Pre-Service Teachers' Perceptions of Virtual Observation and Feedback During Practicum Placements

William Harper-Hooper IV, **Donna M. Ploessl**, **Almir Smajic**, **Cassie G. Raulston**, and **Jennifer A. Davis**
University of Montevallo

Abstract: The purpose of this study was to investigate pre-service teachers' perceptions of traditional observations and feedback compared with virtual observations and feedback during practicum placements. Specifically, researchers were interested in exploring methods for providing quality practicum experience feedback. A mixed-methods research design indicated that pre-service teachers preferred virtual observations and feedback compared to traditional practices. Results suggested a need for further research to explore and interpret pre-service teachers' understanding of the format for observations (virtual or traditional) and providing these experiences based on the level of enrollment in the Elementary (K-6) Teacher Education program.

Pre-Service Teachers' Perceptions of Virtual Observation and Feedback During Practicum

Observations and feedback continue to be essential components in pre-service teacher preparation practicum placements. During an Elementary Education program meeting early in the fall of 2020, faculty discussed how to provide meaningful field placement experiences and quality feedback for pre-service teachers during the Global pandemic. Students could complete practicum placements within the Local Education Agencies' (LEAs) Kindergarten through Sixth grade (K-6) classrooms, but university supervisors could not enter the school buildings for lesson observations. These practicum experiences provide pre-service teachers opportunities to apply content knowledge and newly learned instructional practices in authentic classroom settings (Sasaki et al., 2020; Zeichner, 2010). Therefore, it was necessary to provide effective feedback to pre-service teachers as they practiced newly learned teaching strategies through an alternate format. Supervising faculty kept in mind that the quality of supervision and feedback is critical to the success of these future educators (Kaufman, 1992; Slick, 1997).

GoReact enabled university professors to observe and provide feedback to pre-service teachers in an asynchronous way by allowing pre-service teachers to review the feedback as they viewed themselves teaching lessons. Using resources such as GoReact, supervisors were given the opportunity to interject time-coded comments directly in the video-playback of the lesson instead of after the lesson. Pre-service teachers were able to

SRATE Journal

A peer-reviewed publication of the
Southeastern Regional Association of Teacher Educators (SRATE)
2024, Volume 33, Issue 1
SRATE.org

refer to the comments from the context of the lesson by watching the video and reviewing the feedback during the playback.

Pre-Service Teachers

Pre-service teachers may be excited and anxious about their clinical experiences in the elementary classroom. They look forward to implementing teaching and technology strategies learned during previous elementary methods and technology courses and are nervous about doing a good job at the same time. In a traditional clinical experiences model, pre-service teachers think of themselves as the receiver of information. The university supervisor's primary responsibility is to provide the pre-service teacher with feedback on a regular basis about teaching and classroom operations. Edigar (2009) stressed the importance of the role of university supervisor in scaffolding feedback for pre-service teachers. This scaffolded feedback generally occurs when pre-service teachers implement strategies learned during coursework in their practicum placements (K-6 classrooms). Tripp and Eick (2008) found that pre-service teachers wanted to see modeled lessons and receive ongoing feedback. Rajuan et al. (2007) conducted a four-year study and interviewed 40 pre-service teachers. The researchers found that pre-service teachers were open to new ideas and strategies of teaching valued the freedom to try new ideas in the classroom. Rajuan and colleagues noted that allowing the pre-service teacher to reflect on teaching successes and dilemmas promoted learning. Hertzog et al. (2000) suggested that reflection, communication, problem-solving, and collaboration all play a major role in pre-service teachers' development. Historically, researchers have suggested that as pre-service teachers are exposed to the thoughts and conversations of teaching experts, they become more accustomed to and comfortable with feedback (Choy et al., 2014; Tatum & McWhorter, 1999). This outgoing and detailed feedback will presumably allow pre-service teachers to feel more confident as they continue to develop in the teaching profession.

Teacher education programs consider clinical experiences to be of the utmost importance for pre-service teachers. The clinical experience created by a network of individuals traditionally consists of the pre-service teacher, cooperating teacher, and university supervisor. In a study conducted by Valencia et al. (2009), pre-service teachers were interviewed and observed during the clinical experience semester. Each member's awareness of this balance paradigm promoted collaboration as the university supervisor supported the pre-service teachers as they began shifting between learner and teacher. The members of this triad must work together effectively for a quality clinical experience semester to take place. Pre-service teachers must also learn to effectively develop professional autonomy while adhering to the clinical experience expectations (Smith, 2005). Specifically, pre-service teachers can experience the challenge of striving to apply their own newly acquired pedagogy and technology integration. Research has indicated that the guidance pre-service teachers received during the clinical experience semester was the most important component in learning how to become an effective teacher (Theelen et al., 2019; Guyton & McIntyre, 1990; Wash et al., 2014).

Instructors can face many challenges when supervising teacher candidates. In traditional teacher training, feedback from supervisors is delayed until after lesson completion or even days later (Scheeler & Lee, 2002). Stapleton et al. (2017) emphasized that timing is one of the major issues for providing meaningful feedback to preservice

teachers. They discussed some of the challenges that faculty were faced with regarding large practicum numbers in the field and the difficulty of trying to observe in multiple schools on the same day and at the same time. They discovered that by implementing virtual coaching that 88 percent of the teacher candidates found feedback on their video useful or very useful and that the coach was able to see classroom conditions in the video they had not noticed. In addition, using a virtual platform, instructors were able to save time by utilizing one platform to manage student videos and interject comments to lessons.

Methods and Materials

The research aimed to understand pre-service teachers' perceptions of virtual versus traditional observations and feedback during practicum experiences. Pre-service teacher candidates completed a digital questionnaire using Google Forms (see **Table 1**). A mixed-methods approach was employed, with quantitative data collected via Likert-type rating scales and qualitative data through open-ended questions. Thirty-six pre-service teachers from an elementary teacher education program in the southeastern United States participated. Quantitative data was analyzed using percentage scores, while thematic analysis was used for qualitative data. Three themes emerged: implementation, feedback, and observation format. Participants provided input on their experiences during the global pandemic. Data collection utilized Google Forms, with Likert-type scale prompts for quantitative data and qualitative prompts for thematic analysis.

Table 1. *Survey Items*

Survey Item	Participant Response Options
I was very comfortable recording my lesson.	Strongly Agree, Agree, Disagree, Strongly Disagree
Uploading videos to the GoReact platform was simple to me.	Strongly Agree, Agree, Disagree, Strongly Disagree
I enjoyed getting feedback through GoReact.	Strongly Agree, Agree, Disagree, Strongly Disagree
I would prefer traditional feedback.	Strongly Agree, Agree, Disagree, Strongly Disagree
The feedback I received from my observed lesson was helpful.	Strongly Agree, Agree, Disagree, Strongly Disagree
I prefer traditional observations where the University Supervisor comes to your classroom for observation.	Strongly Agree, Agree, Disagree, Strongly Disagree
I prefer virtual observations where the lesson is recorded and sent to the University Supervisor for evaluation.	Strongly Agree, Agree, Disagree, Strongly Disagree

Survey Item	Participant Response Options
If you had to choose which type of observation (Virtual or Face to Face), which would you choose and why?	Open-ended participant response
Based on your experience recording your lesson, what worked well? What might you do differently next time?	Open-ended participant response
How could the University of Montevallo improve the observation recording experience?	Open-ended participant response
Additional Comments	Open-ended participant response

Results

Implementation

Within this study, the first theme identified for analysis was implementation. Two quantitative and two qualitative questions in the questionnaire provided insight into the participants' perceptions of the ease of completing and submitting their lesson materials for feedback and evaluation. The first quantitative research item asked participants to rate their comfort level with the submission process. Of the 36 participants, 97% indicated that they strongly agreed or agreed that they were comfortable recording lessons. The second quantitative research item asked participants to share their input pertaining to the ease of use for the platform used for submitting lesson documentation. Results indicated that 97% of respondents thought that uploading videos to the GoReact platform was a simple process. A graphic representation of respondents' selections is presented in Figure 1.

To further explore the meaning of the responses provided within the quantitative feedback, two additional qualitative prompts were used to provide depth to initial responses. The first qualitative item asked participants to reflect on their experience with recording lessons with regards to what went well and what could be done differently to improve their experience. When reflecting on what went well, participants provided the following responses:

> P1: *"I enjoyed recording my lesson, however, I was not fond of LiveText at all! I would much rather upload everything to GoReact. It was simpler and I love that you can get feedback [sic]on real-time."*
>
> P2: *"Everything online was easy to submit and quick"*

Based on the responses provided, the participants were able to provide meaning to the quantitative data that suggests that most participants found the process for recording and uploading lessons for evaluation and feedback manageable. In contrast, when participants were asked to reflect on what could be done differently to ensure success with the implementation and recording of lessons, participants provided the following responses:

P1: *"Find a better device to record on. Storage was a really big problem for me"*

P2: *"Something I may do differently next time is getting the students used to a camera being in the room early on, so that when I do have to officially record lessons the students will know how to behave on camera."*

The second qualitative prompt asked participants to reflect on their experience in relation to what the university faculty could do to support the lesson recording experience. When reflecting on what could be done from an instructor or institution's standpoint to improve similar experiences in the future, participants provided the following responses:

P1: *"Use GoReact!! Other components made everything more stressful and super confusing! I would also like to have feedback on more than one video. I think it would help student better their lesson plans."*

P2: *"It went pretty smoothly. I would just need to adjust on my end."*

P3: *"I feel like creating some sort of document to explain how to use the service would be helpful. I felt like I was told how to use it on a computer, but it was easier for me to upload the video from my phone. Maybe an excerpt of how to do it that way would help some students."*

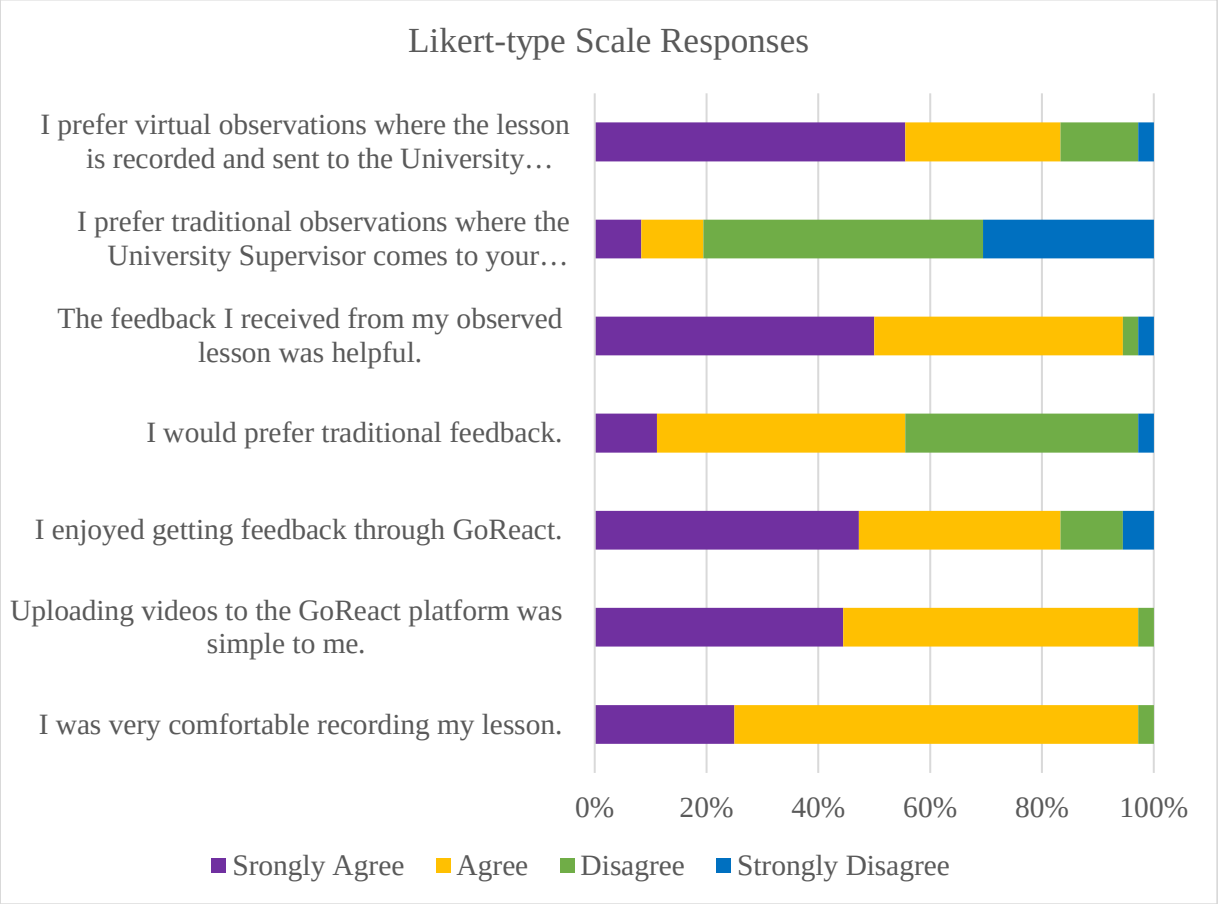
P4: *"By having a time to discuss how to do certain things with uploading and compressing."*

Feedback

Through further data analysis, the second identified theme was feedback. For this study, feedback refers to responses and evaluations of documentation and materials submitted by students as provided by their university supervisor. Within the feedback theme, there were three quantitative prompts that asked participants to rate their perceptions of the feedback given through the submission platform, their preference of feedback delivery, and support provided through this feedback (See **Figure 1**).

In relation to participants' perceptions of the feedback given through the submission platform, 83% of participants strongly agreed or agreed that they enjoyed getting feedback through the submission platform. When participants were asked to reflect on their preference for feedback in relation to traditional feedback (meeting with the university supervisor) or virtual (comments and feedback provided on submission materials in the platform only), data indicated that 45% of participants disagreed or strongly disagreed that they would prefer traditional feedback. Furthermore, when asked to reflect on the quality of support provided through feedback, 94% of participants strongly agreed or agreed that the feedback they received was helpful.

Figure 1. *Quantitative Data Summary*



Observation Format

The third and final theme identified for analysis was the observation format. Within this theme, two quantitative prompts and one qualitative prompt provided insight into the participants' perceptions of the format in which their observations were observed by their university supervisor. The first quantitative item asked participants to rate their preferences in relation to having their university supervisor come into their classrooms to observe their lesson in person. Of the 36 participants, 81% indicated that they strongly disagreed or disagreed that they would prefer that their university supervisor come into their classroom to observe their lesson. Similarly, the second quantitative item asked participants to share their preferences to have their university supervisor observe their lesson virtually via recording. Of the 36 participants, 83% participants indicated that they strongly agreed or agreed that they prefer virtual observations via recording (see **Figure 1**).

To further explore the meaning of the responses provided within the quantitative data for observation format, an additional qualitative item provided insight into initial responses. Within this theme, the qualitative item asked participants to reflect on their experience and identify if they had to choose between the two types of observation format

(virtual or face to face) which they would choose and why. In response to this question, participants provided the following responses:

> P1: *"Virtual, this gave more flexibility to when I could do my lesson. Also, it would make it to where the whole lesson was observed not just some of it."*
> P2: *"I would choose virtual because it is not as stressful as having the university supervisor coming into the classroom. You are less inclined to make mistakes or feel the pressure of two individuals grading you on how well you teach a lesson."*
> P3: *"Virtual! I personally have extremely bad anxiety when it comes to being observed in person. While it is a major learning curve for me, I still am not 100% comfortable with being observed in person. I also enjoy being able to go back and see what they see when they leave feedback on the timestamps like so in [sic] goreact!"*
> P4: *"Virtual, the feedback from [sic] goreact is more helpful because the supervisor can more easily give specific feedback and can [sic] rewatch parts of the lesson to give that feedback if needed."*
> P5: *"Virtual because it's less intimidating and I can focus on my lesson rather than being evaluated. It's hard to give all your focus where it needs to be when you have someone sitting in the room and you can see them writing things and you thinking you're messing up."*

In contrast, the following responses were provided by participants when asked which format they would choose and why:

> P1: *"Face to face; less intimidating than having to record, relationship building with supervisor."*
> P2: *"I would choose Face to Face observation because there is no worry or doubt about making sure the device you have is charged, has enough storage, whether you are speaking loud and clear enough for the viewer, etc."*
> P3: *"I would not mind either method. I believe both have benefits."*
> P4: *"I enjoyed recording my lesson, but I think it would have been an interesting dynamic to have my UM Supervisor be in the classroom. I think having the option to do either would be a great addition (When teachers are able to come to the schools)."*

Discussion

After further analysis of data, quantitative data with relation to the implementation theme suggested that most participants felt comfortable uploading materials to the submission platform and found the overall process to be simplistic in nature. While most responses indicated that the ease of recording was successful, ensuring that students have prepared and appropriate materials for recording their lessons also plays a part in the perceptions of future opportunities for growth personally. When analyzing participants' responses to what could be done differently, data suggested that ensuring that proper materials and technology used for recording lessons become manageable and appropriate for the task being completed.

When analyzing responses provided by participants in relation to the theme of implementation and what could be done to improve the process on behalf of the university supervisor, the qualitative data suggested that the participants expressed that more support with the submission and recording process would be beneficial. Participants indicated that they felt that having an additional informational resource to "*walk them through*" the process

and having more opportunities for explicit feedback and university supervisor explanation would be beneficial. In contrast, similar to the quantitative data results, qualitative data suggested that participants generally found the process and platform used to be beneficial and were able to identify opportunities for improvement that represented both personal and instructional factors.

Quantitative data analysis with relation to feedback indicated that most students found that the use of the platform in relation to feedback was an enjoyable and beneficial experience. In contrast, participants' perceptions of the delivery of feedback were generally favored in a virtual manner that requires no direct interaction or meeting with their university supervisor. While there were no qualitative items that directly tied into the theme of feedback, the data provided within the other themes supported the notion that a virtual format is a preferred approach for students, including in what fashion they receive feedback in relation to their submitted materials.

Based on the responses provided by participants for the theme of observation format, the quantitative data indicated that the participants strongly agreed or agreed that they prefer the virtual observation format for their observed lesson. In contrast, similar to the quantitative data results, qualitative data supported the results that most participants preferred the virtual observation while some of the participants expressed a preference for a face-to-face observation format due to technology. Additionally, some participants expressed an interest in both formats or had no genuine preference for either format for observation.

After data analysis and reflection, the researchers identified two opportunities for further research to continue to explore and interpret pre-service teachers' understanding of perceptions of the format for observation (virtual or traditional) and providing these experiences based on the level of program completion. Through the analysis of participants' responses, we identified that participants' understanding of the format of observation feedback in relation to virtual (GoReact feedback) and traditional (feedback provided with submission without meeting) observations varied. Another opportunity for additional research would include evaluating and comparing responses based on the classification of their experiences (e.g., Internship, Pre-Internship, and Introductory). Analyzing responses based on the pre-service teacher's current course level would provide further insight into each pre-service teacher's prior knowledge and experiences, which would offer depth to the response provided and strengthen the results shared.

References

Choy, D., Wong, A. F. L., Goh, K. C., & Low, E. L. (2014), Practicum experience: Pre-service teachers' self-perceptions of the professional growth. *Innovations in Education and Teaching International, 51*(5), 472-482. https://doi.org/10.1080/14703297.2013.791552

Edigar, M. (2009), Supervising the student teacher in the public school. *Education, 130*(2), 251-254. Retrieved from https://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ871659

Guyton, E., & McIntyre, D. J. (1990). Student teaching and school experiences. In W. R. Houston (Ed.), *Handbook of research on teacher education* (pp. 514-534). Macmillan.

Hertzog, H. S., Pensavalle, M. T., & Lemlech, J. K. (2000, April). *Collegial relationships: What does it mean to be a colleague?* [Conference paper]. American Educational Research Association (AERA) Annual Meeting, New Orleans, LA. Retrieved from https://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED446077

Rajuan, M., Beijaard, D., & Verloop, N. (2007). The role of the cooperating teacher: Bridging the gap between expectations of cooperating teachers and student teachers. *Mentoring and Tutoring: Partnership in Learning*, *15*(3), 223-242. https://doi.org/10.1080/13611260701201703

Sasaki, R., Goff, W., Dowsett, A., Paroissien, D., Matthies, J., Di Iorio, C., Montey, S., Rowe, S. & Puddy, G. (2020). The practicum experience during Covid-19 – Supporting initial teacher education student's practicum experience through a simulated classroom. *Journal of Technology and Teacher Education, 28*(2), 329-339. Retrieved from https://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ1257190

Smith, E. R. (2005). Learning to talk like a teacher: Participation and negotiation in co-planning discourse. *Communication Education*, *54*(1), 52-71. https://doi.org/10.1080/03634520500076778

Stapleton, J., Tschida, C., & Cuthrell, K. (2017). Partnering principal and teacher candidates: Exploring a virtual coaching model in teacher education. *Journal of Technology and Teacher Education, 25*(4), 495-519. Retrieved from https://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ1166362

Tatum, B., & McWhorter, P. (1999). Maybe not everything, but a whole lot you always wanted to know about mentoring. In P. Graham (Ed.), *Teacher/mentor: A dialogue for collaborative learning* (pp. 21-33). Teachers College Press.

Theelen, H., van den Beemt, A., & den Brok, P. (2019). Classroom simulations in teacher education to support preservice teachers' interpersonal competence: A systematic literature review. *Computers & Education, 129*, 14- 26. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.compedu.2018.10.015

Tripp, L. O. & Eick, C. J. (2008). Match-making to enhance the mentoring relationship in student teaching: Learning from a simple personality instrument. *Electronic Journal of Science Education*, *12*(2), 1-26.

Valencia, S. W., Martin, S. D., Place, N. A., & Grossman, P. (2009). Complex interactions in student teaching: Lost opportunities for learning. *Journal of Teacher Education, 60*(3), 304-322. https://doi.org/10.1177/0022487109336543

Wash, P. D., Bradley, G., & Beck, J. (2014). Remote classroom observations with preservice teachers. *SRATE Journal,* 24(1), 58-63. Retrieved from https://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ1057198

Zeichner, K. (2010). rethinking the connections between campus courses and field experiences in college- and university-based teacher education. *Journal of Teacher Education, 61*(1-2), 89-99. https://doi.org/10.1177/0022487109347671

About the Authors

William Harper-Hooper IV is an Assistant Professor and Program Coordinator of Early Childhood Education at the University of Montevallo. Dr. Harper-Hooper's research interests include culture and diversity in social and emotional development in early childhood education.

Donna M. Ploessl is the Dean of the College of Education and Human Development at the University of Montevallo. Dr. Ploessl's research interests include collaboration between general education and special education teachers, Positive Behavioral Supports and Interventions, and teacher preparation and coaching.

Almir Smajic is an Associate Professor of Education at the College of Education at the University of Montevallo. Dr. Smajic's research interests include mathematics education and support for preservice teachers.

Cassie G. Raulston is Professor of Elementary Education and Instructional Technology and Department Chair in the Teaching, Learning, and Technology Department at the University of Montevallo. Dr. Raulston's research interests include instructional technology.

Jennifer A. Davis is an Associate Professor and Elementary Program Coordinator at the University of Montevallo. Dr. Davis's research interests include effective classroom management strategies and collaboration with community partners.