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Research paper

# Multiple facets of supervision: Cooperative teachers' views of supervision in early childhood teacher education practicums

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## HIGHLIGHTS

- Supervision provided by cooperative teachers plays a crucial role in practicums.
- Teacher education programs draw on different assumptions about practicums.
- Finnish cooperative teachers represent different professional generations.
- Six frames were identified through which cooperative teachers approach supervision.
- Frames clarify the multifaceted meanings of supervision.

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## ABSTRACT

The study focused on cooperative teachers' views on supervision in Finnish early childhood teacher education practicums. A total of 111 cooperative teachers responded to surveys and 18 teachers participated in pair or group discussions. The findings revealed that Finnish cooperative teachers represent different professional generations and are differently trained for supervising student teachers. The study promotes understanding the multiple facets of supervision by identifying six frames through which cooperative teachers interpreted their supervisory tasks. The cooperative teachers both criticized the teacher education programs and showed a commitment to facilitate student teachers' professional growth.

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## 1. Introduction

Previous research highlights practicum as an important part of teacher education, crucial for student teachers' evolving professional identities and their commitment to the teaching profession (La Paro et al., 2018; Mena et al., 2017). Student teachers appreciate opportunities to practice their competences in real-life situations and under the supervision of more experienced teachers (Clarke et al., 2014; Vartuli et al., 2016). Researchers have used various terms to refer to teachers who supervise teacher students in practicum settings; such terms include supervising teachers, mentors, and cooperative teachers (Matengu et al., 2020). In this study, the term cooperative teacher refers to teachers who both work as teachers in the classrooms and are assigned the task of supervising teacher students in the practicums.

The expectations regarding cooperative teachers are twofold: to serve as competent teachers in their classrooms and as facilitators of student teachers' professional growth. Cooperative teachers' tasks have been found to be confusing; sometimes, teachers tend to undervalue their function in teacher education and prioritize their pupils' learning (Clarke et al., 2014; Trout, 2012; White & Forgasz, 2017). Cooperative teachers reportedly experience being isolated from teacher education programs and take their actions as supervisors for granted (Kupila et al., 2017; Matengu et al., 2020; Quinones et al., 2020). Some studies have problematized the knowledge base on which cooperative teachers supervise student teachers (Kupila et al., 2017; Calamlam & Mokshein, 2019; Uusimäki, 2013; Vartuli et al., 2016; White & Forgasz, 2017).

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Ambrosetti (2014) notes that being a qualified teacher does not guarantee that one is a good supervisor and teacher educator.

Although student teachers' experiences of practicum have been widely explored, cooperative teachers' views have been less investigated (Calamlam & Mokshein, 2019; Clarke et al., 2014; Collins & Ting, 2018; Matengu et al., 2020). Andreasen et al. (2019) point out this lack of empirical knowledge about cooperative teachers' views, as well as the insufficient theoretical elaboration of their teacher educator functions. There is a trend to approach supervision either as a matter of individual supervisors' experiences or in terms of relationships between cooperative teachers and student teachers, whereas the variation in teacher education programs and societal contexts has received less attention (La Paro et al., 2018; Quinones et al., 2020). Therefore, studies on developing holistic theoretical understandings of how practicums and supervision are shaped through complex interconnections between individuals and teacher education systems are needed (Andreasen et al., 2019; Collins & Ting, 2017; Flores, 2016; La Paro et al., 2018).

The aforementioned challenges are highly topical in early childhood teacher education (ECTE).[1] Given the growing recognition of the importance of early childhood education (ECE)[2] for future societies, the demands for the professionalism of early childhood teachers (EC teachers)[3] have been highlighted in the past few years (Boyd, 2013; Brown et al., 2020; Harwood & Tukonic, 2016). However, EC teachers represent a group whose professional status, working conditions, and commitment to the profession appear lower than those of other teachers in many countries (Boyd, 2013; Cumming et al., 2015). ECTE programs are challenged to critically reconsider how to improve supervision in practicums to enhance student teachers' commitment to the profession and promote their preparedness for changing work life (Brown et al., 2020; Kupila et al., 2017; Foong et al., 2018; La Paro et al., 2018).

This study contributes to international research on ECTE by addressing cooperative teachers' views of supervision in practicums within a systemic approach. The study is part of a larger developmental project focusing on practicums and supervision in Finnish ECTE. The following research question guides the study: How do cooperative teachers view supervision in practicums within early childhood teacher education?

## 2. Theoretical framework

The study draws theoretically on a systemic approach within which practicum supervision is viewed as part of a complex learning system in teacher education (Collins & Ting, 2017; Zeichner et al., 2015). The relationships between student teachers (from this point onward: students) and cooperative teachers are at the core of the systemic approach (La Paro et al., 2018). Trout (2012), among others, calls for the application and enactment of care pedagogy in supervising students in practicum—that is, building and maintaining trusting and caring relationships with students. Although the relationships between students and cooperative teachers form a critical part of a successful practicum, a wide range of other interconnected elements—such as the teacher education program, the practicum setting, the academic community, and the wider societal and cultural context—appear significant (Collins & Ting, 2017; La Paro et al., 2018). Starting from the systemic viewpoint, we approach supervision as a phenomenon that is shaped in relationships between cooperative teachers, students, and the teacher education system. On the one hand, we assume that individual EC teachers' life histories influence how they view practicum supervision. On the other hand, our starting point is that the teacher education system and the societal context provide expectations, opportunities, and restrictions with regard to practicums and supervision.

The systemic approach challenges the reflection of the underpinning assumptions about practicum, supervision, and students' professional development in teacher education. Over the decades, there has been a tension-filled discussion about balancing theoretically and practically oriented studies in teacher education (Collins & Ting, 2017; Flores, 2016). Theoretically oriented (campus-based) studies are criticized for their lack of practical relevance, and practically oriented (field-based) studies are criticized for their limited opportunities for promoting students' theoretical learning and philosophical understanding (Collins & Ting, 2017; Vartuli et al., 2016). An increasing number of studies problematize the theory–practice dichotomy and call for linkages between the two in teacher education (Collins & Ting, 2017; Flores, 2016; Gravett & Ramsaroop, 2015; Zeichner et al., 2015).

Various teacher education models can be located on a continuum between an apprenticeship model and an integrated model (Table 1). Collins and Ting (2017) state that within the *apprenticeship model*—the most familiar application of practicum in teacher education—the basic intention of practicum is to add context to theoretical courses conducted at the university campus. The model draws on a division between educational theory and practice and assumes "a separation of the learner from what is learned and who is learning along with them" (Collins & Ting, 2017, p. 6). Thus, an individual student, rather than a group of students or a learning community, is the starting point of this model. The rationale of the model is that the practicum offers a student an opportunity to observe teaching practice, and role modeling is one of the cooperative teachers' key functions in practicums (Clarke et al., 2014; White & Forgasz, 2017). The relationships between students and cooperative teachers are teacher-directed and hierarchical, and the underlying assumption is that cooperative teachers transfer professional knowledge to students (Andreasen et al., 2019; Collins & Ting, 2017). Within this model, cooperative teachers' actions and competences are not problematized: Working experience is viewed as a sufficient basis for supervision (Calamlam & Mokshein, 2019; Clarke et al., 2014).

However, there has been increasing criticism toward the apprenticeship model (Calamlam & Mokshein, 2019; Clarke et al., 2014; Collins & Ting, 2017; White & Forgasz, 2017; Zeichner et al., 2015). Alternative models in which the juxtaposition of theory and practice is rejected and attempts are made to bridge campus-based and field-based studies, have been suggested (Chan, 2019; Gravett & Ramsaroop, 2015; White & Forgasz, 2017). Here, we call these alternatives *integrated models*, although various terms have been used to refer to alternative models—for instance, school–university partnership (White & Forgasz, 2017), the third space (Chan, 2019; Zeichner et al., 2015), and complex learning system (Collins & Ting, 2017).

Integrated models take a critical stance toward the theory–practice dichotomy and the separateness of campus-based and practice-based studies (Collins & Ting, 2017). Flores (2016), among others, calls for the promotion of the practicum as a space of transformation rather than as a process of application of theory. She states that this requires the redefinition of the relationships between universities and practicum settings with a growing emphasis on supportive partnerships. A shift from apprenticeship toward integrated models also means moving beyond an individualistic approach to students' learning; the idea of shared learning within a learning community is highlighted, which also changes the assumptions about the relationships between students and

[1] The abbreviation ECTE refers to early childhood teacher education.
[2] The abbreviation ECE refers to early childhood education.
[3] The abbreviation an EC teacher refers to an early childhood teacher.

**Table 1**
Underlying assumptions of practicum and supervision in a continuum between apprenticeship and integrated ECTE models.

| Apprenticeship model | Integrated model |
|---|---|
| Separateness of campus-based and practice-based studies | Campus-based and practice-based studies form together a learning environment for a student teacher |
| Theory-practice dichotomy; student teachers "translate" the theory into practice in practicum | Theory-practice connection in the core of all studies |
| Focus on individual learning | Focus on shared learning and collaboration within a learning community |
| Teacher-directed relationship between a cooperative teacher and a student | Reciprocal, dynamic relationship between a student and a cooperative teacher, depending on a situation |
| Role modeling crucial in cooperative teachers' actions; students learn by observing and imitating cooperative teacher's actions | Dialogue, co-reflection, and co-examining crucial for cooperative teachers' actions and student teachers' learning |
| Supervision is intuitive | Supervision requires conscious and purposeful actions |
| Supervision requires expertise and working experience in early childhood education | Supervision requires expertise both in early childhood education and in supervision |

cooperative teachers (Collins & Ting, 2017). Trout (2012) highlights that the relationships between students and teachers are moral in character: "designing and managing the classrooms so that all learners feel safe, connected, and educationally challenged, requires constant attention, truly open dialogue, and a moral impetus to act" (p. 7). Whereas the apprenticeship model contains a teacher-directed, top-down approach, the integrated models view the relationship between students and cooperative teachers as dynamic, reciprocal, and situationally constructed (Collins & Ting, 2017; Quinones et al., 2020). The cooperative teachers' tasks in supervision extend beyond role modeling into creating beneficial conditions for dialogue, co-examining, and co-reflection (Foong et al., 2018; Quinones et al., 2020). Increasingly, cooperative teachers are understood not only as practitioners but also as teacher educators who need particular supervision training (Ambrosetti, 2014; Calamlam & Mokshein, 2019; Kupila et al., 2017; Uusimäki, 2013; Vartuli et al., 2016; White & Forgasz, 2017).

## 3. The study

### 3.1. Finnish ECE and ECTE as the context of the study

The Finnish educational system and teacher education have received much attention due to the high results in international student assessments. The Finnish system is regarded as a "success story" that other countries can learn from (Gravett & Ramsaroop, 2015; Morgan, 2014). In these discussions, the focus is mostly on basic education in comprehensive schools (7–16-years-old pupils), while the views of ECE have been largely ignored. However, the teacher education programs and conditions for teachers' work are not similar for EC teachers and teachers in comprehensive schools in Finland. For instance, practicum placements are not governed by the universities in ECTE, unlike in many other Finnish teacher education programs (cf., Gravett & Ramsaroop, 2015).

In Finland, children attend basic education in comprehensive schools the year they turn 7 years old. Before that, there is a pre-primary school phase that lasts one year and is compulsory for children. All children aged 0–6 years have a subjective right to ECE services which are provided in the form of center-based, family-based, or open services; the center-based services are the most common form of ECE provision. ECE and pre-primary education are provided both by municipalities and private foundations or enterprises. Finnish municipalities have a legislative responsibility to monitor and control private ECE services and to ensure that the scope and forms of ECE provision meet the needs of their population (Act on Early Childhood Education and Care, 540/2018). Basic education in comprehensive school, pre-primary school education, and ECE have separate national core curricula that provide binding guidelines for both public and private services. EC teachers have qualifications to work in ECE services and pre-primary schools, but not in basic education.

The roots of Finnish ECE and ECTE go back to the late 1800s, when the first kindergartens and courses for kindergarten teachers were established in Finland. The need for ECE services increased in the 1960s and 1970s, which led to the establishment of kindergarten teacher colleges throughout the country (Kangas & Harju-Luukkainen, 2021). During the 1980s, ECTE was extended from two-year to three-year study programs. In 1995, ECTE moved to universities and since then, it has been developed in connection with other teacher education programs. However, the requirements for qualifications are different for teachers serving in basic education and ECE settings: Class and subject teachers must have a master's degree, whereas EC students receive teacher qualifications after obtaining a bachelor's degree.

In the past years in Finland, both ECE services and ECTE have undergone major changes (Kangas & Harju-Luukkainen, 2021), including legislative changes that emphasize the pedagogical responsibilities of EC teachers on a multi-professional team. Consequently, the number of EC teachers in the field is growing, and the lack of qualified EC teachers is an acute problem. This problem has resulted in an increasing number of students in Finnish ECTE programs. Therefore, the ECTE programs are compelled to critically reconsider their practices concerning practicums and supervision as a part of the curriculum reforms.

This study was conducted in collaboration between two ECTE programs in Finland. In these programs, the curricula consist of orientation studies, language and communication studies, basic and intermediate studies in educational sciences, compulsory professional studies in ECE, minor studies, and optional studies (altogether 180 credits[4]). Although the structure of the curricula is quite similar, there are some differences in how practicums are conducted as part of the programs.

At the University of Oulu, the study program contains three periods (altogether 20 credits) during which students work in practicum settings outside the university campus. There have been attempts to fuse the theoretically oriented studies and practicums at different stages of the studies. For instance, the first educational sciences courses include both working on the campus and familiarizing students with ECE settings. There is also an on-campus ECE setting that is utilized for both research and teaching purposes. This setting, however, does not enable a large number of students to work with children for long periods. Therefore, collaboration with municipal and private ECE settings is vital for organizing practicums for all students. New practices have been developed for the practicums, such as students working in pairs or in small groups,

[4] One credit requires approximately 25–30 h of work from the student.

extending practicum placements outside the university city, and utilizing online communication in supervision. Cooperative teachers are required to be qualified teachers, but there are no requirements for supervision training. However, the university is piloting supervision training for cooperative teachers.

At the Tampere University, the study program contains two periods (altogether 15 credits) during which students work in practicum settings. The basic studies on educational sciences include familiarization with the field of ECE. The Tampere University coordinates the Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) Partnership Network, which brings together different EC operators, including professionals from eight municipalities; some private ECE providers and settings; and their students, researchers, and teachers. At the beginning of the 2020s, the ECEC Partnership Network covered over 150 ECE centers as partners. These centers provide places for practicums, research projects, and theses. In this context, cooperative teachers are called "mentors," and they are required to be qualified teachers. The Tampere University has offered mentoring training for years and requires mentoring training for all who supervise EC teacher students. Moreover, new practices have been developed for the practicums, such as student teachers working in pairs or in small groups.

### 3.2. Research design

As previous research on supervision in Finnish ECTE is relatively scarce, the purpose of this study was to gain both breadth and depth in generating knowledge about cooperative teachers' views of supervision. The methodology of the study draws on a mixed-method approach in which quantitative and qualitative methods are intentionally combined (Shannon-Baker, 2016). The first set of data was generated through *a web-survey method* that is a prevailing type of collecting survey data today (Callegaro et al., 2015). The purpose of the survey was to map out cooperative teachers' views of supervision in regard to the following facets: 1) teachers' background; 2) motivation for serving as a cooperative teacher; 3) competences in supervision; 4) supervision training; and 5) factors promoting or challenging supervision. Eleven cooperative teachers participated in piloting the survey. The basic structure of the survey was found to have worked well, and the teachers participating in the pilot study found most of the items understandable. Based on their feedback, the formulation of some questions and the clarity of the language were further elaborated.

The final survey included 22 items, most of which were closed-ended questions; either multiple-choice questions or items with a 5-point Likert-scale (1 = totally disagree, 5 = totally agree; 1 = not important, 5 = very important; 1 = never, 5 = very frequently). There were also open-ended questions in which the participants were able to freely address issues that were meaningful to them in practicum supervision. For instance, there were questions concerning teachers' views on factors promoting and challenging supervision. As Singer and Couper (2017) note, open-ended questions may complement closed-ended questions and give respondents an opportunity to more broadly describe their views regarding the research topic. At the University of Oulu, links to the survey were delivered through e-mails to all teachers who had served as supervisors in recent years with the help of directors of ECE services. At Tampere University, links to the survey were sent to all mentors in the ECEC Partnership Network.

While the survey enabled us to create a broad picture of the cooperative teachers' backgrounds and views of supervision, we aimed to deepen the study by interviewing cooperative teachers in pairs or groups. Pair and group discussions offered a potential means for exploring cooperative teachers' individual and shared meaning-making concerning supervision (see Guggelberger et al., 2015). We did not have a predetermined list of questions; rather, there were the following broad themes to be discussed in the cooperative teachers' groups: receiving students to practicum; practices of supervision; me as a supervisor; and ending the practicum. We agreed to proceed flexibly and encourage the teachers to reflect on supervision related issues that they found meaningful.

**Table 2**
Participants in group discussions.

| Group discussions | Participants | University | Data |
|---|---|---|---|
| Group discussion 1 (GD1) | 2 cooperative teachers | Oulu | 25 pages |
| Group discussion 2 (GD2) | 2 cooperative teachers | Oulu | 31 pages |
| Group discussion 3 (GD3) | 3 cooperative teachers | Oulu | 48 pages |
| Group discussion 4 (GD4) | 4 cooperative teachers | Tampere | 20 pages |
| Group discussion 5 (GD5) | 4 cooperative teachers | Tampere | 20 pages |
| Group discussion 6 (GD6) | 3 cooperative teachers | Tampere | 30 pages |

### 3.3. Participants and data

The survey sample consisted of 111 cooperative teachers—47 from the University of Oulu and 64 from the Tampere University. The response rate was 35% regardless of the reminders sent to the potential respondents. Although the response rate was not high, the survey data provide interesting information about the variation in cooperative teachers' backgrounds and their views of supervision.

We organized six pair and group discussions for cooperative teachers to discuss their views of supervision. The group sizes varied from two to four teachers, and altogether, 18 teachers participated in the group discussions (Table 2). Among the participants, there were teachers who had long experiences serving as cooperative teachers and those who were recently recruited to the position. However, our interest was not only in the views of individual teachers but also in how the participants made together sense of supervision within the system of Finnish ECTE (also Guggelberger et al., 2015). The group discussions lasted from 51 to 84 min. The discussions were tape-recorded and transcribed. The transcribed material included 174 pages of text (Times New Roman, font size 12, double spaced).

### 3.4. Quantitative analysis

The quantitative analysis of the closed-ended questions was conducted using SPSS.[5] We first used descriptive statistics, mainly frequencies, to identify the background characteristics of the cooperative teachers, such as their ages, qualifications, and earlier experiences of supervision. As Wildemuth (2017) notes, employing descriptive statistics is the first step of a quantitative analysis that enables researchers to measure and summarize the central tendencies within the data. We then analyzed the connections between variables through cross-tabulation. The statistical significance of the connections between dependent and independent (e.g., age, qualifications, number of supervised students, and university) variables was tested using the chi-square ($\chi 2$) test as the data were mainly on a nominal or ordinal scale. The main purpose of the study was not to systematically compare participants from the two universities. As the traditions and practices with regard to offering supervision training for cooperative teachers differ between the two universities, some comparative analyses were made to investigate how such training is associated with cooperative teachers' views of supervision.

[5] Statistical Package for the Social Sciences.

### 3.5. Qualitative analysis

A frame analysis approach was used to analyze and interpret the qualitative data from the group discussions and open-ended survey questions. Frame analysis draws from Goffman's (1974) theorization of how meanings are constructed between individuals and their social and cultural environments (see Puroila, 2002). A basic assumption of frame analysis is that individuals employ different *frames* when attempting to understand what is occurring in social situations (Goffman, 1974).

We applied the ideas of frame analysis in searching for meanings that the cooperative teachers attached to supervision. While reading the qualitative data, we followed two kinds of hints. First, we looked at the kind of language and verbal expressions the teachers used when talking or writing about supervision. As Goffman (1974) argues, the frame that is employed provides a way of verbally describing the event. We also tried to capture the perspectives behind the verbal expressions—that is, the frame through which the cooperative teachers approached supervision and the related meanings. Based on the analysis, we identified six frames (Table 3). However, it is important to note that even short citations contained multiple frames, and the participants moved flexibly from one frame to another (Puroila, 2002), indicating the teachers' multilayered views of supervision.

## 4. Findings

In what follows, the findings from the quantitative analyses will be described first in subsections 4.1 and 4.2. Subsequently, the six frames identified in analyzing the group discussions and open-ended survey questions will be discussed in light of examples from the data.

### 4.1. Characteristics of cooperative teachers

The findings from the survey portray a big picture of cooperative teachers assigned to supervise EC students at the two universities. A total of 97% of the respondents were female which reflects the dominance of women EC teachers both in Finland and internationally (Harwood & Tukonic, 2016). The ages of the participants varied between 24 and 63 years, with the mean age being 45.1 years. The findings indicated variation in the number of students supervised by the participants in the last five years (Table 4).

The educational background of the participants varied, mirroring the changes in the Finnish ECTE in recent decades (Table 5). The biggest proportion of respondents (34.2%) had a degree from a three-year kindergarten teacher college, and 9.0% of respondents had a degree from a two-year kindergarten teacher college. This means that almost half of the cooperative teachers had completed their degree before 1995, when ECTE programs moved from kindergarten teacher colleges to universities in Finland.

### 4.2. Cooperative teachers' views of supervision

The participants were asked to choose one or more *motivations* for serving as a cooperative teacher (Table 6). Most often (86.5%), the respondents chose the option that supervising students brings different content to their EC teacher work. The second important reason was strengthening teachers' competences in ECE (76.6%). Slightly more than half of the teachers viewed maintaining contact with the university as a reason for serving as a cooperative teacher (52.3%). Interestingly, there were also some teachers who felt that they were obliged to supervise teacher students (8.1%).

The teachers' views of *supervision training* were explored through various questions. The teachers were first asked about the kind of supervision training they had undergone. The findings showed that there were statistically significant differences between the respondents from the two universities in regard to supervision training (Table 7). Cooperative teachers from the Tampere University were more likely to have passed supervision/mentoring training than cooperative teachers from the University of Oulu

**Table 4**
The number of students supervised by the survey participants in the last five years.

| Supervised students in last 5 years | F | % |
|---|---|---|
| 1–2 | 42 | 38.2 |
| 3–4 | 26 | 23.6 |
| 5–7 | 25 | 22.7 |
| 8–10 | 7 | 6.4 |
| more than 10 | 10 | 9.1 |
| **Total** | 110 | 100.0 |

**Table 3**
The frames and related meanings of supervision.

| Frames | Meanings attached to supervision |
|---|---|
| Professional development frame | *Memories and experiences of being supervised as a student teacher<br>*Previous experiences in supervision<br>*Training for supervision |
| Relational frame | *Establishing and maintaining relationships with students<br>*Students' different backgrounds and personalities<br>*Power and authority<br>*Reciprocity |
| Emotional frame | *Working with and providing support to students' emotions<br>*Coping with cooperative teacher's own emotions |
| Organizing frame | *Being informed by the university<br>*Informing the staff of the setting, children, parents<br>*Introducing the spaces of the setting and routines to the student<br>*Organizing conditions for supervision |
| Practitioner frame | *Working as a professional EC teacher<br>*Presenting the "realities" of the EC teacher's work to the student<br>*Serving as a role model for the student |
| Teacher education frame | *Separateness of university and practicum placement<br>*Theory-practice dichotomy<br>*Providing space for students to exercise, test ideas, and use their creativity<br>*Discussion and reflection with students<br>*Setting goals, giving feedback, evaluating<br>*Supporting student teachers' professional growth |

**Table 5**
The educational background of the survey participants.

| Degree | F | % |
|---|---|---|
| Master's degree | 24 | 21.6 |
| Bachelor's degree | 34 | 30.7 |
| Kindergarten teacher degree (3-year kindergarten teacher college) | 38 | 34.2 |
| Kindergarten teacher degree (2-year kindergarten teacher college) | 10 | 9.0 |
| Other | 5 | 4.5 |
| **Total** | **110** | **100.0** |

**Table 6**
Motivations for serving as a cooperative teacher.

| Motivations for serving as a cooperative teacher | f | % | N/% |
|---|---|---|---|
| Supervising students brings different content to my work as a teacher | 96 | 86.5 | 111/100 |
| Strengthening my competences in ECE | 85 | 76.6 | 111/100 |
| Maintaining my skills in supervision | 65 | 58.6 | 111/100 |
| Staying connected with the university | 58 | 52.3 | 111/100 |
| I am obliged to supervise students | 9 | 8.1 | 111/100 |

(Pearson chi-square 9.983, p = .002). Cooperative teachers from the University of Oulu responded more often that they had undergone no supervision training (Pearson chi-square 8.975, p = .003). These findings are understandable considering that the Tampere University has required cooperative teachers to participate in mentoring training and has offered mentoring courses for teachers for several years.

We further analyzed the teachers who had no supervision training. The findings showed connections between the number of supervised students within the past five years and supervision training (Pearson chi-square 6.217, p = .045). A total of 61.9% of teachers who had supervised one to two students had no supervision training, while only 19.0% of teachers who had supervised three to four students or more than four students had no supervision training. There was also an association between supervision training and cooperative teachers' qualifications (Pearson chi-square 9.481, p = .024). None of the teachers with a master's degree responded that they had received no supervision training. The proportion of respondents with no supervision training increased for teachers with a bachelor's degree (26.5%) and a three-year college-level kindergarten teacher degree (28.9%).

Through a multiple-choice question, the cooperative teachers were also asked what kind of supervision training they wanted to undergo in terms of the content of training (Table 8). The findings showed that the three most preferred contents were “evaluating students in practicum” (40.9%), “students’ (individual) learning goals” (36.9%), and “methods of supervision” (36.9%). Only a few teachers indicated that they wanted training in the pedagogy of ECE (1.8%) or in interaction skills (2.7%). There was also a proportion of teachers who expressed that they did not want further training (9.9%); however, the number was so small that no statistical significance was found between the different groups of respondents.

**Table 8**
Contents of training preferred by cooperative teachers.

| Contents of training | f | % | N/% |
|---|---|---|---|
| Evaluating students in practicum | 45 | 40.9 | 110/100 |
| Students' (individual) learning goals | 41 | 36.9 | 110/100 |
| Methods of supervision | 41 | 36.9 | 110/100 |
| Goals for the practicum (in curriculum) | 34 | 30.6 | 110/100 |
| Pedagogical reflection | 26 | 23.4 | 110/100 |
| ECTE program | 25 | 22.5 | 110/100 |
| Theoretical basis of supervision | 11 | 9.9 | 110/100 |
| Interaction skills | 3 | 2.7 | 110/100 |
| Pedagogy in ECE | 2 | 1.8 | 110/100 |
| Other contents | 6 | 5.4 | 110/100 |
| I do not want training | 11 | 9.9 | 110/100 |

For instance, the ages of the teachers and their impending retiring did not explain their unwillingness to undergo supervision training. Interestingly, the number of supervised students seemed to have a connection with the increasing willingness to get training in pedagogical reflection (Pearson chi-square 6.079, p = .048): 16.3% of those who had supervised one to two students indicated this choice, compared to 36.6% of the teachers who had supervised more than four students.

When asked about *factors utilized in supervision*, the findings revealed that the cooperative teachers rested more strongly on their work experience than on their theoretical knowledge and recent research when supervising students (Table 9). There was a statistically significant difference between the teachers from the two universities in regard to one factor: “utilizing competences in supervision methods.” Compared to 92.6% of the teachers from the Tampere University, only 67.7% of the teachers from the University of Oulu indicated that they utilized these competences “much” or

**Table 7**
Training for supervising passed by cooperative teachers.

| Training for supervising | University of Oulu f (%) | Tampere University f (%) |
|---|---|---|
| Supervision training/mentoring training for cooperative teachers organized by the university | 26 (55.3) | 53 (82.8) |
| Supervision training organized by other organizations | 1 (2.1) | 2 (3.1) |
| Teachers' pedagogical studies[a] | 17 (36.2) | 13 (20.3) |
| Other training supporting competences for supervision | 5 (10.6) | 7 (10.9) |
| I have no training for supervision | 15 (31.9) | 6 (9.4) |

[a] 60 ECTS studies required for serving as a teacher in primary schools and many other educational institutions. However, the bachelor's degree of EC teachers does not cover these studies.

**Table 9**
Factors utilized in supervision.

| How much do you utilize different factors in supervision? | Never f (%) | No opinion f (%) | Very frequently f (%) | Total N (%) |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Work experience as an EC teacher | 0 | 0 | 111 (100) | 111 (100) |
| Earlier experience in supervision | 3 (2,7) | 4 (3,6) | 104 (93,7) | 111 (100) |
| Theoretical basis of ECE | 7 (3,6) | 8 (7,2) | 98 (89,2) | 110 (100) |
| Recent research | 21 (18,9) | 22 (19,8) | 68 (61,3) | 111 (100) |
| Theoretical knowledge on supervision | 21 (18,9) | 24 (21,6) | 66 (59,5) | 111 (100) |
| Competences in supervision methods | 14 (12,7) | 25 (22,7) | 71 (64,6) | 110 (100) |

"very much" (Pearson chi-square 9.760, p = .021).

There was also a statistically significant difference between the teachers from the two universities in regard to how they responded to receiving support *in supervision* (Table 10). The cooperative teachers from the University of Oulu indicated that they received more support from the university teachers than from other cooperative teachers, whereas the teachers from the Tampere University indicated opposite.

The differences in the responses to receiving support can be explained by the fact that most of the cooperative teachers from the Tampere University had passed a mentoring training course, which had offered them collaborative network opportunities with other cooperative teachers. The lack of such a supportive network in the University of Oulu might have driven the cooperative teachers to view support from university teachers as more meaningful.

### 4.3. Supervision within the frame of professional development

The study showed that cooperative teachers framed supervision within their professional development. The teachers addressed the phases of their careers and earlier experiences of supervision as meaningful for supervision. Consistent with previous studies, teachers who were at the beginning of their careers or who had little earlier experience of supervision expressed uncertainty as supervisors, while the more experienced teachers with earlier experiences of supervision were more comfortable with supervision (Kupila et al., 2017).

T1: Especially as I have graduated just recently, I wonder if they [the students] take me seriously.

T2: Yeah. I have pondered if the student will be younger or older than me. Though I have some more years as a teacher, I don't think of myself as an old stager to inform others about these matters. Do I really have something to give? (GD2).

T1: I have quite a long career behind me, and I'd like to have some new winds. I have supervised many students throughout my career, but not student teachers. [–] I feel this [supervising student teachers] is an opportunity. (GD4).

One strategy for orienting toward supervision was to consider teachers' own practicum experiences. As the excerpts below illustrate, there were both positive and not-so-positive experiences of being supervised. These experiences significantly influenced teachers' own practices of supervision.

How do I supervise? I tried to remember my own studies and how I was supervised. [–] I remember when I was a student, we talked about different cooperative teachers. Some required doing different tasks, while others did not allow the students to do anything. (GD2).

Some kind of imprint has remained from all practicums. Very safe and positive from some, and others have probably supported creating my professional identity even though the chemistries [with the cooperative teachers] haven't been in sync. (GD4).

Some teachers' reflections showed that they considered themselves unprepared for supervision. This raises the question of how universities recruit cooperative teachers and support them regarding supervision. In accordance with the findings from the survey, the teachers discussed having different opportunities to receive supervision training. Some teachers had completed or were beginning supervision courses, while others discussed the kind of training that would support their professional development as cooperative teachers.

Training for supervision should be obligatory. All the time, one hears stories about divergent ways of supervising. (Survey1).

I feel this kind of [supervision] training is vital, as I have worked a while since my graduation, and especially, as I have not had students. One needs reinforcement on how to supervise so that students will benefit from their studies. (GD6).

I no longer know what's included in the ECTE curriculum. [–] I think it's crucial for supervising teachers to know which basic matters have been taught and which will come later to students who enter the practicum. (GD3).

Supervision training emerged as a potential step toward clarifying cooperative teachers' tasks and supporting newly recruited teachers in their supervision duties. Besides acquiring practical tools for supervision, the teachers expected supervision training to provide them with basic knowledge about the ECTE programs. As the findings of the survey reveal, almost half of the respondents had completed their degrees before ECTE moved from kindergarten teacher colleges to universities in Finland. Therefore, it is understandable that some cooperative teachers indicated that they had no personal relationships with the universities. These findings can refer to the separateness between the teacher education programs and the practicum settings, which is one characteristic of an apprenticeship model in teacher education (Collins & Ting, 2017).

### 4.4. Supervision within a relational frame

The cooperative teachers identified building and maintaining relationships with students as a basis for supervision. This has also been addressed as the core of supervision in previous research (La Paro et al., 2018; Trout, 2012). The teachers of this study considered both parties—the students and themselves—that influence the relationship and expressed that supervision should vary according

**Table 10**
Receiving support for supervision.

| Receiving support | University of Oulu f (%) | Tampere University f (%) | Pearson Chi-Square | p = |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| I receive support from other cooperative teachers | 8 (17) | 35 (55.6) | 16.787 | .000 |
| I receive support from the teachers of the university | 32 (68,1) | 17 (27.0) | 18.408 | .000 |

to students' needs. The teachers had different experiences with the students they had encountered during their careers: There were stories about students who slid into the working community immediately and stories about self-assured students who thought they could manage everything and rejected the cooperative teacher's advice.

T1: It's really difficult if the teacher's temperament differs very much from the students' temperament. Or the students are silent, and one can't get them to speak. I'm afraid if they get everything and just nod. Some may have major problems with listening and internalizing the knowledge. I'm sometimes afraid of this.

T2: That's true.

T3: … but there are those students who enter coats open: "I'm already competent even though I just began my first year." (GD3).

Such students perceive that there is nothing new to learn during the practicum because they are already competent in all areas. These students often have difficulties taking on the student role, and they take on the role of an expert on the team. (Survey2).

Power and authority were embedded in the teachers' descriptions of their relationships with the students, although they did not explicitly mention these concepts. Some teachers discussed situations in which they struggled with their expertise and authority over students. These struggles were most evident with inexperienced cooperative teachers or when the teachers worked with strong, self-assured students who dared to challenge the teachers' practices. The excerpts below illustrate the varied teachers' views.

It's a hard situation for them [students] to ask for advice and feedback from me, as I am younger than them. There have been some … I have had to ask for some respect. You don't need to like me, but if you are here in the practicum and if I say something, it stands. (GD5).

T1: I like if they [students] challenge and request our pedagogical reasons. It's great; one remains fresh and somehow current with the times.

T2: I have been talking with colleagues, and some of them experience demanding students who problematize and ask a lot of questions. It can be hard or scary. I don't feel this way, but I know that we relate differently to students' challenging questions. (GD1).

In the first excerpt above, the teacher articulates the top-down relationship in which the teacher has the decision-making authority. The second excerpt shows that there are also teachers who welcome challenging questions and view joint discussions with the students as an opportunity to reflect on their own practices. The idea that the cooperative teachers have something to learn from the students mirrors supervision as a reciprocal relationship. As noted in previous studies, a practicum can become like a shared journey if the relationships between the supervisors and students are caring and reciprocal (Ambrosetti, 2014; Foong et al., 2018). Some teachers participating in this study acknowledged that their relationships with students sometimes went beyond a professional one and became like a friendship. In these cases, the teachers experienced wistfulness by the end of the practicum: They had lost a team member with whom they had had the pleasure of working.

### 4.5. Supervision within an emotional frame

The findings revealed that working with emotions was tightly intertwined with cooperative teachers' views of supervision. The teachers discussed situations in which students were strained and the teachers attempted to relieve students' feelings and support their efforts to cope with the emotional pressure. The teachers showed an empathetic position toward students' emotions, which previous research raises as crucial for caring relationships in supervision (Quinones et al., 2020; Trout, 2012). The following excerpt exemplifies how a teacher empathizes with students' various emotions, including the stress and joy of success.

I have encountered situations in which students felt very stressed to be in front [of children]. Of course, I tried to help them and to make sure I wasn't stressed too. But when they succeeded, I felt myself taking pride in how well the students managed, knowing the pressure is behind. This pride is what I have had. Such a motherly pride. I have had more of such positive feelings than negative ones. (GD2).

The teachers also addressed challenges in working with students' emotions. The excerpt below portrays a situation in which a student had problems that caused emotional reservation and influenced the student's accomplishment of the practicum. According to the teachers' interpretations, a lack of open communication made it difficult for the teachers to provide the emotional support that the students needed.

T1: I have met students who weren't able to assess themselves or say anything about any matter. [−] It's really challenging and difficult if one is not open to discussing one's feelings and thoughts.

T2: Yeah, open communication is really important. I remember a student who was extremely reserved and timid and almost flopped the requirements for the practicum. In the final discussion, the student opened up and shared their reasons, and there were huge [problems]. If we'd been able to openly talk about these reasons, I'd have understood differently. (GD4).

The teachers also discussed a variety of emotions they experienced as supervisors. As visible in the first extract of this section, some teachers indicated mostly positive emotions, such as joy about students' progress. The teachers also had to manage their own negative emotions toward the students, such as irritation and frustration.

T1: […] if one comes showing off themselves, or if their attitudes are not quite true …

T2: You, lass, don't advise me.

T3: Or if one doesn't take feedback. One completes an assignment and it's assessed and if nothing changes, I know that I'll lose my temper. First inside, I feel frustration, and then it grows if nothing changes. I know that one needs to be mindful of one's own emotional storm as it comes up. It's challenging if we seem to be from different planets. (GD4).

The matters that annoyed the teachers most in regard to the students were their excessive self-assurance, lack of motivation, nonchalant attitude toward assignments, and inability to learn from feedback.

### 4.6. Supervision within an organizing frame

The cooperative teachers also interpreted supervision within an organizing frame, highlighting teachers' responsibilities for practical arrangements in practicums. The teachers addressed the importance of information exchange and adapting the practicum to the practices of the setting. Informing and being informed were regarded as necessary for creating beneficial conditions for the practicum. As the excerpts below exemplify, some teachers indicated that they were inadequately informed by the university about practicums. The teachers expected clear instructions for supervision and clarification of the goals for students. Further, the teachers highlighted their own role in informing their colleagues, children, and parents about students entering the community.

The information from the university has been sparse; for instance, a student suddenly appeared. You'll just get a student teacher. Ahaa! Who, why, when, where? (GD2).

Clear instructions about our tasks and what the student is intended to do here and how are needed, so that we know what is expected. (GD4).

T1: We inform the whole team that we'll get a student, as well as the whole center.

T2: And families.

T1: The families as well. We have a practice of informing the head of the center that students will be placed in certain groups, and this is also mentioned in the weekly newsletter. (GD1).

Especially at the beginning of the practicum, the cooperative teachers' tasks entailed introducing the spaces, curricula, routines, and rules of the setting to the students. Supervision also required practical organization from the cooperative teachers: They had to organize their own schedules and balance supervision and other responsibilities (see Trout, 2012; Uusimäki, 2013).

Such basic issues, including the students learning the ropes and how our group works, the daily schedules, and other systems. (GD1).

You have your own work, and you need to plan your schedule so that you can take care of your work and give enough time to the student. It requires organization and planning to get everything running. (GD6).

The daily life is hectic; thus, taking time is challenging. (Survey2).

There were teachers who pondered how time-consuming some tasks were for the cooperative teachers, such as completing forms and documents required by the universities. Matters regarding the organizing frame, such as the lack of time, changing situations in the setting, and the absence of staff, were among the supervision challenges that were mentioned most often in the survey data. These notions are in line with previous studies addressing structures and resources as aspects that limit opportunities to build trusting and caring relationships between students and cooperative teachers (Trout, 2012; Uusimäki, 2013).

### 4.7. Supervision within a practitioner frame

As noted earlier, the survey data indicated that the teachers' work experience formed a crucial basis for supervising students. Similarly, a great deal of teachers' discussions concerned their daily work as EC teachers. Within this frame, the meaning of supervision was to teach the students what it is to work as a professional EC teacher and provide them with ideas on how to complete different tasks that are included in the work. In line with previous studies, the teachers addressed the complexity of the practitioners' tasks, such as curriculum work, planning, evaluation, and working with children and parents (Boyd, 2013). They also drew attention to the contradiction between teachers' low salaries and the significance of EC teachers' profession.

I always require that students read and understand the meaning of the curriculum in our work, as well as children's individual plans and our team's plans. They are the tools guiding our work. [−] And what I always stress is encountering the families and children. (GD1).

The student should understand what, other than teaching [children], is included in the work. One should avoid the situation of waiting until the students have graduated before they recognize the amount of paper-work, pedagogical evaluation, the number of children with special needs, etc. (Survey2).

T1: The salaries are appalling when compared against the requirements of the work and the profitability to the society; we are raising future decision-makers. [−] (GD3).

In the past few years, EC teachers' role in leading the pedagogical work within a multi-professional team has been highlighted in Finland, and this was also visible in the data. The cooperative teachers addressed leading the team as a central part of their work. Some teachers extended the idea of supervision from a student−supervisor relationship toward a collegial one. In these cases, the students were viewed as team members. The teachers also discussed the kind of picture they should paint for the students on the realism of ECE work, which mirrors the idea of supervision as role modeling (Foong et al., 2018; Quinones et al., 2020; Vartuli et al., 2016).

Open communication with the whole team is important because this is team work. It's not only an issue between the student and the supervisor, but it concerns the whole team. (GD1).

We have some problems within our team. How can I serve as a model of leading a team when we are not doing well in this sense? One cannot get the best possible picture from here. (GD2).

I remember when I was [a student] in the practicum. The first practicum was great, and that cooperative teacher became my role model. [−] I must do my work so well that they see how the work should be done. (GD5).

Some teachers wanted to avoid presenting their work in an overly positive light, while others pondered some troublesome impressions that the students may get from their setting. These reflections resonate with previous studies addressing the gap between ECTE and working conditions as one potential reason for EC teachers' high turnover (Cumming et al., 2015).

### 4.8. Supervision within the teacher educational frame

The relationship between cooperative teachers and the ECTE programs emerged as contradictory. Consistent with previous studies, the teachers did not view themselves as insiders of the ECTE programs (Gravett & Ramsaroop, 2015; Quinones et al., 2020). Rather, they drew a clear distinction between universities and ECE settings and addressed the gap between what students are taught at the universities and what is happening in the ECE settings. As the excerpts below illustrate, the teachers maintained the theory−practice dichotomy and the separateness of the campus-based and practice-based studies, which is typical of an apprenticeship model of teacher education (Calamlam & Mokshein, 2019; Collins & Ting, 2017). Some teachers indicated that the universities should serve as forerunners of the ECE field, while others wondered why old-fashioned pedagogical ideas were being embedded in students' assignments. There was criticism toward the research-emphasizing orientation, which the teachers viewed as characteristic of the ECTE programs. In particular, the survey data contained sharp criticism against the universities.

Sometimes I feel that the students learn so much theoretical knowledge that the practice is strange to them—even though the practice is a big part of the work. Almost all students have challenges maintaining group control, how to use one's voice, authority, etc. (Survey1).

I wish the university would wake up to the realities. What is it really like to work in early childhood education today? (Survey2).

T1: I'm disappointed with the training [ECTE program] today. I call for some respect for the field; it sounds as if nothing other than research is valued. [−]

T2: How do we benefit from academic research? No research realizes benefits other than through practice. (GD3).

Even though the teachers did not identify themselves as part of the ECTE programs, their discussions implicitly reflected their moral commitment to serve as students' supervisors. They shared how they advised, guided, and facilitated students' learning opportunities by providing space for the students to exercise and test their ideas.

There are such stories of growth. During half of the practicum, the students were so shy and needed to be pushed forward, but eventually they found such courage in the last meters. Luckily, we have these [students]! (GD6)

T1: […] tools for supervising the students to support their

thinking toward a deeper pedagogy, and to verbalize why they act in certain ways. […]

T2: I'd like to challenge the student to think and, through one's own thinking, to be able to develop in the work. (GD4).

As illustrated in the excerpts above, the cooperative teachers viewed themselves as supporters of students' professional growth, which previous studies point out as the main function of supervision (Ambrosetti, 2014; Kupila et al., 2017; Mena et al., 2017). The support for students' professional growth covered a variety of actions in the teachers' discussions: extending students' capacities and courage in regard to ECE work, challenging their reflection skills, supporting them emotionally, and rejoicing with them about their progress.

## 5. Discussion

This study took a systemic approach to exploring cooperative teachers' views of supervision in ECTE practicums. Rather than focusing on individual cooperative teachers or their supervising practices, the cooperative teachers' views of supervision were investigated as part of a complex learning system in ECTE. The findings from this study offer novel insights into cooperative teachers' views of supervision in Finnish ECTE. The study portrays a complex picture of how cooperative teachers' qualifications and professional backgrounds, relationships with students, working conditions in practicum settings, and collaboration with the ECTE programs are intertwined with teachers' views of supervision. The study contributes to teacher education research not only by generating empirical knowledge about Finnish cooperative teachers' views of supervision but also by drawing attention to issues that might have relevance beyond the Finnish ECTE context.

First, **the study challenges a reconsideration of how belonging to different professional generations influences cooperative teachers' views of supervision.** Moving from apprenticeship toward an integrated model of ECTE poses challenges for cooperative teachers to extend their roles beyond intuitive role modeling into conscious dialogue, co-examining, and co-reflection with their students (Foong et al., 2018; Quinones et al., 2020). The extended tasks require cooperative teachers to be able to discuss the contents of the ECTE program and the current trends in ECE research and practice with their students. The present study shows that teachers with various educational backgrounds serve as cooperative teachers in Finnish ECTE: Some cooperative teachers have passed a two-year college-level training that ended as a study program in the 1980s, whereas others completed a university bachelor's or a master's degree in the 2000s. The cooperative teachers thus represent different professional generations. As previous research shows, different professional generations reflect the emphases and educational backgrounds of their own eras, with different professional thinking and attitudes toward ECE work (Karila & Kupila, 2010). This study addresses the differences in cooperative teachers' professional generations as an important, although largely ignored, matter in ECTE.

In-service training is one crucial means of maintaining teachers' competences in a rapidly changing world. However, the study showed that there is variation among Finnish cooperative teachers regarding how much in-service training they have received on supervision. Hence, the cooperative teachers' own experiences of supervision proved to be essential for their understanding and enactment of their supervisory tasks. The findings showed that the teachers had both positive and negative experiences of either being supervised as students or serving as supervisors. This variation is meaningful for the teachers' experienced competences and how they viewed their supervisory roles. Thus, our findings challenge cooperative teachers to reflect on their previous experiences of supervision in the early phases of their supervision careers. Moreover, the study suggests that cooperative teachers representing different professional generations might need different support from the ECTE programs with regard to their supervisory tasks.

Second, **the findings of this study address the meaning of supervision training.** Supervision training seemed to contribute to cooperative teachers' professional development, networking, and their confidence in serving as supervisors. The study thus confirms the findings from previous research that argue for the significance of high-quality supervision training for the development of cooperative teachers as supervisors and the quality of supervision (Ambrosetti & Dekkers, 2010; Balduzzi & Lazzarri, 2015; Ingleby, 2014; Kupila et al., 2017). As trained and skilled cooperative teachers play an important role in promoting EC teacher students' professional growth, we suggest that supervision training includes the potential to increase the quality of ECTE programs (see Uusimäki, 2013).

Third, **the study provides insights into various meanings that cooperative teachers explicitly or implicitly attach to supervision.** Previous research has addressed the complexity and lack of clarity in cooperative teachers' supervisory roles (Ambrosetti, 2014; Calamlam & Mokshein, 2019). The current study identified six frames through which the participating cooperative teachers interpreted supervision; the study thus clarifies the multilayered meanings of supervision. We suggest that the six identified frames can be used to compose a framework that promotes understanding the multiple facets of supervision. The framework can be utilized in future research, as well as when reflecting on supervision in ECTE programs and in supervision training. The framework, for instance, challenges the exploration of how the different frames and related meanings appear in different supervision situations. Are there some dominating, unrecognized, or undervalued frames when cooperative teachers interpret supervision situations? What does it mean if the teacher education frame remains implicit in teachers' interpretations? Recognizing the various frames and meanings of supervision may help cooperative teachers and ECTE programs to discuss the prerequisites and challenges of supervision. As Ambrosetti (2014) states, a growing consciousness of the complexities of supervision can encourage cooperative teachers to alter and develop their practices. Moreover, the growing awareness of the multilayered meanings of supervision may help ECTE programs to support cooperative teachers in supervisory tasks.

Fourth, **the study challenges further developing collaboration between the ECTE programs and the ECE field.** Even though an increasing number of studies call for moving beyond the apprenticeship model toward a stronger partnership between the universities and the practicum settings, the cooperative teachers participating in this study considered themselves distant from the universities (cf. Collins & Ting, 2017; Gravett & Ramsaroop, 2015). The separateness from the university appeared as a criticism against the ECTE programs and assignments given to students. There were voices highlighting the overemphasis on theoretical courses within ECTE, indicating the theory-practice-dichotomy in cooperative teachers' views (also Collins & Ting, 2017; Flores, 2016; Gravett & Ramsaroop, 2015; Zeichner et al., 2015). There were also teachers who were unaware of the goals of the practicum and their own tasks as supervisors. The basis of supervision appeared intuitive and unproblematized for the cooperative teachers. Even though the universities had developed practices to advance the integrated models of teacher education, the cooperative teachers did not identify themselves as insiders of ECTE programs. These notions pose a challenge for ECTE to reconsider how to strengthen the integration of ECTE programs and practicum settings and further develop partnerships between the universities and the ECE field.

## 6. Conclusion

The study explored cooperative teachers' views of practicum supervision in the context of Finnish ECTE. Taking a systemic approach, we investigated supervision as part of the teacher education system rather than as the cooperative teachers' individual enterprises. The mixed-method approach and the research material consisting of surveys and group discussions enabled us to gain insights into teachers' views of supervision from different perspectives. The different data sets complemented each other, and the group discussions extended the findings of the survey. While the survey painted a big picture of the variety in cooperative teachers' backgrounds and views of supervision, the group discussions enabled the exploration of the multilayered meanings that the teachers attached to supervision.

The findings revealed that supervision is a complex phenomenon that is connected to various issues in teachers' lives, practicum settings, ECTE programs, and the Finnish educational system. Moreover, the findings addressed various issues that challenge supervision, such as different students' attitudes, teachers' multiple tasks and responsibilities, varying situations in practicum settings, and uncertainty of the contents and goals of practicums. Six frames were identified through which cooperative teachers interpreted supervision. These frames clarify the multifaceted meanings of supervision.

Due to the relatively small number of participants, the findings cannot be directly generalized beyond the research context. Nevertheless, the study raises questions that are worth addressing in any ECTE program: What kinds of basic assumptions about the theory−practice− connection, practicum, and supervision do the ECTE programs draw on? How are these assumptions realized in the implementation of ECTE? What is expected from cooperative teachers in practicums? How are teachers supported as they enact their supervisory tasks? In the context of Finnish ECTE, the findings challenge both teacher educators and EC teachers in practicum settings to strive for a more collegial and integrated model of ECTE. Both parties would benefit from a model where educating new generations of EC teachers is considered a joint task of professionals who work at universities and in practicum settings.

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