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Exploring Student Teacher's Lived Experiences with Supervisor Feedback

Kristin M. Rich

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STUDENT TEACHERS' LIVED EXPERIENCES WITH FEEDBACK

Exploring Student Teachers' Lived Experiences with Supervisor Feedback

Kristin M. Rich

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EXPLORING STUDENT TEACHERS' LIVED EXPERIENCES WITH SUPERVISOR FEEDBACK, a Doctoral research project prepared by KRISTIN RICH in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Doctor of Education degree in Educational Leadership.

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ABSTRACT

Despite receiving feedback from a university supervisor, student teachers often do not show responsiveness to that feedback. This phenomenological study examined the lived experiences of student teachers receiving feedback from their supervisors during a post-observation conference by using a framework of three conditions for learner improvement. The study aimed to enhance what student teachers valued, what they understood, and how they responded to their supervisors' feedback. What they shared highlighted two significant factors influencing their responsiveness to feedback: (1) a knowledge of their learners and (2) a desire to be treated as professionals. These two factors determined whether they applied or rejected feedback and highlighted the student teachers' varying degrees of professional development. This study revealed examples of student teachers who showed skills and dispositions of in-service teachers. Their individual goal setting and feedback-seeking behaviors illustrated a degree of professionalism not often expected in preservice teachers. Implications for this study focused on a need to develop independent self-monitoring skills throughout the educator preparation program, to develop emotionally supportive and professional relationships between student teachers and supervisors, and to use intentionality when pairing supervisors with student teachers.

Keywords: phenomenology, student teacher, student teaching, feedback, university supervisor

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Finally, to my student teachers—past, present, and future. Your commitment to your calling brings me so much joy! May you continue to grow in your knowledge and love for the Lord so that you can best love the students in your classrooms.

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DEDICATION

This work is for the one true Master Teacher
who leads, provides, and loves me like no other

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Background

As I set up for the weekly Thursday evening seminar, the sound of excited yet exhausted voices start to fill the room. The spring student teachers have been in their classroom placements for about a week, and this is the first time they are all gathered at the university to reflect, analyze, and problem solve. This night was no different from past semesters. About 26 student teachers mingle with each other before the start of class. As the instructor of the seminar course, I greet the student teachers and field their questions.

At one point, I see Heather approach. She looks concerned, so I ask her how she is doing. Heather is a top student. She is hardworking, confident, likable, organized, and passionate about teaching. Her skills as a student and preservice teacher have already set her apart from her peers. Worriedly, she says, "Professor Rich, I'm not getting any feedback."

Her words caught me off guard. This was the student teacher placed with a veteran teacher who was handpicked by the school principal for her excellent teaching. Not only that, but Heather worked with the same cooperating teacher she had worked with during an earlier practicum. Unlike her peers, she had been with her teacher for an entire semester, albeit only part-time. I typically diversify placement experiences so that students experience a variety of perspectives and teaching styles, but the principal and I were trying out a new strategy. We wanted to onboard novice teachers to the school and district setting during their teacher preparation program to see if that kind of mentorship would ease the transition into full-time teaching. Heather's work made her a top candidate with strong capabilities. On the one hand, I figured Heather probably did not need a lot of feedback, but on the other hand, I knew she would

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excel that much more if she were receiving quality feedback. Heather would take any suggestion and run with it.

As a director of student teaching for a university's teacher education division, I hear student teachers say something similar to Heather every year. This statement typically occurs in the first month or two of their placements, and various education majors have voiced it: elementary majors, secondary majors, many who are academically strong, and some who just meet the minimum requirements. Without fail, I will hear this comment or something like it from a student teacher spoken about mentors. It has forced me to explore their experience and ask questions about their placement setting, mentors, and routines. Student teaching is a unique time in a teacher's training. They will never again have two mentors supporting them as they practice their teaching. Their comments reveal that they want to take advantage of this time and learn from their mentors, yet something about the situation is not meeting their expectation.

In education, teachers use feedback from many sources as a learning tool to help both teachers and students lessen the gap between their current level of performance and some desired goal (Hattie & Timperley, 2007; Kluger & DeNisi, 1996; Sadler, 1989; Shute, 2008). This professional practice has become an expectation for teachers. Teachers are tasked with giving and receiving feedback so they can adjust their teaching practices and lead students to achieve learning outcomes (Council of Chief State School Officers, 2013). To prepare teachers for their role, university educator preparation programs (EPPs) model this task by helping student teachers receive feedback during their training.

The expectations placed on EPPs come from organizations that assess and ensure teacher preparation programs are training preservice teachers for success. For example, in 2010, the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) released the Blue Ribbon

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Panel report calling for clinically rich experiences in addition to deep content knowledge and evidence of certain professional dispositions. NCATE made this recommendation in response to the National Research Council's (2010) report, which concludes that preservice teachers are best prepared for teaching when they apply knowledge and skills to the field. Building on the Blue Ribbon Panel's seminal report, the American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education (AACTE, 2018) sought to define and operationalize clinical experiences such as student teaching. Created by teacher educators, their proposal includes proclamations and tenets for designing highly effective clinical practices and partnerships.

In recent years, efforts by AACTE, state departments of education, and accrediting bodies have sought to unify EPP practices to reflect standards of teacher preparation. EPPs are accountable to accreditation bodies such as the Council for Accreditation of Educator Preparation (CAEP, 2021) and state departments of education to ensure that "effective partnerships and high-quality clinical practice are central to preparation" (p. 6). Therefore, teacher preparation programs set up several field experiences where student teachers can practice what they have learned by partnering with a cooperating teacher and university supervisor. This grouping is often called a triad.

The purpose of the triad is two-fold: evaluation of the student teacher to verify professional readiness and formative feedback to develop effective teaching practice. The side-by-side nature of student teaching allows for the use of constructive feedback as "information communicated to the learner that is intended to modify his or her thinking or behavior for the purpose of learning" (Shute, 2008, p. 154). However, my professional experience reveals that some mentoring arrangements result in a lack of growth in the student teacher's knowledge, skills, or dispositions.

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Despite the efforts of EPPs to partner student teachers with highly effective mentors, there are factors at play that affect how a student teacher identifies and interprets feedback. These influences can lead to *responsiveness* or *resistance* to the feedback. Most studies focus on what student teachers determine to be effective feedback (Davis & Dargusch, 2015; Gonzalez et al., 2020; Le & Vásquez, 2011; Shantz & Stratemeyer, 2000; White, 2007) and what techniques mentors use to offer feedback (Gonzalez-Toro et al., 2020; Le & Vásquez, 2011; White, 2009). While these studies appear to contribute to our knowledge, there continue to be triad partnerships where feedback does not seem to improve the student teacher's performance. The role of mentors and the responsibilities of the student teacher are essential to learning. Still, EPPs influence the success of the field experience by setting up structures and procedures that can facilitate success. Preparation programs must thoughtfully reflect and analyze their work and the others involved to discern what adjustments might be needed. They must listen to all parties involved to identify any factors creating a negative perception or response to feedback.

Educational Problem of Practice

Armed with decades of research about feedback and learning, EPPs have attempted to develop feedback literacy in student teachers. This includes teaching student teachers how to identify, interpret, and use feedback (Carless & Boud, 2018, p. 1316). To help student teachers grow in these skills, several researchers examine different elements of feedback that may influence their feedback uptake. While not explicitly focused on student teachers, Kluger and DeNisi (1996) recommend that researchers look at personality in feedback intervention to understand its effect on how positively or negatively the recipient perceives the feedback. Shute (2008) also focuses on general feedback and learning and not student teaching. She argues for exploration of specific variables such as recipient characteristics, the learning situation, the

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feedback quality, and the function, content and mode of feedback as possible predictors of perceptions of and engagement with feedback. Predictors, such as recipient characteristics, can also illuminate the external conditions or internal dispositions that affect responsiveness to feedback. By considering the interplay between these different elements, recipients might become more aware of their reactions and adjust their response to feedback. At the same time, providers would craft feedback specifically targeted to the learner's needs.

In addition to identifying potential predictors of responsiveness to feedback, the feedback providers' roles are also significant in this examination. Davis and Dargusch (2015) suggest that teacher education instructors understand and assess their feedback practices since they serve as role models to student teachers. Likewise, as supervisors examine their feedback, Gonzalez-Toro et al. (2020) state that triad members should compare student teachers' interpretations of feedback with their supervisors' interpretations. By reflecting on feedback practices, both mentors can assess the accuracy of the student teacher's interpretation and responsiveness to the feedback. This suggests that research should examine how the student teacher's perspective influences their response and either helps or hinders their learning.

Feedback research in teacher education has focused on student teachers' perceptions of feedback quality and sources (Davis & Dargusch, 2015; Ellis & Loughland, 2017; Gonzalez et al., 2020; Rodriguez et al., 2020; Winstone et al., 2017; Won et al., 2019). When studying feedback's influence on student teachers, Le and Vásquez's (2011) analysis of post-observation conferences highlights a disconnect between what is perceived and what actually occurred. They assert that each triad member has an opinion of the feedback's meaning, but those interpretations may not be apparent to the others involved. These conflicting opinions can result in misinterpretation, which affects the use of feedback. To avoid misunderstanding, Sadler (1989)

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identifies a key component to feedback and learning, which is understanding the goal so that one can judge the distance between the current ability and that goal. A problem of practice occurs if student teachers misinterpret the feedback by completely missing the message. If they are not identifying or comprehending the feedback, attention must be paid to the mentors' feedback. Investigating what a mentor said and the accuracy of how a student teacher interpreted could be a helpful study, but this study is particularly interested in what the student teacher experienced and how they responded. Because preservice teachers will be responsible for giving feedback, it is important to illuminate any factors that help or hinder their response to feedback.

Misunderstanding is one factor that affects the response to feedback, but some researchers call for an examination of other variables that might predict the perceptions of and engagement with feedback (Ali et al., 2018; Henderson et al., 2019). Such findings would help identify potential barriers keeping student teachers from accurately recognizing, interpreting, and applying feedback. Carless (2015) argues similarly for identifying circumstances in the feedback interaction that help or hinder student growth when feedback is offered. These arguments suggest that identifying the individual's dispositions and the situational circumstances will change how feedback is given and received.

Finally, Shute (2008) sums up this problem of feedback responsiveness by developing a list of feedback guidelines. She calls for an examination of how a combination of recipient characteristics, the learning situation, the feedback quality, and the function, content and mode of feedback influence the response to feedback. A study conducted by Lipnevich et al. (2016) seems to align with Shute's notions, and the authors develop a model to examine how these variables influence feedback responsiveness in the classroom. While their model is not specific

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to student teaching, it provides a framework for educators to understand how feedback is received.

Purpose of the Study

There is a body of research on what student teachers perceive as quality feedback and what they perceive to be effective mentoring. However, there is limited research on how specifically student teachers' perceptions of feedback influence their uptake or resistance to the feedback. Just as there are perceptions of quality feedback, there may be indicators of student teacher responsiveness to feedback. The purpose of this study is to explore the lived experiences of undergraduate student teachers following feedback interactions. It seeks to discover what they understand in moments of feedback with their mentors and what they do with the feedback they receive.

Research Question(s)

This phenomenological study will seek to answer the question: What is the lived experience of undergraduate student teachers following feedback interactions with their supervisor? Three sub-questions will guide the interviews:

1. How do student teachers' lived experiences illuminate the perceived value of these feedback sessions?
2. How do student teachers' lived experiences illuminate the perceived meanings from these feedback sessions?
3. How do student teachers' lived experiences illuminate the immediate actions they took after these feedback sessions?

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Significance of the Study

In their overview of feedback assessment, Hattie and Timperley (2007) state that each learner has a personal choice in their response to feedback: application or resistance. A seemingly neglected area of research in the field of learner perceptions of feedback influencing responsiveness is that of student teachers. Their responses are not clearly understood.

This research has many applications in the training of preservice teachers in that it will help EPPs better understand what student teachers do with feedback during their preparation. Ultimately, discovering what contributes to student teachers' perceptions about feedback and their response will help EPPs better prepare them to identify, interpret, and use feedback, coach them to request professional feedback, and train mentors to offer more effective feedback.

Definition of Terms

Terms significant to this study require clarification so that the context is clear. I define the necessary terms here.

Preservice Teacher

Preservice teachers are “engaged in an EPP’s preparation process for PK-12 professional education licensure/certification” (CAEP, 2021). They take required courses in content and pedagogy and complete field experiences and student teaching.

Student Teacher

A student teacher is a candidate enrolled in final clinical practice, “with an intensive and extensive culminating field-based set of responsibilities, assignments, tasks, activities, and assessments that demonstrate candidates’ progressive development of the professional knowledge, skills, and dispositions to be effective educators” (CAEP, 2021).

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Cooperating Teacher

One of the student teacher's mentors. Also known as clinical educators "who assess, support, and develop a candidate's knowledge, skills, or professional dispositions at some stage in the clinical experiences" (CAEP, 2021). Specifically, a cooperating teacher is a school-based teacher responsible for mentoring a student teacher in the classroom.

University Supervisor

Another clinical educator and mentor. The university supervisor works for and represents the teacher education program. They are assigned one or more student teachers to observe, support, and evaluate throughout the student teaching semester.

Feedback

Feedback is information about the status of one's performance or understanding compared to the standard. The purpose of feedback is to assist an individual "to modify his or her thinking or behavior for the purpose of improving learning" (Shute, 2008, p. 154).

Responsiveness

Responsiveness is the resulting actions following the provision of feedback. "It is what occurs within the self as the student peruses the feedback" (Lipnevich et al., 2016, p. 180).

Feedback Interaction

Feedback interactions are the moments when feedback is given. These occurrences can be internal, such as self-monitoring, when a student teacher reflects on how a lesson went, or they can be external (Sadler, 1989, p. 122). For example, the cooperating teacher or university supervisor debriefs what they observed with the student teacher after a scheduled observation.

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EPP

Educator preparation programs are “the entity responsible for the preparation of PK-12 educators at initial and advanced levels” (CAEP, 2021).

CAEP

The Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation is “a nonprofit and nongovernmental agency that accredits educator preparation providers” (CAEP, 2021).

NCATE

The National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education accredited EPPs before 2014. At that point, NCATE merged with Teacher Education Accreditation Council (TEAC) to form CAEP (CAEP, 2021).

AACTE

The American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education “represents more than 800 postsecondary institutions with educator preparation programs dedicated to high-quality, evidence-based preparation that assures educators are ready to teach all learners” (AACTE, 2018).

NCTQ

The National Council on Teacher Quality reviews and evaluates teacher preparation programs to offer comparisons of program effectiveness.

InTASC

The Interstate Teacher Assessment and Support Consortium developed and published a model for core standards for teaching. Their model describes standards and actions to support teacher development so that teachers offer effective teaching (Council of Chief State School Officers, 2013).

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Limitations of the Study

As a qualitative researcher, my job is to listen and describe a common experience without prejudice or judgment. I must “remove from myself manipulating or predisposing influences and to become completely and solely attuned to just what appears, to encounter the phenomenon, as such, with a pure state of mind” (Moustakas, 1994, p. 88). While I can do everything in my power to clear my mind of internal and external messages, as a phenomenological study, this study has several limitations. Phenomenology asks participants to describe a personal experience, and yet the feedback event and the interview cannot coincide at the same time. The very act of reflection changes the participant’s position from experiencing the event to an internal act of recalling what occurred in the recent past (Polkinghorne, 1989, pp. 45-46).

Another limitation is the challenge to recognize accurately the structure of the participant’s lived experience. Structures in phenomenology are the essential characteristics of the phenomenon (Moustakas, 1994, p. 98). In a phenomenological study, the researcher prepares questions and interviews to gather data that describe the participants’ experiences with the phenomenon. However, it is not the researcher’s lived story. The researcher must determine the essential qualities of the experience found in the descriptions. As the researcher and participant work through the cycle of “looking and reflecting, looking and reflecting again” (Moustakas, 1994, p. 70), the reflections will alter the meanings each time.

A final limitation centers around the setting. Each teacher preparation program establishes its expectation and process for cooperating teacher and university supervisor feedback. Since I will recruit participants from a single institution in this study, I will have no control over the focus of the feedback or the structure of the feedback interaction. Student teacher participants study at an independent university, and their program dictates what their

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experience includes. Each interview will reveal these details as participants share the “what” of their experiences during the feedback interaction. In this study, despite having no role in training both mentors in how to give feedback, I verified that the university supervisors participate yearly in interrater reliability practice with the evaluation tool. According to the gatekeeper (personal communication, August 19, 2021), this training included becoming familiar with the professional standards and involved practicing leading feedback conversations. The university supervisors also attended monthly meetings to discuss and share mentor strategies often connected to feedback. The cooperating teachers received tools such as handouts and video tutorials about the evaluation tool and giving feedback. It was not feasible to require their participation in mandatory trainings. The teacher preparation program required cooperating teachers and student teachers to complete an activity that asks both to share their vision, teaching philosophy, and semester goals. This exercise was a chance to practice communication.

Delimitations of the Study

Since student teaching is a mandated experience for traditional pathways to teacher certification in the United States, there are many elements to consider for inclusion or exclusion in the participant selection criteria. Some significant choices were selecting only student teachers, limiting the sample size, and limiting the region. Perhaps the most limiting decision I made was only hearing from student teachers and not their triad mentors. While cooperating teacher and university supervisor perspectives are necessary to understand feedback interactions, the purpose of this study was to examine the student teachers' lived experience, not their mentors. I limited the participants to student teachers so that the layers of their stories would contribute to a synthesized description for the group. Rather than hear perspectives from different triad members, this study focused only on the experiences of student teachers who

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received and responded to the feedback from university supervisors as a means of professional preparation. This narrow focus added depth and clarity to the essence of the experience.

I chose to limit my interviews to five student teachers. Phenomenology requires participants to be articulate in their description (Polkinghorne, 1989, p. 47), and asking student teachers to agree to two interview sessions is a significant commitment. Therefore, I intended to keep the selection criteria specific to elementary student teachers since there were more enrolled in the education program than secondary student teachers. Similarly, I did not pursue participants beyond one EPP in the Midwest region. While multiple perspectives across the United States would have add to the richness of the findings, I again prioritized the likelihood of recruiting articulate and expressive student teachers with whom I could easily schedule interviews. I chose to work with a gatekeeper with whom I had a professional relationship, and I knew that relationship would help me communicate with her about the desired participant characteristics.

Organization of the Study

This dissertation consists of five chapters. In Chapter One, I have introduced the educational problem of practice, the purpose of the study, the research question and sub-questions, and the significance of this research. I also defined key terms as well as presented the study's delimitations and limitations. Chapter Two reviews literature dealing with the research topic. I begin by presenting a survey of literature about feedback in education, and then I lay a conceptual foundation for learning based on the learner's comprehension, evaluation, and application of feedback. Following that, I identify factors and contexts that affect the learner's engagement with feedback. Finally, I discuss research on student teaching as a context for feedback responsiveness. In Chapter Three, I describe the research design for this study. I provide an overview of the methodology, a rationale for its use, the participants, research setting,

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data collection, and data analysis. I explain the credibility and trustworthiness of my research. In Chapter Four, I present a description of the lived experiences of student teachers in a feedback interaction. My synthesis of the participants' experiences and resulting themes develop a description of the phenomenon's essence. Chapter Five includes a summary of the findings and conclusions, which lead to several implications for the preparation and mentorship of preservice teachers. Following Chapter Five are my references and Appendices.

Conclusion

Feedback is a key component of teacher preparation and is critical in field experiences. Student teachers need to receive and utilize feedback to grow into professional educators. Yet, student teacher responsiveness to feedback is inconsistent. Understanding what student teachers comprehend, value, and do with feedback messages will improve the support and training of future teachers. To do this, Chapter Two will review literature about what is known and unknown about feedback, student teaching, and responsiveness to feedback in clinical experiences.

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CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

Student teacher responsiveness to feedback has implications for effective teaching. This literature review discusses the themes of feedback research and its relation to student teachers' lived experiences. A background of feedback in education sets up the conceptual framework for student improvement based on their understanding, evaluation, and use of feedback. I then examine how research has called for consideration of multiple factors that work together to influence the learner's comprehension and responsiveness to feedback. Following this, I look at the context of clinical practice as a setting that offers learners an opportunity to further their skills and knowledge through numerous feedback experiences in the field. This review concludes with an analysis of the literature about student teacher experiences with feedback to help establish the context for their lived experiences and the influence multiple factors have on their comprehension, evaluation, and application of feedback.

Criteria for Inclusion of Sources

Literature in this chapter includes articles published in peer-reviewed journals or policies approved by nationally recognized educational organizations. The peer-reviewed literature is original research except for critical meta-analyses. I selected the latter publications to identify research regarding feedback. The policy references serve as the basis for EPP guidelines and directly relate to teaching and student teaching. Each publication addresses a teacher's role in giving and receiving feedback. Organizations such as InTASC and NCTQ all play influential roles in the training of teachers and preservice teachers.

Sources published in the last 10 years make up much of this review. However, it was important to include publications prior to 2012. Several seminal works contribute to the conceptual understanding of feedback (Hattie & Timperley, 2007; Kluger & DeNisi, 1996;

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Sadler, 1989; Shute, 2008). Feedback research regularly refers to these significant works, all of which have been cited over 4,000 times on Google Scholar. Hattie and Timperley's (2007) review alone has more than 15,000 citations.

One factor I considered when selecting older publications was an increase in feedback research around 2001. This uptick coincides with a time when the United States' public educational system started implementing teacher accountability with the adoption of No Child Left Behind legislation. Teacher training became a central player in the debate over teacher effectiveness, and research increasingly focused on teacher preparation programs. In addition to this, I included older literature from other disciplines such as social work and medical education. These fields examined feedback responsiveness in clinical settings much earlier than teacher education.

Conceptual Background

Research shows effective feedback leads to student growth because it aims to lessen the gap between the goal and what is currently understood (Hattie & Timperley, 2007; Sadler, 1989). This effort to reduce the discrepancy suggests that learning happens by comparing one's current level of knowledge or performance to a goal or standard (Forsythe & Johnson, 2017; Kluger & DeNisi, 1996; Shute, 2008). Sadler's (1989) seminal work establishes a theoretical foundation for feedback's function in learner growth. He argues that the learner must understand the standard of performance, be skilled in evaluating their level of achievement, and have strategies to lessen the gap between the two. Building on Sadler's idea of students selecting an action in response to feedback, Kluger and DeNisi (1996) also speak to student choice in their feedback intervention theory (FIT). They propose a theory to account for feedback intervention variables and their effect on performance. The authors emphasize that feedback draws the learner's

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attention to task details, task motivation, or self, and the recipient has four options to lessen the gap between the feedback and the standard. The learner can increase their effort to achieve the goal, give up on the goal, raise or lower the goal, or outright reject the feedback. Despite concluding that task-oriented feedback is quantifiably most effective, the authors highlight that feedback does not always change behavior.

Understanding, Evaluating, and Responding to Feedback

For feedback to result in improvement, researchers such as Sadler (1989) state that the learner must meet three conditions: the learner must understand the goal, judge their current level of performance compared to specific criteria, and use the criteria to evaluate their current level of performance compared to specific criteria strategies to close the gap. Many researchers have confirmed these three conditions as essential for student growth (Carless & Boud, 2018; Davis & Dargusch, 2015; Ellis & Loughland, 2017; Eva et al., 2012; Lipnevich et al., 2016). However, these studies make slight adjustments and take a broader view of Sadler's conditions. Specifically, researchers have considered whether the learner understands the feedback message, whether the learner values the feedback, and whether the learner responds to the feedback. Sadler's theory stipulates that the learner must take on more self-monitoring while the educator lessens their input. The literature reviewed here does not fully adhere to Sadler's position. While there are elements of learner self-monitoring, most of the studies focused on feedback and clinical experiences heavily emphasize the feedback message and the feedback context.

Understanding Feedback Messages

Clear, objective goals must be communicated to help learners understand feedback messages. When feedback focuses on areas for improvement with specifics about evident knowledge gaps, the learner better understands what they need to do (Davis & Dargusch, 2015).

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To do this effectively, feedback providers need to clarify the standard's criteria. According to Sadler (1989), they can achieve this in two ways by providing descriptions of expected quality and exemplars. Both approaches help the learner understand the criteria and expectations related to the standard. Even after giving such supports, educators or feedback providers play a significant role in assisting learners in identifying, interpreting, and using feedback (Carless & Boud, 2018). Ensuring that the learner understands the feedback message concerning the goal is one component of supporting learner growth.

Evaluating, or Valuing, Feedback

Evaluation is an act of judging whether something is of worth or value. This act of assessing value is prominent in feedback interactions. Many studies have identified what learners consider to be valuable in feedback moments (Dawson et al., 2019; Forsythe & Johnson, 2017; Henderson et al., 2019), and they have examined the influence trust and credibility have on the learner's judgment of the feedback (Bogo et al., 2007; Le & Vásquez, 2011; Telio et al., 2016; Winstone et al., 2017). Davis and Dargusch (2015) find that students believed trust between themselves and their instructors contributes to a perception of feedback quality. The learner's evaluation of feedback extends to elements such as usefulness, comprehension, tone, and consistency with the standard (Lipnevich et al., 2016). During a feedback interaction, the learner is making judgments about the feedback provider and the feedback message. These judgments play a significant role in how the learner responds to the feedback (Eva et al., 2012).

Responding to Feedback

Student growth requires understanding the feedback message and acting. As one study aptly states, "If feedback is not acted upon, it is not likely to be effective in enhancing learning" (Lipnevich et al., 2016, p. 176). Sadler's (1989) conditions and Kluger and DeNisi's (1996)

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theory move the learner from a general understanding of feedback to the point of responsiveness. Responsiveness involves the resulting actions from receiving feedback. Kluger and DeNisi provide a framework for responsiveness by explaining the two options learners can take to lessen the discrepancy between their current level of performance and the goal. Learners can change their effort or the goal, or they can eliminate the goal or the feedback.

Researchers have looked at factors that might influence the learner's choice, including cognitive factors such as a fixed mindset (Forsythe & Johnson, 2017) or affective factors such as the role of power (Rees et al., 2020). Lipnevich et al. (2016) developed a model for student response to feedback that includes the student's cognitive and emotional responses. Their work stems from an assumption that both the emotions and the mind interact as one processes feedback. The model questions what occurs during the feedback experience from receiving feedback to the resulting action. They create a model for responsiveness that includes various factors such as context, content, student characteristics, the interaction of student emotions and cognition, and the action taken based on those influences. Ultimately, this model attempts to acknowledge and examine the complexities of feedback responsiveness.

Multiple Factors at Work

While many studies have looked at individual variables contributing to feedback understanding, evaluation, and responsiveness, others have found that feedback's influence on student learning is more complex. Researchers are broadening their focus from individual factors to consider the interplay multiple variables have on learner outcomes (Bing-You et al., 1997; Henderson et al., 2019; Thurlings et al., 2013; Winstone et al., 2017; Wisniewski et al., 2019). Shute (2008) acknowledges the complexities of formative feedback when she proposes that

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research examine how the characteristics of the recipient, the learning context, the feedback's content and mode influence the student's response or learning.

A widely accepted claim about effective feedback is that it focuses on a task. Hattie and Timperley (2007) establish a feedback model that presents four levels of feedback: task, process, self-regulation, and self (p. 90). These levels become the focus of the feedback, and they have varying degrees of effectiveness. Hattie and Timperley's levels are similar to those studied by Kluger and DeNisi (1996). Both studies conclude that feedback at the task level most often affects learner outcomes. In her literature review, Shute (2008) follows Kluger and DeNisi's theory, and she narrows the scope to task-level feedback. In the end, Shute finds that task-level feedback should fit the student's needs, be timely so that it can be applied, and given in a way that the student is willing to use it. Feedback that addresses these characteristics contributes to the learner's understanding, evaluation, and responsiveness.

Adding to the claim that task level feedback is most effective, Carless (2015) notes feedback resulted in long-term learning if recipients apply feedback to novel tasks. In a later study, Carless (2019) argues feedback loops and spirals, or iterations of feedback, aid in long-term learning. Feedback that applies to many situations results in learner growth. Engagement with the message serves as another variable influencing the learner's understanding, evaluation, and responsiveness to feedback. Winstone et al. (2017) identify various factors connected to engagement, such as communication, personal skills, perceptions of credibility, level of study, educational contexts, and recipient training to interpret and receive feedback. Characteristics like feedback loops and engagement contribute to the learner's feedback interaction and use. Since the purpose of feedback is to improve performance or knowledge, understanding the feedback message is crucial. To measure the extent of understanding, one must observe a behavior change

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(Dawson et al., 2019; Winstone et al., 2017). The feedback message is understood when the discrepancy between what was known and the goal lessens. A learner's interaction with feedback is complex and influenced by many factors (Henderson et al., 2019), and these factors contribute to the learner's understanding, evaluation, and response to feedback.

Feedback in Clinical Practice

Feedback occurs in varying settings and with different modes, content, and sources. However, one unique feedback situation for learners is in clinical practice. The setting of clinical experiences pairs novices with experienced practitioners who give feedback to help novices develop necessary skills. In field experiences set up for disciplines such as medicine, nursing, and social work, researchers confirm that multiple factors contribute to learners' understanding, evaluation, and responsiveness to mentor feedback. The learner's growth is measured in light of these three conditions and influenced by mentor characteristics, learner judgment, the feedback content, and the context in which the feedback is given.

Student perceptions of mentors in clinical practices identify several desired traits. For example, students in social work clinical experiences indicate that their supervisor's availability and openness, emotional support, feedback, and encouraging autonomy fosters learning (Coohey & French, 2017). Across disciplines, many desired characteristics revolve around supportive relationships (Voyer et al., 2016) and mentor credibility (Bogo et al., 2007; Eva et al., 2012; Harrison et al., 2016). The significance of these desired mentor characteristics is how they contribute to the learner comprehending and receiving the feedback. Telio et al. (2016) find that learners' perceptions of their mentors influence how they understand and respond to feedback. The learner judges the supervisor's professional abilities and whether the supervisor seems invested in the learning relationship. Furthermore, learners feel more comfortable with

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supervisors who show an enthusiastic commitment to their role, concern for their personal life and clinical experience, and respect toward the learner. Based on those beliefs, the researchers find that learners accept or reject feedback (Telio et al., 2016).

A learner's perception of the message also influences their understanding and responsiveness to feedback. Students in clinical experiences want clear, individualized feedback based on their needs, and they are open to negative feedback as long as it is clear how they can improve (Bevan et al., 2008). Voyer et al. (2016) confirm that learners consider effective feedback to be needs-based, timely, and task-focused. Their study identifies helpful feedback as specific ways to improve performance in their clinical practice. They also find that students want to be challenged to use a variety of approaches to think and reflect on learning. Focused feedback messages clarify the learning goal and allow students to evaluate how they are performing in light of that goal.

Finally, mentor qualities and feedback content interact with the context to influence learners' responsiveness to feedback in their clinical experience. Several studies conducted within clinical experiences examine responsiveness to feedback and note multiple variables at play (Coohey & French, 2017; Eva et al., 2012; Rees et al., 2020; Voyer et al., 2016). In addition to the learner perceptions detailed above, feedback interactions within a culture that values feedback influences the message content and resulting responses. Some studies look at how particular contexts influence feedback. Watling et al. (2013) state that specific fields of study influence feedback processes and responsiveness, and thus, researchers need to examine responsiveness considering the feedback culture. Harrison et al. (2016) confirm that assessment culture is tied to feedback receptivity. When practicing skills and knowledge in a clinical experience, a variety of factors influence a learner's understanding of feedback, value of the

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feedback, and responsiveness to it. The people involved and the setting contribute to what the learner hears and does with the message.

Feedback in Student Teaching

Like other disciplines, teacher education establishes several clinical opportunities for preservice teachers to develop their knowledge and skills. Field experiences in teacher preparation allow preservice teachers to practice teaching while learning and adjusting their skills based on mentor feedback. Organizations such as the Interstate Teacher Assessment and Support Consortium (InTASC), which defines standards to monitor preservice and K-12 teacher development, expect teachers to use feedback to adjust their teaching (Council of Chief State School Officers, 2013). One of InTASC's foundational assumptions is that learning requires applying new information, gathering data about how it worked, reflecting on the response, seeking feedback, and adjusting. Since the expectation is that teachers receive feedback, EPPs establish opportunities for preservice teachers to meet this expectation. In 2011, the National Council for Teacher Quality (NCTQ) released a report on student teaching in the U.S. The report identifies and defines 19 standards to develop highly effective student teaching experiences, and of those 19 standards, four call for mentors to be skilled in frequently providing feedback.

Driven by these professional organizations, EPPs use a triad model to facilitate feedback interactions. Based on the professional standards for teacher training, feedback opportunities are built into courses and field experiences to improve preservice teacher teaching. During the final clinical experience, student teaching, the triad includes the student teacher, cooperating teacher, and university supervisor. The student teacher is working with the cooperating teacher side by side in a full-time classroom experience. The student teaching experience includes scheduled formal observations conducted by the university supervisor and daily informal opportunities to

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debrief with the cooperating teacher. Typically, the triad uses three stages for feedback: observation, analysis and reflection, and adaptation (White, 2009). These stages work as feedback loops (Carless, 2019) in that the student teacher can move from one stage to another during any feedback interaction.

Student Teacher Understanding of Feedback

With an established feedback system in their clinical experience, student teacher growth is best achieved when they understand, evaluate, and respond to mentor feedback. Since student teaching aims to improve the student teacher's skills, mentors and EPPs typically employ specific techniques to provide feedback (Davis & Fantozzi, 2016; Gonzalez-Toro et al., 2020; White, 2009). One example from Le and Vásquez (2011) finds that mentors employ many common feedback strategies such as questioning and the discourse pattern of compliment-criticism-suggestion. Another study examines the types of feedback preservice teachers receive in a practicum setting and finds that cooperating teachers often neglect to offer feedback about next steps and the final goal (Ellis & Loughland, 2017). Such missed opportunities limit both the formative and summative nature of feedback messages.

The varying strategies of giving feedback contribute to the learner's understanding of the feedback message. Techniques can be used to provide a single message or can encompass an entire feedback process. Several studies have looked at the impact of processes such as feedback literacy, feedback loops, and coaching (Carless, 2019; Henderson et al., 2019; Hoffman et al., 2015). For example, hiring schools expect graduating student teachers to have feedback literacy when they enter the profession (Davis & Dargusch, 2015). Carless and Boud (2018) define feedback literacy "as the understandings, capacities and dispositions needed to make sense of information and use it to enhance work or learning strategies" (p. 1316). They include several

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elements such as appreciating the feedback process, making judgments, managing emotions, and taking action. Such components aid in the learner understanding of feedback messages and assist in student growth. There has been an increase in studies about feedback literacy which signals a need to help learners understand the feedback message (Winstone et al., 2017, 2019).

Specifically, learners need instruction in recognizing, comprehending, and using feedback (Carless & Boud, 2018).

A review of research about how student teachers make meaning of feedback highlights the influential role mentors play in influencing student teacher understanding and engagement. Some researchers argue that feedback providers in student teaching ultimately help or hinder learning (Basmadijan, 2011; Gonzalez et al., 2020). Yet, the student teacher navigates the feedback interaction and works to understand both the goal and their current level of experience. The student teacher's many roles complicate this process of making sense of the message. Student teachers understand feedback as students, preservice teachers, and teachers (Elbra-Ramsay, 2021). They see their role with feedback on a spectrum and exercise flexibility as they move back and forth in their three positions.

Student Teacher's Perception of the Value of Feedback

Student teacher growth from feedback connects to their perceptions of the feedback provider and their perceptions of the quality of the feedback message. Both the mentor and the message contribute to the student teacher's understanding, and at the same time, the student teacher judges the value both add to their learning. Several research studies reveal that student teachers acknowledge the purpose of feedback is to help them learn, so they value feedback as an instructional tool (Davis & Fantozzi, 2016; White, 2007). Since student teachers affirm that they

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know the importance of feedback, studies have identified what mentor and message characteristics student teachers want.

Valued Mentor Traits. A review of literature specific to student teacher perceptions of feedback providers encompasses what characteristics student teachers say they want in their mentors (Basmadijan, 2011; Davis & Dargusch, 2015; Gonzalez et al., 2020; Winstone et al., 2017; Won et al., 2019). A sampling of desired mentor traits includes individuals who create a supportive relationship, quantity of time spent dialoguing, honesty, and supervisor availability to clarify and assist (Davis & Fantozzi, 2016; Le & Vásquez, 2011; White, 2009). Unsurprisingly, relationship plays a crucial role in whether the feedback is deemed worthy and results in action. Again, student teachers make judgments regarding the credibility of their mentors, which influences their responsiveness (Davis & Dargusch, 2015; Le & Vásquez, 2011; Winstone et al., 2017; Won et al., 2019). The list of desired traits is similar to those identified in other disciplines. However, the purpose of feedback separates student teaching from other clinical experiences. Since student teachers are preparing to be teachers who use feedback to help their learners, mentors model feedback opportunities (Davis & Dargusch, 2015; Valencia et al., 2009; Wilkins-Canter, 1997). Not only are student teachers adjusting their teaching skills, but they are learning how to give feedback to their learners.

Valued Message Traits. Mentors model how to give feedback, but they also provide feedback messages intended to help student teachers grow in their knowledge and skills. Therefore, several studies have identified what student teachers consider as quality feedback (Gonzalez et al., 2020; Le & Vásquez, 2011; White, 2007). For example, student teachers want specific, frequent, and constructive feedback (Davis & Fantozzi, 2016; Shantz & Stratemeyer, 2000). Rodriguez et al. (2020) confirm these findings and state that student teachers value

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constructive feedback that is timed and delivered in a manner that matches their placement context. Davis and Dargusch (2015) find that while preservice teachers value timely and individually tailored feedback, they most value feedback that matches the expected criteria. Student teachers want feedback that focuses on areas for improvement with specifics about knowledge gaps. Learners show growth when they understand the goal and their current level of performance.

Student Teacher Use of Feedback

For feedback to cause growth in a learner, the individual acts based on their understanding and value of the feedback. In clinical practice, the student teacher's response reveals whether the feedback is applied or rejected. The discipline encourages responsiveness in that preparation programs promote a feedback culture. Findings specific to teacher education reveal that teacher preparation has distinct features that encourage a culture of feedback (Watling et al., 2013). Since receiving feedback is an essential component of teaching, it is unsurprising that preparation programs would establish a consistent context for feedback. Clinical practices are rich with feedback opportunities that mimic what teachers experience in their vocation.

While the feedback culture plays a significant role in student teaching, emotions and relationships influence the response to feedback. For example, Elbra-Ramsay's (2021) study reveals that student teachers feel responsible for engaging with feedback, but their responses are influenced by emotions and how much they value their relationship with their mentors. Despite recognizing the influence of the setting and relational factors, there are limited studies in teacher education that examine the student teacher's response to feedback.

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Student Teacher Understanding, Value and Response to Feedback: A Recent Study

One recent study examining feedback in student teaching experiences focuses on comprehension and value, but it just begins to touch on student teacher use of feedback. Motivated by a desire to analyze and improve student teaching practice, Won et al. (2019) conducted action research to consider how feedback effects perceptions, experiences, and outcomes. At the end of a 16-week clinical experience, they interviewed six student teachers. They also give surveys to the student teachers, seven cooperating teachers, and three university supervisors. Participants recalled a feedback interaction following a lesson observation and share feedback components from that moment, general ideas about effective feedback, and factors that influence their responsiveness to feedback. Student teacher responses were then validated by survey responses from the entire triad. Survey questions focused on perceptions about feedback elements and student teacher action.

From their research, the authors (Won et al., 2019) note that student teachers often did not recognize receiving specific feedback despite their mentors affirming that a message was provided. Not only were there missed messages, but if student teachers perceived negative feedback to be personal and not merely constructive, they would interpret it as a failure. Their understanding and value of the message was also contingent on their perception of the mentor. Student teachers shared that their feedback uptake depended on feedback that is perceived to be clear and fits the problem and setting.

While student teachers attributed feedback responsiveness to perceptions of the mentor and message, Won et al.'s (2019) work reveals that perceptions of responsiveness were inconsistent in the eyes of the mentors. Survey results showed differing opinions about how often feedback was applied. Student teachers indicated they always applied the feedback while

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mentors suggested feedback was followed less frequently. Student teachers shared that uncertainty with messages from the university supervisor, incongruent messages from both mentors, or a lack of strategies to apply the feedback contributed to their rate of responsiveness. It is reasonable that mentors would perceive a lack of responsiveness if those factors were at play. Won et al.'s conclusions suggest the importance of student teachers understanding and valuing the feedback message. By assuring the feedback message is understood and developing a trustworthy triad, members open the door for feedback responsiveness.

Conclusion

Multiple factors are at play when it comes to student teachers' understanding, valuing, and using feedback in their clinical experiences. Whether it be their perceptions about mentors or the feedback message, student teachers navigate receiving and responding to feedback as students, preservice teachers, and teachers. While an individual's perceptions contribute to the complexities of receiving feedback, more is going on. Mentors must unpack the various factors at work to understand what the student teacher is experiencing. Their experience will influence their response. The literature examined in this chapter considers the interplay between many variables and Sadler's (1989) three conditions of gap closure to determine to what extent the learner's evaluation, understanding, and actions assist student teacher learning and development. Preparing student teachers to be effective feedback receivers requires preparation programs to understand how they recognize, understand, and respond to feedback.

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CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

This qualitative study explored the lived experiences of student teachers in the moments when they received and responded to feedback during a post-observation conference. In this chapter, I present the study's purpose and research questions in alignment with the methodological approach and ethical considerations. The chapter outlines the trustworthiness and credibility of the research, participants, selection process, data collection, and analysis processes.

Restatement of Purpose

My study used a phenomenological methodology to develop a composite description of student teachers' feedback interactions with their university supervisors and resulting actions. This allows outsiders to understand what was experienced and how the student teacher responded to the feedback.

Research Questions

The guiding research question is: What are the lived experiences of undergraduate student teachers following feedback interactions with their supervisor? Related questions to be considered include:

- Q1. How do these lived experiences illuminate the perceived value of these feedback sessions?
- Q2. How do these lived experiences illuminate the perceived meanings from these feedback sessions?
- Q3. How do these lived experiences illuminate the immediate actions student teachers took after these feedback sessions?

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Design Approach

Phenomenology describes the meaning of an experience or phenomenon (Creswell & Creswell, 2018) and captures the essence of what all participants have in common with the phenomenon. My research questions naturally align with phenomenology, which is concerned with understanding what and how one experiences a particular phenomenon. Phenomenologists start with the idea of knowledge coming from one's personal experience. They see their methodological approach as a means of gaining knowledge by stripping away everything else to get to the thing itself (Moustakas, 1994, p. 41).

One unique challenge to examining another's consciousness is that the consciousness is dynamic and integrates one's perceptions, memories, and imaginations (Polkinghorne, 1989, p. 45). Therefore, understanding the experienced phenomenon is difficult because observation or reflecting on the experience does not fully capture the moment of the experience.

Phenomenology sets out to understand the lived experience by first gathering descriptions from the people who have experienced it, then analyzing the descriptions to reduce the experiences down to shared qualities, and finally developing a composite description of what the experience is like for the group.

The setting of my study is in the field of teacher education, specifically the student teaching experience. Field experiences are unlike typical education courses since student teachers apply knowledge and skills by teaching full time in a PK-12 classroom. The daily activities and responsibilities of teaching provide opportunities for feedback messages and decision-making moments. I direct attention to the event of receiving and responding to feedback to understand better how the student teacher experiences the feedback and their resulting action. My research followed participants who shared their stories about the experience. Our

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conversations revealed what they understood, and the interviews helped construct the meaning of their feedback interaction (Moustakas, 1994, p. 19). I used each student teacher's story to synthesize a composite picture of the experience, which represents the entire group of participants. Phenomenology is unique in that it explores the "what?" rather than the "why?" (Polkinghorne, 1989, p. 58) to illuminate a deeper, richer understanding of what student teachers experience in feedback interactions.

The Researcher

Student teaching dominates my professional life. I serve as a director of field experiences and student teaching at a four-year university. My primary responsibility is to place preservice teachers in local schools and support student teachers in their final semester. Support encompasses many tasks, but regularly I am training and meeting with university supervisors, communicating with cooperating teachers, facilitating weekly seminar sessions for the student teachers, replying to their questions in person or via email, and responding to any concerns seen in the field. I also provide orientation meetings before the student teaching term and maintain the student teaching handbook.

Regarding student teachers and feedback, my job occasionally requires observing interns and debriefing with them following the observation. This type of support can be at the request of the student or one of the mentors. I use the same observation form as the university supervisor, but my observation does not influence final evaluations.

As disclosed in the introduction of Chapter 1, I often get pulled into feedback conflicts. These issues range from a student teacher feeling that they are not receiving any feedback to feeling that what they hear is not helpful or even antagonistic. Other concerns can come from the mentors' perspectives such as informing me that the student teacher is not responding to

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feedback. When these situations arise, I spend a lot of time exploring the relational dynamics to deduce the factors at play.

Prior to my directorship, I was a classroom teacher in both public and private schools. I once served as a cooperating teacher, and the feedback interactions were inconsistent. I mentored a male secondary English education student teacher who was at least 5 years older than me, and I was just three years into my career at that point. I can only speak from my perspective, but I provided feedback and opportunities for adjusting. However, the student teacher was not as responsive as I expected.

My only other experience with student teaching was my internship as an undergraduate. During my semester, I interned with one cooperating teacher in a suburban elementary school for 10 weeks, and then I completed another six weeks in a rural middle school. A 10 week/6 week split was common practice in the teacher preparation program where I studied.

These experiences have shaped my perspectives of the purpose and structure of student teaching. I have my own opinion about what works and does not work in the final semester for student teachers. Accordingly, my views could shape my interpretation of the participants' shared descriptions of their feedback experience.

Bracketing of Potential Bias

There is no place for explanation in phenomenology, only description. Therefore, the researcher plays a significant role in ensuring the data do not include presuppositions, biases, and prior knowledge. The researcher must be reflective and attentive to their propensities as well as the participants'. Moustakas (1994) would argue that freeing oneself of preconceptions is the first task in phenomenology (p. 90).

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Epoche

In phenomenology, the key to this bracketing practice is through the *epoche* process. From ancient Greek, *epoche* means to abstain or “to set aside prejudgments regarding the phenomenon being investigated” (Moustakas, 1994, p. 22). Both the researcher and the participant must refrain from including their judgment so they can see what is before them just as it is. Thus, the researcher puts aside self to present the participants’ experiences with the central phenomenon.

To avoid letting my personal experiences with the phenomenon influence my understanding of the participants’ lived experiences, I first bracketed my past experiences with the phenomenon. Bracketing means separating out and putting aside assumptions that might get in the way of understanding the phenomenon in its entirety (van Manen, 2014, p. 215). Before interviewing the participants, I reflected on and journaled about my own experiences with giving, receiving, and responding to feedback as a student teacher and with student teachers. By detailing my thoughts and beliefs, I then put them aside to focus solely on what the participants reconstructed.

Analytic Memos

Another means of tracking my biases and assumptions was through analytic memos. Analytic memos documented my thoughts as they came to mind. These notations “before, during, and about the entire enterprise are a question raising, puzzle piecing, connection making, strategy-building, problem-solving, answer-generating, rising-above-the-data heuristic” (Saldaña, 2018, p. 44). While this strategy was primarily a means of processing what the data revealed, it was also a means of catching my preconceptions which might influence the essence of the experience. I kept a journal of my developing thoughts. As I reflected on my processes or

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an interview, I jotted down what I was thinking. When I transcribed the interview recordings or coded the transcripts, and I saw developing themes, or I thought of a question, I recorded it in a memo. This procedure happened before, during, and after the data collection and analysis stages.

Member Checking

I used member checking as a final method to ensure that my perspective did not influence the description of the phenomenon. Member checking allowed participants to affirm that the researcher accurately captured their voiced experience in the description. Research results did not explain why something occurred, but they revealed what and how the student teacher experienced the event. I had to make sure that my thoughts and ideas did not influence the results. Before the final interview, I prepared a description of the content from the first interview. I shared the draft with each participant and elicited their opinion about its accuracy. Member checking provided a way for participants to look over the description's accuracy.

Research Ethics

Gaining George Fox University's Institutional Review Board approval ensured that I maintained my participants' welfare, rights, and privacy. I needed to address personal bias and confidentiality. First, I utilized bracketing to examine my experience with giving and receiving feedback interactions in student teaching. I used member checking before the final interview to ensure that my interpretations of the participants' lived experiences were accurate.

I needed to protect student teachers' information so that their mentors did not hear about what was shared. With that in mind, I stored all physical data in a locked location, and I used password protected digital storage. In my notes and writing, I used pseudonyms and removed any identifying information. The gatekeeper, who assisted in my participant selection, was the only other individual who knew about specific participants' involvement. The participants'

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mentors had no professional affiliation with my institution, meaning my institution has not used either mentor in past student teaching placements. Finally, interviews were conducted in neutral locations so that the participants would not be seen or heard by mentors.

Trustworthiness and Credibility

Eliciting, analyzing, and presenting student teachers' experiences with receiving and responding to feedback in a phenomenological study requires trust between the researcher and the participant. To develop that trust, I accounted for my thinking and actions to ensure that the data and findings are accurate and trustworthy (Creswell & Creswell, 2018, p. 199). Using the *epoche*, analytic memos, and member checking ensured that the participants' lived experiences were truthfully reported and not manipulated by my interpretations. Throughout the research process, I used audit trails to keep track of my decisions and actions. Reflecting on those and using analytic memos not only helped monitor my actions but also my assumptions. These records spoke to such details as the accuracy of transcripts (Polkinghorne, 1989, p. 57) and the development and consistent use of thematic codes (Creswell & Creswell, 2018, p. 202). I referred to my records and used the interview transcripts to create textural structures. I then synthesized those into the composite description. My handling of the data determined the study's trustworthiness (van Manen, 2014, p. 348).

I also established trustworthiness and credibility by selecting and modifying a credible research instrument and using member checking. I adapted Moustakas' (1994) list of broad questions that focus on the phenomenon (p. 116). (See Appendix A). The use of member checking monitored the accuracy of my descriptions in that participants provided their approval of what I captured of their experiences (Creswell & Creswell, 2018, p. 200).

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Settings

The setting for my study was two-fold. First, the participants were students at a four-year university in the Midwest. The institution was a private university with over 3000 traditional undergraduate students. The teacher education program received national accreditation by the Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation (CAEP). Their undergraduate program offered certification tracks in elementary, secondary, and special education. The university from which I selected participants required student teachers to go through an orientation session that included a brief training about receiving feedback in student teaching. This training consisted of a handout outlining different responses to feedback, and the student teachers practiced responding through role play and group discussion.

Both mentors received several feedback-related resources prior to working with a student teacher. University supervisors attended an initial mandatory orientation in how to use the evaluation tool and how to lead conversations about the student teacher's performance compared to the standards. They also were required to participate in a yearly interrater reliability training where they observed a recorded lesson and used the evaluation tool to score the student teacher and prepare their comments. At that training, the placement coordinator facilitated practice feedback conversations between mentors in response to what was assessed in the video. This training also included becoming familiar with the professional standards. University supervisors were supported monthly by attending a meeting where they discuss mentoring strategies with other supervisors and the placement coordinator.

Cooperating teachers obtained resources to learn about the evaluation tool and how to give feedback. More formal training was voluntary, but the program made all the resources available before the semester began. The placement coordinator provided follow-up

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communication through weekly emails (Gatekeeper, personal communication, August 19, 2021).

The second setting in this study had to do with the student teacher placements. Participants were placed in various public or private schools for their student teaching semester. The diversity of placements fit this phenomenological study because it provided a richer description of the essence of student teachers' lived experiences with feedback interactions. One additional note is that the participants were student teaching during the COVID-19 pandemic. Each one taught in-person and was observed in-person. However, each school still required teachers, students, and visiting supervisors to wear masks.

Participants

A total of five participants were recruited for interviews. The criteria for selection included that the participants were first-time undergraduate student teachers placed in a semester-long student teaching experience. They had to be placed within a triad structure, including a cooperating teacher and university supervisor. Due to the above criteria and varying interest, I selected one group of three student teachers who shared the same supervisor and then two student teachers who each had a different supervisor. Participants sat for the interview within three days of having a feedback interaction with their university supervisor.

Selection Process

As the researcher, I had no previous connection to these student teachers, so I used a gatekeeper to assist with the purposeful sampling. The gatekeeper served as a coordinator for teacher internships at the university. The gatekeeper and I worked together on a council for teacher preparation programs in our region and shared a professional relationship. She gained nothing from her role other than the knowledge from the study's findings. I provided her with the

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list of participant criteria and asked her to recommend four to six current student teachers in her university's program. The first criterion was for participants to share a supervisor, so she started by looking at which student teachers were grouped with which university supervisors. She removed students on remediation plans since their plans required extra work and asking them to spend additional time to participate in this research would distract them from their improvement goals. The remaining two criteria included student teachers whose midterm evaluations scored satisfactory or better and had no additional requirements and those who were grouped with a common supervisor. From that list, she reached out to each student teacher who qualified and solicited their participation. Once the 10 participants were selected and invited to participate, five volunteered to participate in the full research experience.

Using a gatekeeper to select participants required clear communication and trust. My gatekeeper coordinated teacher internships for eight years. Her primary role was to secure student teaching placements and support interns during their full-time student teaching internship. She taught a course for the university, so she might have taught some participants in the past. She reviewed student teacher performance evaluations and determined whether each student met certification requirements. Participants interacted with my colleague weekly at their required seminars and received periodic informative emails from her. As stated above, the gatekeeper also communicated weekly with university supervisors and offered regular trainings.

Data Sources

Since the data needed for a phenomenological study are internal and found in the participants' expressions of their lived experiences, I used interviews to better understand their experiences. Interviews are "a resource for phenomenological reflection and thus develop a richer and deeper understanding of a human phenomenon" (van Manen, 2014, p. 314). I chose

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this data collection method because it allowed me to listen to the participants' experiences. Interviews were also valuable for maintaining participant confidentiality. While I could have directly observed feedback moments in the field, my presence would have potentially influenced the findings. Cooperating teachers or university supervisors would have been aware of my presence and perhaps changed their feedback tone, content, or mode. Interviews also let the participants provide richer context and history to their lived experiences. Finally, as the researcher, I controlled the questions in an interview to ensure that the phenomenon stayed central to the conversation. Interviews were audio recorded for accuracy, and I alone had access to the recordings.

There were several limitations to interviewing that I must address (Creswell and Creswell, 2018, p. 188). For this study, there were three main challenges to interviewing. The first was that interviews account for only one perspective of the phenomenon rather than hearing from the entire triad. Second, interviews did not occur in the natural setting of the phenomenon. Third, the participants had varying abilities to recall and articulate their experiences. To ensure the credibility of the questions and determine that they bring out details about the participant's experience, I ran a pilot test with one of the student teachers at my institution. A pilot test allowed me to practice and critique the interview protocol and the credibility of the questions. Finally, I used member checking after the first interview to ensure the reliability of the data. Participants received and reviewed a copy of the textual description I drafted based on their first interview. They informed me of any discrepancies in meaning.

A Two-Interview Series

The interactions between the researcher and the co-researchers, better known as the participants, was essential to developing accurate descriptions of the phenomenon's meaning

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(Moustakas, 1994). To create a supportive and attentive atmosphere, I met twice with each participant.

Interview One: The Details of the Lived Experience. The first interview was scheduled for no more than three days after a formal observation conducted by the university supervisor. The interview began with building rapport and then focused on the participant's experience with the phenomenon. Focusing on a recent feedback event with their university supervisor, I used my adaptation of Moustakas' (1994) interview questions (p. 116). (See Appendix A). My questions helped direct attention to "what" was experienced in the feedback interaction. The interview questions were semi-structured and used to prompt responses if a participant moved away from description and into interpretation.

Interview Two: Reflection on the Meaning. The second interview asked the participant to reflect on the meaning of the feedback experience. I prompted this type of reflection by utilizing member checking and preparing some reflective semi-structured questions to get at the "how" they experienced what they experienced. Before this second interview, I provided the participant with a brief description developed from the content shared at the first interview. This draft allowed the participant to check for accuracy and opened the door for follow-up questions at the second interview. In preparation for the second interview, I formulated reflective questions that stemmed from themes and connections illuminated in transcripts from the first interview. (See Appendix B).

Data-Gathering Procedures

Recruitment

My gatekeeper emailed each qualifying student teacher and briefly explained the study's purpose. She then invited them to join a virtual meeting she hosted, and I attended as well. At

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that meeting, I shared more about the study's structure, data collection, privacy protections, known risks, and expected benefits. I emphasized that participation was voluntary. I ended by asking who would be interested in participating and then gathered their contact information. I followed up with an email to each interested individual to review the purpose, send the consent form, and schedule the first interview to occur within three days of being observed by their university supervisor.

Interviewing

Interviews were conducted in person in a neutral location or virtually to protect participants from being identified by their cooperating teacher or university supervisor. Each interview was audio recorded so that the data were accurate. As mentioned above, I used an interview protocol to keep the interaction focused and timely. Using a protocol also helped me state necessary information or pause for questions when I might otherwise forget. A copy of my interview protocol can be found in Appendix C.

After each interview, a password-protected online platform transcribed the audio recordings. Once I obtained the transcript, I checked its accuracy and critiqued whether it captured the meaning of the participant's expression of the event (Polkinghorne, 1989, p. 57). Depending on the answers to those criteria, I documented analytical memos regarding adaptations or additions to the list of questions for the following interview. I saved analytic memos in a digital file. I used analytic memos throughout the data collection process as a place where I documented my reflections about the topic of study, the participants, and my techniques as I thought of them (Saldaña, 2016, p. 44). I saved the audio files into password-protected digital files, and any copies of handwritten notes were locked in a secure location.

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Data Analysis Procedures

As interviews ended, I coded and analyzed the data using Moustakas' (1994) modification of the Van Kaam method of analyzing phenomenological data (pp. 120-121). The steps are listed in Table 1.

Table 1

Moustakas' (1994) Modification of the Van Kaam Method of Analysis of Phenomenological Data

Step	Description
1	Listing and Preliminary Grouping: List every expression relevant to the experience. (Horizontalization)
2	Reduction and Elimination: To determine the Invariant Constituents: test each expression for two requirements: 1. Does it contain a moment of the experience that is a necessary and sufficient constituent for understanding it? 2. Is it possible to abstract and label it? If so, it is a horizon of the experience. Expressions not meeting the above requirements are eliminated. Overlapping, repetitive, and vague expressions are also eliminated or presented in more exact descriptive terms. The horizons that remain are the invariant constituents of the experience.
3	Clustering and Thematizing the Invariant Constituents: Cluster the invariant constituents of the experience that are related into a thematic label. The clustered and labeled constituents are the core themes of the experience.
4	Final Identification of the Invariant Constituents and Themes by Application: Validation: Check the invariant constituents and their accompanying theme against the complete record of the research participant. (1) Are they expressed explicitly in the complete transcription? (2) Are they compatible if not explicitly expressed? (3) If they are not explicit or compatible, they're not relevant to the code researchers experienced and should be deleted.
5	Using the relevant, validated invariant constituents and themes, construct for each co-researcher an individual textural description of the experience. Include verbatim examples from the transcribed interview.
6	Construct for each co-researcher an individual structural description of the experience based on the individual textural description and imaginative variation

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Step	Description
7	Constructs for each research participant a textural-structural description of the meanings and essences of the experience, incorporating the invariant constituents and themes.
8	From the individual textural-structural descriptions, develop a composite description of the meanings and essences of the experience, representing the group as a whole.

I selected Moustakas' (1994) modification of the Van Kaam method because it provided opportunities to check the progress of my analysis compared to the data. Step Two assessed my groupings of expressions against the original text to check for relevance and validity. Using the two questions listed in step two, I ensured the data centered on the phenomenon. Step Four of the Van Kaam method also checked identified themes with transcripts to guarantee explicit evidence of their compatibility.

Codes labeled and defined these themes. As I read transcripts, I looked for structures or factors that made up the phenomenon (Moustakas, 1994). Codes named those identified structures, and I defined and noted all codes in my analytic memos. I noted emerging ideas also using analytic memos and started to build descriptions of the experience. Memos recorded anything that came to mind about participants, the study, or the process (Saldaña, 2018). To keep my analysis focused on the specific research questions, I used text features such as italics, underlining, and boldface to categorize data connected to the three research sub-questions. I took a bottom-up approach and looked for what themes arise rather than searched for pre-existing themes. Such an approach sifted through the data inductively rather than deductively (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Seidman, 2019).

My analysis primarily used spreadsheets to organize, label, reduce and collapse codes. After reading through a transcript, the complete transcript was divided into information segments

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and then coded. “Significant statements” were identified and listed (Creswell & Poth, 2018, p. 201). These expressions were listed in the first column while the second column held the horizons, or “the textural meanings and invariant constituents of the phenomenon” (Moustakas, 1994, p. 97). These served as the initial codes. I reduced any overlap or redundancy and collapsed the remaining codes into themes (Creswell & Poth, 2018, p. 238; Moustakas, 1994).

After identifying the themes, the work of synthesizing results began. The remaining three steps required an iterative description process to capture the essence of the phenomenon. I first developed textural descriptions of the “‘what’ the participants in the study experienced” and then created a structural description of “‘how’ the experience happened” (Creswell & Poth, 2018, p. 201). The final composite description combined the textural and structural descriptions for each participant to present the common experience. Put another way, I developed a group description of the phenomenon by synthesizing the individual experiences (Moustakas, 1994, p. 19).

Conclusion

This chapter outlined the background and phenomenological approach that was used in this study. I set out to present phenomenology’s practical application to my research question and the steps I took to illuminate student teachers’ experiences with receiving and responding to feedback. I provided the ethical considerations and details about participants and the setting. Finally, I discussed the process for gathering and analyzing interview data. Chapter Four will focus on the results of the data collection.

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CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS

This chapter provides demographic information about the five participants and shares the results of the phenomenological study seeking answers to the following research question: What is the lived experience of undergraduate student teachers following feedback interactions with their supervisor? The following sub-questions guided the interviews:

1. How do student teachers' lived experiences illuminate the perceived value of these feedback sessions?
2. How do student teachers' lived experiences illuminate the perceived meanings from these feedback sessions?
3. How do student teachers' lived experiences illuminate the immediate actions they took after these feedback sessions?

Participants

All five participants were placed in general education classrooms ranging from first to fourth grade. The schools spanned the socio-economic spectrum. Table 2 provides details about the participating student teachers. All names are pseudonyms.

Table 2

Demographic Characteristics of Participants

Student Teacher	Grade Level	Type of School	University Supervisor
Kelly	4	public	Supervisor A
Mallory	4	charter	Supervisor A
Elizabeth	3	private	Supervisor A
Joy	4	public	Supervisor B
Holly	1	private	Supervisor C

Each participant earned a satisfactory on her midterm evaluation during student teaching and was meeting all expectations prior to our interview. While the gatekeeper tried to recruit

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more student teachers with a common supervisor, only the first three participants shared the same supervisor. After using the criteria to specify the participant pool, we were at the mercy of who would volunteer, and therefore did not end up with more common groupings.

At the time of our first interview, every participant had completed their fourth feedback conversation, however, the most recent conference with their supervisor was based on just a third lesson observation. As is the expectation of their teacher preparation program, they were observed twice and had a post-observation conference following each observation. They met with both mentors for a midterm evaluation meeting, and then they were observed again for a third time. Each initial interview was conducted within three days after that third observation and conversation. All five student teachers met with their supervisor immediately following the observed lesson. Table 3 offers specifics about the timing and length of each interview.

Table 3

Timing and Duration of Interviews

Student Teacher	Number of Days after Post- Observation Conference	Length of Interview 1 (in minutes)	Number of Days after Post- Observation Conference	Length of Interview 2 (in minutes)
Kelly	3	28:12	13	26:48
Mallory	2	28:32	15	19:37
Elizabeth	0 (same day)	18:51	20	15:00
Joy	1	29:35	16	26:59
Holly	2	25:15	24	21:30

Elizabeth and Holly completed their degree requirements and were fully certified after their student teaching experience concluded. Kelly, Mallory, and Joy wrapped up their general education requirements but had to complete student teaching in special education following the semester in which they were interviewed. Of the participating student teachers, all completed their certification in four years except Elizabeth and Holly who finished in four and a half years.

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As interviews were completed, I followed Moustaka's (1994) modification of the Van Kaam method of analyzing phenomenological data to get to the phenomenon's essence. After the first interview, I constructed a textural description of what the experience was like for each participant. These descriptions centered on the broad research question and enhanced understanding of student teachers' lived experiences following feedback sessions with their supervisors. Following each individual description, I developed a structural description to include how those feelings and thoughts came to be. In this chapter, I present each participant's textural and structural descriptions before constructing a composite description. Throughout, I quote participants' words to illustrate the descriptions. The composite description focuses on the study's three sub-questions to illuminate how the group experienced feedback. I end with a synthesized depiction of the essence of the phenomenon.

Kelly's Textural Description of the Phenomenon

Kelly's experience receiving feedback from her supervisor during a post-observation conference revealed her growing self-awareness as a preservice teacher. While the conversation felt overwhelming in that "all the feedback and the things that you should be doing and the things that you're supposed to be doing can feel kind of like you're, like, being blown in the face with a giant fan," Kelly took in all that she could.

Affirmation and Consensus

During the conference, her supervisor's positive reflection reaffirmed Kelly's efforts and made her feel more positive about her lesson. She "felt pleased that she thought the overall lesson went very well." While the supervisor's positive comments may not have validated all her actions, they communicated that Kelly was on the right path and showing continued improvement. Kelly recalled her supervisor noticing her effort to address past goals in the lesson.

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"I like seeing that she thought that I was doing a better job of that in this lesson." Her supervisor's positive reflection alleviated Kelly's concerns with the lesson's success since, initially, Kelly "didn't think it went great."

At the start of the conference, Kelly had a voice in reflecting on how she thought the lesson went, and she served as an advocate for her decision-making. While discussing the lesson, Kelly highlighted her changes to an otherwise prescriptive lesson plan and showed her agency as a teacher through dialogue with her supervisor. As she stated, providing these details was "so that she would know, sort of what changes I had made." She was aware of her motivation in these instructional decisions, expressing a dislike for the lesson and communicating her effort "to try and make it better."

In much of the post-observation conference, Kelly and her supervisor came to a consensus about planning and teaching techniques. The conversation often validated something she had "been working on." They often reached a mutual agreement about what she did and what needed to happen next. The act of conversing about the lesson naturally led to moments of consensus, when they could discuss and determine those details. Kelly found most of the feedback from her supervisor supported her goals and aided in continual improvement. She valued the consistent message, especially when the entire student teaching triad shared it. Her awareness of her strengths and weaknesses was confirmed when the feedback met those two conditions of supporting her goals and continual improvement. These messages established certainty since previous conversations focused on them. Since Kelly had been aware of her past performances and where she hoped to go, the feedback aligned with her self-perception.

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Critical Feedback

However, her self-awareness developed further when the feedback confronted Kelly with observations that did not match her perceptions. She became more aware of her teaching when she received two critical comments from her supervisor. The first was regarding an unmet goal. When the supervisor observed something that had been a continual goal, she pointed it out again. While Kelly admitted, “we had talked before on my observations about...what she calls reading the room”, the supervisor observed this still being an issue. Since the feedback centered on her not meeting a past expectation, Kelly responded in a way that made it appear as though she was aware of the growth area. Kelly explained that she “gave more of an impression of having noticed in our meeting.” Regardless of what she noticed while teaching, the conversation with an expert observer increased Kelly’s recognition of a continual area of growth.

The second critical observation that increased Kelly’s self-awareness focused on an unknown goal. When a comment was made that identified an area of growth, it felt critical if Kelly and her supervisor had never discussed the issue, if it was not connected to other feedback, or if there were no accompanying action steps. Kelly recalled these messages as “not something we talked about.” They brought up feelings of uncertainty when past conversations or observed actions did not substantiate them. Ultimately, they led to feeling directionless, and as Kelly stated, “I don't really know what to do with it.”

Affirmation, consensus, and review of critical expectations contributed to Kelly’s growing self-awareness as a preservice teacher. Goals she would “be focusing on” developed from information aligned with what she had been working on “for the whole semester” and what her supervisor highlighted in the post-observation conference.

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Structural Description of Kelly's Experience with the Phenomenon

The experience of receiving feedback from her supervisor after an observation was a balancing act for Kelly. Sifting through the vast number of feedback messages, comprehending the goal, and listening to an outside perspective all contributed to how Kelly received and responded to the feedback.

Feedback came from various sources, but when narrowed down to the post-observation conference, Kelly's supervisor's verbal and written feedback covered a range of professional knowledge, skills, and dispositions. The comments highlighted many details from the lesson, and her supervisor made suggestions. Kelly felt overwhelmed by the number of comments to the point that she believed addressing each concern was not realistic. The details that her supervisor affirmed got renewed attention, and she confidently applied those practices again. The affirmation seemed to assist her in progressing as a preservice teacher. On the other hand, she dismissed feedback if it was vague or unconnected to the conversation. If she felt like the goal was unclear or that she could not act on the suggestion, then Kelly found the feedback unhelpful and inapplicable.

The value Kelly placed on feedback stemmed from a clarity of purpose. If the goal or standard was apparent, then she had something actionable. At times, her supervisor's feedback seemed unactionable. Kelly was left to determine whether her supervisor was just making vague suggestions, or she wanted Kelly to problem-solve independently.

When the responsibilities of student teaching accelerated towards the end for Kelly, her desire for more feedback increased because there was a perceived need for it. She did not want to drown on her own but desired to have more opportunities for support. As her time in student teaching continued, she had a better idea of the expectations. The conversation from post-

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observation conferences held greater meaning for her, yet she was perplexed that the frequency of feedback sessions diminished toward the end. She grew to understand the feedback process but felt like the first few conferences were not as beneficial since she expected more summative evaluation than the formative feedback she received. She did not know if she was on track or not. Early on, the purpose of the feedback process and messages were unclear to Kelly, but Kelly's value for them increased by the end of her student teaching experience. She found the formative nature of the feedback to be less stressful and more helpful.

Once Kelly understood these things, she could appreciate her supervisor's outside perspective at the post-observation conferences. While Kelly had the day-to-day feedback from her cooperating teacher and she was already critical of herself, Kelly could use her supervisor's visits to get a fresh look at her teaching. The supervisor had specific goals aligned with the university and observed her less often than her cooperating teacher, so it felt more objective to Kelly when she gave feedback. History or experience with that group of students or curriculum did not influence the input. It simply centered on what her supervisor observed compared to what she expected.

As Kelly grew more confident in the structure and purpose of the post-observation conference, she showed more agency in determining what feedback to apply and what to dismiss. Sorting the suggestions and comments became more manageable as she concluded what could be reasonably used and what was impossible.

Mallory's Textural Description of the Phenomenon

Mallory's experience receiving feedback from her supervisor during a post-observation conversation centered on support and growth.

Goal-Oriented Feedback

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New and existing goals guided the conversation. These goals had been either set individually or as a team, but the expectations were clear. Mallory knew what she was striving for. “We both know specific goals that I'm working on.” Throughout the conference, Mallory and her supervisor “talked about the progress [she] had made on [her] future focus goals.” Whether they debriefed the observed lesson or lesson plan, there was a continual dialogue about where she was in relation to her goals and even follow-up about past suggestions.

While Mallory recalled moments when her supervisor followed up on suggested strategies, her supervisor was also responsive to Mallory's new questions and requests for feedback. Her supervisor's responses to these questions and Mallory's lesson supported her perceptions of growth. The supervisor's responses varied and included providing suggestions and next steps, affirming Mallory's performance and supporting that affirmation with evidence, inviting shared thinking as a duo, measuring progress, and offering feedback that could apply to other tasks. Her supervisor would “usually prompt with questions first” and then follow up with her input to what Mallory identified.

One moment of the discussion revealed many of these conversation elements. Mallory recalled her supervisor said, “there was a nice balance between the asking the class a question and having raised hands, and turn and talk,” which served as a tangible example of a strategy that worked in the lesson. Mallory explicitly asked for feedback on a self-identified area of weakness, and her supervisor noted that the technique was “a good improvement” compared to a past observation. But since continual growth was the goal, she gave specific suggestions for future lessons, and she invited Mallory to problem-solve with her about other areas of concern in the lesson. By asking, “what are some strategies you can improve with?” Mallory felt free to

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brainstorm with her supervisor. Furthermore, the feedback she received was actionable and applicable to future lessons. They did not focus on the past but offered ideas for future growth.

Relational Responses

Despite what others might find to be an overwhelming amount of feedback strategies used to debrief the lesson and make goals for the future, Mallory found these conferences to be “stress relieving and comfortable.” The standards were still high, and there was no escaping the expectations, but Mallory noted on several occasions that there was a relational connection between her and her supervisor. “These are improvements we can make, but she is always very positive. Always very positive.” The improvements felt “manageable” and formative. The “small steps” led to a “larger goal.”

But beyond the specifics of each feedback message, Mallory found her supervisor’s modeling of care and empathy to be supportive. During these conversations, Mallory felt free to share personal and professional vulnerabilities with her supervisor. The consistent care, as seen in the fact that her supervisor “always [...] checks in”, helped Mallory share her feelings of being overwhelmed or encouraged Mallory to ask for help with areas of weakness. Her supervisor created a relationship that allowed for openness and showed that she was there for more than just “trying to check boxes.”

Overall, the post-observation conference with her supervisor was a time Mallory positively anticipated. It helped her measure her progress compared to clear goals, answer her questions, receive new strategies and suggestions, and practice collaborative thinking. Her faith in her supervisor was well-established and built upon consistent modeling of care and supportive steps toward improvement.

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Structural Description of Mallory's Experience with the Phenomenon

While collaborative relationships and goal-oriented discussions marked Mallory's experience receiving feedback from her supervisor, these feelings of support and progress resulted from the conference structure and Mallory's propensities.

Mallory could not speak more highly of her supervisor's feedback strategies and the effectiveness of their time together. The structure of their post-observation conferences elicited her favorable response. As is seen in the supervisor's prompting, she used a student-led approach with Mallory. There was a definite give and take in their debriefs, but the supervisor always started with open-ended questions to prompt Mallory's reflections. Her supervisor focused the conversation primarily on Mallory's goals by asking her to evaluate those goals based on the lesson. The supervisor followed up with agreement or additional ideas depending on her responses. This structure of self-assessment and discussion allowed Mallory to take the lead and develop her ability to self-reflect accurately. She was able to compare her perception with those of her supervisor to determine whether she was on target.

With this, her supervisor still acted as a coach and did not simply allow Mallory to determine what was successful. When necessary, her supervisor noted what was not working and even identified the root issue. But because there was already a system that encouraged Mallory to be reflective, the supervisor's coaching techniques continued to push Mallory to take action. She heard the feedback and adjusted her future plans and actions according to those comments. In addition, the collaborative relationship between Mallory and her supervisor allowed Mallory to take risks that her cooperating teacher did not necessarily encourage. She knew she had the freedom to try something new, and she would have her supervisor's feedback to help her assess its effectiveness rather than an attitude that preferred to stick to what was known.

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Mallory's supervisor created a coaching relationship that allowed Mallory to take the lead, and the effectiveness of this strategy was Mallory's response to her supervisor. She sometimes accepted or dismissed her supervisor's feedback, but her reaction stemmed from her dispositions.

Knowing that her student teaching semester was a limited experience, Mallory approached the time with extreme focus and purpose. Most evident was a high level of motivation. Eager to hear from her supervisor, Mallory was open with her self-reflection and listened carefully to her supervisor's response. She was quick to compare what she heard with what she thought about her abilities and used the differences to help her adjust. Mallory valued her supervisor's outside perspective as it came from a seasoned educator who made a point to know and understand her. Furthermore, Mallory often picked up on minor comments that were not focused on her goals and yet she would set her own goal based on that comment. Her response was not an attempt to please her supervisor or anyone else but rather to become the best educator she could become. Because she trusted her supervisor, she highly valued her mentor's suggestions.

There were occasions when Mallory did not take her supervisor's suggestions which showed a mind engaged with her students' learning abilities. Confident in her knowledge of her learners, Mallory assessed her supervisor's feedback and determined whether it was a good fit for her group. This confidence grew over time and resulted from a growing perception of what was happening during a lesson. Having had several opportunities to compare her perception with her supervisor's, Mallory was confident that she was understanding what her students needed.

Mallory's role in assessing and adjusting her teaching grew over the weeks as she was motivated to be as prepared as she could for her teaching career. Her supervisor's feedback

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approach helped develop Mallory's ability to judge her teaching and instilled confidence in the accuracy of her perceptions.

Elizabeth's Textural Description of the Phenomenon

Elizabeth's experience with her supervisor's feedback during a post-observation feedback conference was one of structure, expectations, and care.

Dependable Structure

The structure of these conferences was dependably the same, so Elizabeth knew what to expect. Her supervisor invited her to self-critique the lesson and explain her thoughts about her performance. Her supervisor inserted comments of consensus about reflections on which she agreed. Then, her supervisor offered suggestions and feedback about next steps or missed details so that Elizabeth could continue to improve her teaching. Often, constructive criticism was followed by prompting to get Elizabeth to reflect on "what could [she] do?" This structured method to the feedback conference felt collaborative to Elizabeth, who often used the pronoun "we" to explain how they approached each step. For example, "we came up with a goal" or "then we continue to work our way down the lesson plan." There is a sense of teamwork during the post-observation conference.

Meeting Expectations

Elizabeth learned what to expect from these conferences early on, and she could count on some key components. First, she knew she would get a detailed account of the observation. Her supervisor took comprehensive notes about "exactly what happened" in the lesson. Elizabeth found these written details helped her notice and reflect on her actions and words as a teacher. They helped her set goals, and the details even affirmed particular choices. For Elizabeth, "it's helpful to go back and, like, realize what actually happened."

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Another expectation Elizabeth had was focusing discussion on areas of need or when she would “go off track” and getting specific suggestions. She and her supervisor did not examine every detail, but she knew what to prioritize and adjust since the feedback centered on particular concerns. The input was formative and helped Elizabeth know what “she's looking for that next time.” Despite knowing what the goal was, there were times when both agreed that something went wrong, but Elizabeth was at a loss if her mentor did not provide specific next steps. “Things that she notices didn't go right, I also noticed [...] I just don't know how to make them go right.” Elizabeth valued her supervisor's advice and had grown accustomed to having concrete action steps to apply, so if a suggestion did not address an issue, she could not discern how to fix it.

Because Elizabeth knew what to expect during the post-observation conference, she was receptive to feedback. Her supervisor made it clear at the beginning that this was a learning experience, and her role was to make Elizabeth the best she could be. She communicated that her tactics would be direct. As Elizabeth recalled, her supervisor explained, “I am straight to the point, and I'm going to tell you exactly what I think. But it's because I want you to be the best you can be.” Elizabeth found her directness to be “gentle” in that those initial “sentences about why she's gonna say what she does. That really helps make it better.” Knowing what to expect helped Elizabeth prepare for receiving the feedback.

A Supportive Presence

Elizabeth's receptiveness to feedback stemmed from knowing the purpose of her supervisor's feedback. Still, it also depended on Elizabeth's perception of the usefulness of the feedback message. If she heard a suggestion that she agreed with, she would be sure to write it down and refer to it again. For instance, Elizabeth shared, if “I agree with it, but I wouldn't have thought of it myself then I write it down.” When Elizabeth and her supervisor thought the same

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thing and were “on the same page,” she changed her actions. Suggestions that seemed significant to Elizabeth were ideas that she would use “every day.” She stated, “especially the things I had written down. I'll try to do those in my next lesson.”

Agreement with her supervisor carried a lot of importance because Elizabeth found her supervisor to be a credible mentor. Elizabeth stated, “she knows way more than me,” and found that her supervisor’s feedback communicated care for her as a student teacher. “Anything she says is to help” and “she actually cares if I do better.” Agreement built this trust. As Elizabeth and her supervisor discussed a lesson or as Elizabeth reviewed the written transcript, her confidence in her supervisor’s feedback deepened when there was alignment between what she remembered from the lesson and what the transcript stated. As Elizabeth asserts, “knowing that they just saw it five minutes ago, it makes me kind of trust their feedback more.” Overall, when there was a consensus between the student teacher’s experience and the supervisor’s comments, the feedback messages had a sense of reliability.

Structural Description of Elizabeth’s Experience with the Phenomenon

Since the supervisor utilized a particular procedure in the post-observation conferences, Elizabeth’s application or dismissal of feedback corresponded with her trust in her mentor and her understanding of the feedback.

Elizabeth experienced a safe and predictable feedback process with her supervisor because she knew what to expect from the process and her mentor. Her supervisor communicated the purpose of the conferences and her philosophy from the beginning. Because of this, Elizabeth understood what to expect as she went through feedback cycles and watched her supervisor operate consistently. Not only were feedback messages presented predictably, but she found them to balance positives with criticism. She would not get overwhelmed by negatives

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even if the lesson did not go well. Her supervisor affirmed and critiqued Elizabeth. Furthermore, Elizabeth knew there would be time to share her reflections on her goals and engage in a collaborative dialogue.

In addition to the conference structure, Elizabeth's supervisor's dispositions were another constant. Her ability to make Elizabeth feel supported, her articulated motivation of helping Elizabeth improve, and the accuracy of her feedback message contributed to Elizabeth's sense of security. During the post-observation conference, she helped Elizabeth assess her progress and highlighted specific areas to address. Each comment indicated a desire to see Elizabeth grow. Perhaps the most meaningful feedback messages were those that aligned with Elizabeth's perceptions. Whenever a suggestion was similar to something Elizabeth had also thought, this agreement strengthened her assurance in her mentor's feedback, and she was more apt to apply it.

As time went on, Elizabeth's responses to feedback revealed how secure she felt with her mentor. Elizabeth did not simply accept all feedback as helpful, but rather, she was so confident in her mentor's support that she could voice disagreement. She felt that she knew her students best. If the supervisor's suggestions were not a good fit, Elizabeth could state that and not feel judged in return. Her mentor often accepted her reasoning but then pushed Elizabeth not to dismiss the idea but to consider a modification. The collaborative dialogue would continue and continually move toward helping Elizabeth become the best teacher possible. Elizabeth's trust in her mentor allowed her to respond to feedback in a way that she felt aligned with her learners' needs.

However, at times, suggestions or comments that did not offer specific steps hindered Elizabeth's feedback application. She would feel at a loss as to how to adjust. Elizabeth and her

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supervisor may agree that there was an issue, but Elizabeth did not know how to fix it without further discussion or problem-solving. If left unvoiced or if she did not know what options she had, Elizabeth's doubts or questions resulted in inaction.

When Elizabeth's supervisor first explained the purpose of the feedback sessions, she clearly stated that they would work as a team. Elizabeth understood that to mean they shared a common goal of making her a better teacher, and she knew that meant she would, more often than not, accept her mentor's feedback. With this understood, Elizabeth approached the post-observation conferences expecting to learn and grow.

Joy's Textural Description of the Phenomenon

For Joy, a feedback conference with her university supervisor after an observed lesson was marked by "all positive things." Her supervisor was a "bucket filler" and "like sunshine." Her supervisor provided no criticism and only ever affirmed Joy.

All Positives

The post-observation feedback was when Joy's supervisor discussed "points she liked" with "no constructive criticism." While the feedback was all positive, her supervisor used several different strategies to communicate how Joy was doing. First, the supervisor was specific with her positive comments. She highlighted certain details in the lesson connected to concerns Joy shared in the past, such as transitions and student engagement. In previous conversations, Joy "talked about [it] a lot with her," and the supervisor pointed out any improvement she saw. The supervisor's comments were also specific to Joy's strengths, noting her ability to create a sense of community through particular actions. The positive comments affirmed Joy's efforts to try something new even if she did not feel confident in her abilities. Furthermore, they supported Joy's choices by explaining how they were effective.

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Coaching was another strategy used by Joy's supervisor. When Joy shared a weakness, the supervisor reframed the situation to present weakness as a strength. Her supervisor affirmed her by stating that the weakness "will make you a better teacher." This perspective was a different way of looking at weaknesses and one that Joy found to be "a fascinating viewpoint." The supervisor even shared her weakness as a teacher to support Joy's instructional choice. Her supervisor's vulnerability made a significant impression on Joy, and she admitted, "that made me realize how positive that" strategy was.

A third strategy used by her supervisor asked Joy to self-reflect. Rather than her supervisor pointing out flaws, Joy shared what she experienced in the time since they last connected. This approach was basic as the supervisor merely asked how things were going, but Joy had no problem sharing about struggles. She made sure her supervisor had "been made aware of [issues]." But in the end, "most of the feedback is kind of similar every time," and Joy learned to expect the same feedback experience.

Hungry for More

Joy recognized the "extra pressure" of being evaluated and found relief once it was all over. Yet the post-observation conference felt like the time to receive feedback "right then and there" when all the teaching and learning is "fresh" in everyone's minds. It was an opportunity to reflect and get better. But despite feeling "honored" and "appreciative" of the purely positive messages, Joy stated, "I wish she could give me more." As someone who admitted she preferred getting constructive criticism and wanted "more things to work on," Joy was frustrated by the lack of specific direction. She recognized that her supervisor only saw a limited view of her teaching.

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Joy was confident that her supervisor did not get a chance to see reality. "I wish my class, I guess, would act the way they do all the time...that she could see that, so I could get constructive criticism from her." Joy knew her students behaved differently when her supervisor was in the room. It was up to Joy to inform her supervisor of lessons that "go very south." As Joy admitted, "she hasn't watched me crash and burn."

Since she valued constructive feedback, Joy was honest about her struggles and needs during the post-observation conference. She had a critical self-awareness that caused her to share vulnerabilities. This critical look at her own choices occurred before the conference so that when she did meet with her supervisor, Joy was able to explain her thinking. Her supervisor's positive feedback confirmed her adjustments based on that personal critique. Joy gave context and shared her knowledge about the students and curriculum. All that remained was for her supervisor to comment on the effectiveness of Joy's instruction. Joy recalls, "I could tell that it was, like, going well, so [...] I'm glad she thought so."

A Trustworthy Source

While Joy reflected on the lesson and stated she "could have done something better," her response to her supervisor's positive feedback revealed a trusting relationship between student teacher and supervisor. The specific details provided in the positive feedback showed a supervisor who listened to Joy's concerns. She affirmed Joy's thinking and actions meant to resolve issues they discussed previously. Furthermore, the supervisor showed an understanding of Joy by encouraging her strengths and passions. Another facet of the supervisor's positive comments was that they called attention to things Joy was not aware were strengths. In one moment, the supervisor pointed out something Joy said to the class, something she "didn't even

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know [she] said" but something "that's smart." Her supervisor highlighted and affirmed Joy's natural abilities by identifying unnoticed details. In turn, Joy applied the strategy again.

Even though she wanted "more" constructive feedback from her supervisor, Joy viewed her mentor as a trustworthy source and an effective educator with valuable experiences. Joy saw her supervisor, a seasoned teacher and administrator, as one who "knows what good teaching is." The supervisor's professional context added credibility to her positive affirmation. To Joy, an inexperienced observer "might not realize" what went into planning a lesson, but her supervisor's praise of the lesson carried a lot of weight. Ultimately, Joy admitted to being affected by the affirmation even though it was not critical. After the post-observation conference, Joy attempted a new strategy because she reflected, "I'm actually a better teacher than I give myself credit for." The affirmation changed her thoughts and influenced her instruction.

Structural Description of Joy's Experience with the Phenomenon

Joy's experience with feedback from her supervisor was frustrating and predictable. She was constantly affirmed but received little to no explicit direction on improving. In many ways, her strengths as a reflective preservice teacher set up the conference to be one of only positivity.

Joy's supervisor's lack of constructive criticism stemmed from two significant realities. First, the classroom context from which her supervisor observed her did not reflect reality. The students behaved well and made Joy's lesson seem effortlessly engaging. Joy was the first to admit that her students did not behave that way when her supervisor was absent. This alternative behavior contributed to her frustration since her supervisor never had a chance to watch a lesson fail.

Another contributing factor was that Joy planned an observed lesson similarly to her daily lessons. Knowing that her supervisor would be present, she spent time and thought on her

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lesson components to ensure that she addressed problem areas ahead of time. Careful planning was a daily practice, but Joy still desired to showcase a quality lesson even knowing that she would not get much input from her supervisor.

One impression stood out when listening to Joy share her feedback experience with her supervisor: this student teacher was always thinking about what to do to be a better teacher. Joy talked about how she prepared for a lesson and what she would do differently in future lessons. All of this independent of her supervisor. She was keenly aware of her abilities and those of her students. Before she taught any lesson, even those unobserved, she thought about all that could go wrong and adapted her plans. Because of this predisposition to self-reflect, Joy did much of the work ahead of time. So when her supervisor saw a lesson that Joy had carefully thought out, Joy had addressed most of the problems before she ever walked into the room.

Further evidence of her tendency to independently self-reflect was that her supervisor's post-observation conference structure expected it of her. Joy shared that each meeting revolved around her supervisor asking Joy to evaluate the lesson rather than the supervisor giving any critique. Joy became accustomed to not receiving input from her supervisor, so she practiced self-assessment before, during, and after the post-observation conference. At one point, Joy also realized that her peers who shared the same supervisor did not get the same feedback as she did. Upon hearing that Joy received several "exemplary" marks, one fellow student teacher remarked that he did not know one could get an exemplary score. For Joy, this exchange highlighted that she was student teaching in a very different context than her peers, and perhaps, in comparison, observing the ease of each lesson was an unusual experience for her supervisor.

Despite the frustration of never receiving constructive criticism from her supervisor, Joy experienced pride in her affirmed abilities. While her supervisor's praise felt over the top at

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times, Joy noted several ways her supervisor increased her confidence. The language and how her supervisor praised Joy helped her celebrate what went well, and then the supervisor's use of specific examples aided in Joy identifying what was working. Whether verbal or written, giving specifics affirmed what Joy would continue to do for her learners. She appreciated that her supervisor saw the little things and voiced them to Joy as successes. Joy found it easier to repeat actions that her supervisor affirmed.

Even though her supervisor's positivity was often an encouragement, there were times when Joy felt like she could not fully trust all the praise. She sought out constructive criticism and turned to her cooperating teacher in those moments. The balance of her cooperating teacher's positive and negative messages helped keep her moving forward and making changes. For Joy, feedback came from her self-reflective practices, her supervisor's praise, and the messages she gathered elsewhere.

Holly's Textural Description of the Phenomenon

For Holly, receiving feedback from her supervisor after an observation revolved around identifying and measuring improvement. The conference allowed her to step back and see the bigger picture from a different perspective. It was an opportunity to grow in her understanding and evaluate whether or not she had improved. Overall, the time with her supervisor was marked by a "give and take of ideas."

A Different Perspective

By her fourth observation, Holly was aware of the benefits of her supervisor offering her a different view of the lesson. Her supervisor was good at adding what she "sees that [Holly] didn't really recognize." Their conversation was a collaborative dialogue in which Holly shared a self-assessment of what did or did not go well, and her supervisor always started with listening.

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Holly perceived that her supervisor was there to “really see [her] and really, like, learn about the situation.” She prompted Holly with questions and then responded to her ideas by giving her “something good [and] something to work on.”

Because of their open dialogue, Holly’s understanding of teaching grew. She became aware of ideas and options when her supervisor helped her step back and see all the details of the lesson. Holly admits that she often did not “see the other parts,” so her supervisor’s feedback focused her attention on other points. Alternatives were presented kindly and created a feeling of collaboration. Her supervisor framed suggestions with language such as “we could have approached it in a different way,” which took out the sting of criticism. This approach and Holly’s appreciation for feedback helped her prioritize “knowing in what areas” she needed to “learn” and improve. For Holly, it was “helpful to always have another pair of eyes and then [get] that feedback.”

Meaningful Conversations

What seemed most helpful was when the feedback message connected to past feedback. Then, Holly was more inclined to agree with it. The message had to be consistent with past statements, which supported her value of improvement. When feedback was repeating what she heard before, it reminded her that she “should look at the bigger picture” and that she needed to “work on it.” Her growing awareness was further supported when the conversation with her supervisor was open and provided options. Because of her supervisor, Holly recognized other approaches and alternatives. “[The supervisor] started the idea, and then [Holly] came up with the other specific things [she] could do.” Again, the “give and take of ideas” contributed to Holly’s growing knowledge and abilities.

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Bringing together two different perspectives and openly conversing supported Holly's goal of improvement. Holly was looking for evidence that she was growing as a preservice teacher throughout the post-observation conference. Her supervisor highlighted progress by providing specific affirmation. She compared past performance with what she observed and pointed out what Holly "did really well." Her attention to these details and sharing them with Holly communicates that she wanted "what's best for" her. Holly felt seen and known by her supervisor. As she stated, her supervisor "being specific on stuff that I've improved was really helpful."

Holly knew there were "things [she did not] really improve at," but her supervisor's evaluation of her growth caused her to want to grow even more. She was motivated by that desire to keep improving. While "it's nice to hear" positives, Holly experienced a changed mindset when her supervisor provided a "specific example." Her words confirmed that Holly is "doing something right." That confirmation spurred her on to make further changes and set higher goals, so much so that she planned "to get all proficient by next time."

Through these conversations, she learned to see the whole picture rather than focus on a tiny part of her job as the teacher. Their discussions focused on the goal, and Holly found these conferences helpful when they offered her the chance to identify specific strengths and time to problem-solve with her supervisor so that she could continue to improve.

Structural Description of Holly's Experience with the Phenomenon

Holly's experience receiving feedback from her supervisor during the post-observation conference was valuable and productive. Specifically, Holly received expert feedback, and she believed they were building a trusting relationship.

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Holly saw the feedback sessions as fruitful because she felt treated like a professional. Her supervisor did not come to the conference with an agenda or a long list of things to do. Instead, the supervisor asked Holly for her input. She wanted to know what Holly thought and what she wanted regarding feedback. There was an openness to work together to make Holly the best teacher possible. Likewise, Holly explained that she felt heard, which was evident when she could tell her supervisor was listening to her. Holly's supervisor responded to Holly's concerns and questions. She supported and prompted critical thinking, which helped Holly develop confidence in her thinking. Her supervisor highly valued Holly's opinion and knowledge of her students, so Holly was free to disagree or change the supervisor's suggestions.

Another factor contributing to Holly's feeling like a respected colleague was that she and her supervisor worked as a team to move her toward her goal. Their dialogue operated as a conversation, and each individual respected the other's opinion. Over time, Holly believed that the post-observation conference was not about preparing her for the next observation but about improving her skills and knowledge as a teacher. Their conversation revealed that they both observed Holly's continual improvement and their work was achieving the goal.

Since Holly and her supervisor worked as a team, she saw feedback as a means of growth and not corrections. That required acknowledging met goals and guidance to prompt Holly to grow even more. Holly came to see feedback as a professional challenge. Ultimately, she had control over whether she accepted the feedback and applied it to her work. With that mindset, feedback was not punitive but a chance to push herself and achieve something not yet mastered. It was a powerful resource and one she valued.

Holly was determined to make the most of her time student teaching, and this motivation came from the supportive conversations she experienced with her supervisor. The opportunity to

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speak collaboratively with an expert educator who listened first and offered consistent feedback encouraged her to respond to feedback, try new strategies, and reflect on their effectiveness.

Composite Description of the Meanings and Essences of Phenomenon

Due to various personal dispositions, settings, and university supervisors, each student teacher shared about uniquely different post-observation conversations with their supervisors. Yet, there were similarities in what they experienced. In the composite description that follows, I examined the participants' textural and structural descriptions above and curated commonalities from their experiences. The composite descriptions detail what the student teachers experienced and relate these shared experiences to the study's three sub-questions.

Q1: How do these lived experiences illuminate the perceived value of these feedback sessions?

The post-observation conference was met with nervous anticipation and concluded with relief for student teachers. There was a measure of uncertainty about how the observation and debrief would go.

Value One: Formative Feedback. Still, something evident for all five participants was that they believed the intention of feedback from the post-observation conference was to help them be better teachers. "[...] it just feels like it's gonna improve my teaching," commented Holly. Elizabeth stated, "We are a team, and she's trying to make me a better teacher." Their supervisors' approaches were different, but the input they received convinced the student teachers their supervisors intended it to be formative. In their minds, the observation and resulting comments could help them become more effective in specific areas.

The belief that feedback's purpose was to improve their performance was motivating. When speaking about the meaning of her supervisor's feedback, Mallory said, "I want to be able to, like, be prepared—as prepared as possible—before going into the field." Their supervisor's

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feedback was essential to their growth as teachers. The finite duration of the student teaching experience underscored the student teachers' appreciation for feedback. For Joy, the few observations meant her supervisor did not fully comprehend her unique setting. She felt that this problem could be resolved "if my supervisor was there more frequently." Noting the limited feedback opportunities at the end of their student teaching semester, Kelly stated, "I'm actually wishing that we had more observations [...] I'm actually teaching a lot, and I'm not having any observations." They knew they would never again receive regular and targeted attention from an expert. In response to their experience with their supervisors, the student teachers either soaked up input that affirmed their abilities or they recognized messages intended to point them to the right path.

Value Two: A Trustworthy Supervisor. Another common theme in the post-observation conference was that student teachers valued feedback from a trusted professional. There are two parts to that idea: trusted and professional. Trust in their supervisor was evident in this study's participants' experiences. The student teachers' descriptions of what made their supervisors trustworthy differed, but they found their supervisors to show care and interest in them as individuals. Joy shared, "She's not just there to see me teach, but she also cares for me as a person." They felt listened to and seen as supervisors asked for their opinions and followed up on personal details. Holly experienced a collaborative relationship with her supervisor and commented, "It was good that I was getting feedback from someone, like, more experienced, but also I liked the relationship that we were building and the trust that was being built." For Holly, "She asked for [my] input as well" and "I never felt like she wasn't, like, listening." The post-observation conference sometimes felt high stakes, but student teachers felt confident in their supervisors' purpose and motivation after several meetings. Elizabeth noted, "Knowing that

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someone, like, is taking their time to do this feels, like, supportive.” Supervisors’ consistent presence and availability communicated care. The supervisors were not there to nitpick or be overly critical, but instead, they wanted to see the student teachers excel as educators and people. As Mallory explained, “It feels casual, even though it is a professional relationship...not like she’s trying to check boxes.”

Value Three: A Professional Supervisor. The student teachers also valued receiving feedback from professionals. All five participants remarked that their supervisors were knowledgeable educators, and those credentials added to the weight of their input. They described their supervisors as “seasoned” (Mallory), “experienced” (Holly), someone who “was in administration...and was a teacher for so long” (Joy). The professional background of the supervisors assured student teachers that their feedback was relevant and worthy of attention. When considering her supervisor’s opinion, Mallory asked, “Is what I think a good job of engaging students—is that what a seasoned teacher also thinks?” A perception of teaching experience made the student teachers more open to considering their supervisor’s advice. It was also significant that the supervisors were not present more often in the classroom, making their perspective seemingly more objective. “Since she’s not there as often, [feedback] is a little more, like, maybe a little bit more objective,” explained Kelly. Yet for some, the infrequent presence of their supervisor meant they did not fully understand the placement context. Still, each student teacher affirmed that hearing an outsider’s point of view that differed from their own or their cooperating teacher added diverse thinking to the day-to-day reflective comments between the two classroom teachers. For example, Mallory found that her supervisor’s point of view was “more encouraging of me doing things different ways and trying out new strategies.” She found professional support to take risks because of her supervisor’s perspective. Kelly summarized the

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value of an outsider's assessment saying, "It's helpful to have somebody who just sees things differently."

Value Four: Professional Treatment. Finally, when asked what they valued or found necessary to the post-observation conference with their supervisors, the student teachers saw their supervisors' trustworthiness and credibility as a key to being treated like a professional. In each interview, the participants highlighted collaborative dialogue. Holly spent more time detailing her experience by sharing how her supervisor made it very clear that their conferences were meant to be conversational and not instructive. "[She] wouldn't just, like, say it and point [mistakes] out," Holly explained. Essentially, the supervisors treated the student teachers as colleagues when they invited them to discuss the lessons. Supervisors were not explicitly teaching student teachers new concepts or skills but guiding them in professional learning. Holly again described, "[The feedback] is not just to change the next observation, but it's just for, like, a change in myself." The student teachers were free to add to the conference and not hindered from sharing. Kelly was comfortable enough to explain to her supervisor what she was "thinking about the students when [she] was making choices." Mallory's supervisor took a secondary role and "usually prompt[ed] with questions first" and then would "suggest things based off [her] answers." Because they trusted that their supervisors had their best interest in mind, the student teachers participated more as equals than students. As Elizabeth claimed, "We are a team." Finally, Joy summarized the evolution of becoming more like peers by saying, "[...] it feels natural now, and it doesn't have to feel, like, I'm trying to impress her."

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Q2: How do these lived experiences illuminate the perceived meanings from these feedback sessions?

“We get told so many things that it would be impossible to apply or even reflect on all of them.” As Kelly’s words reveal, student teachers received a flood of feedback messages during the post-observation conference, so what they understood and retained significantly influenced what they valued and did with the feedback. Three feedback traits contributed to the student teachers’ understanding of the messages.

Trait One: Connections to Past Feedback. Messages connected to past feedback were more easily recognizable. These messages monitored progress toward goals, as in the case of Mallory’s experience when her supervisor would ask after an observed lesson, “So these were your goals. Let’s see. Did you meet them? [...] What steps did you take to meet them? And how are they reflected in that lesson?” For some, like Joy and Holly, their supervisor’s feedback affirmed improvements based on previous post-observation conferences. In past conversations, Joy had “talked about [struggling with transitions] a lot with her [supervisor]” so after “trying a new strategy” during her observation, Joy’s supervisor affirmed her choice and said it “allows them to practice self-monitoring and regulating.” Her supervisor’s comments reinforced Joy’s choice. Joy acknowledged, “that made me realize how positive that that use of giving them talk time prior to calming down.” The supervisor acknowledged when Joy addressed previously identified concerns in the lesson, which affirmed the student teacher’s understanding of the prior messages. Likewise, Holly found her supervisor “being specific on stuff that I’ve improved was really helpful,” specifically because the supervisor shared “why it was improving.” The positive feedback was anchored in past conversations so that Holly “connected it to [her] previous

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observation.” Seeing growth after receiving feedback confirmed the student teacher’s understanding of what they heard.

Yet another example of feedback connected to earlier conversations was when the student teacher recognized comments that recalled past messages. Holly and Kelly experienced this when their supervisors pointed out earlier identified areas of growth that still needed work. Holly admitted, “I think it’s [her] second time mentioning the pace, and I totally forgot about it until [she] mentioned it.” Kelly reflected, “I think I was a little embarrassed that I hadn’t noticed the students who were off-task because we had talked before, on my observations, about sort of what she calls reading the room.” As soon as their supervisors brought up the observed concern, both student teachers immediately recalled the previous conversation. They spoke of how they had forgotten to adjust their instruction, which revealed that they immediately understood the message since the feedback connected to a previously discussed idea.

Trait Two: Specific Feedback. A second essential to student teachers understanding their supervisors’ feedback was its specificity. Student teachers resoundingly noted the significance of supervisors providing specific examples that illustrated a success or failure. Having evidence to reflect upon gave the student teachers something tangible to repeat or change. All five stated that they chose to continue using specific practices affirmed by their supervisors, which exemplified their understanding of the feedback message. Working with a supervisor who “takes notes of the little things [she] do[es],” Joy knew precisely what her supervisor liked. For example, “she made note of how important it was to model strong examples first.” Joy stated, “She told me, ‘This is good. Let’s try it again,’ [so] I’ll do it again [...] I did like the outcome, and she liked the outcome.” Kelly, Mallory, Elizabeth, and Holly each admitted that specific suggestions for improvement gave them clarity on what to do next.

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Without specifics, student teachers felt uncertain about how to proceed toward the goal. As Kelly explained, "I don't have time for something I don't even know where to start." Elizabeth agreed and identified her preference by saying, "Sometimes it's hard to know what to do [...] I like having specific things to do." Their supervisors' visits were infrequent, so precise details helped student teachers understand how to progress.

Trait Three: Orienting Feedback. In addition to comprehending specific feedback, the student teachers found that they used the input to orient themselves when they understood it. Feedback helped them compare their actions or current performance to their goals. Mallory, for example, explained that what her supervisor said helped her identify where she was performing in relation to where she hoped to be. "I enjoy, like, self-reflecting and then seeing if she shares." She explained her thinking, "If I feel good while I'm [...] teaching that way, it doesn't necessarily mean it's effective." She looked for feedback from her supervisor to help assess her progress and adjust her goals.

Similarly, Holly used what she understood in the feedback messages to establish her priorities for the next time she taught. She claimed, "My favorite thing about getting feedback is always, like, like, knowing in what areas to learn." Specifically, her supervisor "started the idea, and then I came up with the other specific things I could do." Her supervisor's feedback ignited her thinking and helped her focus on next steps.

The others would compare their self-perceptions with their supervisor's feedback to understand what they heard. Kelly and Elizabeth would receive feedback messages and determine whether their supervisor's feedback aligned with their self-perception. For example, Kelly recalled her supervisor said she was "improving in her ability to elicit student thinking and build off prior knowledge." This assessment referred to a skill Kelly "had been working on," and

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Kelly “was glad to see that she was still sort of looking for that and that she was able to see some steps that I’ve been trying to make to improve.” Kelly knew the effort she was putting into responding to previous feedback, so the post-observation conference was an opportunity to check to see how she was progressing in her supervisor’s eyes. They would consider the other’s perspective and compare it to their assessment of what occurred. Elizabeth spoke of feedback that did not always align with what she perceived, but she admitted that even if “I don’t think that was happening [...] knowing that they just saw it five minutes ago, it makes me kind of trust their feedback more.” Looking for agreement or finding discrepancies in perceptions allowed student teachers to gauge whether they understood their supervisor’s feedback.

Joy, who received only positive feedback from her supervisor, would do the same and look for alignment between her perception and her supervisor’s. But she would also add to it her knowledge of her learners and her cooperating teacher’s constructive criticism to balance out what her supervisor offered. Before the lesson, Joy did a lot of reflecting and would consider her students’ needs as she planned. “I had a lot of adjusting. And I think I was, like, ‘Will this still be too over their heads? Or will this be too easy?’” Her supervisor’s response affirmed her work as Joy recalled her supervisor’s remarks, “[this lesson] reflects extensive knowledge of the content as well as true knowledge of each student.” Yet Joy still sought constructive feedback despite her supervisor’s confirming words by listening to her cooperating teacher. She explained, “my [cooperating teacher] very consistently affirms me, but she always makes me reflect on what could have gone better [...], and then she gives me her input.” Joy and the other participants understood what they heard because they used the messages to reflect on the immediate incident or long-term goals. If they comprehended the feedback, they did something with it.

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Q3: How do these lived experiences illuminate the immediate actions student teachers took after these feedback sessions?

Two possible actions resulted based on the feedback given at the post-observation conference. The student teachers could respond to the input by applying it or ignoring or dismissing their supervisors' suggestions.

Application. When feedback was specific, applicable, and consistent, the student teachers acted according to the suggestions.

Specific Feedback. As previously mentioned, the student teachers valued and understood feedback that offered tangible action steps. "Specific suggestions are most helpful," claimed Elizabeth, and the group echoed this sentiment. The supervisor might point out a particular missed opportunity, such as Elizabeth's supervisor highlighting a continued area of growth. "We had talked about this before, but she reiterated it," noted Elizabeth. She knew the precise issue and recalled her supervisor's past feedback. After making the necessary adjustment, Elizabeth acknowledged that her supervisor's advice had "been helpful." Specific details from their supervisors' feedback empowered student teachers to make noticeable changes. Student teachers also positively responded when supervisors affirmed a specific action. Mallory explained that positive feedback that showed her an "action that I did is actually, like, helping" encouraged her to "maintain that." Knowing a supervisor saw the action as valuable and effective, student teachers were more likely to continue using the strategy. Whether they make specific suggestions or affirm particular actions, having something definite to refer to encouraged a positive response in the student teachers.

Applicable Feedback. Application was significant to the student teachers and contributed to their responsiveness. Elizabeth emphasized the importance of practical feedback in her

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interview. Her supervisor gave her a strategy at the post-observation conference, and Elizabeth tried it soon after but in a different context. She said the feedback “was a general statement that applied to all teaching” and “I’ll use it every day.” The draw of applicable feedback is that it is usable beyond one observed lesson. For Mallory, her supervisor’s feedback often helped her be “more mindful” as she approached her planning and instruction. She was more apt to use feedback that she could broadly apply. The student teachers’ comments indicated that student teachers would likely use feedback that directly applied to their current situation or transferred to other scenarios.

Consistent Feedback. Lastly, student teachers used feedback if it was consistent. When supervisors kept feedback centered on known goals, student teachers responded to input because it was a continual focus of the conversation. Mallory explained, “We both know the specific goals that I’m working on,” and these goals guided their post-observation discussion. Several student teachers identified a particular skill being “something I’m working on” (Kelly) and would associate those growth areas with repeated feedback from their supervisor. There was constant attention to continued improvement as student teachers and their supervisors revisited goals and assessed their progress. Consistent messages meant that the goal was not changing. Student teachers applied feedback focused on their goals, fit into a variety of contexts, or aligned with what they heard before.

Dismissal. On the other hand, student teachers dismissed or ignored feedback if it was perceived not to fit the context or if it was unactionable.

Ill-fitting Feedback. Each student teacher mentioned receiving feedback that did not work in their placement. For example, Holly wondered, “How am I supposed to do that with lower elementary?” or Mallory commented about a suggestion from her supervisor, “It’s

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probably not quite right for our classroom.” They spoke with authority about their students’ needs despite their supervisors’ good intentions. Elizabeth, for instance, filtered her supervisor’s comments through her understanding of her learners. “I get where she was going with that [...] but then if you look at, like, my group of students, like, I’ve tried that, or it might not work.” Ultimately, if the student teacher did not think the suggestion made sense with the context, they did not use it. Some, like Holly, received advice, adapted it to better fit the context, and then tried it. Even in those incidences, the student teacher would comment on how it did not effectively work with their students. In Holly’s situation, she made the attempt and then reflected, “I don’t think this is gonna work.” Their reasons for dismissing the idea had little to do with the concept itself. The student teachers were far enough into their experience to have a good idea of what would or would not work with their learners.

Unactionable Feedback. Perceptions of fit were critical to the student teacher’s responsiveness to feedback, but vague or unactionable feedback also influenced their response. Their dismissal connected to how student teachers understood feedback based on past messages. As Kelly articulated, unusable feedback came out of nowhere or was never discussed. In contrast, she would focus her efforts on “something more concrete” and “goals that I can take steps on.” Student teachers were at a standstill if the feedback was unsubstantiated or not supported with specific action steps. Elizabeth recalled, “I also noticed [a part of the lesson] didn’t go right. I just don’t know how to make them go right.” Feedback that was vague or unconnected to past feedback was not a priority. Student teachers had limited time and capacity for filtering through all the input. Those factors played a role in the assessment and dismissal of particular feedback. Elizabeth shared, “I don’t have time for something I don’t even know where to start.” If a suggestion was not specific, unconnected to past conversations, or did not serve as a

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means of comparing progress, it was let go so that the student teacher could put energy into other more applicable feedback.

The Essence of Experience Feedback in Post-Observation Conferences

For student teachers, the post-observation conference was a valuable, formative opportunity. Emotions, cognition, and self-perception continually shifted as student teachers met with their supervisors to debrief a lesson. Participants understood there was a limited number of conversations, and they had a sense of maximizing time and effort. Knowing that professional competence was the goal, each student teacher was in varying stages of development. While each expressed an appreciation for their supervisor's critical role, there was a marked diversity in progress toward self-monitoring their own abilities. Specifically, participants ranged in their independence to value, understand, and apply feedback to reach their goals. Some were well on their way to identifying weaknesses and strategizing solutions independently of their supervisor. Others still expressed a need to receive action steps from their supervisor. Regardless of their level of independence, each student teacher found the post-observation conferences to significantly affect their teaching knowledge, skills, and actions.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I presented the results of my phenomenological analysis of interview data. By analyzing each student teacher's experience receiving feedback during a post-observation conference, I developed a description of what they experienced and how those experiences came to be. After considering each participant's independent experience, I analyzed what shared experiences surfaced for the group. Once I identified those themes, I created a composite description and synthesized the findings into the essence of the experience.

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Chapter 5 considers the findings in relation to other research. I then discuss the significance of these findings and identify implications the group experience of receiving feedback from a supervisor has on student teachers' training. Specifically, Chapter 5 presents the significance of the feedback sessions' influence on student teachers' professional growth.

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CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSIONS

This study explored what student teachers value, understand, and do when they receive feedback from their supervisors. Participants were interviewed and shared what they experienced and how they experienced it. Their personal stories were transcribed, analyzed, and synthesized into a composite description that presents their shared experience, as seen in Chapter 4.

This chapter includes a discussion of the study findings related to the framework of the three conditions to improve learning (Sadler, 1989). Implications for teacher education programs and those involved with the student teaching experience are discussed, and the chapter ends with recommendations for future research.

I framed my research questions around Sadler's (1989) three conditions of improvement to explore what student teachers value, understand, and do during the post-observation conference. Specifically, I asked: What is the lived experience of undergraduate student teachers following feedback interactions with their supervisor? Additionally, I used three sub-questions to guide interviews.

1. How do student teachers' lived experiences illuminate the perceived value of these feedback sessions?
2. How do student teachers' lived experiences illuminate the perceived meanings from these feedback sessions?
3. How do student teachers' lived experiences illuminate the immediate actions they took after these feedback sessions?

Discussion of Major Findings

My conversations with the five student teachers revealed what they experienced as they participated in the post-observation conference. Specifically, their responses showed what

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student teachers valued, understood, and did with their supervisors' feedback. In this section, I relate this study's findings to previous literature using the study's three sub-questions as an outline. By examining student teachers' values, understanding, and responses to feedback, I explain how other research relates to their experience during the post-observation conference. I make connections to Sadler's (1989) three conditions for improvement by analyzing how they provided insight into student teachers' experiences with supervisor feedback.

What Student Teachers Value in Feedback

While there have been studies that identify what student teachers find valuable in feedback (Davis & Dargusch, 2015; Gonzalez et al., 2020; Won et al., 2019), this study was not concerned with a list of desired characteristics. Instead, the findings reflected how student teachers assess the value or worth of feedback. Student teachers determined feedback was useful if it was formative, came from a trusted professional, and treated them like professionals.

Value One: Formative Feedback. Formative feedback aims to improve knowledge or performance, and participants valued this quality. First, the purpose of feedback is to lessen the gap between a learner's current performance and the standard or goal (Hattie & Timperley, 2007; Sadler, 1989). Second, feedback receivers assess the message's usefulness, comprehensibility, and consistency compared to the end goal (Lipnevich et al., 2016). Student teachers' appreciation for formative feedback aligned with results from other studies specific to student teaching (Davis & Fantozzi, 2016; White, 2007). Specifically, the student teachers' experiences revealed that they understood the function of feedback, and they expected it to improve their performance as preservice teachers. If feedback did not assist them to that end, they judged it as unessential. Student teachers made this judgment based on whether the message pertained to their teaching context and goals. When feedback did not fit their learners or classroom context, they assessed it

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as unimportant since it seemed the advice would not help them meet their goal. While the feedback identified the student teachers' current levels of performance, their perceptions of its usefulness in helping them achieve their goal influenced the extent to which they valued the messages.

Value Two: Trustworthy Supervisor. Another finding was that student teachers valued feedback from supervisors who personally cared for them. This aligned with Davis and Fantozzi's (2016) research which stated that student teachers expect mentors to create a supportive relationship. Specifically, their participants expressed a desire for encouraging conversations and positive feedback. In this study, examples of support and care varied. The five participants mentioned instances such as supervisors expressing a shared goal, listening to what the student teacher had to say, following up on personal concerns, and offering to help above and beyond the expected supervisory role. Reciprocated trust between student teachers and supervisors played a significant role in how the student teachers judged and ultimately accepted feedback.

Value Three: Professional Supervisor. Student teachers also communicated the importance of their supervisor being a trusted professional. Student teachers expressed how professional and personal credibility influenced their value of their supervisors' feedback. Several researchers have attested to the influence trust and credibility have on feedback reception (Eva et al., 2010; Le & Vásquez, 2011; Winstone, 2017). Telio et al. (2016) considered how the perception of cooperation between learner and instructor affected how the learner evaluates feedback. The learner's assessment of the instructor's credibility significantly impacted their reception of the feedback more than the content of the feedback message. The student teachers interviewed in this study highlighted several related perceptions of credibility. All participants in

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this study saw their university supervisors as trustworthy due to past vocational experiences. Several referred to these credentials as reasons for seeing their supervisor as a trusted advisor and an expert in their field.

Value Four: Professional Treatment. In addition to valuing feedback from a caring expert, student teachers evaluated whether supervisors treated them as professional equals. A desire to work collaboratively during field experiences was not new. Learners have expressed that they would be more responsive to feedback if the provider interacted with them as a colleague; students in field experiences have deemed a collegial discussion to involve a supportive instructor who provides formative feedback rather than negative criticism (Eva et al., 2010). This study's participants highlighted their supervisors' intentions as well. Several indicated that their supervisors wanted to make them better and were not simply evaluators intent on pointing out mistakes. Professional collaboration used both evaluative comments and reflective questioning (Won et al., 2019). This type of communication operated as a means of coaching and helping student teachers grow in their understanding and application rather than passively receiving directives.

Unlike other research which found that student teachers wanted supervisors who operated as emotional or instructional coaches (Davis & Fantozzi, 2016), the participants in this study valued supervisors who treated them as professional equals. Such supervisors created a collegial relationship that encouraged open discussion and allowed the student teacher to share ideas. Supervisors invited them to self-critique and not just receive their comments. Student teachers felt more like colleagues and less like students. Collaborative approaches to feedback allowed for autonomy and encouraged student teachers to develop self-assessment skills. The move toward

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independent self-monitoring aligned with Sadler's (1989) belief that the learner must take on more responsibility to meet and advance their learning.

How Student Teachers Understand Feedback

One of Sadler's (1989) conditions for improvement has required the learner to understand the goal. However, this study did not measure whether student teachers accurately understood their supervisors' messages concerning their goals. By listening to their experiences, this study did enhance how student teachers perceive their understanding of feedback. Their thoughts and feelings about the feedback sessions revealed what they comprehended.

Connections to Past Feedback. One finding that became clear was that feedback connecting back to prior conversations helped student teachers understand their current level of performance and the necessary next steps. Student teachers comprehended messages that affirmed their instructional choices or reiterated suggestions for improvement. Feedback loops connected feedback to previous messages, offered a consistent message, and supported learner development toward the desired goal (Carless, 2019). Student teachers recognized and comprehended feedback centered on goals set earlier. Conversely, if a previously set goal did not anchor the supervisor's input, student teachers could not or would not attempt to understand or act on it. Student teachers saw feedback as formative, and therefore each message built on prior understandings. Feedback lacked a longitudinal impact if it was untethered to goals or former suggestions. Essentially, student teachers had difficulty comprehending and applying feedback that was given without prior conversation or centered on an unknown goal.

Specific Feedback. Another factor affecting student teachers' understanding was the supervisors' use of specific examples or actions steps. When supervisors illustrated feedback by sharing examples from the lesson, these details helped student teachers understand their level of

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performance at the time. In addition, supervisors suggested options that would allow student teachers to adjust their teaching. By receiving descriptive feedback, student teachers had a clear idea of what the supervisor wanted to see next time, eliminating any confusion about the expected standard of performance (Sadler, 1989). For instance, supervisors emphasized and affirmed effective practices. Student teachers then knew what went well, allowing them to continue implementing similar practices in their teaching.

As important as receiving specific examples, student teachers appreciated when supervisors gave them specific tasks. Several studies have argued that explicit feedback closely tied to tasks results in action and learning, and therefore students have been less likely to apply feedback that lacks actionable steps (Hattie & Timperley, 2007; Kluger & DeNisi, 1996). In this study, student teachers responded with inaction if they were uncertain of the feedback's meaning or their performance level. To curtail this, using exemplars and descriptors has assisted learners in understanding the goal and comparing it to their current performance level (Sadler, 1989). Supervisors' examples helped student teachers know what to look for or what they are looking at, resulting in student teachers adjusting their teaching to achieve the goal.

Orienting Feedback. Along those lines, student teachers expressed that they understood feedback when they compared their supervisor's messages to self-perceptions of their abilities. According to the findings, student teachers communicated that they comprehended feedback that oriented them and provided a direction forward. Feedback's purpose is to shed light on gaps in knowledge or practice (Hattie & Timperley, 2007; Sadler, 1989) by allowing one to compare the end goal with the current level of ability (Kluger & DeNisi, 1996; Shute, 2008). Learning happens when such a comparison is made. However, since this study did not measure student teachers' self-perceptions compared to the goal, the findings do not speak to the accuracy of their

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resulting understanding. Instead, the findings show that student teachers did compare what their supervisors said with what they thought about their performance. They sifted through the messages and compared them with what they assessed about their teaching and their students' learning. Their conclusions determined whether they agreed with the discrepancy their supervisors highlighted.

How Student Teachers Respond to Feedback

Student teachers constantly examined feedback messages and processed what they understood. They judged what was possible, fitting, and actionable. Then students engaged in decision making, either choosing to use or not use what their supervisor suggested. Kluger and DeNisi (1996) have identified four responses to feedback: increase effort, give up, change goal, or reject feedback. Student teacher experiences with feedback from their supervisors illustrated these choices. In this study, student teachers shared how they came to accept or reject the feedback by sharing their thoughts and feelings during the post-observation conferences.

Applying Feedback. Student teachers likely applied their supervisors' feedback when they perceived it to be specific, applicable, and consistent.

Specific Feedback. Student teachers recognized that detailed feedback allowed them to apply it more easily. Specificity aided student teachers in understanding their current practice in relation to a teaching standard and what they needed to do to improve their practice. Davis and Dargusch (2015) surveyed teacher education students who unanimously claimed that they valued feedback that told them what to do to improve. A focus on improvement supported preservice teacher growth. When supervisors gave detailed examples that prompted self-reflection during student teaching, student teachers often applied that feedback and chose action that demonstrated stronger instructional practice. Participants in this study revealed that the preciseness of feedback

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gave them a better understanding of the goal and elicited a response. This aligns with Shute's (2008) claim that specific, task-oriented feedback has been more likely to influence learner growth and result in learners using the feedback.

Applicable Feedback. Student teachers accepted input that directly applied to their teaching. Feedback that fit a variety of contexts influenced their use of it. Applying feedback to novel tasks has resulted in more significant learning (Carless, 2015). Student teachers affirmed this by giving examples of situations where they applied feedback from one lesson to other contexts. The transferability of the advice showed that they understood the feedback and could use it in various ways and settings.

Consistent Feedback. In this study, the consistency of the feedback message was important. Consistent feedback, aligned with ongoing goals and past input, supported formative learning. Student teachers could straightforwardly prioritize their efforts and assess progress when the feedback was repeated or related. Feedback that developed long-term growth has been iterative and has continually encouraged the learner to consider and reflect on how to achieve the goal (Carless, 2019). When supervisor feedback regularly prompted student teachers to recall a known goal or a previous suggestion, student teachers examined their progress and made decisions about next steps.

Dismissing Feedback. According to the participants interviewed in this study, student teachers chose not to accept their supervisors' feedback if it did not fit the classroom context or if it was perceived as unactionable.

Ill-fitting Feedback. Student teachers were more likely to reject feedback if their supervisor's input did not fit the context. When sharing why they did not accept a suggestion, student teachers explained they made the decision based on their learners. Context has been one

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of many factors researchers list as potentially affecting feedback responsiveness (Shute, 2008; Winstone et al., 2017). In this study, student teachers emphasized that they made decisions about accepting feedback based on their placement context and students' needs. Won et al. (2019) found that when the supervisor's feedback seemed to lack knowledge of the context, the student teacher did not accept the feedback. Participants in this study perceived their supervisors as not having a complete picture of their context because of their infrequent visits to the classroom. Like in-service teachers, the participants used their knowledge of their students when making instructional decisions. When feedback did not correspond with the needs and realities of the classroom, student teachers dismissed it.

Unactionable Feedback. Another factor that caused student teachers to dismiss feedback was perceiving the message as unactionable. The student teachers who shared about such a dismissal explained that if they did not know what to do, they ignored the feedback and focused on tasks they understood. Sadler's (1989) research about the three conditions for self-monitoring has emphasized the necessity of the learner knowing and selecting appropriate strategies. If the feedback receiver did not know what to do next, they would not accept the feedback. Such a reaction revealed a reliance on the supervisor to give them steps to improve rather than knowing how to respond independently. If the student teacher did not have appropriate strategies in mind or the supervisor did not provide details, student teachers dismissed the feedback.

Unexpected Finding

One finding not related to my research questions centered on independent self-monitoring. Specifically, the participants' responses revealed the extent to which student teachers valued, understood, and applied feedback that they either processed internally or sought out beyond their supervisors. Sadler (1989) explained that feedback is formative information

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external to the learner, whereas internal assessment of performance is self-monitoring. Both internal and external sources contribute to lessening the discrepancy between the level of performance and the goal. However, Sadler argued that significant improvement develops when the learner takes on more responsibility for evaluating, understanding, and acting based on feedback.

This study's participants showed that student teachers possess varying degrees of independent self-monitoring. Those whose actions depended on their supervisors providing next steps needed more feedback to respond. In contrast, others were already making decisions and alterations to their teaching without their supervisors' input at the post-observation conference. Long before their supervisor gave feedback, independent self-monitors did the work of a supervisor by considering the teaching standards, evaluating many strategies, and selecting what they felt would be most effective.

This study did not measure student teacher progress or growth levels, but it found that student teachers differed in their reliance on their supervisor's feedback to monitor their teaching skills and knowledge. The interviews gave voice to their experiences and revealed that each one operated at a different level when evaluating, understanding, and addressing the gaps in their teaching. Some were doing the reflection before supervisors could comment, while others waited for external feedback until after they taught the lesson.

Conclusion One: Two Factors Influencing Responsiveness

Student teachers made constant value assessments of what they heard and understood, and they determined whether they would heed or dismiss the advice. However, student teachers did not merely listen to and apply the feedback message. Two of the most powerful determinants of student teacher response appeared to be knowledge of their students and participation in a

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collaborative relationship with their university supervisor. This pair of factors showed a possible movement from preservice teacher to in-service teacher. Their responses to feedback included a growing professional judgment of the message's relevance to the classroom context, which aligned with Shute's (2008) argument that feedback is affected by the interplay of multiple factors. In student teaching experiences, factors beyond the individual student teacher's personality and understanding influenced feedback uptake. Evidence of improvement was not simply accepting feedback but independently assessing its effectiveness on the students' learning.

Conclusion Two: Developing Independent, Self-Monitoring Skills

Improvement best happens with the learner has independently identified gaps in their understanding or performance (Sadler, 1989). They must understand the goal, self-assess their abilities, and respond using effective strategies. Two student teachers in this study illustrated Sadler's theory that learners most improve when they take on more self-monitoring. Rather than solely focusing on the feedback message or the context, Joy and Mallory reflected and responded to inner feedback before receiving external feedback. They were able to identify potential obstacles for their learners and made appropriate adjustments before their supervisors could even offer feedback. The result was affirmation of specific pedagogical practices during the post-observation conference. Often, it seemed as though their supervisors' work was done before it began because the two student teachers were already evaluating their lessons and responding to internal feedback.

In many ways, Joy and Mallory were exhibiting skills of in-service educators. For example, they possessed feedback literacy in that their practices revealed "understandings, capacities and dispositions needed to make sense of information and use it to enhance work or

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learning strategies” (Carless & Boud, 2018, p. 1316). With these two participants, feedback literacy appeared in how they identified, interpreted, and used self-critique to prepare and teach. Joy and Mallory seemed inclined to self-reflection, which was evident in what they shared. Joy, who received only positive feedback, taught students who consistently showed unusual, excellent behavior during her lesson, so she prepared for all eventualities. Her supervisor had nothing to critique after observing a lesson. Mallory received and responded to her supervisor’s feedback, but she also picked up on minor remarks and chose to address them on her own time. She made sure she adjusted everything she could for the following observation. The additional time these two preservice teachers put into developing their instruction demonstrates their growth as professionals. Both student teachers testified to productive, collegial relationships with a mentor: Joy with her cooperating teacher and Mallory with her supervisor. While the collaborative discussions were goal-focused, these two student teachers took further initiative by determining goals independently in addition to their mentors’ expectations.

Student teachers navigated the roles of student, preservice teacher, and teacher when they received and responded to feedback (Elbra-Ramsay, 2021). They balanced their assignments and observations while using feedback to improve their teaching. However, Joy and Mallory seemed unsatisfied with the lull between supervisor observations and started to take over the responsibility of self-assessing their progress. Going above and beyond the structured post-observation conferences during which they were asked to self-reflect, student teachers like Joy and Mallory grew more independent in seeking and responding to feedback.

Implications

Feedback’s influence on learner growth is complex. In student teaching, so many sources of feedback contribute to student teachers’ development. Having now examined what student

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teachers value, understand, and do with feedback, I will discuss the implications for educator preparation programs (EPP), field placement coordinators, university supervisors, and student teachers in this section.

Implications for EPPs

Teacher preparation programs design coursework and field experiences to support preservice teachers' learning. These programs are approved and accredited by organizations such as the Council for Accreditation of Educator Preparation (CAEP, 2021) to ensure that their training aligns with national teacher preparation standards. Since learning is an iterative process and cannot occur in the final semester of student teaching, EPPs can support the end goal of student teachers independently evaluating, understanding, and applying feedback by creating a culture of feedback throughout the program. Teacher education expects its educators to give and receive feedback, so establishing a culture of feedback is fitting (Watling et al., 2013).

EPPs can go beyond simply communicating the value of feedback and checking for understanding. They can offer many opportunities for preservice teachers to grow in their self-monitoring of teaching knowledge, skills, and dispositions. For example, providing timely feedback to tasks specific to teaching skills allows preservice teachers to reflect on what recently occurred and adjust for the next assignment. Formative feedback offered promptly is more likely to be used, although that does not mean it must be given immediately (Shute, 2008). Timely can simply mean with enough time to adjust before the next task. Even if instructors offer comments quickly, they need to be mindful of the mode of feedback. Feedback should invite preservice teachers to think about their performance and compare their perception of their efforts to the feedback. Once feedback is given, faculty can support reflection by setting aside time for

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students to process and adjust. This effort reinforces the value of responding to external feedback and reflecting on internal feedback.

Since participants in this study acknowledged not always knowing how to proceed with feedback, EPPs can teach strategies for responding to feedback. Sadler's (1989) work supports this by highlighting the need for instructors to provide learners with many experiences receiving and responding to feedback. For EPPs, a key component of providing strategies requires faculty to work together to prioritize transferability of feedback. Setting specific standards for essential teaching skills like lesson planning or core teaching practices would allow feedback to center on skills that preservice teachers will use again in other lessons, courses, or field experiences. When a faculty member offers critical feedback about a student's current level of performance coupled with appropriate strategies to apply, the feedback carries more weight because it can be adapted and applied to a similar task at a different time. When instructors allow similar scenarios and repeated attempts, they create a feedback loop and support long-term learning (Carless, 2019). After establishing feedback loops, EPPs will want to begin developing feedback spirals in which preservice teachers take on more responsibility for self-assessing and determining a course of action. Carless' (2019) study of feedback spirals illustrates how EPPs might use meaning-making opportunities. This looks like treating preservice teachers like professionals and encouraging them to verbally process their thinking and evaluation of scenarios or decisions. Operating like learning communities, classmates and faculty can serve as colleagues and help students think through their understanding and discuss possible next steps.

The responsibilities and expectations placed on preservice teachers continue to escalate as they move closer to student teaching. It stands to reason that EPPs structure their programs to

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develop preservice teacher independence. Providing ongoing opportunities to evaluate, reflect, and act throughout the program will support that kind of growth.

Implications for University Supervisors

For this study, I focused on student teacher response to university supervisor feedback, and the findings have several implications for supervisors. Since student teachers enter the mentoring relationship with expectations placed on supervisors and cooperating teachers, supervisors need to pay attention to the relationship (Davis & Fantozzi, 2016). An effort to create an emotionally supportive alliance must be taken. As mentioned above, expressing interest in the student teacher as a person and professional lays a foundation of care. Supervisors can model attentive listening, follow up on personal details, facilitate open discussions, and reiterate shared goals.

Once a supportive relationship has been created, supervisors can support responsiveness by connecting feedback to previous feedback. Student teachers better understand what to do with feedback when they can anchor it to what was said before. Supervisors can scaffold feedback, so it builds upon past feedback. The student teacher comprehends the message by connecting skills and dispositions to familiar criteria or experiences. Sadler (1989) supports this by explaining that students cannot fully develop their learning if it is dependent on the instructor's knowledge. They must grow in their understanding of the goal by being exposed to exemplars or descriptions of quality. Supervisors can provide those specifics during the post-observation conferences. Then, supervisors can prompt student teachers to use those details to compare their current abilities to their former abilities by looping back to past feedback.

Whether the supervisor offers affirmation or criticism, they can encourage the student teacher to monitor progress by scaffolding self-assessment in the post-observation conference.

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As stated above, Sadler (1989) identifies a weakness in educational systems by noting how instructors often create structures that encourage student reliance on the teacher. In this study, there were examples of student teachers who felt immobile without specific action steps supplied by their supervisors. To work towards independence, supervisors can structure the conference to be a time where the student teacher practices self-monitoring skills of evaluating, understanding, and acting. Guided questions resulting in the student teacher thinking aloud can help the supervisor determine whether the student teacher accurately assesses their performance, understands the goal or where they strayed from it, and possesses strategies to address the area of concern.

In addition to supervisors offering scaffolded experiences to develop independence, they can understand the classroom context through intentional study. Supervisors often receive standardized training in supervisory protocols. While supervisors trained in using a valid and reliable observation tool is beneficial, it is not enough. Student teachers and their cooperating teachers are adamant that each setting requires differentiated feedback (Rodriguez et al., 2018). Supervisors can become students of the classroom context by scheduling non-evaluative observations during which they observe like ethnographic researchers. They can immerse themselves in the shared culture of the classroom and note values, patterns of behavior, and language (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Supervisors take on the role of learner. It would be a purely educational practice to see how the participants interact and operate daily. An additional benefit is that such a visit would show an interest in the student teacher, thus building a collegial alliance (Telio et al., 2016).

Many supervisors support more than one student teacher, so, understandably, the amount of time to study each classroom context is limited. One possible solution could be that student

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teachers submit recordings of their day so that supervisors can watch and understand the classroom without being present. Recordings would be advisable in situations like Joy's since her students showed a marked change in behavior when her supervisor was in the room. Another option would be to have a student teacher offer commentary on a recording of the class dynamics either in-person or using one of many video commenting tools. While reviewing the recording, student teachers can make audio or verbal remarks about their understanding of the procedure, student, or incident to help the supervisor comprehend the context.

Supervisors can support student teachers by attending to many factors influencing feedback responsiveness (Shute, 2008). Several research studies emphasize the importance of trust between instructors and students when supervisors offer feedback (Davis & Dargusch, 2015; Telio et al., 2016), but this study showed the necessity of supervisors not just offering feedback based on a knowledge of the standards and protocols. Supervisors must also know the classroom context and use techniques that treat the student teacher as a colleague.

Implications for Placement Coordinators

This study shed much light on my process for pairing supervisors with student teachers as a director of student teaching. I spend a great deal of time considering the fit of a particular school and cooperating teacher when setting up student teaching placements. To a lesser degree, I focus on supervisory assignments. Participants in this study all felt supported by their supervisors, but positive feelings do not guarantee progress. The most responsive student teachers were those whose supervisors supported growing professional independence. They showed an understanding of the student teacher's strengths, and they affirmed effective practices that came from the student teacher self-monitoring. Their feedback tapered off as the student teacher took on more responsibility for their learning (Sadler, 1989).

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Being at a smaller institution with perhaps 25-30 student teachers a semester, I have the luxury of personally knowing most of the students and our supervisor roster. I can consider both individuals' personalities, strengths, and communication styles while also knowing some of the students' areas of concern. These factors do play a role in who gets paired with whom.

Placement coordinators at larger EPPs may not have the same specific knowledge of their student teachers when assigning supervisors. However, they can be strategic. First, faculty advisors or other faculty members who have a long-term history with the students can help assign supervisors who would be a good fit. For example, a knowledgeable faculty member might come to know that a student consistently reacts defensively to criticism and would respond more positively to a supervisor like Elizabeth's who was known for offering gentle yet critical feedback. This supervisor set up a predictable conference structure, and she explained her purposes before offering any critique. Such a faculty member would use their understanding to rationalize pairing the two together.

Furthermore, directors of student teaching are often responsible for training supervisors. As was mentioned above concerning implications for supervisors, a focus on learning the classroom context can be emphasized and required. Placement coordinators, or those responsible for onboarding supervisors, can train supervisors to learn about a particular placement and use that information to select applicable feedback. Educators can enter a classroom with their personal bias about how it should operate and what is most effective, but we would benefit from remembering how each group of students brings its own values and patterns of behavior. Year by year, my classroom culture transformed due to the new groups that entered. Those of us who train supervisors to observe, support, evaluate, and offer feedback can help them learn about the culture by requiring a non-evaluative observation to be completed before the first formal

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observation. Built into that time, supervisors can do some relationship building by asking student teachers to share anecdotal knowledge they have gleaned from their time in the classroom. This practice conveys an interest in the student teacher and treats them like a professional.

Implications for Student Teachers

This study focused on student teachers' experiences with receiving feedback, and so far, the implications have centered on individuals employed by the EPP to help preservice teachers prepare for teaching. However, the framework used has provided an outline of what learners must do independently to improve their learning (Sadler, 1989). That same framework revealed what student teachers value, understand, and do with feedback. Considering those findings, student teachers who want to own their learning can rely less on their supervisor's feedback. Using their goals and past feedback, they can daily process instructional choices before observed and unobserved lessons. This practice of self-reflection and responsiveness develops their independence as professional educators. One example of this professionalism is when individuals self-generate goals and seek feedback from various sources (Voyer et al., 2016). For instance, a student teacher like Mallory received her supervisor's feedback, and the two made goals together. Still, she took additional, minor comments made by her supervisor and decided to address those on her own. She also adjusted her instruction based on her students' needs and not just on her supervisor's input.

While EPPs often require journal writing or similar reflective assignments during student teaching, the student teacher still can pursue personal growth by regularly reflecting on their level of progress. Student teachers can use assessment data, observations of behaviors, and other forms of learner feedback to set goals and make decisions. They also can seek out feedback from more than the triad members. Collaborating with their teaching team, teachers from the grades

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above and below, the principal, the special education resource teacher, and more can help student teachers grow in their understanding of instructional goals, student knowledge, and their role in a learning community. Likewise, many EPPs require student teachers to attend a seminar course where they interact with fellow student teachers and EPP faculty. A seminar course provides another venue where student teachers can monitor their goals, progress, and adjust. They can capitalize on the opportunity for professional development at these seminars by choosing to engage with the topics and exercises through self-assessment.

Recommendations for Further Research

The broad research question guiding this study centered on student teachers' lived experiences receiving feedback from their supervisors. While Chapter 3 explained the rationale behind the narrow scope of this study, Shute (2008) challenged researchers to look at individual, contextual, and message effects on feedback responsiveness. The study did examine individual and message outcomes, but it just touched upon the need for an inquiry into contextual effects. The student teachers themselves alluded to their classroom context's power over whether they accept or dismiss feedback. Future research in the form of a case study exploring the lived experience of the student teacher, university supervisor, and cooperating teacher would provide a fuller picture of what student teachers value, understand, and do with feedback. Such a study could compare experiences to determine each triad member's perceptions of the student teacher's response and clarify any misconceptions.

Research is also needed to understand supervisor techniques that aid in student teachers developing self-monitoring habits. Such a study would enable EPPs to identify best practices and support learner independence. Examining the multiple factors that influence responsiveness will

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contribute to this goal, but this will help supervisors and cooperating teachers recognize effective strategies that develop student teachers' independence.

One last area for research is examining to what extent the types of feedback student teachers receive impact how they give feedback to their students. Even though educators must provide feedback to their learners and student teaching is an opportunity for mentors to model this practice, in this study, there were no findings related to student teachers' efforts in giving their learners feedback. A future study could examine how the techniques, messages, and contexts in which a student teacher receives feedback affect how they give feedback to their students.

Conclusion

By using the framework of the three conditions for learner improvement with feedback, this phenomenological study examined the lived experiences of student teachers receiving feedback from their supervisors during a post-observation conference. Student teachers shared what feedback they deemed worthy and valuable, what they understood, and how they responded to the feedback. I analyzed their descriptions of the feedback event and noticed shared experiences among the study participants. Their values, comprehension, and responses revealed a concern for their learners and a desire to be treated as professionals. These two factors played a significant role in determining whether they applied or rejected feedback and highlighted the student teachers' varying degrees of professional development.

I found that student teachers, who demonstrated skill levels like in-service teachers, took on the role of feedback provider. The three conditions stagnate if the learner does not take on more responsibility and becomes less reliant on their supervisor. By listening to their lived experiences, I discovered examples of student teachers who showed skills and dispositions of in-

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service teachers. They self-reflect and challenge themselves to progress in their teaching. Their goal setting and feedback-seeking behaviors illustrate a degree of professionalism not often expected in preservice teachers.

Such a discovery is thrilling for a director of student teaching. In the past few years, the vocation of education has taken much abuse. Teachers feel beleaguered, beaten, and unsupported by families, politicians, and many other factors, including the COVID-19 pandemic. I am constantly amazed by young men and women who feel called to this profession despite its challenges. Young educators, who not only are meeting the requirements set by EPPs but are fully immersing themselves into the profession by setting personal expectations and actively seeking support, will face challenges with tenacity, humility, and professionalism. These are the men and women who will faithfully teach and care for future generations of learners.

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STUDENT TEACHERS' LIVED EXPERIENCES WITH FEEDBACK**APPENDIX A: Interview One Questions****Details of the lived experience**

STUDENT TEACHERS' LIVED EXPERIENCES WITH FEEDBACK

Interview One Questions: Details of the lived experience

Based on Moustakas' (1994) sample questions (p. 116).

1. Tell me about a typical post-observation conference with your supervisor.
2. Describe one of your recent post-observation feedback interactions.
3. What feelings were generated by the experience?
4. What thoughts stood out to you?
5. What bodily changes or states were you aware of at the time?
6. Did the feedback change your instruction with students in any way? If so, describe an example.
7. What is it like to get feedback right after teaching?
8. Is there anything else you'd like to share that is significant to the experience?

STUDENT TEACHERS' LIVED EXPERIENCES WITH FEEDBACK**APPENDIX B: Interview Two Questions****Reflection on the meaning**

STUDENT TEACHERS' LIVED EXPERIENCES WITH FEEDBACK

Interview Two Questions: Reflection on the meaning

1. Having read the description, to what extent does the document reflect your experience during the post-observation feedback conference? Explain.
2. On a scale of 1 to 5, 1 being not accurate and 5 being completely accurate, how accurate do you think the description is of your experiences?
3. How can we adjust the description to reflect how you experience feedback from your supervisor?
4. Were you surprised by the description? Why or why not?
5. What might be missing from the description?
6. Thinking about your supervisor's feedback during this conference, what have you done with her feedback?
7. What is meaningful to you during the post-observation experience?
8. What is essential to the feedback experience?
9. What does your supervisor's feedback mean to you?
10. Is there any more information you would like to share with me today?

STUDENT TEACHERS' LIVED EXPERIENCES WITH FEEDBACK

APPENDIX C: Copy of Interview Protocol

STUDENT TEACHERS' LIVED EXPERIENCES WITH FEEDBACK

Copy of Interview Protocol

Instructions for the researcher adapted from Creswell and Creswell (2018, p. 191).

Introduction

The researcher introduces self and purpose of the study, obtains signed consent, explains the interview structure (how it will begin, number of questions, the time it should take, etc.), defines terms, and asks if there are any questions.

Recording

Notify them that the researcher is about to start recording. Begin recording.

Opening Question

Set participant at ease with a question about their life, role, or day depending on which interview this is.

Content Questions

Refer to Appendices A-B for interview-specific questions.

Encourage the participant to speak in concrete terms. Sample probes from van Manen (2014):

Ask the person to think of a specific instance, situation, person, or event.

When exactly did this happen?

What were you doing?

Who said what?

And what did you say then?

What happened next?

STUDENT TEACHERS' LIVED EXPERIENCES WITH FEEDBACK

How did it feel?

What else do you remember about the event?

Do not ask for interpretations, explanations, generalizations, speculations, or for anything that may get away from telling the experience as lived. (p. 316)

Prompt for more details if a participant is not sufficiently describing the experience.

Tell me more.

What does _____ mean?

Could you explain that more?

Closing Instructions

Thank participants, answer any final questions, assure them of confidentiality, discuss the next interview focus and schedule a meeting time.

APPENDIX D: Copy of Institutional Review Board Approval

STUDENT TEACHERS' LIVED EXPERIENCES WITH FEEDBACK

Institutional Review Board Approval

2211097

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GEORGE FOX UNIVERSITY HSRC INITIAL REVIEW QUESTIONNAIRE

Title: Exploring Student Teachers' Lived Experiences with Mentor Feedback

Principal Researcher(s): Kristin M. Rich

Date application completed: October 12, 2021

(The researcher needs to complete the information above on this page.)

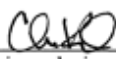
COMMITTEE FINDING:

✓ (1) The proposed research makes adequate provision for safeguarding the health and dignity of the subjects and is therefore approved.

_____ (2) Due to the assessment of risk being questionable or being subject to change, the research must be periodically reviewed by the HSRC on a _____ basis throughout the course of the research or until otherwise notified. This requires resubmission of this form, with updated information, for each periodic review.

_____ (3) The proposed research evidences some unnecessary risk to participants and therefore must be revised to remedy the following specific area(s) on non-compliance:

_____ (4) The proposed research contains serious and potentially damaging risks to subjects and is therefore not approved.


Chair or designated member

10/15/21
Date