

Cooperating Teacher Participation in Teacher Education: A Review of the Literature

Anthony Clarke
University of British Columbia

Valerie Triggs
University of Regina

Wendy Nielsen
University of Wollongong

Student teachers consider cooperating teachers to be one of the most important contributors to their teacher preparation program. Therefore, the ways in which cooperating teachers participate in teacher education are significant. This review seeks to move conceptions of that participation beyond commonly held beliefs to empirically supported claims. The analysis draws on Brodie, Cowling, and Nissen's notion of categories of participation to generate 11 different ways that cooperating teachers participate in teacher education: as 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. When set against Gaventa's typology of participation, the resultant grid highlights the importance of negotiated or invited spaces for cooperating teacher participation and provides a new way of thinking about, planning professional development for, and working with cooperating teachers.

KEYWORDS: cooperating teacher, the practicum, teacher education, supervision, student teacher

Teacher education represents a continuum of professional development for teachers as they seek to improve their practice. An early but critical phase on that continuum is the practicum, an extended field experience under the guidance of an experienced teacher who is often referred to as a cooperating teacher. Given that student teachers universally regard the practicum as the most important component of their Bachelor of Education degree and the cooperating teacher as critical to their success in that degree (Kirk, Macdonald, & O'Sullivan, 2006; Weiss & Weiss,

① Darned at providing evidence for perceptions of role of CT.

② 11 different ways teachers provide support for students teachers

③ Negotiated or invited spaces for CT. participation is essential

④ Definition of practicum

sources given { ⑤ Practicum is the most important component of Bachelor of education degree
⑥ CT as critical the success of their degrees

Clarke et al.

2001), cooperating teacher participation in teacher education is of particular significance (Keogh, Dole, & Hudson, 2006). However, a recurrent theme in the literature is the lack of knowledge about cooperating teachers beyond commonly held conceptions of their participation in teacher education (American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education [AACTE], 1990; Gold, 1996; Grimmett & Ratzlaff, 1986; Holland, 1989; Metcalf, 1991; Wang & Odell, 2002; Wideen & Holburn, 1986; Zeichner, 2002). Indeed,

There is little understanding of the additional demands placed on cooperating teachers; of the images they hold of themselves as cooperating teachers and of student teachers; and of the nature of their work as they undertake responsibilities associated with cooperating teaching. (Goodfellow, 2000, p. 25)

It is also widely acknowledged that the current practices for ensuring that cooperating teachers are professionally prepared for their work are inadequate and fail to address some of the most basic issues associated with their supervisory work (Glickman & Bey, 1990; Knowles & Cole, 1996). Without a clear understanding of the ways in which cooperating teachers participate—or are expected to participate—in teacher education, it is difficult to know how best to support or facilitate that work. As such, it is crucial that researchers and practitioners alike move beyond simplistic conceptions to more detailed and nuanced understandings that both provoke and advance how the work of cooperating teachers is conceived and enacted. Without such understandings, teacher educators are limited in the ways in which they can support cooperating teachers and cooperating teachers are left to rely on their intuitive sense of what it means to supervise student teachers—often by drawing on their own practicum experiences when they were student teachers (Knowles & Cole, 1996). This situation is untenable if we wish to provide the best preparation for the next generation of teachers.

Contrary to what might be expected and what is often heard, there is a large body of literature on cooperating teachers. Indeed, a number of aspects of cooperating teachers' work have been explored but there have been few attempts to theorize that work. Situating this research and identifying professional development needs within a broader frame of cooperating teacher participation in teacher education is essential to address this shortcoming. This theorizing is all the more important when we consider that the teachers in our classrooms who supervise student teachers on practicum are engaged "in the generative process of producing their own future" (Lave & Wegner, 1991, p. 57, italics added), that is, the future of the teaching profession.

We, as university faculty with experience as cooperating teachers, became interested in reviewing the literature on cooperating teachers because of our involvement in a 4-year research project with cooperating teachers on Canada's west coast. As we delved into the literature, we found ourselves conducting an ever-expanding review of what is known about cooperating teachers—we systematically examined more than 400 papers and articles on the topic. Our review builds on earlier reviews but is notable for its scope and breadth, covering 60 years of research on cooperating teachers and including literature from several jurisdictions.

This review begins by acknowledging the origin of the term, *cooperating teacher*, and provides a brief commentary on the centrality of that work in teacher education. This is followed by an examination of three commonly held conceptions about the ways in which cooperating teachers participate in teacher education.

⑦ there is little concrete information about CT role. This is providing a rationale for this paper

⑧ CTs are not professionally prepared for undertaking supervision
[Note how the topic sentence of the ¶ is supported by following sentences]

⑨ Role of CT has not been theorized.

⑩ Identifying the PD needs of CT teachers is essential for the profession as well.

⑪ Scope of lit review 400 papers, 60 years

⑫ Outline of paper
1. Origin of term
2. Role of CT (significance)
3. Three conceptions of CT.

These three conceptions are important as they set the stage for a detailed examination of *what we actually know* about that participation. The significance of this examination is that although it supports underlying assumptions about the three conceptions, it also deconstructs generalities associated with these conceptions and highlights particularities that are central to the highly dynamic and interpersonal context that constitutes the work of cooperating teachers.

The Origin of the Term, *Cooperating Teacher*

Although the relationship between classroom teachers and student teachers on practicum has changed over the years and has differed across jurisdictions, after World War II at least three reasons precipitated the emergence of the phrase, "cooperating teacher" as the most commonly used term today to describe this relationship (Cornbleth & Ellsworth, 1994). First, as the preparation of student teachers gradually moved from normal schools to university settings, faculty members, who sought academic status and prestige, increasingly distanced themselves from normal schools; normal schools were postsecondary institutions for the preparation of elementary and secondary school teachers that existed in various places throughout the world from the late-1800s through to the 1950s. Second, deep budget cuts in the 1960s and 1970s led to the closure of most, if not all, laboratory schools that previously had become an important context for preservice teacher education during that period. Third, the "baby boomers" of the second half of the 20th century entered the public school system in greater numbers than ever before, creating an urgent need for practicum placements to prepare teachers for the now burgeoning student population. As a result of these three factors, faculty members who were at the time comfortably ensconced within academia and who felt that they had a "superior capacity to prepare teachers" (Cornbleth & Ellsworth, 1994, p. 63) relative to their school-based counterparts, suddenly had to call on school teachers to assist them. However, given the faculty members' newly elevated status as experts on teaching, they merely expected classroom teachers to cooperate with them in this endeavor (Boivin, Downie, & LaRoque, 1993; Houston, 2008); hence, the term *cooperating teacher*.

Interestingly, during the mid-1980s, in response to public and political criticism of university-based teacher education programs, faculties began to seek greater credibility with schools and started to develop closer associations with teachers. Within this context, some programs opted for a name change for cooperating teachers and began to use other terms such as mentors or associate teachers. In some instances, this reflected a significant shift on the part of universities as witnessed by the Professional Development School movement in the United States. However, even in some of these more generative contexts, simply opting for a name change resulted in only minor enhancements to the role of the cooperating teacher (Evans & Abbott, 1997). A study by Hall, Draper, Smith, and Bullough (2008) revealed that teachers still think of alternative terms for their role as being "synonymous with the designation of cooperating teacher and means nothing more than providing a place for the pre-service teacher to practice teaching" (p. 343). More recently, Hobson, Ashby, Malderez, and Tomlinson (2009) lamented that the potential benefits of practicum mentoring are often unrealized and that the "conditions for effective mentoring" (p. 214) are yet to be met. The term, *cooperating teacher*, still remains the most frequently used descriptor for teachers who work

⑬ Relationship between CT and ST has changed over the years. Three reasons why this change occurred

Ⓐ Specialist TE institutions became universities and faculty distanced themselves from schools for status

Ⓑ Laboratory schools closed due to budget cuts

Ⓒ Population growth made the demand for teachers great. Practicum placements were in great demand.

This made the role of CT more significant. However faculty is seen as experts. CT has to cooperate with faculty. In other words, it is a condescending term.

⑭ Due to public and political criticism of university-based TE, some began to call CT mentors or associate teachers.

165 ⑮ However, still Practicum benefits are not fully reaped and conditions of effective mentoring not met.

with student teachers on practicum and for this reason we have used it throughout this article.

Centrality of the Role

The role of the cooperating teacher has always been regarded as important within teacher education. In an early report on the practicum experience, known as the Flowers Report (Flowers, 1948), the Committee of the American Association of Teachers Colleges in a 3-year study of more than 200 American laboratory schools recommended that practicum should be considered an integral part of the professional curriculum. Zeichner (1990) claimed that the groundbreaking Flowers Report set the focus on schools in preservice teacher education for the modern era and, although this attention sometimes faltered, the importance of the role played by cooperating teachers has been a common theme in the teacher education literature to this day.

Guyton and McIntyre (1990), Glickman and Bey (1990), and McIntyre, Byrd, and Foxx (1996) noted that student teachers consider the cooperating teacher to be the most important factor in their entry to the profession. Cooperating teachers themselves also view their role in teacher education as the most important part of "learning to teach" (AACTE, 1990; Cruickshank & Armaline, 1986; Murray & Male, 2005; Roberts, 2000). Weiss and Weiss (2001) argued that it is generally accepted by students, teachers, and most faculty members that "co-operating teachers are the most powerful influence on the quality of the student teaching experience and often shape what student teachers learn by the way they mentor" (p. 134).

We found only one study that explored the absence of a cooperating teacher within the context of teacher preparation. Hodges (1982) designed a practicum that did not include a cooperating teacher for five of her student teachers because she felt that the cooperating teacher's influence on practicum was not consonant with that of her on-campus methods classes. At the end of her study, she concluded that, in the absence of a cooperating teacher, the student teachers suffered various crises (including challenges with content knowledge and pupil management) and felt that her student teachers were unable to successfully negotiate the classroom pressures alone. In the absence of a cooperating teacher, the five student teachers were "overwhelmed by the actual experience of teaching" (Hodges, 1982, p. 26).

Common Conceptions of Cooperating Teacher Participation in Teacher Education

Cooperating teachers have been described in a number of ways, three of which have become commonly accepted within the teacher education community: classroom placeholder, supervisor of practica, and teacher educator (Clarke, 2007; Cornbleth & Ellsworth, 1994). For ease of reference, we have depicted these along a continuum representing differing levels of participation in teacher education (Figure 1).

A

The first conception reflects a minimal level of participation by the cooperating teacher, who is conceived of as classroom placeholder. In this conception, when the student teacher arrives on practicum, he or she immediately exchanges places with the cooperating teacher who then exits to the staffroom for the remainder of the practicum. This conception is based on the assumption that the student teacher,

16) Since 1948, practicum is considered an important aspect of TE.

17) ST consider CT to be the most important factor in TE (entry into the profession).

18) CT is the most powerful influence on practicum and shape their behavior of ST.

19) Only one study said has CT not included because their (CTs) teaching methods are inferior. However, the absence was felt very bad. Issues with content knowledge, pupil management, "overwhelmed by the experience of teaching".

20) Conceptions of CT. Increasing levels of participation

