION INSTITUTE</center>

In collaboration with Deans for Impact, a national nonprofit organization dedicated to improving teacher preparation, the university in which this research is conducted created the Teacher Education Institute (TEI) program in the summer of 2017. The original goals of the TEI program focused on three themes: practice-based teacher education, embedded coaching and mentoring, and differentiation. Through these themes, TEI intended to eliminate the silos that often exist between university-based faculty (university supervisors and course instructors) and P-12 partners (teachers and principals). The primary goal was to establish a common understanding about what constitutes accomplished teaching and to better train and support all stakeholders, specifically CTs, in coaching STs to implement high-leverage instructional *focus practices*. These 3 *focus practices* include: Setting up and managing small group work, eliciting student thinking, and facilitating whole class discussions.

I have been actively involved in TEI and the annual summer sessions that have taken place since its establishment in 2017. I have supported the goals of TEI in a number of ways, including serving on the design team and facilitating breakout sessions for CTs. TEI was designed to fill in very specific gaps in the teacher preparation program related to coaching, feedback, mentoring, and *focus practices*; however, many CTs and USs involved have expressed the need for improvements. There have been a number of logistical challenges and anecdotally, many CTs have shared that they wish TEI would center more closely around equipping them with skills and strategies they need on day

one to be effective in hosting their ST, rather than so much of an emphasis on the *focus practices.* Part of this study will serve as a program evaluation of TEI to determine the difference, if any, that exists between the responses of TEI-trained CTs and non-TEI CTs around their perceptions of preparedness based on the level of support and training they received. The results of this evaluation can guide next steps for improvements to TEI. More information about the type of training TEI CTs received will be included in chapter three.

PURPOSE OF STUDY

The theoretical framework of this study was grounded in Lev Vygotsky's seminal work regarding constructivism and social learning. Vygotsky (1978) argued that development is a social process and that interaction with others greatly assists in the learning process. This is evidenced during the student teaching experience when the CT and ST work together while the ST gradually assumes more duties and leadership with students. This process occurs as the CT closely monitors and supports the STs (Vygostky, 1978; Giebelhaus & Bowman, 2002). Through the exploration of CTs' perceptions of the support and training received prior to and during the internship, as well as challenges encountered, EPPs and other educational school leaders will be able to better understand teacher preparation and CT experiences and learning processes as they play the role of the "expert" in the student teaching experience, while supporting the novice ST.

This quantitative study has a threefold purpose. (1) This study sought to explore and describe the student teaching experience through the lens of Vygotsky, specifically focusing on the preparation of CTs and support provided to CTs spanning from the fall

2017 semester through the spring 2020 semester. (2) This study investigated the challenges CTs faced during the student teaching experience. The data gathered will help to decipher what specific areas of the student teaching experience are most challenging for CTs, as well as determine what supports and training CTs report they need from EPPs in order to more effectively serve in their role. (3) This study sought to determine the impact of an existing TEI CT training program, based on TEI-trained CTs' reported responses compared to those CTs who were not part of the program. The data will be examined to determine if there were significant differences in the two groups of CT responses.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

This quantitative study sought to answer the following questions:

1. To what extent do Cooperating Teachers feel prepared by their Student Teacher's Educator Preparation Program to support their Student Teachers at the beginning of the student teaching experience?

2. To what extent do Cooperating Teachers feel prepared to support Student Teachers during the student teaching experience?

3. What components of supervising the student teaching experience are most challenging for Cooperating Teachers?

4. To what extent do Cooperating Teachers who were part of the Teacher Education Institute program feel prepared and supported for their role as compared to their non-Teacher Education Institute trained peers?

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

Teacher preparation is a critical area of focus for EPPs and schools across the country. There is a wide body of research about beginning teacher preparation and retention (Podolsky et al., 2016; Ingersoll et al., 2014) but less research has been conducted on the relationship between beginning teacher preparation and a successful student teaching internship. More specifically, research on CTs and their perceived preparedness for their role, as well as challenges experienced during the student teaching internship, is an underexplored area of teacher preparation. The findings of this study have the potential to illuminate key areas of focus for EPPs and school districts in selecting, supporting, and preparing CTs.   Additionally, the results of this study could help drive forward the work of TEI and inform areas of focus for future training. The findings could also bring awareness to the relationship between beginning teacher preparation, the impact of the student teaching internship, and the critical role CTs play during the internship.

LIMITATIONS AND ASSUMPTIONS

1. This study was limited to CTs that hosted a ST between the fall 2017 semester and spring 2020 semester.

2. This study only surveyed the CT of record and did not include the CT's partner teacher(s), co-teacher(s), teacher assistants, or lead CTs (if applicable).

3. Some TEI CTs received different levels of training, as TEI has evolved each year since its initial session during summer 2017.

4. One semester of this study took place at the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic in which schools and universities abruptly closed for in-person instruction. This may have impacted the survey responses provided and the overall response rate.

5. An assumption of this study was that all participants would understand the questions on the survey and answer all questions truthfully.

DEFINITIONS AND RELEVANT TERMS

Cooperating Teacher (CT): The school-based classroom teacher that is hosting the student teaching intern. This title is also commonly referred to as mentor teacher. Some states have shifted to the accreditation terminology "Clinical Educator"; however, for the purposes of this study, this person will be called a Cooperating Teacher.

Educative Teacher Performance Assessment (edTPA): A performance-based capstone project completed during the student teaching internship, which analyzes a student teacher's ability to effectively plan, instruct, and assess P-12 students. Per NC State Board of Education policy, beginning September 1, 2019, all candidates seeking a North Carolina licensure recommendation must have an official edTPA minimal passing score; however, the university in which this study took place has been requiring a passing edTPA score for successful program completion since the fall 2015 semester.

Educator Preparation Program (EPP): The program, college, and/or university that trains student teachers prior to and during the student teaching internship. The EPP typically makes a teaching/license recommendation on behalf of the candidate.

Student Teacher (ST): The preservice teaching candidate completing the EPP's student teaching requirements. Other titles for this include intern, teacher candidate, preservice teacher, or field experience student.

Student Teaching Internship: The required internship candidates must complete in order to receive a teaching license recommendation. The length of this internship varies by EPP but in the state of NC, this internship must last a minimum of 16 weeks.

Teacher Education Institute (TEI): Summer institute that selected Cooperating Teachers and EPP faculty attend. The goal of TEI is to improve teacher preparation by enhancing practice-based teacher education, embedded coaching and mentoring, and differentiation.

University Supervisor (US): The EPP representative typically charged with overseeing the overall internship and supporting both the student teacher and the Cooperating Teacher.

Yearlong Internship (YLI) Semester: For candidates at the university in which this research is conducted, this describes the semester prior to student teaching in which candidates are still completing required coursework. YLI candidates have already received their student teaching placement and they attend this placement the equivalent of one day per week (minimum) to help get them acclimated to the school, CT, and students. After the YLI semester, candidates typically return to this same placement and the same CT to complete student teaching.

Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD): Refers to the difference in what a learner can do without assistance and what the learner can accomplish with a skilled and knowledgeable guide.

SUMMARY

The student teaching experience is layered with expectations and challenges for both the CT and the ST. Because of the nature of the CT's role in the internship, the CT

is often the first point of contact in supporting the ST, providing feedback, modeling of best practices, and addressing problems. The role of the CT is a critical component of student teaching; however, there appear to be inconsistencies in the amount of mentoring and support STs receive from their CTs during the student teaching internship. For decades, researchers have found that the student teaching experience is the most critical component in preparing to become a classroom teacher (Ferber & Nillas, 2010) and that the CT has the greatest influence on novice STs' development as a teacher (Copeland, 1980; Ferber & Nillas, 2010). While the impact of the CT is significant, CTs lack specific preparation and tend to be underprepared for their role (Clarke et al., 2014). The information gathered from this study can be used by EPPs to evaluate the effectiveness of their efforts to prepare CTs in supporting and preparing STs during the internship and more importantly for their careers in the teaching profession.

This quantitative study aims to explore the training and support CTs receive at the beginning of and during the student teaching internship, and challenges they face during the student teaching internship. This study also aims to assess the existing TEI training program and its overall impact on CT perceptions. Chapter one introduced the study, provided background knowledge, outlined the purpose for and significance of the study, and presented the research questions to be investigated:

1. To what extent do Cooperating Teachers feel prepared by their Student Teacher's Educator Preparation Program to support their Student Teachers at the beginning of the student teaching experience?

2. To what extent do Cooperating Teachers feel prepared to support Student Teachers during the student teaching experience?

3. What components of supervising the student teaching experience are most challenging for Cooperating Teachers?

4. To what extent do Cooperating Teachers who were part of the Teacher Education Institute program feel prepared and supported for their role as compared to their non-Teacher Education Institute trained peers?

Chapter two follows with an extensive review of the available and related literature and will provide a foundation of this study by exploring what is already known about this topic. Chapter three will outline the methodology used for this study, including detailed descriptions of the instruments used, statistical analyses, and participant description and selection. Chapter four will include the data collected, and analyze and report the findings. Chapter five will discuss the results, conclusions, and recommendations for further research.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

The following literature review presents the theoretical framework through which to view the role of the Cooperating Teacher (CT).   This review will continue by providing a foundational understanding of the significance of the student teaching experience and the state policies and accreditation requirements in place to ensure consistency. Following this, the review will expound on the research showing the impact of the CT on the overall student teaching internship. The next focus will be an examination of possible challenges CTs face, including an investigation of the concept of the CT functioning as a mentor and other roles.   An examination of the literature on CT training and preparation concludes this chapter.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The concept of student teaching (observing, assisting, and assuming instructional responsibilities alongside a veteran CT) aligns with Vygotsky's work regarding constructivism and social development (Shabani, Khatib, & Ebadi, 2010). Unlike more rigid approaches, such as behaviorism that focuses primarily on observable behaviors and programmed instruction, constructivism is a learning theory based on the belief that the learner actively constructs their own knowledge based upon current and past knowledge, social interactions, and motivation rather than simply acquiring it. Learning is an active process and learners build new knowledge upon the foundation of prior learning (McLeod, 2019). Tam (2000) suggests that constructivist learning formats are environments in which knowledge is shared between the expert and the learner, the expert and learner share authority, and the expert's role is one of a facilitator or guide.

Similarly, Vygotsky (1978) argued that development is a social process and that interaction with others greatly assists in the learning process. This is evidenced during the student teaching experience when the CT and student teacher (ST) work together while the ST gradually assumes more duties and leadership with students. This process occurs as the CT closely monitors and supports the ST (Vygostky, 1978; Giebelhaus & Bowman, 2002).

The CT's role helps the ST move through what Vygotsky coined as the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD, Vygostky, 1978; Giebelhaus & Bowman, 2002). Vygotsky (1978) defined the ZPD as "the distance between the actual development 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" (p. 86). Vygotsky's seminal notion of ZPD may be dated, but the concept is still relevant in contemporary educational settings.

In this study, the ZPD can be understood as the difference in what a learner (in this case, the ST) can do without assistance and what the learner can accomplish with a skilled and knowledgeable guide (in this case, the CT). CTs are expected to help their STs move through the ZPD by designing and implementing a variety of tasks, such as providing frequent feedback on performance, providing support with planning and preparation, asking guiding questions, and modeling best practices. This study will also examine how CTs move through their own ZPD in learning how to best support their STs through guidance provided by the EPP.

ZPD is the theoretical grounding for the frequently used educational term *scaffolding* (Shabani et al., 2010), which is the act of providing support and structures to

assist the learner in accomplishing new tasks and concepts they are less able to do on their own. Once the learner is able to successfully master the task, the support is gradually removed and the responsibility of learning is shifted from the expert to the learner (Northern Illinois University Faculty Development and Instructional Design Center, 2008). Through this social interaction between the CT and the ST, active learning occurs. This consistent social collaboration between them provides the opportunity for reflection and growth. The ultimate goal of these theoretical concepts is to allow a transfer of knowledge from the experienced CT to the novice so that the ST can take these skills beyond the internship into the beginning years of teaching.

OVERVIEW OF THE STUDENT TEACHING INTERNSHIP

The purpose of the student teaching internship, also commonly referred to as the student teaching experience, is to provide candidates with intensive training and practice within classrooms in becoming a teacher under the supervision of a highly qualified CT. As such, CTs are expected to implement and model exemplary practices for teaching, learning, and assessing preservice teachers, along with providing the ST critical performance feedback to promote their development to a beginning teacher (Giebelhaus & Bowman, 2002; Garies & Grant, 2014). The student teaching experience is intended not only to provide a rich and authentic opportunity for STs to engage with P-12 students in instructional and relationship-building capacities, but it also provides opportunities for the novice ST to collaborate with and be actively mentored by the veteran CT (Russell & Russell, 2011).

The CT and the ST are supported by the University Supervisor (US) through this experience. US' roles may slightly vary between Educator Preparation Programs (EPPs)

but generally speaking, their role is to be a source of support to the ST by providing timely performance feedback, overseeing coursework and programmatic requirements, and providing a final evaluation of the ST's abilities and overall readiness for the classroom, in consultation with the CT. Most USs also provide support and mentoring to CTs throughout the student teaching experience, as well as serving as a liaison between the ST, the CT, the school, and the EPP. While research suggests that the practices of the US have a substantial impact on the quality and overall experience during the student teaching semester, this impact diminishes when compared to that of the CT (Ferber & Nillas, 2010; Kissau, Hart, & Algozzine, 2019). The majority of preservice teachers view their CT as having more influence than the US (Karmos & Jacko, 1977; Manning, 1977; McIntyre & Killian, 1987). This perception is likely due to the fact that the US is not present with the student teaching intern on a daily basis, as is the CT.

The relationship between CTs and their STs during the internship is a critical component to any teacher preparation program. Usually lasting one semester, student teaching provides the opportunity for the ST to operationalize the learning, theories, and strategies from prior coursework; it serves as a bridge between theory and practice. Researchers found that one of the most useful educational experiences for facilitating the transition from a student to a professional educator is that of the student teaching experience (Denis, 2017). The student teaching internship also plays a significant role in developing preservice teachers' beliefs and knowledge (Borko & Mayfield, 1995). Research has shown that student teaching practice in the school serves as the most significant factor in STs' experiences of training to be a teacher (Lanier & Little, 1986; Ben-Peretz, 1995; Tang, 2003). Guyton and McIntyre's (1990) surveys of practicing

teachers indicated that they overwhelmingly rate their student teaching or internship experience as the most beneficial and critical component of their teacher education program. Inservice teachers frequently refer to their student teaching experience as an influential part of their development into a professional educator and speak on the impact that their respective CT had on their learning (Denis, 2017).

Preparation for becoming a teacher begins well before the student teaching internship. Most EPPs have a prescribed coursework sequence that must be completed prior to making it to the student teaching internship. In these courses, teacher candidates learn about various pedagogical methods, assessment practices, and numerous other strategies to help them prepare for the culminating internship. Many EPPs across the nation are accredited by the Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation (CAEP). CAEP requires EPPs to develop key assessments that provide evidence that teacher candidates meet state and national standards and impact P-12 student achievement positively (Paulsen, et al., 2015). Through these CAEP standards, teacher candidates are expected to have learned a wide range of instructional and relationship building practices prior to the student teaching internship. There are also CAEP requirements for clinical practice that were created to ensure that EPPs are establishing effective partnerships in P-12 schools and with P-12 school-based teachers to help candidates further develop their knowledge, skills, and professional dispositions to have a positive impact on all students (CAEP, 2013). In order for EPPs to receive accreditation from CAEP, they must meet CAEP's rigorous standards, which includes both the required coursework leading up to the student teaching internship and clinical practice during the student teaching internship.

Well-prepared teachers consistently produce higher performing students than teachers that are less well-prepared (Darling-Hammond, Holtzman, Gatlin, & Heilig, 2005; Paulsen et al., 2015). Knowing this, efforts to collaborate with school partners to provide the very best student teaching placements and overall internship experiences conducive to learning is critical, as ST preparation impacts the intern's future teaching career and the P-12 students they will soon teach. This phenomenon is reflected in a report by the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (2010) that identifies student teaching and field experiences as one of the most influential aspects of teacher preparation that is likely to have the highest potential for effects on student outcomes and that specific aspects of the student teaching experience are predictive of teacher effectiveness (Goldhaber, Krieg, & Theobald, 2017).

There are several themes that have emerged from the literature that relate to the support and learning student teaching interns receive from their EPP, the support and practices of the US, and the interactions between the ST and the CT (Ferber & Nillas, 2010). The primary focus of this study will relate to the role of the CT, as this has been frequently identified as a salient component to a successful student teaching internship. This study will serve as a vehicle to more closely examine this historical and contemporary issue in a localized setting.

IMPACT OF THE COOPERATING TEACHER

The student teaching internship is typically one that is filled with a wide range of challenges and novice STs tend to rely heavily on their CT to help navigate these challenges. For decades, research has shown that the CT has the greatest influence on the development of the ST (Copeland, 1980; Ferber & Nillas, 2010). In 1969, Yee described

the CT as "the most relevant variable operating in student teaching" (Yee, 1969, p. 327; Conner & Killmer, 1995). Historically, literature has shown this to be true, dating back to a 1977 study conducted by Karmos and Jacko. In this study, 60 STs ranging from 20 to 57 years of age, completed an anonymous survey during the final seminar of the student teaching semester. The survey, called the *Significant Others Instrument*, was constructed to allow open responses, and it asked respondents to list in order of importance five individuals who had positively influenced their student teaching semester. Respondents were also asked to give reasons for the significant influence of the individuals they listed. The results of this study showed that more than half of the responses listed the CT as having the greatest influence. The three major categories that emerged as reasons for the influence were personal support (emotional support and guidance), role development (serving a role model by modeling the skills of a dedicated teacher), and professional skills (helping to increase knowledge, sharing ideas, content knowledge) (Karmos & Jacko, 1977).

In a study conducted in 1982, Hodges designed a student teaching practicum that did not include a CT because she believed the practices of field-based educators did not align with instructional methods taught in coursework. Hodges placed five STs in classrooms alone to complete the student teaching requirements. Those STs suffered various crises throughout the experience, most notably challenges with content and classroom management. By the end of the study, Hodges concluded that the five STs in this study were unable to successfully navigate the classroom pressures without a CT. She went on to explain that the five STs were greatly overwhelmed by this experience of teaching alone (Hodges, 1982, p.26; Clarke et al. 2014). The results of this study may

have a relationship to a more present-day issue related to the attrition rates of Lateral

Entry (LE) teachers in the state of North Carolina. The Department of Public Instruction

in North Carolina explains that LE allows qualified individuals who already hold a

bachelor's degree in any field to obtain a teaching position and begin teaching in a

classroom while obtaining a professional educator's license. LE teachers have three years

to complete their educator's license. A part of the requirements include completing

coursework and a student teaching internship; however, since LE teachers are already

working as full-time teachers in schools, they complete their student teaching

requirements in their own classroom - without a CT. North Carolina's Annual Report on

the State of the Teaching Profession (2019) reports LE attrition rates at 15.51% and

Teach for America teacher attrition rates (most of whom are also LE) at 31.42%. These

percentages are noticeably higher compared to experienced teacher attrition rates

(reported at 7.25%) and beginning teacher attrition rates (reported at 12.34%). Many

candidates choose such routes as LE programs because they cannot afford to forgo a

salary while completing preservice preparation. Alternative certification pathways can be

a popular approach to recruiting teachers, but these pathways are generally associated

with lower retention rates (Podolsky et al., 2016).

Ferber and Nillas (2010) identified the CT as one of the main factors that

determine the effectiveness of the student teaching experience. In this qualitative study of

23 elementary and secondary STs, they reported that problems with their CT's quality of

mentoring and feedback was the most prevalent issue and had the greatest consequence

on the ST's growth due to the magnitude of influence CTs have. Generally speaking,

most programs are designed such that no other person has as much direct contact with the

student teaching intern as the CT. By far, CTs are the most involved in the development of a ST's professional skills. They serve as a role model and mentor and typically spend sustained weeks and months collaborating, modeling, planning, preparing, evaluating, and teaching with the intern. The extended amount of time CTs spend in the shared learning environment illuminates one of several reasons why many educators and researchers alike identify them as having paramount importance and influence (Ferber & Nillas, 2010).

CTs are among one of the most acknowledged, yet least understood, contributors to teacher preparation (Guyton & McIntyre, 1990). Researchers have consistently found that the CT's influence is essential in examining the success or failure of a student teaching intern (Guyton, 1989; Conner & Killmer, 1995). Research also shows that student teaching interns often emulate the instructional practices modeled by their CT (Kissau, Hart, & Algozzine, 2017). Similarly, Weasmer and Mays (2003) suggest that novice teachers are likely to model the practices of the CT. This mimicking can have a positive impact if the instructional strategies are highly effective; however, emulating instructional practices of the CT can be detrimental to ST's development if the practices are considered to be less effective or ineffective. Unfortunately, placing student teaching interns with CTs that consistently model proven and effective professional practices is a challenging and flawed process for many EPPs. Time constraints, increased accountability measures in the schools, and differences in teaching expectations make it difficult to find highly effective CTs who will allow a ST to work with their P-12 students (Kissau et al., 2019).

THE ROLE OF COOPERATING TEACHERS

CTs serve many roles during the student teaching internship. Clarke et al. (2014) completed an extensive review of the existing CT literature over the past six decades. From their analysis, they generated 11 categories related to the variety of roles CTs play in their involvement with teacher preparation: Providers of Feedback, Gatekeepers of the Profession, Modelers of Practice, Supporters of Reflection, Gleaners of Knowledge, Purveyors of Context, Conveners of Relation, Agents of Socialization, Advocates of the Practical, Abiders of Change, and Teachers of Children (Clarke et al., 2014). While all 11 categories provide relevant information about the roles of CTs, the categories that are most aligned with this study that will be discussed in greater detail will be: Providers of Feedback, Modelers of Practice, Conveners of Relation, and Agents of Socialization.

Providers of Feedback

CTs are expected to provide feedback to their STs as they take on responsibilities and learn about the challenges of the classroom. Providing feedback is one of the most significant elements of the work of CTs and largely defines their primary role, as STs rely on this feedback to set goals for improvements. This feedback can happen in a variety of ways, such as oral, written, formal, and informal. Clarke et al. (2014) suggested that while the amount of feedback CTs provide can vary, the quality of the feedback is generally narrow, particularistic, and technical in nature and it is rare that CTs provide feedback that promotes deep, substantive reflection on practice. More information about the challenges CTs face when providing feedback will be discussed in greater detail in a succeeding section of this literature review.

Modelers of Practice

Modeling effective practices is one of the key mentoring strategies expected of CTs (Calderhead & Robinson, 1991; Clarke et al, 2014). CTs often provide STs important images of teaching by modeling what they perceive to be effective strategies, and many CTs expect STs to model their practice after their own (Borko & Mayfield, 1995). Sudzina, Giebelhaus, and Coolican (1997) suggested that CTs have 2 main forms of mentoring: as modeler of practice and co-constructor of practice. While modeling primarily consists of the ST watching the CT and is the most prevalent format, co-constructors of practice more actively involves the ST in the learning and has shown to be a more effective, blended approach (Grove, Strudler, & Odell, 2004; Sanders, Dawson, & Sinclair, 2005; Clarke et al., 2014). Generally, the expectation is that CTs begin the student teaching experience frequently modeling for STs and then gradually shift to a more reflective and independent process in which STs are no longer just mimicking the CT, but are learning how to internalize sound instructional practices in a more independent manner.

Conveners of Relation

An important aspect of the student teaching experience is the relationship that CTs develop with their ST. Having an open, friendly, and welcoming disposition is essential to mentoring STs (Clarke et al., 2014). Bullough and Draper (2004) explain:

> The proper mentor is an expert teacher and skilled coach, a sometimes mother figure who defends her 'children,' is open and responsive to whatever needs a neophyte presents, has a flexible but heuristically useful concept of how beginning teachers develop, is able to maintain an optimal distance and involvement in the neophyte's classroom and protects the neophyte. (p. 285)

Glenn (2006) conducted a qualitative study with two pairs of STs and CTs in the form of

observations, interviews, and artifacts over the course of one semester to determine from

each perspective what characteristics make an effective CT. The findings of the

qualitative data suggest that exemplary CTs collaborate with STs rather than dictate,

relinquish an appropriate level of control, allow for the development of personal

relationships, share constructive feedback, and accept individual differences. This

underscores the important CT role of conveners of relation.

Agents of Socialization

        Clarke et al. (2014) suggest that CTs are powerful agents of socialization and that

many CTs are unaware of the implicit and explicit messages they are sharing with STs

about their personal views, instructional methods, student abilities, and related teaching

expectations. A CTs influence is profound and has a considerable impact on the way STs

come to know and develop in the teaching profession, yet many CTs are not always

aware of the full nature and scope of their influence on the overall student teaching

experience.

        Other researchers emphasize similar qualities of an effective CT as one who has

knowledge about methods of working with adult learners, stages of teacher development,

classroom observation techniques, and coaching strategies. When examining the path to

becoming a teacher and the numerous factors that play a part in this development, the

research points to one factor as the most significant: the CT. Student teaching

experiences could potentially have a long-lasting effect, not only for the ST but for every

student that intern teaches. Strengthening the partnerships between EPPs and school

partners is essential to ensure that STs are successful and able to positively impact

student achievement (Paulsen, et al., 2015). A successful student teaching placement has a strong association to overall preparation for the beginning years in the classroom, and CTs are a critically important link in this placement and preparation (Gareis & Grant, 2014).

Mentor

Garies and Grant (2014) acknowledge that CTs have many critical roles during the student teaching experience, but they argue that the biggest and most influential role is that of a mentor. Across the literature, numerous definitions of mentoring appear and formal and informal mentoring dates back as far as Greek mythology (Harris, 2003; Russell & Russell, 2011). The most common themes in all of the varying definitions describe a mentor as an experienced person overseeing someone who is not as experienced or as someone who nurtures and provides mental, emotional, and pedagogical support (Bierema, 1996; Iancu-Haddad & Oplatka, 2009; Russell & Russell, 2011). Other key roles of a mentor include serving as a guide, offering support, and acting as an advisor, trainer, or partner (Ganser, 1996; Jones, 2001; Russell & Russell, 2011). Knox and McGovern (1988) outlined six critical characteristics of mentors: (a) willingness to share knowledge; (b) competency; (c) willingness to facilitate growth; (d) honesty; (e) willingness to give critical, positive, and constructive feedback; and (f) ability to deal directly with the protege (Russell & Russell, 2011).

Giebelhaus and Bowman (2002) suggested that effective mentoring depends upon such factors as personality and the ability to communicate expectations of effective teaching (Russell & Russell, 2011). Similarly, Trubowitz (2014) explains that mentoring consists of at least these three key elements: (1) the mentor's own knowledge, skills, and

experiences in the field, (2) the mentor's ability to see potential in the mentee, and (3) the
mentor's ability to enable the mentee to achieve his or her potential (Garies & Grant,
2014). In order for a CT to effectively prepare a teacher candidate, he or she must be
able to demonstrate these characteristics and also possess skills related to characteristics
of adult learners, stages of teacher development, coaching strategies, and content
knowledge. Experience as a classroom teacher is not adequate to effectively mentor a ST
(Garies & Grant, 2014).

The role of the CT as a mentor is frequently overlooked as it relates to
establishing a successful student teaching internship (Connor & Killmer, 1995).
Mentoring requires a unique skill set that is not innate for some people. Therefore, the
skills needed to be an effective mentor must be taught and developed. Research has
shown that the more formal preparation a mentor receives, the more successful they
become (Iancu-Haddad & Oplatka, 2009; Kennedy, 1991) yet far too often, CTs are ill-
prepared to serve as effective mentors to their student teaching interns (Grimmett &
Ratzlaff, 1986; He, 2009). Without adequate preparation for mentors, a number of
preservice teachers may have experiences that do not adequately prepare them for the
challenging first years of teaching (He, 2009). Studies demonstrate that mentors need to
be more informed about the needs of the beginning and novice teachers they mentor
(Feiman-Nemser, 2003; Iancu-Haddad & Oplatka, 2009; Russell & Russell, 2011). Other
studies suggest that CT training should also relate to the interpersonal skills needed when
mentoring. Karmos & Jacko (1977) suggest that since CTs influence a ST's personal
growth, they would greatly benefit from training in counseling skills, conferencing
techniques, and other interpersonal skills.

Orland-Barak (2005) explained that mentoring adults requires a different skill set than the skills needed for teaching P–12 students and that often, successful classroom teachers do not always make the strongest mentor teachers. Successful mentoring requires strong and varied communication skills; understanding what to say, how to say it, when to intervene, and how to provide constructive feedback are all necessary skills for CTs (Paulsen, et al., 2015). Mentoring is a collaborative effort between the EPP, the CT, and the ST and is a major part of the training to become a classroom teacher (He, 2009). Evidence consistently shows that training CTs in mentoring strategies results in more effective mentoring behaviors and the absence of mentoring training is associated with ineffective mentoring (Gareis & Grant, 2014).

Russell and Russell (2011) conducted a qualitative study of six middle school and three high school teachers who had served as a CT during previous semesters. Researchers sought to understand CTs' perspectives on mentoring and to determine what factors impact the mentoring relationship. They conducted observations during a two-day, six-hour workshop designed to prepare CTs for their mentoring roles. They also asked participants to complete open-ended questionnaires with questions related to their experiences in hosting STs. The themes that emerged from the data suggest that the major components of CT mentoring are role modeling, nurturing, support, sponsoring, and teaching. The findings of this study purport that CTs who lack mentoring skills can significantly impact a ST's professional development (Russell & Russell, 2011).

COOPERATING TEACHER TRAINING AND PREPARATION

Considering what is known about the impact the CT has on the ST's development, it may be assumed that EPPs would make concerted efforts to train and prepare these

highly influential CTs. However, most CTs do not receive comprehensive or coordinated preparation for their roles (Russell & Russell, 2011) from the EPP or school district. Few CTs receive formal training about how to support the development of their preservice teacher (Matsko et al., 2020). Instead, most CTs receive informal training through informational meetings, orientations, or printed materials (Matsko et al., 2020; McIntyre & Norris, 1980b; Griffin, Barnes, Hughes, O'Neal, Defino, Edwards, & Hukill, 1983; McIntyre & Killian, 1987). Informational meetings and orientations tend to provide general information about the internship, logistics, and paperwork, but often these orientation sessions do not provide guidance to CTs about some of the more challenging issues that arise during the internship, such as providing effective feedback, communication challenges, mentoring strategies, and performance challenges. In a recent study of CTs in a large public school district, the most frequent support provided for CTs by their EPP was in the form of a document/handbook (77%) or meeting with a field instructor from the EPP (81%); only 11% of CTs received professional development related to their role (Matsko et. al., 2020). The CT has a strong impact on the overall student teaching experience and effective CTs are essential to ST success (Conner & Killmer, 1995) yet there are glaring inconsistencies in how CTs are trained to manage the many facets of their roles - providing feedback, support, and mentoring.

In Killian and Wilkins' (2009) study of 13 elementary school CTs, researchers separated the CTs into two groups: highly effective CTs and less effective CTs. To determine who belonged in these 2 categories, researchers analyzed interviews and artifacts about CTs' supervisory preparation, practices, and perceptions. The data from each teacher were then analyzed for evidence regarding the indicators of effectiveness

identified in the *Supervisory Effectiveness Continuum*, a rubric that rates the quality of CT practices and feedback. Four of the five CTs in the highly effective group had master's degrees in teacher leadership, and all five had taken a graduate course focusing on conducting observations, providing feedback, and conferencing skills. The data from this study suggest that training in ST supervision and leadership has an association with being a highly effective CT (Killian & Wilkins, 2009; Kissau, et al., 2019).

Guyton and McIntyre (1990) suggested that "student teaching has failed to evolve much beyond the medieval apprenticeship training model" (Guyton & McIntyre, 1990, p. 515; Conner & Killmer, 1995). Research dating back to the 1980s found that training for CTs tends to be limited to informational meeting styled with printed materials (McIntyre & Norris, 1980b; Griffin, et al., 1983, McIntyre & Killian, 1987) rather than a true and authentic training. Nearly 40 years later, this method of preparing CTs has not significantly changed. The long-term goal and intended outcome of CT training is to improve CT mentoring and leadership skills, as well as student-teacher performance and preparation (Gareis & Grant, 2014). EPPs must create clear expectations of the role of the CT as a fundamental part of their programs before successful training programs can be designed (Conner & Killmer, 1995). CTs, EPPs, and most importantly student teaching interns and the students they will soon lead would all benefit from the training of CTs (Ferber & Nillas, 2010).

Clinical experiences in P-12 schools are a vital part of the training to be a teacher; however, placement and pairing of CTs with student teaching interns tends to happen without deliberate intention and thought (Garies & Grant, 2014). As Darling-Hammond (2006) explained, "Often, the clinical side of teacher education has been fairly haphazard,

depending on the idiosyncrasies of loosely selected placements with little guidance about what happens in them and little connection to university work" (p. 308). EPPs and school partners tend to place STs with CTs with little regard to the supervisory practices of the CT (Griffin et al., 1983; Guyton, 1989; McIntyre, 1984; Giebelhaus & Bowman, 2002). Consequently, STs are often working with CTs who embrace the opportunity to lead an impressionable ST, yet they are ill-prepared for their role, they tend to have unrealistic expectations, and they are tentative about the type of feedback they provide (Giebelhaus & Bowman, 2002). Additional research has found that CTs are overly cautious when providing feedback (Morehead & Waters, 1987; Ferber & Nillas, 2010). During post-observation conferences, CTs often refrain from confronting their interns about errors and difficulties in the lesson to avoid upsetting them (Abell, Dillon, Hopkins, McInery, & O'Brien, 1995; Edwards, 1997; Ferber & Nillas, 2010).

McIntyre and Killian (1987) found that CT training appears to have a positive influence on STs. Their study determined that CTs who completed a three-hour graduate course training on the supervision of preservice teachers had significantly more interactions with their STs as it relates to instructional planning and preparation than their untrained counterparts. Additionally, trained CTs in this study provided significantly more feedback, including evaluative and constructive criticism, than their untrained counterparts (McIntyre & Killian, 1987).

Similarly, Giebelhaus and Bowman (2002) conducted a quasi-experimental study of CTs trained in mentoring and a common framework for discussion called Praxis III/Pathwise through Educational Testing Services. This framework trains CTs in formal methods of mentoring, supervision, and communication related to observations,

feedback, and assessment methods. Two groups of undergraduate STs were compared

based on the supervisory practices of their assigned CT. Both groups received a

traditional orientation to the student teaching experience; however, the experimental

group (*n*=14) consisted of CTs that received additional training using the Praxis

III/Pathwise as a framework for support and feedback. The control group (*n*=15) used a

traditional supervision approach. Data from both groups were collected at three points

during the semester in the form of videotaped lessons and post-observation conferences.

To frame their work, CTs in the experimental group used the Praxis III/Pathwise

resources: pre-observation form, classroom profile, instructional profile or lesson plans,

reflective profile, and post-observation form. CTs in the control group had no specific

guidelines for post-observation conferences. Data gathered at all three points of the

semester were evaluated by two trained raters; the interrater reliability was at .95, which

is the standard set by Educational Testing Services. The analysis of the data from this

study indicated that STs placed with a trained CT, using a common framework for

discussion, demonstrated more complete and effective planning, more effective

classroom management skills, and greater reflectivity on their practice than those who

were placed with CTs in the control group who only received the general orientation

(Giebelhaus & Bowman, 2002)

More recently, Gareis and Grant (2014) examined the effectiveness of untrained

CTs and a Clinical Faculty training program (CF - licensed public or private school

teachers who have successfully served as a CT and have been selected to receive

extensive training to supervise and evaluate STs). CF training was delivered through a

graduate level course, which included 2 weeks of classroom-based instruction during the

summer and 4 follow-up sessions during the school year. This causal-comparative research design was used to examine differences between trained CFs and untrained CTs as it relates to their self-efficacy for mentoring STs, ratings of STs' performance, students teachers' evaluation of the quality of their field experiences, new teachers' perceived competence, and new teachers' perceived impact on K-12 student learning. The data examined in this study included: 101 respondents for the CT and CF surveys; 1,758 ST evaluations (midterm and final evaluations); and 84 respondents for the new teacher survey (63% supervised by CFs and 37% surveyed by CTs). The results of their study showed that (1) trained CFs exhibited increased levels of self-efficacy for key aspects of their roles and skills associated with effectively serving as a cooperating teacher; (2) CFs more accurately assess their STs than untrained CTs; and (3) assessing ST performance accurately may lead to stronger actual performance of STs placed with CFs, compared to those placed with untrained CTs. These findings suggest that training CTs for their role through a program like the CF program could likely make a difference in performance outcomes for STs.

Because of the many complexities in the student teaching experience, serving as a CT requires particular skills that are not possessed by all classroom teachers and, therefore, require advanced training. Experience and expertise in teaching are important factors for CTs; however, these skills are not sufficient as it relates to mentoring STs (Garies & Grant, 2014). This reiterates that one can be an outstanding, skilled P-12 classroom teacher yet not be an effective, skilled CT.

Teacher Education Institute

Teacher Education Institute (TEI) began as a grant-funded summer training program, developed through a collaboration with Deans for Impact (DFI), a national nonprofit organization dedicated to improving teacher preparation, and faculty at the EPP. Together, a leadership team was developed to create the 3.5 day event during the summer of 2017 in which key stakeholders (university-based faculty and CTs) collaborated to learn about 3 high leverage instructional *focus practices* and how these look in action when working with P-12 students. These *focus practices* include: Setting up and managing small group work, eliciting student thinking, and facilitating whole class discussions. Whole group and breakout sessions were led by DFI and faculty members related to these *focus practices*. There was also an emphasis on all stakeholders supporting STs in the implementation of these *focus practices* through feedback and instructional coaching. Not all STs were placed with a CT that had been through the TEI training. The goal was to start small during the first TEI summer training and then gradually increase CT numbers each summer so that eventually all STs would be placed with a TEI-trained CT. TEI has expanded and evolved each summer since its 2017 inception, based on CT and stakeholder feedback. More information about TEI 2017, 2018, and 2019 will be presented in greater detail in chapter 3.

SUMMARY

In this chapter, the literature surrounding the student teaching experience and the CT's impact was reviewed. Chapter 3 will clarify the design and methodology that will be used for this study. First, the setting and participants will be described in detail. Second, the study design will be explained, and the methodology will be outlined. Third,

a description of how the surveys were developed will be provided. Finally, statistical

analyses will be identified and explained.

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

As indicated in chapter two, Cooperating Teacher (CT) training and preparation is a critical issue as it relates to overall teacher preparation. Because of the profound impact CTs have on ST development, it is an area to be further explored. Much of the research in the existing literature related to the topic of the student teaching experience and the role of the CT tends to focus on the experiences of the student teacher (ST) rather than directly addressing the CT. There also tend to be more qualitative methods of research used when exploring this topic, as compared to quantitative methods.

This quantitative study adds to this field of research by focusing solely on the CTs experiences related to their perceived preparedness after the student teaching experience has ended. Using a quantitative approach to explore this topic allowed for greater generalizability due to a larger sample size. The results of this study have the potential to shed light on the types of training and support that CTs receive prior to and during the student teaching internship, while also examining some of their reported challenges. This study also provides an evaluation of the Teacher Education Institute (TEI) training program to determine the impact it has on CTs perceptions of preparedness and support. The data from this study could inform what programmatic and training improvements should be made. This chapter includes information regarding the methodology and research design, participants and setting, instrumentation and data collection, and analysis procedures.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

This quantitative study sought to answer the following questions:

1. To what extent do Cooperating Teachers feel prepared by their Student Teacher's Educator Preparation Program to support their Student Teachers at the beginning of the student teaching experience?

2. To what extent do Cooperating Teachers feel prepared to support Student Teachers during the student teaching experience?

3. What components of supervising the student teaching experience are most challenging for Cooperating Teachers?

4. To what extent do Cooperating Teachers who were part of the Teacher Education Institute program feel prepared and supported for their role as compared to their non-Teacher Education Institute trained peers?

PURPOSE OF STUDY

This quantitative study had a threefold purpose. (1) This study sought to explore and describe the supervision of the student teaching experience through the constructivist lens of Vygotsky's conceptual framework, specifically focusing on the training and preparation of CTs spanning from the fall 2017 semester through the spring 2020 semester. (2) This study investigated the challenges CTs faced while supervising the student teaching experience. The data gathered helped to decipher what specific areas of supervising the student teaching experience are most challenging for CTs, as well as determine what supports and training CTs report they need from Educator Preparation Programs (EPPs) in order to more effectively serve in their role. (3) This study sought to determine the impact of an existing TEI CT training program, based on TEI-trained CTs

reported responses compared to those CTs who were not part of the program. The data were examined to determine if there were significant differences in the two groups of CT responses.

The conceptual framework for this study was grounded in Vygotsky's views on constructivism and social development. Vygotsky viewed learning as a social process and that learning occurs between an expert and the learner. The expert's role is to help the learner move through what Vygotsky coined as the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD, Vygostky, 1978; Giebelhaus & Bowman, 2002). The ZPD refers to the difference in what a learner (in this case, the ST) can do without assistance and what the learner can accomplish with a skilled and knowledgeable guide (in this case, the CT). This is evidenced during the student teaching experience when the CT and ST work together while the ST gradually assumes more duties and leadership with students. This process occurs as the CT closely monitors and supports the ST.

CTs are expected to help their STs move through the ZPD by designing and implementing a variety of tasks, such as providing frequent feedback on performance, providing support with planning and preparation, asking guiding questions, and modeling best practices. This study sought to examine how equipped CTs are in moving their STs through the ZPD by first examining how prepared they are for their important role. This study also examined how CTs move through their own ZPD in learning how to best support their STs through guidance provided by the EPP.

POPULATION

The population for this study included all CTs that have hosted a full-time ST at any time between the fall 2017 semester and spring 2020 semester at the EPP. This

included CTs from all program areas: Elementary Education (K-6), Middle Grades (6-9), Secondary (9-12), Special Education (general and adaptive K-12), Birth-Kindergarten, Arts (Dance, Theatre, and Music), Foreign Language, and Teaching English as a Second Language. A total of 1,164 CTs were invited to participate in this study.

The research was conducted at a large university in the southeastern United States with approximately 29,500 undergraduate and graduate students. The university's Cato College of Education is the second largest producer of teachers annually in the state, with more than 2,000 students enrolled in programs in the Cato College of Education and graduating approximately 500 new teachers per year.

STUDY DESIGN

This study sought to examine CTs perceptions of the training and support provided to CTs prior to and during the student teaching internship, as well as to describe what CTs perceive to be their greatest challenges. The researcher also examined 2 levels of training: CTs who received no specific training other than a general training/orientation to their roles and expectations of the student teaching experience and CTs who participated in both a general training/orientation and the TEI program. CTs were selected to be part of the TEI program based on whether they were employed at select schools that were in close partnership with the university. These "partner schools" were selected by the Cato College of Education leaders and the school district leaders. STs were then placed with TEI-trained CTs; however, because the TEI pilot could not accommodate all, the remaining STs were placed with CTs who attended general orientation but received no TEI training. Both TEI-trained CTs and non-TEI trained CTs

completed a survey related to specific questions and statements about their preparedness and challenges.

TRADITIONAL COOPERATING TEACHER TRAINING/ORIENTATION

All CTs at this university were required to participate in an initial student teaching training/orientation. This training/orientation was offered in two formats: face-to-face or online. These sessions were led by University Supervisors (US) and typically consisted of an overview of the student teaching semester, including logistics, review of licensure requirements, a review of the assessment tools CTs will use, point of contact reminders for issues/questions, abbreviated tips for coaching/mentoring, and an opportunity to ask questions. Face-to-face training/orientation lasted approximately 5 hours and the online orientation format (which mimics the face-to-face session) lasted approximately 2 hours with a follow up required quiz. Since the fall 2018 semester, all CTs have also been invited to participate in optional webinars throughout the semester related to such topics as providing effective feedback, in-the-moment coaching, final capstone edTPA project support, and tough conversations. There were between 5-7 optional webinars offered (depending on the semester), lasting approximately 35 minutes and led by USs. CTs could participate live or view recorded webinars with a follow up quiz.

TEACHER EDUCATION INSTITUTE PROGRAM

The first TEI program implemented at the university in this study was an initial pilot of about 50 CTs selected by their principals from neighboring school districts that were required to attend June 27-30, 2017 (9:00-4:00 and 9:00-12:00 on the final day). CTs were provided a stipend as an incentive to participate in this program and could only receive their full stipend if they were present for all days of the training. TEI was created

with the initial goal that stakeholders would work in TEI teams: 1 CT, 1 US, and 1-2

university course instructors. These team members, who usually work independently of

one another, would collaborate and conduct a series of formal observations of the ST

beginning in their yearlong internship (the semester prior to their student teaching

semester) and provide feedback and coaching on lessons around one of the *focus*

practices, which include (1) setting up and managing small group work, (2) eliciting

student thinking, and (3) facilitating whole class discussions. USs were charged with

leading TEI teams and would provide additional support to the CT and course instructor,

as needed.

During the student teaching semester, the TEI team would continue to support the

ST with instructional coaching, planning, and delivering lessons around the 3 *focus*

practices. TEI teams were expected to use the information gained through TEI to inform

their feedback and coaching sessions, with a higher level of expectation on the CT, since

STs spend the greatest amount of time with them. CTs were expected to provide TEI

structured coaching and feedback around the *focus practices* on a regular basis and USs

and course instructors were required to do the same a minimum of 2 times per semester.

TEI 2018 shifted slightly, in response to stakeholder feedback from TEI 2017.

The purpose was still to center around a shared understanding and language of the 3

critical *focus practices*; however, there was an increased emphasis on equipping CTs with

strategies on prioritizing feedback and instructional in-the-moment coaching, which

refers to providing feedback during lesson implementation through the use of signals,

gestures, and other strategies to provide guidance for the ST in the moment, rather than

waiting until the lesson has completely ended. TEI 2018 involved both new and

returning CTs, as well as university-based faculty, and provided increased opportunities for all involved to practice observing, coaching, and providing feedback to STs around the 3 focus practices the semester prior to student teaching and during student teaching. TEI 2018 consisted of approximately 35 new CTs that were required to attend June 13-15, 2018 (9:00 AM-4:00 PM) in order to receive their full stipend for attendance. A new addition to TEI 2018 was the implementation of follow-up meetings for the new cohort members during the semester (which were referred to as "get-togethers"). The purpose of these get-togethers was to refresh participants on concepts learned through TEI and foster ongoing conversation about the 3 *focus practices* and how to support the development of STs. These get-togethers were held on September 24, 2018 (4:30-6:30) and January 19, 2019 (4:30-6:30).

TEI 2019 was modeled much like TEI 2018 in that the basis was primarily around the 3 *focus practices*, coaching, and feedback; however, there was a new emphasis on equity-based practices. TEI 2019 consisted of approximately 100 new CTs that were required to attend August 5-7, 2019 (9:00 AM - 4:00 PM) in order to receive their full stipend. One major difference with TEI 2019 was that the focus was primarily centered around enhancing CTs work with in-the-moment coaching and providing specific feedback around the 3 *focus practices* to STs. This shifted the focus from CTs and university-based faculty working as a TEI team to university-based faculty supporting CTs as the primary source of coaching and providing feedback to their ST. The mid-semester get-togethers remained as a method to refresh participants on concepts learned through TEI and foster ongoing conversation about the 3 *focus practices* and how to

support the development of STs. These sessions were held September 16, 2019 (5:00-7:00) and January 13, 2020 (5:00-7:00).

While TEI has been planned with great intention, many CTs and USs have reported mixed feedback about its effectiveness over the years. Many USs have reported that TEI CTs seem to have struggled no less in supervising the student teaching experience as those CTs that have not been part of TEI and that the emphasis on the 3 *focus practices* and the quality of the coaching and feedback is inconsistent. Collecting data directly from CTs that did and did not participate in TEI was beneficial in determining if TEI was meeting their needs and providing useful support and training. This study sought to address this area of need.

PROCEDURES AND INSTRUMENT

A survey was co-created by the researcher and the director of the Office of Assessment and Accreditation at the university (see Appendix A). Developing the survey was a collaborative effort which occurred over several weeks. Once all survey items were drafted, they were shared with Cato College of Education leaders and USs. Some survey items were adapted from the Chicago Teaching Pathways Project Survey of Mentor Teachers (Matsko et al., 2020). The survey was created to align with all research questions related to CT training at the beginning of the student teaching experience, CT support during student teaching, and CT challenges. There was a separate section of the survey specifically for TEI-trained CTs to provide feedback about their TEI experience. There were additional survey items that were included on the survey that were not for purposes of this study. These are survey items that the Office of Assessment and Accreditation wanted to include in order to address outside research questions.

This survey was conducted through Survey Share. After receiving Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval on April 6, 2020, the survey was piloted on April 9, 2020, with 13 CTs.   The participants for the pilot were selected in consultation with the Assistant Dean of the office that selects and organizes student teaching field placements and included CTs (TEI and non-TEI) from a range of program areas, including Elementary Education (K-6), Middle Grades (6-9), Secondary (9-12), Special Education (K-12), Birth-Kindergarten, and Music (K-12). The purpose of the pilot survey was to identify any potential problems in the instrument, prior to full implementation. The pilot survey provided a method to test the correctness of the provided instructions, served as a gauge to determine how long it would take to complete, and it allowed the researcher to determine whether it was effective in addressing the overall purpose for the study.

The pilot survey window closed on April 22, 2020 with 9 responses. The researcher sent an electronic Google form for survey participants to include feedback or challenges encountered when completing the survey on each of the sections of the survey. Based on the results of the pilot Google form, participants indicated that there were too many survey items, certain response scales were overwhelming and had too many choices, and some parts of the survey felt repetitive. The amount of time that respondents reported it took to complete the survey ranged from 17 minutes to 42 minutes, averaging 29.14 minutes. This average was nearly double the reported estimated time (15 minutes) that was listed on the consent form. Other feedback from the survey indicated that some things related to their CT experiences and training were hard to recall and answer, since the pilot group of CTs had not hosted a ST in months from the date of completing the pilot.   Two CTs reported that part E of the survey was the most

difficult to answer; however, part E of the survey aligns to the outside research questions that the Office of Assessment and Accreditation wanted to include for their own research purposes and did not apply to this study. Some CTs seemed to be unsure about part G of the survey, which focused on the TEI training experience. These responses indicated that they did not know what TEI was or if they had been part of it. The feedback received from the pilot served as a guide to the changes that needed to be made on the final version of the survey.

After analyzing the pilot results, several adjustments were made. These adjustments included modifying the response scale to include a common 7-point response scale for all questions, removing some survey items that were repetitive, consolidating questions to reduce duplication, and more clearly explaining TEI (part G of the survey) so that respondents would be able to better identify if they had been part of TEI. These changes reduced the survey length so that the stated estimated time to complete could remain at 15 minutes. After these changes to the survey were made, an IRB modification was submitted on April 20, 2020. The IRB approval notice for the modifications was received on April 27, 2020.

The final survey was distributed to 1,164 CTs through the Office of Assessment and Accreditation at the university on April 28, 2020, using the last known school email address that was on file. Of the emails sent, 96 returned as undeliverable due to the email address on file being incorrect or no longer active, likely due to CTs changing schools/districts or leaving the profession. USs were also encouraged to send an email to all fall 2017-spring 2020 CTs they worked with to encourage them to complete the survey.

Respondents (CTs) were asked to complete survey items by selecting the response that best describes their feelings related to statements about their experiences with CT training and support at the start and during the student teaching experience. In a similar structure, TEI participants completed an additional section in which they responded to statements about their TEI training experiences. The response scale for these statements used the 7-point scale below:

- (1) Completely Disagree

- (2) Mostly Disagree

- (3) Slightly Disagree

- (4) Neither Agree nor Disagree

- (5) Slightly Agree

- (6) Mostly Agree

- (7) Completely Agree

The next part of the survey focused on challenges faced during the student teaching experience. Respondents were presented with a list of common challenges encountered by CTs and asked to rate them on a scale of 1-7, with 1 being "not challenging at all" and 7 being "extremely challenging."

At the end of each section, there was an open-ended portion to capture any feedback not covered by the survey questions. Open-ended responses invite an opportunity for participants to more fully share the depth and quality of their experiences, rather than definitive answers (Hanson, Creswell, Plano-Clark, Petska, & Creswell, 2005):

1. Question 15: Please add any other information related to CT training/orientation <u>at the beginning</u> of the student teaching experience that you would like to share.

2. Question 17: Please add any other information related to CT support from the university-based supervisor that you would like to share.

3. Question 18: Please add any other information related to CT support <u>during</u> the student teaching experience that you would like to share.

4. Question 19: Please add any other information related to challenges you faced as a CT that you would like to share.

5. Question 25: Please provide any comments you would like to add about the TEI.

     The Office of Assessment and Accreditation sent a reminder email to those CTs who had not completed the survey yet on May 12, 2020. Some USs also sent a reminder email to their past CTs to encourage their participation in the study. The survey window closed on May 22, 2020, with a total of 361 CTs completing the survey.

DATA COLLECTION

     The purpose of this section is to report the data collected through the survey issued to CTs during the fall 2017-spring 2020 semesters. Each of 4 research questions addressed by the study was divided into 7 sections; however, some items on the survey were not for purposes of this research. Each section of the survey had statements for participants to rate, as well as an opportunity to provide open-ended responses. Table 1 below shows the alignment of the research questions and the number of items included in each section of the survey.

Table 1: Research question and survey alignment

Research Question Number	Survey Alignment
N/A	Part A: Background information - 13 survey items
Research Question 1: To what extent do Cooperating Teachers feel prepared by their Student Teacher's Educator Preparation Program to support their Student Teachers at the beginning of the student teaching experience?	Part B: Preparation for the CT role at the beginning of the student teaching semester - 9 survey items, plus 1 open-ended item.
Research Question 2: To what extent do Cooperating Teachers feel prepared to support Student Teachers during the student teaching experience?	Part C: Supports for the CT role during the student teaching semester - 14 survey items, plus 2 open-ended items.
Research Question 3: What components of supervising the student teaching experience are most challenging for Cooperating Teachers?	Part D: Challenges you encountered during the student teaching semester - 17 survey items, plus 1 open-ended item.
*Outside research questions from the EPP	Part E: EPP program evaluation - 22 survey items, plus 2 open-ended items.
Research Question 4: To what extent do Cooperating Teachers who were part of the Teacher Education Institute program feel prepared and supported for their role as compared to their non-Teacher Education Institute trained peers?	Part B: Preparation for the CT role at the beginning of the student teaching semester - 9 survey items Part F: 21G (CT Support), 21I (CT Preparedness)
N/A	Part G: Teacher Education Institute Experience - 9 survey items, plus 1 open-ended item.

This study was conducted in an ethical manner, abiding by all university and IRB guidelines. All participants received a consent form in which they were informed of the purpose of the study, why they were selected for the study, benefits and risks of the study, how their information is protected, and what their rights were as part of the study. The stated anticipated time for respondents to complete the survey was about fifteen minutes. On the online consent form, there was a place for respondents to electronically

enter their name and initials if they gave their permission to participate in the study. Any

respondents who did not electronically provide their consent were disqualified from this

study.

In order to ensure participants' data and private information were secured, Survey

Share's website explains that "data are maintained on a secure server at SurveyShare.

Participant's data will not be viewed or used by anyone for any purpose, including the

administrators at SurveyShare" (n.d.). All research data were maintained by the Office of

Assessment and Accreditation at the university on a secure server. Only deidentified data

was shared with the researcher, per IRB protocol.

<div align="center">DATA ANALYSIS</div>

This study provided quantitative data to explore CT support and training at the

beginning of and during the student teaching experience, as well as their reported

challenges. Further, the findings were analyzed to determine what differences existed in

the responses between the control group (non-TEI CTs) and the treatment group (TEI

CTs). To identify which teachers were part of the control and treatment groups, the

researcher had to determine which CTs belonged to which group. Question 22 of the

survey asked CTs whether or not they participated in TEI within the last three years.

Teachers that selected "yes" were included in the TEI data analyses and those that

selected "no" or "unsure" were not. Because self-reporting can be inaccurate, the

researcher collaborated with the Office of Assessment and Accreditation which

distributed the survey and had access to all survey participant names to spot-check 14

randomly selected respondents that self-reported "yes" to being part of TEI against the

TEI CT placement database. All 14 of the spot-checked TEI CTs that self-reported being

part of TEI were indeed all part of TEI. This provided some assurance that the self-reporting was accurate.

For the quantitative statistical analyses, the researcher used the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) to record and analyze statistical patterns and trends. The first 3 research questions were descriptive in nature. Descriptive statistics help to describe and understand features of a specific data set by providing brief summaries about the sample and measures of the data. Descriptive statistics were used to report how respondents answered these questions. Data were summarized in a visual way using tables.

Exploratory factor analysis was conducted for Research Question 4 to look at whether or not the survey items for question 15 (CT training at the beginning of the semester) would cluster into different types of preparation and support. Independent samples t-tests were then used to determine the average scores for TEI trained CTs and non-TEI trained CTs to determine whether or not there were statistically significant differences between these two groups. Additionally, the researcher analyzed the responses to question 21G ("[The EPP] did a good job in supporting me in working with their ST(s)") and 21I ("I was well prepared to mentor my ST") and conducted a chi square test of association to determine the differences in responses between TEI and non-TEI CTs. Since the two groups (TEI and not TEI) were not randomly assigned to treatment conditions, the researcher also investigated whether any preexisting differences in demographics existed between those who received the treatment and those who did not.

A qualitative review of open-ended responses was conducted to determine if there were themes in the written responses. This also served as a means to triangulate the data. For the qualitative, open-ended portions, the researcher independently read through each of the comments, line by line, and assigned a numerical code to correspond with a theme. Two rounds of coding were used. For the first round, Initial Coding was used, which is described as "breaking down qualitative data into discrete parts, closely examining them, and comparing them for similarities and differences" (Saldaña, 2013, p. 100). Once Initial Coding was complete, Focus Coding was used, which "categorizes coded data based on thematic or conceptual similarity" (Saldaña, 2013, p. 209). The researcher searched for the frequently recurring or significant codes to develop salient categories (Saldaña, 2013). Once this process was independently completed, the researcher met with the director of the Office of Assessment and Accreditation to jointly read through all of the comments to determine if the existing codes were appropriate. This was done to ensure trustworthiness of the coding and the emerging themes and increase the reliability of the analysis. The researcher and director of the Office of Assessment and Accreditation collapsed and eliminated some codes and created new ones. After the codes were agreed upon, a code book was created to list and define each of the codes, as well as highlight any recurring words that were seen in the comments. The themes that emerged from the open-ended coding process will be further explored in chapter four.

SUMMARY

The data gathered in this study addressed each research question by examining what level of training and support CTs received at the beginning and during the student teaching experience, what components of the student teaching experience are most

challenging for CTs, and what impact TEI had on CTs' perceptions of preparedness and support. This chapter provided an overview of the research methods used for this study and outlined the research questions, population studied, research design, instrument used, data collection processes, data analysis, and methods used to conduct this research. Chapter four will provide the results of the data analysis and the findings of this study.

CHAPTER 4: RESULTS

The purpose of this quantitative study was to explore and describe the supervision of the student teaching experience, specifically focusing on the training, support, and preparation of Cooperating Teachers (CTs) spanning from the fall 2017 semester through the spring 2020 semester. This study investigated the challenges CTs face as they supervise and support student teachers (STs). Additionally, this study sought to determine the impact of an existing Teacher Education Institute (TEI) CT training program, based on TEI-trained CTs' reported responses around their preparedness for the student teaching experience and the amount of support received, compared to those CTs who were not part of the program. This chapter presents information on the data collected from the CT survey, with some qualitative analyses from open-ended responses as well.

Preliminary quantitative analyses included descriptive statistics that help describe and understand features of a specific data set by providing brief summaries about the sample and measures of the data. Descriptive statistics were used to report how respondents answered survey questions and data were summarized in a visual way using tables.   Factor analysis was also used to examine how survey items cluster into scales. Independent samples t-tests were then used to compare the groups on the total scale scores. The two groups (TEI and non-TEI) were not randomly assigned to treatment conditions; therefore, to enhance interpretation, the researcher needed to investigate whether any preexisting differences in demographics existed between those who received the treatment and those who did not.

These data were examined to address the following research questions:

1. To what extent do Cooperating Teachers feel prepared by their Student Teacher's Educator Preparation Program to support their Student Teachers at the beginning of the student teaching experience?

2. To what extent do Cooperating Teachers feel prepared to support Student Teachers during the student teaching experience?

3. What components of supervising the student teaching experience are most challenging for Cooperating Teachers?

4. To what extent do Cooperating Teachers who were part of the Teacher Education Institute program feel prepared and supported for their role as compared to their non-Teacher Education Institute trained peers?

PRELIMINARY STATISTICAL ANALYSES

The survey instrument included 25 questions and began with an opportunity for participants to include the following background information: Content area, school name, district, number of years teaching, master's degree or higher, National Board certification, EPP graduate, teacher preparation pathway, race/ethnicity, and gender. The next survey questions asked CTs how much influence they had in the decision to host a ST, why they believed they were selected, and what types of CT training they participated in. The remainder of the survey questions aligned to the research questions and included a combination of Likert-type response scales and open-ended fields for CTs to provide narrative feedback about their experiences. The Office of Assessment and Accreditation emailed the survey to 1,164 CTs and of that number, 96 emails were undeliverable likely due to errors in email addresses or CTs relocating. The remaining

1,068 CTs presumably received the emailed survey without any delivery errors, and 361

CTs completed the survey (34% response rate). An explanation of the analyses

conducted on the survey items that align to the research questions will be shared in detail

in this chapter.

Research Question 1

To address research question 1 about the extent to which CTs feel prepared by the

EPP at the beginning of the semester, descriptive statistics were used to describe the

frequencies of responses for each item on the Likert-type response scale for question 15

of the survey, which asked CTs to rate various aspects of the training they received at the

beginning of the semester. The number of responses, percentage of responses in each

response category, means, and standard deviations for each survey item are reported in

Table 2.

Table 2: CT training at the beginning of the semester

	N	Completely Disagree (1)	Mostly Disagree (2)	Slightly Disagree (3)	Neither Agree nor Disagree (4)	Slightly Agree (5)	Mostly Agree (6)	Completely Agree (7)	M (SD)
15a Expectations of the role	323	1.5%	2.2%	2.2%	.9%	10.2%	42.7%	40.2%	6.05 (1.213)
15b Logistics	323	1.5%	3.1%	1.9%	1.2%	12.1%	39.9%	40.2%	6.00 (1.276)
15c Strategies for feedback	322	1.6%	1.9%	1.6%	4%	13%	40.4%	37.6%	5.97 (1.224)
15d Strategies for difficult conversations	322	1.9%	3.7%	5.3%	3.4%	17.7%	36.6%	31.4%	5.67 (1.435)
15e Coaching	322	2.2%	2.2%	3.4%	3.4%	14%	40.7%	34.2%	5.84 (1.340)
15f Addressing challenges	322	2.2%	3.1%	5.9%	4.7%	19.9%	39.1%	25.2%	5.55 (1.418)
15g edTPA support	314	4.1%	4.8%	4.1%	8.3%	19.4%	37.9%	21.3%	5.33 (1.572)
15h Training prepared me for CT role	323	2.2%	2.8%	2.5%	4%	14.2%	43.3%	31%	5.79 (1.336)

Table 2 shows that the means for all survey items for this question were ≥ 5.33

and that the most favorable mean of 6.05 was related to the training CTs received about

the *expectations of the role*. The mean for *logistics* was also close to that at 6.00. This

would suggest that the clarity of CT expectations and logistics of the student teaching

experience are the greatest areas of strength for the current training that is provided to

CTs, as these responses also had the highest percentages for "completely agree." When

combining the highest two response scales ("mostly agree" and "completely agree") for

survey item 15h, 74.3% of CTs report that the training they received prepared them for their role.

The licensure required capstone project that all STs must complete during the student teaching semester in order to receive a teaching license in the state of NC, called the educative Teacher Performance Assessment (edTPA), had the lowest mean of all items on this question (5.33). *edTPA support* also had the most items ranked "completely disagree" (4.1%), "mostly disagree" (4.8%), and "slightly disagree" (4.1%) compared to any other items on this question. This would suggest that CT perceptions of preparedness related to edTPA are somewhat unfavorable and this is an area of focus to be considered for future training. *Addressing challenges* is another area that received lower ratings, with an overall mean of 5.55.

There were 97 participants that responded to the open-ended question component to question 15. A qualitative review of the 97 open-ended responses for question 15 showed a similar trend. Many of the open-ended comments (17.53%, n=17) were positive comments about the CT training being useful. Comments included statements about the training being beneficial and very thorough. Respondent 69 (so numbered by order of survey return) wrote: "I thought the CT training/orientation was well-facilitated and provided all the necessary information regarding CT, ST, & [US] responsibilities throughout the student teaching process." Respondent 218 wrote: "I felt that the training was very informational and clear on the expectations of the CT role." Respondent 355 wrote: "I thought the orientation was very helpful. It had been some time since I had been a CT and I do not remember past orientations being this thorough." All CTs are required to participate in CT training in order to host a ST; however, 13.40% of the codes

(n=13) were comments that reported that the CT did not complete any training. This is a concern that may need to be addressed by the Educator Preparation Program (EPP).

Of all the codes related to CT training at the beginning of the semester, 11.34% (n=11) were comments related to edTPA. While there were a few positive comments about the training received on edTPA, the most prevalent comments were about CTs wanting more training and activities related to assisting STs with edTPA. Respondent 54 wrote: "I believe more activities centered around assisting STs with edTPA would be essential. It seems that when the edTPA portions come, the STs really get into panic mode which in some cases disrupts their effectiveness in their own classrooms." Respondent 238 wrote: "I still know very little about edTPA. It would have been helpful if TEI could have spent time acquainting [CTs] with the project so that we could help our STs prepare." CTs also commented about feeling confused or frustrated about edTPA. Respondent 183 wrote: "It would have been beneficial to have edTPA during a different semester as student teaching. The requirements for that project were very time/energy consuming and it was due around the same time as the ST took over full time teaching. That is a lot on a students plate at the same time." Respondent 210 wrote: "I was a bit confused, as I was not familiar with the edTPA program."

The data from this survey question suggests that most CTs have a favorable view of the training at the beginning of the semester. This is evidenced by the majority (≥59.2%) of the responses for each item falling between level 6 (mostly agree) and 7 (completely agree). Both the survey scale and the open-ended comments suggest that edTPA is a significant area of concern, and increased supports and training for edTPA would be of benefit.

Research Question 2

To address research question 2 about the support CTs received during the student teaching experience, to include support from the University Supervisor (US), the school-based administrator, and the EPP, descriptive statistics were used to describe the frequencies of responses for each item on the Likert-type response scale for question 17 (US support provided during the semester) and 18 (EPP and administration support provided during the semester) of the survey. The number of responses, percentage of responses in each response category, means, and standard deviations for each survey item are reported in Table 3.

Table 3: US support provided during the semester

	N	Completely Disagree (1)	Mostly Disagree (2)	Slightly Disagree (3)	Neither Agree nor Disagree (4)	Slightly Agree (5)	Mostly Agree (6)	Completely Agree (7)	M (SD)
17a US Support	358	1.1%	1.1%	1.1%	8.1%	3.1%	19.3%	66.2%	6.34 (1.211)
17b US Accessibility	358	1.4%	.8%	.3%	3.6%	5.9%	17.0%	70.9%	6.47 (1.099)
17c US Suggestions	358	1.4%	.6%	1.7%	5%	5.6%	20.1%	65.6%	6.36 (1.174)
17d US Preparedness	358	1.1%	.3%	1.1%	5.3%	3.9%	16.2%	72.1%	6.47 (1.084)
17e US Effective Conferences	358	1.7%	.6%	.6%	5%	5.6%	16.2%	70.4%	6.42 (1.159)
17f US Valued Input	358	1.4%	.6%	.6%	4.2%	4.7%	12.6%	76.0%	6.52 (1.094)
17g Overall US Effectiveness	358	1.1%	1.4%	1.1%	3.4%	4.7%	16.2%	72.1%	6.46 (1.139)

Table 3 shows that the means for all survey items for US support were all ≥6.34. A considerable amount of responses (72.1%) were rated at the highest level 7

("completely agree") when asked about the *overall US effectiveness* during the student teaching experience. Other areas that were highly rated were the *US valuing the CTs input* and the *US preparedness* for observations and meetings. These strong numbers across all survey items for this section would suggest that CTs are having positive interactions with the US they are placed with. While all percentages were strong, the area with the lowest mean was *US support*, which also had the highest percentage (8.1%) for the response of "neither agree nor disagree."

There were 98 open-ended comments for question 17, which seemed to support the quantitative responses in that they were also overwhelmingly positive. The majority of the responses (71%, n=70) were coded as positive comments about the US. Respondent 40 wrote: "The university-based supervisor was very effective in supporting me in my role as a CT as well as the teacher candidate. She was readily available to answer any questions or concerns that I had." Respondent 275 wrote: "CT support from the university-based supervisor did a great job in supporting me and my ST by giving moral support and problem solving tools to help the ST better themselves in the classroom." Respondent 348 wrote: "My university supervisor was extremely supportive throughout the whole process. She was obviously there for the ST, but she kept me informed and helped to make sure the experience was successful for everyone."

However, there were some opposing comments related to the US. A few comments (11%, n=11) suggested issues or disagreements with the quality and depth of the feedback the US provided to the ST. Respondent 134 wrote: "I believe the feedback given to my ST was more surface level/minor things rather than big picture. Personally I would go more in-depth with my feedback". Respondent 195 wrote: "I felt at times that

the supervisor was too idealistic and often referred to his experiences as a student and as a teacher in the past and wanted things done in that manner. Often this was at odds with the reality of the modern classroom, student, and prior knowledge of the students." Respondent 244 wrote: "Feedback to my ST from the supervisor was delayed and vague." Both the qualitative and quantitative responses strongly suggest that the majority of CTs have a very positive opinion of the US, but there may be areas for improvement related to the amount of support provided and the quality of the feedback for STs.

There were also some comments (10%, n=10) about COVID-19 disrupting the student teaching experience, which created a uniquely challenging situation for CTs. Many of the comments were complementary to the US and the handling of the COVID-19 disruption. Respondent 60 wrote: "COVID-19 created a unique situation, however my University Supervisor was really good at keeping in contact and addressing concerns." Respondent 190 wrote: "There was never a time when I was out of the loop, unprepared, or confused about my role in any of this - even with all the COVID-19 stuff happening." Respondent 332 wrote: "The COVID-19 situation created a new situation that my University Supervisor did a great job of handling, she was able to step up and make needed adjustments to the program to help me and my ST."

The number of responses, percentage of responses in each response category, means, and standard deviations for each survey item related to the support provided during the student teaching experience to the CT by school-based administration and the EPP are reported in Table 4.

Table 4: EPP and school administrator support provided during the semester

	N	Completely Disagree (1)	Mostly Disagree (2)	Slightly Disagree (3)	Neither Agree nor Disagree (4)	Slightly Agree (5)	Mostly Agree (6)	Completely Agree (7)	M (SD)
18a Webinars were useful	197	.5%	.5%	3%	12.7%	20.8%	34.5%	27.9%	5.68 (1.176)
18b Used information from webinars to mentor ST	197	1%	.5%	2.5%	11.7%	23.9%	36%	24.4%	5.62 (1.174)
18c Used ST handbook	321	0%	.6%	1.7%	6.2%	23.4%	38.3%	30.5%	5.89 (.992)
18d edTPA support	319	1.9%	4.1%	5.6%	9.7%	25.1%	30.7%	22.9%	5.36 (1.446)
18e School admin support	342	.9%	1.8%	1.8%	7.9%	9.6%	29.8%	48.2	6.06 (1.246)
18f CT role used on summative evaluations by admin	333	3.6%	.9%	1.2%	18.9%	9%	24%	42.3%	5.70 (1.530)

Table 4 shows that *school administration support* had the highest mean of 6.06. Of all support topics, 78% of CTs selected "mostly agree" or "completely agree" as it relates to their school administrators supporting them in their role as a CT and 66.3% of CTs selected "mostly agree" or "completely agree" to the statement: *My role as a CT is considered on my summative evaluation by my principal*. Interestingly, the survey item about whether or not the CT role was used on evaluations had more responses in the category for "neither agree nor disagree" (18.9%) and had the most responses for "completely disagree" at 3.6%. Overall, based on these data, CTs are receiving support and acknowledgement for their work by their school-based administrators. Many CTs skipped the survey items about *webinars*, which is perhaps an indication that they did not

participate in those. For those that did attend webinars provided by the EPP, most of the responses were positive, with the greatest frequency being for "mostly agree."

As with question 15, *edTPA support* continues to emerge as an area of focus, with the lowest mean at 5.36. This is consistently an area that CTs are reporting feeling less supported and less confident, both at the start of the student teaching experience and throughout it as well. Since this is a trend across the survey, it is certainly something to consider for future support sessions and professional development offerings.

The qualitative data from the 47 open-ended responses for question 18 found some similarities and differences with the survey items. Of all the codes, 21% (n=10) were related to principals and summative evaluations factoring the role of a CT. Respondent 128 wrote: "Although my principal wanted me to have a ST it didn't have an impact nor was it mentioned on my evaluations." Respondent 203 wrote: "My role was not mentioned on my summative evaluation by my principal, it would be nice to have that on my record." Respondent 318 wrote: "I would think hosting a ST is considered as a leadership activity since that was mentioned on my observation." Respondent 346 wrote: "No credit was given to me on my evaluation for supporting a ST." There were many comments similar to these, which slightly contrasts to the quantitative data that showed many CTs reporting their role *was* factored into their summative evaluation ratings.

The data also showed that 17% (n=8) of the comments were related to the support provided by school-based administrators during the student teaching experience. Many comments described how principals allowed CTs to have full autonomy over things related to their ST. Respondent 43 wrote: "I was generally supported by my school administration with regards to my candidate, but my admin was more hands-off when it

came to this year's student teaching experience." Respondent 53 wrote: "My school administrator let me have full control over all decisions based on my ST. This is not a negative indication of my administration, but rather a positive one that they trust my competencies enough to allow me free choice with my ST." Respondent 128 wrote: "The principal left me to learn the process and didn't intervene unless I approached him for assistance." These comments were generally positive and demonstrated a level of trust between the principal and CT.

edTPA resurfaced yet again as a concern and 11% (n=5) of the comments were related to CTs' uneasiness and frustrations with edTPA and the amount of time it took away from the student teaching experience. Respondent 179 wrote: "I do feel that I need additional help to clarify what I should do to help my ST complete her edTPA. I hardly do anything at all to help because I'm afraid to overstep my boundaries and mess it up for her." Respondent 187 wrote: "I was not familiar with exactly the edTPA process for the student and found it quite consumed and distracted my ST." Respondent 259 wrote: "I would have liked to have known more about edTPA as it became all-consuming for my student-teacher and had a negative effect on her classroom performance."

The data suggested that CTs feel supported by their school administrators and they have an appropriate level of autonomy to make decisions related to their ST's performance; however, there are mixed feelings among CTs about whether or not their principals are factoring their role as a CT into summative evaluation ratings. The data also suggested that CTs feel less supported with edTPA and they disapprove of how it takes away from the student teaching experience.

Research Question 3

     To address research question 3 about the challenges CTs experience during the semester which they hosted a student teacher, descriptive statistics were conducted to describe the frequencies of responses for each item on the response scale for question 19 of the survey, which asked CTs to rate various challenges during the student teaching experience on a scale of 1-7. The number of responses, percentage of responses in each response category, means, and standard deviations for each survey item are reported in Table 5.

Table 5: CT challenges experienced during the student teaching semester

	N	1 Not challenging at all	2	3	4	5	6	7 Extremely Challenging	M (SD)
19a Hosting a ST overall	357	30.8%	26.9%	16.2%	9.8%	10.9%	3.9%	1.4%	2.61 (1.570)
19b Difficult conversations	351	27.6%	27.6%	16%	12.5%	8.8%	4.6%	2.8%	2.72 (1.630)
19c Discussing professionalism	354	50%	21.8%	11.9%	5.9%	5.6%	3.1%	1.7%	2.12 (1.509)
19d Evaluation instruments	355	43.7%	31.5%	14.6%	6.2%	3.1%	.3%	.6%	1.97 (1.139)
19e Regularly meeting	354	49.2%	29.4%	9%	6.2%	4.5%	1.4%	.3%	1.93 (1.238)
19f Providing instructional feedback	355	46.5%	36.1%	10.4%	4.5%	2%	.6%	0%	1.81 (.992)
19g Providing classroom management feedback	353	43.1%	35.1%	11.3%	4.8%	3.4%	1.4%	.8%	1.98 (1.219)
19h Providing assessment feedback	355	44.2%	33.5%	14.4%	4.5%	2.5%	.6%	.3%	1.90 (1.072)
19i Competing responsibilities at school	355	26.5%	25.9%	25.1%	10.4%	7.6%	4.2%	.3%	2.61 (1.415)
19j Competing responsibilities in personal life	353	40.5%	29.5%	15.9%	7.4%	4.8%	1.4%	.6%	2.13 (1.284)
19k Positive working relationship with ST	354	73.4%	13.8%	5.6%	4%	1.1%	.6%	1.4%	1.53 (1.129)
19l Giving up control	354	27.4%	29.1%	21.2%	9%	8.8%	1.4%	3.1%	2.59 (1.514)
19m Co-teaching	353	39.9%	31.4%	15.3%	6.2%	4.2%	1.7%	1.1%	2.13 (1.314)
19n Co-planning	351	49.6%	29.1%	8.5%	6.3%	3.7%	1.4%	1.4%	1.95 (1.324)
19o edTPA	348	30.7%	23.3%	20.1%	10.3%	8%	3.7%	3.7%	2.68 (1.651)

19p Generational differences	354	59.6%	24.3%	7.6%	4.2%	1.1%	1.7%	1.4%	1.74 (1.226)
19q Coaching	350	48.9%	30.6%	12%	4.3%	2.6%	1.4%	.3%	1.87 (1.139)

Survey data in table 5 are coded differently from other parts of the survey. In this part of the survey, lower scores are more desirable because lower scores indicate that the stated topic was less of a challenge and higher scores show areas of greater challenge and concern. While all means were relatively low, *building a positive working relationship* had the lowest mean at 1.53, suggesting that this may be an area that many CTs feel especially comfortable with. Conversely, the data suggest that CTs perceive *difficult conversations* with their ST as an area of elevated challenge, as evidenced by this section having the highest mean of 2.72. *edTPA* shows up again as an area of concern on this response scale, with a mean of 2.68. *Hosting a ST overall* and *balancing competing responsibilities at school* were tied with a mean of 2.61; however, more CT ratings fell between levels 4-7 for *hosting a ST overall* (26%) as compared to 22.5% for *competing responsibilities* at school, suggesting that *hosting a ST overall* is slightly more challenging.

As with the survey ratings, there were many positive remarks in the comments section. There were a total of 74 comments provided for question 19 and 41.77% (n=33) of the comments were coded as a positive remark about the student teaching experience. Respondent 41 wrote: "[The EPP] has provided me both years with teachers who were prepared and ready for this level of hands-on work in the classroom and I had wonderful experiences with both of them." Respondent 112 wrote: "My ST was awesome and very receptive to advice and feedback." Respondent 218 wrote: "My overall experience as a

CT was awesome. I was blessed to have a ST who was willing to take risks, try new 'in

the moment' strategies, accept feedback, and have a positive attitude. The program at

[the EPP] played a big part in that. She was clear on the expectations coming from [the

EPP], which positively influenced our experience together."

While most comments were positive, there were some noted areas of concern. Of

the open-ended response codes, 12.66% (n=10) were comments that indicated an issue

related to ST professional dispositions. Respondent 192 wrote: "My ST showed up late

and I had to initiate the conversations regarding her school assignments. I don't think she

was truly invested and she may have had stuff going on in her personal life at the time."

Respondent 178 wrote: "I had a hard time because she wasn't handing in her lesson plans

beforehand so I could go over them. I'm not comfortable letting someone teach my class

if I don't know what they have planned. She claimed she didn't know they had to be

turned in by a certain date so we could go over them together. Therefore, we met with her

supervisor and my principal to reinforce the expectations. She continued to not complete

work on time. This caused issues and she was asked to leave the school."

Coaching/feedback also emerged as an area of focus, with 6.33% (n=5) of codes

reporting a concern about this. Respondent 105 wrote: "The coaching strategies would

be something [the EPP] should provide in the orientation. Maybe it's assumed we know

them. Coaching an adult is different than coaching kids, so I think this information is

valuable. I am a highly effective teacher, but providing an adult with feedback can

sometimes be a challenge. They can be overly sensitive." Respondent 189 wrote: " I

also found it challenging on how to handle him teaching the content incorrectly during a

lesson. I didn't want to embarrass him in front of the students, but I also couldn't let him

teach my students the wrong way to work a problem. I think I could benefit from more training on how to tactfully address these scenarios."

The quantitative data showed that *difficult conversations* had the highest mean. Similarly, the qualitative data showed that the challenges with the greatest frequency were related to *ST professional dispositions* and *coaching/feedback.* There could certainly be an association between these three, considering feedback and professionalism are issues that a CT would likely need to address with a ST in a conversation that might be difficult and uncomfortable.

Research Question 4

As part of the preliminary analysis for research question 4, which sought to determine the differences in perceived CT preparedness and support between TEI and non-TEI CTs, an exploratory factor analysis was conducted to look at whether or not the survey items for question 15 (CT training at the beginning of the semester) would cluster into different types of preparation and support. Results of this factor analysis showed that there was only one underlying dimension or factor: *CT preparation/support.* The one factor solution accounted for 81.1% of the variance in the item responses, and there was only one eigenvalue greater than a value of 1. To measure internal consistency and as another way to determine whether items work together, Cronbach's alpha was used when combining all eight items from question 15 to make a score of high reliability at .964. Because this number is above .8, there is high internal consistency reliability.

Using the single scale of *CT preparation/support* for question 15, independent samples *t*-tests were used to determine the average scores for TEI trained CTs and non-TEI trained CTs to determine whether or not there were statistically significant

differences between these two groups. Table 6 shows the number of CTs in each group, as well as the means and standard deviations for the single scale of *CT preparation/support*.

Table 6: CT preparation/support (factor analysis single scale) at the beginning of the semester

	N	M	SD
TEI CTs	79	48.01	7.22
Non-TEI CTs	232	45.75	10.39

TEI CTs had a slightly higher mean of 48.0, compared to non-TEI CTs at 45.75. This shows that overall in this factor analysis, TEI CTs selected more favorable responses as it relates to the preparation and support at the beginning of the semester, compared to their non-TEI trained peers. The independent samples *t*-test produced a *p*-value of .035. Though small, there is a statistically significant difference between the two groups for question 15. This might suggest that the additional level of training TEI CTs receive is resulting in those CTs feeling slightly more prepared and supported at the start of the student teaching experience compared to their non-TEI trained counterparts.

To further compare TEI vs non-TEI CTs for research question 4, survey item 21G was selected to analyze the differences in responses between the two groups. Item 21G on the survey asked CTs to respond to the following statement: "[The EPP] did a good job in supporting me in working with their ST(s)." Table 7 shows the cross-tabulation between the two CT groups.

Table 7: EPP support of CT crosstabulation (survey item 21G)

	N	Completely Disagree (1)	Mostly Disagree (2)	Slightly Disagree (3)	Neither Agree nor Disagree (4)	Slightly Agree (5)	Mostly Agree (6)	Completely Agree (7)	M (SD)
TEI	87	0%	0%	0%	2.3%	6.9%	35.6%	55.2%	6.44 (.727)
Non-TEI	268	0.4%	1.1%	1.9%	4.9%	7.1%	28.4%	56.3%	6.29 (1.050)

Feedback from both groups were overall very positive as evidenced by the percentages of responses in the "mostly agree" and "completely agree" categories. TEI CT percentages for "mostly agree" and "completely agree" total to 90.8%, as compared to non-TEI CTs percentages for those same two categories (84.7%); however, non-TEI CTs had slightly more responses for "completely agree." Both groups' responses suggest they are satisfied with the level of support the EPP provided but TEI CT responses are slightly higher. To further analyze the differences on this particular survey item and to compare patterns in the percentages, a chi square test of association was conducted between the two groups and produced a *p*-value of .530. This number is greater than .05, meaning there are no statistically significant differences between TEI and non-TEI CTs for this survey item.

The final analysis conducted to compare TEI vs non-TEI CTs for research question four was survey item 21I, which asked CTs to respond to the following statement: "I was well prepared to mentor my ST." Table 8 shows the cross-tabulation between the two CT groups.

Table 8: CT perceived preparation for mentoring a ST crosstabulation - (survey item 21I)

	N	Completely Disagree (1)	Mostly Disagree (2)	Slightly Disagree (3)	Neither Agree nor Disagree (4)	Slightly Agree (5)	Mostly Agree (6)	Completely Agree (7)	M (SD)
TEI	87	0%	0%	0%	0%	6.9%	49.4%	43.7%	6.37 (.612)
Non-TEI	268	0.4%	0.7%	1.9%	3.4%	6.7%	36.9%	50%	6.27 (.947)

As with the previous survey item results, both CT groups reported positive feedback about their perceived preparedness. There are no items rated below "slightly agree" with the TEI group and there are only a few below this same rating with non-TEI CTs (6.4%). Similar to survey item 21G, there is a slight advantage for non-TEI CTs for the highest percentage on the "completely agree" rating totaling 50%, compared to 43.7% of TEI CTs at this same rating. The total responses for TEI CTs for "mostly agree" and "completely agree" combined came to 93.1%, while non-TEI CTs totaled at 86.9%. To further analyze the differences on this particular survey item and to compare patterns in the percentages, a chi square test of association was conducted and produced a p-value of .196, which is not statistically significant. This further illustrates there are minimal differences of CT perceptions of preparedness between TEI and non-TEI CTs for this survey item.

An examination of the background of TEI and non-TEI CTs was also conducted to determine what preexisting differences in demographics were present between those who received the treatment and those who did not. The first background variable that was analyzed was CTs obtaining a Master's degree or higher. The analysis found there to be only a very small difference between the two groups with this variable, slightly

favoring non-TEI CTs (51.7% of TEI CTs selected yes, compared to 53.3% of non-TEI CTs selecting yes), with a *p*-value of .949. There were no statistically significant differences between the two CT groups with respect to obtaining a Master's degree or higher.

The next background variable that was analyzed was CTs obtaining National Board certification. As with the prior analysis, the two groups were very similar with non-TEI CTs having a slightly higher percentage (19.5% TEI CTs obtained National Board certification, compared to 21.8% of non-TEI CTs) with a *p*-value was .504. There was also no statistically significant difference between the two CT groups with respect to National Board certification.

The final background variable that was analyzed was the years of teaching experience. The mean for TEI CTs was 14.37 years of experience (SD 6.56) and 16.51 years of experience (SD 7.42) for non-TEI CTs. Both means are high and are fairly close; however, on average, non-TEI CTs have a little more experience than TEI CTs. The independent samples *t*-test produced a *p*-value of .012, which is statistically significant.

The researcher also tested the other survey demographic questions (EPP program graduates, teacher preparation pathway, race/ethnicity, and gender) but the analyses found there to be no statistically significant differences between the two CT groups.

SUMMARY

An overall review of the quantitative and qualitative results for research questions one and two found that CTs overall have a mostly positive view of the training and support provided by the EPP at the beginning of the semester and during the semester.

CTs had especially positive feedback about the US they worked with in the survey data and the open-ended comments.   CTs also had positive feedback about the support received from their principals; however, there was mixed feedback about whether or not their role as a CT is factored in their summative evaluation. Many CT comments suggest they believe it is important for this form of leadership to be mentioned in their evaluations by their principals.

The data show that the greatest area for improvement to the training and support at the beginning of and during the supervision or hosting of the student teaching experience is related to edTPA. CTs consistently reported in the survey and comments across questions that they were frustrated with how edTPA requirements consume the student teaching experience and they were unsure of what to do to support their ST. Better training and support around edTPA would be an important area of focus for the EPP.

An overall review of the quantitative and qualitative data for research question three showed that many CTs are reporting minimal challenges. The means were all relatively low (which is desirable in this portion of the survey) and nearly 42% of the comments were positive and complementary to the EPP and the ST. The data for this question showed that edTPA, having difficult conversations, ST professional dispositions, and coaching/feedback were the greatest areas of challenge. These are topics that may also need to be prioritized when training and supporting CTs at the start of and during the student teaching experience. EPPs may also address these topics with future STs, and place a greater emphasis on expectations surrounding professionalism and receptiveness to feedback.

The data for research question four shows that there are minimal differences between the responses of TEI and non-TEI CTs as it relates to their perceived preparedness by the EPP for the student teaching experience and the support they received. In some cases, TEI CTs reported slightly more favorable ratings and in other cases, non-TEI CTs reported slightly higher responses. The factor analysis and independent samples *t*-test conducted for question 15 of the survey (CT training at the beginning of the semester) showed there were statistically significant differences between the two groups, though very small (effect size = .217). These differences mean that on average, the TEI group answered one point higher on the rating scale on two questions. Conversely, additional analyses run related to CT support (question 21G) and CT preparation (question 21I) of the survey found no statistically significant differences between the two groups. The data suggests that overall, both groups of CTs are having positive experiences but there are very few and only minor differences in the responses.

This chapter provided an overview of the results of the data analyses and answers to the research questions. Chapter five will present conclusions, implications, and offer recommendations for future research.

CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSIONS

The final chapter of this study summarizes the results and offers conclusions based on the findings. Implications on how this study can provide additional knowledge for teachers, P-12 leaders, and Educator Preparation Programs (EPPs) are considered. Recommendations for future research and best practice are also discussed.

OVERVIEW OF THE FINDINGS - RESEARCH QUESTIONS ANSWERED

Research Question 1: *To what extent do Cooperating Teachers feel prepared by their Student Teacher's Educator Preparation Program to support their Student Teachers at the beginning of the student teaching experience?* The data suggest that, overall, Cooperating Teachers (CTs) have a favorable view of the training provided by the EPP at the beginning of the semester. For survey item 15h (The training/orientation I completed effectively prepared me for my role as a CT), "mostly agree" and "completely agree" accounted for 74.3% of the responses and the "slightly agree" responses accounted for 14.2%. When combining all responses that agree with survey item 15h to some extent, 88.5% of CTs feel that training at the beginning of the semester had some level of positive impact on their preparedness for their role.

The qualitative responses were also positive. The most frequent comment code was related to CT trainings being useful. The codebook included such words and phrases as *thorough, beneficial, organized, meaningful, informational, and well-facilitated*. This would suggest that CTs appreciate the training provided at the beginning of the semester, which supports the quantitative data as well.

Both the quantitative and qualitative data show that CTs feel less prepared to support STs with their edTPA licensure capstone project. edTPA support ratings totaled

10.3% of the responses in the lowest categories ("completely disagree," "mostly disagree," and "slightly disagree" combined), which is greater than any other survey item for question 15. Additionally, edTPA support had the lowest mean (5.33) of all survey items. The 11 edTPA open-ended comments suggested this was an area of concern, as well. Some of the words and phrases related to edTPA included *more training needed, confused about edTPA, and unsure how to assist STs with edTPA*. The quantitative and qualitative data related to research question 1 suggests that overall, CTs have a positive view of training provided at the start of the semester but more training related to edTPA is an area of need. The data also suggest that although CT training is a requirement of the EPP, some CTs are still not completing it.

Research Question 2: *To what extent do Cooperating Teachers feel prepared to support Student Teachers during the student teaching experience?* Survey data suggests that CTs have a strong appreciation for the University Supervisor (US) they are placed with during the student teaching experience and the support they receive from him/her, as evidenced by the positive US ratings (all means ≥6.34). When asked to rate the support provided by the US, 85.5% of CTs selected "mostly agree" or "completely agree." Similarly, the code book included comments about the US being *supportive, communicative, organized, and accessible*. The data also suggest that the principal is a provider of support for CTs. The comments mentioned that principals are allowing CTs to have full ownership and autonomy with their ST.

Several conclusions related to research question two were drawn from the quantitative and qualitative data. (1) CTs feel very supported during the student teaching experience, primarily by the US but also to an extent by their principals. (2) CTs are

supported to a lesser degree by other resources provided by the EPP, such as webinars and handbooks. (3) edTPA is an area CTs need additional support with. (4) Hosting and leading a ST should be factored in CTs' summative evaluation ratings completed annually by the CT's principal.

Research Question 3: *What components of supervising the student teaching experience are most challenging for Cooperating Teachers?* Although this section of the survey was an opportunity to rate common challenges, many CTs provided positive feedback, especially in the comments related to supervising the student teaching experience. This is evidenced by the means for question 19 being relatively low (low means are desirable for this part of the survey). On a seven-point scale where a rating of 1 is "not challenging at all" and 7 is "extremely challenging," the mean for 52% of the survey items was less than two and the remaining means (48%) were all less than three. This illustrates that, overall, CTs are reporting minimal challenges based on the provided list of frequently encountered CT issues. The open-ended comments were also mostly positive about the student teaching experience, with participants using phrases and words such as *great experience, would serve as a CT again, amazing, ST was well-prepared,* and *learned a lot.*

Although the feedback was mostly positive, a few areas emerged from the qualitative and quantitative data as challenges. While all means were relatively low, *edTPA* and *having difficult conversations* had the highest means of all survey items. edTPA has been a trend throughout the entire survey as an area CTs are feeling less prepared for and in this portion, it was rated as the greatest challenge CTs faced. Having difficult conversations with STs also emerged as an area of challenge in the survey and

the participant comments produced some similarities. ST professional dispositions and providing feedback/coaching were top trends noted in the comments. Some phrases and words used include: *ST was unprepared, ST showed up late, lesson plans were not prepared on time, STs can be overly sensitive when receiving feedback,* and *very stressful situation.*

The comments and survey results suggest that most CTs are having a positive experience and typically are able to manage the challenges of hosting a ST; however, the areas that CTs tend to struggle with include having difficult conversations, addressing ST professional dispositions, providing coaching/feedback, and edTPA. Many CTs reported they sought assistance from the US in addressing these challenges, but these were still difficult to handle.

Research Question 4: *To what extent do Cooperating Teachers who were part of the Teacher Education Institute program feel prepared and supported for their role compared to non-Teacher Education Institute Cooperating Teachers?* Across the entire survey, TEI CTs' and non-TEI CTs' responses were very similar. In some instances, non-TEI CTs reported more favorable responses, while in other portions of the survey TEI CTs reported stronger responses. In the factor analysis of question 15 of the survey (CT training at the beginning of the semester), there was a small statistically significant difference between their responses which favored TEI CTs; however, on two additional analyses related to CT support (survey item 21G) and CT preparedness (survey item 21I), there was no statistically significant difference between the two CT groups. Overall, both groups had positive responses and seemed to all feel well prepared and supported. The data suggested that overall there is no consistent, strong evidence to support that TEI CTs

had a more positive perception of preparedness, training, and support than their non-TEI

trained peers.

SIGNIFICANCE OF FINDINGS

The findings of this research both confirm and build upon the existing literature

related to CT preparation, training, and support. When examining the survey data and

open-ended responses for Research Question 1 about their training and preparation at the

beginning of the semester, the majority of TEI CTs and non-TEI CTs reported that the

training provided by the EPP (any level of training they received from the EPP) had a

positive impact on their readiness. This supports much of the research previously

conducted about the importance of training CTs for their role. The data from Killian and

Wilkins' (2009) study suggested that training CTs in ST supervision and leadership has

an association with being a highly effective CT. In their study, trained CTs were more

adept at providing objective feedback and could more effectively resolve difficult issues

at an early stage, as compared to the less effective CTs who had not received the same

level of training. Killian and Wilkins' (2009) study adds to this body of knowledge by

illuminating the positive impact of CT training before the student teaching experience,

especially around providing feedback which is a known area of challenge for CTs.

Research Question 2 illustrates the significance of ongoing support during the

student teaching experience. While training at the start of the experience is important, the

support while implementing the skills and strategies obtained from training is key. Level

three of Guskey's (2000) evaluation of professional development format explains that the

support provided after new learning is critical and the absence of that support can be a

barrier to proper implementation "lack of support [...] can sabotage any professional

development effort, even when all the individual aspects of professional development are done right" (Guskey, 2000).   During the student teaching experience, CT support tends to primarily come from the US. The data from this study show that the US plays an important role in the student teaching semester and that CTs tend to rely on the US to clarify expectations, answer questions, provide general support, and address issues that may arise. School administrators also play a role in support during the semester but not to the same degree as the US. The open-ended comments of the data show that many CTs unexpectedly encountered issues throughout the semester and needed additional support to address things.

Research Question 3 identified some key areas of challenge for CTs. This study found that a significant area of concern fell under the broad umbrella of feedback: Providing feedback/coaching, having difficult conversations, and addressing ST professional dispositions. This supports existing literature which suggests that CTs are tentative about the type of feedback they provide, they are overly cautious when providing feedback, and during post-observation conferences, CTs often refrain from confronting STs about difficulties and instructional errors in the lesson to avoid upsetting them (Morehead & Waters, 1987; Abell, Dillon, Hopkins, McInery, & O'Brien, 1995; Edwards, 1997; Giebelhaus & Bowman, 2002; Ferber & Nillas, 2010).   CTs also consistently reported that edTPA was a significant challenge. Kissau et. al. (2019) conducted a study in 2015 to examine the impact of edTPA training specifically designed for CTs on CT practice and ST edTPA scores.   The results of this study found that the CTs who completed the edTPA training were better able to offer more detailed, specific feedback to their STs about edTPA and also demonstrated a better understanding of the

connections between the edTPA requirements and established best practice. Kissau et. al (2019) recommended that CTs be provided edTPA professional development as part of CT orientation at the start of the semester.

The data results for Research Question 4 is mixed in that the CTs in both groups have an appreciation for the training and support they received; however, there are minimal differences between the responses of TEI and non-TEI CTs. Much of the existing research that uses a comparison between a control group (traditional training or no training) and experimental group that received additional training has found that CTs receiving additional training showed better outcomes, especially for STs. Giebelhaus and Bowman's (2002) quasi-experimental study of two groups of CTs (those trained in a common framework for discussion called Praxis III/Pathwise and those who received the traditional CT orientation) found that STs placed with a trained CT demonstrated more complete and effective planning, more effective classroom management skills, and greater reflectivity on their practice than those who were placed with CTs in the control group who only received the general orientation. Similarly, the results of Gareis and Grant's (2014) study showed that trained CTs exhibited increased levels of self-efficacy and skills, and they more accurately assessed their STs than the untrained CTs. While these studies are not necessarily examining the perception of the CT as this study is, it is still important to note that additional CT training appears to have a noticeable impact on the overall student teaching experience, according to those studies.

In contrast, although additional CT training has proven to lead to better results and outcomes for the CT and ST, the analyses run to compare TEI CTs and non-TEI CTs in this study on their responses to survey items related to training, preparedness, and

support show there are no strong differences between the two groups. The most recent analysis of TEI ST data collected by the EPP (outside of this research) has also shown there to be no significant differences in evaluation ratings and edTPA scores of STs placed with TEI and non-TEI CTs. This is not to say that additional training is not useful; however, there may be some areas in which TEI could be enhanced to better address the reported needs of CTs.

<div align="center">ADDITIONAL TEACHER EDUCATION INSTITUTE DATA</div>

Questions 22-25 of the survey were only completed by those CTs who self-reported they were part of TEI. A spot check of the data was conducted by the researcher and Office of Assessment and Accreditation to determine the accuracy of this TEI self-reporting against the database and this spot check found no issues of concern. The data suggested that TEI CTs had the most favorable view of the coaching training they received. All survey items related to coaching had a mean ≥6.05 (on a Likert-type seven-point scale where 1 is "completely disagree" and 7 is "completely agree"). The items that had the lower means were the *TEI get togethers* (5.51) and *TEI focus practices* (5.83). This would suggest that CTs have a greater appreciation for learning about coaching techniques to use with their ST and less of an appreciation for the ongoing TEI meetings throughout the year and the TEI *focus practices*.

Because most CTs were not part of TEI, there were far fewer comments as compared to other sections of the survey. An analysis of the 12 open-ended comments showed that 46.15% (n=6) of the codes were comments that indicated a positive TEI experience. Respondent 59 wrote: "I gained much more training/experience through TEI participation than the regular CT training/orientation." Respondent 308 wrote: "I have

hosted numerous STs in my career, but it wasn't until my TEI training that I felt confident coaching and mentoring my STs."

Conversely, 38.46% (n=5) of the codes were comments that indicated the need for TEI improvements. Respondent 16 wrote: "The check in one evening when we all met at [EPP] wasn't as effective because teachers were worn out from the school day and seemed chatty and unfocused." Respondent 211 wrote: "I do wish they would spend more time on feedback and coaching instead of equitable teaching." Respondent 238 wrote: "During the Aug. TEI workshops on campus there was a lot emphasis on three focus practices (e.g., whole group discussion). However, my ST had never heard anything about focus practices. I think everyone should be on the same page."

This qualitative data seemed to further confirm the survey data in that TEI CTs have a greater appreciation for the coaching and feedback training they received from TEI and less of an appreciation or understanding of the instructional *focus practices* and the mid-semester TEI get-together meetings. This could be an area of improvement for future TEI trainings.

Anecdotally, many P-12 teachers and leaders have shared that they feel as though colleges of education and EPPs across the nation place too much of a focus on theory and sophisticated practices and not enough focus on equipping future teachers with the strategies needed for success on day one. Similarly, this parallels a theme that emerged from the TEI data of this study in that CTs have less of an appreciation for training around TEI instructional *focus practices* and would rather prefer more practical training on things that will allow them to be more successful on day one in their role, such as coaching and feedback.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

There are several recommendations for future research on CT preparation, training, and support based on this study:

1. Investigate a specific format or framework for CTs to use when delivering feedback. The data from this study showed that feedback is an area CTs struggle with, and the existing literature also points to this as an area critical for success within the ST experience (Morehead & Waters, 1987; Abell, Dillon, Hopkins, McInery, & O'Brien, 1995; Edwards, 1997; Giebelhaus & Bowman, 2002; Ferber & Nillas, 2010). This feedback framework could be developed and examined in additional research studies.

2. Explore and analyze ST perspectives and/or their outcomes (i.e. edTPA, evaluation ratings) to determine what differences exist in their performance if placed with a TEI CT and/or a CT that has received additional formal training in a specific area, such as providing feedback or coaching.

3. Examine other variables that may contribute to CT perceptions of preparedness and challenge, such as school type (e.g. low-performing school), content area (e.g. elementary, special education), school district type (e.g. urban, rural), and/or prior leadership experience (e.g. past service as a CT, beginning teacher mentor).

4. Any attempt to replicate this study might add additional TEI survey and/or open-ended items to (1) specifically ask which parts of TEI were most and least useful, and (2) specifically ask whether they believe TEI directly contributed to their preparation and support, in order to better and more accurately answer the research question.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR PRACTICE

A close examination of the data yielded from this study showcases 4 recommendations that have the potential to bolster practice in the area of CT training and preparation. These recommendations have been outlined in 4 sequential steps.

Step 1: Strengthen the process by which CTs are selected in order to enhance the experience for all stakeholders

EPPs and school leaders cannot simply select "good" teachers of P-12 students that meet the state's minimum requirements. As Matsko et al. (2020) suggested, being an effective teacher of P-12 students is actually less important than being able to effectively provide feedback and support to a ST. The work of a CT is a leadership role filled with a range of expectations and responsibilities in preparing a future teacher and not all teachers possess the skills to lead an adult learner in this way. EPPs and school leaders should be mindful of this when determining which teachers would be appropriate for this role. Primary consideration should be given to those teachers who not only meet the state requirements, but also teachers who have direct experience (or who show promising potential) with leadership and mentoring of adult learners and/or new teachers. Prospective CTs should demonstrate their ability to provide positive and constructive feedback, devote time for planning and preparation of content, relinquish an appropriate amount of control, address difficult topics as needed, model effective practices with P-12 students, communicate hope and optimism about choosing teaching as a career choice, build relationships, and also be willing to reflect and grow. These teachers who have demonstrated or show potential to demonstrate these CT leadership qualities are the most fitting for this work.

EPPs and school leaders must better coordinate efforts and collaborate to ensure these criteria are considered when choosing CTs who will train our future teachers, as this impacts not only the ST's future teaching career, but also the P-12 students they will soon teach. Often EPPs and school leaders conduct their respective jobs in silos from each other and are not communicating effectively about each one's respective needs. If the communication and collaboration increases between both stakeholders, a better system can be created to ensure that STs are being placed with CTs that are a good fit for this important work.

Step 2: Properly orient and train CTs for their work

All CTs should be required to complete a comprehensive training before the semester begins to first provide an explanation of the logistics, requirements of the student teaching experience, and responsibilities of each person involved so that they have a clear path of understanding from the beginning. If a CT does not participate in training, then they should be ineligible to host a ST. Training should also address the areas presented in this research, such as edTPA, coaching, relinquishing control in a sensible manner, addressing difficult topics, and providing feedback. Research has found that CTs are hesitant to provide honest feedback and that oftentimes, CT feedback is generally narrow and does not promote deep reflection on practice (Clarke et al., 2014). Giebelhaus and Bowman (2002) found that training CTs in a common framework for providing feedback (called the Praxis III/Pathwise framework) resulted in better outcomes for the STs placed with those trained CTs. Based on these results, an approach may also be to adopt a common, researched framework for delivering feedback and provide extensive training on it.

The data from this study also found CTs are feeling less prepared to support their STs with the completion of edTPA. Kissau et. al (2019) found that CTs who completed edTPA training were better able to support their STs with edTPA requirements, as well as demonstrate a better understanding the edTPA requirements. Following the recommendations of Kissau et. al (2019), as well as in response to the data from this study, a crucial component of CT training should include information about edTPA and provide practical ways that CTs can support their STs. This should occur both at the start of the student teaching experience, as well as during.

CT comprehensive training should provide interactive practice and reflection, rather than simply an information session. Feedback was an area of focus that emerged from this study so for example, after thorough training of best practices for providing feedback, the CT might have an opportunity to observe a video recording of a ST leading a lesson and then be required to outline how they would provide feedback. Another trend that emerged from this study as a challenge was having difficult conversations. CTs could also be trained in a framework for having difficult conversations and then complete a role-playing activity in which they have to address a ST about an issue, such as professional attire or punctuality. These training opportunities to learn, followed by practice and support, demonstrate Vygotsky's concept of Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD). CTs move through the ZPD as they are trained and supported by the EPP in learning about these critical areas of teacher leadership and ST support.

Step 3: Provide ongoing CT support

To further develop the work of CT effectiveness, the next recommendation is related to ongoing support. As Guskey (2000) explained, the follow up support to

training is critical and learning can be restricted or even thwarted without this ongoing support. The data from this study suggests that the majority of CTs have a favorable view of the support provided by the US during the student teaching experience and there were a number of glowing comments about how knowledgeable and helpful the US was. The US plays an important part during the student teaching experience, not just with the ST, but also by facilitating the CT's continued movement through the ZPD as they are implementing strategies and resources to support the ST. The US and their support seems to be an area of strength, based on the data from this study.

A gap in the current CT support provided during the semester based on the data from this study is related to ongoing professional development and training. In many cases, CTs may not know yet what kinds of challenges and situations they will encounter when they are participating in training at the beginning of the semester, so while training is important at the beginning, it is equally important to provide this information throughout the student teaching experience. If CTs are provided ongoing and/or mid-year training when they are actually experiencing challenges such as providing feedback, difficult conversations, and edTPA, the training may be more readily applicable and meaningful.

Mid-year trainings are currently provided to TEI CTs after school (5:00-7:00 PM); however, many CT comments reported scheduling issues that imposed on personal commitments after work, as well as it being a challenge to travel to the EPP for these meetings. If the EPP could secure funding to offer half and/or full day professional development/training(s) during the school day, that would allow CTs to receive additional support without interfering with their commitments and schedules outside of

the work day. To make travel and parking more convenient, these sessions could be offered at various schools within the participating school districts, rather than solely being held at the university. If funds are not available for in-person training during the school day, synchronous and asynchronous online training could be offered at different times to provide greater flexibility for CTs and their schedules. Mid-year training sessions could be led/co-led by experienced CTs that have demonstrated their ability to effectively support, mentor, and facilitate ST development (as measured by observations, ST/US feedback, and ST performance ratings) and other educational leaders and would serve as a refresher to topics reviewed at the beginning of the semester, as well as focus on other topics of interest and need.

Step 4: Assess, reflect, and adjust

Implementation of practices gained from CT training and ongoing support is often a gradual and uneven process, therefore it is necessary to measure progress at several time intervals (Guskey, 2000). In order to strengthen the student teaching experience, EPPs and school partners must continually evaluate and adjust current CT selection, training, and support practices. Providing opportunities for all stakeholders to provide regular feedback should be a crucial component of successful teacher preparation programs. Increasing opportunities for all stakeholders to provide quantitative and qualitative feedback through surveys, artifacts, and interviews are ways to accomplish this. Additionally, Guskey (2000) argued that unobtrusive, direct observations of practice serves as one of the greatest ways to analyze the impact of training. Conducting observations of CT interactions with their STs (e.g., when they are providing feedback or coaching) would provide another source of rich data to determine what is and is not

working. These various forms of assessment would all allow a greater focus to be placed on what the data show are areas of need.

In addition to the previously mentioned 4 steps, there are some additional recommendations for EPPs as it relates to STs and their role in the challenges that emerged from this study. Training CTs around edTPA and providing feedback is an area of need; however, there may also need to be more training and clearer expectations provided to STs related to edTPA and feedback as well. Many CTs provided comments throughout the survey about how their ST seemed to be completely overwhelmed by edTPA and that their ST prioritized edTPA over all other classroom responsibilities, which made the overall experience stressful for both the CT and ST. While edTPA is an important licensure requirement, the goal of the student teaching internship is to provide the ST with opportunities to learn how to be an effective teacher; edTPA should not consume the entire student teaching experience. Besides the obvious pressure of edTPA being a licensure requirement, other reasons many STs may fixate on edTPA and become overly consumed with completing the project may be due to a lack of understanding of the requirements, time management, and poor planning. Ensuring that STs have a clear understanding of the requirements and have had a sufficient amount of time to practice and learn about the components to the project before student teaching is critical. Incorporating opportunities for edTPA practice into coursework prior to student teaching for all program areas is strongly recommended. Additionally, EPPs and USs may also consider teaching STs various strategies for time management and providing guides or suggested timelines for the completion of edTPA tasks during the student teaching internship.

Another area for improvement is related to feedback. Several CTs mentioned in the comments throughout the survey that their ST was not receptive to feedback, which made the CT more hesitant to address issues. Besides the need for CTs to receive additional training on how to provide feedback, STs play an important role in this as well. First, STs must learn how to receive feedback with a positive attitude. The student teaching internship is designed to provide practice for STs in understanding what life will be like in their own classroom. A part of this includes receiving feedback, as it is a common practice for in-service teachers to be observed by school leaders, with follow-up feedback provided. STs must get comfortable hearing about their performance and how to implement feedback without taking it personally or becoming defensive. Many times, STs have received minimal or no feedback about their teaching performance with students until the student teaching experience. Providing more opportunities for observations with follow-up feedback embedded into coursework and clinical field experiences leading up to student teaching are ways EPPs can address this.

The next area to focus with STs relates to professional dispositions. Several CT comments were related to ST professionalism (i.e. punctuality, unprofessional attitude, lack of preparation, cell phone use during the instructional day). EPPs must continue to emphasize professional standards with STs at various intervals throughout their preparation program, including coursework, at the start of the student teaching experience, and throughout the internship.

FINAL REFLECTION

In conclusion, there is strong evidence in the existing literature about the impact CTs have on STs and their development and readiness for the classroom (Copeland,

1980; Guyton, 1989; Conner & Killmer, 1995; Ferber & Nillas, 2010). Purposeful

selection of CTs, strong training, and ongoing support may positively impact the student

teaching experience. The data from this study show that edTPA, difficult conversations,

and providing feedback are all elevated areas of challenge for CTs. The reported needs

and challenges of CTs are important areas of focus when examining future training and

support to improve the experiences for CTs. CTs are a critical link in teacher preparation

and are needed to ensure STs are receiving the level of support, mentoring, and feedback

needed to prepare them for the challenges and realities of the classroom. If STs are not

receiving honest, meaningful feedback from a skilled and positive model of good

teaching, this can greatly hinder their development and lead to STs having a false sense

of success and accomplishment that could potentially create even bigger challenges as

they enter the teaching profession. The impact of not receiving meaningful, timely

feedback and support during the student teaching internship, among other necessary skills

for teaching, could have academic, emotional, and social consequences for the P-12

students as well. Knowing this, it is imperative to select CTs who understand just how

important their role is and for EPPs and schools to place a greater emphasis on equipping

CTs with the proper training and support, while also frequently reflecting and reassessing

based on needs, so they are more effective in their roles. CTs have quite the

responsibility in balancing the expectations of the student teaching semester, while also

juggling their classroom and school-based duties. EPPs and school districts should

continue to find ways to incentivize this important work in ways such as increasing

stipends, providing free course credits through the EPP/university, factoring the CT role

in summative evaluation ratings conducted by principals, and providing some form of credential or certificate to recognize this critical area of educational leadership.

If schools and educational leaders want to enhance beginning teacher preparation, it may be wise to focus on the student teaching experience and the most crucial factor of the student teaching experience - the Cooperating Teacher. By focusing on the reported needs of CTs, as well as other needs observed by USs, school partners, and other faculty that are involved in student teaching fieldwork, EPPs and school partners can better collaborate and strengthen CT effectiveness and enhance the overall student teaching experience and produce better, more prepared beginning teachers.

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APPENDIX A

Cooperating Teacher Survey

Part A: Background Information

2. Select the option which best describes the area you taught when hosting your most recent [EPP] student teacher:
- Birth-Kindergarten (Pre-K)
- Elementary (K-6)
- Foreign Language (K-12)
- High School (9-12) - Math, English, Science, or Social Studies
- Middle Grades (6-9) - Math, ELA, Science, or Social Studies
- Special Education (K-12)
- TESOL (K-12)
- Visual/Performing Arts (K-12)
- Other: _____

3. Enter the name of the school you taught when you hosted your most recent [EPP] student teacher:

4. Select your school district where you hosted your most recent [EPP] student teacher:
- Anson County Schools
- Cabarrus County Schools
- Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools
- Cleveland County Schools
- Gaston County Schools
- Iredell-Statesville Schools
- Kannapolis City Schools
- Lincoln County Schools
- Mooresville Graded School District
- Rowan-Salisbury Schools
- Stanly County Schools
- Union County Public Schools
- Other: _____

5. Enter your number of years of teaching experience:

6. Do you hold a master's degree or higher?
- Yes
- No

7. Are you a National Board certified teacher?
- Yes
- No

8. Did you complete your teacher preparation program at [EPP]?
- Yes
- No

9. Please select the option that best describes your own teacher preparation pathway:
- "Traditional" university teacher preparation program that included student teaching
- Lateral entry teacher (including Teach for America, Relay, VIF, etc.) completing coursework while simultaneously employed
- Teacher Assistant employed while completing a teacher preparation program

10) Please select your race/ethnicity:
- American Indian
- Asian/Pacific Islander
- Black/African American
- Hispanic/Latino
- White/Caucasian
- International
- Two or More Races
- Prefer Not to Answer

11) Please select your gender:
- Female
- Male
- Non-binary
- Prefer not to answer

12) How much influence did you have over the decision to host a student teacher?
- None
- I had some input in the decision
- It was completely my decision
- I don't know

13. Why do you believe you were selected or asked to host a student teacher? (Please mark all that apply)

- I have a reputation for being a good teacher.
- I have a reputation for being a good mentor.
- I have successfully served as a CT before.
- My school administration thought I would benefit from additional support in my classroom.
- I thought I would benefit from additional support in my classroom.
- I asked my administration for a student teacher.
- I was the only one in my department/area with enough teaching experience.
- I was the only one in my department/area willing to mentor a student teacher.
- Other: _____

Part B: Preparation for Cooperating Teacher (CT) Role - At the beginning of the full-time student teaching semester

14. In thinking about your most recent experience as a cooperating teacher (CT), what kind of activities did you participate in to prepare you for your role as a CT at the beginning of the full-time student teaching semester (check all that apply -- if you did not complete any of these activities, leave this question blank):
- Face to face orientation/training
- Online orientation/training
- District offered professional development on mentoring/coaching
- District offered professional development on hosting a student teacher
- Read/reviewed the student teaching handbook
- Attending edTPA face-to-face workshops
- Talked to other CTs about their experiences
- Other: _____

15. Thinking only about your most recent experience with a [EPP] student teacher, please respond to the following statements related to CT training/orientation at the beginning of the full-time student teaching semester. If you did not complete the training/orientation, select "did not complete training/orientation."

	Did not complete training	(1) Completely Agree	(2) Mostly Agree	(3) Slightly Agree	(4) Neither Agree nor Disagree	(5) Slightly Agree	(6) Mostly Agree	(7) Completely Agree
The CT training/orientation I completed provided me with clear expectations for my role as a CT at the beginning of the student teaching internship.								
The CT training/orientation I completed provided me with clear expectations of the logistics of hosting a student teacher (e.g., which forms to use, when to observe, etc.).								
The CT training/orientation I completed equipped me with strategies to provide quality feedback to my student teacher.								

The CT training/orientation I completed equipped me with strategies to facilitate difficult conversations with my student teacher.							
The CT training/orientation I completed equipped me with strategies to effectively coach my student teacher for improvement.							
The CT training/orientation I attended assisted me in addressing challenges I encountered in mentoring my student teacher.							
The CT training/orientation and/or edTPA session provided me with information on edTPA and supports I could offer my student teacher in completing the edTPA project.							
The training/orientation I completed effectively prepared for my role as a CT.							
Please add any other information related to CT training/orientation at the beginning of the student teaching experience that you would like to share.							

Part C: Supports for Cooperating Teacher (CT) Role - During the student teaching semester

16) In thinking about your most recent experience as a cooperating teacher (CT) for [the EPP], what kind of activities did you participate in to prepare you for your role as a CT during the student teaching semester (check all that apply):
- University supervisor supports (face-to-face conferences, email exchanges, phone calls, etc.)
- Webinar professional development session(s) offered during the student teaching internship
- District offered professional development on mentoring/coaching
- District offered professional development on hosting a student teacher
- Read/reviewed the student teaching handbook
- Asking my student teacher to clarify information
- Attending edTPA face-to-face workshops
- Talked to other CTs about their experiences
- Other: _____

17) Thinking only about your most recent experience with a [EPP] student teacher, please respond to the following statements related to CT support received during the student teaching experience from the university-based supervisor (also known as Site Coordinator) assigned to your candidate.

	(1) Completely Agree	(2) Mostly Agree	(3) Slightly Agree	(4) Neither Agree nor Disagree	(5) Slightly Agree	(6) Mostly Agree	(7) Completely Agree
My university-based supervisor supported me in addressing challenges throughout the semester.							
My university-based supervisor was accessible and responsive to my questions and concerns.							
The university-based supervisor suggested strategies for improvements that supported the growth of my student teacher.							
The university-based supervisor was prepared for observations and classroom visits.							

The university-based supervisor facilitated effective conferences with my student teacher and me.							
The university-based supervisor valued my input regarding the student teacher's progress.							
Overall, the university-based supervisor was effective in supporting me in my role as a CT.							
Please add any other information related to CT support from the university-based supervisor that you would like to share.							

18. Thinking only about your most recent experience with [EPP] student teacher, please respond to the following statements related to CT support received during the student teaching experience. If you did not utilize an option, select "did not utilize this resource."

	Did not utilize this resource	(1) Completely Agree	(2) Mostly Agree	(3) Slightly Agree	(4) Neither Agree nor Disagree	(5) Slightly Agree	(6) Mostly Agree	(7) Completely Agree
The CT webinar sessions were useful to me in my role as a CT.								
I used the information in the CT webinars in mentoring my student teacher.								
I used the information in the student teaching handbook in mentoring my student teacher.								
I felt supported in assisting my student teacher with edTPA completion.								
My school administration supported me in my role as a CT.								
My role as a CT is considered on my summative evaluation by my principal.								
Please add any other information related to CT support during the student teaching experience that you would like to share.								

Part D: Challenges you encountered during the student teaching experience.

19. Thinking only about your most recent experience with [EPP] student teacher, on a scale from 1 to 7, please respond to the following statements related to challenges you faced as a cooperating teacher (CT) during the student teaching experience:

	(1) Not Challenging at All	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7) Extremely Challenging
Hosting a student teacher (ST) overall.							
Having difficult conversations with my student teacher when needed.							
Discussing appropriate professional behaviors with my student teacher when needed.							
Using the evaluation instruments (e.g., STAR, OFF) with my student teacher.							
Finding a regular time to meet with my student teacher to provide feedback on performance.							
Providing specific and targeted feedback on instructional delivery to my student teacher.							
Providing specific and targeted feedback on classroom management to my student teacher							
Providing specific and targeted feedback on assessing student performance to my student teacher.							
Balancing competing responsibilities between my role as a CT and other responsibilities within my school.							
Balancing competing responsibilities between my role as a CT and other responsibilities within my personal life.							

Building a positive working relationship with my student teacher.						
Giving up control of my classroom to my student teacher.						
Designing co-teaching experiences for me and my student teacher.						
Co-planning with my student teacher.						
Supporting my student teacher with edTPA completion.						
Overcoming generational differences in expectations between me and my student teacher (i.e., Millennials vs. Generation X).						
Using "in the moment" coaching strategies (e.g. huddle, sideline, whiteboard) with my student teacher (if applicable).						
Please add any other information related to challenges you faced as a CT that you would like to share.						

Part E: EPP program evaluation (Omitted – not part of this research)

Part F: Overall Experience

21. Thinking about your most recent experience hosting [EPP] student teacher, please respond to the following statements:

	(1) Completely Agree	(2) Mostly Agree	(3) Slightly Agree	(4) Neither Agree nor Disagree	(5) Slightly Agree	(6) Mostly Agree	(7) Completely Agree
I learned valuable mentoring/leadership skills hosting a student teacher.							
When my student teacher struggled with her/his teaching, s/he felt s/he could come to me for help.							
I had appropriate expectations for my student teacher as a beginner.							
I created an environment in which my student teacher felt comfortable taking instructional risks.							
My school community provides a supportive environment for student teachers.							
My school is a place where student teachers should be learning to teach.							
[EPP] did a good job in supporting me in working with their student teacher(s).							
The feedback I offered was consistent with the feedback my student teacher received from his/her field university-based supervisor.							
I was well prepared to mentor my student teacher.							
I enjoyed serving as a CT.							
If I had the chance again, I would serve as a CT for [EPP].							

Part G: Teacher Education Institute (TEI) Experience

The Teacher Education Institute (TEI) is a summer professional development experience offered in 2017, 2018, and 2019 over multiple days for selected Cooperating Teachers. The TEI brings together [EPP] faculty and P-12 partners to review best practices related to facilitating whole group discussion, facilitating effective small group work, and eliciting student thinking. Practice-based education and embedded coaching and mentoring of teacher candidates are also covered.

22. Have you participated in the TEI within the last three years?
- Yes
- No
- Unsure

23. What year(s) did you attend TEI events/trainings? Check all that apply.
- 2017
- 2018
- 2019

24. Please respond to the following statements:

	(1) Completely Agree	(2) Mostly Agree	(3) Slightly Agree	(4) Neither Agree nor Disagree	(5) Slightly Agree	(6) Mostly Agree	(7) Completely Agree
I have used the TEI training/coaching model consistently with my student teacher.							
I regularly spent time talking with my student teacher about improving on the TEI focus practices.							
My coaching skills have improved since I became part of the TEI.							
I am a better mentor to my student teacher because of the TEI training/coaching experience.							

My own instructional practices have improved because of the professional development I received as part of TEI.							
The TEI meetings throughout the year (TEI Get-togethers) have been beneficial to me (if applicable).							
25. Please provide any comments you would like to add about the TEI.							