



The Desired Cooperator: Preservice Preferences and Role Confusion during the Teaching Practicum

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Teacher educators lament the lack of innovation in new teacher practice, and often attribute it to cooperating teachers' role confusion. Few consider the contributions of student teachers. This study examined possible origins of practicum role confusion among preservice candidates who described desirable qualities of a cooperating teacher and preferred type of pedagogical interaction. Preservice preferences for pedagogical interaction were found to be a potential source of confusion. Important differences were found based on intended certification level. Preservice teachers most desired a cooperator who possesses professional knowledge about teaching, and they anticipated some imitation, more guidance, but less scaffolded interaction. Discussion focuses on the utility of using anticipated interaction as a frame for explicitly examining conflicting perceptions of roles.

The body of research concerned with teacher education reflects a dizzying array of issues related to the process of becoming a teacher. These issues include the goals for which, the settings in which, participants contributing to, the political context affecting, and the curricula that shapes teacher preparation. The girth of recent tomes attempting to synthesize this research testifies to the complexity and wide-ranging nature of these investigations (Cochran-Smith, et al., 2008; Cochran-Smith & Zeichner, 2005). One finding that consistently emerges in many of these chapters and studies has to do with the importance of experienced teachers in the context of new teacher preparation. A number of researchers have pointed to the pivotal role played by experienced teachers during the time when teacher candidates are learning to teach (e.g., Hollingsworth, 1989, Nettle, 1998). Cooperating teachers and mentor teachers are believed to influence new teachers' work socialization, feelings of career satisfaction, perceptions of the professional role, philosophies of

teaching, instructional practices, and perhaps even their decision to continue working in the teaching field (e.g., Achinstein & Barrett, 2004; Britzman, 2003; Brouwer & Korthagen, 2005; Goodfellow & Sumsion, 2000; Kelchtermans & Ballet, 2001).

Consideration of how preparation experiences affect new teachers' future practice and beliefs has always been at least an implicit part of teacher education research (Lortie, 1975, Seperson & Joyce, 1973). Recently, some researchers have begun to explicitly address the issue of new teachers' own future oriented thinking (Conway, 2001; Fletcher, 2000; Urzua & Vasquez, 2008; Wilke & Losh, 2008). The result of this enhanced focus has been an awareness that student teachers understandably struggle with connecting present experiences with their future role, and that teacher educators would do well to facilitate this future-looking orientation.

From a psychological point of view, there may be benefits to this type of future oriented thinking. For example, possible selves theory

(Markus & Nurius, 1986) holds that future-oriented, self-relevant identities can have a positive impact on thought and behavior in the present. Cast as hoped for and feared possible selves, these self concepts help individuals to evaluate current behaviors in light of what they want to become, and provide incentive in the form of becoming what one hopes or avoiding what one fears. Possible selves may also have a self-regulative effect as individuals formulate plausible strategies aimed at achieving or avoiding identity-relevant outcomes.

Of course, preservice teachers also anticipate the day when they will become teachers, but it is unclear whether or how these newest teachers think about their future interaction with cooperating teachers. When researchers study new teachers' future orientation, typically, they do not consider those of preservice teachers. Yet doing so could offer some insight into perennial difficulties associated with the manner in which cooperating and student teachers interact with one another. The purpose of our research, then, is to understand the ways preservice teachers anticipate their initial teaching experiences, and to identify within those musings aspects that may contribute to role confusion during the student teaching practicum.

Context of Teaching Practicum Contributes to Confusion

Despite the dominant role played by cooperating teachers, or perhaps because of it, the process of learning to teach is not without problems. Nearly 35 years ago, Lortie (1975) described the teaching practicum as a setting that provides student teachers with little opportunity to explore their own instructional and management approaches thereby thwarting experimentation and helping to entrench current instructional practices. Researchers have tended to attribute negative aspects of the teaching practicum to institutional constraints inherent in a real-world setting (i.e., cooperating teacher's responsibility to current students), and often to characteristics of cooperating teachers who are unable or unwilling to support the needs of an adult learner in the context of learning to teach (e.g., Borko & Mayfield, 1995; Guyton & McIntyre, 1990). Ganser (1996), however, suggested that one possible reason for the limiting nature of the teaching practicum might be attributable to role confusion among university, cooperating and student teachers.

Role confusion during the teaching practicum is created and perpetuated by a lack of clear definitions and expectations related to support, supervision and exploration. Conclusions drawn from a recent review of the literature by Clift and Brady (2005) seems to support this assertion about role confusion contributing to practicum situations that

are less than optimal. For example, the authors found evidence suggesting that student teachers are themselves often struggling with contradictory ideas about students, teaching and learning, often do not accept ideas and concepts from university-level teaching courses, begin to show an increasing interest in classroom management and a decreasing interest in student learning, and are often at a loss for coping with the contradictions and inconsistencies they encounter.

Koerner, O'Connell-Rust and Baumgartner (2002) also reported similar findings concerning role confusion. They found that student teachers often expressed a desire for cooperating teachers to serve as mentors, but then also wanted to be given autonomy when it is time to assume greater responsibility as the practicum progresses. In their findings, the authors were surprised to find that student teachers, while desiring guidance, did not express a strong desire to work with cooperating teachers who possessed greater degrees of professional and pedagogical knowledge. The situation described by these researchers seems ripe for confusion on the part of cooperating teachers who have to determine when to offer suggestions or to intervene more directly, and on the part of student teachers that are eager for autonomy but may still desire direction.

The results from these studies concerning role confusion provide a fascinating insight into the perspectives of student teachers as they consider the optimal contexts for learning to teach. It seems equally fruitful to examine the perspective of preservice teachers, yet few researchers have attempted to do so. Given the connection between future-thinking and behavioral regulation (Markus & Nurius, 1986), this type of investigation could provide insights into how preservice teachers see themselves approaching this learning experience. And given the prominence of the cooperating teacher during the teaching practicum, a fruitful way to investigate this might be to frame it in terms of how the preservice teacher anticipates interacting with their cooperating teacher to learn how to teach.

Pedagogical Interaction during the Teaching Practicum

Grossman (2005) described the pedagogy of teacher education as those aspects of teacher preparation that are concerned with how student teachers learn to teach. Pedagogy of teacher education may include classroom instruction and interaction among teachers and students, as well as the tasks or assignments completed by student teachers. Researchers of teacher education pedagogy typically focus on the effects of course content and instructional strategies on the professional practice

and attitudes of new teachers. The pedagogical influence of interactions among cooperating teachers and student teachers, however, is typically not examined. These daily interactions that occur between cooperating, or supervising teachers, and student teachers are likely to be a particularly potent influence on the beliefs and practices of student teachers (e.g., Wang, 2001; Zanting, Verloop & Vermunt, 2001).

One model that has previously been used to examine the pedagogical value of interaction between cooperating and student teachers is the dyadic interaction model described by Granott (1993). Granott postulated a framework for classifying and analyzing interactions of dyads in any context based on the cognitive change theories of both Piaget and Vygotsky. This framework consisted of a collaboration continuum along which interaction types could be classified (see Figure 1).

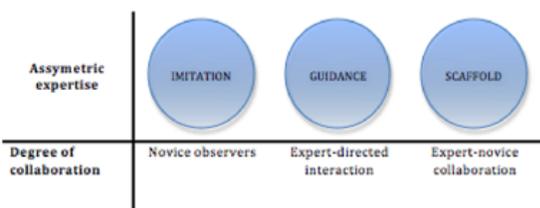


Figure 1. Interaction types based upon degree of collaboration in asymmetric expertise condition.

Granott (1993) identified three types of interaction that might occur depending on the degree of collaboration. A case where there is a low level of collaboration between the cooperating and student teacher may be described as imitation. This classification primarily describes a situation where the cooperating teacher provides little help to the student teacher. During imitation, the cooperating teacher may be functioning in a manner that does not directly acknowledge the needs of the student teacher and continues on with “business as usual” leaving the student teacher to figure things out on her or his own. The student teacher, left to her or his own devices, must learn to teach simply by observing and imitating the cooperating teacher. Such a situation seems parallel to the cooperating teachers Borko and Mayfield (1995) identified as not actively participating in the learning of the student teacher.

The next level of interaction is characterized by the cooperating teacher guiding the student teacher, or treating her or him as an apprentice. In such a situation, the cooperating teacher engages in periods of active directing of the student teachers’ learning. The cooperating teacher might observe and then evaluate activities of the student teacher, or

demonstrate actions and procedures for the student teacher. In this type of situation, the cooperating teacher dominates the interaction by having definite goals and standards for the student teacher and using interaction to help her or him approximate the desired outcomes. Cooperating teachers who engage in guidance-types of interaction are taking an active role in the student teachers’ learning, but the student teacher may be taking a less active role.

Finally, the highest level of interaction, according to Granott (1993) is characterized by the cooperating teacher *scaffolding* the learning of the student teacher. This type of interaction is characterized by the cooperating teacher collaborating with the student teacher. Goals may be selected by the student teacher or cooperating and student teacher together might share a common goal and assist one another in achieving some outcome. Cooperating teachers might also help student teachers clarify goals and then provide support on an as-needed basis. Cooperating teachers who engage in scaffolding-type interactions are also taking an active role in the student teacher’s learning, but the degree to which cooperating teachers control the direction or goal selection is less than in guidance situations.

Research findings derived from investigations of pedagogical interaction reveal that the teaching efficacy of the cooperating teacher is related to the extent to which they collaborate with the student teacher (Hamman, Fives & Olivarez, 2007), and that student teachers who experience greater collaboration with their cooperating teachers themselves report greater teaching efficacy (Hamman et al., 2007). It remains unclear, however, whether a student teachers’ efficacy at the outset of the practicum might influence the manner in which they interact with the cooperating teacher.

What seems clearer, however, is that interaction between teacher pairs is likely to be an important mechanism by which cooperating teachers communicate and convince student teachers about important aspects of working in schools and classrooms (e.g., Wang, 2001; Zanting, et al. 2001). In addition, pedagogical interactions, both anticipated and real, may also provide a useful framework to examine the perspectives on roles that teacher candidates bring to these important encounters. Preservice teachers anticipating both direction and latitude, as described by Koerner et al (2002), may be unintentionally setting themselves up for ambiguous interaction patterns during the teaching practicum.

Research Focus of the Present Study

The present study represents an initial investigation into how preservice teachers think about their upcoming student teaching practicum. In so doing, we are hopeful about contributing to the

discussion about role confusion in the teaching practicum by finding out if preservice teachers' expectations and beliefs are consistent with or counter to what teacher educators might generally assume to be realistic and productive. Moreover, by focusing on the perceptions of preservice teachers, we are investigating the hypothesis that at least some of the source of role confusion may originate with what the preservice candidates desire in terms of qualities and patterns of interaction with their future cooperating teacher. Specifically, this study sought to address the questions of (a) what qualities and interactions preservice teachers desired of their future cooperating teacher, and (b) how desired qualities and anticipated interactions might be related to one another or to the school level at which the preservice teachers were intending to teach.

Methods

Participants

Participants in this study were preservice teachers ($n = 128$) attending a large university in the southwest during one summer session. All were completing coursework as part of the requirement for state certification (elementary = 67%; secondary = 33%) and were expecting to begin their student-teaching practicum within the next academic year. Those preservice teachers who took part in the study, and provided a complete data record, represented 85% of the total number of preservice teachers invited to participate during the summer semester. Participants' average age at the time of the study was 23.4 years ($SD = 6.16$). The majority of participants are female (85%) and White (82.7%), but a small percentage of candidates (14%) represented minority ethnic or racial groups (Hispanic = 13.6%; Black = 0.5%).

Instruments

Three measures were used to address the research question of this study. Given that few researchers have addressed the issue of what preservice teachers anticipate, relative to their interactions with cooperating teachers, two of the measures described below represent measures modified somewhat from their original form. Within the limited scope of this study, efforts were made to establish the reliability of each measure, and consider evidence about the validity of the modified measures.

Desired qualities of cooperating teachers.

Items for this questionnaire were derived from a qualitative study originally conducted by Koerner, O'Connell-Rust and Baumgartner (2002) intended to help clarify roles associated with the teaching practicum (i.e., student teacher, cooperating teacher, and college supervisor). In that study, Koerner and colleagues solicited written responses from a sample of university supervisors, student teachers, and

cooperating teachers reflective of "good" qualities and characteristics of student teachers, cooperating teachers, university supervisors, and the student teaching placement. Koerner and colleagues originally analyzed responses and derived categories reflecting similar good characteristics for each group. Four general themes emerged from their analysis representing characteristics related to (a) mentoring or supervision, (b) personal characteristics, (c) pedagogical content knowledge, and (d) professional dispositions.

For the purposes of the present study, we utilized only the statements reflecting the student teachers' perspective about cooperating teachers as mentors, possessing considerable pedagogical content knowledge, and having personal and professional dispositions. Using the original wording from Koerner's categories, we transformed the "good" characteristics into a 22-item, 6-point Likert-type scale (1 = Definitely don't want; 6 = Definitely want) (see Appendix). It should be noted that all of the items drawn from the original groupings were those that two or more student teachers initially reported as desirable qualities or characteristics of cooperating teachers, and were judged by the current researchers to represent unique statements about qualities or characteristics.

With the resulting questionnaire items, participants rated the degree to which they wanted specific characteristics and qualities in their future cooperating teacher, including (a) their manner of supervision (e.g., gives feedback on instruction; allows the student teacher to try new techniques), (b) desirable personal and professional dispositions (e.g., is flexible; has good interpersonal skills; is honest), and (c) extent of professional content knowledge (e.g., demonstrates how to teach; is knowledgeable about how to teach; is knowledgeable about content). Overall scores derived from the current administration exhibited acceptable levels of internal consistency for the whole scale ($\alpha = 0.89$), and the subscales including supervision ($\alpha = 0.84$), dispositions ($\alpha = 0.78$), and professional content knowledge ($\alpha = 0.76$).

Learning to teach questionnaire. This 20-item, 6-point frequency scale (1 = Never occurs; 6 = Always occurs) was intended to capture the frequency with which three types of interaction occur between cooperating and student teacher pairs as the later learned to provide instruction (Hamman, Olivarez & Stevens, 2006-2007; Hamman, Stevens & Olivarez, 2008). These three types of interaction range from lesser to greater degrees of collaboration, beginning with imitation of the cooperating teacher (e.g., I teach in a way that is similar to my cooperating teacher), guidance from the cooperating

teacher (e.g., My cooperating teacher offers suggestions to improve my instruction), and scaffolded interaction with the cooperating teacher (e.g., I tell my cooperating teacher what I need to learn).

In the current study, this questionnaire was modified slightly to elicit from preservice teachers responses about the types of interactions they would like to have with their future cooperating teacher. Using the current data, the subscale scores exhibited adequate internal consistency ($\alpha = 0.89, 0.87$ and 0.85 respectively) similar to those reported by the authors in the original study.

Teacher sense of efficacy scale (TSES). The TSES (formerly the Ohio State Teacher Efficacy Scale) was unaltered for the current study. This 12-item, Likert-type scale measures teacher efficacy for using instructional strategies, managing a classroom, and engaging students in school-related activities (Tschannen-Moran & Woolfolk-Hoy, 2001). Using scores derived from the current data, adequate internal consistency was found for the whole scale ($\alpha = 0.92$). Although initially included by Tschannen-Moran and Woolfolk-Hoy, subscale scores were not utilized in the current study based mainly on the fact that those authors reported that the factor structure of the questionnaire was less stable when used with preservice teachers. We elected, therefore, to use a single factor or total efficacy score for our data to account for the less differentiated beliefs of our preservice teachers.

Procedures

During one class meeting, participants were invited to participate in this study through their college-level, preservice instructors (i.e., not the researchers). Instructors announced the study, described the purpose and informed students about the amount of extra credit available for participation. Volunteers then visited a central research lab and individually completed the paper and pencil questionnaire. Completion of the questionnaire typically required less than 10 minutes.

Results

The purpose of this study was to examine what preservice teachers' desired in terms of characteristics of their future cooperating teacher, and the manner in which they anticipated interacting with them in order to learn how to teach. The analyses described below were conducted in order to (a) establish what are the desired characteristics and anticipated interactions of preservice teachers with their future cooperating teachers and (b) determine if differences in characteristic and interaction preference existed based on the intended certification level of the preservice teacher. Addressing these issues, it is expected, will be helpful to teacher

educators attempting to improve the quality of the teaching practicum by reducing confusion about expectations and roles played by teacher candidates and mentor teachers.

Relations Between Desired Qualities and Interactions

Table 1 contains descriptive statistics and correlation coefficients reflecting relations among the study variables. Variable averages and small standard deviations revealed that these preservice teachers felt that each quality was highly desirable, while greater variability was evident in their ratings of interaction and efficacy for teaching. Consistent with the findings reported by Koerner, et al (2002), the current sample of preservice teachers rated as most desirable a cooperating teacher that is knowledgeable in their content area. They also anticipated more guidance-like interactions as they learn to teach. These results seem to reflect an understanding about roles similar to what Borko and Mayfield (1995) identified among cooperating teachers who took a more active role in the preparation of student teachers. In a situation where cooperating teachers take a more laissez-faire approach, these expectations could create tensions and confusion about how the teacher pairs should work together to facilitate learning to teach.

Table 1

Correlation Coefficients and Descriptive Statistics Among Qualities, Interaction and Efficacy [Editor's note: The table was missing in the article when accessed in 2015].

An examination of correlation coefficients revealed statistically significant, but weak associations between desired supervision and interaction variables. For example, qualities of a cooperating teachers pertaining to supervision were related to preferences for interaction characterized by guidance ($r = 0.34, p < 0.001$), scaffolding ($r = 0.35, p < 0.001$), and to a lesser extent with imitation ($r = 0.23, p = 0.001$). In addition, desired disposition of the cooperating teacher was related to preference for scaffolded interaction ($r = 0.29, p < 0.001$), and teaching efficacy ($r = 0.23, p = 0.002$). No statistically significant relation was detected between preservice teachers' preferences for interaction with the cooperating teacher and their efficacy for teaching.

These findings seem to suggest that, for the most part, preservice teachers may view the issue of supervision in a manner somewhat distinct from their pattern of anticipated interaction with their cooperating teacher, and that their current level of efficacy for teaching, which was on average quite

high, had little relation to the qualities they desired of, or the interactions they anticipated with, their future cooperating teacher. Moreover, the descriptive statistics revealed a pattern of ratings that might be characterized as traditional in the context of teacher education, in that the desirable cooperating teacher is one who is knowledgeable and provides guidance.

In terms of the consistency of these ratings with expectations held by teacher educators, these results suggest that a difference could arise when either the supervisor or other teacher educator, and the student teacher consider the teaching practicum. That is, in the context of the teaching practicum, teacher educators often see it as desirable for the teacher candidate to pursue learning relevant to his or her own goals for growth in the teaching profession, though clearly, this is not always possible (e.g., Bartholomew & Sandholtz, 2009; Seperson & Joyce, 1973). Yet teacher educators value highly this type of interaction and continue to advocate for the development of teacher candidates who are reflective practitioners (e.g., Postholm, 2007; Schon, 1987), and often see the teacher practicum as one of the first opportunities to integrate theory and one's own practice, and to do so through reflection on practice. This type of development valued by teacher educators is best captured by an interaction pattern Granott (1993) described as scaffolding, where the novice learner and the expert interact to further the goals of the learner. The results from the correlation analysis reported above indicate that the desirable qualities of the anticipated cooperators have only a weak relation with preservice teachers' expectations related to scaffolded interaction with the cooperating teacher. Differences between expectations of teacher educators and preservice teachers, therefore, may be one source of role confusion during the teaching practicum.

Differences Based on Certification-Level

Next, a series of three mean-differences analyses were undertaken to determine whether differences existed in qualities, interactions or efficacy based upon intended level of certification. These analyses were separated based on results reported above indicating that the relations among qualities, interactions and efficacy were moderate at best.

First, a 2 X 1 MANOVA was undertaken with intended certification level (i.e., elementary vs. secondary) as the independent variable and desired qualities (i.e., supervision, dispositions, professional knowledge) as the dependent variables. Results from this analysis indicated a statistically significant multivariate effect based on intended certification level [Wilks' $\lambda = 0.884$, $F(3, 128) = 5.61$, $p = 0.001$, partial $\eta^2 = 0.12$] (see Table 2). Examination of

univariate results revealed a significant difference for desired supervision qualities [$F(1, 131) = 13.71$, $p < 0.001$, partial $\eta^2 = 0.10$], but non-significant differences for desired dispositions [$F(1, 131) = 3.59$, $p = 0.06$, partial $\eta^2 = 0.03$] and professional knowledge about teaching [$F(1, 131) = 0.81$, $p = 0.36$, partial $\eta^2 = 0.006$]. These results indicate that preservice teachers differ, based on intended certification level, in the degree to which they desire to receive supervision from their cooperating teacher, but do not differ in terms of desired dispositions and degree of professional knowledge about teaching.

A second 2 X 1 MANOVA was conducted with intended certification level (i.e., elementary vs. secondary) as the independent variable, and desired interaction types (i.e., imitation, guidance, scaffolding) as the dependent variable. Results from this analysis also indicated a statistically significant multivariate effect based on intended certification level [Wilks' $\lambda = .870$, $F(3, 128) = 6.38$, $p < .001$, partial $\eta^2 = 0.13$] (see Table 2). Examination of univariate results revealed statistically significant differences for imitation [$F(1, 130) = 8.81$, $p = .004$, partial $\eta^2 = 0.06$]; guidance [$F(1, 130) = 18.39$, $p < .001$, partial $\eta^2 = 0.12$]; and scaffolding [$F(1, 130) = 10.52$, $p = .002$, partial $\eta^2 = 0.07$]. As with desired characteristics, these results indicate significant differences concerning the types of interaction anticipated with the cooperating teacher based on intended certification level, with elementary-level candidates hoping to have more opportunities to imitate their cooperating teacher, receive guidance from her or him, and engage in more collaborative, scaffolded interaction.

Third, a 2 X 1 ANOVA was conducted with intended certification level (i.e., elementary vs. secondary) as the independent variable and teacher efficacy as the dependent variable. Results from this analysis indicated no significant univariate effect for teacher efficacy based on intended certification level [$F(1, 131) = 0.728$, $p = 0.36$, partial $\eta^2 = 0.006$] (see Table 2). Although differences in desired qualities and types of interaction exist based on intended certification level, these results reveal that preservice teachers' feelings of efficacy do not differ based solely on intended certification level.

In terms of contributing to role confusion during the teaching practicum, these findings all seem to be fairly in line with what traditional expectations might be for cooperating teachers, and in fact, mirrored findings reported by the student teachers in Koerner, et al (2002). The potential for role confusion is again possible, however, in two situations. The first would be, as Borko & Mayfield (1995) found, when cooperating teachers do not take an active role in the preparation of the teacher

candidate, especially at an elementary level. Interestingly, the second might occur when a cooperating teacher at the secondary level might see her or his role to be more actively involved in the student teachers' preparation, but the candidate herself might have a preference for less interaction and supervision. The differences based on intended certification level, therefore, may deserve greater attention when preparing both candidates and cooperating teachers for the practicum experience.

Discussion

Conclusions about the contribution of the cooperating teacher in the process of learning to teach have been equivocal. On the one hand, cooperating teachers are cast as obstacles to educational progress, and on the other, as mentors and guides to novice teachers. It is little surprise, given this ambiguity, that some confusion may exist around the nature of the role to be played by cooperating teachers. The purpose of this research was to examine the extent to which preservice teachers' anticipation of their teaching practicum may exhibit characteristics that might contribute to role confusion during student teaching. Our findings suggest that the seeds of role confusion may have been sown long before the new teachers' began their initial teaching experience.

Although cooperators like those described by Borko & Mayfield (1995) may exhibit confusion about the exact nature of their role, it seems very likely that a significant source of the confusion may originate from both the teacher candidate and the university-based teacher educator. Koerner, et al (2002) reported that student teachers desired to have cooperating teachers that offered both guidance and autonomy, and more recently, Clift and Brady (2005) suggested that student teachers were struggling to reconcile concepts in their university-level coursework with their experiences in real classrooms. The student teacher, then, would naturally look to the cooperating teacher to help reconcile conflicting notions of teaching (Wang, 2001), while the university teacher educator may just as earnestly look to the cooperating teacher to reiterate the concepts expounded in the college classroom. In many ways, it seems that it is the cooperating teacher who becomes caught in the middle of the struggle over expectations.

The results from the current study seem to support this conclusion, but add to the existing literature in two important ways. First, our findings show that the fault lines that run through the learning-to-teach triad may start to form long before the teacher candidate steps into a more active teaching role (i.e., during the preservice preparation). Second, our findings show that expectations over the types of

pedagogical interaction that preservice candidates anticipate may also contribute to this confusion. Like expectations about supervision, confusion could result when a teacher candidate expects a particular type of interaction pattern, but the cooperating teacher does not share this view. Another source of confusion may arise from teacher candidates who may expect what might be considered a more traditional, guidance-based approach to learning to teach, but the university teacher educator anticipates that the teacher candidate should pursue a more self-directed course of professional development. Finally, our findings point to the potential for additional role confusion based upon the intended certification level of the teacher candidate where elementary-level candidates anticipate a higher level of all types of interaction, but secondary-level candidates expect lower levels of interaction.

Implications

Align early and often. In a broadest context, these findings have relevance to the issue of reforming teacher education. That is, both cooperating teachers, and teacher educators in particular, have alternatively been cited with promoting the status quo in the preparation of new candidates and replicating their own practice. Although there may be some truth in these assertions, results from the present study suggest that, rather than imposing the status quo on new teacher candidates, student teachers themselves may be seeking out traditional modes of working in classrooms.

One implication of this finding is that efforts aimed at clarifying roles are essential. Efforts to align preparation expectations in teacher education programs, where there is close collaboration between the university faculty and cooperating practitioners in the school site, are difficult to achieve and likely to be only partially successful. Programs where no such efforts are made, however, are likely to become rife with confusion. In addition, it might be useful to begin this alignment work during the preservice phase and in so doing aid the new candidates in imagining for themselves what types of experiences they will find most instructive as they learn to teach.

Differentiation based on certification level. Preservice teachers' responses revealed differences based on their intended level of certification that seems to have important implications for teacher educators. First, related to alignment of expectations, it seems important to consider what is the optimal type of interaction between cooperating and student teachers working at the secondary level, and whether that would look different from the interaction occurring between teacher pairs in an elementary-level setting. Second,

if there are appropriate differences in approaches to pedagogical interaction, some steps are needed to assist university supervisors, cooperating teachers and student teachers to structure the teaching practicum in a manner consistent with desired and educative types of pedagogical interaction.

Limitations and Future Directions

It is difficult for a preservice teacher to accurately imagine what the teaching practicum may entail, so rating desires for a future cooperator may have little relevance to what is desired at the time of the practicum, or what, in retrospect, student teachers say they needed most at the end of the practicum. Our results suggest that preservice teachers may draw on their past experience with teachers, when they were themselves students, to guide their anticipation of their preparation. At the present time, it is unclear if they would continue to have similar desires while in the throws of the experience. Results from previous studies suggest that there may be changes from preservice to student teaching (e.g., Nettle, 1998; Shkedi & Laron, 2004).

In the future, it seems important to link desires for cooperator with actual experience and outcomes associated with the practicum experience. Previously, researchers have shown that the quality and frequency of interaction between a new teacher and a cooperating teacher has consequences for the new teachers' efficacy (Hamman et al., 2006). Further work is obviously needed to determine the importance of preservice teachers "desired" qualities of a cooperating teacher in affecting the process and outcomes of learning to teach. Pedagogical interaction, however, seems to provide a useful framework with which to examine roles over the entire preparation continuum, and how desired interaction may be responsible for creating opportunities or limitations within the teaching practicum.

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Appendix A

Qualities of a Cooperating Teacher (modified from Koerner, et al., 2002)

Directions:

Below is a list of statements about the type of cooperating teacher you would like to work with during your student-teaching experience.

Please read each descriptive statement and respond by indicating how much you want your cooperating teacher to possess that specific characteristic.

For characteristics that you definitely would not want in a cooperating teacher, circle a 1. For characteristics that you definitely would want, circle a 6. For characteristics that you have greater or lesser desire for, use the numbers in the mid-range. There are no correct answers – just your opinion about what you would like to see in a cooperating teacher.

I want a cooperating teacher who...

	Statement	Definitely DON'T Want	DO NOT Want	May not want	May want	Do want	Definitely want
1	Is a good mentor (supervision)	1	2	3	4	5	6
2	Knows when to provide support (supervision)	1	2	3	4	5	6
3	Will give the student teacher appropriate autonomy in the classroom (supervision)	1	2	3	4	5	6
4	Will allow the student teacher to take over all appropriate teaching responsibilities (supervision)	1	2	3	4	5	6
5	Is open-minded (disposition)	1	2	3	4	5	6
6	Gives feedback on instruction (supervision)	1	2	3	4	5	6
7	Is flexible (disposition)	1	2	3	4	5	6
8	Knows when to provide help (supervision)	1	2	3	4	5	6
9	Gives positive feedback (supervision)	1	2	3	4	5	6
10	Allows the student teacher to try new techniques (supervision)	1	2	3	4	5	6
11	Allows the student teacher to try new activities (supervision)	1	2	3	4	5	6
12	Encourages the student teacher to take “risks” in her/his teaching (supervision)	1	2	3	4	5	6
13	Is collegial (disposition)	1	2	3	4	5	6
14	Gives constructive feedback (supervision)	1	2	3	4	5	6
15	Is knowledgeable about how to teach (professional knowledge)	1	2	3	4	5	6
16	Has good interpersonal skills (disposition)	1	2	3	4	5	6
17	Is open to learning from the student teacher (disposition)	1	2	3	4	5	6
18	Is honest (disposition)	1	2	3	4	5	6
19	Demonstrates how to teach (professional	1	2	3	4	5	6

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	knowledge)						
20	Is knowledgeable about content (professional knowledge)	1	2	3	4	5	6
21	Is a good role model (supervision)	1	2	3	4	5	6
22	Gives feedback on lesson plans (supervision)	1	2	3	4	5	6

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Note from the 2015 Executive Editor, Constantin Schreiber

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