THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN STUDENT TEACHER PERFORMANCE AND SOCIAL STUDIES TEST PERFORMANCE

by

Christopher Le Roy Jones
Liberty University

A Dissertation Presentation in Partial Fulfillment
Of the Requirements for the Degree
Doctor of Education
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ABSTRACT
Numerous universities throughout the United States of America offer Social Studies Education programs as a major. Naturally, it is the desire of leaders in any credible institution to well train and equip eventual graduates to become quality teachers of Social Studies subject areas, including the field of history. The importance and purpose of this study was to investigate records from Social Studies Education majors of an individual university, to determine if this particular university’s combined efforts between its history department and education department are producing future novice teachers with a keen knowledge of Social Studies fields as well as the skills to successfully teach these subjects. The congruent records utilized in this study were secondary education cooperating teacher evaluations of student teaching experiences and the outcomes from Praxis II exams as well as the university’s history department usage of a Major Field Test (MFT) to assess student content knowledge. Seven consecutive years of records were in review of initially 32 Social Studies Education major students. Of these students, 20 took the MFT assessment, the Praxis II test, and completed Student Teacher internships concluded by a Teacher Competency Assessment (TCA) from cooperating teachers. The Point Biserial Correlation method was used in this study and determined that there was a non-significant relationship between Praxis II scores and TCA results as well as a non-significant relationship between MFT scores and TCA outcomes.

Keywords: Novice Teachers, Cooperating Teachers, Student Teaching Experience, Teacher Competency Assessment (TCA), Point Biserial Correlation, Assessment Tests such as Major Field Tests (MFT), and Praxis II Exams.
Dedication

This manuscript is first and foremost dedicated to my Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ! He has been my strength and my portion. Blessed be the name of the Lord!

I would also like to dedicate this manuscript to my wife, Rashael, and children, Domenica and Wesley. Their prayers, patience, support, and encouragement in the midst of the research and writing process were invaluable. I cannot thank them enough for being there for me. May God bless them tremendously!
Acknowledgements

Completing this manuscript and the doctoral program process would not have been possible without the help of God and the strength and endurance He gave me. In the midst, the Lord provided for me a group of godly men that served as invaluable professional supports to me. Each of them had trekked through their own terminal degree experience long before I embarked on mine and they understood what I was about to encounter. Therefore, I do not know what I would have done without the continual encouragement, guidance and imparted wisdom offered by Dr. Samuel C. Smith, Dr. David L. Snead, Dr. Steven A. McDonald, Dr. Samuel J. Smith, and Dr. Scott B. Watson. They were truly God’s instruments in getting me through this venture and I am eternally grateful for all of they did to help me reach the “finish line”. May God bless them!
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List of Abbreviations

Educational Testing Service (ETS)
Institutional Review Board (IRB)
Major Field Tests (MFT)
Point Biserial Correlation (rpbi)
Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS)
Student Outcome Learning (SOL)
Teacher Competency Assessment (TCA)
CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Overview

This study is designed to better determine if a university’s School of Education and History Department are effectively training and preparing Social Studies Secondary Education majors or Social Studies teacher licensure students to be marketable in the job force and more importantly and specifically be successful history classroom managers. In Chapter One the background for this study will be discussed as well as the problem statement, the purpose statement, significance of this study, the research questions at hand, the correlating hypothesis, and any key terms that will be defined.

Background

How often are new or veteran social studies teachers viewed to be, for example, smart historians but poor teachers? Perhaps, lacking in classroom management and instructional skills are not the issue, but rather, exhibiting weaknesses in subject matter knowledge is the real concern. Arguably it is safe to assume that just because teachers know their history well, it does not necessarily mean that instructors will make the best teachers in relaying this knowledge to others. In conjunction, not all people that obtain and practice quality teaching skills will instruct a history course well without beforehand acquiring and retaining the necessary knowledge. Thus, it can be concluded that the ideal Social Studies teacher is one that possesses a combined balance of not only being a keen historian but also an impressive classroom manager and instructor able to inspire and successfully pass on knowledge to students.

University administrators and subject-matter professors may contemplate if their programs are making a positive difference in training, equipping and preparing students to be employable and successful in specific job fields. This study will determine how well a
The university’s School of Education and History Department have done in their collaborative effort to accomplish this objective. Using LiveText cooperating teacher evaluation records, Praxis II Test outcomes, as well as a Major Field Test (MFT) utilized by a university’s History Department to assess content knowledge outcomes, the researcher will be able to better determine how well the university’s School of Education and History Department, in their collaborative efforts, have done to prepare Social Studies Secondary Education majors to be effective and marketable history teachers. The results may also serve in revealing any weaknesses these university branches may have and where there could be room for curriculum design and instructional improvements.

Due to the nature of a frequently competitive job market, it can be challenging for Social Studies Secondary Education majors to obtain a teaching position immediately following graduation and their respective student teaching experiences (Townsend & Brookends, 2016, p. 1). Thus, it is imperative that these candidates exhibit a healthy level of knowledge and acquire skills by the close of their student teaching endeavors. Furthermore, obtaining conspicuous evaluation and examination records are vital in order to be a contender in the often competitive job market for teaching positions in accredited private and public schools (Sayeski & Paulsen, 2012, p. 117). At the very least, a student must come away from a student teaching program having earned an “A” final grade, followed by high or flattering evaluative feedback from the cooperating teacher that supervised and mentored the intern throughout this definitive semester-long process (Brucklacher, 1998, p. 67). Any final grade less than an “A,” along with mediocre cooperating teacher evaluations almost certainly disqualifies the candidate from realistically gaining a post at a credible accredited school.
University Education and Social Studies departments need to serve these students well by providing them with a quality academic training that will properly equip them not only display keen knowledge of history during their student teaching experience but also to be viewed as practicing a healthy balance of being creative, engaging, passionate and authoritative classroom managers (Castolo & Dizon, 2007). Thus, a case study involving a university’s School of Education database student teacher evaluations offered by their respective cooperating teacher may be a means to discover the level of effectiveness of these university branches in meeting the aforementioned objectives. In conjunction, a university’s History Department assessment test closely aligned with the Student Outcome Learning design affiliated with the Virginia Department of Education, may also be advantageous in such an endeavor (Virginia Department of Education, 2017).

The researcher has attempted to obtain scholarly literature, specifically pertaining to correlations between cooperating teachers’ evaluations of student teacher candidates in conjunction with a university’s multi-departmental assessments or involvement in the training of these pupils, but to no avail. However, there are a few literature sources in publication that discuss correlations between cooperating teachers in relationship to student teacher candidates. Moreover, there are some sources that discuss the value of departmental student assessment tests.

Most recently, Tannebaum (2016) wrote how the cooperating teacher, through instruction and modeling, can instill positive autonomous skills within the preservice candidate inside of Social Studies classrooms. However, this study does not address the value of prior training done by a university’s Education and History departments.

Altan and Saglamel (2015) stated, “Research on the cooperating teacher has mainly dealt with the perspective of student-teachers; however, [their] study focused on the student teaching
process from the perspective of both cooperating teachers and the pupils in student-teacher’s classes” (p. 1). They concluded that, if the student teaching experience is overseen in a quality mentoring manner from the cooperating teacher, it can be a successful practical experience, but if not, it would be disastrous. While this study was intriguing, it took place outside of the United States in a Turkish educational setting.

McLeod’s (2011) study was designed to “investigate the perceptions of cooperating teachers regarding the level of preparedness of specific student teachers at the beginning of the student-teaching experience” (p. 21). While McLeod argued that the study was beneficial in unveiling areas where improvements could be made in better preparing candidates for the student teacher experience, it was limited to a music program perspective (p. 29).

Barney and Hughes (2008), wrote a piece on helpful tips that cooperating teachers can offer to their student teachers to aid in success. This study, however, was taken from the perspective of physical education instructors.

Prior to that, Bell and Robinson (2004) concluded that the student teaching experience is a most important developmental phase in view of the candidate’s future as long as the candidate receives the right guidance from not only their cooperating teachers but also from their college supervisors. Once more, this article was based on the thoughts and sentiments of those in music education. Castolo and Dizon (2007) discussed how cooperating teacher evaluation forms “vary considerably from short checklist to long essay, and some combine aspects of each” which can produce some inconsistencies in outcomes (p. 31). For example, some can be too short and direct in nature and thus a complete view of what the cooperating teacher had really concluded may not be relayed.
Brucklacher (1998) submitted that grades and evaluation reports given by cooperating teachers toward student teachers can be unfair and tainted due to personal bias. Nonetheless, even though negative feedback may result due to bias, Brucklacher’s case study revealed that cooperating teachers generally rate teacher candidates with high marks.

Concerning assessment tests, Breakstone, Smith, and Wineburg (2013) argued that “teachers need tools and [assessment] tests that help students analyze primary and secondary sources and develop written historical arguments,” but did not discuss how valuable they may be in determining candidate preparedness for the student teaching experience (p. 1). Assessment tests can be a useful tool to individual teachers or programs to identify where there is a need for necessary changes in course design (Boyas, Bryan, & Lee, 2012, p. 427). A study under Romer and Merrell (2012) concluded that assessment tests are generally and relatively reliable. However, their research dealt with elementary school children rather than the university level, let alone specifically the college department level. While Tobin and Gebo (2008) inferred that “assessment [tests] help guide understanding of learning experiences and departmental effectiveness” their study involved a university criminal justice department (p. 223). Deardorff and Posler (2005) submitted that departmental assessments are a must but not so much for the sake of determining student knowledge and preparedness for future professions, but rather to test the prowess of the professors.

**Problem Statement**

There are surprisingly few sources that discuss cooperative teacher experiences in relation to student teacher classroom management success/failure stories and even less that specifically deal with the Social Studies realms of successfully preparing knowledgeable subject matter teachers. Moreover, even fewer sources are available concerning the effectiveness of
departmental assessment tests in conjunction to secondary level history teacher candidates. Furthermore, in view of this exact topic pertaining to these specific branches of a university, there is no known prior research that has been started let alone completed. To date, few if any researchers has ever done a study of this nature on behalf of the School of Education and History Department for the university in review. A review of the literature, thus far, has not unearthed a study of this specific nature or design completed within any U.S. university. Therefore, this study is original. Cooperating teacher evaluations are available within the School of Education database files of the university in review that span to around 2005. In addition, the History Department has maintained assessment test outcome records that also span to 2005. As a result, the researcher concludes that there is not only a significant gap in the literature, but specifically to this university case study, despite extensive research, related previous literature appears to be unavailable. But, the student teacher program experience is critical in developing stages of the rising novice educator. Furthermore, “because of the level of influence such a period has on preservice teachers, explorative and empirical research that can assist teacher education programs developing effective educators is needed” (Tannebaum, 2016, p. 97). Finally, when interviewed, novice educators confessed to having their share of previous challenges during the student teaching experience, such as struggling with self confidence in their abilities and lacking in classroom management skills (He & Cooper, 2011, p. 100). Therefore, again, the researcher concludes that a study of this manner is merited and will be valuable.

**Purpose Statement**

The purpose of this study is to determine if there is a relationship between a university’s School of Education and History Department collaborative efforts to train and equip Social Studies education majors for future teaching positions. This study will examine seven years of
information. The participants will include at least 20 Social Studies Education majors that, during their senior year of college, took the History Department comprehensive test as well as the Praxis II Content Knowledge exam. The study will also incorporate final evaluations provided by the cooperating teachers during these students’ respective student teacher experiences. The number of cooperating teachers may vary due to the fact that some students experience up to two school placements during a given semester in which the student teaching program is in operation. There may be a connection between student teacher performances and history department assessment test achievements. While the researcher projects that, at least from a progressive standpoint, there will be an overall positive outcome, the research findings itself will better determine the validity of the hypothesis. The researcher can assume that the History Department Assessment Test (MFT) is reliable since it is well aligned with the Virginia Department of Education Student Outcome Learning model.

**Significance of the Study**

There is a clear lack of literature revealing identical or even somewhat similar studies attempted at other universities. But, there are some key common take-aways that can be extracted from the available literature. Assessment tests can be a useful tool in identifying necessary changes in course or program design (Boyas, Bryan, & Lee, 2012). Research completed on the experience and perspective of the student teacher is greater or more available in comparison to studies concerning the evaluative analysis offered by cooperating teachers (Altan & Saglamel, 2015). To validate the struggles of student teachers, one “perception” study alone encompassed the thoughts of 295 teacher candidates (Claires, Almeida, & Vierira, 2012).

Therefore, this research endeavor will serve the university’s School of Education and History Department to self-assess any progress made and where there may be room for
improvement in training and equipping quality Social Studies teacher candidates. The researcher would venture to assume that other universities would also be curious to learn how well their education and history branches are doing in this same effort. Thus it can be assumed that this model could be helpful to other institutions and replicated in order to launch similar studies on many college campuses, not only for history departments but also science departments, math departments, etc. Arguably, from the bases of this model, the research could be broadened and the model methodology enhanced.

**Research Questions**

RQ1: Is there a relationship between student teacher performance on the Teacher Competency Assessment (TCA) and Praxis II Social Studies test achievement?

RQ2: Is there a relationship between student teacher performance on the Teacher Competency Assessment (TCA) and Major Field Test (MFT) achievement?

**Definitions**

1. *Assessment Tests* – Are designed to “guide understanding of learning experiences and departmental effectiveness” (Tobin & Gebo, 2008).

2. *Cooperating Teachers* – Are grade school teachers that give oversight to and “influence student-teachers’ profession-related socialization, career satisfaction, perceptions of the professional role, philosophies of teaching, instructional practices, and perhaps even their decision to stay in the profession” (Altan & Saglamel, 2015).

3. *Field Experience* – Are school placements in which a teacher candidate will undergo inservice practice teaching and classroom management experience (Liberty University, 2017).

4. *Novice Educators* – Are new professional teachers serving in their instructional capacities for up to three years (Bickmore & Fink, 2013).
5. *Preservice Teachers* – Are another title given to student teacher candidates (Tannebaum, 2016).

6. *Student Teachers* – Are teacher candidates near the end of their respective college education programs that observe, then practice-teach in various educational venues and, in doing so, will hopefully develop professional qualifications resulting in an overall successful learning experience (Altan & Saglamel, 2015).

7. *Teacher Competency Assessment (TCA)* – “Are evaluations completed by the Cooperating Teachers/On-Site Mentor as an assessment of the Student Teacher’s overall performance. Student Teachers will be responsible for meeting all of the competencies outlined in the assessment for their endorsement area” (Liberty University, 2017).
CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

Overview

There is a clear lack of literature concerning comparisons or correlations between university level departmental assessment test score outcomes and the evaluative assessments of student teachers by their respective cooperating teachers. More notably, there appears to be no literature available on comparing specifically history department assessment test records pertaining to Social Studies Education majors and the final evaluations they received from their respective cooperating teachers during the student teacher experience. Thus, there is a definite gap in the literature. It is a reasonable assumption that faculty members and leaders of virtually any university’s school of education and history department programs would be curious to know if any correlations exist between test and student teaching performances. However, this type of research could also reveal if these university branches are doing a conspicuous job training future novice educators to be good and skilled classroom instructors and managers that teach history well with a healthy level of subject matter knowledge. Therefore, hopefully this study will cause certain closure in the gap by bringing some contribution to this subject area. In addition, from this body of work, perhaps further studies of this nature will occur, not only within university history departments but within other subject fields and school departments as well.

Conceptual or Theoretical Framework

A philosophical mindset to be utilized in this research process will be Bandura’s (1986) Social Cognitive Theory. Bandura argued that an individual’s knowledge can be directly obtained and imitated by simply observing and learning from others inside of various social dynamics. This theory is relevant when exploring whether Social Studies Education majors learn the lessons well of what it is to be a confident and inspiring classroom manager via the instruction and modeling offered by professors within a university’s school of education program
and built within the respective curriculum course designs. Along those same lines, did Social Studies Education majors gain extensive knowledge needed to go into the high school history classroom well prepared to instruct pupils with vast and accurate insights? These are questions that may be better understood via the research outcomes that will be disclosed by the end of this study.

As previously submitted, perhaps this study will cause some closure in the research and literature gap by bringing some contribution to this subject area. It is the desire of the researcher that this study will not only benefit inquiring minds among faculty in a university’s history department and school of education, but this body of work may encourage other studies of this nature to occur perhaps in other branches of the university utilized for this study and beyond.

Another philosophical mindset to be utilized in this research process will be the epistemological assumption. According to Creswell (2013), when researchers use this means, they tend to get as close as possible to the participants being studied. According to Gall and Gall (2007), epistemology “is the branch of philosophy that studies the nature of knowledge and the process by which knowledge is acquired and validated” (p. 15). The researcher finds a connection between this assumption and the point and purpose of students taking various forms of assessment tests. Are Social Studies education majors receiving a quality education and being mentored well by their professors respectively in a university’s history department and school of education? Through assessment tests, are these students exhibiting that they are acquiring a healthy level of subject matter knowledge? Through evaluations or assessments of student teachers given by cooperating teachers, are these pupils exhibiting a strong level of content subject matter knowledge received from prior university level history department training as well conspicuously exhibiting classroom instruction and management skills obtained by a university’s
school of education? Or is there a lack of one or both of these aspects and attributes needed before entering into the novice educator experience with the potential to excel as the “well-rounded” Social Studies teacher?

**Related Literature**

Despite the lack of literature directly pertaining to a study of this particular design and purpose, there is literature available that is at least indirectly related or connected to this study as well as the instrumentation to be utilized. Therefore, the examined literature is relevant to this research effort and practical in order to better understand better the facets and dynamics in review. The literature accessed has revealed some common key themes that examine the sense of confidence and preparedness interns may or may not have as they enter into their respective student teacher placements and go through the process, the relationship between cooperating teachers and student teachers, the importance of cooperating teacher evaluations of interns in their charge, and the value of assessment testing. Some literature concentrated on a combination of two of the aforementioned themes, while others focused on one key topic.

**The Student Teacher’s Sense of Confidence and Preparedness**

Various factors can help determine the outcome of the student teacher experience. Under the right circumstances, an internship may start out with its share of challenges for the preservice teacher, but by the end of the semester-long venture, circumstances may improve or matters may only get worse. Claires, Almeida, and Vierira (2012) explored the challenges expressed by interviewed student teachers. Interns admitted struggles with high stress levels, fatigue, and a sense of vulnerability due to weaknesses in background course work experiences. In addition, other student teachers in this study claimed that their confidence and readiness for the in-service venture were due to an apparent strong course training background. According to
Brown, Lee and Collins’s (2015) research, findings indicated “pre-service teachers’ perceptions of preparedness and sense of teaching efficacy both increased significantly from pre-student teaching to post-student teaching. In addition, three themes emerged from the answers to open-ended questions on learning components of student teaching experiences: opportunity for hands-on teaching, the opportunity to observe experienced teachers, and the relationship with their cooperating teacher” (p. 77). A theme in this study and others to be explored in this literature review is the importance of encouragement, quality guidance, and mentorship on the part of the veteran cooperating teacher toward the impressionable intern. Thus, in response to Brown’s question, “Does student teaching matter?”, the takeaway is that it does matter and how well these aforementioned dynamics play out can be a make or break situation as the student teacher faces the novice years as a professional teacher (p. 77).

While studying the novice teachers that had just completed their student teaching experience, several positive scenarios were explored. For example, a high sense of self efficacy among novices is evident in studies conducted by Tschannen-Moran and Hoy (2007), Mosely, Bilica, and Gdovin (2014), as well as Bell-Robertson (2014). In these studies, beginning teachers gratefully express that despite new challenges they may face in their new profession, they at least felt well prepared and informed by their respective colleges to succeed in their instructional roles, whether in view with classroom management or content knowledge (Bell-Robertson, 2014). While it is encouraging to read individual studies that discuss cases where new teachers have officially entered the teaching profession feeling confident and well prepared for the tasks that lie ahead due to prior college training, practicum, and student teacher experiences, these sources do not discuss in depth the reasons why or how the novice teacher obtained such an attitude of readiness to serve. Moreover, these articles do not display and
explore cases of novice educators entering the teaching profession feeling under-prepared and insecure, let alone why they would feel this way.

There are some examples in the literature that do, however, focus more so on how education majors, for a number of reasons, may feel ill-prepared entering into the student teaching or novice phases of their teaching experience. For instance, as the United States becomes increasingly diverse with a growing immigrant population, new concerns arise about teacher preparedness. According to Webster and Valeo’s (2011) interviews with recent graduates that had completed their student teaching experiences, educators are increasingly responsible to go into their novice venues with some training to handle the growing number of linguistically diverse students entering into the U.S. school systems today. While they may have felt well prepared from previous college and practice teaching training to run a classroom affectively and teach a specific subject field in good order, “there is evidence that well-intentioned teachers lack the competence necessary” to successfully instruct new English as a Second Language (ESL) students that may be in their classrooms (p.113).

Preservice teachers entering the classroom needing to be prepared for student diversity is not only a growing trend in the United States but also in other nations such as Australia (Mergler, Carrington, & Boman, 2017). As a result, education majors in the final stages of their degree programs along with novice educators are encouraging more Australian universities to implement an “inclusive education unit in teacher education programs” in order to affectively train future educators to better handle multicultural settings in sensitive and strategic form (p. 77).

Student teachers may also find themselves in inclusive instructional environments in which students with physical disabilities attend school and share in the same classroom dynamics
as non-disabled students. Thus, it is helpful to go into such a dynamic with a sense of preparedness. Ahsan, Sharma, and Deppeler’s (2012) research in Bangladesh, in view of 16 teacher training universities, “revealed that pre-service teachers having higher perceived teaching-efficacy showed lower level of concerns towards inclusive education” (p. 1).

A study with a 216-person sample in Australia submitted that “based on their coursework preparation in classroom behavior management, [new] teachers felt, at best, only somewhat prepared to manage disruption, noncompliance and disorganization problems, and closer to not at all prepared to manage aggressive, antisocial, or destructive behaviors” (O’Neill & Stephenson, 2013, p. 125). Therefore, these educators urged that institutions do a better job of providing working strategies for better handling classroom management scenarios, in addition to preparing them well to instruct various subject matters.

Some circumstances suggest that location may effect a teacher candidate’s sense of preparedness during the student teaching experience (Siwatu, 2011). One study exhibited that self-efficacy and preparedness appraisals from student teachers were greater when they were placed in suburban versus urban school systems. Thus, college programs have been advised to implement curriculum and training programs that will improve teacher candidate awareness of the added challenges that may come in urban placements.

Another example of student teachers feeling a lack of preparation in the classroom was expressed in Rupper, Neeper, and Dalsen’s (2016) study of special education preservice teacher’s working with mentally disabled students. The teacher candidates along with novice teachers, felt “less prepared to meet intensive medical, communication, and instructional needs of students with severe disabilities. [However], teachers with master’s degrees felt more prepared to work with students with severe disabilities in several key areas, although they [also]
felt less prepared to address long-term curriculum development” (p. 273). As a result, in general, these educators called for reforms and improvements to be made in college programs to simultaneously improve teacher responses to varying student disabilities and gain greater training in curriculum development.

Since “many teachers report that their [college and] preservice training was inadequate or ineffective, but little is known about the types of training they received,” Christofferso and Sullivan (2015) did a survey to reveal what training sources or means were utilized to prepare them for the classroom (p. 248). They discovered that “a majority of students took stand-alone courses in classroom management” (p. 248). Moreover, sample students “reported that a combination of didactic coursework and hands-on training were associated with the highest sense of preparedness to use classroom management strategies” (p. 248).

Finally, not all case studies about the teacher candidates expressing a lack of preparedness end on a negative note. Although some education majors may feel ill-prepared going into their practice teaching in-service scenarios, Lee, Tice, and Collins’ (2012) quantitative study of teacher candidates revealed that most felt far more prepared to move into professional roles at the close of their student teaching experience. This was due in large part to the hands on exposure and the guidance given by college supervisors and cooperating teachers.

Cooperating Teacher and Student Teacher Relationships

Numerous journal articles delving into a variety of scenario areas discuss the cooperating teacher and student teacher relationship dynamic. Most of these sources examine this experience from the perspective and assessments of the cooperating teacher. In these studies, the veteran educator offered observations concerning the strengths and weaknesses of student teachers. Such literature often includes advice and insights offered to novice educators by the cooperating
teacher on ways and means to have a positive experience in those volatile and impressionable beginning stages. However, some research delves into the perceptions of the intern and the struggles student teachers may go through as well as their assessments and evaluations of where interns could have received more support, perhaps from the cooperating teacher or prior university course preparation experience. A noteworthy amount of literature on cooperative teacher and student teacher relationship scenarios are easily found in music or physical education related journal articles. Again, this area of study appears to be, at best, in the infantile stage of pursuit in Social Studies education realms.

McLeod’s (2011) study was designed to “investigate the perceptions of cooperating teachers regarding the level of preparedness of specific student teachers at the beginning of the student-teaching experience” (p. 21). McLeod’s findings revealed, via a survey, that cooperating teachers did feel that many of the interns had entered the student teaching venue ill prepared in the areas of personal skills, teaching skills and subject matter skills. As a result, cooperating teachers alerted the universities involved in training these pre-service teachers, to give more attention to improving these areas of their respective programs. While the author argued that the study was beneficial in unveiling areas where improvements could be made in better preparing candidates for the student teacher experience, it was limited to a music program perspective.

Barney and Hughes (2008) wrote an article on helpful tips that cooperating teachers can offer to their student teachers to aid in success. But this article offers sound advice for the preservice teacher as well. According to Barney and Hughes, “the purpose of this article [was] to help better prepare student teachers for the little things they should do during their student teaching experience, while at the same time give those who work with pre-service and student teachers a reminder of little things they can emphasize to help prepare students for the student
teaching experience. Reading the school handbook serves the following purposes: (1) protects the student teacher from unknowingly breaking rules; (2) details how policies could affect them; and (3) frees the cooperating teacher from unnecessary questions” (p. 23). Taking these advisories seriously may not only increase the possibility of a successful internship but will potentially result in a better novice experience as well. This study, however, was taken from the perspective of physical education instructors. In addition, Woika (2012) provided an advisory article in which incoming student teachers should take heed. Woika argued that a successful in-service and building a positive relationship with the cooperating teacher depends on taking certain preventative measures, such as learning about the school placement in advance by visiting the school’s website, reviewing the student and teacher handbooks, developing positive rapport with the cooperating teacher by arranging an interactive visit with them before the internship officially begins. Woika, suggested that maintaining good communication with the cooperating teacher is so very important, and if the relationship never seems to assume a healthy manner, gaining helpful suggestions about how to improve circumstances from one’s college supervisor is advisable. In addition, Sayeski and Paulsen (2012) study concluded that interns got the most out of their relationship with the cooperating teacher when veteran overseers permitted them to explore new pedagogical methods and regularly provided concrete suggestions and even criticism as long as it was done in a caring and sensitive manner.

Rozelle and Wilson (2001) explored the influential power that cooperating teachers may relay onto student teachers in their charge. These influences can be positive but also negative and may have a lasting effect on the teacher candidate as they formally enter into the teaching profession and handle classroom management and instruction for years to come. For example, if the cooperating teacher exhibits enough negative attitudes about students, life as a teacher, or the
school environment, this mindset can be contagious and breed discontentment elsewhere and particularly rub off onto the teacher candidate. While Rozelle and Wilson’s study examined teacher relations within a secondary science department, lessons learned from this research may certainly cross over into other departments and in other academic settings. Thus, it is ideal and arguably imperative that veteran educators function carefully and sensitively in their cooperating teacher roles. A later study generated by Bell and Robinson (2004), concentrated on the impact of cooperating teachers serving the role of “mentor” to the interns in their charge. They concluded that the student teaching experience is a most important developmental phase in view of the candidate’s future as long as they receive the right guidance from not only their cooperating teachers, but also their college supervisors. But their writings go beyond what cooperating teachers can do to help meet their potential as future professional educators. They discuss vital qualities that student teachers should seek to obtain while going through the student teacher experience and naturally the job of cooperating teachers as well as college supervisors is to support and guide interns toward these goals. “A successful student teacher is a professional: knowledgeable, capable, organized, and prepared. From [their] first day of student teaching, [they should] display responsibility and maturity, and think of the experience as actual employment” (p. 40). Once more, this article was based on the thoughts and sentiments of those in music education. Caires and Almeida’s (2007) study of 224 student teachers, concluded that healthy working relationships between the preservice teacher and the cooperating teacher weighs heavily on the emotional balance, confidence, and sense of preparation felt by educators entering the novice stage of their teaching careers (p. 515).

In a later study, Claires, Almeida, and Vierira’s (2012), revealed how the key to student teachers having as positive and as fruitful an internship as possible largely depended on the
caring guidance given by the veteran cooperating and supervising teachers involved and their level of support and encouragement through the process. The preservice dynamic is so challenging that having this support from supervisors was a key for many in making an overall positive student teaching experience possible.

Although both the student teacher and cooperating teacher may be going through the internship scenario together, studies reveal that while their circumstances may be so very different, they may also be incredibly similar. Sandholtz and Wasserman’s (2010) research explores the need for both stakeholders to go through proper pre-launch training that correlate and overlap one another and receive the support needed before the commencement of the internship. In so doing, the veteran educator will have a better idea of what is expected when serving in the cooperating teacher capacity and what the teacher candidate may be going through. Thus, better and more effective forms of mentoring can take place. Young and Macphail’s (2014) article also examined the importance of the cooperating teacher’s role in mentoring preservice teachers, but their findings also present an interesting conundrum. While many sources focus on the pre-training or lack of training before interns begin their student teaching scenario and how veteran teachers can help complete their training, few if any studies delve into the need for cooperating teachers to receive the proper training to be the encouraging mentors to student teachers. Moreover, few studies examine the level of fairness that is needed toward preservice teachers that they need in order to have the best student teaching experience possible. There can be an assumption that just being a veteran teacher sufficiently beyond the novice stage, qualifies someone to take on the responsibility of effectively overseeing vulnerable and impressionable student teachers. However, experience does not necessarily mean that the veteran teacher is a quality subject matter expert and/or classroom manager and instructor.
Maybe they are stellar teachers in these aforementioned areas, but that still does not mean they are prepared and ready to take on the role of mentor and understand the duties and ramifications of being a quality cooperating teacher. The Young and Macphail study explored examples and reasons why cooperating teachers and not just student teachers need proper advance training before entering into the internship dynamic. Along these lines, an asset or quality to be promoted and passed on by a knowledgeable cooperating teacher is a sense of independence and self-reliance on the part of the intern. Tannebaum (2016) wrote that through instruction and modeling, cooperating teachers can instill positive autonomous skills within the preservice candidate inside of Social Studies classrooms. The problem is that some veteran teachers struggle to give up some control of the classroom dynamics or maybe the lesson plan development that they hold closely as their domain. Nonetheless, it is vital that they, within reason, give up some of this control and allow the student teacher the chance to sink or swim. Through proper mentorship and practicing enough balance in running the classroom, in the long-run, the intern can experience a successful term as a student teacher and leave adequately prepared for the much more autonomous task of being a professional novice educator.

Altan and Saglamel (2015) examined the transition between student teachers first entering into their placement venue, the experience they undergo throughout the process, and their exit from the internship dynamic and entering into the professional world. Altan and Saglamel argue that, “research on the cooperating teacher has mainly dealt with the perspective of student-teachers; however, [their] study focused on the student teaching process from the perspective of both cooperating teachers and the pupils in student-teacher’s classes” (p. 1). They concluded that, if the student teaching experience is overseen in a quality mentoring manner from the cooperating teacher, it can be a successful practical experience, but if not, it may be
disastrous. While this study was intriguing, it took place outside of the United States in a Turkish educational setting. However, the researcher has discovered that probably as many articles pertaining to the student teacher experience are available within Asian or European based journal magazines sources as American based education journal magazines. Thus, the researcher has reason to believe that countries such as Turkey may be among the nations in representation further ahead in researching the student teacher dynamic. This possibility merits further investigation.

Some research further examines the triad relationship between student teacher and cooperating teachers as well as the college supervising professor. Huong (2012), argues that joint effort of learning between these stakeholders can be achieved by inquiry based interactions. Since educational knowledge is a continuing process, it is safe to assume that ideas for lesson plans, as well as how to cope with student dynamics and cultural issues, can be gained from not only the veteran high school teacher or the experienced college professor but also from the student teacher. Thus, a supportive relationship between these groups is all the more beneficial. Bickmore and Kink (2013), submitted that, starting in the in-service phase and on into the novice period, new teachers not only receive guidance from the long-time experienced teacher, but the veteran’s own professional development can be enhanced by their contact with brand new teachers (p. 49). Therefore, these collaborative relationships can lead to all around increased knowledge of subject matter, new lesson plan ideas, methods of making class times engaging and relevant to students, and an evolving sense of comradery can evolve between these educators.

An unusual study offered by Cavenaugh and Prescott (2011) researched ten good reasons, within Australian school context, why mentoring is such a mutually valuable component of the cooperating teacher relationship with student teachers. These reasons included how cooperating
teachers can learn new ideas and obtain new perspectives from interns as well as reaffirm one’s own teaching methodology. Furthermore, in the midst, cooperating teachers are granted time to reflect on quality instruction and learning along with being supported by another teacher in the classroom. Moreover, through the experience, the veteran teacher and intern learn from mistakes each makes and, when working well together, both “find new enthusiasm for teaching” (p. 9).

Finally, the cooperating teacher is involved in “shaping the next generation of teachers” and assisting the teacher candidate in gaining employment either at the school where the initial placement occurred or in another institution.

Setting a positive initial precedence can be a leading component as well in garnering a healthy relationship between cooperating teachers and interns. Do teacher candidates feel welcome by the cooperating teacher as well as the school placement faculty in general, particularly at the start, but also for the duration of the student teaching experience? Jones, Kelsey, and Brown’s (2014) research on the success rate of interactive relations between agricultural program student teachers and their cooperating teachers heavily depended on the developed sense of community between them, but above all else, a sense of trust and confidence must be garnered in order to produce a fruitful internship. However, what if a candidate never obtains a sense of being a part of a community in a given placement nor eventual comradery with the overseeing veteran teacher? Not all collaborative efforts between cooperating teachers and student teachers go well. Can anything be done to remedy circumstances? Patrick (2013) interviewed a cooperating teacher and student teacher inside of an Australian high school setting and discovered that initially both parties had conflicting expectations going into the internship experience. “While the preservice teachers interviewed for this study expected professional experience to provide opportunities for innovation and collaboration, mentors tended to view the
relationship as assimilation into the profession” (p. 207). The final analysis suggests that had both been properly trained beforehand and made aware of the multiple duties each was to carry out during the student teaching experience, perhaps the internship would have gone more smoothly and the teacher candidate would have had a better training venture.

Case studies with a sample group of persons involved can also be quite revealing when analyzing the impact of student teacher and cooperating relationships. For example, Hamman, Olivárez, and Lesley’s (2006) case study explored a small group but telling scenario within an elementary school student teacher placement dynamic and how teacher candidates level of self-efficacy can be tarnished when friendly and/or professional interaction between cooperating teachers was limited or infrequent. Thus, experiences proved to be lackluster and the self-confidence of the teacher candidate was tainted by the close of the program experience.

A couple of years later, Draves (2008) did a qualitative study interviewing elementary, middle and high school cooperating music teachers, and their findings displayed the benefits of when “the power structure” is shared between themselves and interns (p. 6). “Team-teaching” produced the healthiest relationships and enabled student teachers to leave the experience well nurtured to go on and confidently face the upcoming novice teacher venture (p. 14).

In continuation, Killian and Wilkin’s (2009) interviews with 13 elementary school level cooperating teachers revealed that 80% of those that had the most effective outcomes with their student teachers, comparatively speaking, in which education beyond the bachelors degree level with befitting graduate degrees. “This deep preparation was association with ability to articulate beliefs behind practices and use practices congruent with those beliefs” and deemed a factor as to why internships and relations molded between the teacher candidate and veteran teacher were so positive (p. 67).
Rajuan, Beijaard, and Verloop’s (2010) study on 20 mentoring pairs in an Israeli teacher training program in order to determine in which ways “matched and mismatched expectations of the role of the cooperating teacher between student teachers and cooperating teachers contribute to different opportunities for learning to teach” (p. 201). An interesting takeaway from this study is that, if both the cooperating teacher and the intern started the endeavor with matched expectations and similar professional goals or objectives, an overall positive learning experience resulted. The classroom students tended to benefit as well from such a collaborative teacher training program. However, the opposite can be stated about student teachers and cooperating teachers that entered the training program with mismatched expectations and objectives. Thus, a negative and somewhat defeatist precedent was set in motion, and if prolonged, the experience could turn into an irreparable dynamic for the duration of the term.

Nilsson and Van Driel’s (2010) study explored how cooperating teachers and interns in science classroom placements can foster positive relationships and learn what worked and did not work in collaborative lesson plan development and implementation processes through immediate follow up reflective meeting times. “The student teachers had had training in scientific knowledge, but only brief experience of teaching. The mentors were well experienced in the pedagogy of teaching and mentoring, but did not feel confident about their science content knowledge and the teaching of science” (p. 1309). However, by the end of the internship using the reflective practice, the cooperating teachers not only gained a greater grasp of content knowledge but also became better mentors to the teacher candidates in their charge. Meanwhile, student teachers were able to impart any wisdom they had to their veteran teacher mentors about the latest scientific content knowledge and learned from the cooperating teachers to become effective instructors and classroom managers.
Rhoads, Radu, and Weber’s (2011) case study entailed interviews conducted with nine math education major student teachers nearing the close of their internships. A central focal point was how and why these student teachers generally had such good experiences with their cooperating teachers. Common reasons ranged from the fact that they actually appreciated critical constructive feedback followed by solid helpful recommendations for improvement, the ability to develop and implement their own personalized lesson plans as well as the supportive friendly relationships that were fostered in the midst.

Roberts, Benedict and Thomas (2014) focused on Special Education Teacher programs. Their study concluded the vitality of preservice programs in giving a candidate hands on training in the classroom and practical training in working with special education students. “When CTs are mindful of the learning needs of beginning special education teachers while also embracing the knowledge and skills they can bring to the partnership, they are more likely to help preservice teachers develop the skills needed to succeed on their own” (p. 174). Therefore, the article explores strategies that the cooperating teacher can utilize successfully to support student teachers to think, act, and feel like a ready and prepared teacher moving into the novice phase of their careers. These strategies include clear and positive communication about what is going well and where there is room for improvement in classroom instruction.

Guney’s (2013) case study of 259 Turkish university elementary level student teachers revealed that relations between the interns and their cooperating teachers were so strained that the program should be revamped. The results of Guney’s research brought to light that “cooperative teachers as a supervisor seemed to be deficient for interacting with student teachers as well as assisting them to develop critical point of views for teaching mathematics effectively” (p. 132). The study suggested that universities and school placements should collaboratively
work together in selecting cooperating teachers to take up the task and provide them with professional development to prepare them such upcoming mentorship roles.

Heidorn and Jenkin’s (2015) case study displayed the benefits of “paired placements” being a key to success in physical education student teacher programs (p. 44). The student teaching experience can be unnerving when candidates enter into it alone. The struggles of being thrusted into administering lessons, classroom management, and working with cooperating teachers are challenging enough when an intern functions as the loan student teacher. However, the notion of being paired with another student teacher to work together and from one another in these ventures has become a growing trend in physical education programs at select school placements. In this study, the results of this classroom scenario were generally positive and relations with the cooperating teacher tended also to function well. This in part may be due to the fact that a second intern was around to share the responsibility loads and maintain order during a class session. A leading disadvantage in this dynamic is that because, at some level, responsibilities were shared, a student teacher may be ill prepared to handle the rigors of running a future class during the novice years as the sole person in charge.

In Maripaz’s (2016) study, data were taken from a 136 preservice teachers and their cooperating teachers. The research, in part, concentrated mostly on student teacher behaviors and attitudes in the practice teaching scenario as well as their relationships with their cooperating teachers. In the midst, teacher candidates vocalized the value of being observed by the veteran teachers and interactions that came via post-conference meetings. Meanwhile, cooperating teachers were convinced that “to sustain the desirable experiences, their roles were to serve as model, guide, leader, monitor, planner, and motivator” (p. 187). These perspective manners of
functioning in the preservice dynamic were mutually acceptable to both parties in garnering a pleasant and positive learning experience for the candidate.

A befitting question that has been raised over the years is just how prepared and qualified cooperating teachers are to handle what can be the rigorous duty of successfully overseeing interns through the student teaching process. After all, even if well intentioned cooperating teachers may want to guide impressionable teacher candidates successfully in their charge through the student teacher program, challenges can erupt if they lack proper prior mentorship training (Russell & Russell, 2011). However, Russell and Russell, through a qualitative study, explored the implementation and impact of a Mentor Teacher Support Program (SMTSP) and carried out during the previous summer before the commencement of an internship. The nine upcoming Cooperating teachers that went through SMTSP were provided with a better understanding of the student teacher program and dynamic and received mentoring skills to help make the internship time-frame as practical, developing, and encouraging as possible for student teachers placed under their tutelage.

Finally, a wise question that an individual student may want to ask, before delving too deeply into an education major program, is if one truly feels a sense of belonging or a purpose to such an endeavor. McNay and Graham’s (2007) article explored, via student teaching experiences, if teacher candidates have obtained that sense of calling and mission to serve as professional teachers. Moreover, can cooperating teachers impact this vision and desire through proper mentoring and guidance through the student teaching program? In response, the conclusion to these issues is that, through the utilization of developed conceptual frameworks that are conducive to positive self-reflection or analysis, cooperating teachers can instill great
confidence in student teachers that they can feel that sense of purpose and go on to become
dynamic educators.

Along those lines, another question that education majors must ask themselves is do they
not only love the subject matter they are about to teach, but do they also love young people in
general that they are about to oversee and instruct? But, is love of those entities enough?
According to an elementary school teacher preparation program study done by Krebs and Torrez
(2011), if one desires to have a positive internship and later go on to become a successful
professional school teacher, it is not enough simply to have a sincere love for kids. Through prior
training and the influence of veteran cooperating teachers, student teachers must obtain and put
into practice key characteristics such as being one that is highly motivated, takes initiative,
exhibits professionalism, and displays a keen knowledge of the subject matters to be taught as
well as good classroom management skills.

The Importance of Cooperating Teacher Evaluations of Student Teachers

The literature in review also reveals the importance of not only cooperating teachers
giving student teachers high scores on evaluation forms but also in competitive work force
environments, it is crucial that the college supervising professor grant the student teacher an “A”
final letter grade (Brucklacher, 1998). Any final grade less than an “A,” along with mediocre
cooperating teacher evaluations, will likely disqualify the candidate from realistically gaining a
post at a credible accredited school. According to Olson (2009), flattering evaluations, stellar
final letter grades, as well as a one’s general college grade point average may increase chances of
securing a job in the school systems. However, for a cooperating teacher to evaluate an intern in
a complementary fashion that will ultimately lead to a final “A” grade, student teachers must
exhibit noteworthy progress made as classroom managers and knowledgeable instructors. It is
worth a return to Brucklacher’s (1998) article as there is another concern in the evaluation and grading realms to address. Brucklacher submitted that cooperating teachers can assess and grade student teachers in an unfair and tainted manner due to personal bias. Perhaps interns are not as strong disciplinarians as the cooperating teacher would like them to be, or maybe the student teacher is too aggressive in classroom management. Perhaps the student teacher comes from a background and has personality characteristics somewhat if not extraordinarily contra to those of the veteran instructor. It is conceivable that biases along these and other lines may have an impact on evaluation scores or the final grade proposed even though the intern has really done an overall good and commendable job. Nonetheless, even though negative feedback may result due to bias, Brucklacher’s case study revealed that cooperating teachers generally rate teacher candidates with high marks. The reason being is that, in the spirit of professionalism and the need to view and base assessments on the “big picture,” they may be inclined to rate the student teacher in a fair-minded manner. Good student teacher ratings can also be a result of veteran teachers reminiscing the days when they forged through the arduous student teaching experience and, thus, empathy influences evaluations.

Kahan, Sinclair, and Saucier’s (2003) study revealed that due to daily contact and serving in the “trenches” together, the cooperating teacher “plays a fundamental role as mentor, role model and friend in the student teaching experience” (p. 180). As a result, they perhaps become the most influential person a teacher candidate may have in undergraduate preparation (p. 180). The evaluative feedback they offer can function as a great motivator to continue practicing positive classroom management skills and improve in other areas where needed. However, if cooperating teachers offer limited feedback or strictly positive analysis in their evaluations, they
can be doing student teachers a disservice when they enter into various professional teaching venues (p. 180).

Castolo and Dizon (2007) submit that “cooperating teachers are key persons in student teacher evaluations” (p. 31). This is because they are regularly in close contact with the teacher candidate and because they tend to know the subject matter and, at least initially, probably had time to get to know the classroom students well before the arrival of the student teacher.

Another key takeaway from their study is that a cooperating teacher’s evaluation of a student teacher may not always be “pleasant because, if it is accurate, needs are identified as well as successive” (p. 34). While it may not be enjoyable for those that oversee a candidate to point out weaknesses, nonetheless, cooperating teachers have a professional responsibility to be straightforward with the candidate. In return, candidates should be open to any criticisms for the sake of meeting their potential in becoming successful novice teachers. Furthermore, their article discussed how in most student teaching experiences, evaluations are not only to be utilized by cooperating teachers, but also self-assessment forms are required for the intern to complete as well. Forms “vary considerably from short checklist to long essay, and some combine aspects of each” which can produce some inconsistencies in outcomes (p. 31). For example, some can be too short and direct in nature and thus a complete view of what the cooperating teacher had really concluded may not be relayed. Through veteran experience though, cooperating teachers can not only provide a fair analysis of the student teacher experience but can also guide students to properly and effectively complete self-assessment requirements. Why is this so important? It is because, whether in view of the cooperating teacher evaluations or student self-assessments, this information will remain on record in the student’s university files and could be detrimental in whether or not they eventually obtain a viable job. In connection with Brucklacher’s (1998)
study, Castolo and Dizon give emphasis in their article on the importance of finishing the student teaching experience with an impressive file since these records may be accessed and viewed by future employers.

Tillema’s (2009) case study involving 51 cooperating teachers and student teachers handled the evaluation process together by dissecting lesson plans to determine strengths and weaknesses. In so doing, each party found the evaluative process beneficial because ways and means were collaboratively explored to enhance the candidate’s ability to teach lessons effectively. Moreover, candidates felt involved in the decision making as well as the assessments made of their efforts by the cooperating teacher.

Akcan and Tatar (2010) analyzed how similar and dissimilar evaluative practices are between university supervising professors and cooperating teachers when reviewing student teachers in action. “The findings indicated that the university supervisors encouraged reflection during their post-lesson conferences and helped the student teachers to evaluate their lessons more critically. The cooperating teachers’ feedback was found to be more situation specific by focusing on certain instances about the classroom” (p. 153). Both oral and written feedback provided following a practice lesson were helpful in discovering methods and approaches that worked well versus measures that were less effective.

Sayeski and Paulsen (2012) discussed a case study in which student teachers generally appreciated verbalized and written feedback, even if it included constructive criticism about areas where there was room for improvement. A key suggestion that these candidates offered though was that evaluations commence with praiseworthy feedback before any negative observations were brought to light. In so doing, the candidate may better handle any
constructive criticism that could follow and move forward with greater ease in making improvements where necessary.

A fundamental takeaway from Sosibo’s (2013) writings based on insights from 57 student teachers and 12 focus groups was that, unless a proper prior teaching practice framework has been aligned well between the university and the collaborating school in which the preservice placement takes place, the teacher candidate will struggle. Therefore, “the effectiveness of [cooperating teacher] evaluations [of student teachers] depends, to a large extent, on the behaviors of evaluators, mentors and all stakeholders” (p. 149). For example, both the university and the school placement cooperating teacher need to remain consistent in promoting the same expectations for the teacher candidate and put into practice, for training purposes, a similar if not the same lesson plan template.

Clarke, Triggs, and Nielsen (2014) drew on “11 different ways that cooperating teachers participate in teacher education: as Providers of Feedback, Gatekeepers of the Profession, Modelers of Practice, Supporters of Reflection, Gleaners of Knowledge, Purveyors of Context, Conveners of Relation, Agents of Socialization, Advocates of the Practical, Abiders of Change, and Teachers of Children” (p.163). However, the article submits that the cooperating teacher evaluation and feedback process may not be well aligned with reality. According to the authors, cooperating teachers see themselves as key providers of a nurturing environment for their students. Therefore, when in charge of student teachers, cooperating teachers, by proxy, it is possible that cooperating teachers may possibly “shy away from an overly critical or reflective engagement with student teachers” (p. 198). In addition, an earlier study by Nielson, Triggs, and Clarke (2010), focused on how cooperating teachers in allowing flexibility student teachers find themselves in contingency dynamics between the veteran and the candidate as well as the
reduction of hierarchical structures between them also reduce tension in the relationship and foster favorable outcomes.

Finally, Young and MacPhail (2015) discussed the evaluative process of teacher education programs in Ireland. In so doing, they projected the inevitability of close relationships forming, at some level, between the cooperating and student teachers. It stands to reason that this would result when people experience the classroom dynamic and work closely together over the long span of a semester. Despite this, the concern is that developed comradery not affect the ability of the cooperating teacher to properly evaluate the candidate honestly and objectively.

Meanwhile, when constructive criticism is offered either verbally, in writing, or through formal assessments, the student teacher should not receive it as a personal affront, but rather as an observation based on experience and a measure of support and proper guidance through the program.

**The Value of Assessment Testing**

Befitting sources concerning history department assessment tests appear to be virtually non-existent. However, literature about assessment testing is available, though scarce. The researcher therefore concludes that a serious gap in the literature exists in relation to departmental assessment testing. Nonetheless, as a basis for this study and perhaps future similar studies, “assessing” the available literature about the value of assessment tests is worth exploring. A common theme that reappears is that, although assessment tests are not always perfect, they still serve a productive purpose in coming closer to how well students are learning material. In addition, assessment tests not only reveal academic weaknesses of students but can also reveal where there may be gaps in teaching instruction and/or course curriculum design and issues that more greatly need to be emphasized in the lessons administered.
Concerning assessment tests, Deardorff and Posler (2005) explored the value of university departmental assessment testing, particularly in the field of Social Studies. They argued the necessity for it in the quest for universities to obtain and maintain suitable accreditation as well as a means of receiving internal grants, particularly if student scores were conspicuously high. Professors submitted that departmental assessment tests “can provide the impetus to create a holistic departmental model and then provide an ongoing mechanism to generate feedback” as to whether or not the model should be renewed or adjusted (p. 273). But, in addition, professors stated that such assessments hold students accountable and enable them to meet student potentials by testing their subject matter knowledge. Moreover, departmental content knowledge assessments are a must but not only for the sake of determining student knowledge and preparedness for future professions but also to test the prowess and effectiveness of the professors. While this article does pertain to college department assessments, it is dated and the researcher concluded the need for further study in current Social Studies and specifically history department realms.

As mentioned above, sources pertaining to departmental assessment testing are limited, but there is some literature that covers the need for assessment testing in general. Breakstone, Smith, and Wineburg (2013), submitted, “Teachers need tools and [assessment] tests that help students analyze primary and secondary sources and develop written historical arguments” but do not discuss how valuable they may be in determining candidate preparedness for the student teaching experience (p. 1). Furthermore, this study strongly endorses the Common Core movement, which is highly controversial across the United States. Meanwhile, Boyas, Bryan, and Lee (2013) argued that assessment tests can be a useful tool to individual teachers or
programs to identify where there is a need for necessary changes in course design. However, their

“results indicate that post-tests may not demonstrate the full level of student mastery of learning objectives and that both the difficulty level of the questions asked and the level of students in their degree [program] affect the difference between graded and ungraded assessments. Some of these differences may be due to causes other than grades on the assessments. Students may have benefited from the post-test, as a review of the material, or from additional studying between the post-test and the final examination. [Findings] also indicate that pre-tests can be useful in identifying appropriate changes in course materials over time.” (Boyas, Bryan, & Lee, 2013, p. 427).

Thus, their research is not entirely conclusive and deeper study is encouraged.

Most studies deduced that assessment tests are more than just necessary but are usually reliable in determining the strengths of students and of a program. For example, Romer and Merrell (2013) concluded that assessment tests are generally and relatively reliable. However, their research dealt with elementary school children rather than the university level, let alone specifically the college department level. Moreover, the study only included 6th-8th grade students at one school in Massachusetts and thus excluded other grade levels, let alone sample groups from other areas of the United States, and certainly did not pertain to the university level. On the other hand, the Tobin and Gebo (2008) study did pertain to the college level. It concluded that “assessment [tests] help guide understanding of learning experiences and departmental effectiveness” (p. 223). Their study involved a university criminal justice department. However, while criminal justice departments are sometimes in conjunction with Social Studies branches of universities, they are only loosely connected with college history
departments. Keenan’s (2016) research evaluated the assessment process of reading comprehension assessment tests. While Keenan agreed that assessment tests are an important means to determine student progress. Perhaps due to design flaws or content limitations, they are not necessarily the only means or a complete means of measuring student learning outcomes. For this reason, it would be advantageous to explore the possibility of utilizing other tools, such as Praxis II test scores to discover if there is a relationship between student teacher performances and history department assessment test achievements.

In recent years, an increased number of states and college programs have required that students take and pass various Praxis exams, not only to discover their skill and knowledge level of certain subject matter fields but also to qualify them for state level licenses to teach (Kelly, 2012). Federal policy makers in the United States encouraged all states to adopt the Praxis II as a prerequisite for student teachers to obtain teacher’s licenses and be viewed as qualified to teach specific subject areas (Hones, Aguilar, & Thao, 2009). In 2009, the individual states were under pressure from educators to raise minimum score requirements in the quest to develop and turn out highly qualified novice teachers. Moreover, a university program may require education majors of various kinds to obtain these licenses upon passing Praxis tests in order to legitimately complete the program and graduate as a valid education major (Liberty University, 2017).

Some educational journals have explored the role and impact as well as positive and negative implications of the Praxis exam for university level teacher licensure programs. For example, Brown, Brown, and Brown’s (2008) article had a two-pronged value. First, it exhibited the benefit of examining 200 students in a case study to determine the practicality of teacher candidates being required to take and pass a Praxis II exam in order to receive a teacher’s license and be qualified for school employment. Outcomes of Praxis II content knowledge sections can
not only reveal how well prepared a candidate may be to enter in the student teacher or novice phase of classroom instruction, but they can also serve as possible predictors to retention in the teaching field. Along these lines, Petchauer’s (2012) research on African American teacher licensure students led to the submission that “basic skills teacher licensure exams such as Praxis are the first gatekeepers to the teaching profession” (p. 252). Due to the intensity of the exam design and high standards tested in the content knowledge sections, many African Americans have to study exceptionally hard to pass it the first time around, and more than half of the students in this study had to retake the Praxis exam in order to pass it in order to obtain a teacher’s license. Nonetheless, despite the challenges, passing the exam was a necessary stepping stone to show some level of qualification to teach subject matters well. A noteworthy takeaway from Graham’s (2013) case study of 52 African American teacher candidates was that, in general, these students did not view Praxis tests as culturally biased in design. In continuation, it was concluded that if candidates went into such examinations well prepared in content knowledge and well aware about how to take these exams, the tests proved to be a good means of determining the candidate’s readiness for classroom management.

Praxis tests cover skill and content knowledge levels in a wide variety of subject field areas other than history/social studies education, such as elementary education, physical education, music education, and multiple language studies education (ETS: The Praxis Tests, 2017). Kelly’s (2013) case study of foreign language novice teachers and teacher candidates, specifically in the field of Spanish Education, provided input on their experiences taking the Praxis II exam. “The data revealed that their perspectives were heavily influenced by previous learning experiences and beliefs about language teaching and learning” (p. 191). In summation, success with the Praxis II test was largely determined by whether students were properly trained
and prepared in their university program. The test was a good means of measuring content knowledge despite the fact that those in the case study sample admitted that there were design aspects of the examination that could be adjusted and improved in order for it to better serve as an appropriate assessment test. But, foreign language teacher candidates in preparation for the Praxis test experience led to multiple positive outcomes. Moser’s (2014) research done among language studies teacher candidates in the state of Mississippi observed how professors were able to aid teacher candidates to pass the Praxis II exam by preparing them well with the necessary content knowledge. In addition, the “faculty modified student learning experiences, ultimately leading students to success on the Praxis II: World Language Test by emphasizing the test requirements, clarifying proficiency expectations with students, altering instructional practices, strengthening the curriculum, developing new courses, and created new K-12 partnerships” (p. 134). In the field of music education, Elpus’ (2015) study revealed that the Praxis II examination program for teacher candidates not only served as a good means to measure how well students had previously been educated in that field while in a university but also revealed the quality of education received before the undergraduate years.

Praxis exams can be challenging to pass because by nature or design, they are intense, lengthy content-area tests. Thus, for many partakers, extensive prior studies and preparation are very necessary (Petchauer, 2012). Some teacher candidates have cause for concern about passing Praxis tests and question what can be done to ensure a positive outcome. Rikard and Norden (2006) acknowledged how beneficially summative Praxis exams can be. Their probe into the world of physical education majors presented “ways to assist students in preparing for the [Praxis] tests and highlighted the importance of these tests relative to both the students careers and the future of teacher education programs. In addition, the authors provide an array of
resources and strategies that have assisted many of their students, while emphasizing that strategies alone will not compensate for poor preparation, high test anxiety, and working under timed conditions” (p. 44). In continuation, when it comes to health and physical education, the Praxis tests do tend to be designed in a manner well aligned with individual state licensure demands and criteria for appropriately instructing physical education courses. Some examples that were offered as methods to perform successfully on Praxis II physical education exams include, “review all class notes from courses taken in health and/or physical education and purchase and study the practice book” (p. 47). In so doing, an exam partaker has some assurance of performing well and exhibiting more strengths than weaknesses in a subject matter field.

Kelly’s (2012) research uncovered “factors in a university’s elementary education program that can affect teacher candidate performances on Praxis II exams” (p. 1). Along those lines, Kelly concluded that “significant, positive relationships exist between grade point average” at the time in which one first takes the Praxis II (p. 1). Therefore, university education programs can play a vital role in training education majors to experience content knowledge success with such assessment tests and determining exam outcomes. Thus, the assumption can be made that an institution’s academic program can have a powerful impact on a student invested in eventually becoming a social studies teacher. The level of course content provided and the quality of instruction within the university dynamic can possibly determine how well or how poorly the student may perform on evaluative content knowledge examinations such Praxis exams as well as departmental assessment tests administered to rising graduates.

Summary

Although there is a serious lack of literature specifically concerning comparisons or correlations between departmental assessment test score outcomes and the evaluative
assessments of student teachers by their respective cooperating teachers, the literature exhibits research that are related to the study and, thus, worth review and analysis. Common themes explored in this chapter include the student teacher’s sense of confidence and preparedness, cooperating teacher and student teacher relationships, the importance of cooperating teacher evaluations of student teachers, and the value of assessment testing. In so doing, the researcher is able to better understand the instrumentation and individuals involved in this study. While this is a practical exercise, it does not take away from the fact that there is a clear gap in the literature in relation to the study the researcher will endeavor to pursue. Through this effort, steps will be taken to begin the process of closing the gap in the literature.
CHAPTER THREE: METHODS

Overview

This study is designed to better determine if a university’s School of Education and History Department are effectively training and preparing Social Studies Secondary Education majors or Social Studies teacher licensure students to be marketable in the job force and more importantly and specifically be successful instructors. In Chapter Three, the research design for this study will be discussed and the research questions and hypotheses will be established. Moreover, this chapter will also include discussion on the participants and setting of this study, as well as the instrumentation, procedures and data analysis.

Design

A quantitative correlation research design method will be utilized in this study. In order to determine if there is a relationship between a university’s student teacher performances and history department assessment test achievements, a correlation research design is befitting. According to Gall, Gall, and Borg (2007), the purpose of such research designs is to “collect data on two or more variables for each individual in a sample and computing a correlation coefficient” (p. 335).

This study also falls within a non-experimental ex-post-facto design. According to Gall, Gall, and Borg (2007), an ex-post-facto research method is one that relies on the “observation of relationships between naturally occurring variations in the presumed independent and dependent variables” (p. 306). In this study, the data will be gathered from pre-existing LiveText records, and departmental assessment test results, and conclusions will be made based on the outcomes.

Using archival LiveText cooperating teacher evaluations outcomes from the university’s History Department assessment test (Major Field Test) as well as Praxis II scores as tools, the
researcher will determine how well the university’s School of Education and History Department, in their collaborative efforts, have done to prepare Social Studies Secondary Education majors to not only be effective classroom managers, knowledgeable in subject matter, but also marketable history teachers. The results may also serve in revealing any weaknesses these branches of the university may have and where there may be room for instructional improvements.

**Research Questions**

RQ1: Is there a relationship between student teacher performance on the Teacher Competency Assessment (TCA) and Praxis II Social Studies test achievement?

RQ2: Is there a relationship between student teacher performance on the Teacher Competency Assessment (TCA) and Major Field Test (MFT) achievement?

**Null Hypotheses**

The null hypotheses for this study are as follows:

**H01**: There is no statistically significant relationship between student teacher performance on the Teacher Competency Assessment (TCA) and Praxis II Social Studies test achievement?

**H02**: There is no statistically significant relationship between student teacher performance on the Teacher Competency Assessment (TCA) and Major Field Test (MFT) achievement?

**Participants and Setting**

This study will incorporate university Social Studies Education Major Student Teachers within the sample group and attempt to achieve a sample size of 30 student participants. According to Gall, Gall, and Borg (2007), experimenting with this group size will meet the
requirements for a large effect size. Thus, there will be a statistical power of .7 with an alpha level of .05. Until the data are fully collected, the researcher will not know with any certainty but nonetheless projects that there will be ethnic and demographic diversity among the sample group. Moreover, the researcher is hopeful that the gender ratio will be a close balance of males and females, since, over the last several years, the university has experienced an interesting level of relative equilibrium between genders that are affiliated with the Social Studies Teacher Licensure program. Regardless of a potential gender imbalance, the final sample size should still reveal if there is relationship between Praxis II scores and TCA results as well as MFT and TCA outcomes.

This study will span the last seven years. It will include information gleaned from cooperating teacher evaluation outcomes as well as Social Studies Content Knowledge Praxis II test results and annual university History Department assessment test outcomes. A collaborative effort between the university’s School of Education Assessment Director and the History Department chairman will ensure that student identities within this study will not be revealed but rather protected via an individual number code process. In addition, using the same measures through this collaboration, the school placements for these student teachers as well as the names of the cooperating teachers will remain ambiguous.

Instrumentation

Teacher Competency Assessment (TCA)

At the close of the university’s Social Studies Education Major’s senior year, students are required to go through a semester–long Student Teacher experience in various accredited public and private secondary school venues. They are placed in the mentoring charge of a veteran high
school or middle school cooperating teacher that, to meet cooperating teacher qualifications established by the university, has served in this capacity for at least five years.

Student Teachers in the university’s program receive their school placements for this internship endeavor by the start of a given semester. Within just a couple of days after the commencement of a semester, these teacher candidates begin serving in these placements and, for the first couple of weeks, usually start out in an observational capacity for the sake of gaining any skills and knowledge on classroom instruction and subject matter direction that the cooperating teacher may be able to impart. These observations will continue on and off for the duration of a semester. However, instructional practice is equally important if not more so in this program. Typically, the teaching experience, under the guidance of the cooperating teacher, may begin after only a few days of classroom observation. According to the university’s policy, by the close of the term, the Student Teacher must have accumulated at least 150 observational hours and 150 instructional hours. Generally, the entire student teaching process lasts for 4.5 months. At the end of the program, the cooperating teacher must complete a Teacher Competency Assessment (TCA) of the Student Teacher’s performance that encompasses 35 items that give rankings from such aspects as the candidate’s professionalism in the classroom, to management and teaching style, and subject matter expertise. These rankings function on a 1-5 scale range. To give examples of this scoring range, the scale of “1” represents not applicable, the scale of “2” represents “needs improvement,” the scale of “3” represents a medium performance, the scale of “4” represents a high performance, and a “5” represents a consistently outstanding performance. The Teacher Competency Assessment is derived from the student outcome learning expectations placed on the university’s School of Education teacher licensure
program formerly via NCATE (National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education) and currently, CAEP (Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation).

**History Department Assessment**

Near the end of each given school year, the university’s History Department administers a Major Field Test (MFT) assessment test for seniors that are various History and Social Studies majors. The purpose is to observe and analyze how well, through departmental efforts, students have obtained and retained key fundamental knowledge that should have been gained via the university’s (i.e.) World History, U.S. History, and Geography courses. Students are not required to study prior to this evaluative exam and only minimal review of any sort is offered in advance. Via advertisements in department-related student meetings and courses, the History Department strongly encourages seniors to take the MFT in order to assess student knowledge. The test design is relevant, practical and versatile as well as aligned with key information covered in classes offered by the History Department. The departmental professors proctor this endeavor within a testing center of the university library. The researcher has witnessed many correlations between the MFT assessment test content and content that the Virginia Department of Education Student Outcome Learning program requires teachers to properly cover and students to amply learn throughout the Commonwealth’s secondary education public school systems. In conclusion, according to the ETS Major Field (2017) records, a 0.94 reliability figure was on file concerning the internal consistency for the History Assessment Test.

**Praxis II Test Assessment**

To strengthen this study and enhance the ability to determine if the university’s History Department and its interconnected Social Studies field departments such as the School of Government are training knowledgeable Social Studies Student Teachers, it may be
advantageous to review the outcomes of subject area Praxis II exams. The university in review requires that all Student Teachers take their respective subject area Praxis II exam prior to the Student Teaching experience or, at the latest, during and certainly before the completion of the Student Teaching phase in order to finalize and achieve state teacher certification. According to the Praxis II registration website (2017), this exam measures “the academic skills and subject-specific content knowledge needed for teaching. Praxis tests are taken by individuals entering the teaching profession as part of the certification process required by many states and professional licensing organizations.” The state in which the university in review exists, requires Social Studies Education majors and teacher licensure students to complete and pass the Praxis II Social Studies exam with at least a score of 160 points out of 200 points (Virginia Department of Education, 2017). This exam consists of 130 questions taken under monitored circumstances without any aids over the span of two hours in official certified testing centers. The Social Studies Praxis II test consists of 26 U.S. History related questions, 26 World History questions, 26 Government/Civics questions, 19 Geography questions, 19 Economics questions, and 13 Behavioral Science questions. Finally, according to the Praxis Technical Manual (2017), a 0.90 reliability figure was on record within the internal consistency reports for the Praxis II: Social Studies Content Knowledge Test.

**Procedures**

It is vital that student and cooperating teacher privacy and ambiguity be upheld throughout this process. Therefore, before the study will commence, the researcher will obtain permission via the university’s Institutional Review Board (IRB) Office to access LiveText, a university History Department’s usage of the Major Field Test assessment, and Praxis II scores. Through the application process the IRB will be carefully informed exactly how the Assessment
Director and History Department chairperson’s measures will establish confidentiality, privacy and ambiguity before the researcher begins examining outcomes.

Several protocols have to be followed in order to obtain Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval. In this effort, the Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative (CITI) to gain initial registration with the IRB branch of the university in review will need to be achieved. This task was completed as of April 2017. The researcher will also have to gain approval to utilize the aforementioned faculty mentors. The researcher will formally complete an application process in detail and expect revision requests. It is advisable that the researcher meticulously adhere to IRB demands throughout the revision process. It is possible that key information about the instruments be submitted for review as well. Once IRB approval is obtained, then the aforementioned process of encoding personal identities from the LiveText records as well as the Major Field Test assessment, and Praxis II scores can be completed collaboratively by the Assessment Director and History Department chairperson, statistical data analysis will commence and conclusions can be made.

Data Analysis

This study is designed to learn the relationship between student teacher performance on the Teacher Competency Assessment (TCA) and Praxis II Social Studies test achievement. Moreover, this study will determine the relationship between student teacher performance on the Teacher Competency Assessment (TCA) and history department assessment test achievement. The purpose of such a study is to collect “data on two variables for each individual in a sample and [compute] a correlation coefficient” (Gall, Gall, & Borg, 2007, p. 335). The researcher projects that there will be no statistically significant relationship between student teacher performances and history department assessment test achievements (Gall, Gall, & Borg, 2007).
To determine if there is strength in the linear relationship between two quantitative variables, a Pearson’s Correlation Coefficient (Pearson $r$) test will be implemented (Warner, 2013). If the data reveals one variable that is continuous and one that is categorical, a Point-Biserial Correlation method will be utilized to divulge whether the relationships in review are weak or strong. To produce a large effect size, it is desirable that 30 students will be involved in the sample with an alpha of .05 and a statistical power of .70 (Warner, 2013).
CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS

Overview

The researcher analyzed data obtained by means of the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) process and Microsoft Excel. There is no statistically significant relationship between student teacher performance on the Teacher Competency Assessment (TCA) and Praxis II Social Studies test achievement. There is no statistically significant relationship between student teacher performance on the Teacher Competency Assessment (TCA) and Major Field Test (MFT) achievement. Numerous statistical figures will be included as well as charts to distinguish demographic differences among the sample members of this case study. Finally, the results of this analysis will be discussed in response to the listed research questions and hypotheses.

Research Questions

RQ1: Is there a relationship between student teacher performance on the Teacher Competency Assessment (TCA) and Praxis II Social Studies test achievement?

RQ2: Is there a relationship between student teacher performance on the Teacher Competency Assessment (TCA) and Major Field Test (MFT) achievement?

Null Hypotheses

The null hypothesis for this study are as follows:

H01: There is no statistically significant relationship between student teacher performance on the Teacher Competency Assessment (TCA) and Praxis II Social Studies test achievement?
**H02:** There is no statistically significant relationship between student teacher performance on the Teacher Competency Assessment (TCA) and Major Field Test (MFT) achievement?

**Descriptive Statistics**

Tables 1 and 2 reveal frequency statistics of the 20 students involved in this venture by their gender and ethnicity. Frequency studies reveal the number of times an individual participated in an endeavor. See Appendices E and F for the Histogram figures related to Tables 1 and 2. There is a sizeable discrepancy among male students in this sample versus female students. Males made up 65% of test-takers. Females consisted of only 35% of the total participants. There was also a large discrepancy concerning ethnic groups in representation. Of the 20 participants, 90% were White, one student or 5% were categorized as being of more than one race, and one student or 5% listed as Asian.

Valid and cumulative percentages pertaining to the genders and ethnic groups of this study are also visible in Tables 1 and 2. It can be determined that because of the aforementioned discrepancies in gender and ethnic representation, there is a significant differentiation in the listed percentage results.

Table 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Frequencies: Gender</th>
<th>Validation</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Validation</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Cumulative</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Valid</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>35.0</td>
<td>Valid</td>
<td>35.0</td>
<td>Cumulative</td>
<td>35.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>65.0</td>
<td>65.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ethnicity</th>
<th>Valid</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Valid Percent</th>
<th>Cumulative Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Asian</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5.0</td>
<td>5.0</td>
<td>5.0</td>
<td>5.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mixed</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5.0</td>
<td>5.0</td>
<td>10.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>90.0</td>
<td>90.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Results

The statistical tables of this section of the chapter will display the means, medians, and standard deviation statistical outcomes of this venture. Moreover, the manner and methods utilized in this endeavor will also reveal how the outcomes were obtained.

Initially, 32 Social Studies Education major students spanning seven consecutive years were under review in this study. However, only 20 of these students were on record for taking not only the MFT assessment and the Praxis II test, but also completing the Student Teacher internship via TCA results. Therefore, the Point Biserial Correlation strategy was utilized to obtain necessary data in this research effort. According to Warner (2013), Point Biserial Correlation ($r_{pbi}$) is defined as “a correlation that is used to show how a true dichotomous variable is related to a quantitative variable [and] it is equivalent to Pearson’s $r$” (p. 1,108). In juxtaposition, the descriptive statistics of Praxis II score outcomes in relation to Student Teacher internship TCA pass/fail results are viewable in Table 3. In addition, means rates as well as the standard deviation outcomes are viewable within this table.

In addition, Appendix B serves as a practical overview of the sample dynamic and the results of this study. It identifies the 20 students in the case study sample by number (#), as well as by gender and ethnicity, that were on record for taking the MFT and Praxis II exam along with completing the student teaching internship process. The MFT content divulges student
performed on both the various history field subsection and the total scores. According to ETS standards, student scores need to range between 120 to 200 points in order to pass this assessment (ETS: Major Field Test, 2017). Various subcategories of the MFT include U.S. History, European History, and World History. In addition, Appendix B provides Praxis II outcomes as well. In Virginia, Social Studies Education majors must achieve a score of at least 160/200 points on the Praxis II Social Studies exam in order to pass and, thus, take the next steps to obtain a state teacher’s license (Virginia Department of Education, 2017). Around 75% of the questions cover social, cultural, and political history (ETS: The Praxis Tests, 2017).

Appendix B includes the TCA Pass/Fail results of the student teacher candidates in this study with “1” meaning the individual passed and “0” signifying failure. In addition, the TCA categorical ranking percentages are listed based on the evaluation scores completed by cooperating teachers. Utilizing a general university-level grading scale, an 80% or better is viewed as good. Percentages below 80% would be deemed a poor performance. Seventeen out of 20 students (85%) scored a TCA of 80% or better.

**Hypotheses**

**Hypothesis One**

There is no statistically significant relationship between student teacher performance on the Teacher Competency Assessment (TCA) and Praxis II Social Studies test achievement.

Appendix B identifies the gender and ethnicity of the students in review. It also closely compares student pass/fail performances specifically between Praxis II scores and TCA results. Thirteen male and seven female students are listed. Eighteen students are categorized as ethnically White. One student is identified as Asian and one other as mixed race. Only one student failed the Praxis II exam. Thus, there was a 95% pass rate among the exam participants.
All but three pupils passed the TCA, providing an 85% pass rate. All three ethnic examples in the sample were represented among the three students that did not pass the TCA student teaching program.

Table 3 exhibits the descriptive statistics of the Praxis II scores in relation to the Student Teacher internship TCA pass/fail ratio. It also includes the means rates along with the standard deviation outcomes.

Table 3

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Descriptive Statistics: Praxis Score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Praxis Score</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Praxis Score</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Valid N (listwise)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A Point Biserial Correlation ($r_{pbi}$) was run to ascertain the relationship between Praxis II scores and TCA pass/fail rates. Table 4 displays the equation methodology utilized to determine the Point Biserial Correlation in this study. Table 5 exhibits the results between Praxis II scores and TCA pass/fail rates. A .850 pass rate is depicted as $p$ coded 1 and the .150 fail rate is displayed as $q$ coded as 0. The $M_p$ or mean of 1 scores is listed as 167.700 and the $M_q$ or mean of 0 scores is 164. Furthermore, the Standard Deviation of this facet of the study is 6.200. The $r_{pbi}$ of the Praxis II scores and TCA outcomes was 0.213. The $p$-value was 0.367. Therefore, since the $p < 0.05$, the result was not significant.

Table 4

$r_{pbi} = \frac{M_p - M_q}{SD} \sqrt{pq}$
There is no statistically significant relationship between student teacher performance on the Teacher Competency Assessment (TCA) and Major Field Test (MFT) achievement. Once again, Appendix B serves as a good reference overview of the sample group demographic and results of this study. In connection, Appendix F gives a condensed view of the comparisons between MFT assessment scores and TCA pass/fail rates. All students in the sample are on record as exceeding the 120 minimum points for the MFT, but according to the TCA files, not all passed the Student Teaching internship experience. While 85% or 17/20 received a passing grade, 3/20 or 15% did not. What is additionally interesting is the fact that all three of these students passed the MFT with sizeable cushions beyond the minimum requirement. In addition, there were six in the sample that passed the internship program, but they were considerably on the low end of points in passing the MFT. Furthermore, the three students that did not pass the Student Teaching process were all males and, once more, all three ethnic groups represented in this case study were among those listed as failing the internship program.

In view of Table 6, the mean score of the MFT totals is 145.590. These subsections of the MFT consist of U.S. History, European History, and World History questions. Concerning mean outcomes, the U.S. History subsection results reveal scores ranging from 31 to 67 correct answers with a mean of 45.75. European History and World History subsection means are listed respectively as 44.560 and 48.440. Therefore, a solid majority of the 20 students in this sample
performed better in the World History component of the MFT than in the other subsections. In addition, Table 6 displays the MFT standard deviation results. The overall total reached 11.129 with the highest deviation being 14.060 for the European History section of the test.

Table 6

Descriptive Statistics: MFT Score

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Minimum</th>
<th>Maximum</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Deviation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>HIST Total</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>129</td>
<td>168</td>
<td>145.59</td>
<td>11.129</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HIST 1 US</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>45.75</td>
<td>9.608</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HIST 2 EUR</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>44.56</td>
<td>14.060</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HIST 3 WORLD</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>48.44</td>
<td>11.356</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A Point Biserial Correlation (rpbi) was run to establish the relationship between MFT results and TCA pass/fail outcomes. Table 7 exhibits the equation methodology used to determine the Point Biserial Correlation in this facet of the study. Table 8 displays the statistical results. A .851 pass rate is listed as p coded 1 and the .150 fail rate is posted as q coded as 0.

The Mp or mean of 1 results is displayed as 142 and the Mq or mean of 0 scores is listed as 146.300. The Standard Deviation of this aspect of the research is 6.200. The rpbi of the MFT scores and TCA results was -0.157. The p-value was 0.508. Therefore, since the p < 0.05, the result was not significant.

Table 7

\[ rpbi = \frac{M_p - M_q}{SD} \sqrt{pq} \]

Table 8

Proportion Point Biserial Correlation: Statistics MFT and TCA P/F Correlations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>p</th>
<th>q</th>
<th>Mp</th>
<th>Mq</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>rpbi</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>.851</td>
<td>.150</td>
<td>142</td>
<td>146.300</td>
<td>9.800</td>
<td>-0.157</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Tables 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, and 14 provide the minimum and maximum scores represented among the 20 students on record as having taken the MFT assessment and the Praxis II test as well as mean and standard deviation outcomes. According to ETS: Major Field Test guidelines (2017), to fall within a passing score, students must obtain at least 120/200 points. Moreover, according to the Virginia Department of Education (2017), students that attempt the Praxis II Social Studies exam must achieve at least a score of 160 points out of 200 points.

The mean report for Praxis II tests was 169.97. Out of 20 students in this sample and considering that 160/200 points is the lowest result a student can earn to pass this exam, it is noteworthy that the average score is virtually 10 points above the minimum requirement. Referring to Table 9, scores ranged from 151 to a conspicuous 194.

In general, regarding both of the Praxis II and MFT assessment and its connected subjection outcomes, the mean scores of the male students were greater than those of females in this study. It should be noted that male participants made up 65% of the sample, giving females somewhat of a disadvantage from a competitive standpoint. For example, concerning Praxis II results, the mean scores of male versus female participants was 171.260 versus 166.670. In conjunction, the MFT total mean scores among male and female students were respectively 148.700 and 137.670. Therefore, under the circumstances, it is difficult to determine if male students really outperformed female students in the test dynamics.

Warner (2013) describes a sample standard deviation as “the square root of the sample variance [or] the typical distance of a randomly selected score from the mean of the distribution” (p. 1,114). The standard deviation of the MFT total was 11.129 with subsequent MFT U.S. History, European History, and World History subsections being respectively, 9.608, 14.060, and 11.356. Therefore, there is a large deviation in the overall MFT totals and a substantially large
deviation concerning European History results. Table 10 also reveals a large standard deviation for male students (10.559) versus a smaller total for females (8.660). Concerning Praxis II results, the standard deviation listed in Table 14 is 8.939. However, the deviation for male and female students was respectively 10.015 to 4.093.

Table 9

Descriptive Statistics: Praxis Score

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Praxis Score</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>20</td>
<td>151</td>
<td>194</td>
<td>169.97</td>
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<tr>
<td>Valid N (listwise)</td>
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<td></td>
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Table 10

Mean Report

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</tr>
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Table 11

Mean Report

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<td>48.17</td>
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Table 12

Mean Report

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Table 13

*Mean Report*

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<tr>
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Table 14

*Mean Report*

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<tr>
<td>Male</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>169.970</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>8.939</td>
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In closing, there was value in utilizing the MFT and Praxis II assessments in this study. According to the Praxis Technical Manual (2017), the Praxis II Social Studies test has a high reliability figure. In addition, the Praxis II is heavy in historical oriented questions (2017). Furthermore, the MFT History exam has an even higher reliability score (ETS Major Field Test, 2017).
CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSIONS

Overview

In this final chapter of the manuscript, the researcher will offer various conclusions resulting from the research and findings. In conjunction, the chapter will include a discussion on the purpose of this study and implications on how this endeavor added to existing knowledge related to this venture. Moreover, the researcher will discuss the limitations that impacted this study. Finally, recommendations will be provided concerning befitting further correlating research that may be launched in the future as well as how it may be pursued.

Discussion

The purpose of this study was to determine if there was a relationship between a university’s School of Education TCA results and Praxis II scores as well as TCA outcomes and History Department MFT assessments. Despite extensive investigation throughout the research process, no literature directly concerning university level departmental assessment test score outcomes compared to evaluative assessments of student teachers were discovered. However, there was literature available that was indirectly related to this study and the instrumentation utilized. For example, concerning cooperating teacher evaluations of interns, McLeod’s (2011) study investigated “the perceptions of cooperating teachers regarding the level of preparedness of specific student teachers at the beginning of the student-teaching experience” (p. 21). Tables were provided showing results of a 40 question survey completed by 53 music ensemble teachers from various areas of the United States (p. 24). “For each of the [survey] items, respondents were asked to rate their most recent student teacher on a 7-point Likert-type scale with regard to that student teacher’s level of preparation at the start of the student-teaching experience” (p. 24). In continuation, Brown, Lee and Collins’s (2015) findings revealed that “pre-service teachers’
perceptions of preparedness and sense of teaching efficacy both increased significantly from pre-student teaching to post-student teaching” (p. 77). This effort was also completed via another questionnaire survey format, but 6-point Likert-type scale was utilized to obtain results (p. 77). The survey questions in both of these studies were similar to the TCA ranking categories in this study and did expose student strengths and weakness, but the survey questions were not a formal assessment followed by a suggested letter grade. Moreover, the survey results were not compared in any way to departmental content knowledge assessment tests.

Concerning content knowledge assessment tests, Elpus (2015) explored the outcomes of music program student teacher Praxis II results and the value in using such a test to examine subject matter strengths and weaknesses among the students in this demographic case study. Using ANCOVA statistical analysis measures, it was determined that White students generally performed better than non-White students and females outperformed males on the Praxis II (p. 47). While this study compared assessment test results from a race and gender perspective, once again, these outcomes were not measured against TCA evaluations.

In relation to the value of departmental assessments, Deardorff and Posler (2005) discussed the benefits of specifically a Social Studies departmental assessment. However, this study was qualitative in nature and no statistical analysis was used to determine results. Instead, the authors promoted the importance of establishing numerous mission purposes or goals to be enacted in the quest to assess departmental effectiveness. While this study was in reference to a university level history department, statistical analysis was not applied and a comparison between departmental assessment outcomes versus TCA results were not explored.

In this study, the researcher initially assumed, that at some level, there would be a strong positive relationship in response to both of the research questions. However, results were mixed
and both weak positive and weak negative outcomes were unearthed. In addition, the outcomes were non-significant.

**RQ1:** Is there a relationship between student teacher performance on the Teacher Competency Assessment (TCA) and Praxis II Social Studies test achievement?

According to the SPSS based Point Biserial Correlation test (rpbi), there was a 0.213 correlation between these two entities. The statistical ramifications conclude that there is no significant relationship between Praxis II and TCA evaluations and the researcher failed to reject the null-hypotheses. Regardless, a clear majority of students in this sample passed the Praxis II test and performed well on the TCA.

**RQ2:** Is there a relationship between student teacher performance on the Teacher Competency Assessment (TCA) and Major Field Test (MFT) achievement?

Based on the results of the Point Biserial Correlation (rpbi) resulted as -0.157. The statistical calculations show that there is no significant relationship between MFT and TCA results and, again, the researcher failed to reject the null-hypotheses. Nonetheless, it is worth noting that each of the students in the sample that passed the TCA evaluation also happened to score at least a 120/200 points on the MFT.

In keeping with what was discussed in Chapter Two of this manuscript, there is a significant lack of literature concerning comparisons or correlations between university level departmental assessment test results and the student teacher internship evaluations completed supervising cooperating teachers. Furthermore, there is a lack of studies specifically related to history department assessment test student records being connected with final evaluations given them by supervising teachers during student teaching internships. However, there is a fair amount of related literature pertaining to journal articles and general case studies about the
student teacher’s sense of confidence and preparedness, cooperating teacher and student teacher
relationships, and the importance of cooperating teacher evaluations of student teachers.
Therefore, the researcher would argue that learning the reliability of assessment tests and
studying the effectiveness of their outcomes is a valuable endeavor. Are these examinations a
good means to measure content knowledge and better understand if university’s History
Department has prepared students well to pass but to excel in performances on such tests? Of
the 20 ultimate students in this case study sample, not only did the vast majority pass these
examinations, but many passed them exceedingly and impressively. As a result, it is conceivable
that those in the sample, destined to take on a career in professional education, are well equipped
in historical knowledge. Thus, there is the potential for them to successfully impart this
knowledge in classroom dynamics.

As for the results of the TCA evaluations and grade scores given by cooperating teachers
toward Social Studies Education majors, the literature does reveal the importance of present
circumstances and outcomes in determining the chances of future employment. In addition, a
substantial amount of literature shows that such internships really do serve as confidence
building experiences, preparing the will and the way for candidates to move into the novice
phase of, for example, high school teaching. Despite the statistical results of this research
undertaking, a clear majority of teacher candidates completed their internships with high
evaluations and “B” or better letter grades. Every sample student that completed the internship
with a passing grade along with sound TCA evaluations also earned at least an adequately decent
score on the MFT examination as well as a passing score on the Praxis II test.

The theoretical concept portion of this study held to the philosophical mindset of Albert
Bandura’s Social Cognitive Theory. According to Bandura, an individual’s knowledge can be
impacting and adapted via simple exposure and observation. Therefore, the student teaching experience, a teacher candidate can learn and put into practice knowledge gained from the veteran cooperating teacher as well as methods that stood the test successful implementation.

Furthermore, the epistemological approach toward this research endeavor was befitting. Gall and Gall (2007), describe epistemology as “the branch of philosophy that studies the nature of knowledge and the process by which knowledge is acquired and validated” (p. 15). A majority of the teacher candidates in this study did score relatively well on the assessment tests. Thus, the knowledge exhibited shows the knowledge gained. Without a solid handle on content knowledge, once the candidate moves into a long-term teaching experience challenges in relaying this knowledge to impressionable students may result. Therefore, student performances on final cumulative exams, Student Outcome Learning (SOL) examinations, or Common Core tests may be negatively affected.

**Implications**

As established above, this study is unique. Despite extensive research, there was not one study of any kind in which history content knowledge assessments were compared to student teaching evaluations. Therefore, this study was valuable and can serve as a basis for other departments of the same university to perform a similar type of self-evaluation/analysis. But, looking further, this methodical study can also function as the launching pad for other universities to examine, via one means or another, their branches of Social Studies Education, Math Education, Science Education, etc. For example, perhaps there is a college that senses the need to examine if its Math and Education Departments are collectively producing good secondary level math teachers. Is not self-analysis a means of achieving self-awareness? In the quest to analyze institutional effectiveness, are a university’s education majors gaining the skills
and knowledge needed to succeed as teachers? Do these teacher candidates have comparably high assessment scores and evaluation rankings to become as marketable as possible in the education job force? Individual teachers are often required to give self-evaluations to determine strengths and where there is room for improvement. Therefore, individual university departments or multi-department collaborative efforts should also place their initiatives under the “microscope” and explore ways to improve their already existing assessment procedures. When examining an academic program, there is bound to be room for improvement. This study can function as a model basis for future research in many academic areas.

**Limitations**

There were several limitations in this venture as well as rising circumstances that required adjustments in the research design. For example, initially, it appeared that there may be as many as 32 students in the sample size. It became evident that not all originally examined in this case study took the MFT and Praxis II test as well as completed the semester-long student teaching internship. Thus, the number soon shrank to 20 pupils, which was a conspicuously smaller group than anticipated.

Moreover, the sample of student teachers spanned more than the ideal immediate five-year time frame. To expand the sample number to an adequate level of obtaining some semblance of determining if there were significances, a total of seven consecutive years of student data was examined. As a result, 20 individual MFT, Praxis, and Student Teaching records were compared and contrasted.

Finally, a major limitation was the lack of any prior literature about previous efforts of this kind to reference and utilize as a benchmark for this research experiment. Therefore, it really was a journey filled with course changes and setbacks. Nonetheless, the effort continued
and methodical game plans were eventually pinned down, yielding results. Moreover, the researcher learned a lot about student success rates with MFT and Praxis II scores as well as the level of teacher candidate performances in semester-long student teaching internships. Finally, through a bird’s eye view of student records, the researcher is still convinced that the collaborative efforts of the History and Education Departments of the university in review are yielding positive results and most Social Studies Education majors are gaining the necessary knowledge and are being equipped as educators to potentially go on and become successful history teachers.

**Recommendations for Future Research**

The researcher stands by the theoretical concept basis for this study. However, based on experience, the researcher offers the following suggestions or recommendations on how the study could obtain more reliable results and become more productive. First, a sample size of at least 30 would be preferable to unmask a larger effect size. Also, to better determine current performance levels, it would be ideal to study results from no more than five of the most recent years. Moreover, obtaining a larger sample of various ethnic groups in representation would help to obtain better demographic insights. Finally, by accruing a sample size relatively balanced in the number of male and female students could yield more definitive frequency outcomes.
References


Bell, C. & Robinson, N. (2004). The successful student teacher experience: Thoughts from the ivory tower: Student teachers can successfully navigate this important stage in their career with the help of their college supervisors and cooperating teachers. *Music Educators Journal, 91*(1), 39-42.


http://www.liberty.edu/academics/education/teacher/index.cfm?PID=14625


https://www.historians.org/publications-and-directories/perspectives-on-history/february-


APPENDICES

The following and final pages of this manuscript consist of the various items related to this research process. Appendix A includes the Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval letter for the chosen research methodology. Appendices B, C, and D entails overview figures of the sample population in this study in connection with Praxis II, MFT and TCA results. Appendices G and H display frequency figures concerning gender and ethnicity differences between the 20 students in this case study sample.
March 16, 2018

Christopher L. Jones
IRB Application 3168: The Relationship Between Student Teacher Performance and Social Studies Test Performance

Dear Christopher L. Jones,

The Liberty University Institutional Review Board has reviewed your application in accordance with the Office for Human Research Protections (OHRP) and Food and Drug Administration (FDA) regulations and finds your study does not classify as human subjects research. This means you may begin your research with the data safeguarding methods mentioned in your IRB application.

Your study does not classify as human subjects research because it will not involve the collection of identifiable, private information.

Please note that this decision only applies to your current research application, and any changes to your protocol must be reported to the Liberty IRB for verification of continued non-human subjects research status. You may report these changes by submitting a new application to the IRB and referencing the above IRB Application number.

If you have any questions about this determination or need assistance in identifying whether possible changes to your protocol would change your application’s status, please email us at irb@liberty.edu.

Sincerely,

Administrative Chair of Institutional Research
The Graduate School
Liberty University | Training Champions for Christ since 1971
Appendix B

*Praxis II Test Subsections Scores versus TCA Pass/Fail and Score Correlations*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>#</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Ethnicity</th>
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<th>Eur.</th>
<th>World</th>
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<th>TCA P/F</th>
<th>TCA Score</th>
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<td>134</td>
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Appendix C

Descriptive Statistics Praxis Scores and TCA P/F Correlation

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Appendix D

**Point Biserial Correlation: Descriptive Statistics MFT and TCA P/F Correlations**

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Appendix E

Figure 1

Ethnicity

Frequency

Asian
Two or More
White

Ethnicity
Appendix F

Figure 2

![Bar chart showing gender frequency]

- **Gender**
  - Female
  - Male

- **Frequency**
  - 25
  - 20
  - 15
  - 10
  - 5
  - 0