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AN EXAMINATION OF THE PRACTICES AND PERCEPTIONS

OF STUDENT TEACHING COORDINATORS FOR MATCHING

STUDENT TEACHERS WITH CLINICAL PLACEMENT SITES

IN PENNSYLVANIA

A Dissertation in

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Abstract

Teacher education programs in Pennsylvania are required by the state to include a student teaching component in their programs of study. This study was an in-depth exploration of the practices and perceptions of student teaching coordinators in Pennsylvania regarding the most important considerations when matching student teachers with clinical placement sites.

The study employed a mixed methodology. Some 46 student teaching coordinators (56%) among 81 contacted through a Pennsylvania Department of Education listing of teacher education programs completed an online survey which contained quantitative and qualitative measures. The survey was followed up by telephone interviews of 8 coordinators for a more in-depth understanding of their original responses to the survey, and as another qualitative component of the study.

The data analysis of the student teaching coordinators' demographic information produced results on the student teacher placements within the past three years at the institutions they serve. Further analysis of the coordinators' experience from the online survey and phone interview data indicated the categories the coordinators found to be most pertinent to matching student teachers and clinical placement sites. These included the cooperating teacher, university/school collaboration, and accessibility to placements, as well as the school site, diversity, coherence, and cohorts.

Accessibility to school sites was found to be a challenge, partly because the need for placement sites for student teachers sometimes outnumbered those available. But of

even greater concern to teacher preparation programs was the finding that school officials

are hesitant to permit access to placements due to school accountability to achieve

acceptable Pennsylvania State System of Assessment (PSSA) test results. Prospective

cooperating teachers may feel the need to prepare their students for PSSA testing under

the No Child Left Behind Act to the exclusion of mentoring a student teacher. The

implications of these findings are that limited accessibility or less than adequate

opportunity to practice may compromise the quality of the student teachers' experience,

their potential to become a highly qualified teacher, and possibly their commitment to the

profession.

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Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to my beloved father, David Trembach, who inspired my journey through life with his unconditional love, encouragement, and unparalleled example as an educator.

Chapter One

INTRODUCTION

In this chapter I set the context for this study within teacher education and student teaching in particular. The chapter presents the need to examine the method of matching student teachers with clinical placement sites, which is a fertile area for research and exploration. The chapter first discusses the complexity of teaching and teacher education programs and continues with a discussion of student teaching within the teacher education program. A brief overview of the historical context of teacher preparation leads to a presentation of current standards for field experiences in teacher preparation. The chapter continues with a discussion of why it is important for teacher educators to focus on the clinical placement site and considerations for matching student teachers with these sites. The remainder of the chapter includes the purpose of the study, the research questions, definition of terms, the limitations of the study, and the significance of the study.

The Complexity of Teaching and Teacher Education

Given the complexity of teaching in our society today, it is essential that teacher educators design teacher education programs that prepare students for the many challenges they will face in the teaching profession. Educators who have been in the profession for many years readily attest to a significant change in the challenges that teachers face today. David Hansen (2008) states that the complexity of teacher education

is evident and that these complexities have evolved "alongside the changing complexity of society" (p. 12). He posits that teachers will need to "appreciate why they teach, why their subjects are important, and why it matters to pay attention to students, parents, colleagues, and others involved in the educational process" (p. 12). As teacher educators design programs to foster such competencies in student teachers, it may be worthwhile to examine the experiences and opportunities that universities provide within the teacher education design framework in order to attain such goals.

In order to facilitate preparation for the complexity of teaching in today's world, it is imperative that teacher educators look beyond the match of one student with one cooperating teacher toward a broader view of the clinical practice site. I chose to look at broader considerations in this study because the traditional model is remiss in considering the many facets so necessary to teacher preparation today. Factors pertaining to matching must also focus on collaboration between the teacher education program and the K-12 school, within the school community, and within cohorts of student teachers as they support each other and prepare for future collegial professional relationships. Student teachers must be afforded the opportunity for coherence to integrate methods courses into practice, to have access to school sites that promote ongoing professional growth and inquiry, and to prepare for cultural competence through interaction with diverse populations of students. Teacher education programs in conjunction with K-12 schools and the state bear the responsibility to provide preparation opportunities which permit student teachers the chance to experience and embrace teaching in an all-encompassing capacity.

The Student Teaching Experience

Student teaching is the culminating experience of teacher preparation. Teachers laud student teaching as the most important experience in their professional development (Guyton & McIntyre, 1990; Silberman, 1970, as cited in Copas, 1984). Student teachers believe that student teaching is "the most valuable and helpful component of their total preparation program" (Watts, 1987, p. 151). During this experience, students have traditionally been given the opportunity to apply theoretical concepts to practice. The traditional view of student teaching as an opportunity to apply theory to practice is viewed by some reform advocates as simplistic and lacking a more comprehensive focus. Levine (1992) discusses Dewey's vision of a restructured view of education, along with current reform advocates where teaching "transforms a knowledge base, reflects on practice, and generates new knowledge" (p. 10). Schon (1983, as cited in Levine, 1992) describes practice as beginning with a knowledge base and "becoming an active process involving inquiry, creativity, analysis, and evaluation, all of which are guided by a set of values or a system of ethics" (p. 11). This process permits the teacher to combine "inquiry and action in reflective practice" (p. 11).

Previous models of student teaching have included a theory-laden base of coursework for two to three years, then the traditional observation and participation in an actual classroom to apply that theory to practice. During the course of the last several years, however, teacher education programs have attempted to introduce students into real-world classrooms much earlier, prior to their student teaching experience. Schlechty (1990) proposes situating teacher education within K-12 schools. In this design, teacher

educators can circumvent the manufactured simulations of K-12 classrooms so evident in the college classroom. Schlechty advocates that students and teacher educators have an opportunity to work together in authentic settings to engage in discussions about observations and teaching enactment in order for teacher educators to socialize students into the profession. Intense collaboration with K-12 schools to redefine the roles of teacher educators and K-12 faculty would be necessary to revamp the traditional student teaching paradigm.

Goodlad (1990, p. 280) addresses the fact that, although student teachers and teachers rate student teaching as the highest component of teacher preparation, "complex issues arise out of the need to provide exemplary practice settings – problems not resolved through building up a roster of cooperating teachers." Goodlad emphatically decries conventional student teaching as a "seriously flawed approach" (p. 281). He also asserts that "many of the arrangements for student teaching are disgraceful" (p. 296). He attributes such unsatisfactory arrangements to admitting more students into teacher education programs rather than establishing a quota whereby students could partake of exemplary experiences including student teaching. Colleges and universities enjoy large profits by admitting any interested students, regardless of qualifications, into teacher education programs. As the institutions usher students through the required coursework, numerous placements become necessary to fulfill the student teaching requirement. The need for large numbers of cooperating teachers to fulfill the program's obligation to provide a student teaching placement precludes the selection of high-quality cooperating teachers. Goodlad calls for intense collaboration between the school and college entities,

and proposes state collaboration in the form of funding for schools participating as clinical placement sites in order to support the reciprocal roles of school and college personnel involved. He further decries the traditional model of the student teacher and cooperating teacher as moving through the student teaching experience to the exclusion of involvement in the whole school. The result of such an arrangement is that the student teacher misses out on the context of teaching in its entirety. Goodlad posits that students must be prepared to teach in a broader sense so that they are "stewards of entire schools" instead of being matched to a single classroom with a single cooperating teacher (p. 297).

In the twenty-first century, the discussion of teacher education has ensued relative to the essence of teacher quality, yet there is disagreement as to what teacher quality means and how such quality relates to desirable outcomes (Cochran-Smith & Fries, 2005). As a result of attention to teacher quality, criticism of teacher education preparation programs has followed. One outgrowth of the heightened attention to teacher education has been the pressure for teacher education programs to show that their student teachers can successfully prepare public school students to pass standardized tests. Cochran-Smith and Fries (p. 39) delineate the following five major trends in teacher education:

1. Heightened attention to teacher quality

2. The changing demographic profile of the nation's schoolchildren coupled with growing disparities in educational resources and outcomes

3. Criticism of traditional teacher preparation coupled with pressure to demonstrate the impact on student learning

4. Multiple agendas for teacher education reform

5. The ascendance of the science of education as the presumed solution to educational problems

In view of teacher quality, teacher preparation programs are challenged to provide opportunities to optimize professional growth and the competencies of teacher candidates. Although the debate about best practices in teacher education continues, Cochran-Smith and Fries (2005, p. 48) call for "questions to be posed about the various pathways into teaching that account for the characteristics of both programs and candidates as well as the conditions that are needed to ensure effective teachers." Therefore, research on considerations for matching student teachers with clinical placement sites may offer insight into "figuring out how specific learning opportunities and teacher education practices . . . can lead to knowledge about teacher development and learning" (Bransford, Darling-Hammond, & LePage, 2005, p. 29).

The Historical Context of Teacher Preparation

By reflecting on the history of student teaching, it is possible to track the progression of this component of teacher education. In a review of teacher education, Griffin and Edwards (1982) reflected on the earliest accounts of learning to teach in the 1600s, when young, prospective teachers apprenticed themselves to master teachers. The structure was very similar to apprenticeships in tradesmen's guilds. Because of a perceived need to provide more formalized training for teachers, the normal school was developed in the United States during the 1800s to train high school students how to

become teachers, with certain *norms* or standards of teaching. The notion of a model

school manifested in 1839 with the emergence of the first state-supported normal school

in Massachusetts. In the model school, students engaged in the actual practice of teaching

to apply theory to practice in a "near approximation of what a school is or should be"

(Pierce, p. 37, as cited in Armentrout, 1927).

In that era of teacher training, Pennsylvania's normal schools required student

teachers to practice teach one hour per day for the last three quarters of the school year.

Lessons were developed by critic teachers, followed by weekly conferences and no

written evaluations (Griffin & Edwards, 1982, p. 6).

During the 1900s, normal schools evolved into teachers colleges. The National

Association of Supervisors of Student Teaching, established in 1920, and The American

Association of Teachers Colleges were instrumental in professionalizing teacher

education. The National Association of Supervisors of Student Teaching focused on

clinical experiences and in collaboration with the American Association of Teachers

Colleges in 1927, established the first standards for teachers colleges, which included

guidelines for student teaching.

Collaborative efforts between colleges and public schools resulted in model

schools being replaced by public school practice sites. The Flowers Report of 1948

stated, "Student teaching is the period of guided teaching when the student takes

increasing responsibility for the work with a given group of learners over a period of

consecutive weeks" (Flowers, Patterson, Stratemeyer, & Lindsey, 1948, pp. 321-322).

Throughout the twentieth century, public school sites for practice surpassed the

laboratory schools (Tanner, 1997) found at colleges and universities, an outgrowth of John Dewey's experiential education begun at the University of Chicago. In 1961, the National Commission on Teacher Education and Professional Standards (NCTEPS) published student teaching guidelines supporting an increase in experiential opportunities. Tensions concerning the responsibilities of colleges and school personnel emerged during this period. Such questions about roles and responsibilities continue today as we move toward more collaborative efforts to improve the student teaching component of teacher preparation. Griffin and Edwards (1982, p. 21) point out that our task as teacher educators is to determine via "a theoretical and empirical basis, what types of practice, evaluation and supervision lead to the most competent teachers." Current experimental studies have shown promise in student teacher growth when experiences have linked concepts, effective teaching practices, and immediate opportunities to apply learning to practice (Darling-Hammond & Hammerness, 2005, p. 403).

Current Teacher Preparation Standards

In 1954, the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) was founded to establish high-quality teacher preparation programs. To support their mission that "every student deserves a caring, competent, and highly qualified teacher" (National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education, 2007, paragraph 4), NCATE set standards for field experiences in the teacher education program accreditation process. Recently adopted standards for field experiences, which go into effect in 2008, lend support to the culminating experience of teacher preparation that would extend far

beyond the classroom to include whole schools, families, and communities. The target

components for student teacher field experiences and clinical practice focus on those that

permit full immersion in the learning community. Student teachers not only need to

demonstrate proficiency in knowledge, skills, and dispositions in the classroom, but their

clinical experiences must also reflect collaboration with colleagues, parents and families,

and communities. Student teachers are expected to study and practice in clinical

placement sites that include diverse populations and students with exceptionalities.

NCATE advocates collaboration between colleges and universities and school partners to

the extent that they jointly determine specific placements. Both entities are encouraged to

"share and integrate resources and expertise to create roles and structures that support and

create opportunities for candidates to learn" (NCATE. Retrieved July 13, 2007 at

http://www.ncate.org/public/aboutNCATE.asp).

The Pennsylvania Standards for Higher Education Programs share similar

standards with NCATE. (See Appendix A.) Category II, Performances of Program

Design, details the requirements for field experience as follows:

> Field experiences include the array of studies and experiences that take place
>
> outside of the formal classroom in the setting in which the candidate seeks to be
>
> certified to work. For initial instructional preparation programs, the culminating
>
> field experience is a student teaching placement for 12 weeks, in an assignment
>
> commensurate with the area of certification, under the direct supervision of an
>
> appropriately certified cooperating teacher with at least three years of experience,
>
> at least one year in their present assignment, who has been trained by the

professional educator program. (*Pennsylvania Bulletiin*. Retrieved May 5, 2008, from http://www.teaching.state.pa.us/teaching/lib/teaching/354 guide.pdf)

Matching Student Teachers With Clinical Placement Sites

To date, modest research attention has been given to matching student teachers with clinical placement sites. Numerous studies (Darling-Hammond & Bransford, 2005; Copas, 1984; Easterly, 1978; Sudzina & Coolican, 1994) have examined the relationship and match between the student teacher and the cooperating teacher. These researchers indicate that there have been positive and negative outcomes for the student teacher as a result of this "match" (Sudzina & Coolican). Although this interpersonal match constitutes a key piece of the student teaching experience, broader clinical experiences might play a critical role in student teacher development. According to Zeichner (2002), a revitalized, refocused view of student teaching is necessary, and he challenges teacher educators to think broadly about placement sites for student teachers. Goodlad (1990) argues that the notion of preparing students to function as significant members of the whole school is negated by matching a student teacher with a single cooperating teacher in a single classroom.

Although the cooperating teacher assumes such an influential and critical position in the student's learning-to-teach process, the conceptions of purpose, content, and enacted opportunities in student teaching vary greatly from institution to institution (Darling-Hammond & Hammerness, 2005). The variability in the range of experiences and practices is a result of "different conceptions and traditions which frequently are

unexamined," including where and when these experiences occur (Darling-Hammond & Hammerness, p. 409). Weasmer and Woods (2003, p. 174) recognized that "it is imperative that those who monitor the program be aware of its significance." Darling-Hammond and Bransford contend that the student teaching experience must be given careful consideration of "*what* the experience should be like and *why*" (p. 410). Calling for a refocused view of student teaching, Wideen, Mayer-Smith, and Moon (1998) also advocated attention to conditions and contexts in which teachers learn to teach.

Because we know little to date about the outcomes of teacher quality and student learning that result from the contexts and opportunities experienced by student teachers, a closer look at considerations for matching student teachers with placement sites may play a key role in the preparation of quality teachers, and eventually, impact student learning (Cochran-Smith & Fries, 2005). Matching student teachers with clinical placement sites is a salient issue for investigation as evidenced in the literature. Although some research has been done on matching student teachers with cooperating teachers and clinical placement sites, there has been no study of the matching process related to the practices and perceptions of student teaching coordinators at the university level. By exploring their experience of the matching process, valuable considerations of how students are matched with clinical placement sites will emerge.

Considerations for Matching

Goodlad (1990) states that given the importance of teachers and the high expectations our nation holds for them, the development of exemplary field sites is

required for student teachers. However, there are conflicting views about whether the goal of matching student teachers with clinical placement sites is intended to promote success in the student teaching or to provide an opportunity for continued success in their future profession. Goodlad claims that fieldwork in clinical placement sites "where family backgrounds and educational resources almost ensure success are programs that disadvantage future teachers and short change society" (p. 61). Such sites might be stepping stones to practice for student teachers and may actually mirror the opportunity in the laboratory school. However, additional practice in clinical placement sites evidencing broader considerations may be warranted to ensure the preparation of student teachers for the reality of today's schools. Goodlad favors exemplary clinical placement sites steeped in collaborative efforts between the K-12 schools and colleges and universities. He calls for exemplary models in affluent and economically disadvantaged areas, and that student teachers experience both settings.

Another consideration for matching is that our society and the complexion of our student population are rapidly changing because of cultural diversity. In order to empower future teachers to influence student achievement, teacher educators must focus their attention on "creating" clinical site experiences for the practice of teaching that include diverse student populations. These experiences may be guided by considerations that are important in our changing world and thus result in a student teaching experience which far exceeds a mere "site to be found" (Potthoff & Alley, 1996). Other important considerations in site selection that appear in the literature include the cooperating teacher, collaboration, socialization in whole schools and communities, diversity factors,

coherence, length of placement, and cohorts.

To the contrary, student teachers have generally been asked to complete this phase of their teacher preparation in fragmented, disconnected frameworks, lacking coherence with college and university methods instruction, or in environments that are removed from the mainstream of today's realities of the classroom, such as diversity considerations. Inattention to appropriate matching of student teachers with clinical placement sites may eventually result in teacher frustration, failure, and exit from the profession in a few years due to inadequate preparedness. Futrell (2008) calls for teacher educators to prepare teachers for "differentiated, integral roles" as opposed to continuing to present teaching as an isolated discipline. She recommends that student teachers must demonstrate "mastery of their content area, and pedagogical skills through well-mentored, diverse field experiences" (p. 537). Futrell contends that we need to attend to the quality of preparation and continued support as these elements reflect demonstrated effectiveness in the classroom as well as confidence in teaching ability and remaining in the profession. She challenges teacher educators to "more clearly define and support the scholarship of teaching and learning, including field experiences" (p. 537).

In spite of concerted efforts in educational and school reform, surprisingly little attention has been given to teacher education reform, as though there is no connection between them. Given the fact that the context of teaching is ever changing in the schools, the tie between schools and teacher education programs needs to be inextricably linked. Goodlad (1990) speaks of the many conflicting directives required of teachers, so removed from the daily exigencies of teaching, as being responsible for 50% of the

reasons that teachers leave the profession within five years. He relates this phenomenon to teachers being "ill-equipped to begin with" (p. 64), reinforcing the challenge and dilemma of teacher educators to seriously look at program structure – particularly in view of clinical placements sites. Promising avenues for better equipping our prospective teachers would include collaboration, coherence, the school site, diversity factors in our changing society, cohorts, and length of placement, which in Pennsylvania may last 12 weeks as required, or up to one year.

Purpose of the Study

This research study examined the current practices of matching student teachers with clinical placement sites as reported by student teaching coordinators across the state of Pennsylvania, and the perceptions of those coordinators as to the most important considerations to examine when matching student teachers with clinical placement sites. The study also examined various challenges in the matching process, which emerged during the data collection and which were deemed important by the student teaching coordinators.

The rationale for identifying the important considerations for matching student teachers with clinical placement sites is to provide opportunities in teacher education programs to adequately prepare competent teachers. Robinson (2008, p. 381) argues that it is essential for teacher preparation to be "linked to actual experience in classrooms in assessing and interpreting the development of student competence" and that teacher educators must design programs that shape field and clinical experiences for teacher

education. Shaping experiences with regard to matching should encompass positive mentoring experiences, collaboration, coherence, the school site, diversity considerations, cohorts, and length of placement (Chin & Russel, 1995; Koerner, Rust, & Baumgartner, 2002; LaBoskey & Richert, 2002; Rodriguez & Sjostrom, 1995; Sumara & Luce-Kaplar, 1996). Teacher education program designs that evidence a longer time frame and coherence "appear to make a difference in teacher practices, confidence, and long-term commitment to teaching" (Darling-Hammond & Hammerness, 2005, p. 411).

Additional studies indicate that certain matching practices may have positive outcomes. Although the results of studies of matching in diverse settings conflict, McCormick (1990) reported that student teachers placed in urban settings voiced the opinion that such placements had a profound impact on their development as teachers. Hollins and Guzman (2005, p. 512) state that student teachers placed in clinical placement settings with diverse students "acquire more complex understandings and awareness of cultural and experiential differences than do their peers placed in suburban settings." In spite of a few studies that showed promising outcomes of matching with respect to diversity, "empirical examination of the relationship between teacher preparation for diversity and pupils' learning and other outcomes is largely uncharted territory in the field of research on teacher education" (Hollins & Guzman, p. 512).

The findings of the present study have implications for improving the quality of teacher education programs by examining student teaching coordinators' perceptions of matching and the most important contexts to consider, based on their extensive experience in teacher education. Most importantly, the quality and competence of future

teachers may be impacted by exploring matching considerations deemed to hold importance in the clinical experience. These implications could manifest in policy changes as well as in individual teacher education program restructuring. Exploring the potential gap between current practices and perceived ideal practices for matching may lead to closing such a gap.

The results of this study might also address Goodlad's (1990) assessment of the student teaching situation: "The chasm between what is and what should be is so great that it appears to have intimidated those who should be finding ways to cross it" (p. 280). This was the guiding purpose or mission for this study – to identify student teaching components in order to bridge the chasm of what should or can be.

Research Questions

For this study, I designed two research questions predicated on the purpose of this study. To gain insight into the perspectives and practices of student teaching coordinators in Pennsylvania, I used both quantitative and qualitative methods to answer the following research questions:

1. What criteria do student teaching coordinators in the state of Pennsylvania consider in order to match student teachers with clinical placement sites?

2. What perceptions do student teaching coordinators in the state of Pennsylvania hold as the most important considerations in matching student teachers with clinical placement sites?

Definition of Terms

The following are the definitions of the terms that are used in this dissertation:

Student teaching: The culminating field experience where student teachers traditionally apply theory to practice.

Student teaching coordinator: A university person responsible for matching student teachers with clinical placement sites.

Clinical placement site: A place where student teachers practice teach for a specified period of time and in specific grade levels and subject areas.

Length of placement: The time a student teacher spends in each assigned clinical placement site.

Cohort: A group of student teachers practice teaching in the same clinical placement site but not necessarily at the same grade level or in the same subject areas.

Coherence: The congruence between the university teacher education program and the host school for student teaching.

Collaboration: The sharing and integration of resources and expertise to create roles and structures that support and create opportunities for teacher candidates to learn. Collaboration may extend to cohorts' efforts toward future and present collegiality, university faculty, school faculty, communities and families, as well as state, university, and K-12 school initiatives.

Cooperating teacher: The person responsible for mentoring the student teacher on a daily basis in the clinical placement site.

Diversity: Ethnic, racial, cultural, and language differences.

State-aided institutions: The status originally conferred on institutions in the 1880s; presently eight institutions in Pennsylvania hold this designation.

State-related institutions: The status of four institutions of higher education including The Pennsylvania State University, Temple University, The University of Pittsburgh, and Lincoln University.

State universities: The 14 schools in Pennsylvania that originated from the former normal schools and teachers colleges.

State-assisted schools: The term used in this study to refer to a combination of state-related and state-aided institutions

Private colleges and universities: These schools comprise the majority of teacher education programs (approximately 67).

Limitations of the Study

According to Creswell (1994), a researcher should be aware of limitations in research. The following limitations pertained to this study. First, the population was restricted to student teaching coordinators in Pennsylvania. Therefore, the perceptions of the participants may not be generalized to other states' populations. The return rate of 56% on the survey in this study was not all-inclusive of teacher education programs in Pennsylvania, yet was considered an acceptable return rate according to Babbie (1998).

Also, the responses of the coordinators who volunteered to participate in follow-up interviews may not be representative of the views of all of the participants in the study. The interviewees primarily represented private institutions. Additionally, the data

collected were self-reported. As the researcher, I did not visit the sites to verify the information. My assumption was that the participants accurately reported their perceptions, which I deemed appropriate data for analysis.

Another limitation of this study may have been my context as the researcher. Thus, I have used reflexivity, which is defined by Denzin and Lincoln (2003, p. 283) as the "process of reflecting critically on the self as researcher." As a researcher, I am also a practitioner of teacher education and involved the student teaching program at the college where I teach, which may have contributed some bias to my research. The following describes my interests and position as the researcher in this study and the limitations associated with this position.

I approached this research study with great excitement and a true sense of inquiry. My transition to teacher education at the college level, after 20 years of teaching in elementary, middle, and high school, and 10 years as a principal, has inspired my professional growth in unexpected dimensions. The fact that the teacher education program at my college was in its formative stage when I came to the program presented a challenge and opportunity that I was willing to accept. Finding my way to teach again, and at the college level as a methods instructor in teacher education, was a new experience. The supervision of student teachers was a perfect fit with my administrative experience, yet I had much to learn, and still do, about supporting neophyte teachers in order to help them develop as teachers.

Guiding student teachers is an exciting and unique experience with each individual. However, I was perplexed by the fact that some students who were marginal

in their courses flourished in student teaching, whereas some students who were stellar in the classroom struggled with student teaching. Thus, my experiences in teacher education led to many questions, one of which concerned the match at the interpersonal level between the student teacher and the cooperating teacher. Discussions with my teaching colleagues and my dissertation advisor Dr. Bernard Badiali, in particular, led me to a more global inquiry as to what are the most important considerations for matching the student teacher and clinical placement sites.

My college is now approximately seven years into its student teaching program, which is still developing. Initially, it was challenging for the teacher education program to cultivate relationships with schools that already had student teaching arrangements with several teacher education institutions in the area. In response to our request to place teachers, administrators indicated they had already accepted student teacher placements. But our persistence initially garnered one or two placements, and we have cultivated positive relationships with several area schools to date, placing 17 student teachers in 2007-2008. Yet I do not take this success for granted. We are engaged in continuous efforts at collaboration of a very positive sort that is growing and changing each year.

My personal quest is to work as an integral part of our teacher education team and do my part as a researcher and learner to gain, as so aptly expressed by Grossman (2005, p. 452), "greater insights to help prospective teachers develop the knowledge, skill, dispositions, integrity, and identities that will inform their future practice."

As I interacted with other teacher educators during my doctoral study, I felt camaraderie in our journeys, and my eyes were opened to new, compelling perspectives

on teacher education. It is my hope to join not only my colleagues but also my students in the pilgrimage of becoming a lifelong learner and an adaptive expert, that is, one who believes that "discovering the need to change is perceived not as a failure but, instead, as a success and an inevitable, continuous aspect of effective teaching" (Darling-Hammond & Hammerness, 2005, p. 363).

Significance of the Study

The purpose of this study was to explore the current practices and perceptions of student teaching coordinators in Pennsylvania for matching student teachers with clinical placement sites. The study examined the perceptions of these student teaching coordinators as to the most important factors to consider in this matching process. The results of this study can help provide teacher educators with a clear sense of the current practices available for matching student teachers with clinical placement sites in Pennsylvania. Additionally, and more significantly, this study may have identified the most important considerations for matching, as reported by the student teaching coordinators themselves.

There have been plenty of studies on the matching of cooperating teachers and student teachers. However, there has been a notable lack of research on the process of matching student teachers with clinical placement sites. Thus, there is little in-depth data for teacher educators to consider when matching student teachers with clinical placement sites. It is hoped, therefore, that this study has garnered some of the most important considerations for matching, and contributed to our understanding of this phenomenon

through the perspective of student teaching coordinators in Pennsylvania. The desired outcome of a better understanding of the considerations for matching student teachers with clinical placement sites is to ultimately provide a more valuable and meaningful student teaching experience and thus better preparation of our teachers.

The traditional model of student teaching has historically focused on matching one student teacher and one cooperating teacher to complete the practice teaching experience. However, in the twenty-first century, the apprenticeship model of the past may not help new teachers meet the current demands of our profession. Thus, teacher educators need to view the student teaching experience from a broader perspective to refocus this experience in order to better prepare future teachers.

It has been my experience that teacher educators informally discuss the matching process with their colleagues. It is apparent from the literature that teacher educators need to re-examine student teaching practices to provide exemplary opportunities for aspiring teachers in relevant contexts. By examining the perceptions of student teaching coordinators, as those most closely associated with the task of matching and most astutely aware of the current dynamics of the education community, the results of this study can assist with informed decision making by teacher educators concerning considerations for matching student teachers with clinical placement sites.

Chapter Summary

This chapter has established the background for this study in terms of teacher education and student teaching, with a view towards the purpose of the study, which was

to explore the practices and perceptions of student teaching coordinators in Pennsylvania with regard to the important considerations in matching student teachers with clinical placement sites. The chapter also contains the purpose of the study, the research questions, definition of terms, limitations, and significance of the study.

Chapter Two

BACKGROUND AND REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

The first section of this chapter examines the recently refocused view of student teaching and the broader perspective of matching student teachers with clinical placement sites. This section is followed by a review of the historical context of teacher preparation and field experiences. The National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education Standards and the Pennsylvania Higher Education Standards are described as they relate to the study. Current considerations of this matching process as found in the literature are discussed, followed by a summary of their implications.

A Refocused View of Student Teaching

As noted in the introduction to this dissertation, student teaching has traditionally been the culminating experience in teacher preparation when students have the opportunity to apply theoretical concepts of education to practice in the classroom. Student teachers and cooperating teachers concur that the student teaching experience is the most important and significant part of the teacher preparation program (Guyton & McIntrye, 1990; Watts, 1987). Given the importance of the potential impact that student teaching may have on the preparation of teachers, teacher educators need to recognize the significance of this experience (Weasmer & Woods, 2003). Several researchers posit that teacher educators need to give careful thought to structuring the student teaching experience with respect to how it should look and why certain conditions and contexts

may be important to consider in that structuring (Darling-Hammond & Bransford, 2005; Wideen et al., 1998). In regard to a call for a revitalized, refocused view of student teaching, Zeichner (2002) challenges educators to think broadly about placement sites for student teachers. He posits that elements of the whole school as a placement site should be examined, including (a) where students work with several faculty, (b) participation in community experiences to inform student teachers to learn about and build on cultural resources, (c) integration of university supervisors into the school site, and (d) inclusion of cooperating teachers and other faculty in more significant roles such as team teaching, admission decisions, and program development.

Cochran-Smith and Fries (2005) contend that we know little to date about "how the context of instruction in teacher education programs influences what opportunities are made available to teacher education students, what they learn from these opportunities, and how this learning impacts teacher quality and student learning" (p. 747). Cochran-Smith and Fries state that it is important to comprehend how different contexts affect the efficacy of field experiences, lending credence to the creation of student teaching placement opportunities conducive to maximizing the benefit of the student teacher's experiences. Clift and Brady (2005) affirm that contexts for learning to practice have become salient issues in field experiences, stating, "It seems clear that learning to practice is impacted by individual, instructional, and contextual factors – some of which we are only beginning to understand" (p. 331). For example, individual factors might include student beliefs which may conflict with teaching practices advocated by university instructors, thus inhibiting a change in teaching practices. According to Clift

and Brady, p. 331), "discrepancies between advocated practice and situated practice" may decrease over time if nurtured by school and university partnerships. Matching according to certain considerations in situated practice may be instrumental in producing desired outcomes. Koerner et al. (2002) note that the context of the placement has "potentially powerful shaping effects on the ways in which student teaching placements are enacted", acknowledging the significance of context in the student teaching experience (p. 54).

Many researchers call for refocusing attention on the context in student teaching. However, teacher educators must examine which contexts are most significant in the student teaching experience, and how students arrive at such contexts. Potthoff and Alley (1996) examined six considerations for matching student teachers and cooperating teachers that included diversity, collaboration, cooperating teacher preparation, challenging beliefs, mentor matching, and clustering. The results of their study indicated that the most highly valued criteria were cooperating teacher preparation, clustering, and mentor matching. Potthoff and Alley challenge teacher educators to identify the type of placement most valued since all site-selection considerations cannot function simultaneously. They also acknowledge a certain reality in that availability of quality sites, geographic location, and cooperation of school districts may inhibit the ideological goals of site selection.

The Evolution of Teacher Preparation

The evolution of teacher preparation proceeded from the normal school of the nineteenth century to teachers colleges during the 1950s, which advanced to state

colleges and universities in the 1960s (Goodlad, 1990). According to Goodlad this

evolution has been more about studying teachers than about preparing them to teach.

Historically, in order to meet the demand for ample teachers, formalized teacher training

centers known as normal schools took hold during the mid nineteenth century. These

teacher training schools had little to do with higher education as we know it today. Then

the pedagogy of learning involved managing children and classroom routines. Although,

initially, the curriculum lacked rigorous academic training and the methods included

those that "collegiate minds deemed unprofessionally mechanical" (Lanier & Little,

1986, p. 532), the normal schools were the impetus for elevating teaching to a profession.

The success of the normal school initiative was based on the premise that teachers needed

specialized training in an institution devoted to that end (Harper, 1939). Close

collaboration with public schools in order to improve existing practices was a state-of-

the-art practice in this early endeavor. Eventually, normal school "graduates" began to

impress the outside world with their teaching attributes, which surpassed the abilities of

other teachers who did not receive such training (Harper).

Later, the inception of John Dewey's laboratory school between 1896 and 1904

moved beyond the apprenticeship idea of learning to "manage" children. Dewey

addressed the danger and promise of field experiences in terms of the "apprenticeship"

and "laboratory" approaches. The apprenticeship approach to learning to teach, which

was akin to preparation for crafts and highly-skilled trades (Lortie, 1975, p. 58), simply

prepared students for managerial tasks in the limited time traditionally available for

practice teaching. Dewey's laboratory school approach, on the other hand, prepared

students for understanding theory and its application to the classroom in light of "how children learn, how curriculum decisions might be guided, and how students' cognitions might influence teaching" (Lanier & Little, 1986, p. 551). Although classroom management is important for student teachers today, the superficial focus of the apprenticeship approach in field experiences is not sufficient preparation for developing teachers who need to possess a deeper understanding of how "theoretical concepts from psychology, curriculum, and sociology are played out in classrooms" (Lanier & Little, p. 551).

In spite of the well-intentioned ideal of the laboratory school as guiding the "art, science and skill of teaching" (Goodlad, 1994, pp. 2-3), Dewey's laboratory schools were only "loosely linked to schools, colleges, and departments of education" (Goodlad, p. 3). Nonetheless, these links might have been the key to the success of the laboratory school.

Today teacher education programs hold differing views as to the conception and structure of student teaching. However, the common ideal that has evolved includes

> a placement in which student teachers are supported by purposeful coaching from an expert cooperating teacher in the same teaching field, who offers modeling, co-planning, frequent feedback, repeated opportunities to practice, and reflection upon practice, while the student teacher gradually takes on more responsibility. (Darling-Hammond & Hammerness, 2005, p. 409)

The structure of student teaching continues to evolve as some teacher educators show evidence of examining current practices.

Current State and National Teacher Preparation Standards

According to Chapter 354 of the Pennsylvania Department of Education Standards for Preparation of Professional Educators, the requirements for student teaching include a minimum of 12 weeks of full-time student teaching experience. Collaboration between the preparing institution and the school partner is required in order to design and implement the student teaching experience. According to these Standards, school partners should be "fluent in the institution's educational philosophy." Student teachers are expected to demonstrate cultural competence, which necessitates matching student teachers with diverse placement settings.

According to the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE), a professional accrediting organization for schools, colleges, and departments of education in the United States, the standards that are to guide teacher education programs are classified as unacceptable, acceptable and target. This discussion refers to the target classification of NCATE (*The Standard of Excellence in Teacher Preparation*. Retrieved October 15, 2007, from http://www.ncate.org/public/aboutNCATE.asp)

The target classification indicators for field experiences and clinical practices listed in NCATE's Standard 3: Field Experiences and Clinical Practice apply to the content of this study. This standard includes: (3a) collaboration between the teacher education program and school partners; (3b) design, implementation, and evaluation of field experiences and clinical practice; and (3c) candidates' development and demonstration of knowledge, skills, and professional dispositions to help all students learn.

Collaboration, according to the NCATE standards, includes the teacher education program and the school partner faculty working together in designing, implementing, and evaluating the teacher education program. Collaboration also includes joint participation in professional development activities. The teacher education program and school partners share expertise and integrate resources to support the student teacher's learning. NCATE specifies that the target for excellence is a joint determination for specific placements for student teachers.

The target goal for design, implementation, and evaluation is that student teachers are afforded opportunities to apply theory to practice. Student teachers are integrated into the school program by serving on instructional teams and as active participants in professional decisions. According to NCATE, the student teaching experience provides the teacher candidates an opportunity to apply theory to practice in a variety of settings. Student teachers are to have opportunities for full immersion in the school community.

The NCATE target goal for student teachers to experience diversity includes extensive and substantive opportunities to work with various ethnic/racial groups, students with disabilities, and language diversity.

The NCATE standards are congruent with Pennsylvania's in that teacher education programs and school partners are expected to collaborate in order to design and implement the student teaching experience. Both of these entities share responsibility for the student teacher's learning and are expected to pool expertise as well as resources to support learning. Both jointly select and prepare clinical faculty to mentor student teachers. According to both sets of standards, student teachers are to experience

opportunities to become culturally competent teachers with diverse learners.

Current Considerations for Matching

Only limited research on matching student teachers with clinical placement sites is found in the literature. However, there are no studies that examine the matching of student teachers and clinical placement sites, based on the student teaching coordinator's point of view. This review of the literature discusses considerations that seem to show promise for this matching process, which include the cooperating teacher, collaboration, coherence, the school site, length of placement, clustering and cohorts, and diversity.

The Cooperating Teacher

The role of the cooperating teacher varies from program to program. In regard to the cooperating teacher, Darling-Hammond and Hammerness (2005, p. 409) state:

> Typically, the ideal has been a placement in which student teachers are supported by purposeful coaching from an expert cooperating teacher in the same teaching field who offers modeling, co-planning, frequent feedback, repeated opportunities to practice, and reflection upon practice while the student teacher gradually takes on more responsibility.

Viewing the relationship of the cooperating teacher and the student teacher from a sociocultural theoretical stance brings to bear the critical role that social interaction plays in shaping a student teacher. In *Mind in Society*, Vygotsky (1978) contends that the "social interaction of the learner with an adult or more capable peers during problem

solving is critical to the learning process and independence" (p. 86). Vygotsky's Zone of Proximal Development, whereby a child develops skills by following an adult's example, moves a student beyond imitation toward independence. According to Gallimore, Tharp, and John-Steiner (1992), a teaching-learning setting is created that leads to developmentally-sensitive interactions and allows the mentor to facilitate the protégé's movement through the Zone of Proximal Development. The student teacher/cooperating teacher relationship can be compared with the apprentice's learning relationship, which is also situated in a social context. With the assistance of the cooperating teacher, the student teacher develops the competencies required to become an independent teacher.

Lave and Wenger (1991) theorize about "legitimate peripheral participation", in which they view learning as a situational activity in which newcomers become part of a community of practice. In the process of legitimate peripheral participation, the "person's intentions to learn are engaged and the meaning of learning is configured through the process of becoming a full participant in a socio-cultural practice" (p. 29). Lave and Wenger posit that student teachers and cooperating teachers negotiate the socio-cultural realm in a symbiotic relationship of "newcomers" and "old-timers", growing as full participants in the community of practice – the education environment. Additionally, they make the critical point that learning is the "access to practice as a resource for learning, rather than to instruction" (p. 85). As student teachers gain access to the opportunity to become full participants, their knowledge base and identities as teachers evolve through legitimate peripheral participation. Matching student teachers in situational contexts where such opportunities exist not only builds on the Vygotsky's notion of the Zone of

Proximal Development but also expands the former historical view of the student teacher as an apprentice, from being a mere observer to being a full participant through legitimate peripheral participation.

Several matching practices reported in the literature appear to have positive outcomes. There are two sides to matching considerations for the student teaching experience: the student teacher/cooperating teacher relationship, including relationship issues of compatibility and cooperating teacher training; and the broader view of the university/clinical placement site, including collaboration, the school site, coherence, diversity, length of placement, and clustering or cohorts.

Compatibility of the student teacher/cooperating teacher.

Compatibility occurs in the literature as an important consideration in matching student teachers with cooperating teachers at clinical placement sites (Zeichner, 2002). Potthoff and Alley (1996) reported that one of the most highly regarded considerations for student teachers was to be matched with a cooperating teacher with whom they felt comfortable. The examination of compatibility as an over-arching domain for matching student teachers may include these various sub-topics as noted in the literature: personality, cognitive orientation, theoretical orientation, and mutual-choice placement (Easterly, 1978; Ganser, 1996; Kitchel, 2005; Mahlios, 1982; Young, 1995).

Personality matching, although intriguing and recurrent in the literature, shows conflicting findings. In a study of student teachers who fail, Knowles and Sudzina (1994) found that in addition to weak pre-service classroom skills, contextual conditions contributed to their unsuccessful experiences. Personality conflicts were cited within

those contextual factors. Knowles and Sudzina refer to these situations as "mismatches" that need to be addressed. Ganser (1996) also reported personality conflicts between beginning teachers and mentors as the second of 14 prioritized obstacles in the student teacher/cooperating teacher relationship. Leslie (1971) noted a pattern "within the group matched on personality variables in the direction favoring students not matched on personality" (pp. 303-309). Kitchel (2005), in a study of personality type as a predictor of interaction between cooperating teachers and student teachers, determined that it has little influence on the satisfaction of interaction between the two groups. Kitchel recommends that "teacher educators should entertain a broader definition of personality type and perhaps even teaching style . . . teaching philosophy, which learning theories the teacher prescribes to, or overall personal values" (p. 139) when considering the match.

Mahlios (1982) investigated matching student teachers and cooperating teachers on the basis of cognitive orientation. He compared selected indicators of effectiveness and the final grades of student teachers in compatible and disparate dyads. Although the results showed that 3 of the 10 indicators revealed significant differences, Mahlios asserted that there is no substantial evidence to indicate that teachers of one cognitive type are more likely to support or provide greater professional growth than another. However, Mahlios found that student teachers in disparate dyads achieved better than in compatible dyads in adaptability to change and communications skills. The final grade variable showed that their achievement was significant in disparate dyads.

Young (1995) examined matching student teachers and cooperating teachers with a theoretical orientation of the reading process. Her findings revealed that certain

personality traits of cooperating teachers, in addition to their belief systems and theoretical orientations, were important factors in determining positive or negative perceptions in student teachers. Her recommendations included further studies to investigate affective effects during student teaching in regard to theoretical orientation and personality traits.

Banville (2002) notes that the pairing of student teachers and cooperating teachers is worthy of research. She suggests criteria such as values, learning styles, teaching styles, or supervisory styles as possible areas for investigation with respect to matching.

Easterly (1978) discusses the importance of the relationship between the cooperating teacher and the student teacher, stating, "When one considers the importance of this relationship, it is truly amazing that such little thought is given to the matching procedure by which student teaching assignments are made" (p. 49). She decries the "paper function" which places student teachers according to geographic location and grade level, without taking into consideration the "decision-making potential of the two most important people – the student teacher and the cooperating teacher" (p. 49). Easterly proposes a matching model of mutual-choice placement in which pairing occurs after a sequence of interactions and indications on the part of the participants of their preferences. The results of Easterly's 1978 study were favorable on attitude surveys of both student teachers and cooperating teachers involved in mutual-choice placement matching. Kitchel (2005) found that a perceived similarity is influential in determining the satisfaction of the relationship between the student teacher and the cooperating teacher. This concept of perception and relationship may validate mutual choice

placement as a matching practice.

Matching student teachers with trained cooperating teachers.

Matching student teachers with competent cooperating teachers in a teaching and learning setting may enhance the outcome of the match. Clifford (1999) speaks of the relationship-building process between mentors and pre-service teachers where mentors discover the pre-service teacher's needs. Effective matching practices evidenced in the literature include matching student teachers with cooperating teachers who have participated in training workshops and who have demonstrated effective teaching practices in their own teaching. Copas (1984) contends that the "value of the direct learning experience in schools seems to depend upon the quality of the teacher with whom the student teacher is placed" (p. 49). The findings of Copas' study indicate the competencies that cooperating teachers should possess, including a demonstrated competence in teaching.

Matching student teachers with cooperating teachers who have acquired certain skills through training appears to be an effective component for student teacher growth. Giebelhaus and Bowman (2000) found that training cooperating teachers to develop skills in giving effective and comprehensive feedback was effective in the student teachers' growth. According to Giebelhaus and Bowman,

> ensuring that each field-based teacher educator has comprehensive training to effectively assist in the learning of their student teachers has been shown here to make a significant difference in the product which results – the demonstration of effective teaching skills by student teachers. (p. 16)

Killian and McIntyre (1986) found that trained cooperating teachers interacted more frequently with student teachers. They also found that trained cooperating teachers are more likely to provide feedback that is necessary for the student teacher's professional growth. In fact, Mills (1980) observed that although cooperating teachers are hesitant to give negative assessment, trained cooperating teachers were able to provide such constructive feedback. Wooley's 1997 study of student teachers' perceptions of their cooperating teachers revealed that it is important to assist cooperating teachers in learning how to give feedback and in developing techniques with which to guide student teachers through the student teaching semester. She supports the premise that cooperating teacher selection should be on the basis of their "expert teacher" status (p. 1).

Although matching student teachers with cooperating teachers who demonstrate effective practices in their own teaching makes sense, Zeichner (2002) cautions that being a good classroom teacher and being a good cooperating teacher are not necessarily synonymous. However, professional development training in techniques relative to being an effective cooperating teacher may offset lack of skill and enhance the cooperating teacher's practice. Feiman-Nemser and Buchmann (1985) believe that teaching experience alone is not enough to be an effective cooperating teacher. They contend that becoming a teacher of teachers requires different skills, and that "preparation must sensitize teachers to the pitfalls of experience in learning to teach so that they can guide teacher candidates . . ." (p. 65). When student teachers are matched with cooperating teachers trained in effective mentoring, the cooperating teacher can focus on active mentoring from the beginning of the placement rather that tentatively doing so.

Collaboration

Collaboration is defined as "the act of working together" (Thorndike-Barnhart, 1988, p. 217). Collaboration involves many facets of teacher education programs and is evident to varying degrees. Collaboration may include efforts to establish program coherence where student teachers experience congruence between curriculum and pedagogy advocated in methods courses and the opportunity to apply theory, strategies, and inquiry in their practice. Collaboration may also find faculty from the university and host school co-teaching methods courses as well as working in supervisory and non-supervisory roles in school settings. Collaboration can involve cohorts of student teachers supporting each other as well as whole schools supporting the professional growth and development of student teachers.

Collaboration between universities and schools in order to establish program coherence and prepare student teachers for demands and issues in the real world has been successful (Howey & Zimpher, 1989). Howey and Zimpher (as cited in Cochran-Smith & Zeichner, 2005, p. 456) found that graduates from teacher preparation programs that stressed collaboration, coherence, and real-life demands of the profession were "better prepared to teach, more confident, better able to attend to student outcomes, more interactive with experienced teachers and more capable of providing leadership in curriculum development activities during their first year of teaching" (p. 456). Placing student teachers in contexts that have such desirable attributes will increase their chances of developing teacher competency.

Clift and Brady (2005) found that collaboration between universities and schools,

as demonstrated in professional development schools, was successful in providing a positive context for learning to teach. The reciprocity of professional growth evidenced by all participants involved not only assisted the neophyte student teacher in learning to practice but also challenged university personnel to reflect on methods courses and the impact of practice in the field. Although involvement in professional development schools is not an option for all teacher preparation institutions, critical components of success may inform future practice to some degree in more traditionally structured programs. When K-12 schools participate in articulation agreements with universities to create professional development schools, such articulations can decrease the "discrepancies between advocated practice and situated practice, thus increasing the congruence of messages between the school and university contexts" (Clift & Brady, p. 331). By drawing on the example of professional development schools, traditional teacher education programs may be well served to initiate more collaborative efforts for achieving program congruence in order to match student teachers in more productive contexts.

Collaboration may include faculty learning together in collegial study groups that include student teachers. For example, at the University of Pennsylvania, student teachers participate in groups with cooperating teachers to frame questions and engage in inquiry into questions of teaching and learning (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1993). The cooperating teachers act as partners and models in the quest to learn from teaching. Modeling inquiry in a community of professional practice demonstrates the importance of continuous examination of teaching practices. Lieberman and Miller (as cited in Levine, 1992) affirm

that such research and inquiry in a particular professional community "resonates with the dilemmas of practice that other teachers experience" (p. 29). This modeling may serve to foster future collaborative efforts for ongoing growth and reflective practice, reinforcing the elimination of the isolation so characteristic of previous teaching situations. When student teachers have an opportunity to collaborate and "negotiate" the journey toward professional growth along side their cooperating teachers, the relationship may be strengthened, the match more effective, and the collaborative learning opportunity enhanced, thus preparing student teachers for future collegial teamwork (Fairbanks, Freedman, & Kahn, 2000).

Often student teachers are matched with schools that do not always have a strong collaborative relationship with the teacher education program. If philosophical differences exist, conflicts can occur during the clinical placement. One common caution by university professors is to remind student teachers that they are "guests" in the classroom and suggest that they keep the peace. However, Goodlad (1990, p. 62) claims that it is "immoral" for student teachers to act in ways contrary to what they believe to be right. Goodlad blames such "inexcusable behavior" (p. 62) on the lack of sincere collaborative initiatives of the school and university. Sincere collaboration in the best interest of the student teacher would permit a certain degree of freedom for the student to practice and grow rather than merely maintain an amicable relationship with the cooperating teacher, and compromise his or her core values. Students need to engage in the mediation of conflict over practice and theory as a measure of real world practice. Goodlad attributes such unsatisfactory placements to admitting more students to teacher

education programs rather than establishing an admissions quota that could provide high

quality experiences in teacher education, including student teaching. Given the fact that

colleges and universities enjoy profit from admitting any interested students to teacher

education, regardless of their qualifications, there is a need for large numbers of

cooperating teachers to fulfill the institution's obligation to provide student teaching

placements after their coursework. Such demand for quantity precludes the selection of

high-quality cooperating teachers. Goodlad (1990) calls for intensive collaboration

between the K-12 school and college or university, and proposes state collaboration in the

form of funding credit for participating teachers. He further decries the traditional model

of the student teacher and the cooperating teacher moving through the student teaching

experience to the exclusion of the whole school. The result of such a narrow experience is

that the student teacher misses out on the context of teaching in its entirety.

Coherence

Coherence in teacher education programs is reflected when integrated coursework

and clinical experiences in K-12 schools are congruent. Programs that reflect such

congruence demonstrate a positive impact on the practices of student teachers (Darling-

Hammond & Hammerness, 2005). A study by the Institute of Research on Teaching's

Teacher Education and Learning to Teach (TELT) found that "more coherent programs

were more influential and effective in supporting student teacher learning" (Tatto, 1996,

as cited in Darling-Hammond & Bransford, 2005, p. 393). Learning is deepened when

students "encounter mutually reinforcing ideas and skills" as well as repeated

opportunities to practice skills in order to "make sense of the phenomena they experience and observe rather than encountering mixed messages" (Darling-Hammond & Hammerness, cited in Darling-Hammond & Bransford, 2005, pp. 393-394). Providing opportunities for students to "consciously integrate" what they are learning into their practice as student teachers demonstrates that teachers "may be able to move farther along in the journey of developing as a teacher more quickly than was previously thought" (Snyder, 2000, p. 108). Student teaching placements that demonstrate coherence through a consistency of vision and purpose among student teachers, cooperating teachers, and supervisors translate into a more powerful clinical placement site (Koerner et al., 2002; LaBoskey & Richert, 2002).

The School Site

Moving beyond the traditional structure of matching one student teacher with one cooperating teacher in one classroom toward the conceptual framework that involves varied experiences within the context of the whole school appears to foster holistic development in student teachers (Levine, 1990, pp. 94-95). Goodlad (1990) supports the stance that students must be prepared in a broader sense to become "stewards of entire schools" not just to be matched with a single cooperating teacher in a single classroom (p. 281).

Length of Placement

Another consideration for matching student teachers in clinical placement sites is

the length of the placement. Some studies (LaBoskey & Richert, 2002; Orland-Barak,

2002) support successful outcomes of effective practice and self-confidence when student

teachers participate in longer, supervised placements with graduated responsibility.

Additional studies (Chin & Russell, 1995; Sumara & Luce-Kaplar, 1996) indicate that a

longer placement coupled with concurrent coursework is effective in linking theory to

practice. According to Darling-Hammond and Bransford (2005), studies indicate that

principals and teachers report that students who graduate from a five-year teacher

education program are more prepared to enter the field than students graduating from

traditional four-year programs. Students prepared in this extended model are more likely

to stay in the profession after several years. These observations also extend to students

who participate in professional development school initiatives.

Clustering and Cohorts

Clustering as a placement site consideration is related to collaboration, and entails

situating groups or cohorts of student teachers in the same school. Clustering also refers

to grouping students closer to the university site to afford more supervisory opportunities.

This matching practice permits student teachers more opportunities to reflect, bond, and

collaborate as teachers already in the profession do. Student teachers also feel less

isolated (Potthoff & Alley, 1996). Student teachers who complete their student teaching

experience with a cohort report significantly more opportunities to collaborate with their

peers and to share in emotional support (Sandholtz & Dadlez, 2000). Zeichner and

Conklin (as cited in Cochran-Smith, Feiman-Nemser, & McIntyre, 2008, p. 272) note that

Howey and Zimpher (1989) advocate that exemplary teacher education programs provide the opportunity for students to complete their program of study in cohort groups so that "they develop a sense of shared identity and accomplishments as they move through particular benchmarks in their programs." Contrarily, Darling-Hammond, according to Zeichner and Conklin (as cited in Cochran-Smith, Feiman-Nemser, & McIntyre, 2008, p. 272), found that strong relationships and connectedness in other programs considered to be exemplary were achieved without the use of cohort groups.

Diversity

Diversity as a consideration for student teachers presents an interesting challenge. Although there is a gap in the literature on diversity and teacher education, the call for teacher competency with diverse populations is growing in our country. However, the belief systems of certain student teachers may complicate their matching with diverse populations. Also, studies demonstrating how student teachers develop equity pedagogy are remiss in investigating the extent to which students are able to apply theory to practice and evaluate the outcomes (Hollins & Gunzman, 2005). Some students enter teacher preparation programs with negative attitudes toward and beliefs about diverse populations, thus presenting a challenge for teacher educators to reduce these student teachers' prejudice and ensure their effectiveness in the classroom. Little is known at this point regarding the process of selecting field-experience sites for student teachers whose belief systems differ because of their limited experience with diversity (Hollins & Gunzman).

According to Cochran-Smith, Davis, and Fries (2004), one of the most critical issues, if not the "most pressing issue for teacher preparation research, practice, and policy, is disparity among racial and cultural groups in school achievement and completion rates, poverty levels, and opportunities to learn from qualified teachers" (p. 931). Although national professional organizations did not focus on multicultural issues until the 1970s, currently all major professional organizations associated with the preparation, licensing, and certification of teachers hold consistent standards regarding competencies to advance learning achievement in diverse learners. For example, the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE, 2007) has multicultural guidelines in 16 of its 17 national curriculum guidelines. Thirty-five states, including Pennsylvania, claim it is important that teacher candidates have an understanding of cultural differences in learning. Therefore, teacher education programs have revised courses and fieldwork experiences to include attention to diversity and multicultural education.

In spite of the increased inclusion of learning about diversity in teacher education, requirements for placements in diverse settings have been "more rhetorical than real, piecemeal, and optional" (Cochran-Smith et al., 2004, p. 932). Diversity in teacher education has often been subject to token coursework and lacking in coherence of pedagogy as demonstrated in the methods courses and fieldwork experiences (Villegas & Lucas, 2002). Studies indicate that teacher candidates who gain experience in urban settings develop a more "complex understandings and awareness of cultural and experiential differences than do their peers placed in suburban settings" (Hollins &

Gunzman, 2005, p. 512).

Demographically, children of color are projected to comprise the statistical

majority of the student population by 2035 and increase to 57% by 2050 (U.S.

Department of Commerce, 1996, as cited in Villegas & Lucas, 2002). In spite of

NCATE's policy requiring multicultural education, Gollnick (as cited in Cochran, Smith,

Davies, & Fries, 2004, p. 946) charges that "institutions still have not taken seriously its

incorporation into its programs and practices." Cochran-Smith et al. (as cited in Banks &

Banks, 2003, p. 947) includes the teacher learning question in her proposed framework

for teacher preparation that encompasses how, when, and where adults learn to teach,

including particular pedagogies and strategies that facilitate this learning. She continues

with the practice question in which student teachers demonstrate competencies and

pedagogical skills necessary to teach diverse populations and work with families and

communities.

The conceptual literature on teacher preparation with attention to diversity

mentions restructured field experiences, and observation and participation in classrooms

with expert models of education pedagogy for diversity (Ladson-Billings, 2000).

However, as indicated by the literature, in spite of a "politically correct" policy, teacher

education programs to date may only rhetorically demonstrate attention to diversity in

courses and field experiences. Yet lip service on paper does not attend to the true issues

of not only understanding diversity and becoming culturally responsive teachers in the

classroom, but also of situating student teachers in classrooms to refine their pedagogical

abilities, develop culturally responsiveness, and foster inquiry to take with them

throughout their professions.

In summary, considerations supported in the literature that appear to have positive outcomes when matching student teachers with clinical placement sites include the cooperating teacher, collaboration between universities and K-12 schools, coherence of the program, length of the placement, clustering and cohorts, and diversity. The literature also supports the positive effects of a high-quality cooperating teacher. However, this study has focused on considerations for matching student teachers with clinical placement sites.

Implications of the Research

According to this research, several factors appear to contribute to proactive success in the matching process. Considerations of the relationship between the student teacher and cooperating teacher in view of compatibility factors and teacher training can have positive effects. Clinical site considerations of collaboration and coherence between universities and schools appear to have positive effects when students are matched in these contexts. In support of collaboration, shifts to increased opportunities for professional development for student teacher cohorts to participate in teacher-research groups to reflect on their practice alongside the cooperating teachers bodes well in real-world experience with other professionals (Cochran-Smith, 1991). Giving student teachers a longer practicum prepares them better to teach upon graduation, and they are more likely to remain in the profession. Clustering or student cohort groups as a matching consideration infuses collaboration, collegiality, and peer support into the student

teaching experience. An additional benefit of matching students in cohorts is an increase in opportunities for supervision. The school site as a consideration for matching engages the student teacher in socialization to the profession in a holistic sense. As students interact with a community of practitioners who embrace the student teacher, the students learn about teaching in its entirety by having a holistic view.

Matching student teachers with professional development school sites appears to increase efficacy and confidence, positive attitudes toward teaching, deeper knowledge of content and assessment, better preparation for the real world of teaching, skill to interact with colleagues, and leadership skills (Sandholtz & Dadlez, 2000; Sandholtz & Wasserman, 2001). When universities do not have the luxury of professional development school articulation agreements, valuable lessons can be learned from professional development schools' examples in order to match student teachers with more productive contexts.

As Leslie (1971) states, "matching may be productive if the right variables are identified" (p. 308). Although he calls for further research on the topic, Leslie contends that "combinations of human characteristics do not occur in neat packages" (p. 308), adding much complexity to the quest to identify such variables. This study examined the perceptions of student teaching coordinators in order to identify critical considerations for matching student teachers with clinical placement sites. The results would inform teacher education programs of these considerations for matching, thereby enhancing the student teaching experience.

The literature clearly substantiates a need for a refocused view of student teaching

in regard to clinical placement sites. Evidence in the literature of promising considerations for matching student teachers with clinical placement sites includes the cooperating teacher, collaboration, coherence, the school site, length of placement, clustering and cohorts, and diversity. The Pennsylvania Higher Education Standards and the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education Standards support several of the aforementioned considerations as discussed in the literature.

This research study contributes to this body of literature on matching, from the point of view of a number of student teaching coordinators in Pennsylvania. This examination of the actual practices and perceptions of the most important considerations for matching student teachers with clinical placement sites supports several findings in the literature.

Chapter Summary

This chapter has provided background on the changing view of student teaching, especially in terms of matching student teachers with clinical placement sites. In addition to an historical review of teacher preparation and current national and state standards for student teaching, the chapter contains a review of literature on the considerations for matching student teachers and placement sites.

Chapter Three

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this study was to explore the phenomenon of matching student teachers with clinical placement sites as related to student teaching coordinators' practices and perceptions of this process as used in teacher education programs in the state of Pennsylvania. It is hoped that this dissertation has not only described current practices and perceptions of a number of student teaching coordinators, but provides a starting point for discussion on how to improve the context and relevance of this critical component in the professional development of aspiring teachers.

The study sought extensive, in-depth insights into the matching process, broadening the scope of this topic to include questions about challenges in securing placements and the state's role and responsibility in this capstone experience for student teachers.

The data for this study were collected by quantitative and qualitative methods. The data collection followed a two-phase, sequential, mixed methods procedure. The advantage of using a mixed methodology is that the quality of the research is improved because these two different research methods have different strengths and weaknesses (Johnson & Christensen, 2000). The use of quantitative and qualitative data added a rich complexity to the study by permitting me as the researcher to "work back and forth between inductive and deductive models" (Cresswell, 1994, p. 178).

Johnson and Onwuegbuzie (2004, p. 17) define mixed methods research as "the

class of research where the researcher mixes or combines quantitative and qualitative research, techniques, methods, approaches, concepts, or language into a single study." Tashakkori and Teddlie (1998, p. 18) discuss mixed methods studies as "those that combine qualitative and quantitative approaches into the research methodology for a single study or multi-phased study." They point out that these triangulation techniques may be employed within the same study or in different complementary studies. Yin (2006, p. 41) posits that the focus on a single study is "critical to mixed methods research" due to the fact that mixed methods should produce "converging evidence, presumably more compelling than might have been produced by any single method alone." Yin also indicates that multiple methods may significantly impact a single study. Onwuegbuzie and Johnson (2006) purport that an exciting outcome of mixed methods research in a single study is that "different perspectives can be examined" and a "sense of what might be useful in local situations" may be garnered (p. 49).

In the present study, quantitative and qualitative data were collected in the first phase from an online survey, after which additional qualitative data were collected from purposive telephone interviews of the survey participants. Triangulation, or the use of multiple methods, "reflects an attempt to secure an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon" (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003, p. 8). The combination of multiple research methods can provide a strategy that adds "rigor, breadth, complexity, richness, and depth to any inquiry" (Flick, 1998, as cited in Denzin & Lincoln, p. 8).

In this study, triangulation occurred through quantitative and qualitative data collected by an online survey of student teaching coordinators in Pennsylvania.

Qualitative data acquired from the phone interviews of several coordinators during the second wave of the data collection phase further enhanced the "richness and complexity and depth" of this study.

One example of the importance and richness of the triangulation in this study follows: One respondent strongly agreed in the quantitative segment of the survey that diversity was important in student teaching. In the open-ended section of the survey, however, he made no mention of diversity as a current consideration, an important consideration, or as a component in an ideal model for matching student teachers with clinical placement sites. But, when asked about the discrepancy of his responses, the interviewee stated that "not everybody gets that chance." The interviewee revealed that his university was situated in a rural area where 100% of the placements were in rural schools and that this teacher education program did not have access to a diverse population. However, in support of his response of "strongly agree" on the Likert-scale item on the importance of diversity and placement, he discussed the current efforts of his program to secure placements in schools with diverse populations, as the university looks to "restructure the program" in order to rectify the lack of the diversity component. Although accessibility for the placement of student teachers presents a challenge in this case and others throughout the study, concerted efforts to improve opportunities for student teachers to interact with diverse populations is evident.

In the first phase of the study, following the administration of an informed consent to the participants (see Appendix B), quantitative and qualitative data were collected through a self-administered online survey utilizing the Survey Monkey

Computer Program. The title of the survey was *Sites for Practice: An Examination of Practices and Perceptions for Matching Student Teachers With Clinical Placement Sites* (see Appendix C). Some of the questions for the survey were adapted with permission from Potthoff and Alley (1996). The survey was an appropriate tool for the initial phase of this study. Fink (2006, p. 1) states that "surveys are collection methods used to describe, compare, or explain individual and societal knowledge, feelings, values, preferences and behaviors." Couper and Nichols (1998) purport that the shift toward computer-based survey methods is eminent and non-negotiable as technology has seeped into our everyday lives. Early documentation supports the "speed and efficiency with which surveys are conducted and the completeness and consistency of the data collected" (Couper & Nichols, p. 1) as benefits of using online techniques. The advantages of computer-based surveys include a high rate of return and a timely response rate in addition to an opportunity for well-thought-out answers (Dillman, 2000).

The quantitative section of the online survey for this study included 6 demographic items and 10 Likert-type scale items. The qualitative section of the survey contained 4 open-ended questions. A final section requested telephone and email contact information for subsequent interviews with study participants who agreed to be interviewed. Completion of this personal information section by the participants was voluntary.

Research Questions

This research study explored the following questions:

1. What criteria do student teaching coordinators in the state of Pennsylvania

   consider in order to match student teachers with clinical placement sites?

2. What perceptions do student teaching coordinators in the state of

   Pennsylvania hold as the most important considerations in matching

   student teachers with clinical placement sites?

Population of the Study

The population for the study consisted of the student teaching coordinators in all

the teacher education programs in Pennsylvania. These coordinators were serving in this

position full time or concurrent with other positions, which varied from institution to

institution. I obtained a list of teacher education programs from the Pennsylvania

Department of Education with verbal consent to use the list to find the participants for

this study. Of the 93 teacher education programs on the list, 14 were state institutions, 8

were state-aided, 4 were state-related, and 67 were private institutions. The designation of

state-assisted combines the 4 state-related institutions and the 8 state-aided institutions

for the purpose of this study.

Instrumentation

The purpose of the study was to examine the current practices and perceptions of

student teaching coordinators as to the important considerations for matching student

teachers with clinical placement sites. Thus, the online quantitative/qualitative survey I developed was an appropriate tool for this study, based on Fink's statement (2006, p. 1) that "surveys are collection methods used to describe, compare, or explain individual and societal knowledge, feelings, values, preferences and behaviors."

The online survey consisted of three sections. (See Appendix C.) The first section contained 6 demographic items, including the title held by the participant responsible for matching student teachers with clinical placement sites, the size of their teacher education program, the number of student teachers placed, the structure of the placements according to the number of placements per quarter, semester, or year; the type of institution, and the percentages of students placed in suburban, urban, and rural districts. The second section of the survey consisted of 10 Likert-type scale items for the coordinators to rate their beliefs about matching. The response values ranged from strongly agree to strongly disagree. Items 7 through 15 on the survey were adapted and used by permission from Potthoff and Alley's (1996) *Selecting Placement Sites for Student Teachers and Pre Student Teachers: Six Considerations*. Potthoff and Alley included collaboration, diversity, challenging beliefs, clustering, cooperating teacher preparation, and mentor matching principles in their study. Because the focus of this study was to look at considerations beyond the cooperating teacher, the items of mentor matching principles and cooperating teacher preparation were purposely eliminated. The areas of site placement considerations adapted for this study were in the following categories:

Collaboration:

Placing prospective teachers in schools with which your institution has a formally

established collaborative relationship.

Assigning prospective teachers to work in a particular "school" as opposed to placing them with a specific cooperating teacher.

Placing prospective teachers in settings where the teaching practices/strategies are consistent with those advocated by college faculty.

Diversity:

Making placements in culturally/racially diverse schools/classrooms.

Challenging Beliefs:

Placing prospective teachers in a school or classroom where teachers are challenging established educational policies and practices.

Placing prospective teachers in a school or with a teacher committed to restructuring/reform.

Clustering:

Making placements in schools/classrooms located in close proximity to your institution.

Placing groups of prospective teachers in the same building or close to each other.

Questions and statements concerning cooperating teachers were intentionally omitted in order to focus on considerations of collaboration, coherence of programs, cohorts, the significance of whole schools as sites committed to improving education, diversity, faculty roles, and location.

The third section of the survey contained 4 open-ended items (17 to 20) and provided an opportunity for respondents to indicate (a) the criteria they considered when

matching student teachers with clinical placement sites, (b) the most important criteria to consider, (c) their personal, ideal model for matching student teachers with clinical placement sites, and (d) the congruence of their personal view of matching with the procedures enacted in their teacher education program. The open-ended questions followed this principle: "to enable the researcher to understand and capture the points of view of other people without predetermining those standpoints through prior selection of questionnaire categories" (Patton, 1990, p. 24). This section of my survey provided an opportunity to gain information from the participants that the Likert-type scale items could not.

Onwuegbuzie and Johnson (2006) discuss sequential mixed designs, such as the one used in this study, saying that "data collected and analyzed from one phase of the study are used to inform the other phase of the investigation" (p. 53). In this instance, the "data analysis begins before all of the data are collected" (p. 53). After analyzing the initial survey data, I conducted follow-up interviews by telephone with 8 volunteers from among the coordinators. I conducted these phone interviews with selected respondents to further explore, probe, and clarify their responses to the initial online survey.

The telephone mode of interviewing, according to Frey and Oishi (1995), is efficient in time and cost, provides increased confidentiality, and causes fewer interviewer effects than face-to-face interviews. Frey and Oishi also report that socially desirable responses, i.e., those to elicit the approval of the interviewer, are fewer via telephone interviews. In this study, the phone interviews provided an opportunity for in-depth exploration and probing of the student teaching coordinators' values and

preferences about matching student teachers with clinical placement sites as well as the congruence or discrepancy between their perceptions and actual practices. My interviews also provided a "validity check" (Schuman, 1970, as cited in Glesne, 1999, p. 68) of the responses to the survey items. Schuman clarifies the purpose of a validity check in that the interviewer can probe responses such as "strongly agree" or "strongly disagree" to determine the participants' meaning, their perception of the item, and the possible reasons for the respondents' selections. My probing illuminated the respondents' perceptions of the questions and gave me valuable insights into their answers as well as unique perspectives on matching.

In selecting the participants for the follow-up interviews for the study, I reviewed their responses to the online survey for consistent patterns of response, discrepancies, and innovative or interesting responses. My intent was to clarify, extend, and probe their responses for a deeper understanding of them.

Data Collection Procedures

To develop a database of contacts, I called all 93 teacher education programs on the list I obtained from The Pennsylvania Department of Education in order to find the appropriate persons to contact to procure participants for the survey. I attempted to speak with the person responsible for matching student teachers with clinical placement sites, not only to obtain their email address for the online survey but also to establish rapport with the student teaching coordinator. I called every teacher education program at least three times to speak with the student teaching coordinator. If the person was not

available, I left a message each time. Several return calls provided contact with the coordinator. Occasionally the respondent left a message on my voicemail, which included his or her email address. In some instances, after several attempts to speak personally with the student teaching coordinator, I obtained the coordinator's email address from an administrative assistant. This process of recruitment began in August 2007.

Following my research approval from the Office of Research Protections at Penn State University in July 2007, I sent an online survey recruitment letter via email (see Appendix D) to 74 people responsible for matching student teachers with placement sites. I sent the first request on September 20, 2007. I obtained additional contact information after I emailed the initial survey and subsequently emailed recruitment letters to those prospective participants, which brought the total to 80. Two weeks later I sent a follow-up reminder to all contacts. I repeated attempts to contact additional participants to enhance the percentage of the return rate. I made four additional contacts, which brought the total to 84. Five of the surveys emailed "bounced back" via mailer daemon. Two were corrected by an additional phone call to the recipient, bringing the final total to 81. The last online survey remained open until January 2008. Two participants were apprehensive of online surveys and requested that I mail them a hard copy, which they completed and returned. One participant who was unable to retrieve the survey online also completed the hard copy. Another participant indicated that she was reluctant to complete the survey because she was being paid to work for her college. She emailed her responses to the open-ended questions only. The overall response rate was 46 or 56%.

The second phase of data collection entailed follow-up interviews with a selective

pool of respondents who volunteered contact information on the initial online survey. The interview recruitment letter for volunteer interviewees is in Appendix E. The verbal consent script and telephone interview guide are in Appendixes F and G, respectively.

The structure of the interviews included a combination of main questions focusing on the crux of the research questions and follow-up questions and probes to ensure "depth, detail, vividness, richness, and nuance" (Rubin & Rubin, 2005, p. 129). I selected 8 interviewees (of the 16 who volunteered) based on their consistent patterns of response to the survey items, as well as their discrepant responses, and/or innovative and interesting responses to the open-ended questions. Prior to conducting my telephone interviews in December 2007 and January 2008, I submitted a Modification Request to The Pennsylvania State University Office for Research Protection of Human Subjects, including a list of the guiding interview questions for approval (see Appendix H).

Then I contacted the interview participants via email or telephone to arrange a convenient time for the interview. At the scheduled interview appointment time, I read the verbal consent over the phone to the interviewee, which included a request for their permission to audio tape the interview. I used 6 guiding questions to provide structure to probe and clarify their individual responses to the survey. I used 2 additional questions that resulted from working "back and forth between inductive and deductive models" (Cresswell, 1994, p. 178) to hopefully "secure an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon" (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003, p. 8) of the emerging theme of accessibility to placements and the hardship of securing placements for student teachers that some colleges and universities are facing.

Validation of the Study

For the purposes of this study, I based part of my online survey (see Appendix C) on questions from Potthoff and Alley's 1996 validated survey on selecting placement sites for student teachers. I redesigned and adapted items from their survey that were pertinent to my research questions.

The original draft of my survey was evaluated by my advisor and doctoral committee for content validity, which according to Litwin (1995, p. 35) is a "subjective measure of how appropriate the survey items seem to a set of reviewers who have some knowledge of the subject matter." Although content validity is not a scientific measure of the validity of a survey, it provides a "good foundation on which to build a methodologically rigorous assessment of a survey instrument's validity" (p. 35). The members of my committee who provided content validity, serving as an expert panel, included Dr. Debra Freedman (my original advisor and committee chair), Dr. Bernard Badiali (my current advisor and committee chair), Dr. Iris Striedieck, and Dr. Edgar Yoder, two of my doctoral committee members.

I revised my online survey based on the comments and recommendations of this expert panel. Especially, I revised the research questions and survey items based on their recommendations in order to focus the study. I emailed copies of my revisions to all my committee members and received approval from my advisor in July 2007 to proceed with the survey. My revisions included the deletion of items concerning cooperating teachers in order to refine and focus the study on other contextual considerations for matching student teachers and clinical placement sites. I changed the wording on the follow-up

interview statement to eliminate the term 'anonymous' and added the term 'confidential.'

Prior to the main study, I pilot tested the online survey via email to several educators, and gave other colleagues hard copies of the survey to review. These educators and colleagues had been involved in teacher education for 23 years and 10 years, respectively. They had extensive experience in field-based supervision. The pilot test of the online survey met with their approval.

In order to verify the telephone interview responses in the follow-up to the online survey for the main study, I used a teacher educator who had supervised student teachers for eight years as an external reviewer. The role of this reviewer was to check whether my interpretation of the information was fair. I provided certain quantities of information from the open-ended survey responses and interview responses to the reviewer. No identifying information as to the person responding to the survey or the institution was given. She assessed my interpretation of the interview responses as fair and accurate. I used an external reviewer in keeping with Krefting's (1991, p. 219) rationale for peer examination, i.e., using "impartial colleagues who have experience with qualitative methods" as a technique to check for accurate interpretation. Lincoln and Guba, (1985, as cited in Mertens, p. 350) also support the use of an "auditor" to examine the fairness of the research process and accuracy of the product in terms of internal coherence and support by data.

Examples of checking for the accuracy of my interpretation follow: Interview question #5 stated, "Several respondents indicated that it is challenging to find quality placements or numbers of placements for student teachers. Do you agree? What

suggestions do you have to remedy this situation? One respondent reported that he "totally agreed." Because of the PSSAs, he reported that principals discourage teachers from taking student teachers and that cooperating teachers won't take student teachers. He reported that if cooperating teachers do have student teachers, they "take back" classes during test preparation time and the student teachers have to "step back to an observation mode." Because of the PSSA challenge, his solution was to change the timing of the student teaching. This timing could be interpreted as the time of year (fall or spring) or extending the length of the placement to accommodate the lapse in practice teaching during PSSA testing. This extension could result in a possible 6-week extension in some cases. In a related response, another participant stated that due to testing pressures, some schools were "crossed off" because student teachers were not teaching 6 weeks prior to PSSA testing. Another participant reflected that cooperating teachers are hesitant and may refuse to mentor student teachers during PSSA preparation. His solution was to place student teachers in "private or Christian" schools. By examining these responses, the reviewer and I agreed that the "timing" of student teaching reflected the time of year (spring or fall) as opposed to extending the length of the placement to accommodate the PSSA experience. We also concurred that PSSA testing affected the acquisition of placements as well as the quality of the experience.

Another example for review of the same item on finding placements included a respondent who mentioned "a formalized link" and "What is the district responsibility?" The reviewer and I interpreted her statements to mean that she inferred that the state should hold K-12 schools accountable to support student teaching in some way.

Data Analysis Procedures

Miles and Huberman (1994) define analysis as "consisting of three concurrent flows of activity: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing/verification" (p. 10). This process involves "selecting, focusing, simplifying, abstracting, and transforming the data" (p. 10). The quantitative methods I used in the study included 10 survey items in a Likert-type scale format in my online survey. My qualitative methods included 4 open-ended items in the survey and 6 follow-up interview questions by phone with volunteer interviewees who had completed the survey.

Following my data collection, I assigned codes to each participant, using the labels "P1" – "P46" to categorize each, and "S", "P", and "SA" to indicate the type of institution (state, private, or state-assisted) they were associated with. The state-assisted designation combined the state-related and state aided institutions. For example, "P1-P" represents the first participant who also works at a private college or university.

Upon completion of the identification codes, I examined the quantitative survey data (the results of the Likert-type scale items) using frequencies, percentages, and measures of central tendency. The frequency distribution indicates the number of responses in the same category or those having the same score. The measures of central tendency noted in the tables for this study included the mean or average, the mode or the most frequent response, and the median or the midpoint of the distribution. The standard deviation is also included, which shows the distribution of the scores and how much each score deviates from the mean (Huck, 2004). I used the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) Version 15 to analyze these statistics in order to display the results.

Merriam (2001) describes the data analysis as "the process of making sense out of the data" (p. 178). Hence, I reviewed the open-ended survey items in order to categorize the participants' responses. I sorted their responses to the 4 open-ended items into response categories. These categories according to Merriam "are most commonly constructed through the constant comparative method of data analysis" (p. 179). Ryan and Bernard (2000) identify coding as the most important part of the data analysis because it enables the researcher to determine and deduce the meanings of the data. Several themes or patterns emerged from this data set.

After I coded all the survey responses, I examined them to select a number of follow-up interviewees based on the previously stated criteria, i.e., the consistent patterns of response, discrepancies, and innovative or interesting responses. Examples reflecting the criteria for selection follow: In one instance, the respondent indicated a "neutral" response to item #9 which stated, "It is important to place student teachers in a particular school as opposed to placing them with specific cooperating teachers." Her open-ended responses to criteria considered, most important considerations, and the ideal model for matching strongly supported the cooperating teacher and personality as considerations for matching. She was consistent in her survey responses and remained consistent in the phone interview, stating, "The most important thing is to match them" (referring to the cooperating teacher and student teacher). She stated, "We have made a concerted effort to match each personality with a compatible personality. Every once in a while we don't quite get there even knowing them as well as we do." There was no empirical measure for the "match", yet this participant was consistent.

In another instance, I selected an interviewee who "agreed" that placing student teachers in cohorts was important. She did not report cohorts as a current consideration or a most important consideration in the open-ended items, but she reported that an ideal model would involve cohorts. During the interview, she spoke about finding ways to implement cohorts in her program. She obviously felt the practice was important, but not currently evident in her program. Her somewhat discrepant responses in the survey led to clarification during the interview.

I selected another respondent for an interview based on his emphatic response stating, "We do not have much of a say anymore" referring to item #17 which asked, "What criteria do you consider when you match student teachers with clinical placement sites?" He continued to express the fact that accessibility to placements due to PSSAs negates any criteria that teacher education programs may desire or value concerning matching, and indicated that colleges and universities are "at the mercy" of K-12 schools for placements. This situation is in direct contrast to the literature which places the teacher education program in the position of authority according to Levine (1992). This interviewee vocalized much frustration and candor in his responses. His interview responses were notably demonstrative and laden with concern about the quality of student teaching experiences due to competition for "slots" because of PSSAs. He was consistent and emphatic in his responses. He depicted the substance of an innovative and surprising finding in the study that accessibility to placements due to PSSA testing has a profound effect on teacher preparation.

The interviewees were designated as "Interviewee 1" through "Interviewee 8."

Similarly I reviewed the interview responses using the constant comparative method of data analysis (Merriam, 2001). In their phone conversations, the interviewees clarified their individual responses to the survey items as well as provided responses to two questions generated from my sense of what had arisen from their open-ended responses.

In summary, I used descriptive statistics to analyze the quantitative survey questions (Likert-type scale items) as they related to the research questions. The participants' responses to the open-ended questions both on the survey and in the telephone interviews supported the quantitative data in addition to revealing patterns and themes relating to the research questions. The results of all the methods of data analysis are reported in Chapter Four.

Chapter Summary

This chapter has described the methodology for this study, which included both quantitative and qualitative components. The two-phase, sequential procedure for collecting the data involved an online survey of 81 student teaching coordinators in Pennsylvania, with 46 responses to the survey, followed by interviews of 8 of the coordinators who had participated in the survey. The chapter also explains the process of developing and testing the instrumentation, the procedures for approval of the instruments and the study, the data collection, validation of the data, and the data analysis.

Chapter Four

RESULTS

This chapter presents the results of the analysis of the quantitative and qualitative data regarding the participants' practices and perceptions of matching student teachers with clinical placement sites. These data were derived from an online survey of student teaching coordinators in Pennsylvania and follow-up interviews of several participants. Given that 46 of the 81 student teaching coordinators contacted completed the survey, the return rate was 56%. According to Babbie (1998) a return rate of 50% is adequate. Out of 46 respondents, 16 provided contact information, thus volunteering for the follow-up interviews, from which 8 were selected.

The purpose of this study was to examine the current considerations for matching student teachers with clinical placement sites and the perceptions of the most important considerations for matching as reported by student teacher coordinators in the state of Pennsylvania. The following research questions guided the study:

1. What criteria do student teaching coordinators in the state of Pennsylvania consider in order to match student teachers with clinical placement sites?

2. What perceptions do student teaching coordinators in the state of Pennsylvania hold as the most important considerations in matching student teachers with clinical placement sites?

The Participants' Demographic Information

The demographic information reported by the study participants in the first section of the online survey indicated their title or position at their institution, the kind of institution they serve, and their rates of placement of student teachers in the past 3 years. Table 4.1 shows the variety of titles held by the student teaching coordinators according to their survey responses. The titles of these coordinators vary since many serve in other positions at their institutions besides student teaching coordinator.

Table 4.1

Current Titles Reported by the Respondents

Current Position	Frequency	Valid Percent
Administrative assistant	1	2.2
Administrative director of elementary/special education	1	2.2
Assistant dean and student teaching coordinator	1	2.2
Assistant director of teacher education	1	2.2
Assistant professor and director of field experiences	1	2.2
Assistant professor of education	1	2.2
Assistant professor of education	1	2.2
Assistant professor of education and coordinator of student teaching	1	2.2
Associate dean and director of field services	2	4.3
Associate dean for teacher education	1	2.2
Associate professor and director of student teaching	1	2.2
Chair, education department	4	8.7
Chair, teacher education	1	2.2
Coordinator of clinical experiences	1	2.2
Coordinator of field experiences	1	2.2
Coordinator of field experiences and supervisor	1	2.2
Coordinator of field placements and supervision	1	2.2
Coordinator of student teaching	1	2.2
Director of clinical experiences	1	2.2
Director of field experience	1	2.2
Director of field experiences	1	2.2
Director of field placement	1	2.2
Director of professional education field experience	1	2.2
Director of student teaching	3	6.5
Director of student teaching and field placement	1	2.2
Director of undergraduate programs, School of Education	1	2.2
Director of student teaching	1	2.2
Educational field services coordinator	1	2.2
Elementary and kindergarten education coordinator	1	2.2
Field placement coordinator	1	2.2
No title provided	3	6.5
Professor and department chair	1	2.2
Professor and director of student teaching	1	2.2
Professor / supervision	1	2.2
Program administrator	1	2.2
Student teaching coordinator	1	2.2
Supervisor of student teachers	1	2.2
Teacher certification officer	1	2.2
Total	46	100.0

As Table 4.2 indicates, 77.8% of the respondents in the study were from private institutions, with 15.6% being from state institutions and 6.7% from state-assisted institutions. According to the Department of Education listing of the 93 teacher education programs in Pennsylvania, 67 were listed as being at private institutions, 14 at state institutions, 4 at state-assisted institutions, and 8 at state-aided institutions. As aforementioned, the state-related and state-aided programs were combined and listed as state-assisted in this study.

Table 4.2

Type of Institution

Type of Institution		Count	Column N %
Our institution can be characterized as a_____.	State institution	7	15.6%
	State-assisted institution	3	6.7%
	Private	35	77.8%
	Total	45	100.0%
	Missing	1	
	Total	46	

Table 4.3 presents an average of the breakdown of elementary and secondary school student teacher placements during the last 3 years as reported by the student teaching coordinators. The number of student teachers placed overall on average during the last 3 years was 23.9% in the 1-50 students category, 22.7% in the 51-100 category, and 19.6% in the more than 300 category.

Table 4.3

Number of Student Teachers Placed in the Past 3 Years (N = 46)

Item and Response Category		Column Total N%
Student teachers placed on average for last three years	1-50	23.9%
	51-100	21.7%
	101-150	10.9%
	151-200	6.5%
	201-250	10.9%
	251-300	6.5%
	More than 300	19.6%
	Total	100.0%
Elementary student teachers on average last three years (K-8)	1-50	32.6%
	51-100	21.7%
	101-150	10.9%
	151-200	10.9%
	201-250	10.9%
	251-300	2.2%
	More than 300	6.5%
	Total	100.0%
Secondary student teachers on average last three years (9-12)	1-50	52.2%
	51-100	17.4%
	101-150	17.4%
	151-200	6.5%
	201-250	.0%
	251-300	.0%
	More than 300	2.2%
	Total	100.0%

Question #4 in the online survey of the coordinators was intended to document the number of placements completed at the various institutions over the last three years. Table 4.4 summarizes the placements per quarter, semester, or year based on the institution's calendar year. There were only 2 institutions on the quarter system, which both indicated one placement per quarter. There were 39 institutions that placed students per semester. Of those, 51.3% or 20 respondents indicated making one placement per semester, and 43.6% or 17 respondents indicated making two placements per semester. There were 2 institutions that had made three placements per semester. One placement per year of student teachers was indicated by 53.8% of the respondents in this category. There were two placements for student teaching for one year, comprising 23.1% of the responses in this category, and three one-year placements or 15.4% of the responses in this category. One institution (7.7%) had zero (0) placements per year. It is curious how that result could occur, although it was reported as such.

Table 4.4

Summary of Student Teaching Placements in the Past 3 Years

Item and Response		Count	Column Valid N%
ST placements per quarter	1	2	100.0%
			100.0%
	Total	2	
ST placements per semester	1	20	51.3%
	2	17	43.6%
	3	2	5.1%
			100.0%
	Total	39	
ST placements per year	0	1	7.7%
	1	7	53.8%
	2	3	23.1%
	3	2	15.4%
	Total	13	100.0%

Tables 4.5, 4.6, and 4.7 summarize teacher education institution reported data on student teachers placed in suburban, urban, and rural school settings over the past three years. The student teaching coordinators at their various institutions were asked to indicate the number of student teachers that were placed in those three types of school settings during the past three years. The respondents representing 43 teacher education institutions reported a mean of 47.44%, with a standard deviation of 26.19% and a median of 50% of student teachers who were placed in suburban school settings. Respondents from 42 teacher education institutions reported a mean of 28.91% with a standard deviation of 23.63% and a median of 25%, of the student teachers who were placed in urban school settings. Respondents from 42 teacher education institutions reported a mean of 26.64%, with a standard deviation of 30.63% and a median of 17.5% of student teachers who were placed in rural settings.

Of particular interest are some of the specific percentages reported by the teacher

education institution representatives. Four (9.3%) indicated 0% placement of student

teachers in suburban settings over the past three years (see Table 4.5). Approximately

49% or 21 respondents reported placing 1% to 30% of their student teachers in suburban

settings the past three years. Approximately 37% of the respondents reported placing

31% to 60% of their student teachers in suburban settings, while 4.6% indicated that 61%

to 100% of their student teachers were placed in suburban settings the past three years.

Table 4.5

Percentage of Student Teachers Placed in Suburban Settings in the Past 3 Years

Responses in Percent		Number of Respondents	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
	0%	4	9.3	9.3
	1%	2	4.7	14.0
	2%	1	2.3	16.3
	4%	1	2.3	18.6
	5%	1	2.3	20.9
	8%	1	2.3	23.3
	10%	4	9.3	32.6
	15%	1	2.3	34.9
	20%	6	14.0	48.8
	25%	2	4.7	53.5
	30%	2	4.7	58.1
	35%	2	4.7	62.8
	40%	3	7.0	69.8
	45%	1	2.3	72.1
	50%	8	18.6	90.7
	60%	2	4.7	95.3
	82%	1	2.3	97.7
	100%	1	2.3	100.0
	Total	43	100.0	
Missing	System	3		
Total		46		

Summary statistics: Mean = 47.44% with a standard deviation of 26.19%;
Median = 50%; Mode = 50%

Table 4.6 shows that 4.7% (2 out of 43) of the teacher education coordinators

reported placing 0% of their student teachers in urban settings the past three years. Eight

(18.6%) reported placing from 1% to 30% in urban settings, and an additional 55.9% (24

out of 43) reported placing 31% to 60% of their student teachers in urban settings. Nine

(20.9%) of the coordinators reported placing from 61% to 100% in urban settings.

Table 4.6

Percentage of Student Teachers Placed in Urban Settings in the Past 3 Years

Responses in Percent		Number of Respondents	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
	0%	2	4.7	4.7
	2%	1	2.3	7.0
	5%	1	2.3	9.3
	7%	1	2.3	11.6
	15%	1	2.3	14.0
	20%	1	2.3	16.3
	25%	2	4.7	20.9
	30%	1	2.3	23.3
	35%	3	7.0	30.2
	40%	6	14.0	44.2
	45%	1	2.3	46.5
	49%	1	2.3	48.8
	50%	6	14.0	62.8
	55%	3	7.0	69.8
	60%	4	9.3	79.1
	70%	2	4.7	83.7
	75%	1	2.3	86.0
	80%	1	2.3	88.4
	85%	1	2.3	90.7
	90%	1	2.3	93.0
	97%	1	2.3	95.3
	100%	2	4.7	100.0
	Total	43	100.0	
Missing	System	3		
Total		46		

Summary statistics: Mean = 28.91% with a standard deviation of 23.63%;
Median = 25%; Mode = 50%

Table 4.7 summarizes the percentage of student teachers placed in rural settings over the past three years. Ten of the 42 teacher education institution representatives (23.8%) reported that 0% of the student teachers had been placed in rural school settings for the past three years. An additional 45.2% indicated placing from 1% to 30% of student teachers in rural school districts. Five respondents or 12% reported placing 31% to 60% of their student teachers in rural school settings, while 8 respondents or 19% indicated that 61% to 100% of their student teachers were placed in rural settings.

Table 4.7

Percentage of Student Teachers Placed in Rural Settings in the Past 3 Years

Response in Percent	Number of Respondents	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
0%	10	23.8	23.8
1%	2	4.8	28.6
5%	4	9.5	38.1
10%	4	9.5	47.6
15%	1	2.4	50.0
20%	5	11.9	61.9
25%	2	4.8	66.7
30%	1	2.4	69.0
35%	2	4.8	73.8
40%	1	2.4	76.2
44%	1	2.4	78.6
60%	1	2.4	81.0
65%	2	4.8	85.7
70%	1	2.4	88.1
80%	2	4.8	92.9
94%	2	4.8	97.6
100%	1	2.4	100.0
Total	42	100.0	
Missing System	4		
Total	46		

Summary statistics: Mean = 26.64% with a standard deviation of 30.63%;
Median = 17.50%; Mode = 0%

To clarify and gain more depth from the responses to the online survey, I purposively selected 8 participants for follow-up interviews based on their responses, although 16 agreed to be interviewed. I conducted these follow-up interviews by telephone with the 8 student teaching coordinators. According to Seidman (1998, p. 12),

in-depth interviewing's strength is that we can come to understand the details of people's experiences from their point of view. We can see how their individual experience interacts with powerful social and organizational forces that pervade the context in which they live and work, and we can discover the interconnections among people who live and work in a shared context.

The interviewees in this study are categorized by gender, title, type of institution, and average number of student teachers placed per academic year (see Table 4.8).

Creswell et al. (2003, as cited in Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007, p. 72) state that "the explanatory design is a two-phase mixed methods design. The purpose is to utilize qualitative data to build on initial quantitative results. It is an appropriate design when the researcher wants to use quantitative characteristics to guide purposeful sampling for a qualitative phase." In my study, the second phase of the data collection (the follow-up interviews) was based on both quantitative and qualitative data already collected in the first phase (the online interview). In the report of the results that follow, the qualitative questions in the survey and interviews are related to both the quantitative and qualitative results of the online survey.

Table 4.8

Summary of Interviewee Characteristics

Interviewee	Gender	Title	Type of Institution	Number of Student Teachers Placed per Year
#1	Male	Educational Field Service Coordinator	Private	1-50
#2	Female	Director of Student Teaching	Private	1-50
#3	Female	Chair, Education Department	Private	1-50
#4	Female	Director of Student Teaching	State	201-250
#5	Female	Assistant Professor of Education	Private	1-50
#6	Male	Assistant Professor of Education/ Coordinator of Student Teaching	Private	101-150
#7	Male	Chair, Teacher Education	Private	1-50
#8	Male	Director of Student Teaching	Private	151-200

Results for Research Question #1

Ten primary themes emerged from the data relating to research question #1,

"What criteria do student teaching coordinators in the state of Pennsylvania consider in

order to match student teachers with clinical placement sites?" These themes included the

cooperating teacher, collaboration, accessibility to placements, the school site, diversity,

coherence, cohorts, location, certification requirements, and student requests.

The Cooperating Teacher

In this study, the Likert-type scale items were intentionally designed to omit

statements about cooperating teachers except for mention of placing student teachers in a

particular "school" as opposed to placing them with a specific cooperating teacher as

indicated in item #9 ("It is important to place student teachers in a particular "school" as

opposed to placing them with specific cooperating teachers."). In spite of the lack of

emphasis on or attention to cooperating teachers in the initial Likert-type scale survey

items, the cooperating teacher was the most compelling theme that surfaced from the

open-ended portion of the survey as well as one of the most important themes from the

telephone interviews.

In item #17, which asked, "What criteria do you consider when matching student

teachers with clinical placement sites?", the predominant response was the quality of the

cooperating teacher. Quality was explained in terms of years of experience and expertise

as a teacher, mentoring abilities, personality, collaboration with the college or university,

and recommendations by building principals or former student teachers. Expertise

encompassed certification as a master teacher, three to five years of experience, and being a positive role model.

Collaboration emerged as a strong indicator of the quality of the cooperating teacher. Collaboration included the cooperating teacher's familiarity with the program, willingness to communicate with the teacher education program, and to "follow handbook requirements", attendance at cooperating teacher trainings as well as their willingness to give student teachers the opportunity to practice what they have learned in methods courses. Additional open-ended responses were "willingness to work with student teachers" and the "openness of the cooperating teacher to student experimentation." Recommendations by the building principal and former student teachers as well as past experiences with particular cooperating teachers also reflected a standard of cooperating teacher quality according to the open-ended responses.

Also in response to item #17, one participant stated, "I consider the professional styles and overall strengths of the individual teachers as well as their individual personalities." Another participant commented, "Cooperating teachers need to be experienced according to PDE guidelines and willing to share the classroom setting with the student teacher."

The interviewees also strongly supported the importance of the cooperating teacher in their current considerations for matching. Interviewee #4 stated:

We go minimally by the state's requirements of 3 years. We also go by the interaction with former student teachers. And, I also go a lot by what the principal says. They really know their staff. I find that very, very helpful. Supervisors are

very astute. Sometimes they come back and say, "I wouldn't use that teacher

again because that person is not a good role model and does not provide our

students with a good experience."

Interviewee #3 indicated that student teachers evaluate cooperating teachers by

describing their "strengths and weaknesses." She stated, "I have a really good list. I've

eliminated some – that's something you really have to do." She discussed matching

student teachers with cooperating teachers according to personality as stated in the open-

ended portion of her survey response as follows:

We have made a concerted effort to match the personality (of the student) with a

compatible personality as far as the cooperating teacher goes. In a smaller school,

our students are advised by faculty and we get to know students as well as you get

to know students. Every once in a while we don't quite get there.

Collaboration

Collaboration as defined in this study includes the act of working together and

establishing partnerships as demonstrated by the teacher education programs, K-12

schools, and students. Items #8, #11, and #12 (see Appendix C) on the quantitative

section of the survey address collaboration as an important consideration for placement.

On Item #8 of the Likert scale section of the survey, the participants rated the importance

of a written, formally established collaborative relationship. The data in Table 4.9 show

the largest number of participants (58.7%) who agreed (32.6%) or strongly agreed

(26.1%) that it is important to have a written, formally established collaborative

relationship. However, a little less than half (or 41.2%) indicated a neutral position

(21.7%), disagreed (15.2%), or strongly disagreed (4.3%) with this practice.

The open-ended responses and interviews revealed that the participants strongly

supported collaboration, but a formal written agreement between the placement site and

the teacher education program was less significant, and very few participants or

interviewees felt that a written agreement was necessary. However, the wording of item

#8 may have confused the participants. Separating collaboration from the written

agreement may have added clarity to this item.

The interviewees also expressed strong feelings about collaboration between

teacher education programs and clinical placement sites. Interviewee #1 said that

"collaboration is key." Interviewee #2 indicated that collaboration is evident between the

university and clinical placement sites as demonstrated by faculty participating in literacy

coaching in schools, science methods faculty participating in science fairs, and

opportunities for university faculty and school faculty to attend summer conferences

together. Another interviewee (#4) revealed that their university faculty teach the writing

process in the schools and that teachers are guest speakers in university classes.

Interviewee #7 stated that "collaborative relationships would be great, but they

don't exist. We work with so many districts – the districts are serving us, we're not

serving them." When asked for clarification to a neutral response to the item about the

importance of collaboration, Interviewee #7 replied emphatically, "Absolutely!"

However, as with several participants, this interviewee felt a formal, written agreement

was not required. This probing for clarification added credence to my query about the

construction of the item.

As stated previously, most participants did not feel that a formal, written agreement was required. Interviewee #1 felt that a formal agreement wasn't necessary and stated, "I've never had any problem." Interviewee #8 supported the signing of an agreement by the Human Resources Department at the school and the Curriculum and Instruction Department at the university as is practiced in his program, but like other interviewees, stated that no formal contract was in place.

Interviewee #4 summed up her views on collaboration with the following comments about the relationship of universities and school districts:

I think we have to have more cooperation from the universities to the school districts. People need to get to know each other. If universities aren't careful they come across as all-knowing, and people should pay attention to what they're saying. And really, it's the people in the field who know what they're doing – they really do – they know kids, they know what it's all about. I think there needs to be a better collaboration.

Accessibility to Placements

The accessibility to placements emerged as a robust theme in the responses to open-ended item #17, as well as throughout the study. Many participants directly cited "the availability of placements" in response to item #17. Accessibility appeared to include the number of sites available in a district, the cooperating teacher's willingness to accept a student teacher, principal permission, and the "availability of placements with

desired teachers (master teachers with whom our students will thrive and grow)."

The School Site

Item #9 in the Likert-type scale portion of the survey stated, "It is important to place student teachers in a "particular school" as opposed to placing them with specific cooperating teachers. The distribution of responses to this item showed that 0% of the participants strongly agreed, 26.1% agreed, 26.1% remained neutral, 47.8% disagreed, and 0% strongly disagreed. Item #13 stated, "It is important to place student teachers in clinical placement sites committed to enhancing and improving education." This item revealed that 76.1% of the participants strongly agreed. Those who agreed comprised 6.5%, neutral responses totaled 0%, and those disagreeing (4.3%) or strongly disagreeing (13%) totaled 17.3%.

The participants supported the school site as a criterion considered in matching. Responses to the open-ended section of the survey talked about the "positive teaching and learning practices", "the environment of the school site", and "reputation of the school or district."

The interviewees reiterated their responses to item #9 by clarifying their "disagree" responses. Interviewee #2 said that selection of the "cooperating teacher is the most significant" versus the school. Interviewee #4 also stated emphatically, "The teacher is the most important part! Not the school." Interviewee #7 concurred that the "school isn't the most important, it's the person" (referring to the cooperating teacher).

Diversity

Likert-type scale survey items 7 to 16 were designed to determine the importance given to considerations evident in the literature about matching student teachers with clinical placement sites. Table 4.9 shows that 41.3% of the respondents strongly agreed and 28.3% agreed with item #7, "It is important to place student teachers in racially/culturally diverse clinical placement sites." Neutral responses comprised 15.2% while 10.9% of the respondents strongly disagreed and 4.3% disagreed with the statement.

The open-ended responses revealed that 9 out of the 46 total participants considered diversity when matching student teachers with clinical placement sites. Those who agreed or strongly agreed that they considered diversity when placing student teachers attempted to vary placements among suburban, urban, and rural settings. One participant stated, "We place all student teachers in a diverse setting because of NCATE."

The interviewees' responses concerning diversity as a matching consideration follow. Given the fact that many colleges and universities in Pennsylvania are situated in rural locations, the concerted efforts of some teacher education programs to achieve placements in diverse schools can be daunting. "Not everybody gets that chance" reported a student teaching coordinator from a university where 100% of the placements are in rural districts. "As we're restructuring, we're in the discussion stages with Trenton, New Jersey, and Philadelphia." This interviewee expressed the possibility of providing exposure for "a week or so" in a diverse setting. Similarly, one interviewee stated that her

student teachers complete one full week (40 hours) in an urban placement. When asked if she anticipates a change beyond the 40 hours, she replied, "I do." She explained that currently there is a proposal in her curriculum committee whereby education students may elect to spend a whole semester in the Pittsburgh schools if approved. "There has got to be some preparation for diversity," she added.

In concurrence, interviewee #5 also indicated progress in providing student teachers with exposure to diverse populations during a possible summer teaching experience. Details for such a possibility were not available at the time of the interview.

One interviewee (#7) stated that although situated in the northeastern part of the state, close to a large diverse urban district, the district does "not want student teachers", so the college is forced to send students farther away to Philadelphia, requiring travel time of 2 ¾ hours.

Diversity as a current consideration for matching was addressed by a limited number of respondents in the qualitative portion of the survey and interviews, and 70% in the quantitative section agreed or strongly agreed that it is important.

It is definitely a challenge for rural schools and some suburban schools to comply with the Pennsylvania Standards for Teacher Education and NCATE in regard to providing student teachers with experience of diversity, as indicated by the participants. The effort to prepare "culturally competent" teachers when diverse placements are not readily available is challenging. Often, however, such limited efforts lead to mere exposure rather than in-depth opportunities for diverse student teaching experiences.

One interviewee (#4) stated," I do believe that diversity is important. If student

teachers come from an inner-city school, then a rural placement would be their diverse placement. I think we have to look at all those factors."

Coherence

Coherence between the teacher education program and the host school can be viewed as a component of collaboration or as a separate entity. For the purpose of this study, coherence was viewed as a separate consideration for matching. Item #10 on the Likert-type scale section of the survey states, "It is important to place student teachers in clinical placement sites where the teaching practices and strategies are consistent with those advocated by college faculty." With this item, approximately 65% of the participants either strongly agreed (19.6%) or agreed (45.7%). Those participants remaining neutral made up 13% of the responses, and 21.8% disagreed (19.6%) or strongly disagreed (2.2%).

Item #12 in the Likert-type scale section of the survey stated, "It is important to place student teachers in clinical placement sites that have an understanding of the goals and expectations of your teacher education program." The results were that 58.7% of the participants strongly agreed and 26.1% agreed with this item, which was only 1 of 2 items in the quantitative section of the survey that received zero neutral responses. Only 15.2% of the participants disagreed (2.2%) or strongly disagreed (13%) with this item.

The open-ended responses for item #17, which reflected approximately 85% in the statistical results, did not indicate coherence of the program as a predominant current consideration for matching. However, support for coherence was evident in the responses to item #18 as mentioned later in this chapter.

When asked about coherence, Interviewee #4 reported, "I'm seeing it more and more. Initially, I didn't." Interviewee #3 indicated that there is more coherence in programs because new teachers are receiving training in current practices. Interviewee #7 asserted that coherence is not necessarily a consideration for currently placing student teachers, although it would be desirable. He answered as follows:

Some co-ops are willing, but others say, "No, you're not going to shake my boat. I don't want you (student teacher) to do something different because you're going to be leaving. They'll be mine again so I just want you to continue doing my thing."

Cohorts

A majority of the participants (53.3%) strongly agreed or agreed that it is important to place cohorts of student teachers in the same clinical placement site. Neutral responses to this item totaled 20%, and those who disagreed (22.2%) or strongly disagreed (4.4%) comprised 26.6% of the responses in the quantitative section of the survey. Opportunities for open-ended responses yielded only one comment about cohorts in item #17, namely that multiple placements in schools can also be interpreted as an opportunity for supervision.

Interviewee #1 who disagreed that cohorts were important as a consideration commented, "I only disagreed because we have not actually done it. We're seriously looking at the possibility of establishing a cohort setup. There aren't too many school districts that could handle a number of student teachers."

Another interviewee (#5) disagreed with placing cohorts of student teachers in

schools. This interviewee felt that students would be able to "share different, diversified experiences in the student teaching seminar" if they were not placed in cohorts. She also related her experiences that if one student in a cohort was having a negative experience with student teaching, he/she would be "pulling others down." She stated that in her experience, members of cohort groups actually stopped driving together for this reason.

Interviewee #7, who also disagreed with the importance of placing cohorts in clinical placement sites, said that in a "small college, the option is limited." He continued to say that the advantage of student teachers supporting each other is often overshadowed by problems of comparing who got a "luckier" or "better" placement, evidencing a "negative effect."

Despite the literature on cohorts cited in Chapter Two, and a relatively strong response on the Likert-scale type item about the importance of placing student teachers in cohorts, as indicated in Table 4.9, the open-ended opportunities for response were scant, and the interviews did not strongly prioritize cohorts as a consideration for matching student teachers with clinical placement sites. The only significant relationship found between private, state, and state-assisted institutions related to item #15 about cohorts. A significant Chi square test ($p = .038$) revealed that 43% of the 35 private institutions agreed or strongly agreed with this item. Eighty percent of the coordinators from 10 state or state-assisted institutions strongly agreed or agreed with item #15.

Location

Location surfaced in the study as a consideration for student teachers' benefit as

well as increased opportunities for university supervisors to observe student teachers. The participants mentioned the need for awareness of the student teachers' needs for transportation and the possibility of their carpooling to schools. Item #14 revealed that 45.6% strongly agreed (6.5%) or agreed (39.1%) that location was an important consideration, while 47.8% were neutral (21.7%) or disagreed (26.1%). Those who strongly disagreed comprised 6.5%.

When asked in the interviews about their responses of 'neutral' or 'disagree' in regard to location, Interviewee #3 felt that there were more important considerations to think about. This interviewee also noted that there were efforts to "place" student teachers with respect to location if the students felt there was a chance for future employment in an area where they would like to teach. Interviewee #6 disagreed with location as a consideration, on the basis of preferring "excellent placements in schools that are successful, and with teachers who are known to be excellent."

Certification Requirements

In the open-ended section of the survey, the participants mentioned certification requirements for the cooperating teachers, which would include grade level, subject area, and certification sought. This consideration is certainly expected and can be viewed as a likely response.

Student Requests

Student teacher requests for placements surfaced as a current consideration for matching. Their requests are often honored based on their preferences and personal

needs. The study participants' responses indicated that attention to student requests usually focused on "student choices", "student desires", and "students [being] permitted to request three schools in which they would like me to try to place them."

In sum, the current considerations for matching student teachers with clinical placement sites in the 46 teacher education programs in Pennsylvania represented in this study, as reported by their student teaching coordinators, included the cooperating teacher, collaboration, accessibility to placement, the school site, diversity, coherence, cohorts, location, certification requirements, and student requests.

Results for Research Question #2

The study participants' responses to the online survey, especially as elaborated on during interviews with several participants, revealed several considerations in the student teacher/placement matching process. Their revelations answered the second research question: "What perceptions do student teaching coordinators in the state of Pennsylvania hold as the most important considerations in matching student teachers with clinical placement sites?"

Open-ended item #18 asked, "What are the most important considerations for matching student teachers with clinical placement sites?" Similar themes emerged with the emphasis on the cooperating teacher, collaboration, and accessibility to placements as the three most important considerations, followed by the school site, diversity, and coherence. Additional themes mentioned included cohorts, location, certification, and student requests.

The Cooperating Teacher

The importance of the cooperating teacher again surfaced as the most compelling theme for matching student teachers and school sites. Quality cooperating teachers were reported in open-ended item #18 ("What are the most important considerations for matching student teachers with clinical placement sites?") to be excellent mentors who provide rich experiences, are willing to work with student teachers, and "recognize that student teachers are in the developmental stages of their teaching." These "excellent" mentors serve as professional role models, demonstrate a willingness to work with student teachers, are open-minded, and are respected as quality professionals. They participate in on-going professional development and "keep current on best practices and use research-based instructional and management strategies."

According to the additional open-ended responses about the quality of the cooperating teacher as the most important consideration for matching, such teachers are highly valued when they collaborate with the teacher education program, reflect congruent practices where "students have the opportunity to apply what they have learned", and openly communicate with the teacher education program.

The cooperating teacher's personality emerged as one of the most important factors in matching students with quality cooperating teachers. Recommendations by building principals, former student teachers, and supervisors surfaced as important considerations in item #17 ("What criteria do you consider when you match student teachers with clinical placement sites?"). The certification and experience of the cooperating teacher were also mentioned by the participants.

One participant, who selected cooperating teachers as one of the most important considerations for matching, emphasized, ". . . the professionalism of the teachers – well-versed in their field, progressive, enthusiastic about what they do. We want our students to 'catch the fire' and passion for teaching that a topnotch educator can provide through modeling and by examples day in and day out."

The interviewees concurred with the importance of the cooperating teacher. Interviewee #1 said, "If a student is with a good coop, I feel the experience will be more positive for them and it's also positive for the coop. I think the coop and district should grow from our students being there and our students should grow from being there too." These comments demonstrated the importance of the cooperating teacher as well as the value of collaboration.

Interviewee #3 said that "the relationship with the cooperating teacher is the most significant consideration for matching." She indicated that the teacher's style is important as well as personality. Communicating on an ongoing basis in addition to training sessions for cooperating teachers enhance collaborative relationships between the cooperating teacher and the college. Interviewee #5 felt that "compatibility" was important. She indicated that it is important to conduct interviews to gauge how student teachers and cooperating teachers "interact" and "get along."

The compelling theme of the importance of the cooperating teacher might be summed up in Interviewee #4's comment: "The cooperating teacher makes or breaks the situation."

Collaboration

Collaboration surfaced strongly again in item #17 as one of the most important considerations for matching. The coordinators' responses to this question inextricably linked the cooperating teacher, collaboration, and coherence. These responses included: "We use cooperating teachers who have strong relationships with our program", ". . . previously developed working relationships which establish congruence of mission and philosophy and academic approaches to teaching and learning", and "The personnel at the site work effectively with us in meeting student teacher needs."

Accessibility to Placements

The participants spoke about the availability of quality placements and accessibility to such placements. "Willingness" was mentioned in reference to the "principal", "cooperating teacher", and "school" in granting access to placements.

Seven out of eight interviewees expressed the importance of securing numbers of quality placements and the challenges that currently exist for doing so. This topic will be discussed at length later with the second wave of data reporting.

The School Site

The importance of the school site was somewhat more evident as one of the more important considerations in item #18 than in item #17. The participants commented on the "reputation" of the district or school with respect to "curriculum" and "student outcomes." Mention was made that the sites should be "accredited and have teachers who

are involved in on-going professional development." According to another participant, "finding sites that offer the chance to grow into a professional" is a most important consideration.

Interviewee #6 commented that schools with "positive teaching and learning practices" were desired. Interviewee #4 disagreed that the "school" was important: "The teacher is the most important part." Interviewee #2 also felt that the cooperating teacher is much more important than the school. When asked why he disagreed with item #9 on the Likert-type portion of the survey, which stated that it was important to place student teachers in a particular "school" as opposed to placing them with specific cooperating teachers, he replied, "I believe it's the teacher who is going to help the student teacher grow."

Diversity

In spite of the challenges stated previously, particularly in rural Pennsylvania teacher education programs, the participants felt that matching student teachers in diverse settings was an important consideration. One participant stated that "the cultural and ethnic composition of the student body" is one of the most important considerations for matching, while another said, "Students must learn cultural competence as teachers."

Coherence

Although the open-ended responses did not indicate that the coherence of the program was a predominant current consideration for matching, a few participants

included it as one of the most important considerations for matching. Comments from the

participants in the open-ended section of the survey included: "We place with teachers

whose practice is congruent with the expectations of our faculty" and ". . . teachers whose

teaching methods parallel what we teach in our methods courses." One participant cited

the importance of "working relationships which establish a congruence of mission and

philosophy and academic approaches to teaching and learning", while another thought a

most important consideration would be a "relationship with school coherence in order for

students to practice what they have learned."

Interviewee #7 disagreed with placing student teachers in schools where teaching

practices/strategies are consistent with those advocated by the faculty, stating,

> Practices are diverse. Many high quality practices may not be presented at a
>
> college. There is not one philosophy – You have to be open to creativity and
>
> practices. It is our job to learn. Students bring ideas back to the college. The
>
> faculty does not possess all the knowledge and skills – that is egotistical.

This perspective separates coherence from collaboration and possibly moves toward

diversity of experience, which is not to be confused with experience with a diverse

population.

Cohorts

Even though the statistical result (55%) showed support for cohorts as an

important consideration for matching, few student teaching coordinators indicated

cohorts as a priority, as expected. Although the respondents acknowledged the value of

cohorts, their comments were linked to the accessibility of placements.

Location

Location as one of the most important considerations was reportedly due to concern for transportation for students as well as about opportunities for supervision by the college faculty.

Certification Requirements

As expected, the certification of cooperating teachers was reported as an important consideration for matching student teachers with clinical placement sites.

Student Requests

Some student teaching coordinators felt it was a most important consideration for matching to honor the student teachers' requests for placement. One participant said, ". . . some students have had enough prior experiences to know their preferences." Another participant supported student requests by indicating that "some students are not comfortable in a rural, or urban, etc., setting." One participant indicated that the school needs to meet the student teacher's criteria. This person stated, "My goal is to help student teachers have a positive student teaching experience. I therefore seek to place them where they seek to be placed, trusting that after three years of college, and at least four education courses with field placements, they know enough to make this decision themselves." Contrary to this response, one participant explained that her program was

"student driven, where students chose their own placements" before she was hired, and that it was a "nightmare".

Other Results of the Participants' Responses

Table 4.9 displays the statistical results derived from the quantitative analysis of this study. This table shows the frequency distribution of the participants' responses to the Likert-type items 7-16 on the online survey. Items 7-15 focus on the student teaching coordinators' perceptions of important considerations for matching. Item 16 shows the extent to which respondents' personal views reflect the actual procedures of their teacher education programs.

I realize that placing the Likert-type items before the open-ended items may have influenced the open-ended responses. My rationale of placing these items before the open-ended items on the survey was to provide options of considerations evident in the literature, which did not include the cooperating teacher.

Table 4.9

Frequency Distribution of Responses to Items Assessing the Participants' Perceptions of Considerations in Student Teacher Placement (N = 46)

Item	Strongly Agree %	Agree %	Neutral %	Disagree %	Strongly Disagree %	Total %
It is important to place student teachers in racially / culturally diverse clinical placement sites.	41.3%	28.3%	15.2%	4.3%	10.9%	100.0%
It is important to place student teachers in clinical placement sites with which our institution has a written, formally established collaborative relationship.	26.1%	32.6%	21.7%	15.2%	4.3%	100.0%
It is important to place student teachers in a particular "school" as opposed to placing them with specific cooperating teachers.	.0%	26.1%	26.1%	47.8%	.0%	100.0%
It is important to place student teachers in clinical placement sites where the teaching practices / strategies are consistent with those advocated by college faculty.	19.6%	45.7%	13.0%	19.6%	2.2%	100.0%
It is important to select clinical placement sites for student teachers in schools where college faculty are also working in non-supervisory roles such as professional development facilitators.	6.5%	32.6%	30.4%	28.3%	2.2%	100.0%
It is important to place student teachers in clinical placement sites that have an understanding of the goals / expectations of your teacher education program.	58.7%	26.1%	.0%	2.2%	13.0%	100.0%

It is important to place student teachers in clinical placement sites committed to enhancing / improving education.	76.1%	6.5%	.0%	4.3%	13.0%	100.0%
It is important to place student teachers in clinical placement sites located in close proximity to your institution.	6.5%	39.1%	21.7%	26.1%	6.5%	100.0%
It is important to place cohorts of student teachers in the same clinical placement site.	8.9%	44.4%	20.0%	22.2%	4.4%	100.0%
My personal view of matching student teachers with clinical placement sites reflects the actual procedures of our teacher education program.	18.2%	22.7%	6.8%	31.8%	20.5%	100.0%

Table 4.10 provides a sampling of the responses to open-ended items 17, 18, and

19 on the survey, reflecting the respondents' comments about the cooperating teacher as a

consideration for matching. The participants are listed by code, for example, "P9"

indicates Participant #9, as are institutions types. The coding includes "P" for private

institutions, "S" for state institutions, and "SA" for state-assisted institutions.

Table 4.10

The Cooperating Teacher as a Consideration for Matching

Participant and Type of Institution	#17 What criteria do you consider when you match student teachers with clinical placement sites?	#18 What are the most important considerations for matching student teachers with clinical placement sites?	#19 What would be your ideal model for matching student teacher with clinical placement sites?
P2 – P	Coops are known and respected by the Education Program or recommended by someone we trust	The cooperating teacher	

P9-P	Teachers who are great mentors – teacher with at least 3 years of experience	Teachers whose methods parallel what we teach in methods courses (congruence) – teachers who are great mentors	To provide training for coops in how to effectively mentor a student teacher
P12-S		Use the best of our cooperating teachers	Develop cohorts of teachers that we know are good and use them every semester
P13-S		Personalities – teaching style	Host teacher should be a master teacher – have a positive attitude
P20-P	Personality of coop / student teacher – philosophy of coop	Personality of both	To match personality
P21-P	Professional styles and strengths of individual teachers – personalities	Professionalism of teachers – enthusiastic about what they do – modeling	Match with a teacher who has similar interests - personality
P22-P	Cooperating teachers need to be experienced and willing to share classroom with student teacher	Teachers involved in ongoing professional development	
P23-SA	Mentor compatibility	Personality – we've found that a good match can be an important factor contributing to student success	To conduct interviews – meet with principals and ask for specific people
P24-P	Quality of teaching staff	Are coops excellent mentors? The mentor can make a life long impact on the student teacher	To talk directly with principal and / or cooperating teacher and request specific teachers for specific students rather than have district make matches
P26-P	Expertise of coop	What coop has to offer our students	I would love to go into the field and observe teachers and classrooms.

P29-P	Cooperating teacher/student teacher relationship	The coop's willingness to work with student teachers	Coop and college supervisor collaborate
P30-P	Availability of placements with desired teachers	Cooperating teacher who will provide a full, rich experience	Placement with a teacher who keeps current with best practices – who will allow our student teacher to grow
P36-P		Matching people is more of a concern than sites	Finding cooperating teachers who are not only good teachers, but also willing to provide the right amount of coaching and feedback while giving the student teacher room to make mistakes and grow professionally

Table 4.11 provides a sampling of the open-ended responses to items 17, 18, and 19 on the survey, reflecting the respondents' comments about collaboration as a consideration for matching. The same coding applies as used in Table 4.10.

Table 4.11

Collaboration as a Consideration for Matching

Participant and Type of Institution	Open-ended Item #17 What criteria do you consider when you match student teachers with clinical placement sites?	Open-ended Item #18 What are the most important considerations for matching student teachers with clinical placement sites?	Open-ended Item #19 What would be your ideal model for matching student teachers with clinical placement sites?
P10-P		Personnel at the site work effectively with us in meeting student teacher needs	Strong relationship with specific sites wherein university faculty work closely with faculty of the site – close connections and interrelationships are ideal
P16-P		Strong relationship with our program – practice is congruent with expectations	Strong history with school staff – faculty provide in-service training and serve as committee members in various capacities
P17-SA	Site's relationship with the university	Past experiences or connection with placement site	
P19-P	Past successful history	I rely on local administrator recommendations for placements	Have a formal agreement with clinical site
P29-P	Relationship between college and school		Coop and supervisor collaborate
P31-P	Pre-established professional development arrangements	Previously developed working relationship which establishes a congruence of mission, philosophy, and academic approaches to teaching and learning	Professional development model that allows collaboration between our professors, cooperating teachers, supervisors, and meets the needs of the school or school district

P35-S		Partnerships where many faculty are engaged in a wide variety of professional activities	That we could place all of our candidates in schools where strong partnerships are established
P37-P	Collaborative relationships with districts	Collaboration / relationship with school – coherence in order for student to practice what they have learned	Collaboration – on-going professional development for college and school together – student teacher / coop interview process
P41-P		Cooperation from administration / faculty	
P43-P		District relationships	Interview both persons to see the fit

Coordinators' Views of Matching and Current Procedures

Figure 4.1 shows the extent to which current placement practices reflected the personal views of the student teaching coordinators on matching. In item #16 which stated, "My personal view of matching student teachers with clinical placement sites reflects the actual procedures of our teacher education program", those who strongly agreed (18.2%) and agreed (22.7%) comprised 40.9% of the responses. Neutral responses totaled 6.8%, while 52.3% disagreed (31.8%) or strongly disagreed (20.5%). In the open-ended item #20, the participants were asked to "Describe how your personal view of matching student teachers with placement sites corresponds with the procedures of your teacher education program." More participants said that their personal views matched (frequency count = 25) than were discrepant (frequency count =14) with the neutral responses totaling 7. The reporting was somewhat discrepant. However, many of their comments indicated that they currently consider the criteria to be consistent with their

personal views. In other cases, personal views gave testimony in favor of considerations not necessarily in place.

Many of the student teaching coordinators' views were relevant to the literature as well as to their personal experiences of matching. The participants whose personal views were congruent with the actual procedures of their teacher education programs acknowledged collaborative relationships, coherence of sites and institutional goals, teacher education philosophy, and teaching approaches as reasons for the congruence. One participant noted that her personal view matched the teacher education program view that "personalities of student teacher and coop [should] mesh." The reasons for their disagreement with the procedures included the need for more diverse experiences, elimination of student requests, lack of time to observe classrooms and meet with cooperating teachers, the randomness of placements versus more familiarity with teachers and sites, and school control over matching student teachers with cooperating teachers.

Additional points of discrepancy included being at the "mercy" of administrators and the reported "disconnect" between the college and the placement site. The issue of competition for the numbers of available placements as well as quality placements factored into principal control and cooperating teacher willingness to accept student teachers. One reason given for the difficulty in securing placements was demands of the Pennsylvania State System of Assessment (PSSA). Schools are accountable for test results, which uphold the reputation of the school. One participant stated,

> Teachers do not want to deal with a student teacher because they must deal with
>
> PSSAs! If they have a choice of working with a student teacher or making sure

their students are prepared for the PSSAs, they know the school's reputation is

more important.

Competition for student teacher placements also included the challenge of smaller

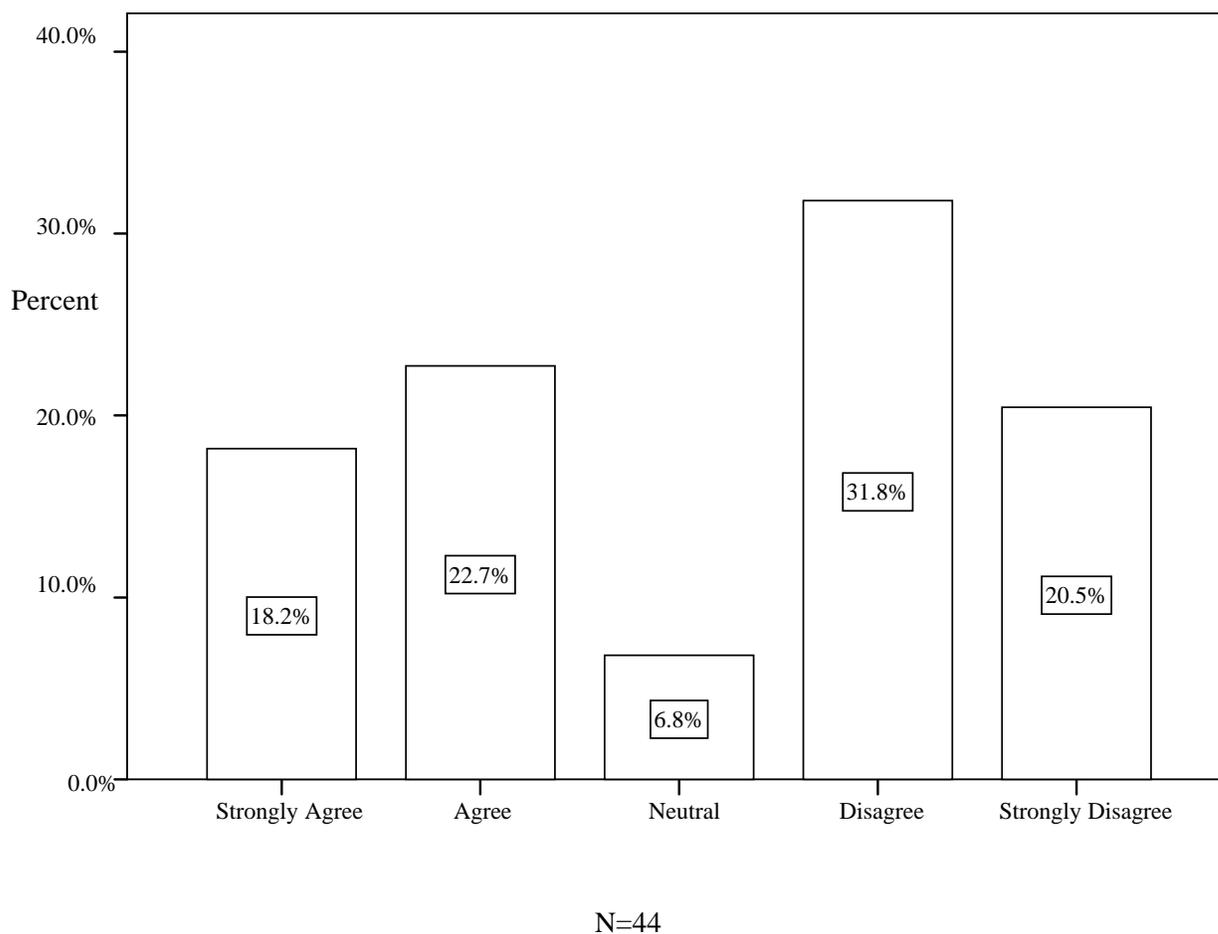colleges vying for those often reserved for larger universities.

N=44

Figure 4.1. **Current placement practices reflecting the personal views**

of the student teaching coordinators on matching.

The Findings of This Study

A number of findings emerged from this study that have a direct or indirect influence on student teaching coordinators' considerations for matching. Mertens (1998, p. 350) states that "guiding questions may be formulated at the beginning of the process; however, additional categories or themes are allowed to emerge from the data." Such was the case in this study. A constant comparative analysis with respect to the open-ended responses on the survey manifested the most compelling theme of accessibility to desired placements or numbers of placements as expressed by several participants. Terms such as "willingness" and "availability" were repeatedly evident in their responses. They indicated that competition for placements occurred because a number of colleges and universities within a particular geographic area were vying for spots as well as other factors that impact this competition. The principal as gatekeeper of the school and cooperating teacher hesitancy to accept student teachers due to the importance of the PSSAs was reported. The notion that a cooperating teachers' attention to a student teacher might compromise their students' PSSA preparation and test taking was evident in the responses.

In light of this evidence, my follow-up conversations with the 8 interviewees employed two guiding questions(#5 and 6) to explore and probe these phenomena, as presented in the following.

Interview item #5.

Interview item #5 asked, "Several respondents indicated that it is challenging to find quality placements or numbers of placements for student teachers. Do you agree?

What suggestions do you have to remedy this situation?"

Seven out of eight interviewees concurred that it is challenging to find quality placements or adequate numbers of placements for student teachers. Interviewee #1, who apparently did not face such a challenge, readily provided suggestions to remedy the situation, which are included later in this section.

In response to this question, Interviewee # 7 offered an emphatic reply, "PSSAs! PSSAs are driving the complexity of finding placements!" He continued, "There are some cooperating teachers who just flat out say, 'No, I don't want to take a student teacher during this time because of PSSAs." He also spoke about a quota of student teachers in schools as a reason that principals may limit requests. Interviewee #7 spoke about a creative solution that his institution has tried. "We can use parochial or Christian schools. We have found that we try to use those schools at the time when PSSAs would be done so that we don't have to worry about them. We cannot always do that, but it is the only way we have found to get around that." He digressed about an encounter at a conference with another student teaching coordinator who was also forced to place student teachers in parochial schools. "She said it was the most wonderful experience because they didn't have to teach to the PSSAs. They could be creative and do all the things we teach our students to do and hope they will do. She said it was hard when they had to go back to the public school 'because there just is that cloud over it'." Interviewee #2 replied,

Yes, it is always a problem and increasing. We talk a lot about this at the college. The state requires student teaching, but they do not make any requirements of

teachers. There's no requirement of schools. With the increasing demands –

pressure – we find they are not meeting the specific needs of student teachers.

Oh, I can't even begin . . . quite frankly, the fact that we're spending six to ten

weeks preparing for PSSA – What schools are doing in response to NCLB and

how that actually impedes classroom practice – There's got to be a link between

requiring student teachers to have a clinical experience and the districts'

responsibility in terms of providing for our placements from the Department of

Education. Are teachers being prepared for the future? Bottom line – principals

are terribly scared of PSSA – that I can appreciate.

The effect of PSSA testing continues to be a prominent factor in securing

placements according to Interviewee #8's reply. When asked if it was challenging to find

quality placements or enough placements for student teachers, he replied,

Totally! I can't tell you – Every year it's the spring in particular – Finding

placements in the spring – that's when most of our students are out there. And do

you know why the teachers aren't accepting them? Take a guess. PSSA! There's

so much pressure for the teachers during March and April, and they're saying, 'I

can't have a student teacher' even though they would love to have one. Principals

are really discouraging student teachers at that time. Our student teachers are

reporting that the cooperating teachers are taking back the classes during that test

prep time and our students are actually stepping back and having to do

observations.

Interviewee #8 also spoke about competition for "the same slots." He

acknowledged that in his case, schools try to be fair and give one or two placements to every college.

Competition with 10 surrounding teacher education programs reflected the rationale for the challenge to find placements, according to Interviewee #3. "We really have to start early. By early, I mean the spring before." She continued by saying that her program did not have a professional development school (PDS) relationship, insinuating that such a collaborative relationship would reduce the challenge. As mentioned earlier, although Interviewee #1 was the only participant who did not face a challenge in finding placements, he also offered a suggestion of more collaboration between the teacher education programs and the schools as a possible remedy for this situation.

The perspective of teachers hesitating to accept student teachers because of their lack of confidence in being a positive role model, looming retirement, and previous negative experiences with student teachers, complicated by small schools in rural areas, comprised my conversation with Interviewee #4. Her response to these challenges was, "Yes, it is. Keep in mind, we're rural. If some buildings have a bad student teacher, they won't take any more. Some teachers are ready to retire and don't want to be bothered. Some teachers don't feel confident – they don't feel they're the best role model. The retirement issue is a big one."

In summary, the paramount challenge of securing placements for student teachers, according to the interviewees in this study, appears to be PSSA testing. The rationale for this challenge was discussed in terms of the school, principal, and teacher accountability for ensuring test results. The competition for student teaching "slots" was directly stated

as being an issue for many colleges and universities located in a particular geographic area, or where larger universities garnered more placements than smaller colleges. In one exception, one interviewee mentioned that his school tries to give one or two placements to each requesting institution. Teacher issues of confidence, retirement, and previous negative experiences with student teachers were also mentioned by the same interviewee.

Interview item #6.

The last interview item asked, "Would incentives from the state increase the availability of placements and/or quality placements for teacher education programs? If so, what types of incentives would you see as valuable?"

The challenge of gaining accessibility to schools for student teaching emerged unequivocally as a major issue in this study. The resistance of schools to allow placements is linked to state testing and the pressures that accompany such testing for potential cooperating teachers who may prefer to concentrate on the testing rather than on supervising a student teacher. This may be a roadblock to providing the state-mandated requirement of student teaching for teacher certification in Pennsylvania.

Several interviewees who acknowledged the burden and challenge of accessibility to student teaching placements felt that the state should require K-12 school participation or provide incentives to facilitate the completion of the required student teaching experience. At this point, the cultivation of a collaborative relationship between the schools and teacher education programs as well as the provision of incentives for finding placements for student teachers is incumbent upon these two entities, if support from the mandating body is not forthcoming. The primary inhibiting factor to securing these

placements paradoxically originates with the state's high-stakes testing initiative—the same entity that mandates student teaching for the certification of new teachers.

The interviewees offered suggestions for possible incentives to bolster accessibility to student teaching placements. When asked about incentives from the state, Interviewee # 6 replied, "I'm not sure. With PSSAs, the carrot would have to be mighty big and orange." Interviewee #1 suggested offering cooperating teachers Act 48 credit (for the state required ongoing professional education) as did several other interviewees. Interviewee #4, who agreed with the challenge of finding placements, concurred that incentives might help. Her suggestions included courses for younger teachers and monetary compensation for the "older ones." She explained, "I think a lot could use Act 48 credits. I think more people would take student teachers if that were the case – something to show the cooperating teacher is valued – like going to training and getting paid to do it."

Though uncertain, Interviewee #7 suggested a grant or compensation to purchase resources to help improve teaching and learning. Interestingly, he suggested that parents might be more supportive of student teachers in the classroom if a conscientious effort to improve learning were evident. He also suggested educational opportunities for cooperating teachers or funding for teachers to attend a major conference and bring the information back to peers.

Interviewee #5 felt that state incentives would not make a difference in accessibility to placements. "Really good teachers are willing to open up their doors – they realize someone took them in," she stated. She mentioned Act 48 credit also, but

with the perspective that she was "afraid teachers would take student teachers just looking for Act 48 credits." She also indicated that she would "hate to see that happen" and that with respect to prospective cooperating teachers merely seeking Act 48 credit, "we should keep the state out of it." Comments from this student teaching coordinator may present a different point of view because she places secondary education students in content areas that are not currently tested by the state. One other interviewee was "leery" of enlisting the state to create incentives, but also suggested Act 48 credit as a possible incentive for accepting student teachers.

During our conversations, several of the interviewees explained their teacher education program's incentive offerings to participating cooperating teachers or schools. These included a minimal stipend for the cooperating teacher, monetary stipends to purchase classroom materials or support technology, and vouchers for courses at the college or university.

In sum, all but one of the interviewees revealed they had experienced challenges to securing student teaching placements, and most felt that the state should provide support or incentives to validate the requirement of student teaching. On the other hand, some participants were reluctant to advocate any state involvement related to incentives. Possible incentives included in the discussions were Act 48 credit, tuition credit, financial compensation for classroom resources to enhance teaching and learning, and compensation for professional development conferences.

Teacher education programs appear to offer various local incentives ranging from personal stipends for cooperating teachers to classroom resources and tuition vouchers

for courses at the collaborating institution. However, interviewee comments addressed the fact that incentives are particularly burdensome for small colleges and that their programs may be well served with state intervention and support.

My findings from this study indicate that there are several current considerations for matching by varying degrees within colleges and universities. These considerations include the cooperating teacher, collaboration, accessibility to placements, the school site, diversity, coherence, cohorts, location, certification, and student requests. The three most important considerations for matching student teachers with clinical placement sites, as viewed by the student teaching coordinators in this study, emerged as the cooperating teacher, collaboration, and accessibility, followed by the school site, diversity, coherence, and cohorts. The cooperating teacher maintains a strong presence as a primary consideration for reasons already discussed. Collaboration was found to be important in many aspects, including university and K-12 relationships, interpersonal relationships among various stakeholders, as well as potential collaboration with the state. Accessibility reflected powerful, rather negative, responses directed toward PSSA testing that impacted the acquisition of placements as well as the quality of experiences for student teachers. The school site was considered important as far as reputation and attention to improving education are concerned, yet in-depth collaboration and coherence are difficult to achieve outside of articulation agreements garnered by professional development schools. The cooperating teacher was specifically mentioned by many respondents as more important than the school site. Diversity has gained status as an important consideration, yet there are many obstacles to bridging that gap in teacher

education. Here again, accessibility in a different form obstructs experiences. Many rural

schools in Pennsylvania have limited access to culturally diverse populations, yet teacher

education programs are creatively trying to provide such opportunities for their students.

Attempts to provide even modest exposure are in place in some teacher education

programs, but immersion in such populations is not always an option to date.

Acknowledging the importance of the diversity component, student teaching coordinators

report that they are investigating articulation agreements with urban schools to provide

more enhanced diversity opportunities for student teachers. Coherence, so well supported

in the literature, was deemed important by most student teaching coordinators, yet,

surprisingly, some felt that student teachers should be exposed to a variety of methods

not necessarily advocated in the university classroom. Cohorts presented an inconsistent

result in that, although student teaching coordinators felt the practice was important,

accessibility issues might render cohorts impractical in many instances. The length of

placement, demonstrating positive outcomes in the literature, was not mentioned in either

qualitative survey items or the interviews.

The discrepancies between the current practices and the desired practices of

matching in view of the important considerations found in this study indicate a need to

refocus the view of student teaching in order to keep pace with the changing face of

education.

Chapter Summary

This chapter has presented the results of the study, beginning with analysis of the demographic data derived from the online survey administered to 46 participating student teaching coordinators in Pennsylvania. Detailed statistical analysis of quantitative data and qualitative data analysis are included in the chapter, with special attention to the results in relation to the two research questions. Finally, a summary of the findings that emerged from these results is provided. Chapter Five presents the conclusions of the study and recommendations for future research.

Chapter Five

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study was an attempt to obtain significant insights into the current practices for matching student teachers with clinical placement sites as well as the perceptions of student teaching coordinators in Pennsylvania as to their most important criteria for doing so. This chapter presents the conclusions and recommendations from the study.

Traditionally, student teaching is the culminating experience when students apply the educational theory and methods they have learned in their college or university coursework to teaching practice in a real school setting. Standards and guidelines for such practice for student teachers are set by the Department of Education in Pennsylvania. NCATE, the gold standard for accreditation, also sets standards and guidelines to direct the student teaching experience.

Currently, the teacher education community is beginning to focus on "context as a salient issue" (Clift & Brady, 2005, p. 313) because "we have not made sufficient progress toward understanding how individual, instructional and contextual variables interact with each other at a given time and location" (p. 335). The intent of this study was to explore such contextual variables as they relate to student coordinators' practices and perceptions of matching student teachers with clinical placement sites in Pennsylvania.

My experience as a teacher education practitioner and researcher corroborates the need to attend to broader considerations for matching student teachers with clinical

placement sites that transcend the traditional cooperating teacher/student teacher match. An abundant research base exists with respect to the match between the student teacher and the cooperating teacher, whereas this study examined student teaching coordinators' perceptions of other contextual considerations for matching student teachers with clinical placement sites.

Student teaching coordinators recognize several matching considerations as important to varying degrees. As the demands of the teaching profession become increasingly complex, collaboration, program coherence which supports learning, schools as communities, diversity, and practice teaching in cohorts can all enhance the student teaching experience. The degree to which each consideration or combination of considerations affects the desired outcome of a highly qualified teacher remains in question and presents ample queries for additional research.

The emergence of the cooperating teacher as the most important consideration for matching evidences a gap in the literature calling for a refocused view of student teaching relative to broader contextual considerations. However, accessibility to placements appears to preclude the luxury of looking at other considerations in matching that were identified as important in this study. Student teaching coordinators are aware of the need to address the complexities their students will face in the profession, yet they are required to provide the student teaching component that at times translates into a "a mere site to be found." The state PSSA testing, for teacher education and student teaching in particular, is reportedly responsible for denying access to quality placements or compromising the quality of such placements in the schools. In this regard, the student teaching

coordinators may be forced to focus on the traditional view of the cooperating teacher as the most important consideration for matching.

It would be prudent, however, for the state to recognize this dilemma and examine avenues, whether guidelines or incentives, to assist teacher education programs in providing experiences that produce highly qualified teachers and may ultimately produce greater K-12 student achievement.

Conclusions

This section presents the conclusions of this study based on the results of the analysis of quantitative and qualitative data to address the main research questions that guided this inquiry:

1. What criteria do student teaching coordinators in the state of Pennsylvania consider in order to match student teachers with clinical placement sites?

2. What perceptions do student teaching coordinators in the state of Pennsylvania hold as the most important considerations in matching student teachers with clinical placement sites?

The Cooperating Teacher

Consistent with the literature, the participants extolled the importance of the cooperating teacher in their responses to the open-ended items on the online survey of the study as well as in individual follow-up interviews. The only mention of the cooperating teacher in the quantitative section of the survey was in the Likert-type rated item that

stated, "It is important to place student teachers in a particular 'school' as opposed to placing them with specific cooperating teachers." The results of the analysis of this item favored placement because of the cooperating teacher, with only 26% agreeing and 0% strongly agreeing with the statement, suggesting that the cooperating teacher is paramount in student teacher placement.

The cooperating teacher received strong participant responses with respect to current considerations for matching, the most important considerations for matching, and ideal models. The ideal models, as indicated by the study participants, included opportunities for student teaching coordinators to select cooperating teachers and match student teachers based on the teacher's and the student teacher's personalities. Several participants commented on matching according to personality, yet the criteria for making such a match was ambiguous. Such personality matching was based on a feeling from knowing both parties, not by using an empirical instrument of some kind. The use of interviews to arrive at the "best fit" were mentioned as ideal practices for matching. This practice of matching by personality aligns with Easterly's (1978) model of mutual choice placement.

The respondents talked about the quality of cooperating teachers with respect to their demonstrated expertise in teaching and mentoring abilities. The recommendations of the cooperating teacher by the school principal or former student teachers could serve as indications of the teacher's expertise, and in some cases, so could observations of the prospective cooperating teachers.

All the interviewees in the study supported the cooperating teacher as the most

important consideration for matching, yet accessibility to placements with the "best"

cooperating teachers presented a challenge.

Collaboration

According to my findings in this study, the student teaching coordinators perceive

collaboration to be one of the most important considerations when matching student

teachers with clinical placement sites. As schools collaborate, cooperating teachers may

attend trainings conducted by college/university faculty and become aware of practices

taught in the teacher education methods courses. Through this kind of collaboration, the

opportunity for program coherence is increased and student teachers have more

opportunities to apply what they have learned to their teaching practice. Professors may

participate in K-12 school professional development as facilitators, or attend professional

development sessions with K-12 educators and possibly student teachers as well. College

and university faculty may participate in K-12 school activities such as being judges for

science fairs, attending parent programs, etc. However, there was no mention of team

teaching or co-teaching in the classroom in the participants' responses.

Levine (1992, p. 136) speaks about traditional school and college collaboration as

involving or indoctrinating cooperating teachers as part of the teacher education program

goals and philosophy. She states that "teacher educators aim to increase the skill and

frequency with which classroom teachers provide learning opportunities to student

teachers that are congruent with the program's goals." According to Levine, the

traditional authority in program development is the teacher education program. The

participants agreed with the practice of collaboration between teacher education programs and schools in order to provide "stability in locating and refining field placements" as advocated by Levine (p. 136) and to attain congruence of program goals. Yet many respondents also spoke in ideal terms about important efforts to develop and assess the program together and work collaboratively toward professional growth. Ideal models reflected a high priority among the participants for collaborative efforts between teacher education programs and K-12 schools.

The interviewees mentioned increased collaboration as a possible offset to the challenge of accessibility to student teacher placements. One interviewee talked about trying to convince schools that are reticent to accept student teachers during the semester that PSSAs are given, that "more hands in the classroom" would only benefit students.

Accessibility to Placements

Accessibility to quality placements had a high priority as a criterion for matching according to the participants' responses to the open-ended items on the online survey and the follow-up interviews. The importance of access and availability interfaced not only with the desire for quality cooperating teachers, but for high quality schools as defined by reputation and educational practices, diverse classrooms, collaboration, and coherence. There was a solid and consistent expression of the challenge of gaining access to placements, which seemed to be primarily impeded by the necessity for concentrating on preparing for the PSSA testing, rather than on assuming student teacher responsibilities. Other access-inhibiting factors included some teachers' unwillingness to mentor a student

teacher, certain principals' or administrations' limitations on or exclusions of placements, and established quotas of student teachers per school. Given the pressure and the high stakes of standardized testing mandated by the state as required by the No Child Left Behind Act (2001), these stances of teachers and administrators can easily be understood.

Even if schools accept student teachers in the spring when PSSA testing occurs, they may spend time observing or preparing for the PSSA tests rather than practice teach. Although student teachers will likely experience education as currently dictated by the No Child Left Behind Act (2001), their experience to practice and learn to teach will be compromised. In this study, the interviewees emphatically attributed the challenge of finding quality placements or adequate numbers of placements to the schools' need to focus on state-mandated testing and student preparation for the tests. The classroom teachers whose own perspectives support the student teaching coordinators' reports that student teaching may be compromised by the testing requirements acknowledge the pressure of having to spend time preparing students for tests and having to relinquish time for teaching content areas that are not included in the testing. According to Alberino (2003), teachers in the Philadelphia schools reported using practice tests two to three times per week. Approximately half of the 24 teachers interviewed for that study reported that some subjects are eliminated "to make time for reading, writing and math preparation because those subjects are measured in the tests." One Philadelphia teacher stated, "There's not enough time in the day to help students prepare for the test and then cover everything else." Thus, placement of student teachers in this testing environment may compromise their practice teaching.

The School Site

      The school site did manifest as a current consideration for matching and as one of the most important considerations for the matching process. The study participants assessed school quality by the school's reputation, a "quality program", a commitment to student outcomes, and support for the professional growth of teachers. In spite of favorable responses to the school as an important consideration for matching, the cooperating teacher superseded the school site in importance for matching, as shown by both the quantitative and qualitative results. The participants' perception of the cooperating teacher as being the most important consideration for matching appears to conflict with another finding in the literature. Taking a broader view, Levine (1992, p. 95) posits that "conditions for responsible practice must promote inquiry and consultation among the faculty as a whole, not just those immediately engaged in supervising novices." She continues, "Teacher isolation promotes idiosyncratic practice and works against the development and transmission of shared knowledge" (p. 95).

      Again, the inter-relationships of matching considerations were evident. According to the study participants, the collaborative efforts of schools to communicate with teacher education programs and their attention to coherence with the teacher education program increased the desirability for matching with particular schools. The literature speaks about immersing student teachers in the whole school community (Levine, 1992) – in the sense of "it takes a village to raise a child" philosophy; however, such opportunities appear to be minimal outside of professional development school agreements. Colleges and universities are, for the most part, on their own in competition for accessibility to

what are generally perceived to be the "best" schools. Accessibility to schools is also inhibited by some of the principals due to PSSA testing, as previously mentioned.

Given the difficulty of placing many student teachers in schools, the depth of the relationship of the teacher education program with most schools might to be somewhat superficial – a mere site to complete student teaching requirements. One ideal model for matching that was identified by the study participants included school sites that collaborated with the college or university to continually assess and improve the program to provide the best student teaching experience. The student teaching coordinators remarked that matching the student teacher with a school setting concerned with improving models of excellent teaching methods would be ideal.

Diversity

According to Hollins and Guzman (2005, p. 512), student teachers matched in urban settings with diverse students "acquire more complex understandings and awareness of cultural and experiential differences than do their peers placed in suburban settings."

The statistical results of my study show that the participants affirmed the importance of matching student teachers with clinical placement sites that offer an experience of cultural diversity. Current placement practices reflect attempts to match students to a variety of urban, suburban, and rural settings. The student teaching coordinators in this study view diversity as an important consideration for matching in order for student teachers to gain cultural competence. Teacher education programs

attempt to provide opportunities for students to teach in diverse settings within a

reasonable distance from their college or university. However, many schools do not have

easy access to diverse settings, for instance more rural institutions. The importance of

matching student teachers with diverse school sites was expressed by several respondents

who favored making agreements with urban schools even at some distance in order to

enable student teachers to experience cultural diversity. To date, such opportunities may

only consist of their being placed in a diverse school setting for one or more weeks in the

summer, which may mean mere exposure and not enough of an in-depth experience of

diversity. The coordinators qualitative responses and interview comments revealed that

they strongly support providing a diversity component in student teaching despite the

difficulty of securing such placements. Student teaching coordinators are investing much

energy into investigating ways to provide a diversity experience to student teachers, in

spite of the challenge to do so.

Coherence

In regard to coherence, Darling-Hammond and Hammerness (2005), p. 413)

observe that "research has indicated that school placements that are not aligned in

significant ways with the philosophy and practice of teacher education programs can be

problematic for the student teacher." They also believe that learning is increased when

"learners encounter mutually reinforcing ideas and skills across learning experiences" (p.

393). Collins, Brown, and Holum (1991) posit that the construction of clinical

experiences which involves many opportunities to connect classroom work to college

courses is important in promoting the growth of student teachers.

Based on my findings, the participants in this study demonstrated support for coherence as a consideration for matching, both in the statistical results (65% strongly agreed or agreed) and in the qualitative results. The student teaching coordinators perceived program congruence, and opportunities to apply techniques and strategies learned in methods courses, to be an important consideration for matching. These coordinators also viewed coherence as an important component in ideal models of matching.

In spite of the participants' support for coherence according to my research results, there was a slight discrepancy in that some believe that students can and should be exposed to a variety of teaching practices that are not necessarily congruent with methods courses in a teacher education program. One might also speculate, from a logistics point of view regarding accessibility, that finding placements can be a challenging task in itself, much less securing placements demonstrating congruence between the clinical placement sites and the teacher education program. One interviewee stated that given the competition for student teacher placements, specifying criteria for the site is not always an option.

Cohorts

Based on the statistical results of the survey, 55% of the study participants agreed or strongly agreed that cohorts were viewed as an important consideration for matching student teachers with clinical placement sites. However, there was an inconsistent result

in the qualitative responses. Only one respondent indicated that cohorts are a current

consideration for matching. The student teaching coordinators did indicate that cohorts

constituted an important consideration for matching, but to a lesser degree than expected.

The literature notes that cohorts of student teachers gain a deeper, more coherent learning

experience when they engage in "study and practice" with faculty and each other

(Darling-Hammond, 2008, p. 342).

The respondents addressed the benefit of matching in cohorts as twofold. First,

location and better opportunity for supervision were positive reasons for such matching.

The other benefit was an experience of collegiality in the cohort as well as an opportunity

for professional growth and support during the student teaching experience, as reflected

in the literature. During my follow-up interviews, my probing of the participants'

responses revealed that their difficulty with getting accessibility to several placements at

one site precluded matching in cohorts. The student teaching coordinators discussed

several negative experiences with cohorts as mentioned previously.

Certification and Grade Level, Location, Student Teaching Requests

Not surprisingly, the results of this study show that certification and grade level,

location and student requests are current and important considerations due to logistics and

requirements. The certification and grade level of the cooperating teacher are expected

considerations, of course. The consideration of the location of the placement sites related

to opportunities for supervision and transportation for student teachers. Student teaching

requests are honored due to possible future employment opportunities for them, interest

in a particular school, grade level or discipline, and transportation or living situations.

Length of Placement

The literature confirms that the length of placement has positive effects on the

student teacher's ability to apply theory to practice (Sumara & Luce-Kaplar, 1996) and

enhances their commitment to teaching (Andrew & Schwab, 1995). An opportunity to

comment about the length of placement did not draw any responses from the study

participants about its consideration for matching.

Summary of the Considerations for Matching

Based on a synthesis of the information collected from 46 student teaching

coordinators in Pennsylvania during this study, Table 5.1 depicts my interpretation of the

relative importance of their considerations for matching student teachers with clinical

placement sites.

Table 5.1

Summary of Relative Importance of Considerations for Matching

Relative Importance	Consideration
1	Cooperating Teacher
2	Collaboration
3	Accessibility to Placements
4	School Site
5	Diversity
6	Coherence
7	Cohorts
8	Location
9	Certification or Grade Level
10	Student Requests

Figure 5.1 depicts the summary of considerations and the most important for matching student teachers with clinical placement sites. The clusters reflect the sources of data for the emerging themes. The research software NVivo Version 7 was used to construct the figure (Richards, 2005).
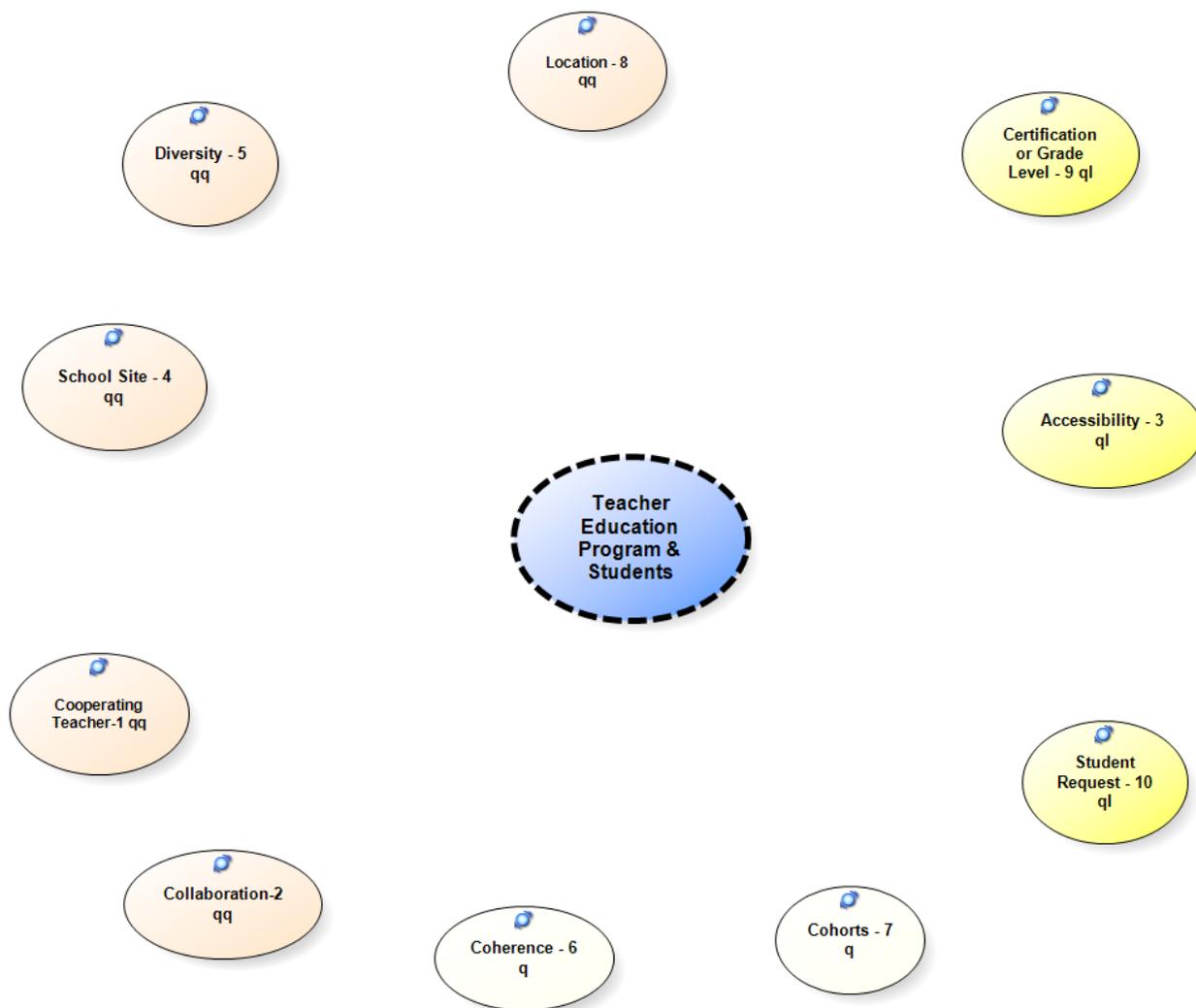

Figure legend:
    numbers indicate the relative importance of each factor
    q = evidence primarily from quantitative data with modest qualitative support
    ql = evidence from qualitative interview data
    qq = evidence provided equally from quantitative and qualitative data

Figure 5.1. **Considerations for matching student teachers with local school sites.**

In sum, teacher education programs are required by the state of Pennsylvania to include a student teaching component in their students' programs of study. However, teacher education programs are experiencing challenges in meeting the general requirement of this component, primarily due to PSSA testing and limited accessibility. Some school officials are hesitant to permit student teaching placements due to K-12 accountability for the standardized test results, and prospective cooperating teachers may need to concentrate on test preparation rather than on mentoring a student teacher.

As student teaching coordinators look to match student teachers with clinical placement sites, they consider the following criteria: the cooperating teacher, collaboration, coherence, accessibility to placements, the school site, diversity, cohorts, location, certification requirements, and student teacher requests. The coordinators' perceptions of the most important considerations include the cooperating teacher, collaboration, and accessibility. Other important considerations are the school site, diversity, coherence, and cohorts. It is possible that these various considerations may interface with and complement each other in the matching process.

This study represents an in-depth exploration of the practices and perspectives of student teaching coordinators as to their considerations for matching student teachers with clinical placement sites in Pennsylvania. The participants' responses to the online survey and follow-up interviews have reflected their practices, perceptions, and challenges in the matching process. Factors affecting the outcomes of the practices in teacher education programs are complex and not easily understood with empirical evidence. Zeichner and Conklin (20005, as cited in Cochran-Smith & Zeichner, 2005, p.

700) posit that "the reality of teacher education is much more complex and contradictory than reported in the literature" and maintain that close study of the inner workings of a teacher education program will "help illuminate the critical features that make a difference in producing desired outcomes."

Based on the research findings of this study, the exploration of matching student teachers within certain contexts will hopefully provide an understanding of important considerations for matching student teachers within contexts that will prepare them to become highly qualified teachers. It is also hoped that this study will make visible the challenges in teacher education that came to light from the sharing of the insights and experience of these student teaching coordinators in Pennsylvania.

Recommendations for Further Research

This study focused on current practices and perceptions of student teaching coordinators in regard to matching student teachers with clinical placement sites. Quantitative and qualitative methods were used to explore the student teaching coordinators' perspectives. Based on the results of this study, the following recommendations are made for further research.

First, the enlightening perspective as to the effect that PSSA testing has on accessibility to placements of student teaching and the quality of their opportunity to practice and learn was consistent. However, the participants' perspectives were mixed regarding state incentives to help resolve this dilemma. Therefore, further studies could offer insight into the extent of this problem, provide an in-depth examination of how

teacher education programs are coping with the problem, and possibly suggest policy revisions to teacher education standards to include accountability for K-12 school participation in teacher preparation.

Second, since this study focused on the perceptions of student teaching coordinators regarding the current and most important considerations for matching, an extension of this study to explore the views of other stakeholders in the student teaching experience, such as administrators, cooperating teachers, and Pennsylvania Department of Education officials, could offer additional insights.

Third, further research could be conducted to identify ways in which collaborative relationships could be developed between teacher education programs and schools to implement better matching practices. Additionally, research could be conducted with regard to how each of the identified considerations for matching can be achieved, interfaced, and implemented within such collaborations.

Fourth, further research on the effects of the length of the student teaching experience is warranted based on the literature on teacher education. This study did not ascertain results for this consideration for matching.

Fifth, longitudinal studies of the effects of the matching considerations found through this study could be of value.

Sixth, in this study the data were collapsed into categories. Further research could examine the data through strategies that look at the type of institution and how it may influence priorities of matching considerations or patterns in responses. By collapsing the data, innovative responses may also be lost. Further research could include these.

Chapter Summary

This chapter has delineated the conclusions from this research as derived from this mixed methods study of the perceptions and practices of student teaching coordinators and the considerations they find important for the matching of student teachers with clinical placement sites in Pennsylvania. Since this study raised questions of interest to the field of teacher education and student teaching in particular, it also offers suggestions for further research on this important topic. A few personal reflections on the use of an online survey in this research and a little feedback from participants completes this chapter.

Concluding Comments

Although the literature supports the benefits of using online surveys in research, I encountered a few participants who were very hesitant to complete a survey online. Several did comply after our telephone conversations, yet a few insisted on completing a hard copy of the survey by mail instead. Their rationale was their skepticism of maintaining confidentiality online, and, in particular cases, concern that their responses would be accessible by their institutions. It was evident in some cases that the respondents were concerned that their jobs might be jeopardized if they were candid in their responses.

During the recruitment phase when I was creating the email contact list for the surveys, and during my interviews, many participants expressed a heightened interest in this study. Several asked to receive a copy the abstract so that they would know the

outcome. One interviewee commented that at the beginning of the interview he was just complying to be helpful, but by the end "realized how important this study is." Another interviewee was quite affirming of my work, asking, "Is this study going to be published? It should be. It should be." Finally, I believe that the reactions and responses from the participants while I collected the quantitative and qualitative data added a dimension to and reinforced the potential value of this study for teacher education.

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Appendix A

The Pennsylvania Standards for Higher Education

Chapter 354 General Standards

I.   MISSION – The professional educator programs shall have a cooperatively developed mission statement that is based on the needs of the professional educator candidates, public school entities and their students, and consistent with the design of the programs. (354.21) (49.14(4)(i))

II.   ASSESSMENT [REPORTING] – The preparing institution shall submit an annual systematic report and a biennial report on candidates and demonstrate that the results are used to modify and improve the professional education programs. (354.22) (49.14(4)(vii)(x))

III.   ADMISSIONS – The preparing institution shall document that its procedure for admitting applicants into its professional education programs confirms that they have met the course, credit and grade point average or alternative admissions requirements. (354.23) (354.31) (49.12(4)(v))

IV.   DESIGN – The preparing institution shall document that the academic content courses for initial preparation programs culminating in a bachelor's degree or higher shall be the same as a Bachelor of Arts or Bachelor of Science Degree and shall also include all required electives in the content area that the candidates plan to teach or serve and allow completion in four years. (354.24) (49.14(4)(iii))

V.   FIELD EXPERIENCES – The preparing institution shall document that candidates complete a planned sequence of professional education courses and field experiences that integrate academic and professional education content with actual practice in classrooms and schools to create meaningful learning experiences for all students. (354.25) (49.14(4)(iv)(viii))

VI.   STUDENT TEACHING – The preparing institution shall document that candidates for initial Instructional I certification complete a 12-week full-time student-teaching experience under the supervision of qualified program faculty and cooperating teachers. (354.25) (49.14(4)(ii))

VII.   COLLABORATION – The preparing institution shall document that higher education faculty, public school personnel, and other members of the professional education community collaborate to design, deliver, and facilitate effective programs for the preparation of professional educators and to improve the quality of education in schools. (354.25) (354.41) (49.14(4)(ix))

VIII. ADVISING & MONITORING – The preparing institution shall document its procedure for recruiting and advising students, systematically monitoring their progress, and assessing their competence to begin their professional roles upon completion of the program. (354.32) (354.33) (49.14(4)(vi))

IX.   EXIT CRITERIA – The preparing institution shall have a published set of criteria and competencies for exit from each professional education program,

that are based on the PA Academic Standards, Specific Program Guidelines and the learning principles for each certificate category. (354.33) (49.14(4)(iii))

X.   FACULTY – The preparing institution shall provide systematic and comprehensive activities to assess and enhance the competence, intellectual vitality and diversity of the faculty. (354.41)

Appendix B

Informed Consent

Implied Informed Consent Form for Social Science Research

The Pennsylvania State University

Title of Project

Sites for practice: An examination of practices and perceptions for matching student

teachers with clinical placement sites in Pennsylvania.

Principal Investigator: Devorah Trembach Bozella

506 Central Avenue

Cresson, PA 16630

dbozella@mtaloy.edu; 814-886-6430 or 814-886-5876

Advisor: Dr. Bernard Badiali

The Pennsylvania State Universtiy

Rackley Building, 2nd Floor

University Park, PA 16802

Bxb8@psu.edu

814-863-3286

Purpose of the study: The purpose of this research is to explore the phenomenon of matching student teachers with clinical placement sites. The investigation will focus on the following research questions:

1. What criteria do student teaching coordinators in the state of Pennsylvania consider in order to match student teachers with clinical placement sites?

2. What perceptions do student teaching coordinators in the state of Pennsylvania hold concerning the most important considerations to examine when matching student teachers with clinical placement sites?

Procedures to be followed: You will be asked to answer 20 items on an online survey.

Duration: It will take about 15-20 minutes to complete the survey.

Statement of Confidentiality: Your participation in this research is confidential. In the event of any publication or presentation resulting from the research, no personally identifiable information will be shared. At the end of the survey you will be asked for contact information to participate in follow-up interviews. If you are willing to participate, your identity will be replaced with a code once the survey data are received. Your confidentiality will be maintained to the degree permitted by the technology used. Specifically, no guarantees can be made regarding the interception of data sent via the Internet by any third parties.

Right to Ask Questions: Please contact Devorah Trembach Bozella at 814-886-5876 or 814-886-6430 with questions or concerns about this study.

Voluntary Participation: Your decision to be in this research is voluntary. You can stop at any time. You do not have to answer any questions you do no want to answer.

You must be 18 years of age or older to take part in this research study.

Completion and return of the survey implies that you have read the information on this form and consent to take part in the research. Please print this form for your records or future reference.

Are you willing to participate in this research?

- Yes

- No

Appendix C

Online Survey

*Sites for Practice: An Examination of Practices and Perceptions
for Matching Student Teachers With Clinical Placement Sites*

Matching Survey

As the person responsible for matching student teachers with clinical placement sites, please complete the following survey questions. Please note the term student teaching refers to the culminating student teaching experience.

Please indicate your title or position:_____

Demographic Information

Please respond to statements #1-#5 by indicating one response. In item #6, please indicate the estimated percentage in each category.

1. During the past 3 years, our teacher preparation program placed _____student teachers per year.

   *1-50

   *51-100

   *101-150

   *151-200

   *201-250

   *251-300

   *More than 300

2. During the past 3 years, our institution placed ____elementary level student teachers per year.

   *1-50

   *51-100

   *101-150

   *151-200

   *201-250

   *251-300

   *More than 300

3. During the past 3 years, our institution placed ___secondary level student teachers per year.

   *1-50

   *51-100

   *101-150

   *151-200

   *201-250

   *251-300

   *More than 300

4. During the past 3 years, our student teachers completed:

	1	2	3 or more
Student teaching placements per quarter			
Student teaching placements per semester			

Student teaching placements per year

5. Our institution can be characterized as a_____.

   *State Institution

   *State-aided Institution

   *Private Institution

6. During the past 3 years, please indicate the estimated percentage of your student teachers placed in the following settings:

   Urban %

   Suburban %

   Rural %

Please respond to the following statements by marking one response which indicates your <u>personal</u> beliefs:

7. It is important to place student teachers in racially / culturally diverse clinical placement sites.
   - Strongly Agree
   - Agree
   - Neutral
   - Disagree
   - Strongly Disagree

8. It is important to place student teachers in clinical placement sites with which our institution has a written, formally established collaborative relationship.

   - Strongly Agree
   - Agree
   - Neutral
   - Disagree
   - Strongly Disagree

9. It is important to place student teachers in a particular "school" as opposed to placing them with specific cooperating teachers.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neutral
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

10. It is important to place student teachers in clinical placement sites where the teaching practices/strategies are consistent with those advocated by college faculty.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neutral
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

11. It is important to select clinical placement sites for student teachers in schools where college faculty are also working in non-supervisory roles such as professional development facilitators.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neutral
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

12. It is important to place student teachers in clinical placement sites that have an understanding of the goals/expectations of your teacher education program.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neutral
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

13. It is important to place student teachers in clinical placement sites committed to enhancing / improving education.

- Strongly Agree

- Agree
- Neutral
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

14. It is important to place student teachers in clinical placement sites located in close proximity to your institution.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neutral
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

15. It is important to place cohorts of student teachers in the same clinical placement site.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neutral
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

16. My personal view of matching student teachers with clinical placement sites reflects the actual procedures of our teacher education program.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neutral
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

(*Adapted and used by permission – Potthoff, D. & Alley, R. (1996). Selecting placement sites for student teachers and pre-student teachers: Six considerations. *The Teacher Educator*, 32, 85-98.)

Please answer the following questions:

17. What criteria do you consider when you match student teachers with clinical placement sites?

18. What are the **most** important considerations for matching student teachers with clinical placement sites? Please explain why. List up to 3 considerations.

19. What would be your **ideal** model for matching student teachers with clinical placement sites? Please explain.

20. Describe how your personal view of matching student teachers with placement sites corresponds with the procedures of your teacher education program.

Thank you for completing this survey. Your responses will remain confidential. Please complete the section below and return with your survey in order to further discuss your responses with the researcher in follow-up conversations.

Name:_____

Address:_____

Phone
number:_____

E-
mail:_____

Appendix D

Online Survey Recruitment Letter

Dear Student Teaching Coordinator:

I am a graduate student at Penn State University conducting a research study about matching student teachers with clinical placement sites. As a teacher educator and student teaching supervisor, I am very interested in your procedures and perceptions of matching student teachers with clinical placement sites.

I would greatly appreciate your participation in this project. Be assured that all response data will be pooled for reporting purposes and that no single response can be traced to an individual or institution. This online survey will take approximately 15-20 minutes to complete. Please click on the following link to the Web page:

I sincerely thank you for your participation and your time.

Respectfully yours,

Devorah Trembach Bozella (dbozella@mtaloy.edu)

Appendix E

Interviewee Recruitment Letter

Dear (Participant),

In your reply to my research survey for Penn State University, you indicated that you were willing to engage in a follow-up conversation to further discuss your responses. The interview should take approximately 15 minutes. A verbal consent will be read to you over the telephone before we begin. Please contact me by phone or email to set a time to do so. My phone contact numbers are 814-886-6430 or 814-886-5876. My email is dbozella@mtaloy.edu.

Thank you. I look forward to talking with you!

Sincerely,
Devorah Trembach Bozella

Appendix F

Interviewee Verbal Consent Script
(to be read at the beginning of the telephone interview)

Hello (Participant),

Thank you for agreeing to be interviewed today. Once again, my name is Devorah Trembach Bozella and I am a doctoral student in the Education Department at The Pennsylvania State University.

Let me review key points of this verbal consent. First, are you 18 years old or older? Thank you. Moving on, the focus of this interview will be to clarify and extend responses to the survey you completed. I will ask you # questions as well as any necessary questions for clarification to your responses. The interview will take approximately 15 minutes. Will you give your permission to be audio-recorded?

If "No" to audio question: No problem. I will certainly respect your wishes. Your participation in this survey is voluntary; your completion of the interview constitutes implied consent. You do not have to answer any questions you are uncomfortable or unfamiliar with and you may stop at any time. Your participation in this research is confidential. Please feel free to ask any questions or express any concerns you may have at any time. Are you ready to begin?

Will you give your permission for direct quotes to be used in publications/presentations? If "No" to publication question: No problem. I will certainly respect your wishes. The audio tapes of the interview will be stored in a locked file, and will be accessible to Dr. Edgar Yoder, one of my committee members, and Dr. Bernard Badiali, my advisor and committee chair, as well as myself. The audio tapes will be destroyed by November 2010. Your participation in this survey is voluntary; your completion of the interview constitutes implied consent. You do not have to answer any questions you are uncomfortable or unfamiliar with and you may stop at any time. Your participation in this research is confidential. Please feel free to ask any questions or express any concerns you may have at any time. Are you ready to begin?

If "Yes" to both questions:
Thank you. The audio tapes of the interview will be stored in a locked file, and will be accessible to Dr. Edgar Yoder, one of my committee members, and Dr. Bernard Badiali, my advisor and committee chair, as well as myself. The audio tapes will be destroyed by November 2010. Your participation in this survey is voluntary; your completion of the interview constitutes implied consent. You do not have to answer any questions you are uncomfortable or unfamiliar with and you may stop at any time. Your participation in this research is confidential. Please feel free to ask any questions or concerns you may have at

any time. Are you ready to begin?

Following the interview:

(Participant), thank you once again for participating today. Your contribution has been valuable. Do you have any questions or concerns at this time?

I would like to give you some contact information. Do you have a pencil and paper available? If you have any questions or concerns regarding this interview in the future, please contact me at 814-886-5876, or dbozella@mtaloy.edu. You may also contact my faculty advisor, Dr. Bernard Badiali, at 814-863-3286, or bxb8@psu.edu.

Thank you, and have a great day, (Participant)!

Appendix G

Guiding Questions for Telephone Interviews
IRB# 26011

1. In the survey, you indicated _____are important considerations for matching student teachers with clinical placement sites. Why are these factors important? Are these considerations evidenced in your current practices?

2. In the survey, you indicated that _____is/is not important to consider when matching student teachers with clinical placement sites. Could you please explain your response?

3. Do your personal views of matching student teachers with clinical placement sites ever change your matching procedures? Please explain.

4. How could your ideal model of matching student teachers, as indicated in your survey response, be implemented in your teacher education program? What challenges would you encounter?

5. Several respondents indicated that it is challenging to find quality placements or numbers of placements for student teachers. Do you agree? What suggestions do you have to remedy this situation?

6. Would incentives from the State increase the availability of placements and/or quality placements for teacher education programs? If so, what types of incentives would you see as valuable?

Appendix H

IRB Approval

Dear Dev,

The Office for Research Protections (ORP) has reviewed the above-referenced study and determined it to be exempt from IRB review. You may begin your research. This study qualifies under the following category(ies):

Category 2: Research involving the use of educational tests (cognitive, diagnostic, aptitude, achievement), survey procedures, interview procedures, or observations of public behavior unless: (i) information obtained is recorded in such a manner that human participants can be identified, directly or through identifiers linked to the participants; and (ii) any disclosure of the human participants' responses outside the research could reasonably place the participants at risk of criminal or civil liability or be damaging to the participants' financial standing, employability, or reputation. [45 CFR 46.101(b)(2]

COMMENT: Please use the attached survey when administering the study. The word "anonymous" was removed from the survey. Since participants are being asked to provide contact information, the data cannot be "anonymous."

PLEASE NOTE THE FOLLOWING:

- Include your IRB number in any correspondence to the ORP.

- The principal investigator is responsible for determining and adhering to additional requirements established by any outside sponsors/funding sources.

- Record Keeping

- The principal investigator is expected to maintain the original signed informed consent forms, if applicable, along with the research records for at least three (3) years after termination of the study.

- This will be the only correspondence you will receive from our office regarding this modification determination.

- MAINTAIN A COPY OF THIS EMAIL FOR YOUR RECORDS.

- Consent Document(s)

- The exempt consent form(s) will no longer be stamped with the approval/expiration dates.

- The attached informed consent form(s) is the one that you are expected to use.

- Follow-Up

- The Office for Research Protections will contact you in three (3) years to inquire if this study will be on-going.

- If the study is completed within the three year period, the principal investigator may complete and submit a Project Close-Out Report. (http://www.research.psu.edu/orp/areas/humans/applications/closeout.rtf)

- Revisions/Modifications

- Any changes or modifications to the study must be submitted to the Office for Research Protections on the Modification Request Form - Exemption available on our website:

http://www.research.psu.edu/orp/areas/humans/applications/exemptmod.rtf

- Modifications will not be accepted unless the Modification Request Form is included with the submission.

Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any questions or concerns.

Thank you,

Jodi

Jodi L. Mathieu, BS, CIP
Research Compliance Coordinator
Office for Research Protections
The Pennsylvania State University
201 Kern Graduate Building
University Park, PA 16802
Phone: (814) 865-1775
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http://www.research.psu.edu/orp/ <http://www.research.psu.edu/orp/>

Vita

Devorah Lynn Trembach Bozella

Education:
 Bachelor of Science, Slippery Rock University, 1974
 Master of Education, Indiana University of Pennsylvania, 1990
 Elementary Principal Certification, Pennsylvania State University, 1993
 Letter of Eligibility Certification, Pennsylvania State University, 1999

Professional Experience:
 Assistant Professor, Mount Aloysius College, 2002-present
 Principal/Project Director 21st Century Keystone Community Learning Centers/
 21st Century After-School Program (Middle Schools), 2001-2002
 Elementary Principal, Keystone Central School District, 1997-2001
 Elementary Principal, Northern Cambria School District, 1995-1997
 Assistant Elementary-Middle School Principal, Northern Cambria School District, 1994-1995
 Reading Specialist, Parent Programs Coordinator, Claysburg-Kimmel School District, 1986-1994
 Long-term Reading Substitute Teacher, Penn Cambria School District, 1985
 Elementary Methods Lecturer, Saint Francis College, 1985
 Health Teacher, Belle Vernon Area High School, 1978-1980
 First Grade Teacher, Saint Patrick's School, 1977-1978
 Substitute Teacher, K-12, 1974-1977

Presentations:
 Presenter, 2002 National Association of Elementary School Principals' Convention, San Antonio, Texas