Perceptions of Student Teachers towards the Effectiveness of Cooperating Teachers, School Principals, and University Supervisors participating in the Teacher Education Program in Jordan

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Abstract

The primary purpose of this study was to determine perceptions of student teachers regarding the effectiveness of university supervisors, school principals, and cooperating teachers participating in the teacher education program at the Hashemite University in Jordan. A total of 120 student teachers participated in the study by completing the researchers-designed questionnaires. The results indicated that participants perceived favorable high agreement toward the effectiveness of university supervisors and cooperating teachers and moderate agreement toward the effectiveness of school principals. Furthermore, based on t-test and ANOVA analysis, significant differences were not found in student teachers' perceptions based on gender and grade-point average (GPA). The study ended by offering a number of practical and theoretical implications for the field of study.

Key words: Mentoring, Teacher Education Program, Student Teachers, Cooperating Teachers, School Principals, University Supervisors, and Jordan.
Introduction and theoretical Framework

Preparing effective teachers for our school systems has been a topic of concern in the educational literature for decades. Student training has been established by many colleges and universities locally and internationally as a significant process for the professional development of student teachers. The importance of student training within teacher education programs has been stressed by many educators. This increased attention has arisen from the growing amount of research recommendations in the area of teacher education (Cochran-Smith, 2001; Ekiz, 2006; Gates, 1994; Hayes, 1999; Wideen & Grimmett, 1996). Many of these recommendations have deemed student training as a necessary factor for career development and advancement. During training, students are exposed to real life situations and perform the duties and responsibilities of the formal teacher. Indeed, student training has evolved to become a prominent feature in teacher education and a key to the future development of the teaching profession in many countries.

The aim of the teacher education programmes is specifically to facilitate student teachers learning and development within their professional career. This aim can be achieved by providing student teachers with extensive access to pupils in the classroom and the school environment (Cochran-Smith, 2001). Recently, teaching practice in schools is considered the most important part in the student training, but it is generally agreed on that this practical experience needs to be supported by many stakeholders (Asher & Malet, 1996; Bezzina, 1999; Brisard & Hall, 2001; Cochran-Smith, 2001; Ekiz, 2006; Kwan & Lopez-Real, 2005). Previous research has emphasized that university supervisors, school principals, and cooperating teachers play a vital role in enriching the experiences of student teachers and can
impact their ultimate performance and success. Moreover, these stakeholders can help students connect theory to practice in real work environments (Brisard & Hall, 2001; Pepin, 2000, Williams & Soares, 2002). Indeed, it has become the vogue in many teacher education programs to believe that practice in the classroom is the best. Grenfell (1998) supports this view when he emphasized that schools are often seen as the natural place of training and “sitting on the job” (p. 174).

This shift towards school-based teacher education has given rise to several issues that shape the student training. One important issue is how each partner (university supervisors, school principals, and cooperating teachers) can contribute to the learning of student teachers. Since the purpose of the training programs is the professional development of student teachers, the people who are involved in supporting that development need to be able to do so effectively (Ekiz, 2006; Kwan & Lopez-Real, 2005; Sivan & Chan, 2003). The cooperating teacher, as a main participant in these programs, has particularly an important role in students’ training. Through this process students are to acquire and reflect on different skills, competencies, and understanding in order to become skilful, reflective, and autonomous teachers. The essence of teacher training programs for students is to gain access to the professional craft knowledge of their cooperating teachers.

Recently, many researchers such as Richert (1997) suggested that student teachers need to be explicitly informed about the process of their training. These needs may give rise to the question as to how they can access the craft knowledge of experienced cooperating teachers in the school. This question has not been satisfactorily researched. Brown and McIntyre (1993) (cited in Hagger, 1997, p. 103) argued that with a suitable approach it is possible for student teachers to gain access to their cooperating teachers’ craft knowledge. Such an approach is essentially based on assumptions about what constitutes good practice, and in particular on the identification of the elements of good practices (Muijs & Reynolds,
They summarize that student teachers should do the following: (a) emphasizing what was good about the teaching, in the eyes of the teachers and pupils, (b) focusing on specific classroom events, which occurred when the cooperating teacher was present, (c) determinedly avoiding the imposition of any preconceptions about good teaching or about how to make sense of teaching, and (d) helping teachers to remember what was involved in doing the things they did well, the most important element in this being to interview the teachers very soon after the observed lessons.

The cooperating teacher works with the university supervisor in planning the student teaching experience that allows the student to gradually assume all duties and responsibilities of the cooperating teacher during this placement. University supervisors help student teachers to communicate effectively with students in the classroom, plan instruction, evaluate learning, utilize materials, and match educational philosophies with classroom practice (Sivan & Chan, 2003; Williams & Soares, 2002). With regard to school principals, little research, if any, has been documented toward their role and influence on the students’ teaching experience. However, more research is needed in this area (Ekiz, 2006; Swick & Ross, 2001). School principals are primary stakeholders and may play a vital role in the success of student teachers during their training period. For example, they can hold meetings that encompass student teachers and cooperating teachers to provide guidance and support, deal with student teachers as a formal teacher, conduct follow-ups on the progress of student teachers, and encourage participation in all activities of the school.

In Jordan, all public and private universities train their student teachers in schools through participation in the teacher education programs. Indeed, there is a substantial literature that shows the importance of school experiences on the way a teacher teaches (Virta, 2000). The teacher education programs in Jordan have adopted a system where a specified teacher in school acts to give specialist support to the student. This role is variously
referred to as that of a cooperating teacher. The cooperating teacher, in some way, facilitates
the student teacher in gaining the skills, knowledge, practices and attitudes of the professional
teacher. Clearly, a cooperating teacher is in a position to have a significant effect on students’
learning experience (Koki, 1998).

Furthermore, a qualified university supervisor from the department members of
curricula and instruction are assigned to undertake the responsibility of student training and
supervision. Their job is to help students to benefit from the training course and to develop
their teaching skills and competencies by visiting them, at least three-to-four times, in the
schools, observing their work and performance and giving the final mark at the end of the
course. Finally, school principals are frequently contacted by university supervisors to
determine the progress of their students and to encourage them to provide all means of
support that may ultimately impact the success of student teachers.

In light of the above discussion, it can be concluded that university supervisors,
school principals, and cooperating teachers play an important role toward the effectiveness of
student teachers learning experience. Therefore, assessing the perceptions of student teachers
toward the effectiveness of those key stakeholders was the major concern for this study.

Statement of the Problem

The nature and the quality of teacher education has been the subject of much concern
in many countries around the world. Darling-Hammond (2000) claimed that public
dissatisfaction with schools has included dissatisfaction with teacher education. In order to
take educational decisions to develop and improve teacher education programs to achieve the
desired outcomes, it is of paramount importance to evaluate and investigate the effectiveness
of such programs from time to time. Little has been documented about the perceptions of
student teachers regarding the effectiveness of the teacher education program combining its
three primary dimensions (university supervisors, school principals, and cooperating teachers). Therefore, this study aims at determining the effectiveness of the role of university supervisors, school principals, and cooperating teachers based on perceptions of student teachers.

Research Questions

The present study was driven by the following research questions:

1. What are the perceptions of student teachers toward the effectiveness of the role university supervisors participating in the teacher education program offered by the Hashemite University in Jordan?

2. What are the perceptions of student teachers toward the effectiveness of the role of school principals participating in the teacher education program offered by the Hashemite University in Jordan?

3. What are the perceptions of student teachers toward the effectiveness of the role of cooperating teachers participating in the teacher education program offered by the Hashemite University in Jordan?

4. Are there any statistically significant differences in the means of student teachers’ perceptions towards the role of the university supervisors, school principals, and cooperating teachers based on differences in gender and grade-point average (GPA)?

Significance of the study

Hargreaves (2001) believes that of all professions only teaching is charged with the formidable task of creating the human skills and capacities that will enable societies to survive and succeed in the age of information. It is said that the destiny of a nation is shaped in its classrooms and it is the teacher who can mold that destiny. Teachers have great responsibility for shaping the minds and hearts of students. Being the first thorough study that investigates the perceptions of student teachers towards the main stakeholders of the teacher
education program in Jordan, it is hoped that this study will provide knowledge that could help in the development and improvement of the program at the Hashemite University specifically and in Jordan in general. The results of this study can also be used by the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Higher Education to determine the effectiveness of participating schools in the professional development of prospective teachers.

**Definition of Terms**

**University supervisors:** are faculty members who provide a detailed practical plan for training in co-ordination with cooperative teachers and school principals and evaluate the performance of student teachers during the practicum course in the cooperative schools.

**Cooperative teachers:** are experienced school teachers who participate in the teacher education programs and are expected to train student teachers by sharing their classrooms, providing opportunities for student teachers to observe, practice, and receive feedback on their performance.

**School principals:** are the principals of the cooperative schools in which student teachers are being trained. They are expected to introduce student teachers to the school environment and follow up with the progress of student teachers during the practicum program in their schools.

**Student teachers:** are prospective teachers who are completing a university-based teacher education program. They have completed the majority of the course work and are completing a supervised teaching experience under the direction of a cooperative teacher.

**Research Methods and Procedures**
**Population and Sample**

The target population for this study was all student teachers who participated in the teacher education program at the Hashemit University in Jordan. The sample of this study comprised of 128 student teachers who are attending the teacher education program for the first semester of the academic year 2006/2007. A total of 120 usable instruments were returned with a response rate of 93%. The sample distribution was 28 males (23.3%) and 92 females (76.7%). With regard to the GPA of students, 22 (18.3%) had a GPA between 2-2.49, 57 (47.5%) had a GPA between 2.5-2.99, 35 (29.2%) had a GPA between 3-3.69, and 6 (5%) had a GPA between 3.7-4).

**Instrumentation**

The scales and items used in the instrument were developed by the researchers after a thorough review of the literature especially related to the teacher education programs, student teachers, cooperating teachers, school principals, university supervisors, and professional development. A demographic section was included to provide a description of the sample used in the study. These demographic variables included gender and cumulative grade-point average (GPA). The face and content validity of the instrument was evaluated by an expert panel comprised of university faculty members, cooperating teachers, academic supervisors, and student teachers. The instrument was field tested with 27 student teachers participating in the teacher education program who were not included in the final sample of the study. Changes indicated by the validation panel and field test were incorporated in the instrument development. The final instrument was named "the Teacher Education Program Assessment Questionnaire” (TEPAQ) and is comprised of three separate scales and 30 items.

The first scale is the role of university supervisors with 10 items such as "hold meetings to discuss student progress" and "train students to develop accurate lesson plans".
The second scale is the role of school principals with 10 items such as "familiarize new student teachers with the school environment" and "hold regular meetings with student teachers". The third scale is the role of cooperating teachers with 10 items such as "guided student teachers inside the classroom" and "help student teachers in solving class-related problems". These items were rated using a Likert-type scale ranging as follows: 1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Neutral, 4 = Agree, and 5 = Strongly Agree. The scales of the instrument exhibited acceptable internal consistency coefficients of .80 for the role of university supervisors, .83 for the role of the school principals, and .86 for the role of the cooperating teachers.

**Data collection**

The researchers held a meeting with all student teachers participating in the study on the Hashemite University campus during the last two weeks toward the end of the first semester of the academic year 2006/2007. Before handing the TEPAQ instrument, the researchers explained to the participants the purpose of the study and encouraged them to read the statements carefully before ticking the appropriate choice. The participants were also ensured confidentiality and anonymity. Finally, instruments were handed and collected during that meeting.

**Data Analysis**

To achieve the first three research questions, descriptive statistics including means and standard deviations were utilized to describe each item and the average of all items for each scale. To accomplish research question four, independent t-tests and one way analysis of variance (ANOVA) were used to compare if differences exist in the perceptions of student teachers toward the effectiveness of university supervisors, school principals, and cooperating teachers based on the demographic characteristics of students. In the case where there were two levels of the variable (e.g., gender) the t-test was used while ANOVA was used when the
variable has more than two levels (e.g., GPA). Tukey's post hoc test was used in case differences were detected. An alpha level of .05 was set a priorie.

**Results of the Study**

Data collected from all participants were analyzed using SPSS-version 11.5. Descriptive statistics of all variables in the study were examined using frequencies. The minimum and maximum values for each variable were examined for the accuracy of data entry by inspecting out of range values, which did not show any outliers. Missing subjects were not detected either. The results section is organized according to each research Question.

**Results Pertaining Research Question One**

Research question one was to determine the perceptions of student teachers toward the effectiveness of university supervisors participating in the teacher education program offered by the Hashemite University in Jordan. Means and standard deviations were used to accomplish this question. As shown in Table (1), the overall mean score for all items was 4.02, indicating favorable high agreement toward the effectiveness of university supervisors in mentoring student teachers. All items exhibited high mean values above 3.85 while five items exhibited mean values above four.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Items</th>
<th>Means</th>
<th>Standard Deviations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Item 1</td>
<td>4.15</td>
<td>.73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Item 2</td>
<td>3.98</td>
<td>1.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Item 3</td>
<td>3.88</td>
<td>.97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Item 4</td>
<td>3.91</td>
<td>.93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Item 5</td>
<td>3.85</td>
<td>1.02</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Results Pertaining Research Question Two

Research question two was to determine the perceptions of student teachers toward the effectiveness of school principals participating in the teacher education program offered by the Hashemite University in Jordan. Means and standard deviations were used to accomplish this question. As shown in Table (2), the overall mean score for all items was 3.41, indicating moderate agreement toward the effectiveness of school principals in mentoring student teachers. Items 1, 5, and 6 had the highest mean values (3.93, 4.08, and 4.08 respectively), whereas items 3 and 4 had the lowest mean values (2.68 and 2.58 respectively). The rest of the items mean values were fairly moderate to high ranging from 3.88 to 3.83. It is noticeable that six of the nine items had mean values above 3.50.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Means</th>
<th>Standard Deviations</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Item 1</td>
<td>3.93</td>
<td>1.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Item 2</td>
<td>3.83</td>
<td>1.14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Item 3</td>
<td>2.68</td>
<td>1.12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Item 4</td>
<td>2.58</td>
<td>1.12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Item 5</td>
<td>4.08</td>
<td>1.15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Item 6</td>
<td>4.08</td>
<td>1.12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Item 7</td>
<td>2.88</td>
<td>1.09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Item 8</td>
<td>3.50</td>
<td>1.06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Item 9</td>
<td>2.88</td>
<td>1.42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Item 10</td>
<td>3.76</td>
<td>.95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average</td>
<td>3.41</td>
<td>.39</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2
Means and Standard Deviations for the Perceptions of Student Teachers toward the Effectiveness of School Principals
Results Pertaining Research Question Three

Research question three was to determine the perceptions of student teachers toward the effectiveness of cooperating teachers participating in the teacher education program offered by the Hashemite University in Jordan. Means and standard deviations were used to accomplish this question. As shown in Table (3), the overall mean score for all items was 3.89, indicating favorable high agreement toward the effectiveness of cooperating teachers in mentoring student teachers. All items exhibited mean values higher than 3.5. While items 6, 7, and 8 (4.02, 4.07, and 4.03 respectively) received the highest mean values, items 4 and 5 (3.70 and 3.68 respectively) received the lowest mean values.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Items</th>
<th>Means</th>
<th>Standard Deviations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Item 1</td>
<td>3.93</td>
<td>.92</td>
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<tr>
<td>Item 2</td>
<td>3.93</td>
<td>.93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Item 3</td>
<td>3.79</td>
<td>.94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Item 4</td>
<td>3.70</td>
<td>1.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Item 5</td>
<td>3.68</td>
<td>1.16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Item 6</td>
<td>4.02</td>
<td>1.11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Item 7</td>
<td>4.07</td>
<td>.80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Item 8</td>
<td>4.03</td>
<td>1.16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Item 9</td>
<td>3.87</td>
<td>.84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Item 10</td>
<td>3.88</td>
<td>1.18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average</td>
<td>3.89</td>
<td>.40</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Results Pertaining Research Question Four

Research question four was to determine if significant differences exist in student teachers' perceptions based on the selected characteristics of gender and GPA regarding the effectiveness of university supervisors, school principals, and cooperating teachers. T-test for independent samples was used to examine the difference in means between males and
females. However, one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was utilized to identify whether the variances of the four level groups of GPA were equal or significantly different. Table (4) shows that there were no significant differences at the 0.05 alpha level between male students and female students perceptions regarding the effectiveness of university supervisors, school principals, and cooperating teachers. Utilizing ANOVA, as can be seen in Table (5), shows that there were no significant differences among the four GPA level groups (2-2.49, 2.50 – 2.99, 3 – 3.49, and 3.50 – 4.00) regarding the effectiveness of university supervisors, school principals, and cooperating teachers.

Table 4
Differences between Male and Female Student Teachers Regarding the Effectiveness of University Supervisors, School Principals, and Cooperating Teachers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dimension</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Means</th>
<th>Std. Deviations</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>University Supervisors</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>3.99</td>
<td>.36</td>
<td>-42</td>
<td>.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>F</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>4.03</td>
<td>.35</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School Principals</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>3.45</td>
<td>.42</td>
<td>.48</td>
<td>.63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>F</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>3.40</td>
<td>.38</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cooperating Teachers</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>3.77</td>
<td>.45</td>
<td>-1.64</td>
<td>.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>F</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>3.92</td>
<td>.39</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5
Differences among the Four GPA Level Groups (2-2.49, 2.5-2.99, 3-3.49, 3.50-4.0) Regarding the Effectiveness of University Supervisors, School Principals, and Cooperating Teachers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sum of Squares</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>Mean Square</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>University Supervisors</td>
<td>Between Groups</td>
<td>.304</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>.101</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Within Groups</td>
<td>14.750</td>
<td>116</td>
<td>.127</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>15.053</td>
<td>119</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School Principals</td>
<td>Between Groups</td>
<td>.167</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>.056</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Within Groups</td>
<td>18.333</td>
<td>116</td>
<td>.158</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>18.500</td>
<td>119</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cooperating Teachers</td>
<td>Between Groups</td>
<td>.351</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>.117</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Within Groups</td>
<td>19.232</td>
<td>116</td>
<td>.166</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>19.584</td>
<td>119</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Discussion and Conclusions
There is no doubt that university supervisors, school principals, and cooperating teachers play an important role in the lifelong learning of student teachers. Therefore, assessing the perceptions of student teachers towards the effectiveness of those key stakeholders was the major goal of this study. One-hundred twenty eight student teachers attending the teacher education program were given the "Teacher Education Program Assessment Questionnaire" (TEPAQ) in which they were asked to respond to thirty statements pertaining to the roles of the key stakeholders selected for this study on a 5-point Likert–type scale. Descriptive statistics, independent t-tests, and one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) were used to achieve the research questions. Results of the study are addressed by each research question.

The Role of the University Supervisor

The first research question addressed the perceptions of student teachers toward the effectiveness of the role of the university supervisor participating in the teacher education program offered by the Hashemite University in Jordan. Results indicate that student teachers have favorable high agreement regarding the effectiveness of the university supervisor in mentoring student teachers with an overall mean value of 4.02. Student teachers believe that university supervisors train them effectively to plan comprehensive daily lesson plans, combine a theoretical perspective with practice in the instructional process, provide appropriate instructions to improve performance, provide immediate feedback at the end of each class, and conduct meetings to discuss student teachers' performance and progress individually and collectively. These results are consistent with the views of Sivan and Chan (2003) who mentioned that the university supervisor plays an important role in linking theory to practice in real-life situations which can aid student teachers in their success and professional development. There is no doubt that the university supervisor is one of the key stakeholders that the teacher education program is dependant upon for success. Student
teachers usually study many academic classes with the university supervisor during their university years and are gaining real life examples from them during those years concerning the proper methods of instruction. Furthermore, during the practicum experience, students are looking up for guidance and assistance from the university supervisor that can help them link theory to practice (Williams & Soares, 2002).

**The Role of School Principals**

With regard to the second question about the perception of student teachers toward the effectiveness of the role of school principals participating in the teacher education program offered by the Hashemite University in Jordan, the results indicate a moderate agreement regarding the effectiveness of school principals in mentoring student teachers with an overall mean value of 3.41. Student teachers believe that school principals follow up their attendance strictly and employed educational procedures in dealing with student teachers. On the other hand, the participants felt that they were treated as aliens to the school environment. They felt that school principals were biased and discriminatory in their treatment and did not cooperate with student teachers in implementing their instructional duties aptly. The findings confirm those of Broadbent (1998) and Wood (2001) in that student teachers were not treated as a full member of staff. This kind of behavior practised by school principals, the highest administrative authority at schools, may hinder student teachers ongoing learning, performance, and progress in realizing and maximizing their full potential. As mentioned by Ekiz (2006), school principals may severely limit the successful experience of student teachers because of their administrative authority on all other stakeholders participating in the teacher education program. Not to mention their effect on the morale of students concerning their learning experience.
The Role of Cooperating Teachers

The third research question assessed the perceptions of student teachers toward the effectiveness of the role of cooperating teachers participating in the teacher education program offered by the Hashemite University in Jordan. The results indicate a favorable high agreement regarding the effectiveness of cooperating teachers in mentoring student teachers with an overall mean value of 3.89. Student teachers believe that cooperating teachers were supportive in helping them administer their duties in the classroom, discipline students during instruction, instill respect and esteem within pupils, follow the performance of student teachers in the classroom by observing them throughout the process of instruction, and taking down notes on their performance. In light of previous research, these results are not consistent with similar studies conducted by Ekiz (2006) and Hobson (2002) who found that cooperating teachers were not always successful in creating conditions for effective teacher training. The contradiction in results may depend on the context and can be attributed to the fact that the teacher education program offered by the Hashemite University has been given a primary attention by the university administration in the past three years. The university administration has prompt their faculty members to conduct workshops and seminars twice yearly to improve the performance of cooperating teachers and to provide them with the latest trends in teaching and communication and training of preservice teachers. Moreover, university supervisors follow up closely with cooperating teachers during the full period of the teacher education program and offer help and training in the questioned aspects of concern.

Demographic Variables and Group Differences

The last research question was to determine if there were any statistically significant differences in the means of student teachers’ perceptions towards the role of the university supervisors, school principals, and cooperating teachers based on differences in gender and
GPA. The results indicated that there were no significant differences at the 0.05 alpha level due to gender or GPA. These results might be justified in light of the recent development in the educational system in Jordan were all students regardless of their gender are provided with the same opportunity for education. Similarly, higher education institutions represented by the Hashemite University, provide male and female student teachers with the same learning experience, exposed students to the same theoretical and practical backgrounds, help students deal with psychological pressures, and equally practice new teaching skills and classroom instructional techniques. As well, such a process may have eliminated the impact of GPA on students' perceptions. Based on regular meetings with student teachers in the past three years, several comments were provided by them: "I do not have a high GPA in the university courses but I expect to get a full mark in the practicum courses". Another student commented that "there is no relationship between my academic GPA and the practical experience at the training school". It is obvious that students are more inclined toward hands-on training. Over the years, university students in Jordan have shown to value the practical training and devalue the theoretical aspect of academic courses. In brief, students' interest in practical training may be the reason behind these comments. A final comment was provided by an outstanding student said that "I have a high GPA but this has no link with what I expect to get in the practicum courses".

**Conclusions and Recommendations**

In light of the above discussion it can be concluded that university supervisors and cooperative teachers are most effective in enhancing the teaching experiences and ongoing learning of student teachers during the practicum training program while school principals’ role was not as effective. In order to foster the culture of lifelong learning, all key stakeholders participating in the teacher education program must form an alliance and
partnership to learn from each other. Moreover, the role of student teachers as prospective lifelong educators may be enhanced and supported by those three primary stakeholders. Based on this conclusion, several practical and theoretical recommendations are provided. From the practical standpoint, it is recommended that school principals should change their attitude towards student teachers and should treat them as potential change agents in their schools and not as guests. This effort can be accomplished by conducting regular meetings between university faculty members, cooperating teachers, school principals, area directors, and student teachers to discuss issues expressed by all stakeholders participating in the teacher education program. The results of these meetings may be published in an annual booklet that can be used as a guideline for all stakeholders of the 'dos and don'ts'. From the theoretical standpoint, similar studies should be conducted to determine the effectiveness of the role of the three primary stakeholders participating in the teacher education programs in Jordan. Moreover, qualitative studies should be done to get a complete picture of the effectiveness of the teacher education program. Finally, Jordanian universities should conduct studies that compare the effectiveness of their teacher education programs with leading international programs to gain better access to their best practices.

Finally, it is hoped that this research may provide valuable insights for decision-makers in Jordanian universities about the present situation of their teacher education programs which might lead to its continuous improvement and development. Furthermore, the international education society may benefit from the Jordanian experience and may make decisions regarding future cooperations.
References


