



**Supervisors' feedback in ELT practicum as perceived  
by student-teachers and (their) supervisors**

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## **Abstract**

The purpose of this research study was to investigate the perceptions of supervisory feedback of student-teachers and university supervisors involved in the teaching practicum, in four EFL teacher education programmes at three public universities from the central region of Argentina. The sample, which was conveniently selected based on student teachers' and university supervisors' interests and availability, consisted of two groups, 24 student-teachers and 8 university supervisors from the four EFL teacher education programmes. Data were obtained by means of a questionnaire, which included close-ended and open-ended questions, and semi-structured interviews. In order to analyse the data and allow for the concurrent analysis of both quantitative and qualitative data, a mixed methods approach was employed. After considering the perceptions of the student-teachers and the university supervisors participating in this research study, the findings suggested a characterisation of supervisory feedback that contributed to deepen the existing knowledge about feedback in the teaching practicum context. Moreover, the results obtained provide relevant information to understand, interpret and anticipate the impact of supervisory feedback on student-teachers and university supervisors in the English Language Teaching (ELT) practicum.

To my family, for their unconditional support and patience.

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## **List of Abbreviations and Acronyms**

ST: Student Teacher

SUP: Supervisor

UADER: Universidad Autónoma de Entre Ríos

UNLP: Universidad Nacional de La Pampa

UNRC: Universidad Nacional de Río Cuarto

PA: Programme A

PB: Programme B

PC: Programme C

PD: Programme D

## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

#### 1.1 Towards an understanding of feedback

*the boat paused shuddering.-Shall it sink  
Down the abyss? Shall the reverting stress  
Of that resistless gulph embosom it?  
Now shall it fall?*

*(“Alastor”, Percy Bysshe Shelley, 1792–1822)*

These questions, which trigger dramatic suspense after a frail boat approaches a whirlpool, may be considered an analogy to student teachers’ (STs) uncertainties, anxieties and tensions during their teaching practice<sup>1</sup>. Metaphorically speaking, STs are expected to “pilot their boats” in order not to “sink”, “fall” or “lose direction” –that is to say, they have to successfully apply the theoretical knowledge gained during their course of studies to school-based practical experiences (Starkey & Rawlins, 2011). However, as Allen (2011) explains, “one of the major and long standing challenges of pre-service teacher education programmes has been to strike a balance between the theory and practice of the profession”.

Moreover, the teaching practice is meant to provide for the authentic context within which STs experience the complexities and richness of being a teacher (KiggunduI & Nayimuli, 2009) and, in some cases, STs’ expectations for practicum, based on their prior experiences and observations of teachers, may not correspond with the reality in the field. As a result, STs may underestimate the complexity of the teaching task and their optimism may be “tarnished when confronted with the realities

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<sup>1</sup> Used in this thesis interchangeably with the term *practicum*, defined by Choy (2013) as “school attachments for the purposes of either observing other teachers in action and reflecting on it, or being involved in, observed and assessed while one is ‘practising teaching’” (p. 2).

and complexities of these tasks” (Atay, 2007; Hoy & Woolfolk, 1990, as cited in Choy, 2013, p. 2).

Therefore, in the same way in which a pilot navigating a boat needs instruments to measure wind direction and a nautical chart to be informed about distance, latitude and longitude to plot a course, STs need information about how to integrate what they learn at university with their activity in the workplace (Bates, 2002, as cited in Allen, 2011). This information, or feedback, will enhance their “continuous learning, development and professional growth” (Smith, 2010, p. 37).

One of the main purposes of teaching practice supervision is to provide data on STs’ performance, “a form of feedback which can take them forward, feed forward” (Hattie & Timperley, 2007). The Merriam-Webster online dictionary defines feedback as “helpful information or criticism that is given to someone to say what can be done to improve a performance, product, etc.” In that regard, Copland (2010) states that a central component of the teaching practice is the feedback offered to the ST by an experienced teacher, who is expected to assess the ST’s teaching and provide support, suggestions and advice with regard to improving practice.

Hence, through supervisory feedback, “supervisors assist teachers-to-be in developing the tacit aspects of professional competence” and are responsible for providing STs with “strong foundations of professional knowledge and with tools for ongoing, independent professional development” in order to become autonomous teachers after graduation (White, 2005, p. 177).

Tang and Chow (2007) point out that feedback can have a “formative assessment purpose for enhancing professional learning and a summative assessment purpose for certification or informing personnel decisions” (p. 1067). However, although the purpose of supervision can be specified in a programme, it is the relationship between the participants while giving or receiving feedback the one that defines how such purpose is enacted. As Tsui, Lopez-Real, Law, Tang and Shum (2001) highlight “asymmetrical power relations are inherent in the nature of supervision in which only one party’s work is analysed, in the structures of supervisory conferences, and in the role of perceptions and expectations of participants” (p. 343).

Feedback, and the way in which STs react during feedback sessions, can be affected by the power and functions of university supervisors and the perceptions that STs may have of them (González Ramírez, 2012). Furthermore, the communication between STs and supervisors through feedback can influence “STs’ performance and openness to experiment with different methods or activities” (p. 216).

## **1.2 Statement of the problem**

Since the development and implementation of valid and effective methods to communicate feedback during practicum is critical (Allen, 2011), it is important to first understand STs’ and supervisors’ experiences and perceptions of supervisory feedback to characterise it and deepen the existing knowledge about the practicum. This research study represents one step towards this goal by investigating the perceptions of supervisory feedback of STs and university supervisors that were involved in the teaching practicum during the academic year 2012, in four EFL teacher education programmes at three public universities from the central region of Argentina.

Recalling STs’ and supervisors’ memories and perceptions of supervisory feedback is a way of promoting reflection and generating changes based on true experiences and relations. As Männikkö-Barbutiu, Rorrison and Zeng (2011) point out “through gaining a greater awareness of the particularities of the lived experience of the STs and the mediating preconditions that frame the practicum we can contribute to our common knowledge about teacher education in general and the practicum in particular. Besides, we will argue, becoming a teacher and being a teacher have certain universalism which makes it possible for us to recognise through comparison of sayings, doings and relatings, what makes a particular practice architecture work and where we might envisage changes” (p. 45).

## CHAPTER II

### THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This chapter intends to link the theoretical aspects and the practical components of the investigation undertaken as well as establish a conceptual framework from which the methodological assumptions and tools will be drawn. It also includes a description of key concepts related to the main theme of this research study.

#### 2.1 The ELT Practicum

The teaching practicum is regarded as one of the most influential aspects of pre-service teacher education (Ferrier-Kerr, 2009). It is critical to the development of STs because it is their first hands-on experience with their chosen career and it creates opportunities for future teachers to develop their pedagogical skills (Leshem & Barhama, 2007). The practicum is “the best way to acquire professional knowledge and competences as a teacher” (Hascher, Cocard, & Moser 2004, as cited in Leshem & Barhama, 2007) since, during the practicum, STs can put into practice their beliefs based on language learning theories they acquired in the course of their studies. According to Hascher, Cocard and Moser (2004), the teaching practicum serves as a ‘protected field for experimentation’ and ‘socialization within the profession’, it sets the stage for success or failure in student teaching and it determines a ST’s future in education (p. 626).

Not only those who are in charge of pre-service teacher education but also future teachers consider the practicum experience as the most significant element in their teacher education programme. The reason resides in that STs benefit more from spending time in the field observing others teach, than from attending sessions at university or colleges (Zeichner, 1990). Moreover, the practicum contributes with STs’ development by offering a range of goals. Gebhard (2009, as cited in Trent, 2010) lists the following: gaining practical classroom experience, applying theory and teaching ideas, discovering from observing experienced teachers, expanding awareness of how to set goals, and questioning, articulating, and reflecting on their own teaching and

learning philosophies. Ochieng Ong'ondo and Borg (2011) argue that primary amongst these is offering opportunities to STs to develop pedagogical reasoning skills because, as Johnson (1999) points out, teaching is a complex process in which teachers must consider and constantly reflect on “unpredictable and dynamic interrelationships” among the teacher, learners, the context, and the curriculum. Rorrison (2008, cited in Mattsson, Eilertsen and Rorrison, 2011) claims that the practicum is usually a time of “tension, frustration, misinformation, confrontation, acquiescence and poor communication” (p. 10), and she emphasises that many learning opportunities are wasted during the teaching practice.

For Trent (2010), it is by emphasising on awareness and questioning that the teaching practicum can be regarded as a vital stage of teacher identity construction, where understanding refers to the way teachers are and the way they think other people are (Danielewics, 2001, as cited in Trent, 2010). This view is consistent with Britzman’s (2003) who states that learning to teach “is always the process of becoming: a time of formation and transformation” (p. 31).

## **2.2 Reflective Practices and STs’ Perceptions**

The effect of professional development upon classroom teaching is governed by a number of factors, one being the ability of teachers to be reflective about their practice. Indeed, the literature abounds with calls for reflective practice to be fostered at the pre-service level and encouraged as a career-long pursuit (Farr, 2011). Reflective thinking, then, has its roots in the work of a number of educational theorists and practitioners and it cannot be considered an innovation in teaching (Qing, 2009).

Reflection allows for the appropriation of theory to real teaching situations. Hence, it has been argued that teaching experience and practice promote efficiency only when the dimension of reflection is considered (Oxford, 1997). The practicum plays an essential role in assisting pre-service teachers to become reflective practitioners, parallel with their intellectual and professional development (Armutcu & Yaman, 2010). By giving trainees a “voice”, their experiences are validated, a feeling of ownership and

individuality is promoted and fundamental tools for professional development are provided (Farr, 2011).

According to Schön (1987, as cited in Armutcu & Yaman, 2010) reflective practitioners have artistry to react to any puzzling event in an appropriate manner by thinking critically and generating possible outcomes. Further, Schön (1987) suggests two types of reflection: *reflection-in-action* and *reflection-on-action*. The first one, reflection-in-action, implies thinking on the spot to deal with a complex or surprising situation and producing possible solutions. Reflection-on-action, however, refers to the ability to think critically after a challenging event.

It is through reflection that STs subjectivise their own perceptions of the teaching practice, analyse it critically and assume a responsible attitude towards their actions and the consequences of those actions (Korthagen, 1993, as cited in Farrell, 1999). STs' perceptions, thus, constitute a fundamental source of information without which the interaction with the environment could not be possible.

Perceptions are mental images that result from selecting and interpreting feelings and which provide data on our habitat, our actions and internal states<sup>2</sup> (Guardiola, 2001). They are processes by which “our brains give meaning to the stimuli registered by our senses” (Robbins, 2003, p. 45). Highlighting the importance of perceptions, Guski (1992, as cited in Manyari Aranda, 2010) points out that it is by collecting and analysing information from the outside world that human beings can familiarise themselves with it and develop possible action plans.

At this point, the relevance of reflection in teacher education lies behind pre-service teachers' self-awareness of their perceptions of the teaching practice and their supervisors' recognition and consciousness of those perceptions. As Armutcu and Yaman (2010) state “one's self-knowledge is an essential prerequisite for change or improving performance” (p. 29).

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<sup>2</sup> Own translation.

According to Choy (2013), including sessions for reflection during the practicum experience is essential in helping STs to bridge the theory–practice gap and to make the most out of their practicum exposure in schools. Hereby reflection cannot be a simple and linear process but a dynamic and complex social activity. Valli (1997, as cited in Brandt, 2008) concludes that,

If left unsocialized, individual reflection can close in on itself, producing detached, idiosyncratic teachers. Because reflection is not an end in itself, but for the purpose of action, communal dialogue is essential. Many different voices are necessary. (p. 86)

### **2.3 Feedback**

Given that reflection is ideally a social activity, the opportunity exists to combine feedback and reflective skills development. Black, Harrison, Lee, Marshall and Wiliam (2002, as cited in White, 2007) claim that effective feedback promotes thinking and reflection by allowing for dialogue between student and teacher provided that learners have opportunity to express their ideas.

Hattie and Timperley (2007) characterise feedback as “information provided by an agent (e.g., teacher, peer, book, parent, self, experience) regarding aspects of one’s performance or understanding” and they point out that feedback is “a “consequence” of performance” (inverted commas in the original, p. 81). In addition, Brandt (2008) suggests that if the purpose of feedback is to supply information to trainees concerning some aspect of their performance, with a view to enhancing their practice, then trainees need to know that they are receiving good quality feedback. Hattie (2003, as cited in Hattie & Timperley, 2007) reported that some types of feedback, such as providing students with information about a task and how to do it more effectively, are more powerful than others that involve praise, rewards and punishments. The most useful forms of feedback provide cues or reinforcement to learners; are presented in video-, audio- or computer assisted formats; relate to goals; provide information on correct rather than incorrect responses; and/or build on changes from previous experiences.



Moreover, feedback is more effective when a number of conditions are met (Brinko, 1993, as cited in Brandt, 2008). For instance, a) a psychologically safe setting is provided, b) information is gathered from different sources, c) the feedback is mediated by someone other than the individual who made the evaluative judgment, d) the feedback focuses on behavior rather than the person and it is descriptive rather than evaluative, e) the feedback reduces uncertainty for the recipient and allows for response and interaction, and f) negative feedback is ‘sandwiched’ between positive information. Hattie and Timperley (2007) summarise the effectiveness of feedback by stating that it must answer three questions: “Where am I going?”, “How am I going”, and “Where to next?” These questions correspond to notions of “feed up”, “feed back”, and “feed forward” respectively (p. 86).

Pollock (2012) indicates that feedback has been directly intended as assessment of student progress and intentionally directed from the teacher to the student. However, Pollock highlights that feedback is a cue to seek more information or instruction and that “the hinge factor is the transfer of information”. Therefore, feedback is “the hinge that swings the information about goals and progress between teacher and student” (p. 5). Assessment feedback does not answer the three questions (“Where am I going?”, “How am I going”, “Where to next?”) and it does not enhance reflection and metacognitive attributes (Hattie & Timperley, 2007). The conflict resides in that, from the supervisor’s perspective, the main role of feedback is to facilitate assessment whereas from the trainee’s perspective, feedback exists to allow trainees to develop ‘skill and proficiency in the work of teaching’ (Brandt 2006, as cited in Copland, 2010). The incompatibility of the assessment and development roles as well as the different expectations amongst trainers and trainees about the purpose and performance of feedback result in disquiet and tension in the teaching practice (Copland, 2010).

Supervision in the form of lesson observation followed by a post-observation conference and the communication of constructive feedback plays a vital role in pre-service teachers’ professional development (Tang & Chow, 2007). Moreover, Brandt (2008) proposes considering the post-observation meetings as opportunities for reflective conversations (indicating plurality) rather than for feeding back (indicating singularity). Reflective conversations may allow for “a more democratic, interactive, and trainee centred atmosphere (...) which could offer a number of advantages” (p. 43).

Furthermore, Brandt suggests separating the currently dual roles of tutors by assigning the function of assessor and facilitator/process mediator to different supervisors. While the assessor should focus on evaluating the technical means of achieving predetermined objectives, the process mediator should establish a non-threatening environment to encourage reflection and questioning, allow for flexibility, ensure comprehensiveness, facilitate interaction and defuse possible tensions that may be caused by power imbalances. Although challenging in some contexts, this practice would recognise teaching as an essentially complex, interactive, and social activity.

## **2.4 ELT Practicum Supervision and Supervisory styles**

There has been general agreement that not only practice but also supervision is an integral part of the teacher education process (Farr, 2011). In supervision, a supervisor advises STs and provides the necessary support for their professional education (Tang & Chow, 2007). Furthermore, a supervisor often attempts to make some connections between the two contexts involved during the practicum experience: the school where the ST has been placed and the university (Le Cornu & White, 2000).

As Bailey (2006) explains

The supervisor's role is to help novice language teachers make connections between the material in their training courses and the classroom contexts they face ... the supervisor may need to guide them as they build bridges between the research and theories they have studied and the realities of the classroom teaching ... so in addition to providing practical tips, supervisors' feedback can promote reflective practice and socialize novices into the professional discourse community. (pp. 240–44)

Freeman (1982, as cited in Murphy, 1992) and Ghebard (1990) describe a variety of alternative roles that are available for supervisors during their interactions with trainee teachers. In Ghebard's view, being judgemental, evaluative, or directive is but one of the several alternative styles that a supervisor can adopt. Other supervisory styles suggested by Ghebard include: 1) alternative, 2) collaborative, 3) non-directive, 4) creative, and 5) exploratory.

Directive supervision has the goal of directing, informing, modeling and evaluating. The supervisor assumes the dual roles of helper and assessor, and often tends towards negativism (Freeman, 1982, as cited in Farr, 2011). For Gebhard (1990), directive supervision poses three problems. Firstly, it assumes that the supervisor knows what good teaching is. Secondly, strong direction may cause a feeling of inferiority in those being observed and thus, they can become disengaged. Thirdly, STs may not develop autonomous skills since the decision-making responsibility is placed on the supervisor.

A less prescriptive approach provides alternatives for STs to choose from. An alternative supervisory style, therefore, offers a number of courses of action for the ST and he/she decides which one to explore (Farr, 2011). By providing STs with alternatives, they are able to reflect on the consequences of their decisions (Gebhard, 1990).

Collaborative supervision is, as Farr (2011) describes it, “a model in which teaching is seen as a problem-solving process that requires the sharing of ideas and collaboration between the supervisor and teacher in a joint effort” (p.21). However, Gore (1991, as cited in Farr, 2011) claims that an equal and reciprocal relationship between the trainee and the supervisor is difficult to realise and, in case it is realised, the relationship can be affected and broken by any criticism coming from one of the parties involved.

The non-directive supervisory style is holistic and therapeutic since it provides the trainee teacher with a reflection of his/her own performance. The supervisor’s role implies listening and reorganising the trainee’s thoughts and opinions to help him/her to discover his/her own experiences. The supervisor acts as a mirror and offers input in a non-directive way encouraging the trainee teacher to express and clarify their thoughts (Farr, 2011). Nevertheless, some trainee teachers may feel anxious and alienated in this relationship, particularly if they lack the theoretical or experiential knowledge necessary to contribute to the discussions (Gebhard, 1990).

Creative supervision allows for a free and adequate combination of models and supervisory behaviours, according to the preferences and needs of the STs (Farr, 2011). Freeman (1982) notes that when teachers need to know *what* to teach, direction is important, when they need to know *how* to teach, alternatives are helpful, and when they need to understand *why* they teach, the supervisor has to assume the role of understanding in a non-directive approach.

The exploratory approach suggests that, instead of being a helper, the observer or supervisor is an experienced teacher that wants to explore the teaching practice (Gebhard, 1990).

Hopkins and Moore (1993) propose that STs be introduced to the clinical supervision model to encourage a formative evaluative approach. The clinical supervision model consists of five steps: 1) pre-observation conference (examining the lesson plans to be implemented during the observation and establishing a common frame of reference for the planning of the observation), 2) observation (providing an objective record to mirror what the ST actually said and did during the instructional process – the observer remains neutral), 3) analysis and strategy (supervisors analyse classroom data and develop appropriate strategies that will lead to an improvement in the instructional process), 4) post-observation conference (supervisors provide feedback and guidance to improve instruction), and 5) post-observation analysis (supervisors analyse their own roles). The clinical supervision model is “designed to involve the student and make them a part of the evaluative process, which is as much formative as it is summative in its assessment of a ST’s teaching” (Gürsoy, Bulunz, Baltacı Goktalay, Bulunz, Kesner & Salghoğlu, 2013, p. 193).

Notwithstanding the varied purposes and styles of teaching practice supervision, many researchers emphasise its formative aspects by examining how information about the ST’s performance is used during the post-observation conference to enhance teacher professional development (Tang & Chow, 2007). For instance, Stones (1987) states that supervision is a form of teaching which helps trainees to learn how to solve pedagogical problems. Orland-Barak (2002) advocates placing the focus of supervision on the development of STs’ ability to conceptualise their experiences. Similarly, Holland (1989, as cited in Tang & Chow, 2007) argues that supervision helps teachers develop

skills of analysing teaching in the meta-level process of self-supervision. Hence, these researchers' studies stress the developmental and learning-oriented purpose of post-observation conferences to enhance professional learning.

Post-observation conferences, usually held soon after the teaching practice, are part of the debriefing stage of the supervisory cycle. Although the majority of post-teaching conferences are dyadic (one trainer and one trainee), some others can involve a group of trainees discussing the lesson with the trainer (Copland, 2010). Nonetheless, the common feature of these feedback sessions is that they encourage trainees to discover how successful their teaching has been by engaging in reflective talk about their own lessons.

In sum, this chapter has presented a description of key concepts connected to the ELT Practicum such as, reflective practices, student teachers' perceptions, feedback and supervisory styles.

## CHAPTER III

### LITERATURE REVIEW

*I only quote others the better to quote myself.  
(Montaigne, 1572, as cited in Screech, 2003, p. 166)*

This chapter will explore the literature that is relevant to understanding the development of, and interpreting the results of this piece of research. It reviews studies that describe the role of feedback according to different philosophies of learning as well as the inclusion of reflection in the teaching practice. The chapter goes on to state the purpose and objectives of the present thesis.

#### 3.1 Historical development of feedback

The field of language teacher education (LTE) presents the teaching practice (TP) or practicum as a crucial stage in language teacher learning (e.g. Borg, 2006; Crookes, 2003; Farrell, 2008; Johnson, 1999; Richards, 1998). Farrell (2008), for example, states that the practicum has been recognised as “one of the most important aspects of a learner teacher’s education during their language teaching training programme” (p. 226).

As stated by Ochieng Ong'ondo and Borg (2011), the practicum can have a range of goals such as helping the future teachers to develop “pedagogical reasoning”<sup>3</sup>. For Copland (2010), the teaching practice offers “experience of the job” and its key components are the support, advice and assessment STs receive from their supervisors, who are usually experienced teachers. In order to perform these duties (support-advice-assessment) and to foster professional learning, supervisors observe trainee teachers’ lessons and usually hold a post-observation conference with them or provide them with written feedback. Therefore, Copland states that, while many STs regard feedback as

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<sup>3</sup> The ability to think critically about the relationship between procedures and principles in teaching (Ochieng Ong'ondo & Borg, 2011).

the most useful element of the practicum, others consider it as a source of disquiet and tension due to its dual role – assessment and development.

During the first half of the twentieth century, there was uncertainty as regards the role that feedback played in the learning process (Kulhavy & Wager, 1993). However, three definitions of feedback that developed during the early 1900s are surprisingly similar to the ones we use today and still prevail in the current view of feedback (Mory, 2004). Kulhavy and Wager refer to these definitions as the “feedback triad” (p. 5) and they can be enumerated as follows: a) feedback as a motivator or incentive for increasing response rate and/or accuracy, b) feedback as a provider of a reinforcing message that would automatically connect responses to prior stimuli – focusing on correct responses, and c) feedback as information that learners could use to validate or change a previous response – the focus being on error responses.

Thorndike (1911, as cited in Kulhavy & Wager, 1993), led the first investigations involving the use of post-response information. Thorndike’s work showed that a response followed by a “satisfying state of affairs” is likely to be repeated and increases the likelihood of learning, a theory he named the Law of Effect.

In 1926, Pressey (as cited in Regian & Shute, 1994), developed his “teaching machine”, a mechanical device loaded with multiple choice questions and answers by the teacher that drilled the student on the questions and provided immediate feedback in order to support learning. Pressey’s influential work emphasized both the error-correcting function of feedback and its acting as a punishment for errors, supporting Thorndike’s viewpoint of feedback as a reinforce (Mory, 2004).

After significant advances in technology and following Thorndike’s pioneering work, Skinner (1958, as cited in Mory, 2004) studied programmed instruction. Skinner applied reinforcement on learners and used principles from the Law of Effect to design classroom materials that would take learners through information, shaping behavior and strengthening desired responses. Therefore, feedback in programmed instruction assumed its status as both a reinforce and a motivator, maintaining a confusion between learning and incentive (Skinner, 1960, as cited in Kulhavy & Wager, 1993).

Research in the 1960s concentrated on promoting and measuring correct responses, and pointed out that feedback following errors caused distress and low self-concept (Skinner, 1968).

After 10 years of research, around 1970, little evidence was provided to sustain the view that feedback following positive responses acts in a reinforcing manner (Anderson, Kulhavy & Andre, 1972; Bardwell, 1981; Barringer & Gholson, 1979; Kulhavy, 1977; Roper, 1977, all as cited in Mory, 2004).

Anderson, Kulhavy and Andre found that students used feedback with little or no processing unless this use was controlled, and suggested that feedback functioned primarily to correct errors instead of simply reinforcing correct answers. Therefore, feedback was examined from an *information processing perspective*, where the learner participated in the system to correct his or her errors, and researchers focused on how feedback influenced cognitive and metacognitive processes within a learner (Kulhavy, 1977). The view of feedback as information highlighted the learner's role in learning, with the ability to adapt his or her response according to information in the feedback and thus, correct his or her errors (Mory, 2004).

The *information processing perspective* demonstrated that feedback can be accepted, modified, or rejected, contrary to the behaviourists' argument (Hattie & Temperley, 2007). For instance, Roper (1977), provided college students with either no feedback, yes–no verification, or an opportunity to restudy the correct answer, and found out that scores on the posttest increased as more information was added to the feedback. The study also showed that the correction of errors and not just reinforcement of responses was the major effect of feedback. Similarly, two types of feedback (correct answer feedback, self-correction feedback, and no feedback control) were employed in a study by Andre and Thieman (1988). Both types of feedback facilitated performance but did not facilitate the application to new examples. This investigation suggested that such feedback may be helpful in tasks where the students memorise an answer, but be ineffective for tasks which require application to new situations, as in the case of the teaching practicum. Clariana, Ross and Morris (1992) also examined the effect of various forms of feedback (no-feedback, answer-until-correct, knowledge-of-correct-



response, and delayed) on learning outcomes. The results of this study showed that knowledge-of-correct-response and delayed feedback were superior to no-feedback.

The latest philosophy of learning, the *constructivist* approach, postulates that the student must *construct* his or her own reality or knowledge, and this construction will be based on the learner's prior experiences, mental structures, and beliefs (Brown, Collins & Duguid, 1988; Cooper, 1993; Duffy & Jonassen, 1991; Jonassen, 1991, all as cited in Mory, 2004). Considering this view of learning, feedback could be used as a coaching mechanism that analyses strategies used to solve real world-problems (Jonassen, 1991). Therefore, as feedback can serve to guide the learner to revisit a problem from different conceptual perspectives, Rieber (1992) suggests using a variety of feedback features to complement one another, for example, verbal feedback at the same time as visual feedback. Wiliam (1998, cited in White, 2007) argues that feedback is only apparent when the information about the gap in learning is actually used to alter the gap. Sadler (1998, as cited in White, 2007) also emphasises that feedback must let learners identify gaps between current and desired performance, and take some action that will close the gap. He goes further, however, in suggesting that constructing a way forward for learners necessitates feedback that they can readily access and understand, and that has catalytic and coaching elements that work to inspire confidence and hope.

Brookhart (2008) points out that “educational theorists no longer explain learning with behaviourist theories about stimulus-response connections” (p. 3). On the contrary, after the shift towards *information processing* and *constructivism*, research began to recognise the role of the student in the feedback process as well as to focus on the kind of feedback given and the context in which it was presented. Therefore, Brookhart stresses that feedback is filtered through the student's perception (influenced by prior knowledge, experiences, and motivation) as it becomes the message received. The student's job is to make meaning from feedback, not to respond to stimuli.

The most powerful form of feedback for learners is that which is regulatory because it involves learners to the greatest degree as participants in their own teaching and learning (Hattie & Timperley, 2007). For Brookhart (2008), *self-regulation* takes place when “making meaning requires using and controlling one's own thought processes.” (p. 3).

### **3.2 The role of feedback in the teaching practicum**

In a research study of how STs respond to observation notes and how they feel about those records, Viáfara González (2005) explains that nonjudgemental and no pressuring notes that contain objective, specific, systematic and concrete information are positively valued by STs. This reveals the importance of using friendly observation instruments since they encourage reflective processes such as self-evaluation and self-inquiry. Viáfara González concludes that “providing STs with enough autonomy and non-threatening contexts to work regarding observation of their practices can be a key for their growing” (p. 150).

White (2007) investigated the sort of feedback STs expected to receive from their lecturer during their teaching practice, and what type of feedback (written or spoken) from their supervisor they considered most useful in influencing positive changes to their teaching practice. The findings revealed that most STs view feedback as involving advice and tips about their practice and expect to receive it in spoken format. However, some students consider written feedback as extremely useful since it challenges, questions and suggests alternative ways of thinking and doing. In addition, STs express that feedback offers some benefits to their teaching practice such as: provide focus, clarify concerns and questions, and allow future teachers to review and reflect on material.

In the same vein, Leshem and Bar-hama (2007) examined STs’ perceptions regarding the ways in which supervisory feedback is communicated. The study disclosed that, instead of a verbal grade of “pass” or “fail”, STs prefer a numerical grade and favour holistic assessment for different reasons that include: acknowledgement within the items of originality and risk taking, credit for preparing extra time activities in their lesson plan, evidence of improvement from previous observations, and awareness of the teacher’s action zone. Furthermore, future teachers require explicit criteria for effective teaching and regard the observation lesson not only as a test but also as an opportunity to reflect and improve.

Following the constructivist view of feedback, Smith (2010) suggests that feedback is the basis for the dialogue, and that supervisors and STs consider it important for future development to improve performance. STs generally want to receive feedback on tasks, practical suggestions and advice which can be seen as feeding forward to improve performance. In addition, Smith notes that future teachers seem to be open to feedback on weaknesses as well as on strengths, with a strong belief in their own competence. As the supervisor and the ST come from two different contexts, together they are supposed to co-construct knowledge for teaching.

Arribas Arévalo (2010) found out that, for feedback to be effective during the teaching practice, a number of conditions should be met. For instance, supervisory feedback should not be provided immediately after the ST has been observed teaching since it is necessary to allow some time for reflection on practice. Moreover, when feedback is spoken, the ST should begin the conversation since, normally, he/she will first mention the aspects of the lesson that need improvement instead of waiting to hear them from the supervisor. Arribas Arévalo suggests that it is important to avoid the use of imperatives as well as ambiguous language when talking about weaknesses. Positive comments and polite, impersonal expressions promote motivation and lead to significant changes.

Along the same line, the research reported by Ferguson (2011) was designed to investigate the type, quantity and quality of assessment feedback STs would prefer to receive. According to the findings, STs prefer personal verbal feedback and, in case it is written, it should provide them with comments rather than just interpretation and explanation of criteria or marking schemes. More personal feedback is perceived to help inform future work and to have a greater relevance to personal learning whereas feedback such as one word, short unexplained responses, ticks or crosses without further explanation are of no value at all. STs agree on the fact that feedback is crucial to build confidence and that some balance between negative comments and positive reinforcement is necessary.

Consistently, González Ramírez (2012) carried out research into STs' perceptions of feedback sessions and concludes that STs regard feedback as an enhancer of instruction since it provides suggestions and comments that motivate them to try new methodologies and activities that they would not try otherwise. Moreover, González

Ramírez observes that it is vital to qualify supervisory feedback with explanations to assure STs' comprehension of information in order to increase the possibilities of seeing changes implemented in the following classes. For STs, feedback sessions imply "an opportunity for reflection and adjustment into new teaching structures and practices" (p. 222) since during these sessions, they have the chance to interact with supervisors who have vast experience in teaching and personal and professional growth.

Future teachers view the teaching practice and supervision as useful in giving them guidance on critical aspects of teaching but state some problems that can affect the effectiveness of supervision. Among them are delays in supervision, little or no dialogue between supervisors and supervisees, illegible reports and lack of consensus on the part of supervisors in dealing with similar issues (Rosemary, Richard & Ngara, 2013).

In order to provide students with appropriate, meaningful and reflective feedback, it is central to take practicum students' emotional blocks into consideration and help them overcome their fear, nervousness, and anxiety (Soykurt, 2010). Moreover, according to Brandt (2008), the efficacy of feedback for STs would be greatly enhanced if the value of reflective practice were considered. Practices of reflection can raise awareness on future teachers and lead to appropriate development and relevant change or innovation in practice (Farr, 2011).

Leshem and Bar-hama (2007) point out that there is a significant amount of information and literature available that deals with multiple aspects of the practicum but there is a dearth in the field of practicum assessment. Leshem and Bar-hama describe this situation as "surprising" (inverted commas in the original p. 258) considering that assessing STs' practicum is a complex activity and a means for reflection and professional development.

Practicum courses need to be redesigned to provide more opportunities for feedback sessions and to integrate reflective practice into the teaching practice. STs should be given chances to reflect-in-action and on-action and feedback should be non-directive and non-prescriptive. STs should find out their weaknesses themselves rather

than being told by others in order to develop autonomy, critical thinking skills, and increased awareness of their actions and decisions (Gürsoy, 2013).

As stated above, it is necessary to “promote reflective practice and socialize novices into the professional discourse community” (Bailey, 2006, as cited in Ochieng Ong'ondo & Borg, 2011) as well as to explore STs’ and supervisors’ perceptions of supervisory feedback since “assessment of the trainees’ performances in their practicum has far-reaching implications for their entry into our profession” (Leshem & Bar-hama, 2007, p. 258).

In Richards’ (1990) words

self-inquiry and critical thinking can help teachers move from a level where they may be guided largely by impulse, intuition, or routine, to a level where their actions are guided by reflection and critical thinking'. (p. 5)

### **3.3 Aim of the study**

The purpose of this research study is to investigate the perceptions of supervisory feedback of student-teachers and university supervisors that were involved in the teaching practicum during the academic year 2012, in four EFL teacher education programmes at three public universities from the central region of Argentina.

### **3.4 Research questions**

This investigation presents the following research questions:

- What are the perceptions on the part of student-teachers as regards supervisory feedback in the teaching practicum corresponding to the academic year 2012, in four EFL teacher education programmes at three public universities from the central region of Argentina?
- What are the perceptions on the part of university supervisors as regards supervisory feedback in the teaching practicum corresponding to the academic

year 2012, in four EFL teacher education programmes at three public universities from the central region of Argentina?

- Which are the characteristics of supervisory feedback according to the perceptions of the student-teachers and the university supervisors participating in this research study?
- What is the impact of supervisory feedback on STs and university supervisors in the ELT practicum?

### **3.5 Objectives**

The present research has the following objectives:

- To investigate the perceptions on the part of student-teachers as regards supervisory feedback in the teaching practicum corresponding to the academic year 2012, in four EFL teacher education programmes at three public universities from the central region of Argentina.
- To investigate the perceptions on the part of university supervisors as regards supervisory feedback in the teaching practicum corresponding to the academic year 2012, in four EFL teacher education programmes at three public universities from the central region of Argentina.
- To characterise supervisory feedback, after considering the perceptions of the student-teachers and the university supervisors participating in this research study, in order to deepen the existing knowledge about the teaching practicum.
- To gather data and provide relevant information in order to understand, interpret and anticipate the impact of supervisory feedback on STs and university supervisors in the ELT practicum.

The identified research questions and objectives help to specify the intended outcomes of the present investigation, the data collection and analysis procedure to be used and the design of the proposed study. Moreover, they could lead to a greater understanding of STs' and supervisors' perceptions of supervisory feedback in the ELT practicum.

## CHAPTER IV

### METHODOLOGY

*When early youth had past, he left  
His cold fireside and alienated home  
To seek strange truths in undiscovered lands.  
("Alastor", Percy Bysshe Shelley, 1792–1822)*

This chapter introduces the research methodology used for this study. It describes the setting and the participants, the procedure used in designing the instruments and collecting the data, and provides an explanation of the procedures used to analyse the data.

#### **4.1 Context of the study**

This research study was carried out at four EFL teacher education programmes, which award a degree in English Language Teaching, at three public universities from the central region of Argentina. Although the teaching practicum or field experience is dealt with in specific ways related to the particular contexts where each university is immersed, the three programmes comprise the practicum in the 4<sup>th</sup> and/or 5<sup>th</sup> year and follow a "partnership model". According to Mattsson, Eilertsen and Rorrison (2011), partnership models are based on agreements between a university and local schools that have been carefully selected and which are expected to offer a good educational environment as well as grant opportunities for practicum learning.

The site-based experience in schools provides pre-service teachers opportunities to apply the theoretical aspects of their coursework to the real-world context of the classroom, trying to bridge the theory-practice gap. During the practicum experience, STs observe other teachers teaching, plan lessons and teach at different levels of education (primary, secondary and higher education). Mentor teachers and/or university supervisors observe and assess pre-service teachers' performance in their host classes



and provide after class feedback (verbal or written). Therefore, feedback acts as an essential means of communication between the supervisors and the future teachers.

## **4.2 Research Design**

The present study used a mixed methods research design since, although qualitative research methods best applied to the working scheme employed, quantitative aspects were also considered. The methodology was exploratory and descriptive since the variables as well as the theoretical background were practically unknown and the nature of the problem could not be measured quantitatively only (Creswell, 1994).

## **4.3 Participants**

The sample consisted of two groups: 1) Six STs conveniently selected from each of the four EFL teacher education programmes: UADER (Paraná, Entre Ríos - Concepción del Uruguay, Entre Ríos), UNRC (Córdoba) and UNLP (La Pampa), making a total of 24 STs. The students participating in this research study had already finished their practicum experiences thus, their contributions regarding their individual, personal and subjective perceptions of supervisory feedback were expected to be exempt from any tension arising from the role of evaluation in the teaching practicum; 2) Two University Supervisors from each of the four EFL teacher education programmes, making a total of 8 supervisors. The supervisors were responsible of observing and providing feedback to the STs during their field experiences.

Throughout the present thesis, UADER-Paraná will be referred to as *Programme A*, UADER-Concepción del Uruguay as *Programme B*, UNRC as *Programme C*, and UNLP as *Programme D*.

#### 4.4 Data collection instruments and procedures

The instruments used to collect data on the perceptions of supervisory feedback in the teaching practice were two: 1) a questionnaire, including open-ended and close-ended questions, adapted from the questionnaires designed by Rawlins and Starkey (2011) and Farr (2011), and 2) a semi-structured face-to-face follow-up interview in order to triangulate data.

##### 4.4.1 The questionnaires

The questionnaire investigated the participants' perceptions of supervisory feedback in ELT practicum. Both groups - STs and supervisors - answered the same questions in the same order and, although all the participants possessed a very good command of the target language, the questionnaires were designed in Spanish to minimise any pressure and to make clear that there was no intention to evaluate the respondents' use of English. The questionnaire, based on the surveys designed by Starkey and Rawlins (2011) and Farr (2011), consisted of five sections: a) *Giving feedback to observed STs*: respondents were asked to indicate how often they received or provided feedback (always after each lesson, sometimes after each lesson, never after each lesson) and had to provide a value to the frequency chosen (positive, negative, indifferent). Respondents were also able to add other frequencies and values in an open space available at the end of the section; b) *Describing supervisory feedback*: participants had to specify how often (always, sometimes, never) supervisory feedback included comments such as "you did very well" or "good idea", made reference to the lesson plan, considered the students' learning and STs' classroom management techniques. The frequency chosen had to be assessed according to three options: positive, negative, indifferent. An open space was left so respondents could add other possibilities; c) *Communicating feedback to STs – strategies employed*: respondents had to indicate the frequency (always, sometimes, never) and value of that frequency (positive, negative, indifferent) according to five items: written after each lesson, oral after each lesson, informal discussions, discussion forums organised by the supervisors, e-mail. In case respondents wished to include other strategies, an open space was included at the end of the section; d) *Relationship between STs and supervisors through*

*giving and receiving feedback*: respondents had to indicate frequency (always, sometimes, never) and assess the frequency chosen (positive, negative, indifferent) taking into account the following points: “I tell him/her what to do”, “I orient him/her”, “I let him/her be creative”, “I value his/her ideas and experiences”, “I don’t formulate suggestions to improve the practice”, “I’m structured”, “I reject dialogue”, “I’m confrontational”. Respondents were asked to provide a concrete example or situation experienced whenever they chose the option “sometimes”; e) *About supervisory feedback*: this section was subdivided into five items: e.1) Respondents were asked to select the most predominant or frequent feelings STs experienced after receiving supervisory feedback. The list included the following adjectives: stimulated, motivated, respected, uncomfortable, indifferent, frustrated, self-confident, enriched, angry, surprised, confused, independent, self-critical, uncertain. Other feelings/emotions could be added in a separate box; e.2) This item enquired about the benefits of received or given feedback; e.3) This item asked participants to mention the negative aspects of received or given feedback; e.4) Respondents were asked whether they believed supervisory feedback promoted a process of reflection-action that benefited future teachers, in all cases participants had to justify their answers; e.5) Participants had to explain why supervisory feedback helped or did not help STs to acquire self-confidence to face a group of students.

The questionnaire included a final item where respondents could include other aspects they considered important about supervisory feedback (See Appendixes A and B).

The questionnaire was piloted with six STs who had finished their practicum experience at Programme A and two supervisors from the same programme. No changes were introduced to the questionnaire since the pilot study showed that instructions were clear and participants provided the information required.

To test pilot the instruments, the questionnaires were administered to STs and supervisors once the teaching practicum carried out during the academic year 2012 had finished. Participants signed a consent form which informed them about the research purposes, the anonymity and confidentiality of the data collected as well as about their voluntary participation and prerogative to withdraw from the study at any time (See

Appendix C). The questionnaires were completed individually and, for participants located a long distance from the researcher, online completion was allowed.

#### **4.4.2 The follow-up interviews**

In order to triangulate data, with the purpose of confirming, disputing and/or extending the data obtained through the questionnaires, semi-structured interviews were carried out. Hence, although there was a set of pre-prepared guiding questions and prompts, “the format was open-ended and the interviewee was encouraged to elaborate on the issues raised in an exploratory manner” (Dörnyei, 2007). Each one-to-one interview lasted about 40 to 60 minutes and the interview guide included six sections: A) Greeting and introduction to the interview, B) Presentation of the objectives of the interview, C) Interviewee’s personal information, D) Content questions, E) Final closing question, F) Final greeting (See Appendix D). A ST from each of the universities involved in the study was randomly selected and interviewed. All the participants were asked the same questions, although not necessarily in the same order or wording, and the interviewer supplemented the main questions with various probes. The interview was piloted with three STs who had finished their practicum experience in the academic year 2011 and, since the format and questions appeared to be clear, no changes were made. All the interviews were carried out in Spanish as well as recorded, transcribed and conducted by the researcher in person. In the case of participants residing in a province different from that of the researcher, Skype v6.14.0.104 was used to facilitate communication. Before recording the interviews, the interviewees’ consent was obtained and the researcher guaranteed the confidentiality and anonymity of the data. In person interviews were recorded with the S-Pen Voice application for the Samsung Galaxy Note series, an application that assures high quality audio and allows the researcher to take notes while recording.

## **4.5 Data analysis**

According to De Vos (1998), data analysis entails that the analyst breaks down data into constituent parts to obtain answers to research questions. The analysis of research data does not in its own provide the answers to research questions.

The purpose of interpreting data is to reduce it to an intelligible and interpretable form so that the relations of research questions can be studied and tested, and conclusions drawn. Moreover, when the researcher interprets the research results, he/she studies them for their meaning and implications (De Vos, 1998).

Dornyői (2007) states that “a mixed methods approach can offer additional benefits for the understanding of the phenomenon in question” (p. 47). Therefore, a mixed methods approach was employed in this research study to permit a parallel mixed analysis. This approach allowed for the concurrent analysis of both quantitative and qualitative data.

The procedures used to analyse the data are described below in relation to each of the instruments employed.

### **4.5.1 The questionnaires**

Thirty-two copies of the questionnaire were distributed and the return rate was of a 100%. Twenty-four contained the responses of STs and eight had been answered by supervisors.

The data reported in the questionnaires were classified and therefore, analysed according to whether they were obtained from closed-ended or open-ended questions.

To analyse the data generated from the closed-ended questions, the statistical software SPSS (Ver. 19) was used.

In order to obtain insights or issues not captured in the closed-ended questions, the data generated from the open-ended questions were analysed following the qualitative research approach known as Grounded Theory Methodology. The goal of this type of data analysis is to uncover emerging themes, patterns, concepts, insights and understandings (Patton, 2002). Therefore, the following steps were taken: 1) responses were transcribed into a Microsoft Word document; 2) transcriptions were carefully read and key words and phrases were highlighted; 3) common emerging themes were identified; 4) coding categories were developed; 5) responses were labelled with their corresponding coding categories; and 6) sub-themes were recognised.

Frequencies for each of the sub-themes were specified according to: STs, supervisors, STs from each of the four ELT programmes investigated and supervisors from each of the four ELT programmes studied.

The process described above was employed to analyse the answers to the last four questions of the questionnaire: mentioning the benefits of received or given feedback, pointing out the negative aspects of received or given feedback, expressing whether supervisory feedback promotes a process of reflection-action that benefits future teachers or not and explaining why supervisory feedback helps or does not help STs to acquire self-confidence to face a group of students.

The participants used their own words to answer the open-ended questions and, from the analysis of the data obtained, a number of themes and sub-themes emerged. For instance, when mentioning the benefits of supervisory feedback, the following phrases were highlighted: “it helped me to improve the use of the board”, “it pointed out my role as a teacher”, “I improved the way in which I planned my lessons”. Therefore, the theme “improvement of the teaching practice” was identified.

#### **4.5.2 The follow-up interviews**

Three STs volunteered to be interviewed (1 from Programme A, 1 from Programme C and 1 from Programme D) and they were provided with the opportunity to highlight both negative and positive comments on their perceptions of supervisory feedback.

In line with the Grounded Theory Methodology, the semi-structured follow-up interviews were transcribed and individually analysed to identify common themes.

The purpose of this chapter was to describe the research methodology used for this study and how it has guided data collection and analysis in order to investigate the perceptions of supervisory feedback of student-teachers and university supervisors that were involved in the teaching practicum during the academic year 2012.

## CHAPTER V

### RESULTS

In this chapter the results of the data analysis are presented. The data, collected through the questionnaires and the follow-up interviews, were analysed following a mixed methods approach, as described in the previous chapter. The results are reported as the research questions posed in the study are addressed.

The data were collected from twenty-four STs, six from each of the four public EFL teacher education programmes from the central region of Argentina, and eight university supervisors, two from each programme. In order not to be influenced by the pressure that the teaching practice may entail, as well as by the anxiety of feeling evaluated, it was a condition that all the STs participating in this research study had already finished their practicum experiences.

#### 5.1 Supervisory feedback

In order to investigate how often supervisors provided feedback during the teaching practicum, the questionnaire designed *ad hoc* for such a purpose was administered (see Table 5.1.1). Results are here provided in relation to the most frequently chosen options (*always, sometimes, never*) and according to the value that participants gave to their choices (*positive, negative, indifferent*).

Analysis of the data showed that most of the STs (83%) *always* received feedback after each lesson taught in their practicum classes whereas a smaller amount of STs (17%) *sometimes* received feedback after each lesson. For the majority of the STs (80%), “*always*” providing feedback after each lesson was a good choice on the part of the supervisors.



As regards supervisors, most of them (88%) claimed that it was positive to *always* provide feedback after each lesson, and only 12.5% chose the option “*sometimes*” giving feedback to practicum students after each lesson.

Although respondents, both students and supervisors, were given the possibility to mention other answers in an open space available at the end of the section “*Giving feedback to observed STs*”, no participant added other options.

The results showed consistency in Programmes B, C and D since all the supervisors reported to *always* give feedback after each lesson. In Programme A, half of the supervisors reported to *always* give feedback after each lesson while the other half revealed that they *sometimes* gave feedback after each lesson.

Table 5.1.1 *Distribution and value of communication of supervisory feedback according to STs and Supervisors (SUP).*

<b>Participant</b>	<b>Frequency – Value</b>	<b>Occurrence</b>	<b>%</b>
<b>ST (n= 24)</b>	Always after each lesson - POSITIVE	19	79,2
	Sometimes after each lesson - POSITIVE	4	16,7
	No answer	1	4,2
	<b>Total</b>	24	100,0
<b>SUP (n= 8)</b>	Always after each lesson - POSITIVE	7	87,5
	Sometimes after each lesson - POSITIVE	1	12,5
	<b>Total</b>	8	100,0

## 5.2 Description of supervisory feedback

STs’ and supervisors’ descriptions of supervisory feedback were collected through the questionnaires, which asked participants to specify how often supervisory feedback included encouraging comments, made reference to the lesson plan, considered the students’ learning and STs’ classroom management techniques (see Table 5.2.1).

### 5.2.1 Encouraging comments

As regards how often supervisory feedback given during the teaching practice contained encouraging comments, the great majority of the STs (83%) reported that their supervisors *always* included them in their feedback. STs also reported that it was positive to receive that kind of feedback during the practicum course.

When analysing the supervisors' answers in relation to the frequency in which they gave encouraging feedback to STs during the ELT practicum, it was found that the majority of the supervisors (88%) reported *always* including encouraging comments in their feedback. Moreover, most of the supervisors considered that it was positive to offer the kind of feedback that supported STs during the teaching practice and that contributed to the development of STs' self-confidence.

All the STs from Programme C stated that they *always* received feedback that contained encouraging comments and considered it was positive for their development as future teachers to receive that kind of feedback. Most of the STs from Programmes B and D (83%) reported to *always* obtain feedback with supportive comments. As regards Programme A, a lesser amount of STs (67%) claimed to *always* be encouraged by supervisors' comments when receiving feedback.

Supervisors from Programmes B, C and D informed that they *always* included encouraging comments when giving feedback to practicum students. At Programme A, half of the supervisors agreed with the previous findings and the other half reported to *sometimes* encourage STs with motivating comments.

### 5.2.2 Reference to the lesson plan

When asked if supervisory feedback made reference to the lesson plan, the option "*always*" was chosen by the majority of the STs (67%). Moreover, more than half of the STs surveyed (58%) indicated that it was positive to *always* receive feedback that included comments about the lesson plans used during the lessons observed by their supervisors.

As regards the supervisors, all of them reported to “*always*” include comments about the lesson plan in their feedback. Moreover, most of the supervisors (87%) expressed that *always* including comments about the lesson plan in their feedback was positive for the STs’ development during the practicum course.

At Programme D, all the STs agreed on “*always*” receiving feedback that contained comments about the lesson plan. Consistently, most of the STs from Programme B (83%) provided the answer “*always*”. However, more than half (67%) of the STs that belonged to Programme A and half of the STs from Programme C expressed that they “*sometimes*” received feedback that contained comments about the lesson plan.

### **5.2.3 Students’ learning**

When asked about the frequency in which supervisory feedback provided comments about the STs’ interaction with their students and the way in which students learned during the lessons delivered by the STs, similar findings were reported.

Feedback containing remarks on the students’ learning process was *always* received by a significant number of STs from Programme B (83%), Programme C (67%) and by half of the STs from Programme D. At Programme A, most of the STs surveyed (67%) indicated that their supervisors *sometimes* provided feedback that made reference to the students’ learning process during the lessons delivered by the STs.

The majority of the supervisors (75%) –most of whom belonged to Programmes A and D- revealed that they *always* provided feedback that made reference to the students’ learning process and to their interaction with the STs.

### **5.2.4 STs’ classroom management techniques**

Regarding feedback that made reference to STs’ classroom management techniques, most of the STs from the four Programmes (83%) revealed that their

supervisors “*always*” provided comments on how STs managed their classes. Moreover, STs considered that *always* providing that kind of comments was a positive choice made by their supervisors.

Similarly, all the supervisors reported that it was valuable for STs to *always* receive feedback about their classroom management techniques.

Table 5.2.1 *Description of supervisory feedback according to STs and Supervisors (SUP).*

Feedback description	STs		SUP		
	(n=24)		(n=8)		
	Occurrences	%	Occurrences	%	
Encouraging comments	Always	20	83.3	7	87.5
	Sometimes	3	12.5	0	0
	Never	0	0	0	0
	No answer	1	4.2	1	12.5
Reference to the lesson plan	Always	16	66.7	8	100
	Sometimes	8	33.3	0	0
	Never	0	0	0	0
	No answer	0	0	0	0
Students' learning	Always	14	58.3	6	75
	Sometimes	9	37.5	2	25
	Never	0	0	0	0
	No answer	1	4.2	0	0
STs' classroom management techniques	Always	20	83.3	8	100
	Sometimes	4	16.7	0	0
	Never	0	0	0	0
	No answer	0	0	0	0

### 5.3 Strategies to communicate supervisory feedback

In order to investigate the strategies employed by the supervisors to communicate feedback and the frequencies in which they were used, a questionnaire was administered (see Table 5.3.1).

### 5.3.1 Written after each lesson

All the STs and all the supervisors reported to *always* receive / provide written feedback after each lesson. Furthermore, both supervisors and STs considered that it was positive that written supervisory feedback was *always* provided after the practice lessons.

### 5.3.2 Oral after each lesson

When asked how often oral feedback was provided after each lesson, the majority of the STs (70%) in the four programmes answered “*always*” receiving it. Most of the STs (67%) considered that it was positive that their supervisors “*always*” provided verbal feedback after each lesson.

Likewise, a good number of supervisors (63%) revealed that they “*always*” provided oral feedback after each lesson. Only 37% of the supervisors indicated that they “*sometimes*” provided verbal feedback after each lesson because they lacked the necessary time to do so or because they preferred STs to have written records of the feedback they received.

As regards the frequency in which oral feedback was provided in each programme, all the STs from Programmes C and D, and most of the STs from Programme B, chose the option “*always*”. However, at Programme A, the majority of the STs (67%) reported to “*sometimes*” receive oral feedback after each lesson.

All the supervisors from Programmes C and D revealed that they *always* provided oral feedback after each lesson. However, with respect to Programme A, all the supervisors chose the option “*sometimes*”. At Programme B, half of the supervisors reported “*always*” providing oral feedback after each lesson whereas the other half selected “*sometimes*”.

### 5.3.3 Informal discussions

With reference to the frequency in which supervisory feedback was informally discussed during the ELT practicum, half of the STs surveyed chose the answer “*sometimes*”. A lower number of STs (30%) indicated that supervisory feedback was “*always*” discussed informally.

With respect to the supervisors, a good number of them (63%) stated that they *sometimes* discussed feedback informally after each lesson.

As regards the frequency in which supervisory feedback was informally discussed at Programme C, a great number of the STs (67%) indicated “*always*”. At Programmes A, B and D most of the STs expressed that they “*sometimes*” discussed supervisory feedback after each lesson.

In the case of supervisors from Programmes C and D, half of them indicated “*always*” and the other half chose “*sometimes*” informally discussing supervisory feedback with the STs. All the supervisors from Programme A revealed that they *sometimes* discussed feedback informally after each lesson and at Programme B, half of the supervisors selected “*sometimes*” while the remaining half chose “*never*”.

### 5.3.4 Forums organised by the supervisors

Consistent findings were reported when the participants were asked how often feedback was communicated through forums organised by the supervisors. Half of the STs from Programme C indicated “*always*”. “*Sometimes*” was selected by 25% of the STs –mainly by the STs who belonged to the Programmes A and B- and almost half of the STs revealed that their supervisors *never* organised forums to communicate or discuss feedback.

Similarly, on the part of the supervisors, only one from Programme C expressed that he/she *always* organised forums to discuss feedback. As regards the rest of the

supervisors, half of them stated that they “*sometimes*” used that strategy while 37% indicated to “*never*” organise forums to discuss supervisory feedback with the STs.

### **5.3.5 Via e-mail**

As regards the frequency in which feedback was transmitted via e-mail, a large number of STs (71%) indicated “*never*”. More than half of the STs (54%) were indifferent to “*never*” receiving feedback via e-mail.

Consistently, nearly all the supervisors (88%) expressed that they *never* provided feedback via e-mail and 37% of them were indifferent to that answer.

## **5.4 Relationship between supervisors and STs through feedback**

The information about the relationship between supervisors and STs through feedback, which was collected through a questionnaire, was analysed in search of a description of supervisory feedback as perceived by STs and supervisors. Participants were asked about several aspects of supervisory feedback: the frequency in which supervisory feedback in the ELT practicum informed STs what to do, oriented STs, let STs to be creative, valued STs’ ideas and experiences, did not formulate suggestions to improve the practice, was structured, rejected dialogue and was confrontational (see Table 5.4.1).

Table 5.3.1 *Strategies reported to be used to communicate supervisory feedback (according to STs and Supervisors (SUP)).*

Kind of Supervisory Feedback		STs (n=24)		SUP (n=8)	
		Occurrence	%	Occurrence	%
<b>Written</b>	Always	24	100	8	100
	Sometimes	0	0	0	0
	Never	0	0	0	0
	No answer	0	0	0	0
<b>Oral</b>	Always	17	70.8	5	62.5
	Sometimes	6	25	3	37.5
	Never	0	0	0	0
	No answer	1	4.2	0	0
<b>Informal Discussions</b>	Always	7	29.2	2	25
	Sometimes	12	50	5	62.5
	Never	2	8.3	1	12.5
	No answer	3	12.5	0	0
<b>Discussion forums</b>	Always	4	16.7	1	12.5
	Sometimes	6	25	4	50
	Never	11	45.8	3	37.5
	No answer	3	12.5	0	0
<b>Via e-mail</b>	Always	1	4.2	0	0
	Sometimes	3	12.5	1	12.5
	Never	17	70.8	7	87.5
	No answer	3	12.5	0	0



#### 5.4.1 Supervisory feedback that “tells” STs what to do

As regards the frequency in which supervisory feedback included comments such as “I tell him/her what to do”, almost half of the STs (42%) selected the option “*sometimes*”. Only 17% of the STs expressed that supervisory feedback was “*always*” directive and indicated them what to do in their practicum classes.

STs expressed that their supervisors *sometimes* told them what to do when it was necessary to: design exams, present lesson plans, present a particular topic, pay attention to students’ particular needs and improve some aspects regarding the STs’ demeanour (for example, tone of voice).

Similarly, according to most of the supervisors (75%), they “*sometimes*” informed STs what to do. “*Never*” telling STs what to do by means of supervisory feedback was reported by 25% of the supervisors.

Supervisors stated that they *sometimes* told STs what to do in the following situations: when future teachers lacked ideas or felt unsure as regards how to present a topic, when STs needed help to reflect on their practice, when STs did not know how to apply specific classroom management techniques, give instructions or check activities, and when STs needed guidance to incorporate resources that developed the four macro-skills.

Consistently, a reduced number of STs (17%) from the four programmes (A, B, C and D) reported that they were *always* told what to do when lacking ideas to plan their lessons.

With respect to the supervisors, all the ones that belonged to Programmes A and C expressed that their feedback “*sometimes*” told STs what to do. For half of these supervisors, “*sometimes*” indicating STs the best course of action during particular classroom situations was a positive decision while for the other half, it was a negative choice. As regards Programmes B and D, half of the supervisors indicated that they “*sometimes*” told STs what to do and half of them chose the answer “*never*”.

### 5.4.2 Supervisory feedback that orients STs

When asked about the frequency in which supervisory feedback oriented STs during the practicum, most of the STs (79%) chose “*always*” as their preferred answer. Some examples of instances of supervisory orientation suggested by the STs were: when the teaching practice needed to be improved, when STs asked for ideas to motivate students, and when it was necessary to make some changes to the lesson plans.

In agreement with the STs, feedback was reported to *always* orient the STs by the majority of the supervisors (63%). Supervisors revealed that they oriented STs when the latter had problems designing activities different from the textbook and when STs felt uncertain as regards what to do in the classroom. Moreover, supervisors explained that they oriented STs always making sure that future teachers’ ideas were respected and encouraging STs to evaluate advantages and disadvantages of the suggestions in order to make their own decisions.

As regards each ELT Programme, all the STs from Programme C and most of the STs (83%) from the Programmes A and B, expressed that supervisory feedback “*always*” oriented them. At Programme D, half of the STs selected the answer “*always*” and the other half reported that they “*sometimes*” received orientative feedback from their supervisors.

Similarly, all the supervisors from Programme C indicated that they “*always*” oriented STs. However, half of the supervisors from Programmes A, B and D selected the option “*always*” and the remaining half revealed that they “*sometimes*” provided feedback that oriented STs during their practicum experiences.

### 5.4.3 Supervisory feedback that allows STs to be creative

When asked about the frequency in which supervisory feedback allowed STs to be creative during the teaching practice, a significant number of STs (83%) chose the option “*always*”. STs pointed out that they were allowed to be creative when inventing games or activities for their lessons.

As regards the supervisors, all of them indicated that they *always* let STs to be creative during their practicum classes. For most of the supervisors surveyed, allowing STs to innovate and experiment new ideas in their practicum lessons was beneficial for STs' development and preparation for future experiences.

With respect to each programme of studies, all the STs from Programmes A and C reported that they were *always* allowed to be creative during the teaching practice. Most of the STs (83%) from Programme B also chose the answer "*always*" and at Programme D, half of the STs selected "*always*" while the remaining half indicated that they were "*sometimes*" allowed by their supervisors to be creative while planning a lesson during the practicum course.

#### **5.4.4 Supervisory feedback that values STs' ideas and experiences**

Regarding how often supervisors valued STs' ideas and experiences while providing feedback during the teaching practice, most of the STs (71%) selected "*always*". The majority of the STs that chose that answer belonged to Programme C (100%) and Programmes A and B (67%). STs reported that they felt their ideas and experiences were valued when they were allowed to incorporate new activities to the lesson plans and when supervisors noticed specific moments of the lessons observed and commented about them in their feedback.

For nearly all the supervisors (88%), STs' ideas and experiences were *always* valued. Supervisors explained that a way to value STs' ideas was to praise them when they applied strategies that motivated students (for example, adapting activities from textbooks and developing innovating presentations).

#### 5.4.5 Supervisory feedback that formulates suggestions to improve the teaching practice

Concerning supervisory feedback that formulated suggestions to improve the teaching practice, most of the STs (88%) indicated that it was *always* provided by their supervisors.

However, a significant number of supervisors (75%) expressed that their feedback during the teaching practice never provided suggestions on how to improve STs' teaching. Supervisors explained that they did not formulate suggestions when they considered that STs should be autonomous and when supervisors wanted STs to make their own decisions according to their own experiences. This is illustrated by the following comments:

*“lo oriento cuando veo que realmente está desorientado, siempre trato de respetar sus ideas y haciendo sugerencias de mejoras”, “suelo referirme más a lo que ‘deberían’ hacer y no lo que ‘tienen’ que hacer”.* (SUP 1 from Programme B)

Half of the supervisors from Programmes A and D revealed that their feedback *“sometimes”* did not formulate suggestions to improve their STs' teaching practice. The supervisors explained that they only suggested STs what to do in the following situations:

*“cuando me parece que hay actividades que merecen ser puestas a prueba para ver si funcionan con ese grupo en particular”, “cuando necesitan sugerencias sobre cómo proveer consignas y feedback a los alumnos durante la clase”.* (SUP 2 from Programme A)

#### 5.4.6 Structured supervisory feedback

This research study also investigated the frequency in which supervisory feedback was structured. There were similarities in the number of STs that expressed that supervisory feedback was *“always”* or *“sometimes”* structured. STs specified that supervisory feedback was structured when they felt that their supervisors expected the

lesson plans to be followed during the lessons without modifications, as shown in the following comment:

*“en ocasiones, cuando me devuelven el feedback siento que los parámetros que tenemos que tener en cuenta como docentes al momento de evaluar a nuestros alumnos, no son aplicados cuando soy yo la evaluada. Por ejemplo, el ser flexible con el plan y adecuarlo al momento, pero cuando decido saltar una actividad porque veo que los alumnos no responden positivamente, o cuando decido dedicarle más tiempo a otra porque veo que surgen problemas, en el feedback se evalúa como que no respete el seguimiento del plan”*. (ST 1 from Programme D)

One half of the supervisors surveyed indicated that their feedback during the teaching practice was *sometimes* structured while the other half reported that their feedback was *never* structured. They explained that, in some cases, they had to be structured at the beginning of the teaching practicum in order to guide future teachers. Moreover, a supervisor explained that he/she *sometimes* structured the way he/she provided feedback so that it could be simpler for STs to understand: *“estructuro el feedback de una manera que pienso que es sencillo de leer y comprender, según criterios acordados en la cátedra”* (SUP 3 from Programme A)

#### **5.4.7 Supervisory feedback that rejects dialogue**

As regards the frequency in which supervisory feedback rejected dialogue between STs and supervisors during the teaching practice, nearly all the STs (92%) chose the answer *“never”*.

On the part of the supervisors, all of them indicated that they *never* rejected dialogue. Only half of the supervisors from Programme B expressed that it may be positive for STs if supervisory feedback rejected dialogue between supervisors and supervisees. Unfortunately, this participant did not expand his/her answer as regards the reasons why it may be positive to reject dialogue with his/her students.

#### 5.4.8 Confrontational supervisory feedback

As regards the frequency in which practicum supervisors confronted STs through supervisory feedback, a significant number of STs (71%) opted for the answer “*never*”.

Similarly, all the supervisors agreed on the fact that they were *never* confrontational with STs when providing feedback on the teaching practice. Only half of the supervisors that belonged to Programme B indicated that it may be beneficial for STs if supervisory feedback were *sometimes* confrontational since it promoted the exchange of ideas and interaction between supervisors and STs: “*da lugar a la discusión-interacción entre practicantes y supervisores, favorece el intercambio de ideas*”. (SUP 4 from Programme B)

Table 5.4.1 *Kind of supervisory feedback provided by Supervisors (SUP) to STs.*

Kind of supervisory feedback		STs		SUP	
		(n=24)		(n=8)	
		Occurrences	%	Occurrences	%
Directive (“tells” STs what to do)	Always	4	16.7	0	0
	Sometimes	10	41.7	6	75
	Never	8	33.3	2	25
	No answer	2	8.3	0	0
Orientative	Always	19	79.2	5	62.5
	Sometimes	5	20.8	3	37.5
	Never	0	0	0	0
	No answer	0	0	0	0
Feedback that allows STs to be creative	Always	20	83.3	8	100
	Sometimes	4	16.7	0	0
	Never	0	0	0	0
	No answer	0	0	0	0
Feedback that values STs ideas/experiences	Always	17	70.8	7	87.5
	Sometimes	7	29.2	1	12.5
	Never	0	0	0	0
	No answer	0	0	0	0
Feedback that does not formulate suggestions	Always	0	0	0	0
	Sometimes	0	0	2	25
	Never	21	87.5	6	75
	No answer	3	12.5	0	0
Structured	Always	4	16.7	0	0
	Sometimes	9	37.5	4	50
	Never	8	33.3	4	50
	No answer	3	12.5	0	0
Feedback that rejects dialogue	Always	0	0	0	0
	Sometimes	0	0	0	0
	Never	22	91.7	8	100
	No answer	2	8.3	0	0
Confrontational	Always	0	0	0	0
	Sometimes	1	4.2	0	0
	Never	21	87.5	8	100
	No answer	2	8.3	0	0

## 5.5 Feelings provoked by supervisory feedback

To investigate the feelings generated in STs as a result of receiving supervisory feedback during the teaching practice, a semi-guided questionnaire was administered both to STs and supervisors from the four ELT Programmes selected in this study (see Table 5.5.1).

The feelings that, according to the majority of the STs and the supervisors, were experienced by STs as a result of supervisory feedback corresponded to: *self-critical*, *enriched*, *stimulated* and *respected*.

Although most of the STs (75%) indicated that they also felt *motivated* after receiving feedback from their supervisors, a small number of supervisors (37%) perceived the same.

A less significant number of STs and supervisors expressed that STs felt *frustrated*, *uncertain*, *surprised* and *self-confident* after being provided with supervisory feedback.

Both STs and supervisors reported that STs never felt *angry* as a consequence of receiving feedback from their supervisors during the teaching practice.

Two feelings that only a small number of supervisors (12.5%) perceived as being experienced by STs as a result of supervisory feedback were *indifferent* and *confused*.

As regards the feelings *uncomfortable* and *independent*, only 1 ST selected them as a reaction provoked on him/her after receiving feedback from his/her supervisors during the practicum experience.



Table 5.5.1 *Feelings generated in STs as a result of receiving supervisory feedback according to STs and Supervisors (SUP).*

Feelings	STs (n=24)	SUP (n=8)	PA		PB		PC		PD	
	Occ. %	Occ. %	STs Occ. %	SUP Occ. %	STs Occ. %	SUP Occ. %	STs Occ. %	SUP Occ. %	STs Occ. %	SUP Occ. %
<b>Stimulated</b>	15 62.5	5 62.5	4 66.7	1 50	3 50	1 50	4 66.7	2 100	4 66.7	1 50
<b>Motivated</b>	18 75	3 37.5	6 100	2 100	5 83.3	1 50	5 83.3	1 50	2 33.3	1 50
<b>Respected</b>	14 58.3	8 100	4 66.7	2 100	3 50	2 100	5 83.3	2 100	2 33.3	2 100
<b>Uncomfortable</b>	1 4.2	0 0	0 0	0 0	0 0	0 0	1 16.7	0 0	0 0	0 0
<b>Indifferent</b>	0 0	1 12.5	0 0	1 50	0 0	0 0	0 0	0 0	0 0	0 0
<b>Frustrated</b>	4 16.7	4 50	1 16.7	1 50	0 0	2 100	1 16.7	1 50	2 33.3	2 100
<b>Self-confident</b>	11 45.8	2 25	3 50	0 0	3 50	1 50	2 33.3	1 50	3 50	0 0
<b>Enriched</b>	15 62.5	5 62.5	4 66.7	1 50	4 66.7	2 100	4 66.7	1 50	3 50	1 50
<b>Angry</b>	0 0	0 0	0 0	0 0	0 0	0 0	0 0	0 0	0 0	0 0
<b>Surprised</b>	4 16.7	1 12.5	0 0	0 0	2 33.3	0 0	0 0	1 50	2 33.3	0 0
<b>Confused</b>	0 0	1 12.5	0 0	0 0	0 0	0 0	0 0	1 50	0 0	0 0
<b>Independent</b>	1 4.2	0 0	0 0	0 0	1 16.7	0 0	0 0	0 0	0 0	0 0
<b>Self-critical</b>	15 62.5	7 87.5	4 66.7	1 50	2 33.3	2 100	3 50	2 100	6 100	2 100
<b>Uncertain</b>	2 8.3	2 25	1 16.7	0 0	0 0	0 0	0 0	0 0	1 16.7	2 100

*Note.* Oc = Occurrences; PA = Programme A; PB = Programme B; PC = Programme C; PD = Programme D.

## 5.6 Benefits of supervisory feedback

To investigate which were the benefits of supervisory feedback, a questionnaire that contained open-ended questions was administered to the participants of this study. The themes and sub-themes that emerged from the answers as well as the references (i.e. number of times that each sub-theme was mentioned by the participants), are shown in Table 5.6.1.

The most frequently mentioned benefits of feedback were related to the *type of feedback that focused on weaknesses/strengths* (11 references made by the STs -most of them from Programme A- and 4 references made by the supervisors, 1 from Programme C and 2 from Programme D) and to the *development of personal/professional skills* that feedback promoted on future teachers. This type of feedback was characterised as one which developed *self-criticism* (6 references by the STs and 4 references made by the supervisors), *self-confidence* (11 references by the STs –mostly from Programme B- and 4 references by the supervisors –from all the universities except from Programme B) and *motivation* (5 references by the STs and 1 reference by the supervisors). Moreover, according to the STs and the supervisors, feedback that *improved the teaching practice* focusing on *teacher roles* (3 references by the STs and 1 reference by the supervisors), *use of the board* (2 references by the STs), *lesson planning* (1 reference by the STs and 3 references by the supervisors) and *classroom management* (1 reference made by the supervisors), was beneficial.

As a result, benefits of supervisory feedback were connected to comments that helped STs to improve their teaching practice, focusing on weaknesses and strengths identified during the lesson observed, and feedback that promoted self-criticism, self-confidence and motivation to grow as professionals.

Table 5.6.1 *Benefits of supervisory feedback: Distribution of references made by the STs and the supervisors and percentages in relation to the total of STs and Supervisors (SUP) surveyed.*

THEMES	SUB-THEMES	STs (n=24)	STs PA	STs PB	STs PC	STs PD	SUP (n=8)	SUP PA	SUP PB	SUP PC	SUP PD
<b>Improvement of teaching practice</b>	Teacher roles	3			2	1	1			1	
	Use of the board	2	1			1					
	Lesson planning	1		1			3	1		1	1
	Classroom management						1	1			
<b>Type of feedback</b>	Focus on weaknesses/strengths	11	4	3	2	2	4		1	1	2
<b>Development of personal/professional skills</b>	Self-criticism	6	1	1	2	2	4	2		1	1
	Self-confidence	11	3	5	2	1	4	2		1	1
	Motivation	5	1	3		1	1			1	

Note. PA = Programme A; PB = Programme B; PC = Programme C; PD = Programme D.

## 5.7 Negative aspects of supervisory feedback

As regards the negative aspects of feedback (see Table 5.7.1), a ST from Programme D mentioned the *negative comments* received about *demeanour*, specifically *tone of voice*. A ST from Programme C and another from Programme D referred to *comments that only focused on weaknesses*, and a ST from Programme B pointed out that feedback that showed supervisors' *unawareness of the groups being taught* was negative. Having *different supervisors* and consequently, *different considerations of lesson planning* was also negative, as highlighted by a ST from Programme B. Moreover, *time constraints* resulting in *limited observation time* was a negative characteristic of feedback mentioned by a ST from Programme A. *Written feedback* was

identified as negative by a ST from Programme A and by a supervisor from the same programme. *Evaluative feedback* was considered a drawback by a supervisor from Programme D and feedback that was *too much centred on STs' feelings* was pointed out as negative by a supervisor from Programme C.

Consequently, negative aspects of supervisory feedback were related to comments that referred to weaknesses, STs' personal characteristics, and comments showing lack of awareness of the students being taught. Furthermore, lack of time to observe STs and being supervised by more than one teacher was said to result in negative experiences. As regards the kind of feedback received or given, supervisors pointed out that feedback that was written, evaluative and centred on STs' feelings was usually ineffective.

### **5.8 Supervisory feedback that promotes reflection-action**

When asked if feedback promoted a process of reflection-action that benefited STs, all the supervisors and almost all (96%) of the STs answered affirmatively. The reasons for their positive responses, which are summarised in Table 5.8.1, resided in the *type of feedback* provided and the *supervisors' expertise*.

For the STs (7 references), feedback that was *detailed, objective* and *verbal* was the one that promoted reflection. A supervisor from Programme A also agreed on the fact that oral feedback benefited reflective practices. STs (9 references) and a supervisor from Programme B expressed that feedback that *focused on strengths and weaknesses* encouraged reflection and a ST from Programme A pointed out that, when feedback was given *after the lesson*, STs felt more relaxed and open to the supervisors' comments. Supervisors (6 references) stressed that feedback itself could *promote self-reflection* by focusing on *STs' feelings*. Moreover, STs (10 references) and a supervisor from Programme D indicated that *suggestions and advice* offered by the supervisors could promote a process of reflection-action that benefited STs.

Table 5.7.1 *Negative aspects of supervisory feedback. Distribution of references made by the STs and the Supervisors (SUP).*

<b>THEMES</b>	<b>SUB-THEMES</b>	<b>STs (n=24)</b>	<b>STs PA</b>	<b>STs PB</b>	<b>STs PC</b>	<b>STs PD</b>	<b>SUP (n=8)</b>	<b>SUP PA</b>	<b>SUP PB</b>	<b>SUP PC</b>	<b>SUP PD</b>
<b>Focus on STs' demeanour</b>	Tone of voice	1				1					
<b>Negative comments</b>	Focus on weaknesses only	2			1	1					
	Unawareness of problematic groups	1		1							
<b>Different supervisors</b>	Different considerations of lesson planning	1		1							
<b>Time constraints</b>	Limited observation time	1	1								
<b>Type of feedback</b>	Written	1	1				1	1			
	Evaluative						1				1
	Too much centred on STs' feelings						1			1	

*Note.* Oc = Occurrences; PA = Programme A; PB = Programme B; PC = Programme C; PD = Programme D.

Table 5.8.1 *Reasons why supervisory feedback promotes a process of reflection-action. Distribution of references made by the STs and the Supervisors (SUP).*

THEMES	SUB-THEMES	STs (n=24)	STs PA	STs PB	STs PC	STs PD	SUP (n=8)	SUP PA	SUP PB	SUP PC	SUP PD
<b>Type of feedback</b>	Detailed – objective	7	2	1	3	1					
	Verbal	6	3	1	1	1	1	1			
	Focus on weaknesses-strengths	9	2	3	2	2	1		1		
	After the lesson – relaxed atmosphere	1	1								
	Promotion of self-reflection /Focus on feelings						6	2	1	2	1
<b>Supervisors' expertise</b>	Suggestions - Advice	10	3	5	1	1	1				1

Note. PA = Programme A; PB = Programme B; PC = Programme C; PD = Programme D.

### 5.9 Supervisory feedback that promotes self-confidence

Both STs and supervisors agreed on the fact that supervisory feedback helped STs to acquire self-confidence to face a group of students. As shown in Table 5.9.1, the reasons for this response, according to the participants, were related to the *type of feedback received/given* and *supervisors' expertise*.

More than half of the STs surveyed indicated that feedback that focused on *strengths* made them feel self-confident to face a group of students. Moreover, feedback that offered *suggestions, advice* and that promoted *critical thinking* was also considered crucial by the STs (7 references) and by the supervisors (3 references). In addition, most

of the participants (10 references made by STs and 5 references by the supervisors) pointed out that *supervisors' expertise* and their *encouraging suggestions* stimulated future teachers to feel self-confident and ready to face a class.

Therefore, it can be concluded that, according to the supervisors and STs surveyed, two important factors to promote STs' reflection and self-confidence were the supervisors' expert skill and knowledge in the practicum field as well as feedback that suggested, advised and pointed out strengths and weaknesses.

Table 5.9.1 *Reasons why supervisory feedback helps / does not help STs to acquire self-confidence to face a group of students. Distribution of references made by the STs and the Supervisors (SUP).*

THEMES	SUB-THEMES	STs (n=24)	STs PA	STs PB	STs PC	STs PD	SUP (n=8)	SUP PA	SUP PB	SUP PC	SUP PD
<b>Type of feedback</b>	Focus on strengths	13	4	4	3	2					
	Suggestions - advice	10	3	4	2	1	7	2	1	2	2
	Self-critical	7	2	2	2	1	3	1	1	1	
<b>Supervisors' expertise</b>	Encouraging suggestions	10	3	3	2	2	5	1	2	1	1

*Note.* PA = Programme A; PB = Programme B; PC = Programme C; PD = Programme D.

### 5.10 Follow-up interviews

The follow-up interviews served to corroborate the findings obtained through the questionnaire administered to STs and supervisors and provided more details for some of the questionnaire responses. This part of the research, qualitatively explored STs' and supervisors' perceptions of supervisory feedback in the ELT practicum. Answers to the semi-structured interviews were classified according to the themes identified in the questionnaire.

### 5.10.1 Frequency of supervisory feedback

Responses to the questionnaire revealed that most of the STs always received feedback after each lesson. This was also reflected in the semi-structured interviews and STs pointed out that, in case feedback could not be provided after each lesson, it had to be given “*at the beginning, middle and at the end of the teaching practice*” in order to allow some time for the STs to modify those practices that needed improvement. The ST from Programme A commented that it was useful to receive frequent feedback to try to surpass themselves and measure progress.

### 5.10.2 Description of supervisory feedback

The STs interviewed described feedback as “constructive comments” that an observer offered to a teacher or ST to point out aspects of the teaching practice that could be difficult to notice while teaching. As ST 2 from Programme A expressed:

*“sirve para tratar de mejorar, es decir, creo que a veces cuando estamos dando las clases hay distintos aspectos de nuestro comportamiento, o como nos desempeñamos, que no le prestamos atención, entonces, si hay una persona externa observando eso, ya sea algo positivo o negativo, nos puede informar de lo que ven y eso ayuda, si es algo no muy bueno, para que trate de mejorarlo”.*

ST 3 from Programme B expressed that feedback should be humble and respectful, taking into account the STs’ efforts and feelings:

*“rescato que uno tiene que dar feedback lo más humildemente posible, y pensando en la otra persona, en el esfuerzo de la persona ahí parada, que no es fácil... el feedback es devolver lo que uno vio de la mejor manera posible, destacando las virtudes de esa persona y tratando de hacer sugerencias en aquellas cosas que quizás no estuvieron, a la vista de uno, tan bien”.*

Confirming the responses obtained in the questionnaires, the interviewees revealed that STs expected to be informed about their weaknesses and strengths and that it was positive to receive suggestions and recommendations on how to improve the ways of teaching.



ST 2 from Programme A mentioned that feedback had to include comments about students' learning process, teacher roles, pronunciation and use of English. Moreover, ST 3 from Programme B expressed that supervisors had to monitor STs and detect weak explanations or presentations that needed to be remedied. ST 1 from Programme D agreed with all the aspects mentioned by ST 3 and added that feedback had to focus on STs' presence and attitudes in the classroom:

*“yo creo que es un conjunto de todo, desde el comportamiento de los chicos, la presencia del practicante, la forma que tiene el practicante de pararse frente al aula... creo que es importante también tener en cuenta la presencia, es decir, no es vestirse con ropa cara pero sí tener una buena presencia que te diferencie del alumno desde ese punto de partida”.*

### **5.10.3 Strategies to communicate supervisory feedback**

As regards the mostly valued strategies to communicate feedback, the STs mentioned that pointing out the strengths as well as the weaknesses of the lesson observed and making suggestions on how to improve the teaching practice were essential. As ST 2 expressed: *“siempre mostrar las fortalezas y las debilidades, que cosas te parecieron que estuvieron buenas y que cosas no tan buenas... y sugerencias, sugerir a la persona”* (from Programme A).

In addition, written feedback was considered useful because it offered STs the possibility of rereading it as many times as desired. As regards this, ST 1 said *“las palabras se las lleva el viento”* and added that, in her view, it was helpful to receive written feedback. However, she also remarked that it would be better to receive verbal feedback more frequently to have the opportunity to discuss the comments with the supervisor, sharing opinions and clarifying doubts:

*“se debería sumar siempre esta parte oral, el intercambio... decir qué es lo que te pasó y, quizás, si tenemos debilidades en cuanto al manejo del grupo, qué estrategias el resto de los compañeros te pueden aportar para mejorar esa parte... o quizás el mismo docente te puede dar consejos”* (Programme D).

Therefore, the three STs interviewed explained that it was better to receive both verbal and written feedback and to have informal discussions with their supervisors. ST 3 mentioned that discussions with the supervisors were instances necessary to, for example, explain the reasons for decisions made during the lessons observed and to comment on particular characteristics of the group of students that went unnoticed if the supervisors were not familiarised with the school.

#### **5.10.4 Feelings provoked by supervisory feedback**

All the STs pointed out that, mainly when receiving feedback for the first time, they felt *frustrated*. However, they admitted that, in all the cases, they agreed with their supervisors' comments, which focused on weaknesses rather than on strengths.

The interviewees observed that, once they got used to receiving feedback, they could concentrate more on its positive aspects and regard it as an opportunity for improvement.

ST 1 explained that expressions such as “adequate” or “acceptable”, when referring to a specific aspect of the lesson, were not sufficient. In contrast, she described those comments as having been “shocking” for her. Thus, ST 1 revealed that she expected feedback to contain accurate and thorough descriptions of her performance in the classroom.

#### **5.10.5 Benefits of supervisory feedback**

When talking about the benefits of supervisory feedback, the STs referred to feedback that described both the *strengths* and *weaknesses* observed during the lesson and that helped STs to develop both *personal and professional skills*, in accordance with the responses to the questionnaires.

The STs indicated that feedback made them aware of mistakes and, as a consequence, their practices improved. Besides, future teachers revealed that they felt

enriched if their supervisors offered tips, advice and suggestions that included examples of their own experiences as professionals.

#### **5.10.6 Negative aspects of supervisory feedback**

For the STs interviewed, supervisory feedback had been never negative. These future teachers expressed their satisfaction regarding the kind of feedback received but pointed out that written feedback should always be complemented by verbal feedback or informal discussions with the supervisor. They indicated that written comments could have been clarified and expanded in a conversation and that STs should have been given a voice. As ST 2 pointed out:

*“prefiero la comunicación oral y escrita... si se pueden dar las dos, mejor... si después de la clase se puede compartir algo oralmente y después recibir algo escrito, porque ayuda a que también yo pueda explicar cosas que quien observa no pudo presenciar o no sabe como vienen las clases”*. (Programme A)

#### **5.10.7 Supervisory feedback that promotes reflection-action and self-confidence**

According to the STs interviewed, for feedback to promote reflection-action and self-confidence, it should be: *detailed, complete, objective, focused on strengths and weaknesses, legitimate (i.e. supervisors gave reasons for the comments provided)* and it should offer: *advice, suggestions, tips and opportunities to interact with the supervisor taking into account the STs' feelings*.

Moreover, the STs remarked that while observing a lesson, supervisors should remain “invisible”, being careful not to influence the lesson in any way, avoiding any interaction with the students or the school teacher. As ST 3 expressed:

*“la persona que observa debe permanecer lo más ajena a la clase posible, no estar interactuando con los alumnos, ni con el practicante, ni con el docente... si veo hablando a quien va a observarme, me siento nerviosa, es como que estoy más pendiente de eso, de qué es lo que puede llegar a estar diciendo, que de lo que yo estoy haciendo en la clase”*. (Programme B)

As regards the characteristics of STs being observed, all the STs interviewed said that they should be “relaxed” and act “naturally”, as if they were not “being evaluated”

*“tratar de comportarse de la misma forma como si no estuviera siendo observado porque sino está mintiéndole a la otra persona. Tenés que tratar de no ser consciente de que te observan...para comportarte de la manera más natural posible, haciendo lo que hacés siempre, no cambiar sólo para que la otra persona te vea”.* (ST 2 from Programme A)

Moreover, the STs pointed out that, if the aspects mentioned before were considered, feedback was likely to be helpful and authentic.

STs’ and university supervisors’ perceptions of supervisory feedback present significant similarities in accordance with a) the frequency in which feedback is communicated, b) the description of supervisory feedback, c) the strategies to communicate feedback, d) the relationship between supervisors and STs through feedback, e) the feelings provoked by supervisory feedback, f) the benefits of supervisory feedback, g) the negative aspects of feedback, h) the kind of supervisory feedback that promotes reflection-action, and i) the kind of supervisory feedback that promotes self-confidence to face a group of students.

The consideration of those perceptions deepens the existing knowledge about the teaching practicum and provides information to characterise supervisory feedback. Moreover, the research findings offer relevant data in order to understand, interpret and anticipate the impact of supervisory feedback on STs and university supervisors in the ELT practicum.

In all, this chapter has presented the study findings as they related to the research questions posed in the study and to the responses to the questionnaire and follow-up interviews, which gathered data that offered more in-depth insights on STs’ and supervisors’ perceptions of supervisory feedback.

## CHAPTER VI

### DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

In this chapter, the main findings with regard to the research objectives are summarised and discussed in the light of the literature. Furthermore, the limitations of this study and suggestions for further research are considered. This chapter concludes describing the theoretical and pedagogical implications of the research results.

#### 6.1 Discussion

This study investigated the perceptions of supervisory feedback of student-teachers and university supervisors that were involved in the teaching practicum during the academic year 2012, in four EFL teacher education programmes at three public universities from the central region of Argentina.

The results indicate that both groups of participants –STs and supervisors- agree on the fact that feedback is *always* provided *after each lesson* and positively value that frequency. Moreover, STs indicate that receiving feedback regularly, or at least at specific points during their teaching practice such as at the beginning, middle and end, is crucial to measure progress and improve.

Most of the STs and the supervisors state that it is positive to receive or provide feedback that includes *encouraging comments*, makes *reference to the lesson plan*, refers to *the students' learning* and provides *information about the STs' classroom management techniques*. These findings are consistent with previous studies that showed that STs prefer to be given feedback that acknowledges the kind of activities included in the lesson plan and that makes reference to their interaction with the group of students (Leshem & Bar-hama, 2007). Moreover, confirming White's (2007) findings, STs express that *systematic* and *objective* feedback is positive for their professional development and, in agreement with Viáfara González (2005) and Smith (2010), STs expect feedback to clearly indicate what their *strengths* and *weaknesses* are. Nevertheless, regarding whether supervisory feedback is perceived as structured or not,

most of the participants indicate that sometimes it is but appear to prefer feedback that is “never structured”. Some supervisors explain that, at the beginning of the practicum, their feedback is structured with the intention of making it easier for STs to understand it.

With regard to the strategies to communicate feedback, all the STs and the supervisors always receive or provide *written* feedback after each lesson. They positively value this strategy but also reveal that *verbal* feedback should complement the written comments. Particularly, STs and supervisors from PA coincide in that they rarely receive or provide oral feedback and STs claim that it would be necessary to add a verbal instance for them to express their opinions, clarify doubts and discuss aspects that cannot be covered by written feedback only. It is encouraging to compare these results with those by Babkie (1998 as cited in White, 2007) who maintains that both spoken and written feedback need to be given, and that each should cover positives and negatives.

The results show that, although STs consider them essential, oral strategies to communicate feedback are infrequent. This finding is in agreement with Rosemary, Richard and Ngara’s (2013) study which showed that a common problem during the teaching practice resides in the lack of dialogue between supervisors and supervisees, which may impinge on the effectiveness of supervision. The participants reveal that, even though feedback never rejects dialogue, they sometimes or never participate in *informal discussions* or *forums* organised by their supervisors, except for most of the STs and supervisors from PC who express that they always discuss feedback informally or in forums. According to White (2007) and Ferguson (2011), STs expect to be given feedback in spoken format and Smith (2010) describes feedback as the basis for dialogue.

In general, STs and supervisors reveal that they never receive or provide feedback *via e-mail*, a strategy found to be appropriate for the final practicum since it reduces the stress associated with supervisors’ observations and increases independence (Le Cornu & White, 2000).

With respect to the relationship between STs and supervisors through feedback, participants' responses show that sometimes it is necessary that supervisors *tell STs what to do*. For instance, when STs need help to plan a lesson or manage a class. In addition, the results reveal that feedback *always orients* future teachers, and participants positively value this frequency. Orientative feedback occurs, for example, when STs ask for ideas to implement in their lessons or when they need to make some changes to their lesson plans. Supervisors state that their orientations encourage STs to become critical and independent by helping them to make their own decisions.

Most of the participants recognise that supervisory feedback is *never confrontational*, *always promotes creativity* and *always values STs' ideas and experiences*. As an example, STs point out the instances when they intend to innovate in their lessons by inventing their own games or activities and are consequently praised by their supervisors. These findings further support the idea of González Ramírez (2012) who concluded that feedback increases the possibilities of instruction by encouraging STs to try new methodologies and activities that they would not try otherwise. Furthermore, participants observe and appreciate that supervisors always *formulate suggestions* to improve the teaching practice. However, some supervisors point out that they do not formulate suggestions when they consider that STs should have some choice and control to become independent professionals. This idea is consistent with Brandt's (2008) and Gürsoy's (2013) who suggest that, in order to develop autonomy, future teachers should explore and identify their weaknesses themselves.

STs and supervisors agree on the fact that, after receiving supervisory feedback, STs most frequently feel *self-critical*, *stimulated*, *enriched*, *respected* and *frustrated*. This last feeling mainly occurs when STs receive feedback for the first time and the supervisor focuses on weaknesses rather than on strengths. However, once the STs get used to the supervisors' comments, they perceive feedback as an opportunity to become better teachers.

Other feelings mentioned by both groups of participants but to a lesser extent include *motivated*, *uncertain*, *surprised* and *self-confident*. Surprisingly, unlike the supervisors, a few STs state that feedback makes them feel *independent*, a feeling that

supervisors reveal they would like to inspire in their students. *Uncomfortable* and *indifferent* are also indicated by STs and *confused* is only mentioned by the supervisors.

It is interesting to note that, as the ST from PA points out, feedback that contains expressions such as *adequate* or *acceptable*, without further explanations, is not sufficient and described as *shocking*. These comments are consistent with Ferguson (2011) who explains that more personal feedback is perceived to have a greater relevance to personal learning whereas feedback such as one word, short unexplained responses, ticks or crosses are of no value at all.

Hence, participants consider that negative supervisory feedback is: mostly focused on weaknesses, not informed about the characteristics of the class being taught, evaluative and written without allowing dialogue to take place. Furthermore, two difficulties emerged from the qualitative analysis of the interviews: 1) the supervisors' lack of time to observe the STs teaching, and 2) the incongruence caused by being supervised by more than one teacher, a situation also found problematic by Rosemary, Richard and Ngara (2013).

For feedback to be reflective, supervisors have to consider STs' emotional blocks and help them overcome their fear, nervousness, and anxiety (Soykurt, 2010). However, according to a supervisor from PC, feedback that is too much centered on STs' feelings may overlook fundamental aspects of the teaching practice itself. As a consequence, the quality and effectiveness of supervisory feedback may be reduced.

Both the STs and the supervisors that participated in this research study are in agreement that feedback can be beneficial and promote reflection-action as well as self-confidence to face a group of students if it focuses not only on weaknesses but also on strengths. Moreover, this type of feedback is essential to improve the teaching practice and develop *personal/professional skills*. As Viáfara González (2005) found out, it is important to use friendly observation instruments because they encourage reflective processes such as self-evaluation and self-inquiry.

STs and supervisors claim that supervisory feedback should reflect the supervisors' expertise by offering tips, advice and suggestions, including strategies



based on the supervisors' own experiences. Besides, feedback should always provide opportunities for interaction between STs and supervisors if the goal is to promote reflection and critical thinking.

On the whole, the results produced in this study support previous research (Bunton, Stimpson & Lopez-Real, 2002 as cited in Tang & Chow, 2007) that showed that less structured observation forms that allow more descriptive and questioning comments are likely to encourage a reflective approach to teaching. Moreover, as suggested by Brinko (1993, as cited in Brandt, 2008), the findings illustrate that feedback is more effective when it is provided in a psychologically safe environment and when it reduces STs' uncertainty by allowing for response and interaction. In addition, Villanueva de Debat (2010) found out that "STs appreciated being offered suggestions for improvement and being praised for their strengths, which had a positive influence on their self-confidence" (p. 76).

STs interviewed also highlight that, while observing a ST teaching, supervisors should be careful not to influence the lesson in any way and try to remain as "invisible" as possible. As regards the STs being observed, they should behave as if they were not "being evaluated". For STs, feedback is more likely to be authentic if the attitudes before-mentioned are followed. As Ferrier-Kerr (2009) suggests, it is important that those involved in the teaching practice develop environments of co-participation in the practicum to enable professional relationships to be established and which can contribute to developing new insights into supervisors' and STs' practices.

In brief, "supervision is to be regarded as a process of interpersonal relationships whereby people would listen to each other, bring alike problems, come together with resources to find solutions and feel secure in the educational process" (Wiles & Bondi, 1996 as cited in Hişmanoğlu & Hişmanoğlu, 2010, p. 29).

## **6.2 Limitations of the study and suggestions for further research**

This study shed light on STs' and supervisors' perceptions of supervisory feedback in the ELT practicum. However, it is difficult to make claims about the generalizability of the knowledge gained in this research since it just involved participants from four EFL teacher education programmes from the central region of Argentina.

In addition, participants' geographically dispersed locations posed some drawbacks while collecting the data since, although not knowing the researcher may be a guarantor of participants' anonymity and neutrality, it may also be a cause for resistance to cooperate. Also, STs' limited use of videoconferencing technology reduced the number of interviews that could be carried out.

It is possible to identify a number of areas for future research into supervisory feedback which would help to generate deeper insights on the teaching practicum.

An example of a future research topic is to examine the perceptions of STs and supervisors from other socio-cultural contexts.

Furthermore, the teaching practice involves three parties, the ST, the school teacher (or mentor) and the university supervisor. In this study only the perceptions of supervisory feedback of STs and university supervisors, the ones "with the final judgmental voice" (Smith, 2010, p. 40), were considered. Future research could include the mentors' voice since, in some ELT practicums, they also supervise STs and provide feedback.

Further work could be undertaken in the integration of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) in the teaching practice as a facilitator of communication between STs and supervisors.

It would also be of interest to investigate whether supervisory feedback in fact leads to enhanced STs' practice and contributes to the development of STs' autonomy and critical thinking skills.

### **6.3 Theoretical and Pedagogical Implications**

*Knowledge gives one the power to act and to make critical decisions.*

*(Kanter, 1999)*

The findings of this study suggest some possible implications for teacher education. Firstly, results have shown the importance of using complementary strategies to communicate supervisory feedback. As Harrison, Lawson and Wortley (2005 as cited in Tang & Chow, 2007) point out, the implementation of varied reflective practice strategies allows STs to construct and deconstruct practice and to become self-evaluative and critical professionals.

Therefore, written supervisory feedback that identifies strengths and weaknesses and that is detailed, systematic and objective helps STs to focus on those aspects that need improvement. However, in agreement with Starkey and Rawlings (2011), it is recommended that verbal feedback in the form of informal meetings or forums organised by the supervisors be also incorporated as a regular strategy to communicate and discuss supervisors' comments. In addition, informal verbal discussions are quick and are consistent with the idea that feedback should be given in a timely manner (Hattie & Timperley, 2007).

The strategies chosen to provide feedback can be crucial to maintaining interaction with students and providing feedback that will be taken seriously (Hyland & Hyland, 2006). As suggested by Haigh (2001, as cited in Ferrier-Kerr, 2008), STs value frequent feedback which promotes dialogue about the nature of the professional relationship and effective supervisory styles. Collaborative, non-directive and creative supervisory styles are considered the most desirable and effective by supervisors and STs.

Secondly, as Allwright (1989) notices, establishing and preserving genuine opportunities for learning involves minimizing and avoiding conflicts and incompatibilities [...] The ways teachers choose to express their feedback can affect both students' reactions to it and the extent to which they use it in their revisions. (as cited in Hyland & Hyland, 2006, p. 2)

Therefore, supervisory feedback that orients, suggests, advises and contains encouraging comments is recommended. As Sadler (1989, as cited in Tang & Chow, 2007) suggests, it is crucial to provide quality feedback that is non-evaluative and which promotes learning. Sadler highlights the importance of providing quality feedback that is helpful to identify the gap between STs' current level of achievement and a higher level in order to close that gap as well as to "feedforward" judgements on performance into future work. Ávila Luna (2009) summarises this idea by proposing a constructive model which intends to explore STs' opportunities and useful strategies to improve their teaching practice as well as to facilitate STs' abilities to self regulate and evaluate their performance (see Fig. 6.3.1).

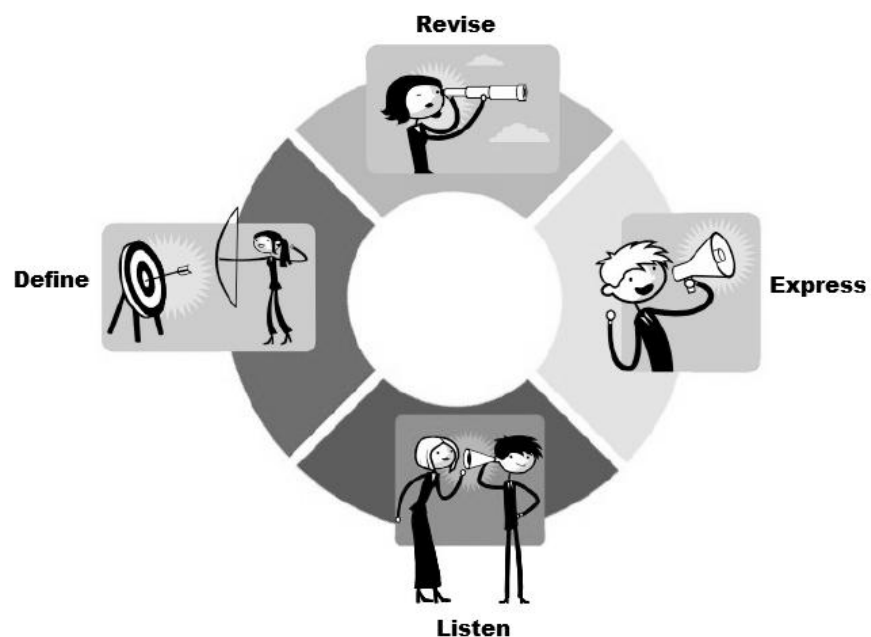


Figure 6.3.1. Model of Constructive Feedback (Ávila Luna, 2009).

As Brookhart (2008) points out, good feedback describes work rather than judges it, is positive, and makes suggestions for improvement. Good feedback is clear and specific. Good feedback helps students become self-regulated learners. Good feedback gives students the help they need to become masters of their own destiny when it comes to learning. (p. 112)

Third, the importance of supervisors' expertise in the promotion of reflective practices through feedback has been significantly established. According to Mc Donald (2004), supervisors' professional knowledge, their curriculum and their interpersonal skills are essential for STs' development of their own teaching style. However, as Farr (2011) points out, there may be a conflict between the more expert professional wanting to relinquish control in a scaffolded way and the STs wanting to be constantly tutored by their supervisors. Thus, it is necessary that STs and supervisors discuss their roles in the feedback process to avoid intuitive assessment and to create a common basis for formative as well as summative assessment (Smith, 2007, as cited in White 2010).

Moreover, supervisors need to keep up-to-date in terms of professional knowledge, curriculum knowledge, learning and teaching styles, and resources in order to be successful and effective supervisors (Mc Donald, 2004).

Finally, continuous reflection and re-examination of STs' perceptions, expectations and professional learning is needed since, as the world progresses, they are constantly being redefined. Supervisors need to ensure that STs have opportunities to develop reflective practice and to discuss their learning progress during the teaching practicum. As Quesada Pacheco (2005) explains, "learners have so many things to say. They are the ones who are affected by our teaching, so getting feedback from them is productive" (p. 14).

## 6.4 Concluding remarks

*A wandering stream of wind,  
Breathed from the west, has caught the expanded sail,  
And, lo! with gentle motion, between banks  
Of mossy slope, and on a placid stream,  
Beneath a woven grove it sails, and, hark!  
The ghastly torrent mingles its far roar,  
With the breeze murmuring in the musical woods.  
("Alastor", Percy Bysshe Shelley, 1792–1822)*

Favourable wind conditions, as Shelley's poem suggests, and sailing-specific instruments may contribute to guide the direction of a boat. As in navigation, STs attending the practicum may also benefit from some instruments, such as supervisory feedback, which can orient their paths towards professional development.

The purpose of the teaching practice is to prepare STs for their prospective profession by offering the "experience to gain knowledge of how teachers go about the many and complex tasks involved in actual classroom practice" (McGee, Ferrier-Kerr, & Miller, 2001, p. 1, as cited in Ferrier-Kerr, 2009). Still, as STs cannot be expected to develop into expert professionals during the practicum, it is important to assess their skills, "both in order to track and support their development, as well as to be able to certify that their competencies reach acceptable standards" (Jönsson & Mattsson, 2011, p. 169).

Thus, providing feedback is a complex, and at the same time, enriching process, in which relations of power and underlying perceptions should be considered. As Tang and Chow (2007) suggest,

by developing shared understanding of assessment criteria, it is hoped that deprivatizing the 'judgment' and 'feedback' facets of supervisory practices will engender the gradual reframing of supervisory practices and facilitate the move towards maximizing teacher ownership of the assessment process to promote professional self-learning. (p. 1081)

STs' and supervisors' participating in this research study added to the understanding of supervisory feedback by gently sharing their valuable thoughts and perceptions during the practicum. In addition, having already experienced the practicum and the feedback process allowed STs to express their perceptions as leading actors, free from the emotional impact and tensions that the teaching practice may have generated on them.

Quoting Santayana (1905), "those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it" (p. 284). Recalling STs' and supervisors' memories and perceptions of supervisory feedback can facilitate the understanding of their lived experiences and "perhaps translate this understanding into meaningful social and educational implications" (Phillion, He, & Connelly, 2005, as cited in Männikkö-Barbutiu & Rorrison, 2011). The intention resides in remembering what can be improved and not forgetting what can be repeated.

## **6.5 Personal impact and challenges**

*Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world.*

*Nelson Mandela*

Seen as an M. A. Programme requirement, writing a thesis may be imposing. However, seen as a process of exploration aided and guided by a deeply knowledgeable advisor, the thesis is an immense source of intellectual and professional satisfaction. At any rate, this was true of my thesis-writing process.

As a teacher educator and practicum supervisor, the significance of this investigation resided in the possibility of withdrawing from my professional role and structuring reflection. I concentrated on situating myself in a transition zone, trying to find a balance between neutrality, what I already knew and the creative perception of what I read and heard. Therefore, it was possible to draw analogies and differences and, although my interpretations may have seemed schematic, at no time was I moved by indifference or stereotypes emanating from my own experience. The instruments employed generated the necessary conditions for STs and supervisors to rediscover their perceptions and express them.

As Dörnyei (2007) explains, “the most important thing about doing research is that we get down to it, 'get our feet wet' and as a result get 'hooked' on what is a very exciting activity” (p. 10). Furthermore, I would also highlight the excitement and the stimulating challenges that emerge once the results of our research become visible. In the case of this investigation, one of the main challenges dwells on practicum supervisors’ responsibilities when communicating feedback to future teachers.

As teacher educators, we cannot expect to find “nautical charts” that indicate the right direction towards more effective learning experiences, but we can provide opportunities, both structured and unstructured, to reflect on our own and our students’ practices (Clarke, 1995).



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## Appendix A – Questionnaire for STs

Universidad:	
Lugar y Fecha:	

### ENCUESTA A PRACTICANTES DEL PROFESORADO EN INGLÉS

El objetivo de esta encuesta es recoger la valoración de los practicantes acerca del *feedback* docente. Su colaboración es anónima, voluntaria e imprescindible para contribuir al mejoramiento de la profesionalización docente, por lo que es importante una respuesta sincera y objetiva.

Conteste cada una de las preguntas planteadas marcando con cruz (x) la opción elegida, o bien, emitiendo una opinión, en el caso que corresponda.

*Nota aclaratoria: Cuando se le pregunte acerca de la **frecuencia** de una acción, deberá optar por la respuesta que refleje la cantidad de veces que se lleva a cabo la misma. Cuando se solicita **valoración**, podrá ponderar la frecuencia de la acción, de acuerdo a su criterio.*

a) Recepción del feedback del docente supervisor de las prácticas:	Frecuencia			Valoración		
	Después de cada clase	A veces después de cada clase	Nunca después de cada clase	Positivo	Negativo	Indiferente

*Otros: (por favor indicar frecuencia y valoración).*

.....

.....

b) El feedback del docente supervisor da cuenta de:	Frecuencia			Valoración		
	Siempre	A veces	Nunca	Positivo	Negativo	Indiferente
Aspectos afectivos- volitivos (ej. Estuviste muy bien, Buena idea).						
El desarrollo del plan de clases.						
El aprendizaje de los estudiantes (ej. Los estudiantes te entendieron muy bien).						
El manejo del grupo.						

*Otros: (por favor indicar frecuencia y valoración).*

.....

.....

c) Estrategias de comunicación del feedback del docente supervisor:	Frecuencia			Valoración		
	Siempre	A veces	Nunca	Positivo	Negativo	Indiferente
Escrito después de cada clase.						
Oral después de cada clase.						
Discusiones informales.						
Foros de discusión organizados por los docentes de la cátedra.						
Vía e-mail.						

Otros: (por favor indicar frecuencia y valoración).

.....  
 .....

d) Relación docente supervisor – practicante observado, en el feedback docente:	Frecuencia			Valoración		
	Siempre	A veces	Nunca	Positivo	Negativo	Indiferente
1. Me dice lo que tengo que hacer.						
2. Me orienta.						
3. Permite que sea creativo.						
4. Valora mis ideas y experiencias.						
5. No formula sugerencias para mejorar.						
6. Es estructurado.						
7. Rechaza el diálogo.						
8. Es confrontativo.						

En los casos que en “d” haya respondido “a veces”, especifique algún ejemplo concreto que recuerde, por ej. en qué momento y circunstancia.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.
- 6.
- 7.
- 8.

**e) SOBRE EL FEEDBACK DOCENTE:**

1. Por favor, piense en general, cuál es el / los sentimiento(s) que sintetiza(n) su relación con el feedback docente. Seleccione de la lista el/los adjetivo(s) que considere más frecuente(s) o predominante(s).

a- Estimulado		h- Enriquecido	
b- Motivado		i- Enojado	
c- Respetado		j- Sorprendido	
d- Incómodo		k- Confundido	
e- Indiferente		l- Independiente	
f- Frustrado		m- Auto-crítico	
g- Seguro		n- Inseguro	

Otro(s) (Por favor, especifique):

2. Puntualice, si los hubo, beneficios del feedback docente que recibió durante su práctica de enseñanza.

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3. Mencione, si los hubiese, aspectos negativos del feedback docente que recibió durante su práctica.

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4. En general, ¿contribuye el feedback docente a generar un proceso de reflexión – acción que incida efectivamente en la práctica docente?

SI – NO

¿Por qué?

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.....  
.....  
.....

5. El feedback docente, en general, ¿ayuda a adquirir seguridad en el posicionamiento áulico?

SI – NO

¿Por qué?

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.....  
.....

Otros comentarios que desee agregar sobre el feedback docente:

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.....  
.....  
.....

*Nota: El formato de la presente encuesta es una adaptación del trabajo de Rawlins y Starkey (2011) y Farr (2011).*

## Appendix B – Questionnaire for Supervisors

Universidad:	
Lugar y Fecha:	

### ENCUESTA A DOCENTES SUPERVISORES DE LAS PRÁCTICAS DEL PROFESORADO EN INGLÉS.

El objetivo de esta encuesta es recoger la valoración de los docentes supervisores de la práctica de enseñanza acerca del *feedback* docente. Su colaboración es anónima, voluntaria e imprescindible para contribuir al mejoramiento de la profesionalización docente, por lo que es importante una respuesta sincera y objetiva.

a) Emisión del feedback docente a los practicantes observados:	Frecuencia			Valoración		
	Después de cada clase	A veces después de cada clase	Nunca después de cada clase	Positivo	Negativo	Indiferente

*Otros: (por favor indicar frecuencia y valoración).*

.....

.....

b) El feedback docente a los practicantes observados da cuenta de:	Frecuencia			Valoración		
	Siempre	A veces	Nunca	Positivo	Negativo	Indiferente
Aspectos afectivos- volitivos (ej. Estuviste muy bien, Buena idea).						
El desarrollo del plan de clases.						
El aprendizaje de los estudiantes (ej. Los estudiantes te entendieron muy bien).						
El manejo del grupo.						

*Otros: (por favor indicar frecuencia y valoración).*

.....

.....

c) Estrategias de comunicación del feedback docente a los practicantes observados:	Frecuencia			Valoración		
	Siempre	A veces	Nunca	Positivo	Negativo	Indiferente
Escrito después de cada clase.						
Oral después de cada clase.						
Discusiones informales.						
Foros de discusión organizados por los docentes de la cátedra.						
Vía e-mail.						

Otros: (por favor indicar frecuencia y valoración).

.....  
 .....

d) Relación como docente supervisor con los practicantes observados, en el feedback docente:	Frecuencia			Valoración		
	Siempre	A veces	Nunca	Positivo	Negativo	Indiferente
1. Le digo lo que tiene que hacer.						
2. Lo oriento.						
3. Permito que sea creativo.						
4. Valoro sus ideas y experiencias.						
5. No formulo sugerencias para mejorar.						
6. Soy estructurado.						
7. Rechazo el diálogo.						
8. Soy confrontativo.						

En los casos que en “d” haya respondido “a veces”, especifique algún ejemplo concreto que recuerde, por ej. en qué momento y circunstancia.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.
- 6.
- 7.
- 8.

e) SOBRE EL FEEDBACK DOCENTE:

1. Por favor, piense en general, cuál es el / los sentimiento (s) que sintetiza (n) la relación de los estudiantes con su feedback. Seleccione de la lista el/los adjetivo(s) que considere más frecuente(s) o predominante(s).

a- Estimulado		h- Enriquecido	
b- Motivado		i- Enojado	
c- Respetado		j- Sorprendido	
d- Incómodo		k- Confundido	
e- Indiferente		l- Independiente	
f- Frustrado		m- Auto-crítico	
g- Seguro		n- Inseguro	

Otro(s) (Por favor, especifique):

2. Puntualice, si los hubo, beneficios del feedback que emitió para los practicantes.

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3. Mencione, si los hubiese, aspectos negativos del feedback que emitió.

.....  
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.....

4. En general, ¿cree que el feedback docente genera un proceso de reflexión – acción que incide efectivamente en los practicantes?

SI – NO

¿Por qué?

.....  
.....  
.....  
.....  
.....

5. En general, ¿considera que el feedback docente ayuda a los practicantes a adquirir seguridad en su posicionamiento áulico?

SI – NO

¿Por qué?

.....  
.....  
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.....

Otros comentarios que desee agregar sobre el feedback docente.

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*Nota: El formato de la presente encuesta es una adaptación del trabajo de Rawlins y Starkey (2011) y Farr (2011).*

## Appendix C- Consent form

### Consentimiento Informado para Participantes de Investigación

El propósito de esta ficha de consentimiento es proveer a los participantes en esta investigación con una clara explicación de la naturaleza de la misma, así como de su rol en ella como participantes.

La presente investigación es conducida por la Prof. Antonella Percara, de la Universidad Autónoma de Entre Ríos (UADER). La meta de este estudio es indagar acerca de las percepciones sobre el tema “*feedback* docente” por parte de practicantes y docentes supervisores de las prácticas de enseñanza en los profesorados en inglés de tres universidades públicas de la región Centro de la Argentina (Entre Ríos, Córdoba y La Pampa).

Si usted accede a participar en este estudio, se le pedirá responder preguntas en una entrevista corta (o completar una encuesta, o lo que fuera según el caso). Lo que conversemos durante estas sesiones se grabará, de modo que el investigador pueda transcribir después las ideas que usted haya expresado.

La participación en este estudio es estrictamente voluntaria. La información que se recoja será confidencial y no se usará para ningún otro propósito fuera de los de esta investigación. Sus respuestas al cuestionario y a la entrevista serán codificadas usando un número de identificación y por lo tanto, serán anónimas. Una vez transcritas las entrevistas, los audios se destruirán.

Si tiene alguna duda sobre este proyecto, puede hacer preguntas en cualquier momento durante su participación en él. Igualmente, puede retirarse del proyecto en cualquier momento sin que eso lo perjudique en ninguna forma. Si alguna de las preguntas durante la entrevista le parecen incómodas, tiene usted el derecho de hacérselo saber al investigador o de no responderlas.

Desde ya le agradecemos su participación.

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Acepto participar voluntariamente en esta investigación, conducida por la Prof. Antonella Percara, de la Universidad Autónoma de Entre Ríos (UADER). He sido informado (a) de que la meta de este estudio es indagar acerca de las percepciones sobre el tema “*feedback* docente” por parte de practicantes y docentes supervisores de las prácticas de enseñanza en los profesorados en inglés de tres universidades públicas de la región Centro de la Argentina (Entre Ríos, Córdoba y La Pampa).

Me han indicado también que tendré que responder cuestionarios y preguntas en una entrevista corta.

Reconozco que la información que yo provea en el curso de esta investigación es estrictamente confidencial y no será usada para ningún otro propósito fuera de los de este estudio sin mi consentimiento. He sido informado de que puedo hacer preguntas sobre el proyecto en cualquier momento y que puedo retirarme del mismo cuando así lo decida, sin que esto acarree perjuicio alguno para mi persona. De tener preguntas sobre mi participación en este estudio, puedo contactar a Antonella Percara al teléfono 0343-154 550 646 o a la dirección electrónica [antonella.percara@gmail.com](mailto:antonella.percara@gmail.com) .

Entiendo que una copia de esta ficha de consentimiento me será entregada, y que puedo pedir información sobre los resultados de este estudio cuando éste haya concluido. Para esto, puedo contactar a Antonella Percara al teléfono anteriormente mencionado.

-----  
Nombre del Participante

Firma del Participante

Fecha

(en letras de imprenta)



## Appendix D- Semi-structured Interview

### ENTREVISTA SEMI-ESTRUCTURADA A PRACTICANTES Y DOCENTES SUPERVISORES DE LA PRÁCTICA DE ENSEÑANZA EN EL PROFESORADO EN INGLÉS.

TIEMPO PREVISTO PARA CADA ENTREVISTA: 60'

#### A. INICIO.

- ✓ Saludo, agradecimiento y charla informal.

#### B. PRESENTACIÓN DEL OBJETIVO DE LA ENTREVISTA.

El objetivo de esta encuesta es recoger la valoración de los docentes supervisores de la práctica de enseñanza y de los practicantes acerca del *feedback* docente. Su colaboración es imprescindible para contribuir al mejoramiento de la profesionalización docente, por lo que es importante una respuesta sincera y objetiva.

#### C. PRESENTACIÓN DEL/DE LA ENTREVISTADO/A.

- ✓ Edad.
- ✓ Titulación.
- ✓ Lugar de trabajo.

#### D. CONTENIDO.

- ✓ 1) *Principios teóricos que sustentan el feedback docente.*

¿Qué es para Ud. el feedback docente?

¿Para qué sirve el feedback docente?

¿Qué aspectos no deberían faltar en el feedback docente? ¿Por qué?

¿Qué características posee el feedback docente que ha recibido?

¿Con qué frecuencia debería emitirse el feedback docente? ¿Por qué?

- ✓ 2) *El rol del observador en el proceso didáctico.*

¿Qué actitud debería asumir el observador? ¿Por qué?

¿Qué actitud asume el observador normalmente?

- ✓ 3) *El rol del observado en el proceso didáctico.*

¿Qué actitud debería asumir el observado? ¿Por qué?

¿Qué actitud asume el observado normalmente?

- ✓ 4) *Relación entre docente supervisor y practicante observado.*

¿Cómo es la comunicación en el proceso del feedback docente normalmente?

¿Cómo debería ser la comunicación en el proceso del feedback docente?

✓ 5) *Repercusión del feedback docente en la práctica de enseñanza.*

El feedback docente, ¿genera beneficios para la práctica de la enseñanza? ¿Por qué? ¿Cuáles?  
El feedback docente, ¿genera perjuicios para la práctica de la enseñanza? ¿Por qué? ¿Cuáles?

✓ 6) *La valoración del feedback docente.*

¿Cree que es positivo el *feedback* docente? ¿Por qué?

E- AGREGADOS.

- ✓ ¿Hay algún aspecto sobre el *feedback* docente que no ha sido considerado en esta entrevista y desee comentar?

F- FINALIZACIÓN.

- ✓ Agradecimiento y saludo de despedida.